

# THE FORGE IN OUR DAILY LIFE

Quid Prodest

66

Ordinary Time II

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST  
LIKE CLARET

# 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. Return to Ordinary Time

**A**fter the 50 days of Easter, we return to ordinary time. We are now in the eleventh week. During the month and half covered in this booklet you will have the opportunity to get closer, once again, to your identity as a Claretian Missionary. On July 3rd we will celebrate the **Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary** and on the 16th, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we will remember the **162nd anniversary of the founding of the Congregation**. Both anniversaries can help you to give thanks to God "for your vocation," to go deeper into the meaning of your identity as the Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and reinforce your membership in the Congregation in the light of *Quid Prodest*. Both realities (identity and belonging) were explicitly addressed by the XXIV General Chapter (cf. MFL 34-41).

If you live in the northern hemisphere, during this period the school and pastoral year ends and the holiday period begins. Perhaps this change will make you adjust your pace to the new circumstances. It will be an opportunity to open yourself up to new experiences and new encounters. Don't miss out on this. If you live in the southern hemisphere, this is an intense time of work you can continue to use beneficially, trying to live "the prophecy of ordinary life" in the small gestures that express what we really are.

Surely the practice of the "Easter journal" (or the "utopian journal") made you more sensitive to the presence of the grace of God in the detail of everyday life. The American poet Walt Whitman said it was "God's letters littering the street." Those who have a "pure heart" can see God in any

situation (cf. Mt 5:8). An open attitude will help you continue to recognize during ordinary time, the "signs of God" in nature, in events and, above all, in people themselves. Let yourself be guided by all of this. Try to listen to the call of God.

Personal guidance, so strongly advised in the *The Forge project in our daily life*, should not be cut back, far from it. A regular session with your guide or spiritual director is very important. God is with us in so many ways. There are hidden messages for us in every aspect of our lives. He is with us, above all, through the People of God we belong to, through their pastors, their liturgy, their theologians, artists, and community people, etc. We must learn to recognize and interpret all these signs and to be guided by them. Only when we enter into a relationship with other realities, do we begin to understand who we are.



## 2. Reflection

### My identity as a member of a religious congregation

During the Easter season you were able to reflect on the Church as the "community of the Risen Lord." She, amid the ups and downs of history, continues proclaiming that "the Lord is truly risen" (Lk 24:34). It is likely that you sometimes find it difficult to perceive the Church as a confessional community. There is continuous publicity of its failings and its sins. What reaction does this cause in you? We can not close our eyes to reality. But, however much this negative image hurts us, it is within this church of the baptized where we, the Claretian Missionaries, "have received the gift of following Christ in the communion of life and to proclaim the gospel to every living person, travelling around the world" (CC 4). Following Christ, as proposed in the Gospel, is the supreme rule of our lives. Along with other Claretians around the world, you recognize yourself in the words of the Constitutions: "We answer this divine call by adopting Jesus' way of life, a way which the Virgin Mary, too, embraced in faith. And so in the Church we have to manifest Christ's virginity, poverty and obedience in proclaiming the Good News. Through our profession of the evangelical counsels by public vows we dedicate ourselves to God and are consecrated by him, and thus we form in the Church an Institute which is truly and fully apostolic." (CC 5).

Are you sure that you are a religious as a response to "divine calling"? Do you think that in the course of your consecrated life, other less genuine motives have crept in? The core of this vocation, within the Church, is to live the same lifestyle as Jesus, chaste, poor, obedient and dedicated to the proclamation of the Kingdom.

The XXIV General Chapter acknowledged that, at present, one of the calls that comes from the consecrated life, to which we belong, is to "shape our way of life with "a passion for Christ and for humanity"; from the perspective of the two evangelical icons of the Samaritan woman at the well and the good Samaritan, symbols of the thirst for God and the tender mercy towards the marginalized, those who suffer violence and the impoverished (cf. *International Congress of Consecrated Life*, 2004; MFL, 6a) . The search for God and compassion for the excluded are the two great passions of every consecrated person. The two are mutually self-explanatory and feed on each other. The weakening of one of them reduces a consecrated life to a mere caricature.

You are a consecrated person. You have surrendered yourself completely to God for the service of the Gospel. It is likely that throughout your life you've understood this fact in different ways. The Church has changed in its understanding of religious life, especially after Vatican II. But beyond the variety of theological explanations, what matters now is to make you aware of what this actually means for you. Over the four years of the project "The Forge project in everyday life" you will have an opportunity to return several times, especially during the stage of "Caritas Christi", to the implications today of following Jesus Christ, chaste, poor and obedient. Now we want to make you aware of this reality from the perspective of *Quid Prodest*, and therefore, aware of its value to you, of what you "win" and "lose" living this way.

Without a doubt, you enthusiastically consecrated yourself to God, but how many times have you wondered if it was truly worth it? Would you be willing to start anew in the light of your experience?

## Exercise 1: Prayer with Psalm 16

*You can start by praying Psalm 16, probably the most influential Psalm in the history of religious life. Let its words recreate in you the experience of having committed your life to the Lord. Then you can answer the following questions in your notebook:*

1. **Do I believe I can really recite these words:** " You are my Lord, my only good, there's nothing that compares with you "(v.2)? Do they respond in truth to what I feel when I think about my life of consecration?
2. Do I believe that, with **the gift of consecrated life**, "the best part has been allotted to me" (v. 6)? Am I happy to live as a religious in the Church? What benefits have I received?
3. For me, who are **"the gods of the earth, those powers that used to gratify me"** (v. 3)?

### My identity as a Claretian Missionary

For various reasons, which may become evident in the following exercise, your ordained life is unfolding as a Claretian Missionary. It is likely that before entering the Congregation, you would have considered other possibilities for your future life, even within the priesthood or religious life. Why, specifically, are you a Claretian Missionary? What meaning does this have for you at the present time?

The XXIV General Chapter addressed the issue of identity because the Meeting of the Claretian General Government with Major Superiors, held in Jundiaí, Brazil in January 2008, there was general consensus that this was now the main problem of the Congregation. Indeed, if we do not know who we are and if we do not live this identity with joy, how are we to evangelize others with enthusiasm? How can we invite others to join us? We are not talking about applying an out-dated solution, but above all, to revitalize an experience that can sustain and revitalize our lives.

In speaking of our identity, the XXIV General Chapter reminds us that "after our first profession, we add to our name the initials CMF (Cordis Mariae Filius) (cf. Dir cf. 25). It is not merely an exter-


nal detail. It conveys that our profession initiates a new identity in us which incorporates all our other identities: Being Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is for us the specific way of showing we are human, Christians, religious, ordained ministers and apostles (cf. CC 4, 159 , Dir 24-26; MCT 132) (cf. Appendix 1). This means that being a Claretian is not a reality that is added to many others, but a charism that unifies all aspects of our lives. This statement may sound a bit exaggerated and perhaps does not fully coincide with your own experience. In any case, it is good that you take time to reflect on it and explore what it means.

The question about who you are (the question about identity) is associated with three questions that sum it up:

- **What is your name?** Our name encapsulates what we are. Apart from your family name (and maybe your baptismal name too), you have a charismatic name: Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Are you proud of it? Are you ashamed of it? What does it actually mean? How does it express who you really are?

- **Which is your face?** Normally, in identity documents there is displayed a photo of a person's face. No part of the body better expresses who we





are. The face, and especially the eyes, makes our deepest identity physically visible. How would you describe your charismatic face? Is it recognizable amongst the other "charismatic faces" that exist in the Church?

- **What do you do?** While it is true that what we are is not limited to what we do, action does form a part of our identity because it is not something merely external but an expression of our personal mystery. When they put this question to you, how do you respond? In other words: What is your occupation in life? What do you do? Can you say, like Jesus and Claret, that your main job is dedicated to "the affairs of the Father" (cf. Lk 2:49)?

Maybe the next exercise, in its apparent simplicity, will help you reflect on your Claretian identity and to express it in a brief and precise manner.

## Exercise 2: CMF advert

Imagine someone asks you to present what you mean by Claretian identity **in the form of an advert**. You must try to emphasize what is essential and also present it in the shortest and most attractive way you can imagine. To do this you need to make explicit the underlying **values**, select a **symbolic image**, think of a **slogan** and write **a text of about 40-50 words** that explains what you mean by Claretian identity.

<b>Values</b>	
<b>Image</b>	
<b>Slogan</b>	
<b>Text</b>	



## My relationship with the Founder

You're a Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a Claretian Missionary, because there was a man named Anthony Mary Claret. Of course, this is not the ultimate cause of your vocation, but it is an intervention from the past that is part of god's plan. Anthony Mary Claret was not only a man of spirit and an indefatigable missionary, but also the founder of the religious family to which you belong. It is not a mere canonical fact, but an intervention that gives a specific profile to our way of following Jesus. Without the existence of St Anthony Mary Claret, your life would have been different. Therefore, a founder is not just a model, a father, or an advocate (cf. **Appendix 3**).

Moreover, every founder has something of John the Baptist in him: by the way he lives he points to the One whom we must follow, Jesus Christ. The Church reminds us that "in Christian discipleship and love for the person of Christ there are a number of points concerning the growth of holiness in the consecrated life which merit particular emphasis today. In the first place, there is the need for fidelity to the founding charism and subsequent spiritual heritage of each Institute. It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, an inspiration which is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice"(VC 36). Of course, this is clearly not to try to repeat the life of Claret himself, but to be faithful to his spirit of revival at every moment and in every circumstance: "Institutes of Consecrated Life are thus invited courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world"(VC 37).

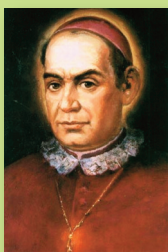
With the XXIV General Chapter, "we give thanks to the Lord.... for the vigour of Claret in the Church. Perhaps there have never been so many faithful who have identified themselves with the person of Claret and who, like him, desire to live and proclaim the Gospel using all means possible"(MFL 18). Are you yourself to be counted one of this group of men and women excited about the figure of Claret? What have you learned from it? In short, what does it mean to you? In the following exercise can explore these relationships.

## Exercise 3:

# My images of St Anthony M. Claret

In the left column there are **four images of St Anthony Mary Claret**. Look at them carefully. Let them bring to mind several aspects of his life. As they occur to you, write them down, with brief notes in the column on the right.



*Now you can answer the following questions in your notebook:*

1. Which of the four images **do you most identify with**? Why?
2. How would you describe **your relationship with the Founder**? Have you experienced any significant changes during your life as a missionary?
3. How have you made **your knowledge of the Founder** more intimate? Do you regularly read any of his works, especially the Autobiography? Have you read any extensive biography?
4. How did you personally spend the period celebrating **the second centenary of his birth**? Did it change anything about how you relate to Claret?



## My relationship with the Congregation

The XXIV General Chapter has also reflected on this issue which is closely linked to our identity (cf. MFL 37-41). Clearly, if all members of the congregation are the children of the same father and mother, the relationship that exists between us is one of brotherhood. From this key fact we can raise the issue of membership.

Today we live in an environment characterized by multiple belongings. We all belong to our family (and perhaps never before have we laid such stress on the importance of cultivating this relationship), a country, a culture and groups of various kinds: from a diocesan clergy to a teaching faculty, through apostolic movements, sports clubs, friendship groups, foundations, NGOs, etc.. While it is true that we live in a network of multiple belongings which both enrich us and make demands of us, "our belonging to Christ, expressed by the vocation that we share in the Congregation, takes the first place over all" (MFL 37).

The Congregation is, as our tradition says, the "Mother Congregation" that extends to us the motherhood of Mary. Perhaps, because of your age or your cultural background, you are not accustomed to using this term with reference to the Congregation, but it is good to know its historical background. It is moving to note, for example, that this term "mother" is the most common title used by the Claretian Martyrs of Barbastro when speaking of the Congregation: "In them, like in an icon, we find gathered all the basic elements which make up our identity: love for Jesus Christ, for the Heart of Mary and the Church, missionary zeal, devotion to the Word and to the Eucharist, a sense of community, a preference for the poor etc.." (MFL 39).

With the Congregation as our intercessor, we pledge our commitment to Christ. And towards the Congregation we develop feelings of gratitude, respect, loyalty and commitment.

It is clear, therefore, that the Congregation does not establish a mere contract that can be terminated at will; for example, when an appointment is not to our liking, or we have a problem in the community, or we are tempted to join the secular clergy. Nor is it simply a social group where we devote some of our time and energy. It is the new family which is not based on blood ties, but in the welcome and attention we give to the Word of

God. Without welcoming and attending to the Word of God, the profound reasons why we continue to live as a religious community simply disappear. Our community life gets its meaning and fulfilment in the Eucharist and is nourished by prayer, the family atmosphere, the shared responsibility of governance and collaboration in the common mission (cf. CC 12-13).

The Congregation now is multi-faceted. We have been enriched by brothers from different countries, races, languages and cultures. However, it is not easy to live in multicultural communities. After a peaceful first phase of opening, there usually emerge real underlying problems and even the prejudices which we all conceal. Perhaps most of us have not been formed for this kind of life-style.

There are many other aspects that are related to your experience of living as a disciple of Christ in the Congregation: acceptance of weaker or difficult brothers, appreciation of your own Province or Delegation without falling victim to provincial prejudices, making yourself available to be sent wherever you are most needed, and so on.

In the next exercise you can explore your own personal way of expressing your belonging to the Congregation. All questions are qualified by the *Quid Prodest*: What good is there in legally belonging to the Congregation if perhaps I'm not living out the results of the fraternity? What advantage is there in benefiting from the Congregation for my own purposes if I do not experience the joy of giving myself unselfishly to the common mission? What good is there in enjoying a warm environment in the Congregation if I'm not ready to be sent where I am most needed?

## Exercise 4: My experience of the Congregation

*This may be a good time to calmly read sections 37-41 of the Chapter declaration "Men on fire with love." You can then respond in writing in your notebook to the following questions:*


1. Do you think you have **sufficient knowledge of the Congregation** or, in many instances, do you reduce it to your experience of the community where you live or, at most, to your Organism? What could you do to find out more about the Congregation?
2. What are your **dominant feelings concerning the Congregation**? Do they coincide with those presented in Chapter (i.e. gratitude, respect, loyalty and surrender)? Are there any others? Do you think you've been hurt in any way? In what way? How can you address it?
3. **What term do you most frequently use to refer to the Congregation**: mother, family, institution, "our people" ...? What does it mean for you?
4. Do you accept the **history of the Congregation**, with its ups and downs? What causes you greatest problems of integration?
5. How would you assess **your own level of belonging in the Congregation**? With which other institutions do you maintain meaningful relationships? What is the difference between them?
6. What are **your expectations of the Congregation** at the present moment of time? How are you helping to improve its life?
7. How do you live the **diversity** that is evident within the Congregation? Do you prize, respect and promote lay people for the diaconate and priesthood?
8. Do you have experience of living in **multicultural communities**? How does it affect you in your personal life? What major benefits have you received? What difficulties have you found? What have you learned for the future?

### Pray, work, endure and strive to follow Christ

In the Definition of the Missionary, our Founder presents us to the Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a man whose only concern is how he may follow Christ and imitate him in "praying, working, enduring and striving constantly and solely for the greater glory of God and the salvation of humankind"(CC 9). You may remember now the significance of these four verbs:

- **To pray.** No fire gives off light without flames. Nothing produces flames if there is no heat source. Claret used the power of the symbol to express the dynamics of Christian life and, more specifically, its missionary dimension. The missionary will not give off light or heat if he is not on "fire with love." And





he cannot be on fire with love if he doesn't let himself be kindled by the love of God. This inner fire is accessed through prayer. This is the great secret! Claret, an apostolic man, knew it well. In practice, how does he analyse the verb to pray? It's simplicity will surprise us: "Vocal prayer suits me better than strictly mental prayer, thank God. At each word of the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory, I glimpse an abyss of goodness and mercy. Our Lord has granted me the grace of being very attentive and fervent when I say these prayers. The Lord in his goodness and mercy also grants me many graces during mental prayer, but in vocal prayer I have a deeper awareness." (Aut 766). He prayed as millions of simple men and women have prayed, using the "Prayer of Jesus" and other simple formulas inherited from our tradition. That was it: every word was "an abyss of goodness and mercy." Claret of the final phase in France and Rome (1868-1870) intensified the verb that accompanied him since childhood. One verb led to another. Claret's prayer routine drives him to work and suffer for the Gospel: "For some time now, God in his infinite goodness has been favouring me with many telling insights when I am at prayer and arousing in me many desires to do and suffer for his greater honour and glory and the good of souls." (Aut 761).

Next year, during the *Patris Mei* stage, you will have the opportunity to work with the subject of prayer in depth. But, within the dynamics of *Quid Prodest*, you can ask yourself two opposing questions in the examination of your prayer experience: What benefit is there for me to be doing lots of things "in God's name" if you scarcely develop a warm, spontaneous relationship with him? What's the point of spending a lot of time in prayer if it does not lead me to "complicate" my life in the service of others?

- **To work.** In Claret industriousness was a virtue acquired from childhood. It was one of the virtues of the Catalan people in general, and his own family in particular. Speaking of his childhood and youth, remember what work meant for him: "Since my father manufactured thread and cloth, he set me to work in his factory. I obeyed without a word, a long face, or any sign of displeasure. I set to work as hard as I could and never spent an idle, half-hearted day. I did everything to the best of my ability so as not to displease my dear parents in the slightest, because I loved them very much and they loved me." (Aut 31). His life's schedule was summed up in this sentence: "Eat little and work much" (Aut 745). This verb is further developed in his time as an apostolic missionary in Catalonia, the Canary Islands and Cuba. Claret was aged 34-49 years, at the height of his powers.

Maybe you do find the verb to work easy to analyse today. On the one hand, it is one of the favourite verbs of our culture. In general, we are judged by what we do. Our work is our social status: "What do you do for a living?". On the other hand, a serious trend has formed which sometimes looks on work as a form of escape and compensation. What does a saint like Claret mean by to work? How does he analyse the verb? For him, what really matters is not the activity of work but the objective he hopes to achieve, that God "should be known, loved, served and praised" by all.

In the light of his experience, you may wonder to what extent what you do as a Claretian Missionary actually seeks that God "should be known, loved, served and praised." Again *Quid Prodest* holds up a question about your life: What's the point of working so hard if I'm seeking only myself and I'm forgetting about other essential dimensions of my life? Or, conversely: What's the point of me living a comfortable and relaxed life if I am



not responding to the assignment I have received?

- **To endure.** Love means giving your life. There can be no love, then, without suffering. It is not, of course, a physical pain nor the result of psychological trauma, but the suffering that comes from an experience resulting from love. Claret coined an expression that sums it up well because he experienced it in the flesh: "Doing and suffering are the greatest proof of love" (Aut 424). This is the verb that the Claret of the Madrid phase analyses the most. He is 50-61 years of age. They are the hard years: lack of work, persecution, slander. His personal identification with the dead and risen Christ becomes his biography.

The verb to suffer, in its most evangelical sense, is today expressed in different ways. Perhaps you suffer not just from your own personal problems (health, being accepted, failure, etc..) but also from the circumstances of many elderly people, the sick, the lonely, the exploited. How are you affected by the suffering caused by the huge injustices in this world? How well does it fit with the "passion" of the Church? These age-old sufferings join with the many that are born out of our condition as people of our time. Dare you analyse this verb calmly, as the saints have done, confident that it forms part of our real association with Jesus? What good is there living germ-free, fleeing from every discom-



fort, if you do not share in the passion of Christ that extends into the suffering of his brothers and sisters?

• **Always and only seeking the greater glory of God and the salvation of men and women around the world.** The verb "to seek" is very important in the spirituality of Claret. He links it with the verb

"to desire" (cf. Appendix 2). He doesn't get bogged down with feelings,

despite the romantic

tone of many of his

prayers. He is a deci-

sive person: he

makes things hap-

pen. It is striking

that, since his time

as a seminarian in

Vic, each year he

draws up a list of

objectives, which

emerge from his

spiritual exer-

cises. It is his

personal way

of translating

the will of

God into ac-

tion. On this

point he has

much to

teach a ge-

neration

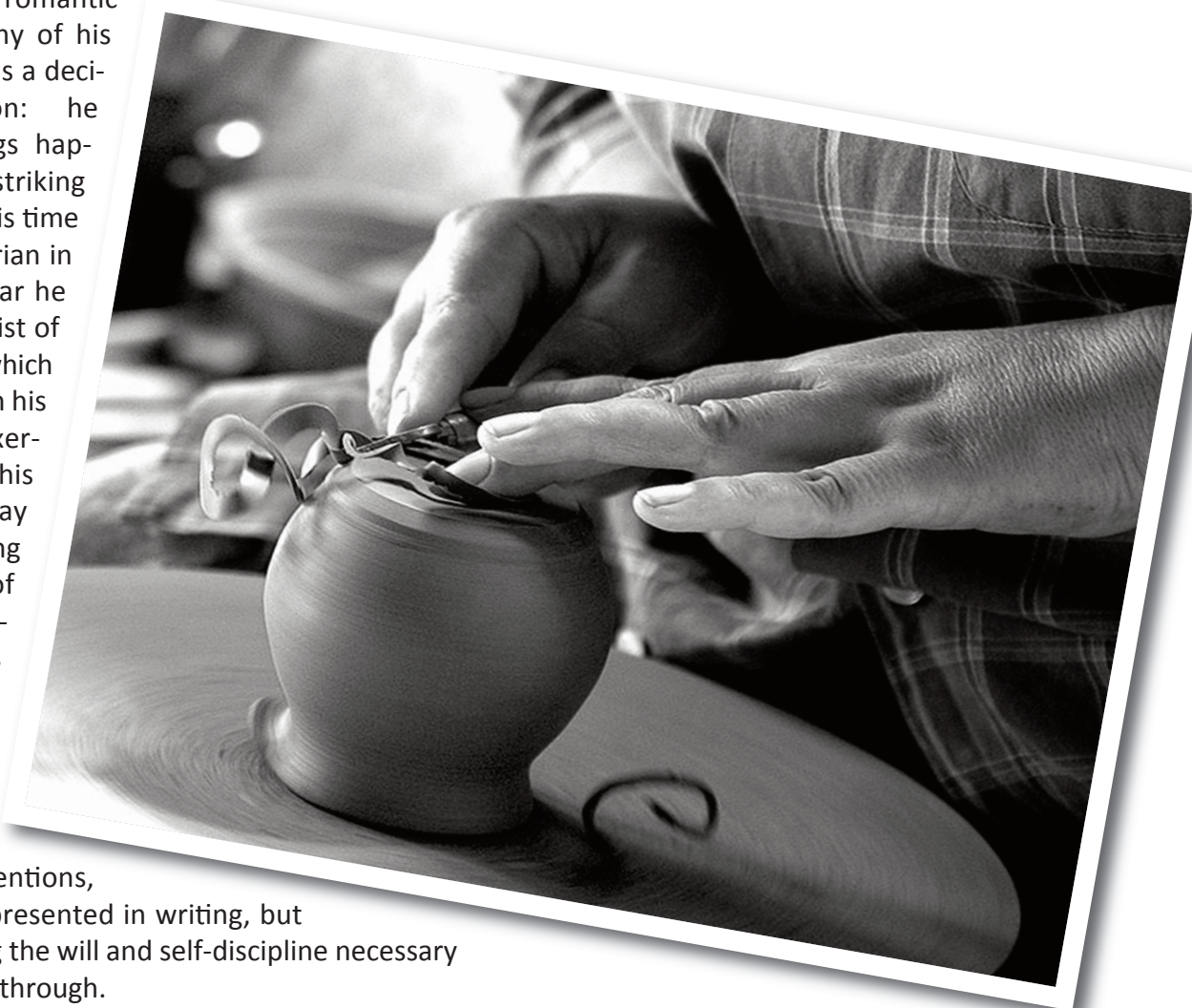
that is full

of good intentions,

beautifully presented in writing, but

often lacking the will and self-discipline necessary

to see them through.



As you move forward through this Forge experience, you will probably discover some things you have to change in your life. Do you really believe you are "seeking" to implement them (i.e., trying to make something happen)? What is the point of thinking a lot, writing a lot, sharing a lot if, in the end, everything is going to continue as before?

## Exercise 5: The verbs of my vocation

*The objective of this exercise is to evaluate how you live out these four key activities in your missionary life: **praying, working, suffering and seeking**. Each of them can be an expression of your will to live a genuine life or a way to escape, to avoid the reality of your missionary life. Under the + sign you can write three positive developments in your life; under the - sign three negative developments. You can share this exercise with your director.*

PRAYING		WORKING		SUFFERING		SEEKING	
+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-







### 3. Guidelines for the *Lectio Divina* during this period

As noted in the introduction, the Liturgy of the weeks included in this booklet begins with the **eleventh week of Ordinary Time**. On weekdays, the first reading is taken primarily from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, Genesis and Exodus. The gospel is taken from **Matthew** (Chapters 5-14). During this period there are also plenty of solemnities, which have their own readings: **Birth of St John the Baptist, Body and Blood of Christ, Sts Peter and Paul, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Heart of Mary and James the Apostle**. On Sundays we continue reading the Gospel of Matthew (a variety of verses between chapters 10 and 14).

In the daily practice of the *Lectio Divina* we draw near to the Word of God with an attitude of poverty to allow ourselves to be enlightened and healed. Beyond the diversity of the texts, the message is always the same: God shows us his love by surrendering his son Jesus to us. The basic question is: Do I truly believe in Jesus as the Word, addressed to me by God?

The stage directions set out in the last column are not brief exegetical, liturgical or spiritual comments, but simply some assistance in reading the text from the perspective *Quid Prodest*, which is your guide throughout this liturgical year. If you have the *Claretian Calendar*, you may find it useful to read the references which occur some days in the third column.



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Also at this time, in accord with of the Constitutions and of prev: Chapters, there has been a deeper and a growing appreciation for t God. Sharing our journey with indi peoples, above all with the poores to be for us a great source of spi nation. Today, many Claretians, f: ral origins, ages and mission conte intense desire to grow in the Spiri tivating, in the midst of the di: response to the call they hav

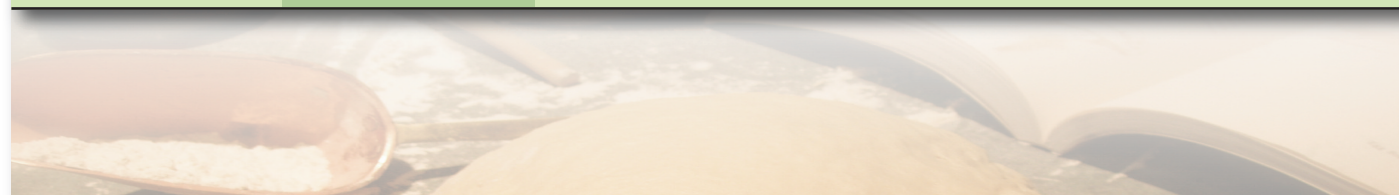
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MFL 9

Monday 13th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 6.1-10</li> <li>• Mt 5.38-42</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor of the Church. [Anniversary of the priestly ordination of Anthony Mary Claret (1835) (Cf. <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 165-169)]	In the words of Jesus there is an exaggeration that goes beyond the criterion of "fairness" of this world. How? When? Paul gives us the answer: "This is the opportune moment."
Tuesday 14th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 8.1-9</li> <li>• Mt 5.43-48</li> </ul>		<i>Jesus' words are a clear Quid Prodest:</i> What is the point of seeking refuge amongst those who love you dearly, who always speak well of you, if you're not proclaiming the universal love of the Father with your life? He makes the sun rise on both the good and the bad.
Wednesday 15th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 9.6-11</li> <li>• Mt 6.1-6.16-18</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Micaela of the Most Holy Sacrament ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 171-177)	When we do good, pray or fast, what is it all about?: Continuing to cultivate your image as a "religious person" or living in truth? The temptation to be hypocritical besets consecrated people in a special way.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 11.1-11</li> <li>• Mt 6.7-15</li> </ul>	[Feast of Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp.195-199)]	Jesus' prayer clarifies what is essential in life (for which we must implore God) and, by contrast, what is superfluous. It is a kind of permanent "test" to find out what our real priorities are.
Friday 17th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 11.18-30</li> <li>• Mt 6.19-23</li> </ul>		Today's Gospel also has a strong hint of <i>Quid Prodest</i> . The alternative is clear: either accumulate treasures on earth (prestige, power, money, welfare) or accumulate treasures in heaven (compassion, service, commitment). The heart always sticks with what we consider to be "our treasure."
Saturday 18th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 12.1-10</li> <li>• Mt 6.24-34</li> </ul>		Another alternative <i>Quid Prodest</i> : either the greater Godhead of Jesus or the lesser god of money. Jesus' questions help us to decide: Isn't life more worthwhile than food? Are you not worth more than the birds in the sky? The priority is always seeking the Kingdom and its justice. Everything else is secondary.
<b>Sunday 19th June</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jer 20.10-13</li> <li>• Rom 5.12-15</li> <li>• Mt 10.26-33</li> </ul>	<b>XII Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>	The body and soul are two ways for displaying the richness of an individual. Both can be attacked. Do not fear the destruction of the first, but do be aware of an attack on the latter because, what good is it to save the body and forfeit the life of the soul?

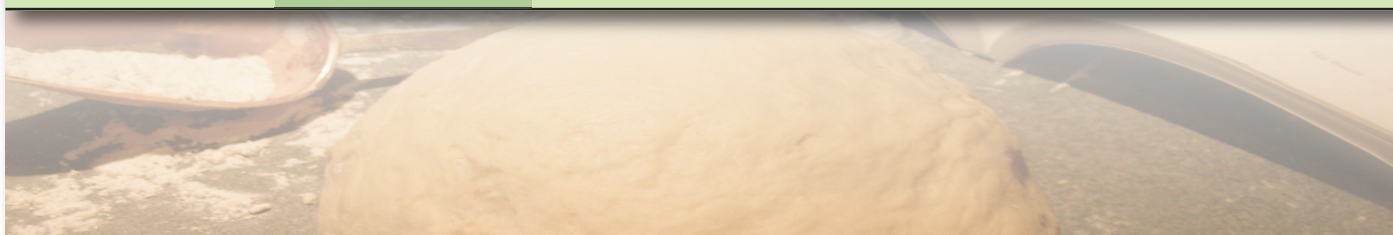


Monday 20th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 12.1-9</li> <li>• Mt 7.1-5</li> </ul>		Here are some <i>Quid Prodest</i> questions: What good is there in being very sharp in your criticism of others (people, the Church, the world) if you do not know yourself and you can't pinpoint your own inconsistencies? You can not grow and mature as a person and, therefore, not be able to help others improve.
Tuesday 21st June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 13.2-18</li> <li>• Mt 7.6-14</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Aloysius Gonzaga	The crossroad of life is presented today with the symbol of the two gates: the narrow one leads to life, the wide one, to spiritual ruin. What is Jesus saying? Do you apply to others the same criteria that you apply yourself?
Wednesday 22nd June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 15.1-18</li> <li>• Mt 7.15-20</li> </ul>		Sheep or wolf? Good or bad fruit? It is not about feigning anything but growing, putting down secure roots: "By their fruits ye shall know them."
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 16.1-16</li> <li>• Mt 7.21-19</li> </ul>	Pedro Mardones ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 179-185)	Another way to meditate on the experience of <i>Quid Prodest</i> : What good is it to be a pious person if, in fact, do not manage to put the Word of God into practice? What ensures the stability of a house is not its beautiful appearance but its solid foundations. Are you building on rock or sand?
Friday 24th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is 49.1-6</li> <li>• Acts 13.22-26</li> <li>• Lc 1.57-80</li> </ul>	Solemnity of the Birth of St John the Baptist	John the Baptist, "the greatest man born of woman", had its own <i>Quid Prodest</i> : he was able to give up a comfortable way of life and choose the path of penance. But, above all, he knew how to lower his own voice so that it would resound with the power of the Word.
Saturday 25th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 18.1-5</li> <li>• Mt 8.5-17</li> </ul>		The Roman centurion's faith (a pagan, foreigner and conqueror) touches Jesus' heart. People like him will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. What good is there in belonging to a church of ancient traditions when your own faith is weak?
<b>Sunday 26th June</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dt 8.2-3.14-16</li> <li>• 1 Cor 10.16-17</li> <li>• Jn 6.51-58</li> </ul>	<b>Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ</b>	We are what we eat and drink. Those who feed on junk food, end up being junk themselves, they lose their dignity. Those who feed on the body and blood of Jesus have eternal life. What you feed on yourself? On the other hand: What is the good of breaking the Eucharistic bread every day if you do not live in communion with the whole body of Christ?

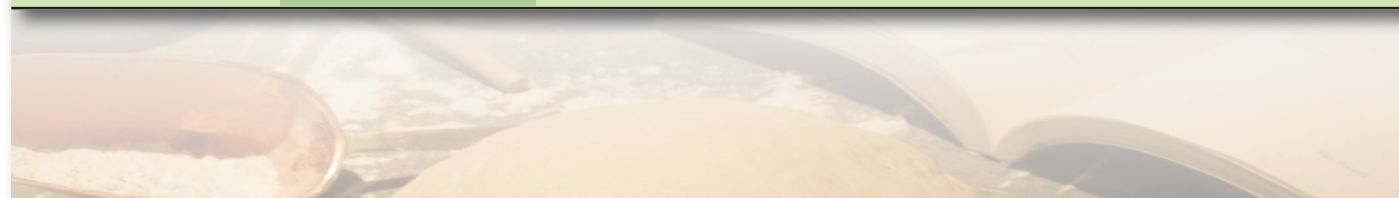




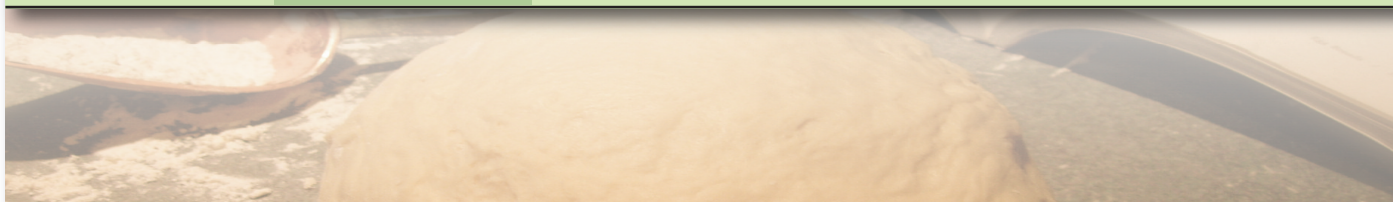
Monday 27th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 18.16-33</li> <li>• Mt 8.18-22</li> </ul>		On the "other side" one must choose between two different ways of understanding our discipleship of Jesus: comfort or poverty, old or new. In which direction does your heart lean?
Tuesday 28th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 19.15-29</li> <li>• Mt 8.23-27</li> </ul>		The problem is not that your boat of life (or that of the Church) seriously founders because of the storms. The problem is the lack of faith to believe that we can continue sailing if we trust in Jesus. What good is a pleasant crossing if it isn't the fruit of faith but of normal routine and comfort?
Wednesday 29th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts 12.1-11</li> <li>• 2 Tim 4.6-18</li> <li>• Mt 16.13-19</li> </ul>	Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, Apostles and co-patrons ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 187-194)	Peter does not depend on the faith of the people. He has his own personal experience. For that reason he dares to confess: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." His mission of being the "rock" is based on this confession. Do you think your lay or ordained ministry is also fed by a powerful experience of faith in Jesus as the Christ? What would be the purpose of operating without a soul? You are a witness, not just a public face.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 22.1-19</li> <li>• Mt 9.1-8</li> </ul>		Jesus heals the whole man: body and spirit. He can heal paralysis and forgive sins. As the Forge experience progresses, are you enjoying some holistic healing through contact with Jesus?
Friday 1st July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dt 7.6-11</li> <li>• 1 Jn 4.7-16</li> <li>• Mt 11.25-30</li> </ul>	Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	Which group do you belong to: to the group of the "wise" or the "small"? Only to those with a simple heart is revealed the mystery of the Father. The humble heart of Jesus is the resting place of those who are weary and burdened. Has this been your experience on your life's journey?
Saturday 2nd July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is 61.9-11</li> <li>• Gal 4.4-7</li> <li>• Lk 11.27-28</li> </ul>	Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	What purpose would have been served for Mary to have been the biological mother of Jesus if she had not completely accepted his Word? Being Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary means, above all, listening (like her) to the Word of God and fulfilling it.
<b>Sunday 3rd July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zec 9.9-10</li> <li>• Rom 8.9-13</li> <li>• Mt 11.25-30</li> </ul>	<b>XIV Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>	The messianic mission of Jesus is not based on power, but on humility: "It is just and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey" (Zec 9.9). Do you still believe that violence can change the hearts of people and evil in the world?



Monday 4th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 28.10-22</li> <li>• Mt 9.18-26</li> </ul>	Sometimes it is Jesus who touches others. Other times it is he who is touched by others. But he always transmits an energy that heals people. Do you let him touch you? Do you approach him to touch the "places" where he is to be found (the Word, the sacraments, the community, those in need ...)?
Tuesday 5th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 32.22-32</li> <li>• Mt 9.32-38</li> </ul>	Jesus feels compassion for people who walk about like sheep without a shepherd. He responds to their needs, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel and healing diseases. But the Kingdom needs more workers to continue his task. Are you one of them? Are you sent by the "Lord of the harvest"?
Wednesday 6th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 41.55-57, 42.5-7.17-24</li> <li>• Mt 10.1-7</li> </ul>	Jesus calls, trains, instructs and sends out the twelve disciples whose names are listed in the gospel. Do you think that through your life and your work, you are, like them, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is "at hand"? Do you feel a special desire to help the lost sheep?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 44.18.21, 45.1-5</li> <li>• Mt 10.7-15</li> </ul>	What we get for free we should give for free. What good is there in having so many ways of proclaiming the Gospel if you lose the very thing which makes it more attractive: it is cost-free? The end and the means should not be opposing forces.
Friday 8th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 46.1-7. 28-30</li> <li>• Mt 10.16-23</li> </ul>	Doves and snakes at the same time. Prudence and guile together. Still, the gospel preacher knows that sooner or later, he will be persecuted. What good is there in defending oneself at all costs if the only Defender is the Spirit of Jesus? The disciple is asked to persevere during challenging periods, not for defensive arguments.
Saturday 9th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gen 49.29-33, 50.15-24</li> <li>• Mt 10.24-33</li> </ul>	Where the Gospel is there is light, trust and courage. Where there is sin, darkness, fear and cowardice dominate. Do the words of Jesus help you to better know in which direction you're walking?
<b>Sunday 10th July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is 55.10-11</li> <li>• Rom 8.18-23</li> <li>• Mt 13.1-23</li> </ul>	<b>XV Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>  It is no use sowing the Word, even though generously, if the ground is not prepared to accept it. Do you think you live at a superficial level or are plagued by worries "of this world"? What does it mean to you to be "good soil" that produces fruit?



Monday 11th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 1.8-14.22</li> <li>• Mt 10.34 – 11,1</li> </ul>	Feast of St Benedict, abbot, patron of Europe. [Fr Philip Maroto, Superior General ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 211-215)]	What is the point of having peace that does not help you to make the right decisions? Jesus offers the only proper perspective: "Anyone who has found his life shall lose it and whoever loses it for my sake shall find it."
Tuesday 12th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 2.1-15</li> <li>• Mt 11.20-24</li> </ul>		Jesus has performed many signs for you, as he did in Characin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon. You are a consecrated person. Do you think you are responding with gratitude?
Wednesday 13th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 3.1-6.9-12</li> <li>• Mt 11.25-27</li> </ul>		Only the little people have the Father revealed to them. What is the point of being wise and smart in the eyes of the world if we miss the most important thing, if we do not catch sight of God's signs?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 3.13-20</li> <li>• Mt 11.28-30</li> </ul>		Any pressure that life imposes on us to follow Jesus is always infinitely lighter than the heavy loads that persuade us to follow our own tastes, views and interests. The "yoke" of Jesus is always a shared yoke.
Friday 15th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 11.10-12,14</li> <li>• Mt 12.1-8</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Bonaventure, bishop and doctor of the Church.	Rules are necessary for personal and social life. Compliance is often a source of security. But what good is there in being tied to them when they are not a channel of mercy? They become a new kind of slavery.
Saturday 16th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zec 2.14-19</li> <li>• Psalm 22.1-16</li> <li>• Eph 1.3-6.11-12</li> <li>• Mt 12.46-50</li> </ul>	Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. 162nd anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 217-224)	Claret found inspiration in the Word of God. As hard and dark the way is, never fear if the Lord is your shepherd: you will not be without. Mary experienced fear and doubts, but she trusted in the Word.
<b>Sunday 17th July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wis 12.13.16-19</li> <li>• Rom 8.26-27</li> <li>• Mt 13.24-43</li> </ul>	<b>XVI Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>	The wheat and tares grow alongside each other in the field of your life. Why would you want to remove all the chaff that is inside you if you run the risk of tearing out the wheat? The master of your life will know how to separate the two at the right time.





Monday 18th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 14.5-18</li> <li>• Mt 12.38-42</li> </ul>		Sometimes other voices are more seductive than that of Jesus himself, but he is greater than Jonah, Solomon, and all those who wish to show us the way.
Tuesday 19th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 14.21-31</li> <li>• Mt 12.46-50</li> </ul>		True fatherhood and true brotherhood are based on doing the will of the Father. Mary was a great woman because she was one of her Son's disciples.
Wednesday 20th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 16.1-5.9-15</li> <li>• Mt 13.1-9</li> </ul>		The word of God can be spoiled if it lands on the path, or on ground that is stony or full of thorns. But it always retains its power to transform the lives of those who embrace it. Do you have trust in it?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 19.1-20</li> <li>• Mt 13.10-17</li> </ul>		What do you gain if you have eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear? The gospel message is closed off to those who have hardened hearts. But it is full of light and life for those who seek with sincerity and humility.
Friday 22nd July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 5.14-17</li> <li>• Jn 20.1.11-18</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Mary Magdalene	Mary weeps and searches because they have taken her Lord away and does not know where they have laid him. Jesus reveals himself to her, calling out her name. When you feel that Jesus himself also "disappears" from your life, do you weep and search for him, or do you easily become accustomed to living as if he never existed?
Saturday 23rd July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 24.3-8</li> <li>• Mt 13.24-30</li> </ul>		The temptation to separate the wheat from the chaff can lead to tearing out the hidden good that is inside you. Do not think you should learn to live with your weakness and let God do the purifying?
<b>Sunday 24th July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Kings 3.5-12</li> <li>• Rom 8.28-30</li> <li>• Mt 13.44-52</li> </ul>	<b>XVII Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>	Hidden treasure, precious pearl, large fishing net. Three beautiful images for discussing the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Are you willing to sell what you have to buy what is more valuable? Do you think you are living the faith as the true treasure of your life?



Monday 25th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Cor 4.7-15</li> <li>• Mt 20.20-28</li> </ul>	Solemnity of St James the Apostle, co-patron of the Congregation ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 225-230)	We carry the grace of vocation in clay pots. We are called to be servants like Jesus and are seduced by the lure of prestige. What is the good of aspiring to be the first if you renounce your vocation to give your life on behalf of others?
Tuesday 26th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sir 44.1.10-15</li> <li>• Mt 13.16-17</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Joachim and St Anne, parents of the Virgin Mary	What makes us truly happy in life is the gift of faith. Many would like to believe but cannot. Did you find Mary as "a pilgrim of faith"? Do you feel attached to her on your own pilgrimage journey?
Wednesday 27th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 34.29-35</li> <li>• Mt 13.44-46</li> </ul>	Servant of God, Fr José María Ruiz, formator and martyr ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 231-236)	The treasure of the kingdom is not visible to the naked eye: it is "hidden." The pearl of the kingdom is not just one more amongst many others: it is a pearl "of great value." Are you still seeking the Kingdom but cannot see its fruits?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ex 44.14-36</li> <li>• Mt 13.47-53</li> </ul>	Servants of God Tomás Cordero and companions, martyrs ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 237-241)	The believer, like the good scribe, knows how to amalgamate the old and the new. How does it benefit you to be anxious about new trends if you lose touch with the value of tradition? What good is there in holding on to tradition if you close the door to renewal in the Spirit?
Friday 29th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prov 31.10-13.19-20.30-31</li> <li>• Lk 10.38-42</li> </ul>	Memorial of St Martha. [Servants of God Fr Cándido Casals and companions, martyrs ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 243-248)]	Do you feel, like Martha, "kept busy with many jobs"? What good is there in worrying about lots of things and being troubled, if you forget "what is most important"?
Saturday 30th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lev 25.1.8-17</li> <li>• Mt 14.1-12</li> </ul>		Jesus learns of the death of John the Baptist. The whim of an unjust king is responsible for the prophet's death. Jesus sees his death as heralding his own. He too will suffer the same fate. Do you perceive in your own life the risk of being faithful to the Gospel of Jesus in a world that often walks in different direction? ción?
<b>Sunday 31st July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is 55.1-13</li> <li>• Rom 8.35.27-39</li> <li>• Mt 14.13-21</li> </ul>	<b>XVIII Sunday of Ordinary Time</b>  [Memorial of St Ignatius Loyola, priest and co-patron of the Congregation ( <i>Calendario</i> , pp. 249-253)]	Jesus does not react angrily at the unjust death of John the Baptist. His own reaction is to feel compassion for people and feed them in abundance: "They all ate and everybody had enough." Are you willing to be fed by Jesus and help him in his task of distributing bread to the crowd?

## 4. For the community meeting

Since two Marian feasts are celebrated during this period, both of some significance in the life of the Congregation (the Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel) (cf. **Appendix 5**), it is appropriate that this year the community prepares and celebrates them with special attention. Where possible and appropriate, they should be celebrated in

conjunction with a nearby community. Don't forget the celebration of the novena to the Heart of Mary (cf. *Dir* 88) shared, whenever possible, with God's people. If there are special anniversaries of profession or ordination during this period, it would be important to give them the prominence they deserve.

### COMMUNITY MEETING

**1. Prayer:** "Surrender to the Heart of Mary" (*Spiritual Directory*, no. 23).

**2. Discussion on each person's experience during this phase:**

- How have I lived the last few weeks in general terms?
- What is my current relationship with Founder? (As a starting point, the exercise "My Images of Claret" could be shared).
- What is my relationship with the congregation like? What feelings are aroused in me by the fact of belonging to it?
- How does this affect the way I understand and live my mission as a Claretian?

**3. Discussion about life in the community:**

- What could we do to increase awareness concerning the figure of Claret?
- How can we better inform others about the life of the Congregation and to involve more people in it?

**4. Claretian Prayer** (*Spiritual Directory*, no. 33).



## 5. Guidance for spiritual direction

As the year progresses you have been able to chat with your director on several occasions. Maybe this time it would be good if you were to ask some other people who know you well (family, friends, colleagues, colleagues in the community and co-workers in your apostolic work) their opinions on some points:

- **How do they see you as a consecrated person?** What would they say to you about improving your quality of life as a religious?

- **How do they see you as a Claretian and member of the Congregation?** What do they like most and least? What do they suggest about how to better live out your identity and belonging to the Congregation?

They can answer these questions directly, in a conversation with you, or by letter, email, etc.

## 6. To go deeper

### Appendix I: CIRCULAR FROM FR GENERAL ON THE HEART OF MARY (1978)

Since its outset, the Congregation has gloried in having the Immaculate Heart of Mary in its title. We do not have any clear information on how or where our Founder got the idea of giving this title to his Congregation of Missionaries, but we know that he gave it the title with full premeditation. In his Autobiography he tells us that, some months before the founding, he revealed to his friends and consellers "my plan to form a congregation of priests who would both be, and be called, 'Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary'."

To grasp the full scope of this title one must enter deeply into the theology of the spiritual maternity of Mary as related to her Heart. But this is not enough. We must also become fully aware of the charismatic and vocational meaning our Founder attached to it. For him, sonship was essentially connected with mission and with the social lifestyle which the Son chose for Himself and the Twelve in proclaiming the Kingdom. The Mother of Jesus also assumed this lifestyle. Claret was continually discovering new aspects of his vocation being in various symbols of identity. In the vision of the Angel of the Apocalypse, the Sons of the Heart of Mary are identified with the Apostles who, like thunder, echo his prophetic voice, as they spread through the air and shake the whole earth. Our Founder defined a Son of the Heart of Mary as a missionary on fire with charity and, at the same time, completely conformed to the Son as the bearer of Good News. The early Congregation also understood the scope of our title in the same sense. In the "Prayer of the Congregation", which dates back to our origins, there was a petition that the Holy Spirit be sent upon each of those who had been called, "so that in worthily and fruitfully announcing the Gospel, we might be called and truly be Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary." There have been some Claretians – such as Brother Giol – who mystically ex-

perienced the intimacy of sonship, and others who have been enthusiastic propagandists to the devotion, still others who have delved into the theological and spiritual foundations of what it means to the Sons of the Heart of the Mother of the Total Christ. All of these living experiences must be integrated, as they were in our Founder, in the vocational "gift" in which sonship, fraternity, lifestyle and apostolic mission are inseparably and vitally fused.

As the Congregation continued to grow, it continued to experience the protection of Mary's maternal kindness, and the first addition it made to the first renewal of the Constitutions was to acknowledge the Heart of Mary as the Patroness of the Congregation. The Congregation experienced her protection early enough, in the revolution of 1868 and again, after a number of internal difficulties around the turn of the century, and it has continued during problems of adaptation in the Congregation's mission, during world and civil wars, during the latest ideological and vocation crises."

One consequence of having the Heart of Mary as our titular and principal Patroness was the desire to be able to celebrate her Feast day. The title - patron of a moral person does not enjoy the same privileges as the title - patron of a Church, and so it was necessary to obtain a pontifical indult to bring this about. Our Founder obtained this indult from Rome on May 22, 1862, as a Double of the First Class with Common Octave." It was, above all, a family feast, and the date chosen was one on which all the missionaries would be at home. St. Anthony Mary Claret went every year to Segovia in order to share in the feast with the community.

At the outset, the Missionaries enthusiastically lived out the "first fruits" of the Spirit; later, because of their great joy, but also, because of the sadness they felt at the first defections from their midst, felt obliged to

The forge in our daily life - *Quid Prodest* **27**

"profess" their common faith in the gift they had received from God. This expression took concrete shape in a special commitment to God and the Heart of Mary, for the object for which the Congregation was instituted, with the promise of living an apostolic life in accord with the Constitutions. The consecration was the first bond, together with the oath of permanence that gave the new Institute any stability." The consecration and

promise were made through the Superior in the presence of the Trinity, Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, "the Virgin and Mother of God and my Mother." Those who wished to do so reinforced this commitment with VOWS, although they were - in the juridical sense - non-public and quasi secret, as a precaution against the meddling of the civil government.

## Appendix II: CLARET'S WISHES IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

It is fascinating to look closely at Claret's "wishes" as they appear in the Autobiography: "Because I wanted to improve my knowledge of manufacturing techniques, I asked my father to send me to Barcelona" (56), "Nearly every time I went to confession I spoke to my director of my desire to enter the Carthusians" (88); "As the parish was not my final goal, I felt a deep desire to leave it and go to the missions in order to save souls, even if it meant undergoing a thousand labours and even death" (112), "Ever since I lost the desire to become a Carthusian - which God had used to uproot me from worldliness - I not only thought about becoming holy myself, but I was continuously trying to imagine what I could do to save the souls of my neighbours" (113), "My mind was set on going to Rome" (126), "My Lord and Father, I want nothing more than to know your holy will, so that I may do it" (136), "Another force that drives me to preach and hear confessions is my desire to make my neighbour happy" (213), "I know, my Father, that I do not love you as I ought, but I am quite sure that a day will come when I will love you as much as I desire to because you will grant me

the love I ask through Jesus and Mary" (445), "My constant desire to escape have kept me from envy and from setting my heart on the things the world holds dear" (622), "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" (641); "These words made a deep impression on me and filled me with a strong desire to be perfect" (674); "I should very much like permission to sleep fully clothed on a plank and not go to bed because my head feels heavy when I lie in bed" (cf. 757); "I have such a deep longing to leave Madrid and go out into the whole world that I can't tell you how much I suffer at not being allowed to do so; God only knows" (762) "But experience has taught me that tendencies, and desires are not conscience, and here we are talking exclusively of conscience" (848); "Early in October 1839, he went to Rome to offer his services for the foreign missions" (859).

## Appendix III: MEDITACIÓN ANTE EL CUADRO DE LA FUNDACIÓN (Gonzalo Fernández, CMF)

### The people

Two thirds of the picture is occupied by human figures. Jesus chose twelve. In the cell at Vic we look on at half that number: six. Two on the left, three on the right and, in the middle, standing with his right hand raised, Anthony Mary Claret. The number sounds very small. An expert in group dynamics would have advised one more person so that there would be a healthy atmosphere and greater productive efficiency. But this is where the following words are fulfilled: "many are called, but few are chosen."

Clotet notes that "once the will of God was known, Fr Claret called several priests together, and proposed the carefully prepared plan. Some of them accepted it, others however, either were not moved to follow him,

**28** Followers of Christ like Claret.



or some insurmountable obstacle prevented them." One thing is to have a desire and quite another to make the actual decision. Yesterday, today and forever.

The number issue is, moreover, a modern-day obsession. The truth subordinates the mathematics. As Mark Twain once said: there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.

They are all men. Despite their black attire and the severity of their faces, they all look young. Ranging from the 26 year old Jaime Clotet to the 41 year old Fr Claret. Not all of them were previously known to each other, although they all had met with Claret and were animated by his spirit. The painter has not been able to clearly define them as figures, which to us are only too well known.

In this depiction, it is somewhat difficult for us to recognize Antony Mary Claret, 41, a tireless missionary, Esteban Sala, 37, a learned, shrewd co-worker with Cla-



ret ("seniority is just a matter degree"); Manuel Vilaró, 32 years, a virtuous fellow missionary on the campaign in Tarragona; Domingo Fábregas, of the same age, a good man, invited at the eleventh hour; also including José Xifré, also 32 years old, energetic, enterprising, and a missionary; and Jaime Clotet, almost 27, a faithful and kind person. The latter had never dealt personally with the Founder, but knew him by sight and had heard of his zeal.

The eyes and hands give an insight to their attitudes. When we look upwards we see that none of them are looking at us. They are about their own business. Three seem to be looking towards Claret. One with the eyes half closed is gazing at the left hand of the Founder. In the background, with his back to the corner of the room, another is standing, looking into the distance.

There are also several pairs of hands. One is resting on the table. The one of the person on the left is holding his jaw. Some are crossed, others hold books. Only the Founder's hands seem to convey a clear message. The right hand points upwards: perhaps to heaven, perhaps to the Picture of Mary. The left hand is resting on the table and touches the papers.

And because we love deciphering codes, we venture to interpret it all. This comes from above ("Whoever is not born from above ..."), but it becomes reality in what we begin today ("God helps those who help themselves"). Or perhaps: "Look who is our Mother" (pointing to the picture). "this is who we are" (pointing to the pages where it has been written beforehand "A Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a man ...").

We detect a sense of calm, concern and restrained joy on their faces. We would have liked to see them smiling, but this was not the way men posed in the 19th century. A sense of gravity overcomes all other feelings. Or maybe the artist feels like a prisoner of the pictorial conventions of the time and fails to convey the vicissitudes of the soul. What matters is that they are together forming a pyramid

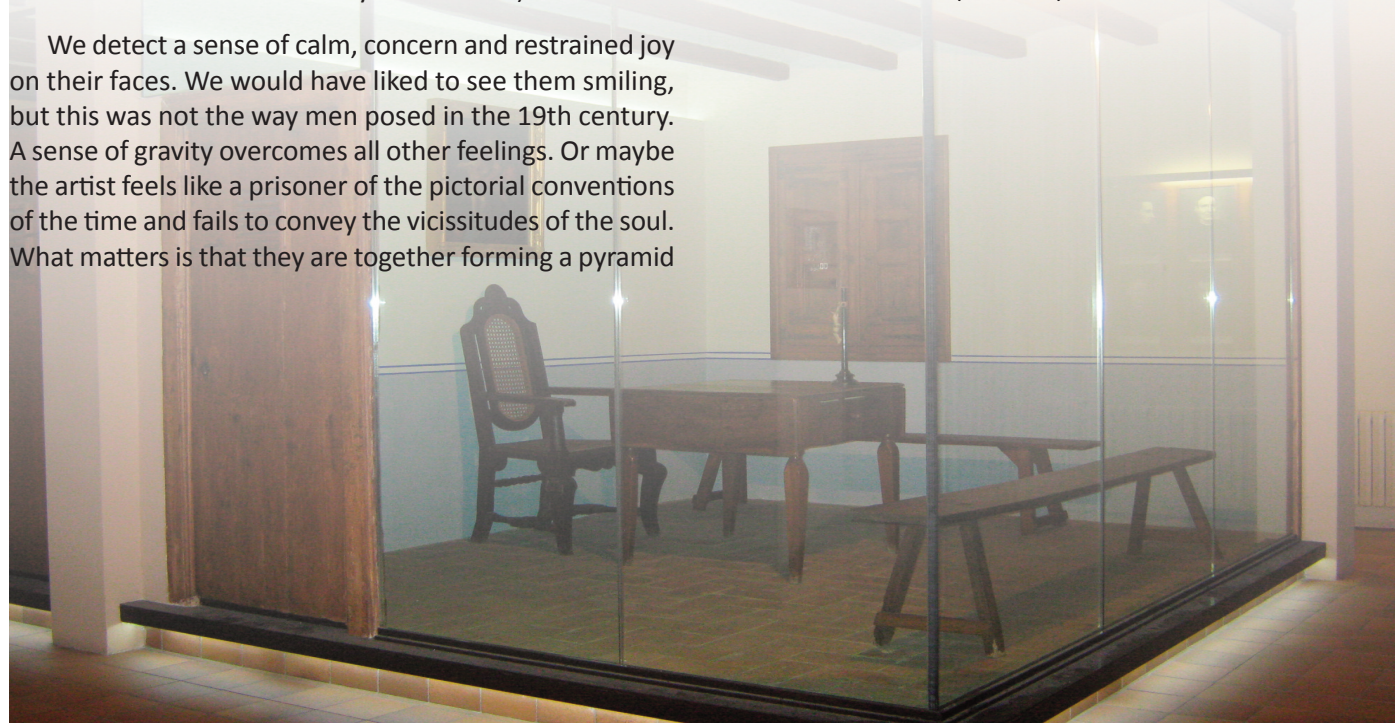
that projects vertically up towards the painting of the Virgin. Yes, together, united and not side by side. One appears to give encouragement, but you can see that it is a painting about all of them, even though the dominant perspective is from the left.



Our critical frame of mind is not quietened, however. What can these six poor secular priests do? We forget the key message of the First Letter to the Corinthians: "Brothers and sisters, look and see whom God has called. Few among you can be said to be cultured or wealthy, and few belong to noble families." (1 Cor 1.26 .) None of them has figured in the history of literature or philosophy. Their names are quite unknown to the vast majority. Maybe that's why the picture seems to be a mirror in which we can look at ourselves without shame.

Any of us could be sitting in the place of Manuel Vilaró: "God has chosen what the world considers foolish, to shame the wise; he has chosen what the world considers weak to shame the strong" (1 Cor 1:27). This team well deserves to smile: "To laugh at everything is fitting for a fool, but not to laugh at anything is the lot of the stupid" (Erasmus of Rotterdam). Humour is a demonstration. The root is gratitude.

Let's listen in. The six at the table are singing a capella, a genuine Claretian Magnificat: "My God, may you be blessed for condescending to choose your humble servants to be Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (Aut 492). Furthermore, there is a second part that says: "Most Blessed Mother, may the courtesy of your Immaculate Heart, in accepting us as your Sons, be praised a thousand times!" (Aut 493).





## Appendix IV: FROM THE 2009 CHAPTER DECLARATION “MEN ON FIRE WITH GOD’S LOVE”

**29.** We are, first of all, a gift of God. We want to respond to this gift personally and as a community. The General Chapter of 1979 has given us an accurate perspective: “We know that recovering our own Claretian identity, creating a true communion of life and apostolic action and achieving genuine availability for mission are not things that can be brought about by decree or by mere information or study, although these are certainly indispensable. What we must do is to resituate ourselves in the very centre of our vocation experience” (MCT 128). If we listen anew to the call of God and allow him to guide our interior processes, we will live our vocation with renewed meaning and joy.

**30.** In the history of salvation many who have been called have transmitted and expressed their vocation in stories and symbols. Claret summarised his call and that of his companions in his “definition of the missionary” A Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a man on fire with love, who spreads its flames wherever he goes. He desires mightily and strives by all means possible to set everyone on fire with God’s love. Nothing daunts him; he delights in privations; welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, rejoices in all the torments and sorrows he suffers, and glories in the cross of Jesus Christ. His only concern is how he may follow Christ and imitate him in praying, working, enduring and striving constantly and solely for the greater glory of God and the salvation of humankind”. Today this “definition of a missionary” is the final part of the Fundamental Constitution (cf. CC 9) as an expression of our identity in the Church.

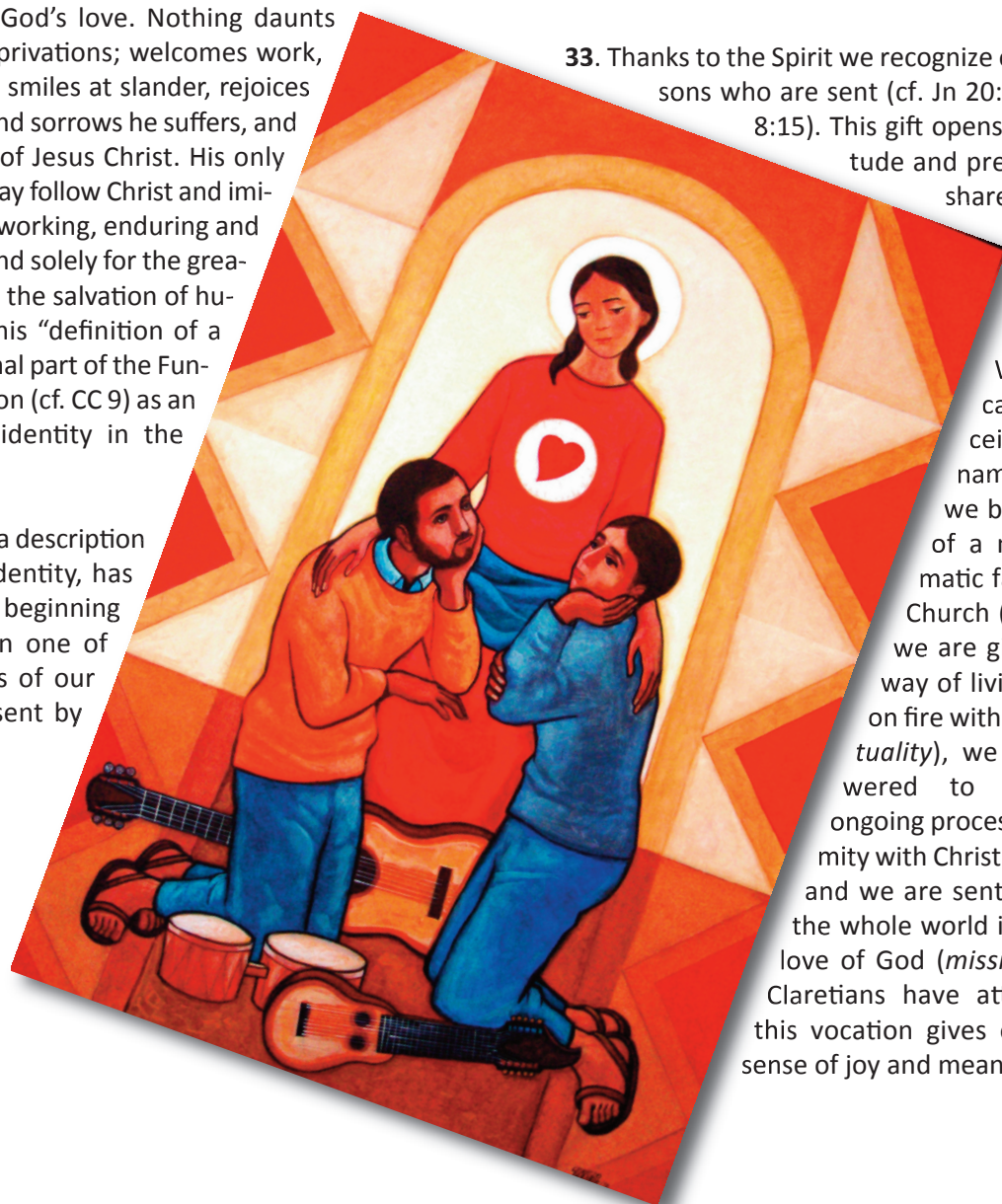
**31.** This ‘definition’, a description of the missionary identity, has been from the very beginning of our Congregation one of the best summaries of our spirituality. It was sent by

Claret to Fr. Xifré with the desire that all the missionaries carry it around with them. The first generations of Claretians were very much aware of the definition. Its contents have inspired Superior Generals and illuminated many important texts of the Congregation, especially those dealing with formation. In 1888 it held a central position in one of the first texts on the formation of novices. A century later, it forms the title-page of the General Plan of Formation.

**32.** To live the call to evangelize more fervently, we need to remember who we are and to whom we belong. Returning to the “definition of the missionary” helps us to eliminate the ashes of routine and weariness, rekindles the burning embers of our vocation, and renews the enthusiasm we need to be “on fire”, “to spread the flames” and “to set everyone on fire with God’s love.” The “definition of the missionary” leads us to the core of a fulfilled human and Christian life: love.

**33.** Thanks to the Spirit we recognize ourselves as sons who are sent (cf. Jn 20:21-23; Rom 8:15). This gift opens us to gratitude and prepares us to share freely that

which has been freely given to us. With this vocation we receive a new name (*identity*), we become part of a new charismatic family in the Church (*belonging*), we are gifted with a way of living as “men on fire with love” (*spirituality*), we are empowered to follow an ongoing process of conformity with Christ (*formation*) and we are sent to light up the whole world in this same love of God (*mission*). Many Claretians have attested that this vocation gives one’s life a sense of joy and meaning.



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# The Forge in our daily life

*Quid Prodest - 2011*

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claretian missionaries