

MESSAGE TO THE CONGREGATION

Nairobi 16 September 2022

Querida Congregación, *ijambo!*

The Nairobi 2022 meeting comes to an end. It has been two weeks of intense daily living together, both spiritually and in terms of dialogue and discernment. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the brothers of the Independent Delegation of St. Charles Lwanga for their efforts in organizing, hosting and assisting in the smooth running of this meeting. The place chosen, the house of the Religious of Dimesse in Nairobi, was a perfect choice; with a gracious heart towards the sisters, we noticed that we did not lack smiles, small gestures, a spirit of work and dedication, silence and room to meet and walk together.

As the pandemic began, the Lord summoned us to the South, and we gathered in Talagante (2020 Chile) to prepare the 26th General Chapter based on the Emmaus image: walking with Jesus, asking Him and asking ourselves questions, discerning roots and fruits, conversing and betting on missionary daring as a challenge on the road ahead. And the chapter journey, transformed and illuminating amid COVID-19, arrived between conversations at Nemi, at the gates of Rome, where we celebrated the Chapter, still in the uncertainty of a pandemic that seemed to have no easy remedy.

“Querida Congregación” is the fruit and spirit of that General Chapter; it is not only an exhortation, but it is also an expression of thanksgiving for the charism received; we are Missionaries in a congregation that, with our stumbling blocks, wants to live, rooted and audacious, from the tenderness of God as Mary of Nazareth lived, Wholeheartedly.

And the conversation did not end in Nemi, but resonates in all the Organisms and continues in a fraternal dialogue in a shared mission that has taken us to Nairobi, Kenya, a step away from the Equator where South and North meet and discover that they are one. Africa is life, energy, rhythm, spirituality, hospitality, effort, a road to be traveled; its colors, its nature, its people... How different is Africa today from the one to which the Claretian Missionaries went during the first expansion (Algiers, Equatorial Guinea)!

Dear brothers, at the center of this meeting was the 2022-2027 Action Plan of the General Government. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, so we present three biblical icons at the end of this meeting that we believe continue the road to Emmaus with which we began the march more than two years ago:

The vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-8)

This first icon was proposed at the initial retreat of the encounter, and is a good reflection of the congregational transformation process “adorers of God in the Spirit”. If our Claretian branch is not united to the vine of the Lord, our effort is in vain and, as the allegory says, we will not bear fruit.

We are heirs of a rich charismatic humus with numerous stories of fidelity and vocational audacity, among them those of many Claretian Brothers who lived and live their Claretian identity in closeness to the people of God and are an existential counterpoint to clerical attitudes that still exist among us. We want to live a spirituality that is centered on the Word, life and promise of God’s dream for humanity, and is Cordimarian: The strong woman with a tender heart.



We are committed to an integral and holistic education that recognizes and accepts, without fear, the challenges that interculturality and new worldviews present. We believe in a culture of ongoing formation, a never-ending history of dialogue with our charismatic sources, with theological knowledge and the human sciences. Ongoing formation is the nourishing sap that runs through the entire congregational tree, from the roots to the leaves and fruits; without this internal circulation, the tree ends up getting sick and does not bear the fruits it should.

The Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4)

This picture has accompanied our encounter in the meeting room from the very beginning. We believe that this biblical image of the Samaritan woman at the well, in a salvific dialogue with Jesus while the disciples are searching for daily food, is a living image of our second transformation process: A community of witnesses and messengers. The apostolic community shares everything and seeks together the

necessary resources for its mission with generosity, in solidarity and always at the service of the mission entrusted to it. The conversation at the well presents us with a community whose mission is also a testimonial one (EN 41), always open to welcome and listen without prejudice to everyone, even to those with whom, as with Jesus and the Samaritan woman, we do not always share the same ideas.

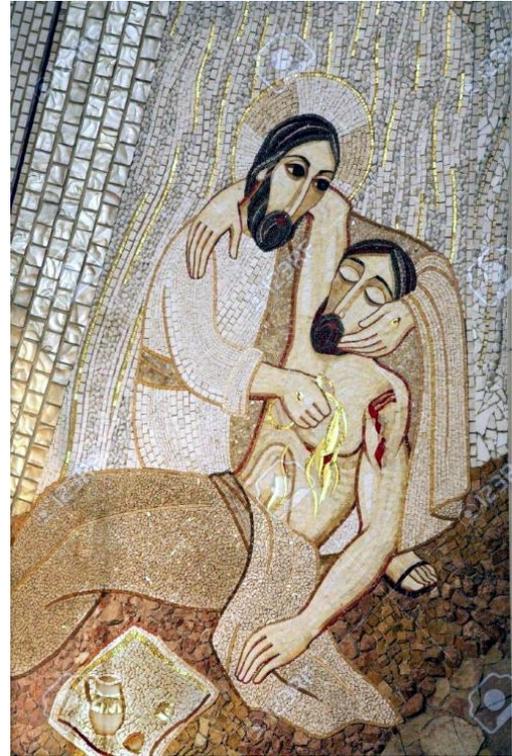
The community is also the home of the Spirit where we pray for one another, for those who have left us, for those who are struggling in the mission and for those whom the Lord is already calling to follow him according to the Claretian charism.



The road to Jericho (Lk. 10:30-37)

If the road to Emmaus invites us to the conversion of faith and to believe in the Risen One, the road to Jericho is a call to conversion of heart, to believe in our capacity to look with compassion, like Jesus, seeking to transform the world and inviting others to join efforts in shared mission, especially with our brothers and sisters of the Claretian Family.

We are missionaries, we are a Congregation going forth, anchored in the Word, communicating the good news of the Gospel to the world by all possible means. We are a Congregation that has been incarnating our charismatic richness in the diverse ecclesial, social and cultural realities that we have encountered throughout almost 175 years of history; a great work that was born in a small cell in a corner of Catalonia (Vic) and today has 521 communities in 71 countries.



We have been invited to look at our congregational organization as a constellation, so as to better visualize the relationships, networks and synergies that articulate our life and mission that are at the service of the Kingdom in synodal communion with a church of diverse faces.

We thank once again the Independent Delegation of St. Charles Lwanga for their dedication, and also all those behind the scenes who have made it possible for this meeting to take place and reach each of the communities that embody our life and mission.

Dear brothers, the synodal journey from Talagante to Nairobi has been long and rich, but it does not end here. We will soon return to our organisms and communities with the desire to share this rich experience to continue walking together to realize the dream. May the horizon of the celebration of the 175th anniversary of our foundation be a true experience of enlightenment and grace, conscious that it is the Lord who guides our steps.

We entrust the fruit of this synodal journey to the Heart of Mary, so that she may accompany us, comfort us in our weariness and encourage us to be rooted and daring like our Founder and our martyrs.

Asanteni Sana