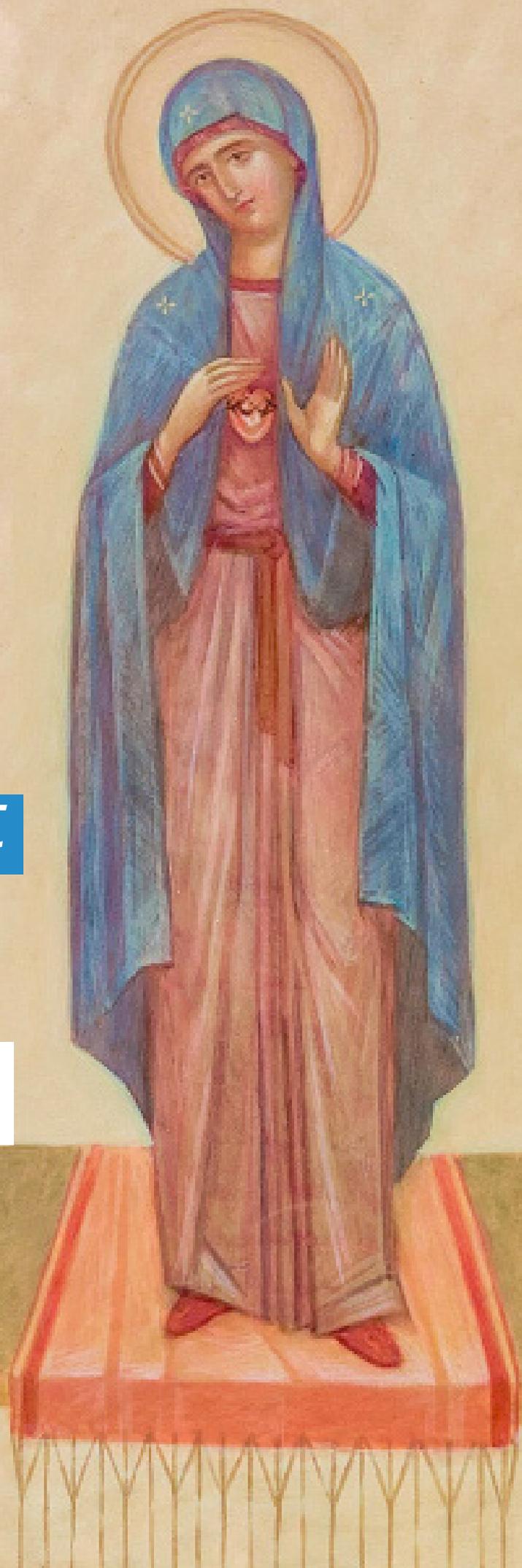


Novena
to the Heart
of Mary

YEAR 2023



Heart of Mary and life in synodality

Introduction

The theme of last year's novena to the Heart of Mary was centered on "the confession of God", which is the first Cordimarian aspect highlighted in the capitular declaration "*Querida Congregación*"; for this reason, we dedicate ourselves to meditate and pray with the hymn of the Magnificat. This year, we interrupt the deepening of the sequence of those traits to dedicate ourselves to contemplating the Heart of Mary as inspiration in the synodal path that we are following as the People of God.

This novena revolves around the three dimensions that appear in the theme of the XVI Synod of Bishops: "For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission." In this hour of synodality we have been summoned to "walk together", to "do with others", and to find ourselves with the deep desire to contribute to the renewal of the Church. This new ecclesial season and this novena in memory of the Heart of Mary offer us another opportunity to continue opening and making paths. From the vocation received we want to continue responding in communion to the challenges of the moment in which we have had to live.

The scheme of the novena has four parts. In the introductory part we find a monition, a song (each community can choose the most convenient one), a greeting and the opening prayer. The second focuses on the proclamation of a biblical text, followed by a brief moment of contemplative silence. The third, entitled “We meditate with Mary”, offers some brief reflections on the theme of the novena and complementary texts (either from the writings of Fr. Claret or from other authors), which can illuminate what is reflected. In the last part, you will find the prayers, the Our Father, the concluding prayer, the blessing and the final song. Each community can use this material as best suits it, trying to accommodate it to its needs



First day

A COMMUNITY UNIFIED BY VIRTUE AND TO THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

1. Opening monition

Mary lives the communion with God. She is called “icon of the Trinity” because the relationships of love in the heart of God are reflected in her heart. And Mary lives the communion of the Saints: she is the woman of the new heart, a heart for communion. Origen was telling, “where there is sin, we disassociate in multitude, there appear divisions, schisms, heresies and arguments and where virtue is found by the work of the Spirit, there is union”. Mary is innocent and totally holy. As the Spirit, the admirable constructor of the unity dwells, she fosters unity and she could be called “mother of unity”. Let us feel especially united to her, whose love and union we want to express during these days.

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Father and Mother, as we prepare ourselves to celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, you are calling us to work for the unity among us following your example of the Most Holy Trinity. As Mary accompanied the apostles in the upper room to receive the Holy Spirit and come out with one mind and heart, make us also to constantly respond to your call to value the presence of your Son Jesus in each one of us and thus remain united always to be his witness in our surroundings. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. ‘It is’ he had said ‘what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’

So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and

John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1: 4-5.12-14).

Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

Pentecostal experience is both Trinitarian as well as Marian for the Christian community. It is trinitarian because of the Father’s promised one, the Holy Spirit, as per the guidance of Jesus. It is Marian because of the presence of Mary’s accompaniment of the apostles and disciples. Their waiting for the Father’s sending of the Holy Spirit was a communitarian act by praying (Acts 1:14) and studying the Scriptures together (Acts 1: 15-22). This shows the importance of the spiritual unity and resolve in accomplishing missionary vocation of the Church as Jesus prophesied it. The prayer of Jesus to the Father for the unity of his disciples (Jn 17:21) is realized by the Holy Spirit who gathers all people to be one community as it took place when St. Peter preached to the people of different cultures and nations on the day of Pentecost. As the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in unity, we are called to build our communities in unity and become his witnesses remaining one in Christ without any distinction among us (Gal 3:28).



This call for the unity among us in the image of the Trinity reminds us the facts of divisions among us based on social, religious, geographical, economical differences. The pride stands in the first place that creates these divisions. The different gifts of the Holy Spirit challenge us to fight against our egoistic tendencies of widening the gap between us. Our differences are positive when they are used as complementing obligations to build up our communities.

Mary's accompaniment of the apostles and disciples is another means to strengthen our fraternal knots. She prepared the members of the upper room with her example. As they were preparing themselves to welcome the Holy Spirit in their lives, Mary became their model to be persons of prayer and listening of the Word. St. Luke depicts in his gospel Mary as the one who lived from her heart by treasuring and pondering the God's actions there (Lk 2:19.51).

It means that She did not forget the "great things" God was doing in her life and on the contrary, she was remembering and ruminating them. Thus, she taught to the community of the upper room to study Word God from the heart and fill it with its resoundings. The result is seen in St. Peter's preaching before and after the coming of the Holy Spirit. They were full of proves about fulfilment of God's promises in Jesus Christ. The urgent need for us today is that we be the ardent listeners of the Word. It means that we should have the Word of God in our hearts so that our hearts are for the Word of God.

This was the experience of our first missionaries in Vic witnessed by a Dominican Priest from the monastery of San Domenec in that town when they were going out for the ministry of the Word. He witnessed that our missionaries looked as if they were going out of the upper room full of fire for the Word of God when they went out to preach. It was community modelled after the Holy Trinity.

4. Complementary texts

"O Mary, my Mother and my hope, consolation of my soul and object of my love, consider all the graces for which I have asked you in the past, all of which you have granted me. Shall I find that this ever-flowing stream has only now gone dry? No, no, it has never yet been heard, nor shall it ever be, that anyone who turns devotedly to you has ever yet been turned away. My Lady, you can see that all these things I ask you are for the greater glory of God and you, and for the good of souls. Hence I hope to obtain them and I know I shall obtain them. That you may grant this all the sooner, I do not offer you my merits, for I have none to offer. Rather I shall say that, since you are the Daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the Son of

God, and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, it is most becoming that you be filled with zeal for the honor of the Blessed Trinity, whose loving image man's soul is--an image, furthermore, that has been washed in the blood of God made man" (Aut 162).

5. We pray together

We offer our prayers, God our Father, through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, the model of the trinitarian unity in our communities:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- *Fill us with the zeal to respond to the love of the Father...*
- *Lead us to love one another as Jesus loves us...*
- *Make us generous by living the gifts of the Holy Spirit...*
- *Lead us to work for the unity in our communities and in the Church...*
- *Give us the heart that ruminates your life-giving words...*

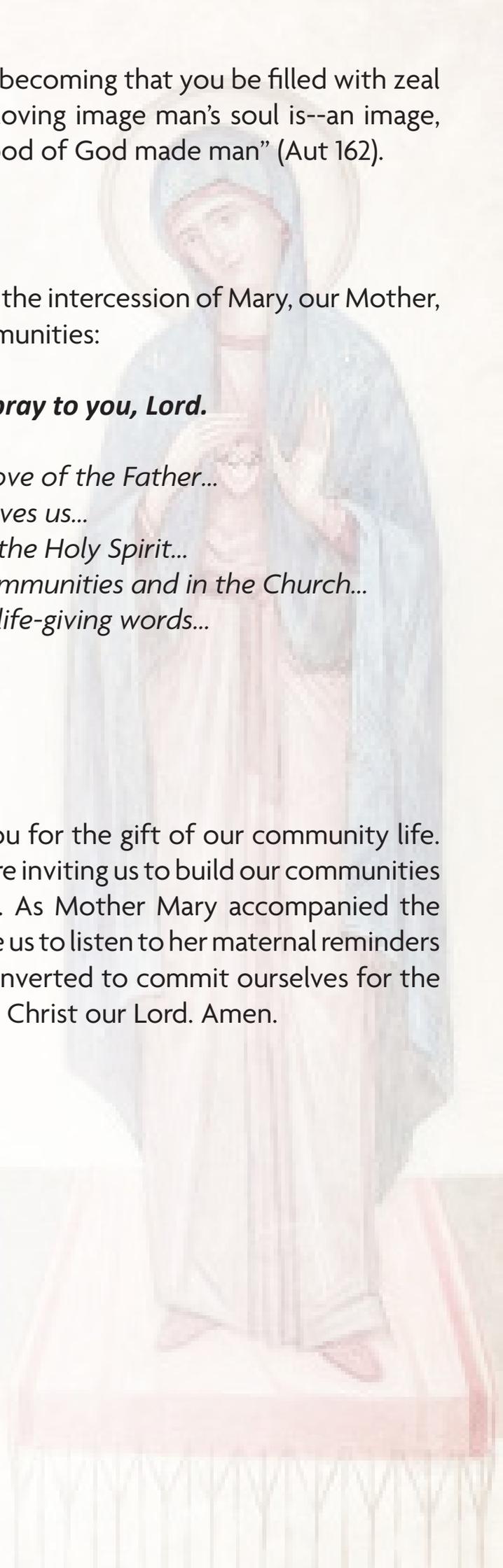
Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, we whole heartedly thank you for the gift of our community life. Through different gifts of the Holy Spirit you are inviting us to build our communities by complementing each other in our needs. As Mother Mary accompanied the community of the Apostles and disciples, make us to listen to her maternal reminders to ruminate your life giving words and get converted to commit ourselves for the unity among us. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Blessing

An apt Marian hymn



1. Opening monition

We are Church, not an aggregated ones or collection of individuals. If we have God as Father, it is impossible not to have the Church as mother; If we belong to the Lord, we are to be members of his ecclesial body; If we are temple of the Spirit, we are to be of the creature in the Spirit which is the Church. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. We share history, life, a way of looking at the world and occupy it, one hope for the time and beyond the time, joys, sorrows, sadness and cared. We walk together towards the fullness which we call kingdom of God.

Mary belongs to the people of Israel and she does not get away from it; she feels interior of its history and tradition and participates in its hopes. She was part of the of YHWH, but was away from the sectarian spirit seen among the «poor» of Qumran. We see her integrated in the primitive Christian community; and we recognize her as member, type, example and mother of the Church: she has the ecclesial soul. Her heart is not this arrogant heart that feels proud of its own justice and gives thanks to God not being like other men (Lk 18,11). She knows herself that she is a humble handmaid in whom God has placed his gaze that beautifies her.

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer

Merciful God our Father, as we have gathered to meditate on our call to be Church, we thank you for your call to be part of this sacrament of salvation. Through this you are calling to be born anew in the Spirit and Water and worship you in truth and Spirit. You are strengthening in our fraternal life amidst differences and difficulties. Pour on us your Spirit to be a community centred in the Word of God and Eucharist, so that we may be able to go out and bear witness of your compassionate love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not

for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body" (1Cor 12: 12-20).

Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

We are called to be Church by our new birth in the Water and Spirit and thus we undergo the experience of dying to sin, being buried with Christ to raise again with him. This is how we are reminded to be new creatures in Christ. How do we live this experience in our daily life?

As we are Church, our call is to worship the Father in truth and Spirit transcending the attachments to rituals and rubrics. As the first Christian community gathered every day for the breaking of bread and listening to the Word of God, today we are called to examine our worship of God in truth in Spirit through the Eucharist and Word of God.

Our way of being Church, we are called constantly to participate in the Mission of God. Each one of us are invited to build up the Church from our gifts received from the Holy Spirit and in this way, we respond to the Mission of God. It is not multiplying the



Institutions of our ministries, but it is charismatising the institutions with God's mission. How do we strike balance between our institutional attitudes and gospel attitudes?

Our commitment to be Church leads to go beyond the worldly attitudes and put on Christ. Our temptations to get struck with this world and its passions, blind out vision of being the witness of the word. Our attachment with this world goes against our call to be Church. Mary, our Mother, was a pilgrim transcending the worldly attitudes, discovered her God who is always with the poor and marginalized. Our call to be Church is a grace to fix our eyes on the Kingdom of God by going away from our worldly attachments and attitudes.

4. Complementary texts

“Tomorrow's Church will be small, and to a great extent it will have to start from the beginning. It will no longer be able to fill many buildings built in times of splendour. Along with the number of faithful, he will lose many of his privileges in society. It will be presented above all as a community to which one enters only by voluntary decision. As a small community it will require much more initiatives from its members. It will surely take new forms in its ministry and will ordain professionally proven Christians as priests...It will be a Church of a deeper spirituality...But from that more spiritual and simple Church will come a great strength. Because the men of a completely planned world will suffer from an unspeakable loneliness. When God disappears from their lives, they will experience their total and terrible poverty. Thus, they will discover the small community of believers as something completely new, as a hope, as an answer that they were always looking for in the occult” (Prof. Joseph Ratzinger, 1969).

5. We pray together

Let us present our needs to be Church through intercession of the Heart of Mary, mother and disciple in our Church:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- Grant good health and wisdom to our Holy Father Pope Francis...
- Lead our bishops and priests to be committed to their call to be Church...
- Strengthen our laity in their struggles of daily life to be your witnesses in this world...
- Help all the families to grow in their commitment to be a church in their family situations...

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Prayer: God, our loving Father, open our hearts and minds to be aware of your call to be united as one Church. Help us to recognize in each of us the presence of your Son to fulfil his call to live and work for your Kingdom on earth. Formed in the Forge of the Heart of Mary, help us to have a loving, listening and mystical heart to love one another tenderly and to pay attention with care and concern and remain united with you always. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



Third day

WE ARE PEOPLE ON MARCH: WALKING TOGETHER

1. Opening monition

We are not a community accommodated in this world and shaped to it, nor an erratic group without direction. As people on march, we are companions of the way. We go towards God. He is our destination and direction of all creation.

Mary practices the «walking together» each year as she goes in the caravan to go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the great Pascal feast and on the way back she joins the group that returns to Nazareth (cf. Lk 2:41-44); after this Jesus carries out the inaugural sign of his ministry in Cana, mother goes down with him with his brothers and disciples to Capharnaum (Jn 2:12). Mary practices the «being together»: after the Pasqual feast, we find her in the upper room along with the disciples, with some women and with the brothers of Jesus (Acts 1:14). This heart that keeps in step with the march of the walking group and that participates in the rhythm of the domestic life is master in the art of living together.

Hymn.

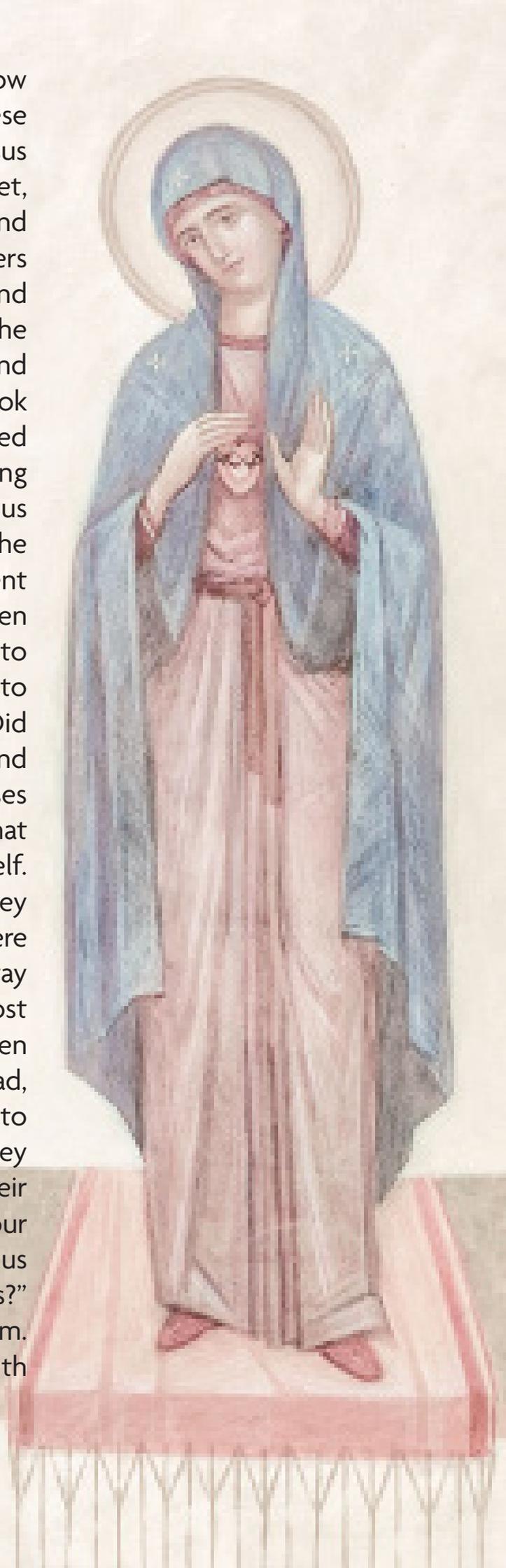
Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Father and Mother, we thank you for calling us to walk with you and with our brothers and sisters. Ever since you called your people for your mission, you started walking with them strengthening and guiding them. As you made the Hebrews to see your wonders and providence in your journey with them, you are filling us with your pleasant surprises. As you taught them to listen to your guidance, you are teaching us to discover your will and obey it. Increase in us the faith to believe that you are accompanying us always and never we are lone. Open our eyes to recognize you in our communities while sharing your Word and Eucharist. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the

only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” “What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.” He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together” (Lk 24: 13-33). .



Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

The synodal Church reminds us always that we are not alone. We are accompanied by Jesus and his disciples. Therefore, we say that the Christian salvation is always community oriented. All are to be saved. The Church on the march constantly reminds us to recognize this accompaniment and increase our faith in the invisible presence of our Lord. At the outset we seem to take for granted this mysterious presence, but later we are amazed at this reality manifested through persons, events and realizations. Those who seek Jesus end up telling that it is he who is in search of us than the individual. This mysterious walking of God with us makes us to be thankful for the gift of faith to be strengthened in the moments of darkness.

This walking together leads us for an encounter. Abraham encountered God and saw his promise being fulfilled in him. The exodus and exile experiences of the people of Israel shows how their meeting with God led them for freedom and spiritual maturity. Mary's move to meet Elizabeth has brought to us her Magnificat that shows her liberating God. Her return to Jerusalem with St. Joseph revealed their son to be totally involved with the affairs of his Father. This makes us to examine ourselves whether our journey with God is lived as an encounter of an I and You experience.

Our walking with God leads us to listen to him closely. God speaks to us daily. Mary was moved to listen in the wedding feast the need of wine and bring joy to all gathered there. The disciples of Emmaus experienced in their listening to Jesus the melting of their hearts by his convincing words. The mere presence and expressions of people force us to read their minds and listen to them. Thus, the synodal call to listen to one another on our walking together questions our desire for spending time with people to listen to them patiently and discern their needs and our response.

4. Complementary texts

“Another very effective way of doing good is taking part in familiar conversations with people. A great many benefits can be accomplished by this means! Among the early Jesuits there was a lay brother who went shopping every day, and as he made his rounds, the conversations he held with people were so effective that he converted more souls than any other missionary. I read this story as a student and liked it so much that I have followed the same practice as often as circumstances have permitted” (Aut 334).

“While I was traveling I would strike up a conversation with those who chanced to join me about the various things we saw. If I happened to see some flowers, I would

point to them and remark that, as these plants produced beautiful and fragrant flowers, we should produce virtues. The rose, for example, teaches us love, the lily symbolizes purity, the violet, humility, etc. We must, as the Apostle says, be bonus odor sumus Christi Dei in omni loco. If I saw a tree laden with fruit, I would remark that we, too, should bear the fruit of good works, so not to end up like the two fig trees in the Gospel. If we passed by a river, I would say that the running water reminds us that we are passing on toward eternity. If we heard birds singing or music being played, I would refer to the new and everlasting song of heaven, etc. I have personally witnessed the great value of conversations like these; their effect was like that of the conversation Christ held with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. I also found that they had the further advantage of avoiding useless talk and grumbling” (Aut 336).

5. We pray together

Let us present our needs to be Church through intercession of the Heart of Mary, who walks with us always:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- Bless all those who accompany us in all our initiatives with good health, joy and peace...
- Gives us the generosity to spend time with the persons who share their life with us and make our encounter a place of mutual trust and respect...
- Grant us the wisdom to perceive the inner struggles of our brothers and help them to come out of it...
- Increase in us the faith that you walk with us always and commit ourselves generously for the cause of the Kingdom...
- Make our conversations fruitful and make way for deliberation and discernment...

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for making us to be aware of your journey with us. You walk with us, your children, holding our hands to go in a right path. You are listening to our groanings and longings and come to our rescue always. As you listen to us, make us to listen to one another and make our search for truth is deep and committed. As Mary our Mother accompanied the apostles, help us to allow ourselves to be accompanied by her. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.

1. Opening monition

The Church is not a theatre hall where some are actors and others are spectators. We are co-responsible: the present and future of the faith, ecclesial life and mission concern all. We are not an amorphous mass; the Church has a structure: in it there are different ministries and charisms. To live as Church means a choral participation.

Mary belongs to the poor of YHWH. They totally trust in God, but they are not passive and apathetic subjects. She lived her belonging to the People of the Covenant from her very personal identity and vocation. God was not in need to snatch her yes with forceps to the incarnation; she neither went away won over and as one taken dragged to the mountains of Judea, «The grace of the Holy Spirit ignores the slowness in the effort» (Saint Ambrose) is a grace that carries in the air. With her journey and Magnificat, Saint Augustine's watchword fulfilled: «Sing and journey». It is the watchword of a synodal people: «Walk, People of God».

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Father and Mother, we thank you for your gifts poured on our community members. Every gift is a manifestation of your love. Verities of gifts enrich our communities beautiful and blissful. Showering on us your gifts you are inviting us to carry out their corresponding ministries to witness your love for us. By sharing our gifts with one another you are calling us to work for the unity in the Church. Give us your grace to discover your gifts and develop them in our life, thus we will move from our selfishness to community-oriented life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“Here are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of

tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines” (1Cor 12:4-11).

Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

We are a community built on the charisms received from the Holy Spirit. We live them in our daily life. That’s why our communities are supposed to be vibrant and committed. We live from our charisms. As various gift placed together for the common cause, our communities are called to be charismatically rich and interpersonally beautiful. Starting from our vocation, we discover verities of gifts like evangelical counsels, community living, pastoral involvements, etc. They all manifest how we put them into practice, how some are not discovered and how some are not utilized due to different reasons. It is good to ask ourselves whether we live from our charisms or not.

Practicing the gifts of Holy Spirit takes place in our communities and ministries. Holy Spirit gives his gifts as he wills and so it is not our effort. That’s why they are purely gifts from his generosity and goodness. This generosity forces us to be generous in living them with our brothers and sisters. The more we put it into practice the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the more they will be developed. One charism will lead us to discover many charisms. Our community living is joyful when we involve in its dynamisms from our charismatic gifts which stand always as source of our strength to withstand the challenges. Living the life of consecration from the charismatic gifts calls us to examine source of our joy in our missionary life.



Mary was filled with the power of Holy Spirit and so she was “full of grace”. Her motherhood of God, life as the handmaid of the Lord, unconditional surrender to God’s will, discipleship to listen to the Word, availability to the people in need (Lk 1:39-56; Jn2: 1-12), strong hope in her God (Lk 1:49-55), mystical pondering of the presence of God in her heart (Lk 2:19.51) and animation of the community of the apostles to receive the Holy Spirit are the gifts she was living in her life. She is inviting us to build our communities as witnesses of our gifts from God.

Father Claret is our model of discerning and discovering our gifts. He discerned his vocation for the Word from his particular life situations. His discerning spirit made his evangelizing charism as a man to fight the evils of the society. He was gifted to listen the voice of his Master for the mission in his reading and praying the Word of God.

The gift of healing he lived is a proof for his docility to the Spirit of God. His observation of the society and the effect of his writings made him to realize that he had the gift of teaching. His commitment to sit at the feet of the Lord to prepare his sermons and commitment to the habit of reading led him to be convinced of his gift of mission preaching. His different efforts to preach the Word God led him to discover his charism to be Founder. His concern and solidarity for the socially marginalized ones highlight his life overflowing with the life giving power of God’s gifts. In this way our Father Claret stands as an example to keep alive our evangelizing spirit with different gifts of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts.

4. Complementary texts.

“The gifts of the Spirit, more than making us better than others, charge us to serve our brothers and sisters. A charisma is more than a talent or a personal quality. It is a grace, a gift that God gives through the Holy Spirit: not because someone is better than others, but rather, so that he puts it at the service of others with the same gratitude and love with which he has received it. [...] The multiple gifts of the Holy Spirit enliven and enrich the Body of Christ” [...].

The diversity of these gifts “invites us to share them generously for the good of all and never to let them become a source of division.” “Diverse charisms and gifts with which the Father fills the Church are to grow in harmony, in faith and in his love, as one body only, the Body of Christ, where we each need the other and where every received gift is fully verified when it is shared with (our) brothers.” It is in this way that the “supernatural beauty and strength of faith shines” forth, so that, “together, we may enter the heart of the Gospel and follow Jesus”.

Questioning those present, he encouraged each to ask: “What charism has the Lord given me? How do I live this charism? Do I assume it with generosity, placing it at

the service of all? Or have I perhaps neglected or forgotten it?” “Let us ask the Lord to help us recognize with gratitude this great outpouring of spiritual gifts, which enables the Church to persevere in faith, to grow in grace and to be an ever more credible sign and witness of God’s infinite love,” he said. Pope Francis concluded his address by encouraging all to “consider the special gifts he or she has received and how we choose to use those gifts to advance the Church’s unity, life and mission in the world.” (General Audiences about the gifts of the Spirit, St. Peter’s Square, from April 9 to June 11, 2014, on CNA/EWTN NEWS News October 1, 2014).

5. We pray together

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary who was full of grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- Make us to be grateful to you for the gifts you have showered on us...
- Fill us with the gift of generosity for our community...
- Strengthen us to live your gifts for your greater glory...
- Move us to build unity among us making use of the diverse gifts in us...
- Inspire us to be faithful to our gifts by constantly developing it...

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer

Loving Father, make us to value the gifts you have placed in our lives so that we may bear witness to your love poured into our hearts by your Spirit. As Mary, our Mother accompanied the apostles of your Son, give us your grace to listen to her guidance in all our undertakings. Grant us your grace to walk in the footsteps of Father Claret in discerning and living the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be better listeners and servants of the Word. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



PARTICIPATION. THE METHOD: LISTENING, PARTICIPATION AND DISCERNMENT

1. Opening monition

Today we need the humble listening of the people of God and listening of the cries of the poor, of the victims, of the Earth. Their voices resound in the prayer, the study, the exchange of narratives, testimonies, reflections and arguments of those who participate in the synodal encounter.

The voice of the Spirit reaches Mary by inner inspiration, but also through mediations like the tradition of her people in the stories, confessions and rites, the family teachings, the instructions in the synagogue, the dialogue with Joseph and the words of Jesus. From these last ones, some were mysterious, «Don't you know I must be in the matters of my Father?» (Lc 1,49); other were indicating initially distance: Woman, what is it for you woman?» (Jn 2,4); others are from those who realise what they say: «Woman, here is your son» (Jn 19,26). The heart of the woman is a heart that participates with his questions (Lc 1,35; 2,48), that prays unanimously with other hearts (Acts 1,14).

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Loving Father and Mother, we thank your living presence with us always. You are speaking to us in our daily life through various persons and events. You are inviting us to listen to you attentively so as to know your will and guidance. Through this you are reminding us that we are not alone in our synodal journey, and we are accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Shower upon your wisdom and prudence to discern your call to be your witness in our world. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times,

and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven”(Act 10: 9-16).

Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

Prophets listened to God in their daily life events and proclaimed his message to them. They announced the salvation and denounced the unjust realities of their society. They called the people with an invocation, “Listen, our Israel.” Their listening to their society had a discerning approach. The will of God for them was the discerning criterion. When they were certain of this aspect, they were ready to confront the earthly powers even to the extent of facing rejections and murder attempts on their lives. Their discernment led them to stand for the primacy of God in their societies. In today’s atmosphere of social communication media, we are filled with innumerable messages and views mixed up with false information and fake projections. We struggle to discover the truth buried by the unjust social elements. There is a need today for discerning persons to know what God wants from us.

Mary was a person of discerning heart. When she is mentioned in the gospel as the person pondering and treasuring all the events, she becomes already a model for our discernment. When she listened from the angel Gabriel the call of God for her, she was deeply in touch with the inspiration of God and gave her final consent. The needy situation of Elizabeth and Mary’s response portrays her mind in tune with the voice of God in her. In our world realities, her messages in the apparitions to different persons in different



parts of the world in different social contexts call us for a proper discernment to respond to the call of God.

Father Claret's constant prayer to know the will of God (Auto.754-755) played a vital role in his discernment process through out his life. Starting from his seminary life he was always oriented to know what God wanted from him. In the time of his crisis, he approached his spiritual directors who helped him to discover the ways of the Lord. He quotes the role of the Philip Neri oratorians' in the discernment of his vocation and founding of our Congregation. In this way, knowing the will of God through discernment does not take place by our way of thinking or praying alone.

Our personal reflections and prayerful attitude have to be accompanied by spiritual direction or accompaniment where the director helps the individual to discern the will of God. Our Directory tells, "Spiritual direction or accompaniment is earnestly recommended as a means for discerning the will of God and remaining faithful till the end (CC 54; 73)" (Dir. 140). Today we are called to look into our personal, communitarian and pastoral commitments and examine our transparency to allow some wise and matured persons to accompany us to discern the will of God for us.

4. Complementary texts. "Seeing that our Lord, out of sheer good will and no merit on my part, was calling me to stem the torrent of corruption and cure the ills of a moribund society, I thought that I should dedicate myself to studying and gaining a thorough knowledge of the maladies of this social body. I did so, in fact, and found that this world is nothing but the love of riches, the love of honor, and the love of sensual pleasure. The human race has always been bent on this threefold lust, but in our day the thirst for material things is drying up the heart and bowels of modern societies" (Aut 357).

"I see that we live in a century that not only adores the golden calf as did the Hebrews but also worships gold so avidly that it has pulled down the most generous of all virtues from their sacred pedestals. I have seen this era as one in which selfishness has made men forget their most sacred duties to their neighbors and brothers--for all of us are images of God, children of God, redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and destined for heaven" (Aut 358).

"I believed that this dreadful giant, which worldlings call all-powerful, had to be confronted with the holy virtue of poverty. So wherever I encountered greed, I countered it with poverty. I had nothing, wanted nothing, and refused everything. I was content with the clothes I had on and the food that was set before me. I carried all I had in a bandanna. The contents of my luggage were a full-year breviary, a sheaf of sermons, a pair of socks, and an extra shirt--nothing more." (Aut 359).

5. We pray together

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary who accompanies us always to discern the will of God for us:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

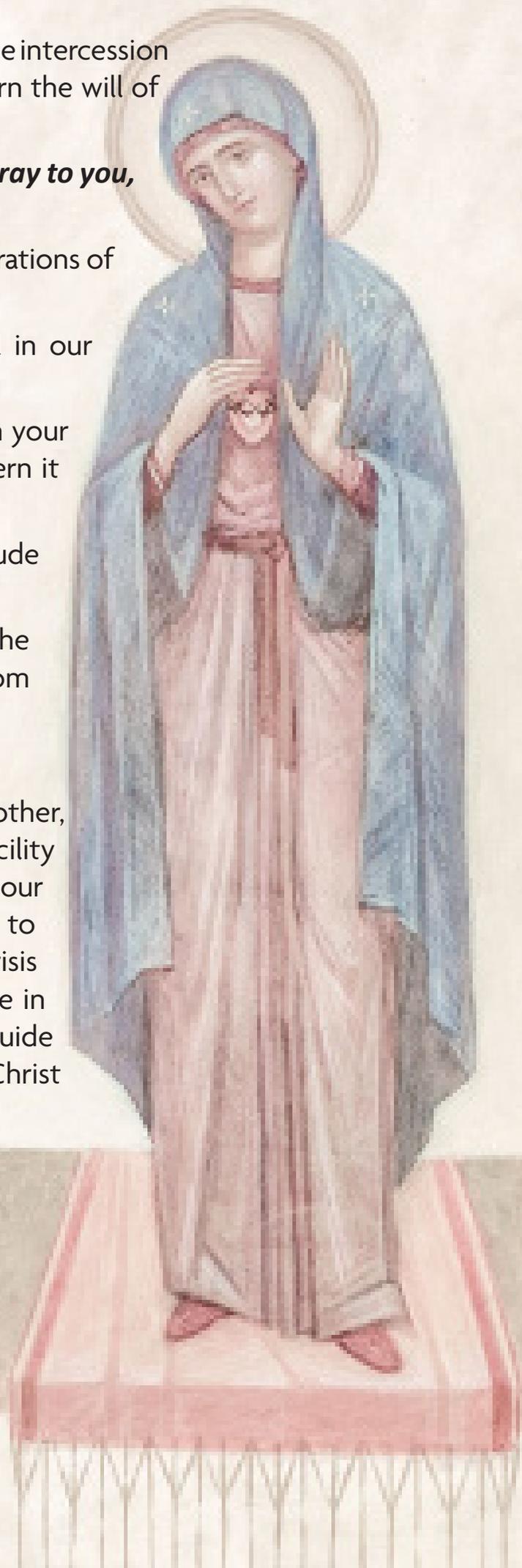
- Grant us your grace to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in all our undertakings...
- Give us the support to seek your will in our prayer and community discernment...
- Help us to look at our surrounding with your eyes and feel it with your heart and discern it with your mind...
- Fill us with the thirst for silence and solitude to listen to you...
- Open our hearts and minds to have the clarity in our efforts for your kingdom ministries...

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer: God our Father and Mother, you are the source of wisdom. Give us the docility of heart to know your will and be faithful in our witnessing life. In our darkness, be our light to enlighten our minds. In our confusion and crisis be our companion to accompany us. Increase in us the faith that you are with us always to guide and protect us. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



Sixth day

CELEBRATING TOGETHER: EUCHARIST AND ECCLESIAL SINAXIS

1. Opening monition

We remember in all the eucharistic prayers the glorious ever virgin Mary, Mother of God, but not only of her, nor in an isolated and separated manner; followed by this St. Joseph, the apostles, martyrs and all the saints are mentioned; but she appears in first place within the communion of the saints and leading it. All were companions of the way (synodoi) and lived with soul of the Church; thus, they got the term pilgrimage. The body of Christ that Mary conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit, is made present in the celebration by the work of the same and is offered in the banquet to the invited ones. This food of the pilgrims and pledge of future life unites the assembly with the living Lord who brings together all. May the memory of Mary and the saints who reached the house of the Father stimulate the desire of encounter.

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: Father of all goodness, we thank you for the gift of faith in your real and living presence in the Holy Eucharist. Doing it in remembrance of our Lord strengthens us to live and work for the realization of your Kingdom. As we are constantly reminded that it is the source and summit of our Christian life, make us to meet your Son in this sacrament in the Holy Mass, personal prayers and daily life experiences of meeting our brothers and sisters. May this living presence of Jesus strengthen our communities in our witnessing life of self surrender and sacrifice. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval. So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on

to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup"(1Cor 11:19-26).

Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

The Lord's call to celebrate the eucharist in his remembrance started already in the beginning of the Church itself. The first Christian community gathered constantly to listen to the Word and the breaking of bread. Eucharist was the centre of that community which kept itself in unity. The community remembered in it the Lord's death and resurrection, preserved its fraternal communion and fulfilled the needs by sharing. It was a witnessing community by this eucharistic celebration. It gave them the power to unify the members into one body. When the unity was put in danger St. Paul had to intervene in Corinth regarding the misuse of the eucharist celebrations as mere eating and drinking creating division among them, as rich and poor, free and slaves (cf. 1Cor 11: 19-



26). Our commitment to form communities centred in the Eucharist examines our reverence and respect for it. The remembrance of the Lord's death and resurrection leads us to understand the Eucharist as a sacrifice. This sacrificial aspect brings forgiveness for our sins as the Lord pronounced in the last supper. In the aspect of the Eucharist as a banquet we are called to strengthen in our fraternal communion.

The body of Christ is the body of the son of Mary. Her remembrance in each eucharistic celebration expresses her presence with us. She prays with us during the Holy Mass and she accompanies us in our personal meetings with the eucharistic Lord. As she carried Jesus in her womb when she went to meet Elizabeth, she is bringing to us the presence of Jesus whenever we meet her.

Father Claret lived the real presence of the Eucharist in his life. His mystical experience of bearing the eucharistic Lord in his inner being was not a mere feeling, but it was power that forced to work for the good of the community fighting against the evils of his society of the time (cf. Aut 694-695). Our blessed martyrs of Barbastro received their strength from this eucharistic presence. Their fervour and devotion to receive it at the point of death led them to be united as brothers born of God (cf. Jn 1:13).

The synodal life of our communities reminds us "Fraternal life is best symbolized and brought to perfection in the Eucharist, which is the sign of unity and the bond of love" (CC 12). In this background it is always good to ask ourselves whether we take the eucharist as a devotional element of our life or a power house to fight our self-centred attitudes and fight against the evils as Father Founder lived.

4. Complementary texts. "On August 26, 1861, at 7:00 in the evening while I was at prayer in the church of the Rosary at La Granja, the Lord granted me the great grace of keeping the sacramental species intact within me and of having the Blessed Sacrament always present, day and night, in my breast. Because of this I must always be very recollected and inwardly devout. Furthermore I must pray and confront all the evils of Spain, as the Lord has told me. To help me do this, I have engraved in my memory a number of things, such as that without any merit, talent, or personal recommendation, He has lifted me up from the lowest of the low to the highest post, at the side of the kings of this earth. And now He has put me at the side of the King of Heaven. *Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro.* 1 Cor. 6: 20" (Aut 694).

"On August 27, 1861 in the same church, during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament that I was conducting after Mass, the Lord let me know the three great evils that were menacing Spain: Protestantism, or rather, the loss of the Catholic spirit; the

Republic; communism. To combat these three evils, He showed me that three devotions should be practiced: the Trisagion, the Blessed Sacrament, and the rosary” (Aut 695).

5. We pray together

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary, who brought Jesus to our world and in the Eucharist:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

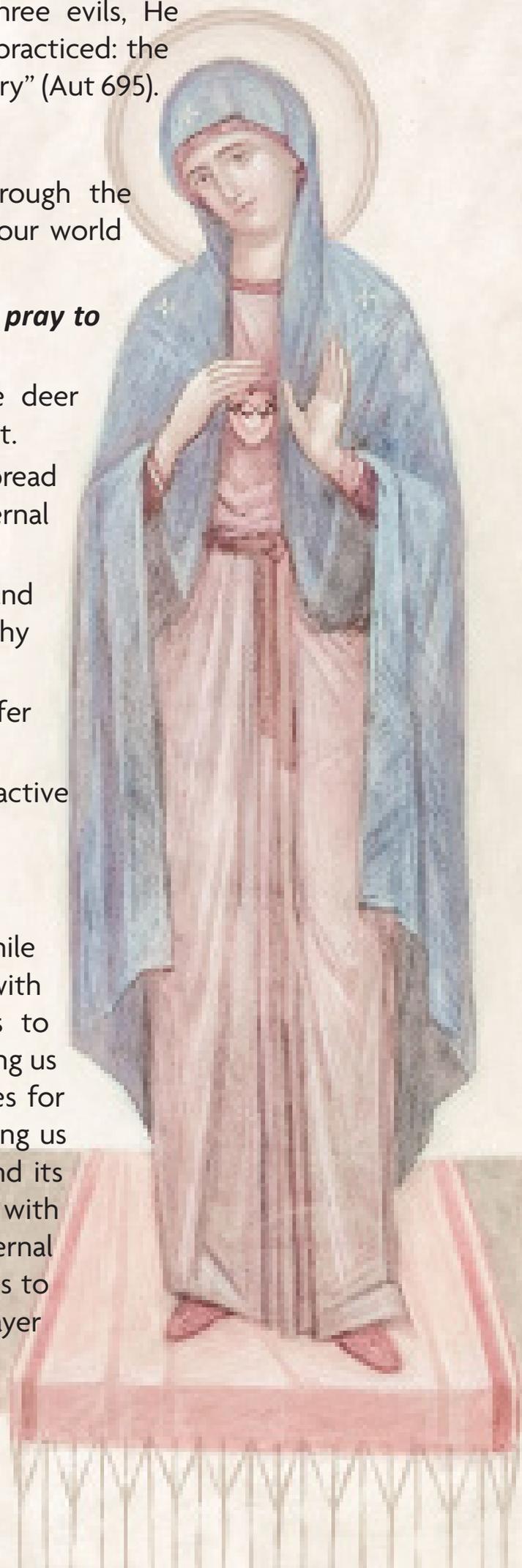
- Increase in the thirst to run like the deer seeking the living fountain of the Eucharist.
- Make us to realize that we are one bread sharing in the one bread to grow in our fraternal life.
- Help us to celebrate the Holy Mass and participate in the banquet in a worthy manner with a converted heart.
- Deepen in us the sense of sacrifice to offer ourselves for the good of others.
- Lead us to the fulness of joy by our active participation in eucharistic banquet.

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer: God our Father, while thanking you for your accompaniment with us through the Eucharist, make us always to understand that its sacrificial presence inspiring us to develop in the sense of offering ourselves for our brethren; its dimension of banquet leading us to deepen our interpersonal relationships and its dimension of forgiveness for our sins filling us with your consolation. May the tender and maternal accompaniment of Mary our mother make us to grow in our eucharistic life. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

Final blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



1. Opening monition

Life is mission and the life of Mary was mission. John the Baptist was not light; he came to give witness to the light. Mary was not the salvation; she came to conceive and give birth to the Saviour to bring up and take care of him, educate him, in the first years of his life and to accompany him. The narratives of Visitation, Cana and Pentecost Mary had an intuition of being entrusted to the missionary exercise. For Claret she is the one forges the missionaries and she is the Woman who releases them like an arrow against the adversaries of man.

She has been called as the first missionary, first evangelizer, icon of evangelization, mother the missionary Church, queen of the apostles, disciple-missionary. She is the mother of the Missionary essentially: of the one sent by the Father and of the Son who knows and reveals the Father..

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Father and Mother, we thank you for the mission of the Kingdom given by Jesus Christ. You are calling us to be his witnesses by living the values of his love for us. You are leading us to experience your love and compassion and share them with our neighbours. All of us, members of the people of God, realize anointed to be missionaries of the gospel in our diverse cultures, traditions and social realities. Make us to appreciate your Kingdom values in the cultures of the people and purify those cultural elements which hinder the progress of human dignity. Keep in us alive the missionary spirit of Father Claret in all the circumstances of our life. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen..

2. We listen to the Word of God

“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:16-20).

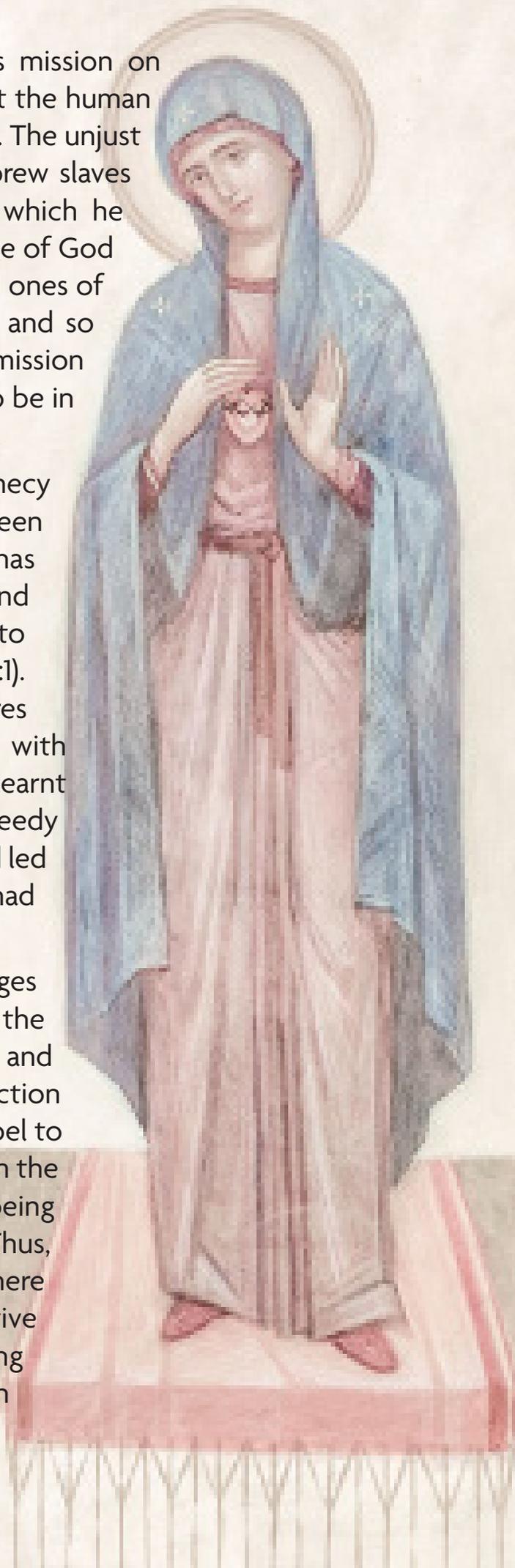
Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

God sent his chosen ones to carry out his mission on earth. The prophets spoke in his name against the human structures that we against the mission of God. The unjust slavery system and the liberation of the Hebrew slaves was mission received by Moses from God which he faithfully carried out. The mission and message of God is always on the side of the poor and rejected ones of the society. God needs people for this task and so he asks, "Whom shall I send?" (Is 6:8). This mission of God invites us to evaluate our ministries to be in right path of being missionary people of God.

Jesus found in him the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. "The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison..." (Is 61:1). He presented his God as a Father who cares for everybody. He was always in communion with him and spoke and worked from what he learnt from him. His compassionate look on the needy manifested the maternal face of his Father and led him to alleviate the pains of his people who had no shepherd to lead them.

He sent disciples on mission to different villages and towns during his mission to announce the Kingdom of God supported by their healing and casting away the evil spirits. After his resurrection he gave them the mandate to preach the gospel to all the nations which they started to fulfil from the day of Pentecost. This missionary mandate is being carried by all the members of the Church. Thus, Church is the missionary people of God where each member evangelizes by their respective vocations of laity, religious and priestly. Fulfilling this missionary mandate is possible only when we personally experience the anointing of the Spirit who sets us apart for his mission.



Ever since Mary received the call of God to be the mother of the saviour, she became a missionary carrying Jesus to others. She proclaimed the greatness of her God from her experience. She went with Jesus to the wedding feast at Cana where she was instrumental for the manifestation of his glory to his disciples (cf. Jn 2:1-12). Her role and participation in the first proclamation of the resurrection of the Lord by St. Peter makes us to ask her accompaniment in our call to missionary life. She is the morning star who fills us with hope and leads us to the dawn of new life and horizons. Father Claret found his missionary identity as an arrow placed in the mighty hands of Mary to be released by her against the evil (cf. Aut 270).

Father Claret was deeply aware of his missionary identity to be sent by God for the cause of the gospel. Experienced powerfully the anointing of the Spirit to preach the gospel to the poor (cf. Aut 118) and as a Founder he writes later that this anointing is for all the members of the Congregation (cf. Aut 687). He Following his footsteps, we are invited to live “the anointing of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are anointed to preach the Good News to the poor, is a sharing in the fullness of Christ...This is the only way in which we will become effective instruments in proclaiming the kingdom of heaven” (CC 39).

While Father Claret’s proposal of using all means possible for the ministry of the Word (cf. CC 6) provides wider possibilities of freedom for the means to attain this goal, it also invites us to look into our faithfulness to his missionary charism. If all the means we employ are expressions of our charism, we must ask ourselves what our charism really is.

4. Complementary texts. “Who then has the mission of evangelizing? The Second Vatican Council gave a clear reply to this question: it is upon the Church that “there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every creature.” And in another text: “...the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God.” While the Church is proclaiming the kingdom of God and building it up, she is establishing herself in the midst of the world as the sign and instrument of this kingdom which is and which is to come. The Council repeats the following expression of St. Augustine on the missionary activity of the Twelve: “They preached the word of truth and brought forth Churches.” The observation that the Church has been sent out and given a mandate to evangelize the world should awaken in us two convictions.

The first is this: evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial. When the most obscure preacher, catechist or pastor in the most distant land preaches the Gospel, gathers his little community together or administers a sacrament, even alone, he is carrying out an ecclesial act, and his action is certainly attached to the evangelizing activity of the whole Church by

institutional relationships, but also by profound invisible links in the order of grace. This presupposes that he acts not in virtue of a mission which he attributes to himself or by a personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name.

From this flows the second conviction: if each individual evangelizes in the name of the Church, who herself does so by virtue of a mandate from the Lord, no evangelizer is the absolute master of his evangelizing action, with a discretionary power to carry it out in accordance with individualistic criteria and perspectives; he acts in communion with the Church and her pastors. We have remarked that the Church is entirely and completely evangelizing. This means that, in the whole world and in each part of the world where she is present, the Church feels responsible for the task of spreading the Gospel” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 59.60).

5. We pray together

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary who accompanies us always in our task as missionary people of God:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- Instil in us the evangelizing spirit to know you and make you known.
- Give us your grace to carry out missionary commitments impelled by the love of Christ.
- Fill the world leaders with wisdom to rule their countries with the values of the gospel.
- Bring peace to our world affected by the religious fundamentalism.
- Enlighten our minds to be the missionaries of hope and joy for our brothers and sisters.

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer: Father of all goodness and love, make us to realize that we are called to be missionaries of your Kingdom on earth. This is the task entrusted to all the baptized person and so help us with your wisdom and light to do our missionary task together in a synodal way with mutual respect, encounter, listening and participating in the life of the Church. In the growing tendencies of hatred and religious violence, fill us with the renewed spirit to discover new methods of presenting the message of salvation to create a fraternal society where your love is shared and every individual is respected as your images and likenesses. We ask this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen..

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.

Eighth day

INCULTURATION OF THE GOSPEL IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

1. Opening monition

The heart of Mary symbolizes its person itself. Different cultures in which the gospel has been preached have received it. Its image has varied according to the evolution of mentalities or sensibilities (she is called type of the Church, model of the virginal life, and of monastic life, imploring all powerful, the Sorrowful co-redeemer...); she is filled with titles (mother, empress, queen, lady...); cultural plans, dreams and human desires have been projected on her. We have to discern here also, and Word of God listened in the Church will be the criterion to judge these representations. Mary was welcomed cordially when she was alive in the house of Zachariah and in the house-community of the beloved disciple. We the sons of her heart have the command of supporting its welcome in the ambiances and cultures in which we are evangelically present.

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God, our Father and Mother, we thank you for the incarnation of your son Jesus to be part of our culture and history. You sent your Spirit on the apostles to take the gospel of salvation to incarnate in different cultures and peoples. This cultural immersion enriched the cultures by purifying them from those elements contrary to your Kingdom. Make us to be sensitive to the persons from different cultures by appreciating them and living the values. Help us also to withstand the challenges brought forth by those values that are against the gospel values. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit and is God forever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He

came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1: 1-14).

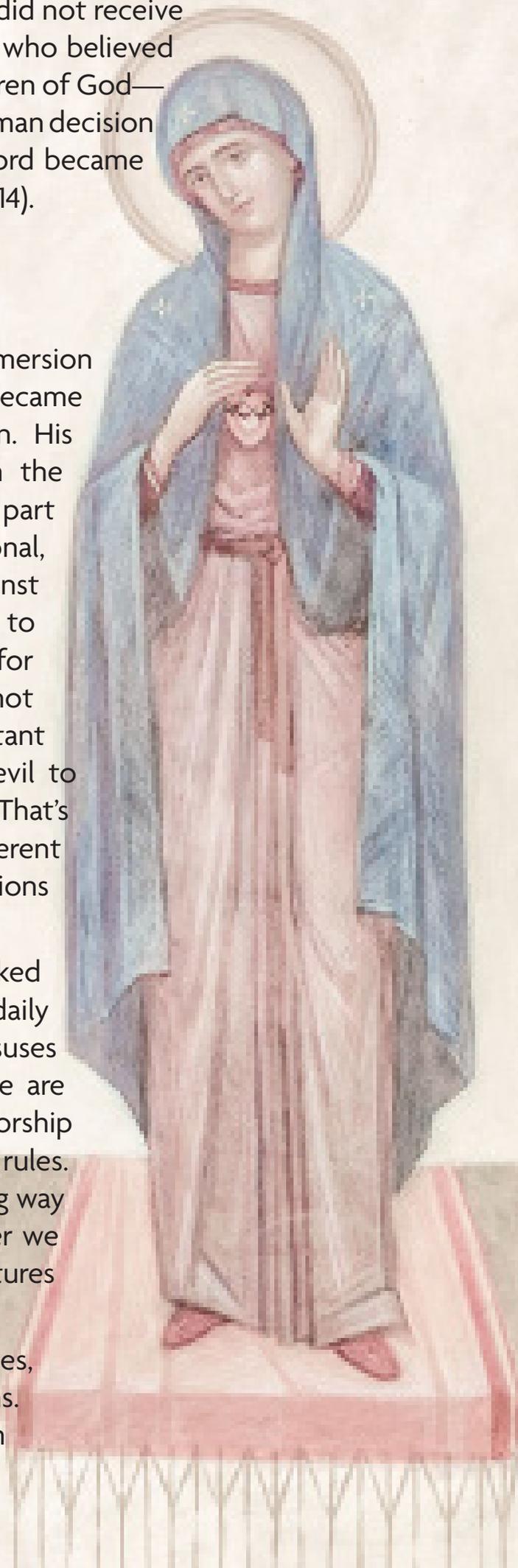
Meditative silence

3. Let us meditate with Mary

The incarnation of the son of God is his immersion in the Jewish culture and traditions. He became one with them in all the levels except sin. His incarnation expressed God's solidarity with the poor, marginalized and sinners. While being part of this culture, Jesus questioned those traditional, cultural and religious practices which were against the will of his Father. In this way he fought to purify and make them life giving source for all. God's incarnation and inculturation is not welcomed by all, because they demand constant conversion from falsehood to truth, from evil to good and from the worldliness to godliness. That's why, inculturation of the gospel into different cultures too meets with the negative reactions from powerful ones of the society.

The closeness of God with the humanity is looked as a threat because of his participation in our daily struggles and critical warning against the misuses of the presence of God. Because of this we are tempted to convert God into a matter of worship and imprison him with rituals, traditions and rules. This type of God is not a danger for our wrong way of life. The synodal way questions us whether we allow the message to participate in our cultures and traditions.

When St. Paul took the gospel to the gentiles, he met with the challenge of their traditions. He experienced the imposition of the Jewish social and religious norms and traditions.



Imposition of circumcision and imparting the salvific message of Christ was the bone of contention in his gospel ministry. Jerusalem council places the importance salvation brought by Jesus above the Jewish traditions (cf. Acts 15). He boldly claimed that the law brought death (cf. Rom 7:10), but the Spirit brings life (cf. Rom 8:9).

The inculturation of the gospel demands us to be transparent to appreciate and promote the good elements in each culture. Excessive attachment to one's own culture is an obstacle for the gospel to be rooted in the persons of this attitude. "...They should also be on guard against letting an inordinate love of their own country and culture prevent them from adapting to the ways of the people they are sent to evangelize..." (CC 49).

Mary stands as an example in this process of the inculturation of the gospel. People's love for her irrespective of their race, colour, culture and religion, they celebrate her with the filial love to their heavenly Mother. The different names people have given to her in various countries according to their traditions express the ways and possibilities for inculturation of our faith. Her maternal love highlighted in their devotions for her leads us to take the way of love as an important means in this process of our an inculturated evangelization.

We are missionaries with the spirit of Father Claret whose spirit is for the whole world. With his universal spirit the inculturation of the gospel is possible. He loved the people with whom he worked. His solidarity with the slaves of his time in Cuba shows his openness to welcome them in his pastoral ministry. The culture of poverty is one of the major eye opener that poses challenges to preach the gospel to the poor

4. Complementary texts.

"In carrying out this mission, our missionaries should use all means possible, but they should above all foster the following attitudes:

- *a sense of alertness* to whatever is most urgent, opportune and effective, in the setting of the times, places and persons with whom they have to deal, without clinging to outmoded or inadequate methods or tools of the apostolate;
- *a sense of availability* allowing them to be so open to the guidance of the Spirit and so obedient to their mission that they will be ready to abandon all that they have grown accustomed to in order to fulfil their duty of spreading the faith, both within and beyond their native land.
- *a sense of catholicity* that will lead them into all parts of the world and make them open-minded, receptive and respectful of the religious and cultural customs and values of the people. Their missionary work should be directed mainly to those who most need evangelization or to persons who are or should become agents of evangelization. If any individual or group is led by a missionary spirit and wishes to

collaborate with us, we should be glad in the Lord to have them associated in our apostolates” (CC 48).

4. Rezamos juntos

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary leads us in our process of inculturation of gospel:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord

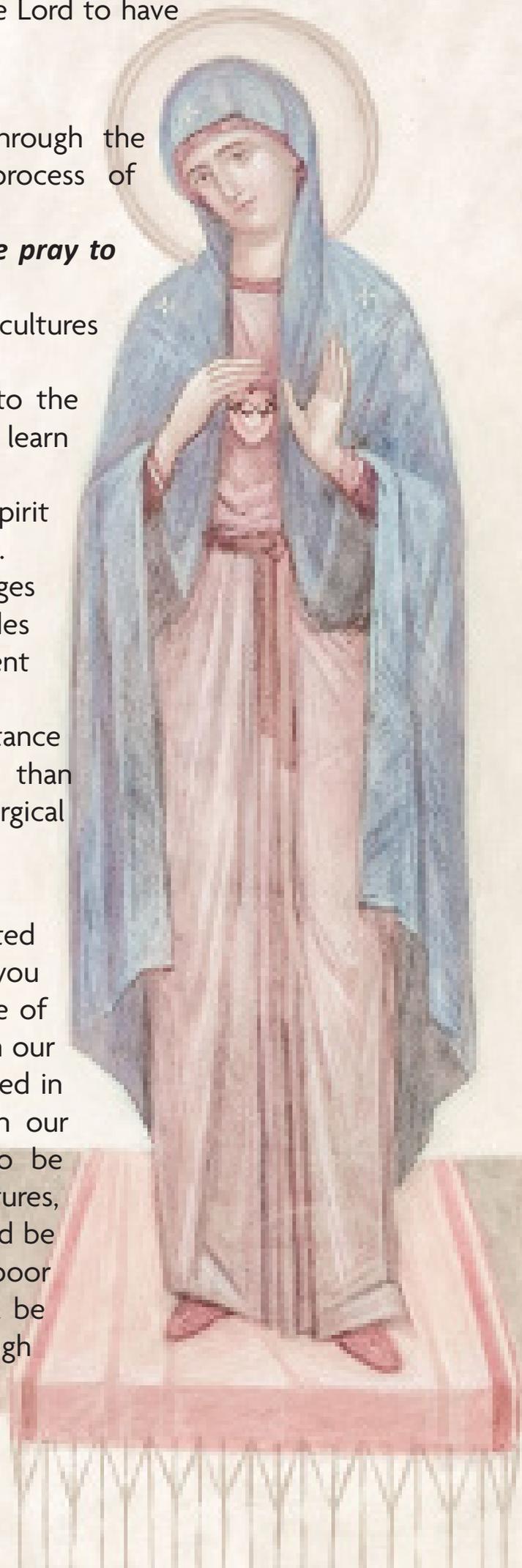
- Increase in us the openness to different cultures in our task of preaching the gospel.
- Make us to realize our commitment to the gospel is more meaningful only when we learn the values in culture.
- Grant us the sensibility to listen to the Spirit to present the gospel in different cultures.
- Strengthen us to withstand the challenges from the closed-minded attitudes endangering the gospel ministry in different cultures.
- Make us to understand the importance of learning the positive cultural values than enacting some cultural elements in our liturgical celebrations.

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Concluding prayer: Father of the Incarnated Word, through the incarnation of your son you are making us to understand the importance of the process of inculturation of the gospel in our cultures. Our history teaches us how we failed in recognizing the importance of this need in our evangelizing process. Give us the grace to be interested to know and appreciate other cultures, take initiative to learn different languages and be open to be confronted by the culture of the poor so that our commitment to your Word will be authentic and meaningful for this world. Through Christ our Lord.

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



Ninth day

“PEOPLE OF GOD, PILGRIM IN THE HISTORY TOWARDS THE HEAVENLY MOTHER LAND”

1. Opening monition

Finishing the course of her earthly pilgrimage Mary was taken up to the heavenly glory. It was with all her personal identity, forged in her concrete humanity, through her faith, her maternity, her ambitions and works to which she was dedicated in her daily life, of the joys lived and also of the pains suffered in that world of relations and tensions in which she found herself wrapped, by herself or because of her Son. She is the sign of sure hope for the people of God still on the way; and -we could say- in this her glory there is still lacking something; namely, the glory will be full only when the whole community of the chosen ones obtain the goal that polarizes its journey. «Mary is dignity of the Earth» (St. Augustin); her memory moves to give glory to God and activate the desire of the future world.

Hymn.

Liturgical greetings.

Prayer: God our Father and Mother, we thank you for the frequent reminder that we are pilgrims on earth towards our heavenly mother land. By this you are calling to be in the world, but not of the world. Listening to your call we remember our temptations to fix our gaze on the worldliness in our way of following the Lord. Give us your grace to seek first the Kingdom of God and pay attention to live a life worthy of it. Thus we will be strengthened in our hope that we live for the eternal joy and peace promised by our Jesus Christ who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

2. We listen to the Word of God

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3: 1- 4).

Meditative silence

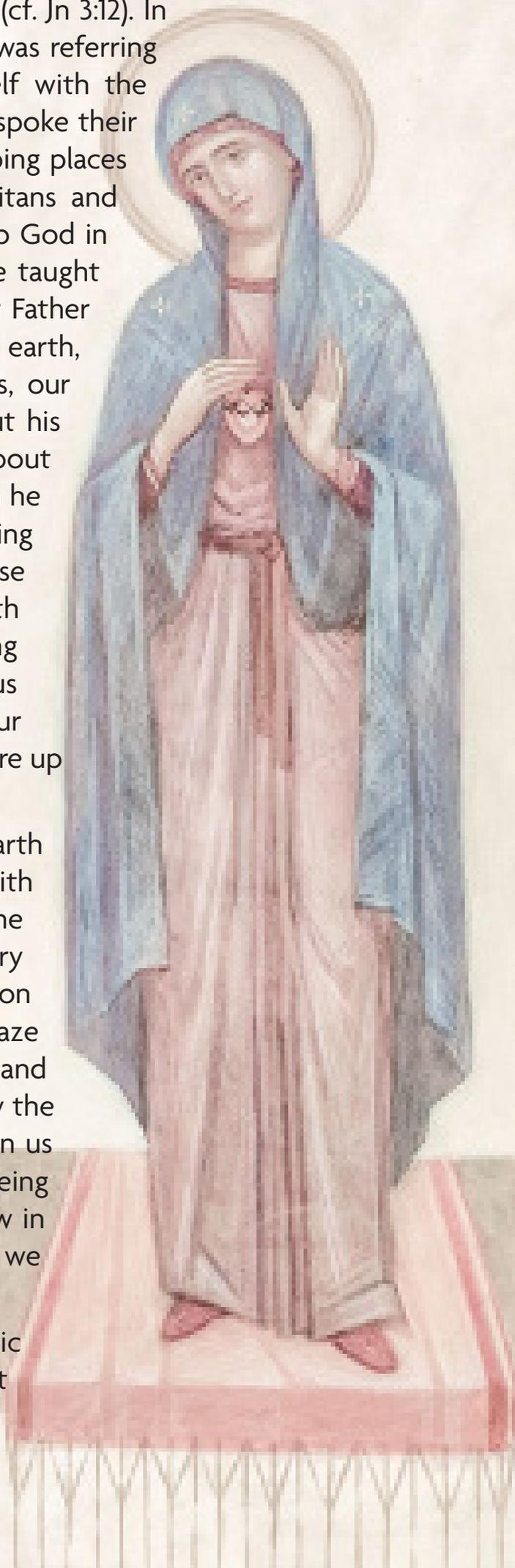
3. Let us meditate with Mary

During the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus on the new birth, Jesus indicates that we are unable to believe of the earthly things and find difficult to believe

in the heavenly things that he would explain (cf. Jn 3:12). In the dialogue with the Samaritan woman he was referring to the living water, but she stopped herself with the water from the well (cf. Jn 4:13-15); when she spoke their religious worships, he transcends the worshiping places and practices of both the Jews and Samaritans and testifies that the true worshipers will worship God in truth and spirit (cf. Jn 4: 23). In the prayer he taught to his disciples, he presents his God as “Our Father in heaven” and points out that we are on this earth, but we belong to the place where Christ is, our heavenly mother land. When he spoke about his body as the bread of life, they were thinking about the bread as daily food (cf. Jn 6: 34-35). When he highlights about his Father, the Jews were arguing about their own fathers (cf. Jn 8:18-19). These dialogues are examples how we are struck with earthly realities and become incapable of going beyond these earthly realities. Therefore, Jesus clearly states, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:21) and advices to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven (cf. Mt 6:19).

Mary leads us by her life as a pilgrim on earth directed towards heaven. In her meeting with Elizabeth led by the Spirit, she presents the reality of her God’s kingdom which is contrary to this world power and pride. Her assumption tells us that we are pilgrims on earth with our gaze fixed beyond this world where true joy, peace and justice prevails. The pilgrimages carried out by the people to her shrines and basilicas develop in us the awareness of being oriented to God not being attached to this world. She invites us to grow in our hope in the world to come towards which we march together as a pilgrim church.

Father Claret’s itinerancy has a symbolic significance. His discernment to be an itinerant evangelizer brings to our mind his movement from one place to another was not only a



geographical one but it was also a pilgrimage to our heavenly mother land. His Catalonian itinerancies for the gospel ended up in France and Italy and he wrote with contentment, “I have completed my work”. Followed by this he tells that he was waiting for his final fulfilment of getting united with his Master. As an evangelizer who offered himself for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls, he chose the Heart of Mary as a source and means for the conversion of the sinners. As strangers and exiles we are called to be away from the worldly desires glorifying God in our bodies by our belonging to Christ (cf. CC 43). The horizons of our heavenly mother land is blocked by our worldliness, egoism, self-centeredness, power seeking attitudes, superficial liturgical celebrations, etc. Our life in synodality calls us to be aware of the dangers of the worldly spiritualities and motivations and fight against them to clear the ways for a transcendental living.

4. Complementary texts. “This idea of a lost eternity that began to move me so vividly at the tender age of five and that has stayed with me ever since and that, God willing, I will never forget is the mainspring and goad of my zeal for the salvation of souls” (Aut 15).

“In time I felt a further stimulus for zeal of which I shall speak later, namely, the thought that sin not only condemns my neighbor but is mostly an offense against God, my Father. This idea breaks my heart with pain and makes me want to run like... And I tell myself, “If a sin is infinitely malicious, then preventing a sin is preventing an infinite offense against my God, against my good Father” (Aut 16).

5. We pray together

God our Father, we offer our prayers through the intercession of Mary who accompanies us in our pilgrimage towards the heavenly mother land:

With trust and confidence in your love, we pray to you, Lord.

- Increase in us the awareness that we are pilgrims, strangers and exiles here on earth.
- Make us to live in the world recognizing all its realities of goodness and sinfulness.
- Give us the grace to seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness.
- Help us to overcome to the worldliness in our spirituality and daily life as religious.
- Empower us to fight against our egoism, pride, power mindedness, etc.

Spontaneous prayers... our Father

Prayer final: Loving God, save us from falling into the worldliness that rejects the prophecy of our brothers and sisters, discredits those who question us and point out our mistakes. Guide us with your presence not to be obsessed by mere appearances.

Help us to open our hearts bottled in only to the limited horizon of our own immanence and interests that hider the learning from our own sins and be genuinely open to forgiveness. Make us to fight against this tremendous corruption disguised as a good. Save us from a worldliness with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings. Heal us from this stifling worldliness by breathing in us the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Final Blessing.

An apt Marian hymn.



Detail of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
on the icon of the Claretian Martyrs.



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GENERAL PREFECTURE OF SPIRITUALITY
AND COMMUNITY LIFE

