CMF
SUPERIORE GENERALE

Prot. SG 258/2026

LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
AFTER THE INTENSIVE SESSIONS

Dear brothers,

It is always a joy to communicate with you after our intensive Council sessions and to share something of the life of the Congregation that we have brought into our prayer and conversations. We are living a time of grace as we prepare for the XXVII General Chapter. I thank you for the interest and active participation with which so many brothers and communities are engaging in the Conversations in the Spirit proposed by the Preparatory Commission.

1. Listening to the Spirit and cultivating the gaze of Christ

Learning to listen more deeply is central to our preparation for the Chapter. To hear what the Spirit says through each of us for the good of the Congregation, we need attentive hearts. Amid the many voices within and around us, let us cultivate a silence that is fertile and receptive to God's action. As sons of the Heart of Mary, we learn to treasure the Word and allow it to shape our response. A missionary life centred on Christ and guided by his Spirit gradually transforms our gaze, enabling us to see beyond appearances and prejudices and to recognize the dignity and beauty God has bestowed on every person and all creation. Let us cultivate this gaze of Christ, which sustains hope amid the trials of our world.

2. Our missionary presence in America

The General Government has completed the canonical visitations in America, and we look forward to meeting the governments of its Major Organisms in Aparecida (Brazil) this December. I ask your prayers for our collective discernment of what the Lord asks of the Claretian presence on that continent. The young vine evoked by our Founder has matured through a long missionary history, while the image of its youthful growth finds fresh resonance today in Africa. In America, we have encountered committed and creative missionaries in many peripheries of human struggle, often working alongside lay people whose faith and dedication enrich our shared mission. Their stories deserve to be heard and shared: they help us recognize how God continues to work through ordinary lives generously offered.

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The visitations have also brought before us challenges familiar in other parts of the Congregation: apostolic commitments and other concerns that leave little room for personal prayer and community life, difficulties in working together, wounded relationships, and the fatigue of brothers carrying many responsibilities. These realities invite us to care for the roots of our vocation and to ask how we are nourishing the life we generously spend in mission. The fire of our charism needs the oil of prayer and an enduring friendship with the Lord who has called us. In his presence, we learn to receive our life as a gift, recognize our limits, and see our brothers with greater compassion. This communion with Christ takes flesh in a community where we share our faith, bear one another's burdens, and seek together what the mission asks of us. From these living roots, our missionary service draws the strength to remain fruitful and faithful amid weariness and trials.

3. Reviewing our journey towards the General Chapter

During these sessions, we again reviewed the service of the General Government in the light of the XXVI General Chapter Document and our Action Plan. We sought to recognize the ground covered, acknowledge our limitations, and identify what still needs attention as we approach 2027. We are grateful for the collaboration received throughout the Congregation. We also recognize initiatives that remain incomplete and areas where our accompaniment and coordination could have been better. The remaining months call us to complete what is possible and prepare a responsible handover to those who will continue this service.

The General Government has sent a comprehensive questionnaire covering the different dimensions of our life and mission to help us understand the present state of the Congregation. I invite Major Superiors to reflect on these questions with prayerful diligence in their councils, involving members of the Organism where appropriate.

The reports prepared in response will contribute greatly to the Chapter's discernment. Alongside activities and statistics, we need to recognize the fruits of our efforts: What has changed because of the decisions we have taken? What has helped us grow, and what continues to hinder us? An honest account of experience, including the accompaniment received from the General Government, will help the Chapter discern with realism and hope. Let the community conversations and the preparation of these reports illuminate one another, keeping our discernment rooted in lived experience.

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4. Caring for fraternity and supporting leadership

One concern running through our discussions was the quality of our fraternal life. Each brother needs a community where he is known, welcomed, and accompanied, and whose life he helps sustain by sharing his gifts, work, and care for others. This sharing also includes placing in common what we receive through our ministries and services, as a concrete expression of our poverty and mutual responsibility. Prayer, shared meals, listening to one another, and discerning our mission together deserve a protected place in our daily life. When tensions arise, we need the courage to speak truthfully and charitably, seek help when necessary, and walk the sometimes demanding path of reconciliation. Our credibility as missionaries is closely linked to the way we treat one another.

I am particularly grateful to our local superiors and government teams, who often serve amid considerable demands and limited personnel. Through continued formation and accompaniment, we want to support a discerning and synodal style of leadership that empowers others. An advanced Discerning Leadership **programme**, beginning in January 2027, will help local superiors build community and weave differences into communion in the spirit of our Founder. The animators designated by the Major Superiors will work with the General Team for Discerning Leadership to facilitate the programme. Responding to Pope Leo XIV's call for a "disarmed and disarming" peace, let us become peacemakers through our daily relationships in community and our service in mission.

The fruit of these programmes should become visible in how we consult, share responsibilities, address difficulties, and follow through on decisions. I encourage communities and government teams to revisit what they have learned and embrace ongoing formation as a means of serving their brothers and the mission more faithfully.

5. Formation and accompaniment throughout life

Our reflections reaffirmed the need for ongoing formation and mutual accompaniment. Young missionaries beginning ministry, brothers entering a new cultural setting, those experiencing personal difficulties, and elderly or sick members need accompaniment suited to their circumstances. At every stage, we are called both to welcome support and to offer it to others. Seeking spiritual, psychological, or other professional help when needed expresses responsibility for the vocation entrusted to us.

The *General Plan of Formation* (GPF), the Forge programmes, and the initiatives of our prefectures offer valuable resources for formation. Two further resources are nearing completion: the *Claretian Formation Guide*, a manual for the practical application of the GPF, and the *JPIC Manual for Initial Formation*. Translations are underway to make both available on our website. These resources bear fruit as we remain open to learning, welcome accompaniment, and care for one another's growth in Christ and missionary service.

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6. Vic-Sallent at the service of our charismatic heritage

At the request of the Provincial Government of Sanctus Paulus, Vic-Sallent became a General House on 16 July 2026. We gratefully acknowledge the former Province of Catalonia and the present Province of Sanctus Paulus for their many years of service in preserving and sharing our spiritual and charismatic heritage at these foundational places.

We wish to build on this legacy, strengthening the community's service to the Congregation, the Claretian Family, and the local Church of Vic. During the second week of November, I will visit the community with the General Prefect of Spirituality and Community Life for a local assembly, to listen to the brothers and discern together how best to carry this mission forward.

7. The Forge as a time of spiritual and missionary renewal

In 2026, two editions of the midlife Forge were offered for missionaries aged 40–65, one in Spanish and one in English. For 2027, a Spanish midlife Forge is planned from April to June, together with a month-long Forge for brothers over 65 between February and March. I encourage you to consider these opportunities to pause along your missionary journey, deepen your encounter with the Lord, reflect on your vocation, and renew your missionary enthusiasm. The Forge remains a valuable expression of the Congregation's commitment to lifelong formation and spiritual renewal.

8. Sharing responsibility for universal mission

About thirty-six Claretians are being prepared for universal mission this year, as shared in our meeting with the Major Superiors. I thank these brothers for their availability and their Organisms for generously sharing personnel. This commitment calls for careful discernment, preparation, and continuing accompaniment by both the sending and receiving Organisms. Learning a language, entering another culture, and building fraternal relationships take time. Let us welcome each missionary as a brother whose gifts enrich us and whose integration calls for our patience, understanding, and support.

The enthusiasm of our brothers in South Sudan, amid insecurity and great material need, remains close to my heart. Their presence among people affected by conflict and displacement gives concrete expression to missionary availability. In Madagascar, our shared mission with the Claretian Sisters continues to grow, and local vocations are emerging. These missions call for our prayer and solidarity, and for sustained care for the persons and communities through whom the Gospel takes root.

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9. Approval of two documents

During these sessions, we approved the Directory of Communications. We thank the General Prefecture of Bible and Communications and the team that prepared it for their dedication. The Directory promotes communication at the service of communion and evangelization through clearer coordination and responsible participation. It encourages us to share the lives, journeys, and hopes of the people we serve, and to engage with digital media and artificial intelligence with formation, sound judgment, and careful verification, respecting persons and the truth.

We also approved guidelines for welcoming and integrating retired Claretian bishops into our communities, prepared in response to the reflections at last year's meeting of Claretian Bishops and in accordance with the relevant canonical norms. We rejoice in their presence in our communities and wish to ensure that they enjoy full participation in community life while continuing any episcopal service entrusted to them in the Church.

10. A shared commitment to safeguarding

We also reflected on our responsibility to make every community and ministry a safe place for minors and vulnerable adults. I ask the Major Organisms to complete and update their safeguarding protocols in accordance with our congregational standards and the requirements of their respective contexts. These commitments must take flesh in formation, daily conduct, attentive listening, and responsible action. Protecting those entrusted to us belongs to the heart of our fidelity to the Gospel.

11. Solidarity and responsible stewardship

Our discussions on Solidarity and Mission highlighted the need for greater understanding and coordination among JPIC, the General Mission Procure, and our NGO presence at the United Nations. Their distinct services contribute to a common missionary commitment. Projects acquire missionary depth when they arise from listening to people and discerning with them, strengthening their dignity and participation. Financial support serves these processes and calls for competence, transparency, and faithful follow-up. I remind all concerned to coordinate with the General Mission Procure while ensuring the necessary preparation, participation, and follow-up at the local level. The growing networks around migration and care for creation offer promising opportunities to connect local efforts and learn from one another.

The responsible use of our goods is also an expression of communion. We continued reviewing economic sustainability plans and the support needed by those entrusted with administration. I thank the brothers whose careful work sustains our communities and ministries. Realistic budgets, accurate accounts, consultation, and accountability help us honour the trust of our benefactors and use our resources responsibly for mission. These practices concern all of us and require the cooperation of superiors, economes, and communities.

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12. Our institutes at the service of consecrated life

Our six institutes of consecrated life remain a precious service to the Church. We considered the challenges facing *Claretianum* (Rome) and the importance of maintaining suitable formation opportunities for religious men and women, including those without previous theological qualifications. Dialogue with the competent authorities is continuing. I ask your prayers for this ministry and encourage Major Superiors to discern suitable missionaries who can prepare themselves for a sustained commitment to teaching, research, and the accompaniment of consecrated life.

13. Accompanying young people and their vocation

We look forward as well to the Claret Way Global Gathering in Naksan, South Korea, from 31 July to 2 August 2027, before World Youth Day in Seoul. I encourage the Major Organisms to prepare for meaningful participation and to accompany the young people before and after the gathering. The new Vocational Directory and the formation offered around it can help us renew our conviction that every community has a part in welcoming young people and accompanying their search for God's call.

14. Two practical reminders

I would also like to recall two practical matters concerning our liturgical and community life.

Eucharistic celebration, concelebration and Mass offerings. Across the different cultural and pastoral settings of our Congregation, we encounter varied liturgical practices, particularly in the celebration of the Eucharist. Respect for local cultures and realities should go hand in hand with fidelity to the Church's liturgical norms, whose observance is a shared responsibility rather than a matter of personal preference.

Priests who concelebrate are to wear the sacred vestments prescribed by the liturgical books and observe the applicable norms of the Church[1]. Civil dress alone is not appropriate for concelebration. Accepting a Mass offering entails the responsibility to celebrate or concelebrate Mass and apply it for the specified intention(cf. CIC 948); attendance alone does not fulfil this responsibility. Mass offerings distributed through the General Mass Collector help sustain our missionaries through their communities, particularly in missions facing financial hardship. Their faithful fulfilment is therefore also an expression of solidarity and shared responsibility. A priest need not concelebrate whenever he attends Mass, though concelebration at the community Eucharist fittingly expresses our priestly and fraternal communion.

[1] *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 209; *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 124.

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Provision for incapacity and death. Difficulties can arise when a Claretian loses the capacity to make decisions and has left no valid arrangements concerning his care or affairs, or when uncertainty arises after his death regarding burial or personal belongings. I therefore invite Major Superiors to ensure that all perpetually professed missionaries prepare the appropriate documents, valid under the applicable civil law, authorising the competent Claretian Superior to act on their behalf in the event of incapacity, including in medical decisions, and providing for burial in accordance with our Directory and the disposition of personal belongings after death. These provisions should reflect the form of life they have freely chosen and facilitate its respectful observance. We should also help our families understand, with sensitivity and in good time, the implications of our religious commitment, including provisions for care, death, and burial. Such dialogue fosters trust and prepares families and the Congregation to walk together through illness and bereavement, honouring each brother and the form of life he has freely chosen.

15. Gratitude and our continuing journey

Dear brothers, much of your faithful, quiet service never appears in a Council report. Matters that require attention naturally occupy a considerable part of our discussions, yet we remain deeply aware that your daily fidelity sustains the vitality of the Congregation. I thank you for your prayer, patient care, hidden sacrifices, and generous missionary dedication. I also thank our collaborators in the General Curia and throughout the Organisms, whose work enables so many services to reach our communities.

As we continue towards the General Chapter, let us allow the prayer of Jesus to lead us more deeply into his relationship with the Father and his love for the world. The reflections on the Our Father being prepared for our communities are offered in this spirit. May Mary, who listened, pondered, and placed herself at the service of God's promise, accompany our journey. May she help us become more deeply one in the mission entrusted to us.

United in the Immaculate Heart of Mary,



Fr. Mathew Vattamattam, CMF
Superior General



Rome, November 5, 2026

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