

MESSAGE TO THE CONGREGATION

Compassionate Leaders

The service of authority must be exercised in synodality in order to promote co-responsibility (QC57)

Querida Congregacion!

1. Dearest Brothers in the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, receive our warm and fraternal greetings from Casa Claret in Yaoundé-Nkolbisson (Cameroon), where the Claretian Discerning Leadership Workshop is taking place from 01-14 March 2023. This workshop is an opportunity to thank our Mother Congregation for allowing us to live out the dream she laid out for us for a fortnight: *We dream of a pilgrim Congregation rooted in faith in faith in Jesus Christ and in Claretian spirituality (QC44)*. How can we be pilgrims in a world where everything is confused if we have no discernment? This question finds its meaning in this time of learning that we have just experienced in Cameroon.

2. In a synodal spirit, we began this seminar with the reading of the message of Father General Mathew Vattamattan, cmf, who already underlined that *the context of the planning of this workshop is the awareness of the importance of forming and accompanying our brothers in charge of the exercise of authority and leadership in the Congregation*. The workshop was facilitated by the duo of Fathers Paulson Vellyannor, cmf and Gonzalo Fernando Sanz, cmf, who once again underlined the purpose and importance of this meeting, which is summarised in the expectations of the XXVI General Chapter: the process of transformation requires intelligent and articulate animation.

3. There is a significant observation: most, if not all, the leaders appointed or elected in our Major Organisms lack the necessary basis to exercise the duties to which they are called. We need formation and education to meet our new responsibilities. From experience, the formation received by the major superiors is insufficient, hence the need to include more persons from each organism for this workshop.

4. During these days, therefore, it was a question of drinking in the wisdom of the Mother Congregation to acquire the necessary weapons to respond to the call that the Lord has made to each of the participating brothers in the exercise of the offices that we hold within our various Major Organisms. This moment was a time of training and good formation to enable us to respond to the challenges of our time to live the dream of the Congregation.

5. The teachings were grouped into twelve modules, reminding us that we lead with what we have and are. The modules invite us to get to know ourselves and our environment while taking Christ and the Virgin Mary as models for leaders, following the example of Claret, our Father. The leader is called to become aware of what he is to exercise his function better. He must know what role he plays and the competencies that go with it because there is always a gap between his duties as a leader and the expectations of his people, which he must reorganise according to the dream of the Congregation and according to our Constitutions **n°138,113, 104.....**

6. Thus, he must equip himself with dialogue as a leadership tool to communicate generatively and compassionately. Moreover, he should live dialogue as a spiritual practice. He must also equip himself with key elements and strengthen his relationship with the Lord and his brothers, as Father Claret did. In the exercise of his leadership, he will experience difficulties. He is therefore called to discern the problems of the polarities that he will have to hold in their best forms and transform the conflicts to his advantage. To do this, of course, requires a strategy in the mission to influence community life, regardless of the conditions of his living context.

7. Also, the leader must always be daring in bringing about change with the awareness that the spirit of God is at work in his life. To do this, he must ask for wisdom, diligence, and know how to implement good practices in his community. Speaking of good practices, our organisms are already living them out. Unity, communication, the sharing of goods, the well-being of the brothers, fraternal relations, prayer and the animation of communities are the main ones. We wish to express our gratitude to all the brothers who are dedicated to realising the dream of the Congregation in their various Major Organisms.

8. This workshop and its many practicums gave us the skills to promote in the Congregation, especially within the ACLA structure, a culture of discernment at all levels, and even more so among leaders and officials. It has also helped us to grow and exercise leadership in terms of what we should do, what we can do, and what we are allowed to do.

9. This moment allowed us to meet, share, exchange experiences and strengthen our fraternity. We are grateful to the Congregation for this great initiative. We express our unalloyed gratitude to our facilitators who sacrificed their time and energy to form us. We also thank the Independent Delegation of Cameroon for hosting us in Casa Claret and for all they did to make our stay comfortable. As our General Superior said in his closing remarks, we must continue training more leaders in our organisms. May the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary enflame us in our various missions.

Done at the Curia Casa Claret, 14 March 2023.

Participants at the CDLW