

The Forge

in our daily life

SPIRITUS DOMINI

Ordinary Time II

5 SERVANTS OF THE
WORD IN THE CHURCH

SPIRITUS DOMINI - 2014

T

he arrow forged on the anvil is not saved in a

museum. Its destiny is to be launched, although nicked with the passage of time. We are called to be missionary arrows: "The ministry of the Word, through which we communicate the total mystery of Christ to humanity, is our special calling to the People of God. For we have been sent to proclaim the Lord's life, death, and resurrection, until he comes, so that all who believe in him may be saved. (CC 46).

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To help individuals, communities, Provinces and Delegations to be consciously aware of their present reality, rekindling their experience of Fire and missionary zeal following the methodology of the Forge.



OBJECTIVES

- To pass from passive attitudes to creative attitudes.
 - To believe in the experience of the Spirit who anoints us to be ministers of the Word in the prophetic mission of the Church.
 - To deepen in the Cordimarian dimension of our missionary spirituality.
 - To personalize the significance of our belonging to the Congregation today and to value its charismatic diversity and universal mission.
 - To recapture the experience lived throughout the Forge Project to continue progressing in the missionary life.

BOOKLETS

1. The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Us (Advent-Christmas)
2. We Have Been Anointed to Evangelize (Ordinary Time I)
3. In the "Today" of the World and the Church (Lent)
4. As Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Easter)
5. Servants of the Word in the Church (Ordinary Time II)
6. In the Style of Claret (Ordinary Time III)
7. In the Missionary Congregation (Ordinary Time IV)
8. Open to the Whole World (Ordinary Time V)
9. Progressing in the Missionary Life (Ordinary Time VI)

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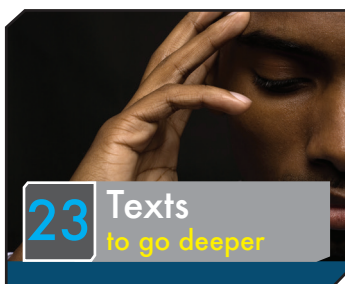
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1. Introduction

Our life is life in the Spirit. We are an evangelizing "arrow" which the Spirit of the Lord drives forward.

Led by the dynamism of the Spirit, we know we are anointed to put our lives at the service of the new evangelization. As a missionary family, as sons of Claret.

In our mission we feel impelled to cultivate the ability to recognize and read the signs of the times and places inspired by the Spirit. To the glory of God, the good of the Church and the service of humanity.

We do not live or serve in any haphazard way; we do so in line with our charismatic identity. Our mission is a 'superior product': the forge of the Heart of Mary.

The grace from our vocational gift makes us servants of the Word in the Church. This is expressed as such in our Constitutions: "The ministry of the word, through which we communicate the total mystery of Christ to humanity, is our special calling among the People of God. For we have been sent to proclaim the Lord's life, death and resurrection, until he comes, so that all who believe in him may be saved" (CC 46).

2. Reflection

2.1. Missionary service of the Word. This is our purpose!

With the celebration of Pentecost still in our hearts, at this point of ordinary time, let us go back over our own mission.

It is a blessing to be able to celebrate Pentecost. Thanks to the gift received, each of us Claretians have been growing in awareness that our lives are otherwise occupied, that our steps are guided and escorted; that the wind from the Spirit fills the sails of our boat, that charity urges us onwards, that the hand of the Star of Evangelization throws us forward.

Those of us who have drunk from the same Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:13) and have allowed ourselves to be regenerate by him, know we are sent to live what we are, to bear witness by how we live, to participate in the realization of the dream that God has for humanity. Because when we talk about our mission, this is what we are meaning.

That's it: we are talking about a way of being, of living, of meaning, of acting. Almost nothing at all! It would be a mission impossible if it were only the work of our own hands. A mission impossible if it only consisted of what we, beings made of dust, think, plan, organize and carry out. A mission impossible if it depended on our skill, on our ability, on our strength and wisdom ...

It is fortunate to be able to truly confess that we “have received a calling” to follow Christ like the Apostles (cf. CC 4). That “we have received a calling” to be ministers and servants of the Word. That “we have received a calling” to communicate the mystery of Christ in its entirety.

When we are with other evangelizers, when we talk to other priests, religious and laity, **it becomes increasingly clear that ours is the missionary service of the Word.**

This has already been clearly expressed in the first Chapter of renewal (1967): “The charism, the spirit and mission of the Congregation, within the Church, is the missionary service of the Word. This ministry or service consists of communicating the mystery of Christ to mankind” (DC, 20).

Since the missionary service of the Word is our own objective, we are also clear that it is neither wholly, singularly, or uniquely to be found in the Church. Ours is one of the ways that the Spirit has led the Church to carry out God’s plan, the projects of his Heart. We are, along with many others, collaborators in the great divine dream.

Let’s go back a little in time, to the years following the 1991 General Chapter. Let’s mentally leaf through the booklets of that wonderful project called “Word-Mission”. In the last pages of the brochure that explains the project, in the first volume, there is a text that we can review and read again. It is entitled: “Eleven points on the missionary service of the Word.”

Let’s look carefully at what is said there. By way of headlines, trying to summarize different aspects, dimensions, and the dynamics of meaning the missionary service of the Word has for us Claretians, it emphasized the following:

- it is the basic criterion for assessing our work, our institutions and our people;
- it is the pivot around which all our lives rotate;
- it is a gift, a charismatic gift, which becomes a ministry (through baptism and holy orders and through our profession);
- it is born and nurtured in our experience of being servants, disciples and being sent;
- it is rooted in the ecclesial communion and converts us into collaborators and energetic assistants of the Bishops;
- it refers primarily to the fact that it is the Word of God, the whole mystery of Christ that we have to communicate;
- it puts us in a state of permanent spiritual and apostolic discernment;
- it pours out through our words, demanding consistency with the proclaimed Message;
- it develops into a permanent “dialogue of life”;
- it is both service and ministry that is radically missionary, prophetic and eschatological-apocalyptic.

What we have received is serious and beautiful. As expressed beautifully in the words of Fr Gustavo Alonso: “The mission is the heart of our charism.”

From time to time, if we return to these dimensions, it can stimulate in us that constant process of living it in an increasingly integrated way, like the master thread of the tapestry of our existence and activity as missionaries.

It’s good to know what we are in the Church; to understand it clearly, live it naturally, simply and with passion. How are we living it? What do you say to yourself about it?

Exercise 1: Eleven points about the missionary service of the Word

Find time to re-read and reflect on this text which you can find in **Word-Mission, volume 1 Pentateuch: So that man might live**, Presentation of the project (pp.12-16)

1. Read the following text.
2. Linger over the paragraph(s) that have a deeper impact.
3. Link faces, situations, experiences etc., any elements or dimensions of your own missionary service of the Word, as you continue reading and reflecting.
4. In your prayer, put before the Lord all that you find most difficult to integrate into your life.
5. Re-work the text and insert those elements which, at this moment in time, shape your own missionary service of the Word.



2.2. The Trinity in the background. Common cause of allies!

It frequently happens that there is almost always some distance separating theory from practice. It is likely that, theoretically, we are in agreement about our mission essentially being a gift that we receive, a grace that we are blessed with, an affair in which God is definitely involved. But it also happens that, in periods or stages of our lives, in situations or concrete circumstances, or the way in which projects develop which shape our mission, we might be living as if we were lords and masters (blatantly or discreetly), as if it all essentially depended on us. What should we call this: protagonism, Promethean disposition, pseudo-Messianism, pride, activism....?

On the other hand, some situations that occur amongst us, which tell of people exhausted and burned out by their missionary work, of despair and discouragement caused by a sense of failure, by the layers of bureaucracy..... they may also have something to do with our way of understanding the practice and lifestyle of missionary work.

It's a good thing to begin with the deep conviction of faith that we are not alone in what we are doing. **In the fulfilment of our vocation and mission, we are neither orphans nor are we called to be giants.**

Let us go back to basics. Yes. God has a plan (call it what you will: design, project, dream....). He wants all of humanity to be saved, and to come to know the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2, 4-5). He wanted it, he wants it, and will want it (come what may). And when God wants something, he truly wants it: "His plan stands forever, and his heart's design through all generations" (Ps 32, 11).

If this is the case, and we believe it firmly, the most sensible thing to do would be to ally ourselves with Him. Yes, that we form an alliance with Him. And tell Him that we are with Him in the undertaking. That we are signing up to his plan, and to the way he wants it to be developed over time (a style which, without a doubt and in all sincerity, will be a long way from what would come out of us naturally).

Let's pay heed to what the psalmist says: "Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain do its builders labour" (Ps 126, 1). And God also works during the night: "Whoever says that God is dead/ let him come out to the light and see/ if the world is or is not a project/ from a God who is still awake". Faith in the provident love of God, and our acknowledged trust (in Him we live, move and have our being) in his presence make us live the mission as a collaborative project.

Our goal is to support the Father's action which is at work in every human being. The seed planted by the Father in the heart of each person, and which he continues to nurture, is our ally in the task of evangelization. Put as follows: "we share in the mission that comes from God" (MFL 47). We will have to make the conditions favourable so that this seed is not hidden and ignored. We will have to seek the wisdom of the expert gardener, the patient labourer. But all this with the conviction that man is "capax Dei", who has written on his heart his yearning for the Father's House, his desire for communion with divinity.

What also plays in our favour is the certainty that we have been created in the image of Jesus Christ. The Son is always our reference: "Ecce Homo". **Jesus is the visible face of what it is to be human in all its authenticity, in all its grandeur, the most accomplished human being of all.** In Him, we clearly see what we are, and what God wants for each of us, because Jesus is the "perfect man", perfection attained through human nature (cf GS 22). For that reason, the person who follows Him becomes more and more perfect in his own human dignity (cf GS 41).

Jesus is the human face of God's manner of being and doing. He thought, he lived and he acted like a human being. Created in the image of the Son means that our essential nature (as the Theologians say) is 'Christic'. Like the Father, so also the Son works in each human being. And we can collaborate in the work of God with the deep conviction that everything truly human, and all that is best within human nature, connect with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and bring it to fulfilment (Mt 5, 17)

Besides, our principal, unconditional ally is the Holy Spirit. How often have we said, spoken and preached that He is the principal Agent of evangelization! The Spirit works within the hearts of people, of cultures, of social movements, in the very veins of history.....**It is the Spirit that prepares our hearts, that opens them up to receive the Good News.** The Spirit is the one that converts us, who gives us our knowledge of God, who gives us the gift of repentance.....

What a great opportunity it is to re-read, meditate on and savour the Acts of the Apostles: the inspiration of the Spirit which from the beginning helps, sustains and activates the witnesses of the Resurrected Christ.

We can only see our mission through, if we stretch to learn the grammar of the Spirit; if we familiarize ourselves with his way of making his presence felt in the hearts of people and communities; if we fine tune our hearing to detect the whispers; if we are awake to receive his calls, to support his initiatives, to set sails of the mission in the direction from which his Wind blows. The Spirit is the major ally in our mission.

All this will have some very practical and specific consequences on the way we shape and mould the missionary work that is entrusted to us. More evangelical styles. Styles more in keeping with the Gospel.

It wouldn't go amiss if, each morning, in our personal prayers, we began with the conjugation of the verb "to collaborate", or the verb "to support" (in the style of a mantra: "I collaborate with...", "we support..."), and to follow this with translation exercises of what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, and to continue with a period of contemplation on what was

truly human that we saw with our own eyes during the previous day's labours. Meaning that every day we awaken our awareness of being "collaborators" in the work of the Lord.

No. Our daily routines, our registers, our points of reference, our use of electronic devices.....they cannot be the same as employees in a company, business or local administrative office.....

To feel humbly like God's collaborators, recognizing and supporting his action which quietly and un-demonstratively goes on around us: that's where the true servants of the Word operate; they are the ones who really work to integrate the mission of evangelization into their lives; they are the ones who seek a faithful reading of the successes and failures, or their hesitations and doubts, in order to align themselves more closely with the divine action, to grow a little closer to the way He does things.



Exercise 2: Following the trail of the Trinity's action

1. During a quiet period, taking your time.....you can ask for this grace of contemplating the action of the three Persons in your work, or in the people with whom you interact on the mission.
2. Start with a meditation on the text of the Word of God:

"So we put out to sea from Troas and sailed straight across to Samothrace Island, and the next day to Neapolis. From there we went inland to Philippi, the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We spent some days in that city. On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the bank of the river where we thought the Jews would gather to pray. We sat down and began speaking to the women who were gathering there. One of them was a God-fearing woman named Lydia from Thyatira city, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. After she had been baptized together with her household, she invited us to her house, "If you think you are faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house". And she persuaded us to accept her invitation" (Acts 16, 11-15)

3. From this scene, go over moments in your life in the service of evangelization, in which you have been able to identify this reality, in which you have been a witness to how the Lord acts through his Spirit: how the Lord prepares, opens up the heart and makes it accessible.....make use of our mediation....
4. Give thanks to God.

2.3. Basic dispositions: alertness, availability, catholicity...

From the basic confidence of knowing we collaborate in God's work, with the serenity that comes from experiencing that we have powerful allies in our mission: that's how we give direction to our missionary life. And in the light of that we re-position many things in our lives. Because of that, for example, we understand the task which our Constitutions recommend for us: "they should above all foster a sense of alertness....a sense of availability....a sense of catholicity..." (cf. CC 48).

One of the meanings of the verb "to foment" is "to revive with warmth". Some synonyms have a similar meaning: to nurture, to revive, to promote, to stimulate ... In this exhortation made to us, there is an element that has to do with stimulating care, passionate diligence. We may understand it more in conjunction with other verbs in the Constitutions such as "to procure" ...

This task connects directly with the quality of our spiritual life. In the background, it is a task that is done in the "forge" each day. And it's a reasonably reliable thermometer for finding out if we are genuinely interested in what we are and if, heart and soul, we really want to be what we are.

Where and how can we foment these basic dispositions? There are no spaces reserved, exclusively for us. What we must have is a real determination, a strong craving, a yearning that will contrive to find ways and means.

Sense of alertness to what is most urgent, for what is most opportune, for what is most effective. There is almost a note of arrogance here. But we know from experience that when we are captivated by a cause, when we feel a strong sense of urgency ... that sense is activated.

We are not referring to reasoning here, but the ability to immediately perceive something, a sharp sense of perception of where the crux of the matter lies (the quid). It's a quest for answers to that concern which, in moments of honesty, pester the heart: **"For me as a Claretian missionary, what is it today and here, in these circumstances, in this context, that I understand to be the greatest need, the loudest call, the greatest challenge? What answer should be given according to God's design and by what means? How do we make it operational, give it life, shape it?"** This concern, this movement of the heart is personal, but demands collective discernment, points of view and dialogue with others.

One of the things that we can be thankful for as Claretians is that we participated in that collective search which, at every moment, has required of us a missionary charism.



Some Claretians will criticise the increased number of meetings, encounters, instruments of consultation... You can understand why. But we should be touched by a conviction: that kind of mini-synodal dynamism which has been brought into play by our Congregation in order to hear the Lord's voice and better understand the whys and wherefores of our missionary response, is the result of the grace and the action of the Spirit (although it has had its shadows and its flaws).

Moreover, there is the impression that **our Congregation has grown during this time in its sensitivity to picking up the message of the synodal process of the universal Church**, and so we have placed our contribution to the "one mission of the Church" on a more ecclesial footing.

Fomenting a sense of alertness is a basic provision for every conscious believer; the same is also true for all the charisms and ministries in the Church. Our rule of life asks us to develop this sense "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" (CC 48).

This attention to temporal, local and personal circumstances is a guaranteed requirement that we take seriously the "today" of salvation, the law of the Incarnation and the need for inculturation. And the warning to not anchor ourselves in specific methods or means is consistent with what we are seeking, since it would be ridiculous to maintain what is no longer appropriate to achieving the aim that we are pursuing. The missionary stamp claims that creativity which takes our response to the new challenges seriously ("new wine, new wine-skins": Mk 2:18-22).

Much ground is gained in this task of fostering a sense of alertness when, in ordinary life, we are awake, alert to what is happening around us, looking and being interested beyond the four houses you can see from the window, and an anxiety in the heart that encompasses not just our neighbourhood, people or culture. Read, think, study, compare ... with eyes of faith, with urgency in the heart, in obedience to the mission ... That is what it is to foment the basic dispositions to carry out a tireless missionary service of the Word.



And it must also foment our sense of availability.

When you nurture a sense of alertness, it includes the requirement of being "ready to abandon all that they have grown accustomed to in order to fulfil their duty of spreading the faith...." (cf. CC 48).

Although it all sounds very basic, the first thing you need to promote a sense of availability is to be in possession of yourself. No one can make himself available if he does not own himself. Personal growth, maturation, balance, unity of life.... are all the prerequisites needed for availability. Surely you will remember how the Congregation, in several General Chapters, insisted on cultivating human bases for our lives of fraternal communion and our consecration. It can not be otherwise. He who is dominated by fear, or the desire to feel safe, or the compulsive search for gratification ... you can not ask him to be available.

Everything we do to make progress every day in our missionary life gives substance to the nature of our availability, in actually doing something.



We cannot be available to order, can we? It happens from a sense of inner freedom. In fact, when you are willing to give up everything you have, the process of availability kicks in. It is an exercise that, in part, is conjugated by the verb "to let loose". And, even though it brings with it a measure of pain, it is shaped by our acquiescence to the Spirit and in obedience to the demands of the mission, and creates a serene spiritual joy.

The practice of revising positions (such as permanent dynamism) which, not without some difficulty and reluctance on the part of some, has become part of congregational life, and requires us to keep ourselves available for today's mission in each place.

By reading the Constitutions we find that, at all levels of government, it is emphasized as a serious responsibility on the part of everyone to keep the Congregation on the ball, available, determined in mind, and free to fulfill the service of the Church and of "all mankind" (cf. CC 136. 113).

The third disposition which is required of us is that we foment the sense of catholicity. Being heirs of Claret, it is not unusual that we are being asked this. In Booklet 8 we have occasion to return to this in greater depth.

We must now give thanks to God for the fact that, during this period of congregational life, the conditions for each Claretian to expand this dimension of our missionary charism, and the way we carry

it through, has grown enormously. Nobody can deny that, theoretically, the missionary expansion that we have experienced as a religious family, allows those who are available to expand their mental horizons, and to broaden and increase their appreciation of new peoples, races and cultures. For instance, to leaf through the Claretian yearbook or the newsletters of various organisms, or glance at a variety of web pages.....they all invite us to overcome our merely local perspective, our parochialism, our unwillingness to change ... and to grow in our high esteem of other values present in other parts of the world ...

To have a Catholic mind and heart means to grow skilful in discarding prejudices, in dismantling

ideological arguments, in jumping over barriers of race, culture and religion. Having a Catholic mind and heart is to be open to the whole world, its peoples and ways of life. Catholicity is an invitation to discard laziness, which comes with the temptation when one is excessively attached (accustomed) to a culture, a part of the world, a way of exercising the ministry.

To put us in a position for broadening our catholicity is a self-evident task which should compete for time in the Congregation's government. Each of us has the potential to enrich ourselves with it and make our missionary service more authentic, and our minds and hearts more Catholic.

Exercise 3: Acknowledgements

1. Find the list of the people who make up your Organism (Province, Delegation...). You can make use of the Catalogue.
2. Spend time going over their names and making them present in your mind. It is highly likely that from this group of people, you have received something of value, which has to do with our style of mission.
3. Try looking at those people using your sense of alertness, your sense of availability and your sense of Catholicity for the mission. Now without thinking about it, even with a touch of humour, put by each name one of the three initials: A (alertness), Av (availability), C (Catholicity)
4. Open your heart to those people who have clearly betrayed these traits, and whose life witness has inspired your own journey as a Claretian Missionary. (If you feel up to it, you could even send a note of thanks to one of your brothers).
5. You can also do the exercise bearing in mind those people you have known (priests, catechists, educators.....) during your work in the service of the Kingdom.

2.4. Ecclesial communion: “to feel with the Church”

We make up that sector of the People of God called the Congregation of the Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which (as a truly and fully-fledged apostolic Institute) belongs to the life and holiness of the Church (like the other charisms of the consecrated life). That is to say, that our second homeland is the Congregation; our first homeland is the Church. **Ecclesiality is in the DNA of our charism.**

Our Founder was a fervent son of the Church. He was urged on by the grace he had for really looking closely at his own weaknesses, and to live out his gift from God with such honesty, that helped to enhance the beauty of the Church. We are heirs of a believer who loved the Church, who felt at one with the Church, who rejoiced in its holiness and suffered because of its sin.

From the outset, the ecclesiality, the sense of fellow feeling with the Church, the ecclesial community ... none of this should pose a problem for any Claretian. However, there are times when a note of

concern, about how to live this dimension of our missionary service of the Word, rears its head. You can hear about or read things connected with peoples' disaffection, a parallel magisterium, and the absence of communion; or things that point to “parochialization”, to assimilation into diocesan life, etc..

From time to time, it is healthy that these clear, direct questions are given attention: **How am I living my ecclesial communion, how do I feel it, how do I encourage it to grow?** What does “feeling with the Church” mean for me? What triggers are activated in my mind and in my heart for the missions?

This is a chapter from the book of our personal and congregational life, that everyone will have to write from a perspective of warmth, honesty and creative fidelity to the charismatic roots that we have.

It is always a good time to be honest. At this period of time, even more so. The “new evangelization” in which we are involved, isn't it demanding of us,

among other things, a climate of Catholic fellowship, a commonly shared vision? Honesty will lead us to recognize the importance of what is at stake, as well as the necessary corrections or adjustments both to our focus and to the activity we will have to see through. All this would be a great service to ourselves, to the Congregation and to the universal Church.

To bring to bear on the Catholic communion all the charismatic and institutional energies of God's people is a complex process which often creates tensions and conflicts. Anyone of any maturity will understand that.

If at a certain point in ecclesial life, a certificate of citizenship had to be awarded for "Mutuae Relationes", it was just an expression of appreciation for the richness and abundance of life that must be channelled for the good of the Church, and as an instrument of orientation for the different countries, and of the specific ways of establishing communion for mission. Feeling with the Church is, in this sense, recognizing her wealth of diversity (of services, charisms, gifts, ministries, energy ...) and the resulting complexity that communion brings with it, the interrelation ... History, from the first chapters of Christianity, illustrates this reality.

It matters a lot where we stand, how our eyes see and read this ecclesial reality. Perhaps we need to put greater emphasis on the language that involves us personally. In short: speaking of the Church in the first person. **No, not "they", we are the Church. All of us. All charisms and vocations, all states and lifestyles.**

It's good to stop for a moment to take stock of what I am saying when I say "Church" (what am I talking about?, To whom am I speaking? ...). What am I really saying when I say "Church"?

Talking and feeling about the Church in the first person helps remove certain stereotypes (both "conservative" and "progressive") that have done a disservice to the image that we as a Church give to civil societies and which has not borne healthy fruit in-

side the Catholic communion.

Without losing the charismatic freedom that we enjoy, and which we should not have to give up, moderation and careful deliberation would suit us well, when making public our personal positions on everything that is sensitive in the field of inter-Church communion. Through a sense of responsibility, through respect for the ecclesial "we", through a true appreciation of those who want to bring the Good News of salvation.

The communion that is taking shape and is palpable: this is certainly evangelization, it is a service to the mission. In that sense, "feeling with the Church" is to give a face to the Church. In a simple, quiet, stimulating, constructive way. Insofar as we create "Church" in our missionary work, either from the pastoral platform, or from the point of view of being sure of strengthening communion and verifying the mission. This stands out and the people can see it.

No one can ask us to turn a blind eye to what is wrong. Nobody can ask us to call what is bad, good. **But, as we are called to recognize our own failings and personal sins in the light and warmth of God's mercy, in the same way we must look at, take on board and deal with the church's sins and weaknesses.** We have to do it knowing full well that they are our sins and weaknesses as well, and the purity of the Gospel always comes to us through an impure channel. All this must be taken into account not only in theory, but should also be kept at the forefront of our minds, as a focus and as a criterion for dealing with specific situations, problems and tensions in church life.

And within the ecclesial communion, it isn't right to be generous in our indulgence and understanding of the sins and weaknesses of people from other parts, and never practice those same attitudes with those on the inside (or even to be with them would be harder and unsympathetic).

The weaknesses and sins of the Church can, ultimately, only be borne with evangelical dignity when we are able to integrate them into the faith; that is, the ecclesial cross forms part of this dynamic of faith. And since what it is not taken as given can not be redeemed, or healed, or elevated, we will always have need of that serene lucidity to detect where the shadows are and that patient determination to achieve greater levels of authenticity.

Forms of consecrated life (including us) are called to be "experts in communion". We must not forget it at any time during the year of our missionary service of the Word.



Exercise 4: Lights and shadows

1. In two columns, make a note of the values you have discovered both in the Congregation and in the universal church.

CONGREGATION

Province or Delegation

CHURCH

Local church

2. Next to each characteristic, each value, you can make notes of those aspects that appear to be shadows.
3. Now take a look at your own Organism (Province, Delegation....) and at the local church in which your community is located. Note down new characteristics that you discover.
4. Look at the Church, look at the Congregation and contemplate yourself (as a son of the Church, as a son of the Congregation)
5. Now study what you have written. Try to discover the possible relationships, implications and connections that are evident.
6. Give thanks to the Lord.

2.5. Question of freedom

The more we read Chapter VII of the Constitutions, the better we understand that our mission is a matter of freedom. As is everything truly evangelical!

Only free people, touched by the grace of God, are those that transform reality, those that allow what is most authentic and genuine to grow and develop in the Church for the service of the world. Free people are the ones most likely to be served by God, to move his plan of salvation forward in the history of the world. Free people will be served by the Spirit to renew and reform families, institutions and ecclesial projects.

Don't you get the feeling that what we need in society, in the Church, in the Congregation are people who are truly, absolutely, resolutely, and boldly free?

Missionary service of the Word, to be lived in a spirit of truth and authenticity, requires Claretians who have travelled the long road to freedom; who have discarded the 'safety chains' of Egypt and have been guided through the desert (carrying no more than they absolutely needed) and, stripped of themselves, have been re-clothed with the freedom of Passover.

If we did not ask for this gift (with tears in our eyes) it will bear little fruit in our ministry. Getting ourselves prepared for the mission, which in our state of weakness is the task of the Spirit, we are asked to be willing to take on board the whole pro-

cess until, as a swift arrow, it is ready for launching. To freely consecrate ourselves to our missionary (cf. CC 49). It can not be otherwise. There is no mission without freedom.

And we well know that "only from love can freedom germinate, / only from faith can wings grow". There is no freedom without having experienced what it is to know that we are freely loved and saved. There is no freedom without the bold confidence that comes of knowing that we are sustained and guided in life. "God alone suffices." Without the experience of unconditionality, there is little hope of discarding excess baggage. We will only burn the boats when God is "more than sufficient" in our lives (Aut 445). Without additions.

Christian freedom is the fruit of love and faith.

We are also becoming aware that what carries a high price is theological experience: to live by faith and love, "to be born again" (cf. Jn 3:3). The rule of the new life in Christ is a gift and task. Therefore, freedom (daughter of the Exodus and Easter) is not something we can take for granted; it is something we have to ask for confidently, yearn for sincerely and work for honestly.

In our inner selves, in ecclesial structures, we will always find nesting the larvae of subservience, sub-mission and slavery. Only the antivirus of the Lord's Cross can counteract the poison. Are we calmly willing to make that offering?

Getting used to it. It is a temptation, a sin that doesn't even appear as such. For that reason, it is

so seductive. Almost without realizing it, we become part of the group of his loyal followers. Living a life of vigilance, open to the surprises of the Spirit, all this should become daily bread that becomes part of our diet, if we truly want to walk along the paths of loyalty.

Worshipping the calf. It is a temptation, a sin that requires sharp discernment to uncover it and confess it. Calves of security, of professionalism, of self-realization ... they have to disappeared from our current circumstances. They demand time, energy and dedication which must be stolen for our worship of the one true and living God. It is clear that to worship two masters will, sooner or later, have a price to pay, and live in state of inauthenticity always ends badly. To renew our baptismal vows, to relive our act of religious profession, should not be reserved only for "special" occasions; its internal dynamism needs to be incorporated into the daily heartbeat of our missionary work.

Conformity, idols, lack of self-surrender ... It is good that each one of us, in the sincerity of his own conscience, takes note of the cutbacks, the obstacles and the pitfalls that beset their sense of freedom to

carry out our service to God and to our brothers. And, with eyes wide open, to continue along the path of liberation putting our faith in grace, without omitting the channels which the wisdom of our religious family has put at our disposal. You will have occasion to return to all this in the **Booklet 9**.

"They gave up their lives going to death" (Rev 12:11). This is the testimony and a permanent lesson from free people: the martyrs of all times. Thank God that the Claretian Missionaries have somewhere to look to, and have people to intercede for us on our way to freedom. **A little over a year ago, the movie "A forbidden God", about the 51 martyrs of Barbastro, was released.** Their testimony and their intercession will undoubtedly help us to take on our duty more readily, "to faithfully and boldly proclaim the Good News of the kingdom especially since there are many, led astray by the lure of power, wealth or lust, who oppose it"(CC 46).

Exercise 5: On the road to freedom

1. During a quiet moment, reflect on the theme of freedom in your life as a Claretian missionary.
2. What do you feel free from? From what have you been liberated? Why is it you feel free? How is your freedom sustained?
3. Give thanks to the Lord.



Organize a community encounter with one of those in charge of pastoral work in the local church where the community is.

Depending on the kind of pastoral work being carried out by the Community, **you can invite the Pastoral Vicar or the Arch-priest or the delegate in charge of Catechesis and Teaching or ICT.**

The purpose of the meeting is to share experience of ecclesial communion and exchange ideas on the vision and value of both the Claretian community and the Church.

To make the most of this meeting, we offer the following suggestions:

1. The Claretian community, in the days leading up to the meeting, should get together to share a personal vision about the life of the Church: its lights and shadows. This is an attempt to become more aware of how people feel about the Church and how they are living ecclesial communion.
2. A member of the Community should make notes of this, with a view to the scheduled meeting.
3. At the said meeting, prayers should be said expressly for the local Church.
4. With sufficient forewarning, the Superior should finalize the date and the form of the meeting, and inform the diocesan representative.
5. In the same community encounter with the diocesan representative in charge of Pastoral work, there should also be included:
 - Relevant information about the Claretian community and about the local church.
 - A discussion about how the community perceives the local church and how the diocesan representative views the role of the Claretians in that particular Church.
 - A time of shared prayer.

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

Living from day to day, being guided by the Spirit of the Lord; this is what Ordinary Time invites us to, to take it up again after celebrating the Solemnity of Pentecost. To live every day as a Servant of the Word of the Church is what we are called to.

During the 37 days covered by **Booklet 5**, the Word of God will provide you with food: its light, its orientation, its demands, its interpellation ... welcomed with an open heart, he will continue to work through us: to reshape us as listeners and servants of Him, who is our focus and sustains our missionary life.

In the following five weeks you are going to celebrate liturgy of great importance: the feast of Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest (in some countries), the solemnities of the Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, Nativity of St. John the Baptist, Heart of Jesus, Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The reminder of great apostolic figures (St. Barnabas, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Peter and St. Paul, St. Thomas, St. Benedict, St. Bonaventure) will spur on your pastoral commitment. As with our Founder, so also with us, to remember these great followers of the Lord will stimulate us in missionary service.

On feast days the first readings are taken from 1 and 2 Kings, Amos, Hosea and Isaiah.

The Gospel of Matthew will be our major companion at this time. The section we will meditate on (Matthew 5-11) shows the proclamation of the proximity of the kingdom of heaven, a proclamation that is addressed to everyone. Jesus, the new Moses, preaches the Kingdom, with words and deeds, and extends this message through his disciples.

To listen to the Master, and watching him announce and make present the Kingdom of God, is the gift that you will be offered by the Liturgy of the Word, day by day.

4. Guidelines for the "lectio divina"

Monday, June 9, 2014

- 1 Kings 17: 1-6
- Psalm 120
- Mt 5: 1-12

What shall we proclaim? What flows from our hearts and spills from our lips? Is it a proclamation of grace, of joy, of salvation ...? Behold the Master, seated on high, surrounded by his own ... Behold. Listen: "Blessed ones". The message is for you, who hungers and thirsts for happiness, who puts his very existence at risk, to achieve a successful life ... It's for you, invested with the grace of being the Lord's herald, you feel the urge to announce the good news today, to share the discovery of a treasure, to communicate the mystery of Christ to everyone ... Behold. Listen. Welcome. Learn. Give witness.

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

- 1 Kings 17: 7-16
- Psalm 4
- Mt 5: 13-16

How bright is your life? How pleasant is your existence? How varied and interesting are your daily activities, your duties? Those who see and hear you, to whom do they give glory; whom do they bless when they listen to your preaching, your teaching, your advice, your pastoral care? What is the music of your work? What dance is your evangelizing work in step with? If you are deprived of the tasty Bread, if you distance yourself from the burning Light ... If you become bland in all that you do ... If you hide behind the mask of duty ... If you lock yourself away in your privacy ... how can you bring salt and flavour to life, how are you going to be the light that illuminates the night! How will they give glory to God for your ministry!

Wednesday, June 11, 2014. Memorial of St. Barnabas, Apostle

- Acts 11: 21b-26, 13:1-3
- Psalm 97
- Mt 10: 7-13

"What you have received for free ...", "Don't take ...", "A good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and faith". Today, look at yourself in the mirror of the Word and in the mirror of the life of Barnabas. How goes your freely-given ministry? Does thanksgiving predominate in your prayer? Do you generously make yourself, your time and your resources available? What do you take and what do you leave behind when you go out on pastoral work, when you go out preaching the gospel? You are a servant of the Word in the Church; ask for the intercession of Barnabas. Our world, our Church, our Congregation needs good men, full of faith, servants of the universality of the Gospel, filled with the Spirit. Look for yourself in the Word, look for yourself in Barnabas.

Thursday, June 12, 2014. Feast of Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest (Cal CMF, 195-199)

- Is 52:13-53,12
- Psalm 39
- Heb 10: 11-18
- Lk 22: 14-20

With the Psalmist we confess: "I am here to do your will." The fire of his call has lit a fire in our hearts. Called to be servants like the Servant, to make an offering of our lives, to give ourselves as broken bread, to be more Eucharistic every day. He offered himself once and for all; his surrender of self is the fountain from which we drink in the ability to surrender ourselves each and every day, and then one more day ... We wish with all our hearts that He sits us at His Table and that He surrenders us as for food of his People.

Friday, June 13, 2014. Memorial of St. Anthony of Padua, priest and doctor of the Church. Priestly Ordination of St. Anthony Mary Claret (Cal CMF, 165-169)

- 1 Kings 19: 9,11-16
- Psalm 26
- Mt 5: 27-32

We can not be his followers, or his witnesses, if we refuse to let him change our thinking, the working criteria we use, the evaluations we do ... "But, I tell you." There are ideological principles, values currently in vogue, assumed standards of behaviour which are accepted and supported socially ... "But, I tell you." Yes. We will seek his face. We will respectfully cover ourselves, like Elijah, so that his revelation will come to pass. We will seek, Lord, your truth, your judgment, what You say ... although it is not "politically correct", even though we distance ourselves from society's way of thinking, even though "everyone" does not see it that way ...

Saturday June 14, 2014

- 1 Kings 19: 19-21
- Psalm 15
- Mt 5: 33-37

It is not enough not to swear false oaths. You should never swear at all. The word of Jesus goes much further, it goes to the very heart of the matter. We are interested in understanding what Jesus wanted. We want to understand what kind of community the Lord wanted: in terms of transparency, loyalty and trust. A yes, our yes, is a true commitment to the other person, so that our word is enough to provide security? If I say "yes" am I saying that you can count on me? Let what we say always be the truth, in mutual trust, so that our word is sufficient: a yes or a no. We are fragile and weak. Until now, we haven't been able to eliminate the oath. Will there come a day when we no longer have to appeal to any witnesses, since the other person, because he is my brother, will command my honesty and truthfulness?

SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 2014. SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY TRINITY

- Ex 34: 4-6.8-9
- Dn 3: 52-56
- 2 Cor 13: 11-13
- Jn 3: 16-18

We do not believe in any “god” nor in any God at random. We confess our faith in the engaging mystery of a God who is communion, communication, relationship, a giver, self surrender ... Our ministry becomes more integrated in the faith we profess: when our hands work to overcome isolation, disintegration, solitariness, separation, division; when our message is accompanied by specific endeavours to create family, to strengthen ties, to build bridges, to add energy ... On earth as it is in the communion of heaven. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Monday, June 16, 2014

- 1 Kings 21: 1-16
- Psalm 5
- Mt 5: 38-42

In our state as believers, we are moving towards those new values that are at the core of the Gospel. Overcoming revenge, is one of them. What do you do to break the cycle of damage, of wrongdoing, of violence; to move towards that goal to which the steps of the new family of the Lord take us? Let us nurture within ourselves, and in the practice of our mission, non-violent attitudes. Because that’s what the Father’s heart is like. Let’s try new courses of action that go beyond the mere fulfilment of the law. “It was said ... but I say to you”.

Tuesday, June 17, 2014

- 1 Kings 21: 17-29
- Psalm 50
- Mt 5: 43-48

The new life of the Gospel aims high. The reference point is the quality of the Father’s heart. We are not called to live a minimal existence. We do no service in our mission if we aim short; if we lower our sights in order to adapt, if we fall short in order to accommodate ... Ask yourself: up to what point can we extend our capacity to love, which has been gifted to us by the Lord, if we set our hearts on doing the job well? Even the enemy, the adversary, the persecutor ... can be touched by the truth and strength of our love. Do we dare to love as does our heavenly Father? That’s what this is all about!

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

- 2 Kings 2: 1.6-14
- Psalm 30
- Mt 6: 1-6.16-18

When you give alms, pray and fast; when you engage in pastoral work, when you interact with others, when you do anything in your day ... watch out for vanity! Don’t be showy or look for applause, don’t go looking for praise ... don’t spoil the good work! We should be attentive and recognize our own vulnerability to the risk of falling. May the Lord deliver us from the bondage of success, from merely trying to please people. What matters is the authenticity of our relationship, starting with our relationship with the heavenly Father. We should nurture it, look after it.

Thursday, June 19, 2014

- Sir 48: 1-15
- Psalm 96
- Mt 6: 7-15

The burning desire through which God’s dream for us and for the world becomes a reality (which the Kingdom is making manifest) leads us into prayer. The experience of God as our Father, who is urged to give his children the experience of kinship and brotherhood, comes to us as a blessing. Isn’t it true that when we pray with sincerity, we make the passionate desire of Jesus our own? Let’s pray with humility, because we know that it’s the fruit of grace: the basic necessity for each day, the forgiveness of our sins, peace among us, resistance to temptation, our release from the influence of evil. Isn’t it true that we don’t yet know how to pray as we should?

Friday, June 20, 2014

- 2 Kings 11: 1-4.9-18.20
- Psalm 131
- Mt 6: 19-23

The pleasure of accumulating things is like a poison. And it jeopardizes our exercise of the ministry for the people of God. People can forgive many weaknesses amongst ministers and servants of the Gospel. They can forgive us our faults. But, in terms of greed ... When they notice that pastors are greedy for money, which they accumulate for who knows what purposes, their ministry is deprived of authority. Keep a watch on our hearts. What is it focused on? What treasures, what riches?

Saturday, June 21, 2014. Memorial of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, religious

- 2 Chron 24: 17-25
- Psalm 88
- Mt 6: 24-34

The person who is concerned with too many things and overrates his own importance, or just cannot trust others and ends up supplanting the provident Father, who lovingly cares for all his creatures. Knowing that we are in the hands of the heavenly Father is a wonderful antidote to counteract our own solicitous nature. Isn’t it true that the Father loves us with a heart free from the needs and concerns that tend to stifle the Word? We must learn to ask that our hearts are freed from unnecessary concerns and are filled with the peace and serenity that God promises his children. Let’s do it today, at the start of the day, and seek to renew it as the day’s duties continue.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2014. SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

- Dt 8: 2-3,14-16
- Psalm 147
- 1 Cor 10: 16-17
- Jn 6: 51-58

Clothed with the resurrection, the Eucharist is the celebration of life. It gives us everything. Through it we receive everything: the word, the bread, the presence ... No Claretian missionary is without the daily Eucharist. No-one can be a servant of the Word in the Church if he abandons or neglects the Lord's Table. So venerate the mysteries of his Body and his Blood, so as to be transformed into what we eat and worship. Venerate the mysteries of his Body and Blood in such a way that it should get easier day by day to recognize him and serve him in those with whom he identified himself in a special way: "I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was in prison ..."

Monday, June 23, 2014. E. Pedro Mardones (Cal CMF, 179-185)

- 2 Kings 17: 5-8,13-15,18
- Psalm 59
- Mt 7: 1-5

Find out what the Lord really asks of us today, because we instinctively make judgments about everything that falls into our field of perception: people, situations, events ...? Is he pushing us towards the impossible, the impracticable? Let's look at this carefully: never judge anyone else's heart, because only the heavenly Father knows him; refrain from making categorical, damaging, definitive judgements ... Sincerely and humbly ask forgiveness for all our rash, hasty, pitiless, hard, unbending, damning judgements. We have a long road ahead.

Tuesday, June 24, 2014. Solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

- Is 49: 1-6
- Psalm 138
- Acts 13: 22-26
- Lk 1: 57-66,80

We welcome the invitation to profound joy and happiness made to us today, as we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist. As servants of the Word in the Church, we are aware of the reasons for our spiritual joy. Like John, we jump for joy because we know Jesus, the Lord, and our encounter with Him, has given meaning to our lives. Like John, we relive receiving the gift of the call ("he made my mouth like a sharpened sword, he made me into a polished arrow ...") Like John we recognize the duty before us: show him to the people as a Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Like John we know we are invited to stand firm in this testimony, even to the point of sacrificing our lives.

Wednesday, June 25, 2014

- 2 Kings 22: 8-13,23, 1-3
- Psalm 118
- Mt 7: 15-20

An invitation to realism: there are false prophets. A call to discernment: by their fruits you shall know them. False prophets exist and have the capacity to deceive us. Jesus warns us about the ones who don't flaunt themselves, who hide behind a camouflage: so gentle, affable, but end up wreaking havoc. We need to fine tune our perception. Be aware of the warning signs. And above all, to be aware of what the fruits are that give us the key to discern these situations. What are the fruits of authentic ministry, of true prophecy, of the mission of the servants of the Word in the Church? How are they manifest in us? What do you see in yourself?

Thursday, June 26, 2014

- 2 Kings 24: 8-17
- Psalm 78
- Mt 7: 21-29

The Sermon on the Mount ends with a strong call to build life on the solid rock of the Word of God. A call which today may become, in my heart and in yours, a beautiful invitation to stop and contemplate how we are building our lives as believers, where we have determined the way forward, on what kind of foundation our ministry, preaching, pastoral work, and missionary life all stand. ... We know that it is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord". We should recognize, like the contemporaries of the Lord, that He speaks with authority. Let's now, again, give due credit to his call, to his interpellations. So be it.

Friday, June 27, 2014. Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

- Dt 7: 6-11
- Psalm 102
- 1 John 4: 7-16
- Mt 11: 25-30

Jesus exultant with joy. Jesus overcome by the joy that gives him the unique experience that he has of God as "Abba". Jesus opens the doors of his Heart to reveal to us the mystery of the Father's Heart: his inclinations, predilections, his identity with little ones and those who are lost, the excluded, the disenfranchised ... To celebrate the Heart of Jesus is to enter into the core of revelation: "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God, for God is love." The great sin is not to love. The best form of worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to give your life over to love. As simple as that, without further comment.

Saturday, June 28, 2014. Solemnity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

- Is 61: 9-11
- 1 Samuel 2:1-8
- Gal 4: 4-7
- Lk 2: 41-52

The affairs of the Father, his plan, his project: his Reign. That is the key to understanding the person of Jesus, from his childhood. Nobody understands anything; nobody discusses anything, not even his own parents. Mary treasured all these things in her heart (here we have the first brushstroke of a model of a humble disciple of the Word). To contemplate Mary's heart is to explore the dynamics of how we can become true disciples of the Lord. To celebrate this feast day is, for all the Claretian Family, to reaffirm that, without tenderness, without heart, there is no mission. Happy Feast!

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 2014. ST. PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES AND PATRONS (CAL CMF, 187-199)

- Acts 12: 1-11
- Psalm 33
- 2 Tim 4: 6-8, 17-18
- Mt 16: 13-19

Our missionary service of the Word drinks from the same Pauline cup of evangelizing, of arousing faith, of strengthening communities of believers. To be “steadfast collaborators of the Shepherds” our missionary service of the Word is at the service of the ecclesial communion. Along with Peter and Paul, we make our confession of faith. In the centre of our lives, our work, our desires, our joys and sorrows, the most fundamental, the most vital, the most decisive is friendship, discipleship and our identification with Jesus. “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”, “For me, life is Christ.” Confess, bear witness, make all of this evident ... our lives should take this course, shouldn't it?

Monday, June 30, 2014

- Am 2: 6-10, 13-16
- Psalm 49
- Mt 8: 18-22

As with the “learned”, we are also moved by the desire to go in the footsteps of the Lord. As with the “learned” we are also reminded today about the Lord's way of life as a point of reference: He had nowhere to lay his head ... Like that other disciple who called for a deferment, so the Lord can ask both you and me today: what do you mean by the word ‘first’? What effectively counts as ‘first’ in your life and in your work? What takes up most of your energy? Availability without counting the cost, freedom without cutting corners, self-surrender without conditions The Son of Man always makes these demands of us ... Today is no different.

Tuesday, July 1, 2014

- Am 3: 1-8; 4: 11-12
- Psalm 5
- Mt 8: 23-27

The task of evangelization as a disciple of the Lord has never been easy. In every age and situation difficulties can arise and complicate things, so can hardships, adversities, failure and persecution. To grow in faith and trust is to open oneself up, especially in situations of collapse, to a real and mysterious presence, that of the Lord who seems to be asleep. Only faith and trust, proven and unquestioned, carries us along the road of discipleship. Who do you call upon during “the storm”? Who do you go to with your difficulties? Faith cuts through the darkness. Trust opens up new ways ...

Wednesday, July 2, 2014

- Am 5: 14-15, 21-24
- Psalm 49
- Mt 8: 28-34

Our ministry is clearly empowered to fight against the powers of evil. To continue winning ground against the forces that have so many people subjected to inhuman ways of life, is part of our task as disciples of the Messiah. It is a struggle in which we have to expect resistance and opposition. Let's be clear on this. Working on the recovery of lost dignity requires a commitment that not everyone can offer. There will always be those who are not interested in changing things because, in their calculations, it is not worthwhile. We must always stay close to the Lord in order to confront evil, and to do it for all to see, and bear the consequences ...

Thursday, July 3, 2014. Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle and co-Patron (Cal CMF, 205-209)

- Eph 2: 19-22
- Psalm 116
- Jn 20: 24-29

Here's a good opportunity to thank the Lord that His Word also tells our own stories, and portrays us realistically with our doubts and queries in our journey of faith. Today, imagine you are Thomas. Because ... well, we are all Thomas! Faith alone makes us blessed and disciples of the Lord. Only to have seen and touched in faith will make us blessed and disciples... Today go over the times you've touched the wounds of the Lord in faith (in the many people that you have been in contact with in the mission). Today, review the times you've seen the face of God in faith, in the many faces that you pass every day ... See and touch in faith. Today as well.

Friday, July 4, 2014

- Am 8: 4-6, 9-12
- Psalm 118
- Mt 9: 9-13

One of the most affectionate expressions of the new ways that come from the Master of Nazareth are the meals which are open to all, without discrimination of any kind, and the ‘scandalous’ meals with sinners, with people on the fringes of society ... How deep people have to dig before they take seriously the things of the Lord! How do our lives and mission progress when we put into practice the new ways that he taught us, that he proclaimed and practiced? Who are those who sit at the table of our pastoral work? Who is not there? Who are we going to look for? Who will we go out to meet?

Saturday, July 5, 2014

- Am 9: 11-15
- Psalm 84
- Mt 9: 14-17

Do you live with the knowledge that the feast of the Kingdom of God has already started, even in the midst of all the hardships, or perhaps the old ways still dog your heels, the old mentality, with its social rankings and the law? The Good News does not come as a temporary measure nor as patchwork; it's not simply a question of tweaking things here and there ... Our mission is to herald the new life, in Christ Jesus, the New Man. Friends of the Bridegroom shake off the inherited sadness. Friends of the Bridegroom can tell the taste of the new wine of the Kingdom. The friends of the groom are friends of the poor, the little people and the forgotten ... And what about us: who are we? Are we simply acquaintances or true friends of the Bridegroom?

SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2014. XIV SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Zec 9: 9-10
- Psalm 144
- Rom 8: 9.11-13
- Mt 11: 25-30

We must be trained and prepared... well trained and solidly prepared. Being Servants of the Word in the Church demands that we be, among other things, qualified and trained... This is necessary, but not sufficient. We will always need the gift that the Lord gives to the simple hearted. For the latter, we will need to beg and plead tirelessly; and open ourselves to the action of the Spirit. Let's be counted among those who go through life with a heart that is as open to gratitude and recognition as was the heart of Jesus. Today give heartfelt thanks to the Father through the revelation that he makes to ordinary people; be very thankful for the wisdom of the Gospel that you found in so many simple people you've known ...

Monday, July 7, 2014

- Ho 2: 14-16.19-20
- Psalm 144
- Mt 9: 18-26

Our reference is always Jesus Christ. In everything and for everything. "He expresses his love for the poor and the sick, for the little people and for sinners. He never remained indifferent to human suffering". The pain of the father and the shame of that woman in today's Gospel, bring together and summarize all our own personal and collective ills. If we live united with Him, the conqueror of sin and death, isn't it true that our words and deeds can become like medicine, health restorers, revitalizers ...? Only when we are united with the Living One, in communion with Him, can we communicate. Something we must never forget!

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

- Ho 8: 4-7.11-13
- Psalm 113 B
- Mt 9: 32-38

The summary made by the evangelist of the activity of the Master, today invites us to contemplate the Lord in order to learn (to look at him so as to imitate): he went here and there, he taught and healed people; to all the cities and villages, every synagogue, every disease ... We are called to leave behind our comfort and go to meet people ... We are called to teach all that He told us ... We are called to perform the actions that today will bring life, health and fulfilment ... With passion, with intensity, with a universal spirit: along all roads, to all the peoples ... As Claret said: "My spirit is for the whole world." From the urgency of evangelization, there naturally arises the plea: "Lord, send labourers out into your harvest."

Wednesday, July 9, 2014

- Ho 10: 1-3.7-8.12
- Psalm 104
- Mt 10: 1-7

"Jesus called his twelve disciples ...". "Go and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is near." Today we can go from the Word to the Constitutions and we can renew our vocational commitment for another day. "We... have also received a calling like that of the Apostles and have been granted the gift to follow Christ in a communion of life and to go out into the whole world to proclaim the good news to every creature" (CC 4). Renew your decision to advance along the path of discipleship ... Re-awaken your missionary zeal ... Then, and now, Jesus calls us and confers on us the authority to expel evil, to encourage the growth of goodness ... Thanks to Him that your name features on the list of his disciples.

Thursday, July 10, 2014

- Ho 11: 1b-4.8c-9
- Psalm 79
- Mt 10: 7-15

"Following Christ, then, as proposed in the Gospel, is for us the supreme rule". In today's proceedings, we again hear the Master when he puts forward the rules of the apostolic life: free from possessions, a detached and itinerant way of life ... How are we translating the demands of today's evangelical mission into the context in which we carry out our mission? What today does "cleanse the lepers" or "cast out demons" actually mean? How do we take the message of peace to houses, households, families, to those who have been abandoned ...? The itinerancy that is required of us, does that apply to the mind, to our attachments ...? Our mission style draws its strength from our contemplation of the Gospel.

Friday, July 11, 2014. Saint Benedict, Abbot, patron of Europe. Fr Felipe Maroto (Cal CMF, 211-215)

- Ho 14: 2-10
- Psalm 50
- Mt 10: 16-23

There is no mission without a cross. No discipleship without self-surrender. In history, there has been no real community of the Lord without persecution. In the school of discipleship, sooner or later, we must study the subject of self-surrender and conjugate the verb "to suffer". Through communion with the Master (no disciple is ever greater than He is), through fidelity to the Message (there are always anti-kingdom forces rising up against the Kingdom), through accepting the consequences of taking love and service seriously ... But, never alone. In no situation are you left to your own devices. The Spirit of our Father (and our Mother) will speak in us, will become the strength in our weakness.

Saturday, July 12, 2014

- Is 6: 1-8
- Psalm 92
- Mt 10: 24-33

The cause of the Gospel is not a lost cause, even though sometimes it seems it. It's not lost because it is in the hands of the heavenly Father. Jesus lived this truly unique experience. The experience of God as his "Abba" was the source of his wisdom, of his extraordinary self-assurance and of his radical freedom. Why do we find it hard to take his message seriously, or live as He lived and face up to the difficulties, the pain, the suffering and the surrender of one's life as he did? Perhaps, put simply, because God is not for us than He was for Him ... Let's continue walking towards that experience of God. "Even the hairs of your head have been numbered. So do not fear..."

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 2014. XV SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 55: 10-11
- Psalm 64
- Rm 8: 18-23
- Mt 13: 1-23

The force and power of the seeds of the Gospel come with God's guarantee. It's true to say that the way he does it, right from the start, is a long way from what one would expect in terms of productivity and business efficiency. The harvest will be generous, God guarantees it. Our duty is to sow generously, liberally. And do it with the deep conviction that the Lord will watch over the growth and the fruit. Our lot is to reflect, so that everyone of us (seeing ourselves reflected in the mirror of the Word), can discover what attitudes, barriers and impediments we bring to the seeds that the Lord wants to become fruitful and produce a splendid harvest.

Monday, July 14, 2014

- Is 1: 11-17
- Psalm 49
- Mt 10: 34-11.1

When we have made our commitment to the Lord, we know we have taken sides. To the extent that his Word and his Plan are at the centre of our thinking, feeling and acting, everything else will occupy peripheral positions in our lives. When the Word and Jesus' Plan are established within us, we will gradually assimilate the evangelical paradoxes, and the apparent contradictions will gradually dissolve, and we will discover the meaning of this new logic of the Kingdom. What is it 'to lose'? What is 'winning'? Ask yourself that from your point of view, in the circumstances you have chosen to live. We know that at best we are never going to win over the Lord, so: what's the big concern?

Tuesday, July 15, 2014. Memorial of St. Bonaventure, bishop and doctor of the Church

- Is 7: 1-9
- Psalm 47
- Matthew 11: 20-24

We have been blessed abundantly. The means, resources and dynamics within our reach to respond to such an offer of grace have been copious... But as we know, all this is no safe guarantee of a generous, loyal, enthusiastic, dedicated response ... In line with the Lord's heartfelt lament about the meagre progress made in places where he had invested most energy, dedication and signs of his ministry (Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum) we should examine our narrow-mindedness, resistance and justifications on our life's journey and mission. Today we pray for the important grace to be truly in a permanent state of personal conversion and to encourage ongoing reform of ecclesial life.



Appendix 1: Instruction “Mutuae Relationes”, n. 12

Every authentic charism implies a certain element of genuine originality and of special initiative for the spiritual life of the Church. In its surroundings it may appear troublesome and may even cause difficulties, since it is not always and immediately easy to recognize it as coming from the Spirit.

The specific charismatic note of any institute demands, both of the Founder and of his disciples, a continual examination regarding fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the Church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities. The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross, which, above every motive that may justify misunderstandings, is supremely helpful in discerning the authenticity of a vocation.

Individual religious, too, certainly possess personal gifts, which without doubt usually come from the Spirit. They are intended for the enrichment, development and rejuvenation of the life of the institute, in the unity of the community and in giving proof of renewal. Discernment of such gifts, however, and their correct use will be measured according to the consistency they show both with the community commitment of the Institute and with the needs of the Church as judged by legitimate authority.

5. Texts to go deeper

Appendix 2: “Mutuae Relationes”, n. 15

The mission of the People of God is one. In a certain sense it constitutes the heart of the entire ecclesial mystery. The Father, in fact, “has consecrated the Son and sent [Him] into the world” (Jn10:36), “Mediator between God and men” (AG 3). On Pentecost “Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father to exercise inwardly His saving influence, and to promote the spread of the Church” (AG4). Thus the Church, throughout her history, “is by her very nature missionary” (AG 2; cf. LG 17), in Christ and in virtue of the Spirit. All -- pastors, laymen and religious -- each according to his specific vocation, are called to be apostolically committed (cf. n. 4). This commitment arises from the love of the Father; the Holy Spirit, then, nourishes it, “giving life to ecclesial structures, being as it were their soul, and inspiring in the hearts of the faithful that same spirit of mission which impelled Christ Himself” (AG 4). Consequently the mission of the People of God can never consist solely in the activity of the exterior life, since apostolic commitment cannot in the absolute be reduced to mere human promotion, however efficacious it be, because every pastoral and missionary initiative is rooted in participation in the mystery of the Church. And, in fact, the Church’s mission is by its very nature nothing else than the mission of Christ continued in the history of the world. It consists principally in the co-participation in the obedience of Him (cf. Heb 5:8) who offered Himself to the Father for the life of the world.

Appendix 3: “Fraternal life in community”, n. 10

It is impossible to speak of religious community univocally. The history of consecrated life witnesses to a variety of ways of living out the one communion according to the nature of the various institutes. Thus, today we can admire the “wondrous variety” of religious families which enrich the Church and equip her for every good work⁽²⁵⁾ and, deriving from this, the variety of forms of religious communities.

Nevertheless, in the various forms it takes, fraternal life in common has always appeared as a radical expression of the common fraternal spirit which unites all Christians. Religious community is a visible manifestation of the communion which is the foundation of the Church and, at the same time, a prophecy of that unity towards which she tends as her final goal. As “experts in communion, religious are, therefore, called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design. Above all, by profession of the evangelical counsels, which frees one from what might be an obstacle to the fervour of charity, religious are communally a prophetic sign of intimate union with God, who is loved above all things. Furthermore, through the daily experience of communion of life, prayer and apostolate -- the essential and distinctive elements of their form of consecrated life -- they are a sign of fraternal fellowship. In fact, in a world frequently very deeply divided and before their brethren in the faith, they give witness to the possibility of a community of goods, of fraternal love, of a programme of life and activity which is theirs because they have accepted the call to follow more closely and more freely Christ the Lord who was sent by the Father so that, firstborn among many brothers and sisters, he might establish a new fraternal fellowship in the gift of his Spirit”.⁽²⁶⁾

This will be all the more visible to the extent that they not only think with and within the Church, but also feel themselves to be Church, identifying themselves with her in full communion with her doctrine, her life, her pastors, her faithful, her mission in the world.⁽²⁷⁾

Particularly significant is the witness offered by contemplative men and women. For them, fraternal life has broader and deeper dimensions which derive from the fundamental demand of this special vocation, the search for God alone in silence and prayer.

Their constant attention to God makes their attention to other members of the community more delicate and respectful, and contemplation becomes a force liberating them from every form of selfishness.

Fraternal life in common, in a monastery, is called to be a living sign of the mystery of the Church: the greater the mystery of grace, so much the richer is the fruit of salvation.

In this way, the Spirit of the Lord, who gathered together the first believers, and who continually calls the Church into one single family, calls together and nourishes religious families which, by means of their communities spread throughout the world, have the mission of being clearly readable signs of that intimate communion which animates and constitutes the Church, and of being a support for the fulfilment of God’s plan.



Appendix 4: “Fraternal life in community”, n. 60

The missionary presence of a religious community is developed within the context of a particular Church, to which the members bring the richness of their consecration, of their fraternal life and of their charism.

By its mere presence, not only does a religious community bear in itself the richness of Christian life but as a unit it constitutes a particularly effective announcement of the Christian message. It can be said that it is a living and continuous preaching. This objective condition, which clearly holds religious themselves responsible, calling them to be faithful to this, their primary mission, correcting and eliminating anything which could attenuate or weaken the drawing power of their example, makes their presence in the particular Church identifiable and precious, prior to any other consideration.

Since charity is the greatest of the charisms (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13), a religious community enriches the Church of which it is a living part, first of all by its love. It loves the universal Church and the particular Church in which it is inserted because it is within the Church and as Church that it is placed in contact with the communion of the blessed and beatifying Trinity, source of all goods. In this way it becomes a privileged manifestation of the very nature of the Church herself.

A religious community loves the particular Church, enriches it with its charisms and opens it to a more universal dimension. The delicate relationships between the pastoral needs of the particular Church and the charismatic specificity of the religious community have been dealt with in *Mutuae Relationes*. In addition to the theological and pastoral orientations it provides, that document has made an important contribution to more cordial and intense collaboration. The time has come to take another look at that document, in order to give a new thrust to the spirit of true communion between religious community and the particular Church.

The growing difficulties of mission work and the scarcity of personnel can tempt both a religious community and the particular Church to a certain isolation; this, of course, does nothing to improve mutual understanding and collaboration.

The religious community runs the risk, on the one hand, of being present in the particular Church with no organic link to its life or to its pastoral programme and, on the other hand, of being reduced to merely pastoral functions. Moreover, if religious life tends more and more to emphasise its own charismatic identity, the local Church often makes pressing and insistent demands on the energies of religious for the pastoral activities of the diocese or parish. The guidelines provided by *Mutuae Relationes* take us far from the isolation and independence of a religious community in relation to a particular Church and far from the practical assimilation of a religious community into the particular Church.

Just as a religious community cannot act independently of the particular Church, or as an alternative to it, or much less against the directives and pastoral programme of the particular Church, so the particular Church cannot dispose, according to its own pleasure and according to its needs, of a religious community or of any of its members.

It is important to recall that a lack of proper consideration for the charism of a religious community serves neither the good of the particular Church nor that of the religious community itself. Only if a religious community has a well-defined charismatic identity can it integrate itself into an “overall pastoral programme” without losing its own character. Indeed, only in this way will it enrich the programme with its gift.

We must not forget that every charism is born in the Church and for the world and the link to its source and purpose must be continuously renewed; each charism is alive to the extent that one is faithful to it.

The Church and the world make possible its interpretation, request it and stimulate it to continued growth in relevance and vitality. Charism and particular Church should not be in conflict but should rather support and complete one another, especially now that so many problems of living out the charism and its insertion into changed situations have arisen.

At the root of many misunderstandings is perhaps a mutual partial knowledge either of the particular Church or of religious life, and of the responsibilities of the bishop for religious life.

It is earnestly recommended that all diocesan theological seminaries include a course specifically on the theology of consecrated life, including study of its dogmatic, juridic and pastoral aspects; religious should in turn receive adequate theological formation concerning the particular Church. (74)

Above all, however, a truly fraternal religious community will feel in duty bound to spread a climate of communion that will enable the entire Christian community to consider itself “the family of the children of God”.

Appendix 5: CMF Directory

101. The missionary service of the Word is that which specifies our mission among the people of God and for which we are constituted into an apostolic institute in the Church. We should live it according to the spirit and the prophetic style inherited from our Founder and enriched by the tradition of our Congregation. This missionary vocation is the source of our apostolate and the fundamental criterion for the choice of our apostolic works.

It should always inspire and guide the missionaries and each and every one of their works.

102. Our missionary charism includes consecration and mission, and involves belonging totally to God and being entirely committed to the Kingdom.

103. The consecration to God constitutes by itself our first and primordial form of evangelisation. Our commitment to the service of humanity requires of us a solid spirituality of action; to cultivate an in-depth experience of God; to discern, in the light of the Spirit, the challenges of our times and to transform them with courage and daring into options and projects that are consistent both with our original charism and with the demands of the concrete historical situation.

107. The attentive observation and study of the reality should lead us to an attitude of constant discernment and revision of our positions (CC 48). This attitude must be fostered on the personal as well as the community level.

108. The ecclesial nature of our mission demands that we always be attentive to the reality of the Church and to the Church's awareness of its own mission in every age and place.

110. Our apostolate and choice of works should be developed within perspectives that reflect our fundamental commitment to mission. Such perspectives or options are constant apostolic attitudes that should figure relevantly in everything Claretian. These attitudes may be summed up as an option for a missionary evangelisation that is inculturated, prophetic and liberating, carried out within a framework of the poor and needy, and aimed at multiplying evangelising leaders.

116. Although our apostolic vocation is universal and does not exclude any class of persons (CC 2), it is nevertheless carried out in every time and place by means of our dedication to determined recipients.

Each provincial and local community should discern the preferential recipients of its mission, among those who have been pointed out on a general level, such as the non Christian world, the poor, youth, the family, and new evangelisers.

119. In tune with times and places, and always searching for a more participative model of the Church, we should manifest our spirit of Claretian creativity by seeking out and creating new forms of apostolate.

135. The apostolic action of the Congregation must be planned, programmed and evaluated on all levels: on the general level, on the level of major organisms and on that of each one of our local communities.

In today's technological society, planning toward objectives is a highly efficient instrument, which we should always use under the guidance of the Word of God and the animation of the Spirit.

Programming is a means for growth in missionary community, because it stimulates and channels the participation and co-responsibility of everyone.

In planning, we set determined goals for ourselves and establish the means best suited to attain them. The pastoral planning of the particular Church should also be taken into account.

Appendix 6: Our Martyrs (A. Bocos, "Heritage and Prophecy", n. 47)

Our heritage of martyrdom is a great one. Among our Martyred brothers, love for the Congregation appears quite explicitly. Well known are the different testimonies of the "faithful, generous and perpetual love" of the Blessed Martyrs of Barbastro that we have kept and treasure. The farewell letter that our brothers wrote deserves to be meditated on frequently, above all in our formation centers. They felt that they were sons of the Congregation: "They are your sons, dear Congregation!"; "Common Mother of us all." They felt that they were members of a well articulated body, and one with a future, because they desired that their blood, "flowing through your veins, will stimulate your development and expansion throughout the world." They were aware that their fidelity unto death was a glory and not a loss for the Congregation.

The sign of maturity that they offered in their recourse to faith in Jesus Christ, to the Church, to the Eucharist, to the essential values of their missionary vocation, to their status as sons of the Heart of Mary, to fraternal life in community, to the Superior General, to their families, their people, their persecutors and murderers, to workers, to a more hope-giving social, ecclesial and congregation future, etc. -- all of these must make us think on the way that belonging to our apostolic community is nourished and fed. But the Martyrs of Barbastro were not the only ones, for Fr. José María Ruiz Cano, the prefect of postulants in Sigüenza, has left us some most beautiful written testimonies, as well as the great sign of giving his life for the postulants. By the testimony of Fr. Stanislaus Sanmartín we know that the group of Martyrs of Fernán Caballero (Ciudad Real) were quite happy in prison, "ready to suffer whatever the Lord might will, including martyrdom, which they offered for the Congregation and the salvation of Spain." Two testimonies about Bro. Ramón Rius Camps, of the community of Cervera (Lleida) agree that "he used to say that the only pain he suffered was that of being away from his Congregation." We find similar testimonies among the Martyrs of Tarragona, Barcelona, Castro Urdiales, etc.

Appendix 7: Vita Consecrata, n. 46

A great task also belongs to the consecrated life in the light of the teaching about the Church as communion, so strongly proposed by the Second Vatican Council. Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practise the spirituality of communion as “witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design”. The sense of ecclesial communion, developing into a spirituality of communion, promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension. The life of communion in fact “becomes a sign for all the world and a compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ ... In this way communion leads to mission, and itself becomes mission”; indeed, “communion begets communion: in essence it is a communion that is missionary”. In founders and foundresses we see a constant and lively sense of the Church, which they manifest by their full participation in all aspects of the Church’s life, and in their ready obedience to the Bishops and especially to the Roman Pontiff. Against this background of love towards Holy Church, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), we readily understand the devotion of Saint Francis of Assisi for “the Lord Pope”, the daughterly outspokenness of Saint Catherine of Siena towards the one whom she called “sweet Christ on earth”, the apostolic obedience and the *sentire cum Ecclesia* of Saint Ignatius Loyola, and the joyful profession of faith made by Saint Teresa of Avila: “I am a daughter of the Church”. We can also understand the deep desire of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus: “In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love”.

These testimonies are representative of the full ecclesial communion which the Saints, founders and foundresses, have shared in diverse and often difficult times and circumstances. They are examples which consecrated persons need constantly to recall if they are to resist the particularly strong centrifugal and disruptive forces at work today. A distinctive aspect of ecclesial communion is allegiance of mind and heart to the Magisterium of the Bishops, an allegiance which must be lived honestly and clearly testified to before the People of God by all consecrated persons, especially those involved in theological research, teaching, publishing, catechesis and the use of the means of social communication. Because consecrated persons have a special place in the Church, their attitude in this regard is of immense importance for the whole People of God. Their witness of filial love will give power and forcefulness to their apostolic activity which, in the context of the prophetic mission of all the baptized, is generally distinguished by special forms of cooperation with the Hierarchy. In a specific way, through the richness of their charisms, consecrated persons help the Church to reveal ever more deeply her nature as the sacrament “of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind”.

Appendix 8: Vita Consecrata, n. 74

Everything must be done in communion and dialogue with all other sectors of the Church. The challenges of evangelization are such that they cannot be effectively faced without the cooperation, both in discernment and action, of all the Church’s members. It is difficult for individuals to provide a definitive answer; but such an answer can arise from encounter and dialogue. In particular, effective communion among those graced with different charisms will ensure both mutual enrichment and more fruitful results in the mission in hand. The experience of recent years widely confirms that “dialogue is the new name of charity”, especially charity within the Church. Dialogue helps us to see the true implications of problems and allows them to be addressed with greater hope of success. The consecrated life, by the very fact that it promotes the value of fraternal life, provides a privileged experience of dialogue. It can therefore contribute to creating a climate of mutual acceptance in which the Church’s various components, feeling that they are valued for what they are, come together in ecclesial communion in a more convinced manner, ready to undertake the great universal mission.

Institutes involved in one or other form of the apostolate must therefore foster a solid spirituality of action, seeing God in all things and all things in God. In fact, “it is necessary to know that, just as a well-ordered life tends to pass from the active to the contemplative, so the soul generally returns with profit from the contemplative life to the active life, in order more perfectly to sustain the active life with the flame ignited in contemplation. Thus, the active life ought to lead to contemplation and, sometimes, from what we see interiorly, contemplation should more effectively call us back to action”. Jesus himself gave us the perfect example of how we can link communion with the Father to an intensely active life. Without a constant search for this unity, the danger of an interior breakdown, of confusion and discouragement, lurks always near. Today as yesterday, the close union between contemplation and action will allow the most difficult missions to be undertaken.

"There is no doubt that the Council represented a radical change in the mindset of the Church and its mission in the world. The ecclesiology of communion that we find in the documents of the Council invites us to live the mystery of the Church as a reality in which the different charisms and ministries, precious gifts of the Spirit, are mutually interrelated, helping one another to follow Jesus more faithfully, and to enthusiastically fulfill the mission entrusted by the Lord to the Church." (Josep M. Abella, *Missionaries*)

spiritus domini

The Forge in our daily life

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