

The Forge

in our daily life

SPIRITUS DOMINI

Ordinary Time V

8 OPEN TO THE
WHOLE WORLD

SPIRITUS DOMINI - 2014

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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.



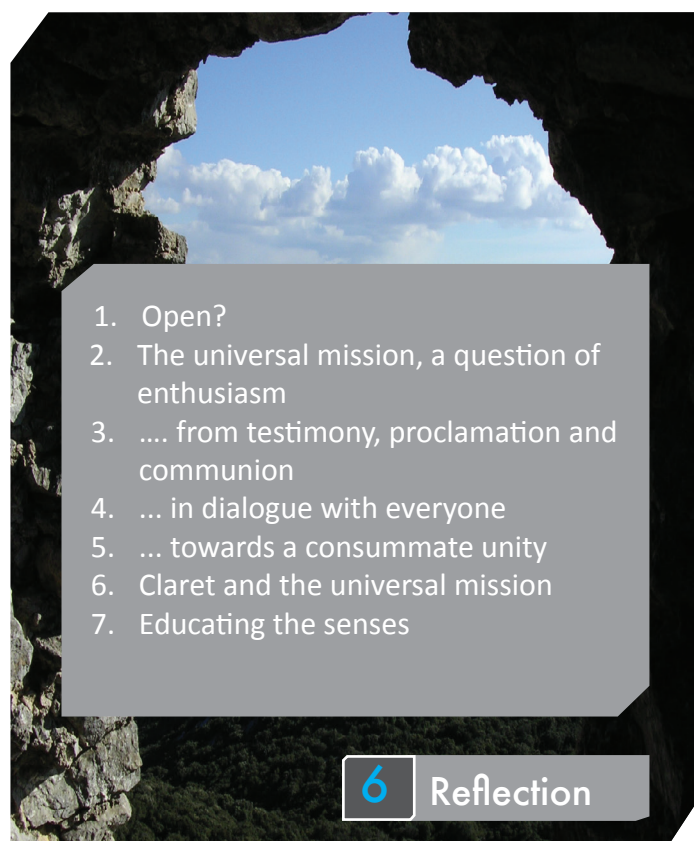
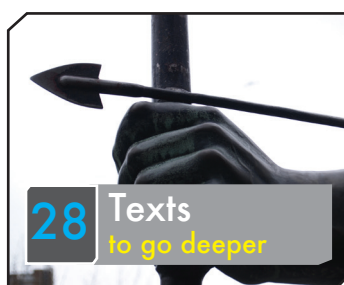
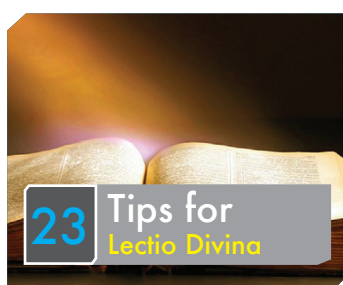
OBJECTIVES

- 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)

contents



1. Introduction: the universal restless spirit of October

In the **northern hemisphere** of our planet, in October the leaves start falling from the trees. The spirit of autumn, even winter in some latitudes, is gradually taking everything over. It's time to pick fruit and prepare for the winter period, when the earth sleeps and everything seems dead. Fragrances of nostalgia and melancholy float in the air. Everything seems to invite us to light the fire in the hearth and stay at home, stretched out on the couch with a good book and the smell of good coffee. Everything summons us to retreat into what is familiar, into our own world, with its surrounding environment, to behold the beauty of nature that changes from day to day, just like the leaves of the trees.

By contrast, **in the southern hemisphere**, pulses of life awaken everywhere. Winter, sometimes severe, disappears behind us, and spring imposes the logic of what is new and re-born. To open windows, welcome in the new, step out of the house and take on a new course...all this is heard in the lively song sung in chorus by the birds and the plants, by the air and the sun, and by the symphony orchestra of all creation.

Maybe you live **in an area close to the equator**, in which there are hardly any striking oscillations between one season of the year or another. Maybe just the dry season and the rainy season.

Wherever you are, whether it rains or is sunny in the place where you live, or within your own heart, whether you are feeling downcast or you are feeling in your element, whether you live in the northern or the southern hemisphere, **the month of October will be guided by the expert baton of the Spirit**. Therefore, from the very beginning of this phase, it is a good idea to trust in Him and let Him carry you wherever necessary, whether through suggestions, propositions, intuitions or dreams of a positive kind; or whether in the form of searching questions, dissatisfactions or disappointments which are seemingly negative. He knows better than anyone the musical staves of

your life, with its cascades of semiquavers or its long white notes, with its silences and dominant chords, with its tuneful melodies or some stubborn discords that appear when you least expect them, which undermine your self-esteem. He is skilled in breaking through barriers and walls with sheer force, in irrigating arid land and straightening what is crooked, because he knows that "we know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom 8, 28).

In itself, this is a month to which the adjective "missionary" fits perfectly. Not only is it the month of Claret and World Mission Day. **The whole month is marked out by events and people of cosmic spirituality, of Claretian inclinations.** If it were an altarpiece or iconography, we would say that it is full of evocative figures, stories of men and women transfigured by their openness to the Spirit, even though human beings don't always lend themselves to great expectations. Think about the small and "tendentially neurotic" figure of **Teresa of Lisieux** who, without going beyond the walls of her provincial monastery, was able to live the universal dimension of her mission, because she lived off the love at the heart of the Church. Then there's **Francis of Assisi**, the universal brother, because he refused to possess anything, who experienced the fatherhood of God and bore the marks of the love of the crucified Jesus on his body. And who does not shudder when he hears the still fresh words of **Ignatius of Antioch**, "God's carrier", bearing witness to his martyrdom, who walked joyously towards death, to become bread of Christ and to embrace and greet all the communities along his path?

In October we encounter the testimony of those who saw and touched the resurrected one, people like **Simon and Jude**, or believers in the second coming, like **Luke**, who listened to the Spirit in the voice of the very first witnesses, and helped with their efforts to understand the universality of the mission of Jesus and the Church. In women like **Teresa of Jesus**, restless and contemplative, or with **Anthony Mary Claret**, who learned so much from her, we discover the human heart of one who lives through God alone without retreating into the sterility of isolation, but opens herself up to the ongoing reform of her Church within which she wants to live and die ("... well then, I will die a daughter of the Church").

The month of October begins liturgically with the feast of one who embodies the universal mission in the narrow space of a cell, and ends with a historical reminder that keeps catching our attention because it is an open wound on the body of Christ. On October 31st, 1517 the Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, sent his famous 95 theses on indulgences to several university colleagues around the Germanic Empire. It was the symbolic beginning of the Reformation that gave rise to a new division in the Christian world that has still not healed over today. For those who have

received the gift "to proclaim the good news to every creature" (CC 4) and to serve (under the guidance of the Supreme Pastor), in "the building up and growth of the Church" (CC 6), we cannot simply be indifferent to these events.

With **Booklet 8** we complete the "autumn-spring" itinerary which we started some years ago. Do you remember it? The first October of the Forge (the *Quid Prodest* stage) **we looked towards our own bodies** as a place of relationships, discovering the emotional ties we create and revealing ourselves to be both great and small in our emotional nature. Our openness to universality, which we will explore more deeply this year, anchors its roots in this capacity to link ourselves to others without having to be tied to them, because the freedom of love never isolates nor diminishes the horizon.

In our experience of God as Father (the **Patris Mei** stage) **we were heading for a deep relationship of love that turns into prayer**, a place of encounter and solitude, but also a battle ground where our own angels and demons are in contention. It can be a constant temptation to go back over our own unresolved issues, to worry about our own little world, or alternatively, to get carried away by the love of a Father who asks me to open myself up to everyone, to recognize the child in myself making me everyone's brother.

Last year (in the *Caritas Christi* stage) **we turned our gaze to the Eucharist** as the "place" where the fire of the love of Christ can transform us, to change what we are and what we do. A loaf of bread that, when you receive it, introduces us to the logic of giving and breaking bread for the life of the world.

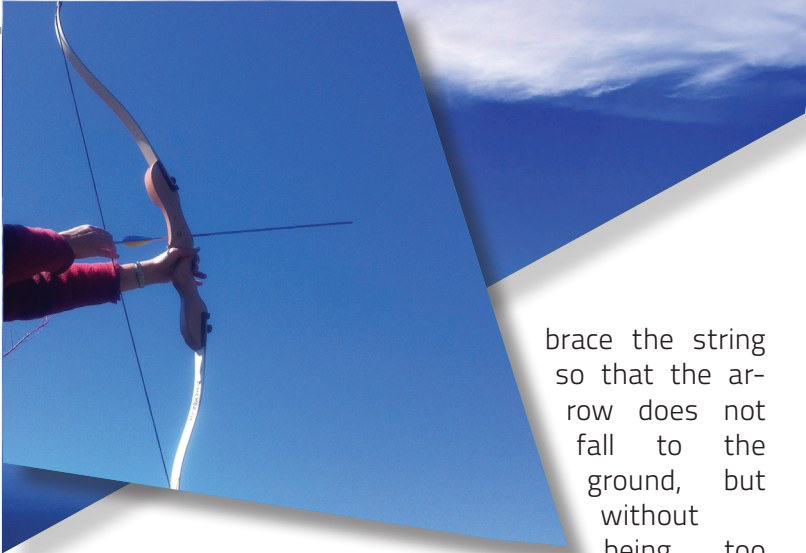
We will complete the process in this month of October 2014, opening up the horizons of our lives and vocations to the wind of the Spirit of the Father and the Son. A Spirit that makes universality a revelation to us, something like our own spiritual genetic code. We are an arrow marking the four cardinal points, wherever we are, however we are (physically, mentally, or spiritually speaking) and however old we are. Each of us can charismatically repeat what Claret had in his heart until the last breath of his life: "My spirit is for the whole world." The experience of the Spirit that expands our universality is what makes us understand the most radical sense of our emotional and relational lives (*Quid Prodest*), the rationale for our apostolic prayer "that makes you know what love is, to serve all creatures" (*Patris Mei*) and the cosmic dimension of our Eucharistic life in union with Christ who sends us to proclaim the gospel everywhere (*Caritas Christi*).

2. Reflection: Open?

To live is to be open. The only certainty we have of being alive is when we are growing, moving, learning new things, changing; that is to say, we are open. This is true in all dimensions of our lives. **Our charismatic spirituality is also marked by our openness and progress.** In our Constitutions, this fundamental principle is enshrined at the end of the first part, as we shall see in more detail in **Booklet 9**. After presenting the fundamental essence of our being (missionary community, evangelical counsels, spirituality, mission ...) we are told that all this is achieved through an open, progressive process. Not that we are "progressives" simply because it is fashionable or it seems right. From the earliest days of our novitiate we were taught the wise principle of St. Bernard: on the road to perfection "not to progress is to go backwards." And this applies not only to the early stages of the journey, when we are young and have our lives and mission ahead of us; it is a law of the journey itself, right to the end. There is no point in seeking supposed immunities from this basic rule. We can't use age as an excuse ("this is just for young people, I'm already passed it") or fatigue ("enough is enough, I can't do any more") or some apparent spirit of moderation and prudence, which will inevitably disguise some pact with mediocrity ("no need to exaggerate", "this is something we must consider carefully ...").

The opening and progress of the missionary spirit is essential for us to keep ourselves fit as missionaries. Otherwise, people might be able to say of us what was said of the angel of the church of Sardis: "You think you live but you are dead" (Rev. 3, 1). From the beginning of this month, do everything in your power to let this Forge Booklet 8 be, for you, a reminder and a wake-up call similar to those in the letters to the churches in the book of Revelation. There is plenty to do. We can recover lost time. Let us return to those "affectionate" imperatives in the letters, which are an invitation to wake up from slumber, to get back up and recover what's best in us, which still lives on as God's gift in our hearts: "listen" (Rev 2 7.11.17.29, 3, 6/13/22), "remember" (Rev 2, 5, 3, 3), "hold on to [the gift]" (Rev 2, 25, 3, 3, 3.11), "get up and change" (Rev 2, 5. 16, 3.3. 19), "Be faithful unto death" (Rev 2, 10. 26). Let the Spirit, who is Lord and giver of life, truly rekindle in us our spirit as missionaries.

One of the symbols of this stage is the arrow in flight. It's a striking image for expressing our openness to the universal mission. The arrow is, by definition, a movement forward, opening up spaces and roads ahead with a clear goal or objective. It is not merely a bit of pointed metal, but a whole set of elements in harmony. Most of the arrow is not made up of the tip, but the shaft. Without this element, the arrow lacks rigidity, straightness and direction. At the end of the shaft we find the feathers, which provide stability to the arrow and compensate for any imbalances during flight. The feathers help it to track it towards its objective. Finally, there is the nock, an almost insignificant part at the end of the shaft, which is just a notch, providing the attachment of the arrow to the bowstring. It is one of the most important elements of the arrow, because if it's not perfectly set, the level of tension in the bow will not be set correctly, making it feel unstable even before shooting. The nock should em-



brace the string so that the arrow does not fall to the ground, but without being too

squashed. It would not be very difficult to find parallels of each of these symbols in the various aspects and dimensions of all our spiritual and missionary life, without which it would lose its focus, strength, forcefulness and effectiveness.

There are other arrows that move, but without changing places. They are indicators, whether always at a fixed point (like the arrow of the compass, which guides and orients the hikers), or pointing in the direction of the wind, like the weather vane on the tower. An arrow can also be a graphic symbol of movement, like the arrows which are signal indicators. They do not move; they seem to stand still, but prompt other people to "move", leading the way and helping them go in the right direction.

The arrow, like any tool, can be dented, blunted, lose its sharpness and incisiveness, and may not adequately fulfil the mission for which it was made and fashioned. In several recent documents of the Church and within the Congregation, there are reflections on these critical situations. Missionaries' fatigue may be caused by daily routines or frustrations, by negative experiences of things going wrong, or the feeling of having laboured for nothing. There may also be ideological reasons: serious doubts about the need for a particular duty, or tasks that seem not to bear fruit, or the conviction that "everyone can be saved" or become happy without having to go via the baptismal font ... may be that, after various attempts to recover their missionary spirit, which we have come to call zeal for the universal mission, we come to the point of quietly accepting that you can not change things. Resistance and opposition to the Gospel are too strong, both inside and outside of us. We are not made of material so solid and polished as to be able to deal with just any difficulty, however great it is. We have to resign ourselves and abandon sterile dreams. There is no more wax other than that which is already burning. We have to settle for what we can readily do, tasks of little consequence and negligible impact. We are not made for the long-distance stuff. Our zone of operation can be reached by a local train, we are experts in the short-distance stuff. When you get to a certain age, it's not good to continue fostering

dreams that only generate frustration. Why, what is it all for?

However, if you have not completely turned off the voice of the Spirit in yourself, you will know perfectly well that these voices do not clearly express truths. Our way of being open as missionaries is to feel a natural affinity with the universal mission. If we feel that the whole purpose of the mission in a global or universal context, "ad gentes" or "inter gentes" (however we call it) is merely a romantic thing, or something typical of our younger days, but does not fit now with our own advancing age, with our infirmities and experiences, we would have to turn on the little red warning light that tells us of a serious hazard. If we have come to think that our way of living out our Claretian vocation and mission is confined to small circles of interest ("my people", "my" school, parish, group or diocese, because everything else is useless or sterile dreams), things are going seriously wrong.

Many ecclesial and congregational documents warn us about this evangelical sclerosis, this state of fatigue or "missionary hibernation". The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* warned us, 25 years ago, that many question the very idea of having a specific mission assigned to those who do not know Christ. Perhaps what was then said can be repeated now, and this time with greater emphasis if possible: "... also, because of modern changes and the diffusion of new theological ideas, some ask the following questions: Is the mission to non-Christians still relevant? Has it not been replaced, perhaps, by inter-faith dialogue? Isn't the ennoblement of human beings a better objective? Shouldn't our respect for freedom of conscience exclude all efforts at conversion? Can't people be saved in any religion? Why, then, the mission?" (RM 4). As a result "the specific mission we call ad gentes appears to be stalling (...) internal and external difficulties have weakened the Church's missionary thrust towards non-Christians, which is a fact that should concern all believers in Christ. Indeed, in the history of the Church, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its diminution is a sign of a crisis of faith" (RM 2).

Recently, **the circular letter "Missionaries" from Fr General, Josep Maria Abella, has put before us various factors about our present situation which seem to question our universal missionary vocation.** It would be good that, against the backdrop of these diagnoses and other possible ones which we can experience in different contexts, each one of us questions how these issues are modifying our current missionary sensitivity, if we are truly open and challenged by them, or they leave us indifferent.

Exercise 1: Changes and questionings

Following the directions of the Circular Letter “Missionaries” (II, 1), we will try to discover the changes that are occurring around us and the questions they raised to help us live our vocation in its universal dimensions. We need these aspects, and others we might discover, in order to see in what sense they block the road ahead and paralyse us; and how they might boost or stimulate aspects of our universal missionary vocation.

We can use the table below, if it helps, or another similar format that might be appropriate:

Aspects	¿What does it mean for me?	How does it negatively affect me?	How does it stimulate or energize me?
Globalization			
Cultural and religious pluralism			
Challenge of the secular world			
The search for true harmony			
(Other aspects, as for example.....)			

2.2. The universal mission, a question of enthusiasm

We cannot understand what the universal mission really means if we do not start correctly; that is to say, in the heart of God the Trinity. The missionary nature of the Church is based dynamically on the Trinitarian mission, the *Missio Dei*, as highlighted by the Second Vatican Council. The Church is missionary by her very nature (cf. AG 2), as well as through “declaration, epiphany and the realization of God’s plan in the world and its history” (AG 9). Therefore, the universal mission of the Church is deeply rooted in the Trinitarian God. God is not an abstract idea or a closed system, something like a narcissistic “*Ipsium esse subsistens*”, delighted to have encountered it, but permanently submerged beneath the ocean itself. It is an open community that survives, lives and becomes attainable in the context of submissive love. **Love is the starting point**

of the mission of God the Father in the Son: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life” (Jn 3, 16) and of the mission of the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and sent through the Son to those who believe in him (cf. Jn 15: 26; Jn 7: 39). That submissive love is not a single event in the past, but is a continuous present, which continues today, coming from Him, maintaining and perfecting the entire universe, and man within it.

The believer is someone who has experienced this God, through communion and the communication of love through the action of the Spirit, which is, so to speak, the external presence of God, or more poetically “*digitus Paternae dexteræ*”, the finger of the Father’s right hand. Although sometimes we call it “the great unknown”, really how much or little we “know” about God is gained through the Spirit. In the Spirit and through his action, God makes himself accessible to us. At the touch of the Spirit, God helps

us feel His tenderness, protection, strength, love and presence. No one can come to profess the faith that simply shouts "Jesus is Lord" unless he is moved by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12, 3). The Spirit is our teacher and mystagogue, bringing us to the heart of the Triune God: "No one but the Spirit of God knows the secrets of God" (1 Cor 2, 12) Thanks to Him, we can enter into a loving dialogue of divine communion. We can get "carried away"; that is to say, live in God ("en-Theo" in Greek). Enthusiasm, understood as such, does not come from external circumstantial realities, like good weather, poor health, feelings of vitality, a favourable economic climate or success at work. It springs from the heart that knows it is anchored in God, grounded in Him. The believer knows from experience that "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). So everything that happens, whatever it is, is experienced as something that comes from the hands of God, as something that does not escape his endearing love.

He who lives with this enthusiasm enters into the mystery of communion with God, and lives the communion with everything and everyone.

He participates in the enthusiastic movement of *Missio Dei*, which rises out of him and becomes man in the Son and is poured out in the Spirit upon all flesh. The first form of shared mission is this: to participate through grace in God's mission. He wants "all to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2, 4). In this verse we have synthesized all the missionary intensity which had its origins in the Father. He, through the hands of the Son and the Spirit (cf. *Against Heresies*, V, 6, 1, 28, 3) carries out His mission throughout the history of the world. Through this tide of love in the Trinitarian mission, we come to understand and develop the mission of the Church and within each of us. He who gets excited and embodies the wishes of God, his Father and, like Claret, has a consuming desire and does everything possible to make Him known, loved, served and praised by all (Aut 222).

These are not naive romantic dreams or illusions, engendered by people of poor judgment. It is the exaggeration caused by love that will not rest until what the loved one loves becomes a reality. The style of God's mission, of God's unconditional surrender to love, will be the mission style of someone who lives in God, full of enthusiasm: prayer, work and suffering so that all may have life and have it abundantly. Where there is no excitement there can be no missionary impetus. So the lack of universal perspective about the mission is a clear sign of lack of faith, because "the mission renews the Church, revitalizes our faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened by giving it to others" (RM 2).



Exercise 2: The demanding mysticism of the mission



This exercise invites you to contemplate the image of the Trinity, as portrayed by the Orthodox monk Andrei Rublev. Someone has said that the Trinity exists because of Andrei Rublev's painting. Although it is an exaggeration, it is clear that the path of sublime beauty opened up by the Russian iconographer brings us to a closer understanding of the mystery better than most theological treatises.

Our contemplation is drawn by the conversation of these three angels sitting at the table around the cup with the slaughtered calf. Our eyes go back and forth from one to the other, trying to discover the deep and attractive unity that links them together (face, body, sceptres, blue garments common to all three ...) and also what distinguishes them from one another (the garments, position at the table, the symbols that each has behind him ...).

Experts still argue about who is who, although all agree that the angel on the right, as we look at it, the more stooped of the three, is the Spirit. His posture invites us to enter the circle. When we do, our eyes come to rest on the mountain. This is the place where God manifests himself in the Spirit. From the springboard of that crooked mountain, like the angel himself, our gaze fixes on the central angel, who has a more pronounced "scarlet" garment, with some red and blue, typical of Christ and the Mother of God in icons. Behind him, the tree splits the icon in two. Let the wind carry us up to the branches of that tree (symbol of the oaks of Mamre or the tree of life and Calvary). It is a place of transit, because from the top of the tree we climb down to rest, at last, in the dark open house which is the mystery of God, which comes to us like an encounter (reverse perspective). In it, the light is so great that it blinds us. In front of the house, we see God the Father, the gazes and gestures of the other two angels directed towards Him, and in the initial movement becomes vertical and complete.

The basic geometric shapes (the square, triangle and circle), seen everywhere in the icon, help us to find peace and engender a sense of delight in the soul for its extraordinary harmony. The three are sitting at the table. It is a rectangular table with four cardinal points, like the world itself. In the centre stands the cup of sacrifice and, beneath it, a kind of open window, a reminder of where they place the relics of martyrs on the ancient eastern altars. A table, then, which is an altar, while also being a picture of the whole world.

The three angels are talking to each other. The hands of both the Spirit and the Son are as if touching the white tablecloth of the world. God the Father, who also speaks, seems to be initiating and directing the conversation. No doubt they are talking about their important project of saving love: "God so loved the world" "Let no one be lost" "Let all come to know the truth." Communion begins to turn into mission. Everything points to a way of detaching ourselves so that the world will come to reside in God, the source of life.

And yet, the icon calls us to enter into this dialogue, in that invisible embrace of the three, in the communion-mission of love. But this is not intended as a route of escape, of taking us away from reality and encouraging us to dream of unreal worlds. The more we look, the more we see that not only has Rubliov placed a cup with slaughtered calf in the centre of the table-altar, but the entire icon itself is a large open cup, formed by the inner profiles of the two angels who stand before us. What is he trying to say with this image, which is both visible and invisible at the same time? In all its ineffable beauty and harmony of shapes and colours, the icon of the Trinity is incomplete. Yes. It is incomplete, because you are missing. The iconographer is stirring things up in us. After intoxicating us with the perfect unitary triune, to help us feel the love the Triune God has for our world, he puts before our eyes the reality of the sacrifice of Christ and invites us to sit at the table to complete the cup. It is as if we say, "How beautiful everything is, isn't it? Well, what are you willing to sacrifice so that the cup closes?". It is no coincidence that if we accept the challenge, we will be sitting in front of the figure of the Son, and of the tree, that reminds us of his sacrifice for love. That is the challenge of the mission "so that the

world may believe". It is not about God, but to help everyone to meet Him and to sit at the table, intoxicated by the cup which closes up. It's a high price to pay: the sacrifice of oneself. Losing myself in order to find myself. Leaving behind the 'me' so that the concept of 'us' in communion is born. Going to the ends of the earth to proclaim a love without limits. Dying in order to rise up again.

This is the demanding mysticism of the *Missio Dei*. It is good that we have it before our eyes. It may be that to begin with, we are taken aback. We have to be patient. If looking at the icon scares us a little, put it somewhere in the room for it to look at us, so that it will call out and inspire us. Let's hope that it does inspire us and that every day we sit at the table in dialogue with these three pilgrims! Let the Spirit lead us up the mountain, and direct us to the tree on which the Son gave us life through his own death, which opened the way to sharing a common home for all human beings, which is the project of the love of God the Father, where everyone will have a place.



2.3. ... from testimony, proclamation and communion

The Church, icon of the Trinity and born of the *Missio Dei* is, therefore, essentially evangelical. Its sole purpose is the proclamation of the Gospel. You cannot confine the field of missionary activity "to one sector of mankind or to one class of people or to a single type of culture" (EN 50) Evangelization is directed towards "everybody! To every creature! To the ends of the earth". It is important to realize that "the mission ad gentes is still at the beginning. New peoples appear on the world stage and they have the right to receive the message of salvation" (RM 40).

The testimony of their own experience of faith is the first and obligatory form of evangelization (cf. EN 21). We are talking about living in such a manner that the very existence of the witness himself is a call to faith, a proclamation. The words of Cardinal Suhart, archbishop of Paris in the 1950s, are becoming a reality: "Being a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda or stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means living in such a way that life itself would make no sense if God did not exist."

But the testimony, however impressive and crucial it is, is still not enough. It needs to be clarified and verbalized by what Peter in his first letter called giving "reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3: 15). There is need for a proclamation which is "clearly and unequivocally from the Lord Jesus" (EN 22). For that rea-

son, "there can be no true evangelization if there is no proclamation about the name, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God" (ibid.). Moreover, this announcement is "the first service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the world today (RM, 2). Christ, his person and his message, can be accepted because the people of all nations on the earth already have sown in them the seeds of the Word by the Holy Spirit, in the form of "a period of waiting (even if unconsciously) to know the truth about God and man" (RM 45). The missionary enthusiasm comes from knowing that we are responding to this hope. This proclamation of Jesus Christ is not an act of "proselytism". **We are talking about linking together all that is best in human nature, our desires for peace, freedom, justice and fulfilment, which are present in all cultures, with the fountain of full life that is revealed in Christ.** So, no "it is not enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion; it's not enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace, solidarity" (RM 46).

The culmination of this process of evangelization is to form a community of believers in Christ: "Because all evangelization, apart from the preaching of the message, consists of establishing the Church,

which cannot exist without the breath of sacramental life culminating in the Eucharist" (EN 59). This new Christian community also lives the dynamic missionary way of life, open to the universal Church and taking seriously the evangelization of other people. This means the continuation of the dynamic of preaching the Gospel from the very beginning, which has been so perfectly and beautifully captured in the words of the First Letter of John: "This is what has been from the beginning... what we have seen and heard with our own eyes... that you may be in fellowship with us, with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1: 1-3).

To live your life embracing the idea of mission like this requires a change of mindset, to enthuse about it, deepen our roots in God and widen the theological dimension of our lives (cf. *Missionaries*, 41-43). We will thus clearly understand that to participate as a gift of the Spirit in the universal mission of God and the Church of Christ "is the clearest sign of maturity in the faith" (RM 49). When a community lives this universal missionary vocation, it can overcome internal divisions, strengthen their unity and re-ignite their faith, which is enriched by giving, as we are reminded by *Redemptoris Missio* (2, 49 ...).

2.4. ... in dialogue with everyone

The *Missio Dei* is born of fruitful dialogue at the heart of the Trinity; so it develops and grows in dialogue as if it were fertile soil. **Dialogue is not a mere strategy or tactic for fishing in troubled waters or harnessing the sympathy of listeners.** This is the "proper place" for the mission. It requires deep respect for every human being and the work the Spirit effects in each one. Living the universal mission through dialogue, as one of the privileged forms, requires us to go through a process of getting out of ourselves. This means listening to others, not only with our ears but also with all our minds and hearts. It's a real process of making the "vital connection" or engaging in "dialogue of life" (cf. RM 56), where not



only are ideas, opinions and different experiences shared, but the values that underpin peoples' very existence, their vital concerns, struggles and hopes encapsulated in their achievements and frustrations. Thus, through dialogue we find in other people the "seeds of the Word" and inklings of the Truth already possessed by peoples and cultures around the world.

A task of this kind demands of us a deep humility in recognizing our own limitations, a willingness to change our ways of seeing things, of banishing prejudices and to allow ourselves to be touched by the demonstrations of truth evident in those we engage with. It will also demand sincerity and loyalty of us: we must not hide the truth within us, nor play "as if" we are putting aside our deepest convictions, act "as if" we thought in the same way as them, or "as if" nothing really mattered at all. If that were the case, dialogue would not be a viable way forward, even from the very start. **It has to be a joint effort to seek the Truth that is in Christ, his way, the truth and life of man.** The missionary is, like Jesus himself, a witness to the Truth. Through dialogue, we realize our own shortcomings when it comes to thinking, living and speaking the Truth.

So, missionary dialogue is a time of purification and inner conversion for the witness, through which we can enrich ourselves and others. It is all about "walking together" (synodality) towards the realization of the dream that Abba had for his children, for all creation "(cf. *Missionaries*, p. 44). The journey will, without doubt, uncover unexpected surprises. We must be open to continuing dialogue, because we are open to the universal mission. There will arise new forms of expressing of our confessed faith and new ways of living off it as a community. This mission in Dialogue "will make all our lives more missionary" (*Missionaries*, p. 46).

2.5. ... towards a consummate unity

"The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. Is not this, perhaps, one of the greatest evils of evangelization? For if the Gospel that we preach is torn to shreds by doctrinal disputes, ideological polarization or mutual condemnation among Christians, in the light of their different theories about Christ and the Church, and even because of their different concepts of society and human institutions, how can those to whom we address our preaching fail to be disturbed, disoriented, or even scandalized?" (EN 77).

Ecumenism and universal mission are inter-related realities. As is well known, the ecumenical movement clearly had its origins in the first World Conference of Protestant Missions in Edinburgh in

1910. At that meeting a Chinese delegate "asked the missionaries from Europe and America to give up their missionary activities, take down their ecclesiastical barriers, which only make sense in the context of the local history of their churches, but is incomprehensible to those who hear the message of the everlasting gospel". From that moment of time, ecumenism began to rise as a move-

ment, not just as an idea, but also as a goal of reconciliation amongst the Christian denominations, as a visible expression of the universality of Christianity and as an eloquent sign "that the world may believe". The Catholic Church initially kept its distance and even condemned the movement. However, our experience of the collaboration amongst Christians and the sharing of their common experiences in the years spanning the two world wars, as well as the reflections of some great theologians, actually brought people closer together. Vatican II gave its approval and, since then, it has found a comfortable position in the life of the Church and its mission.

Among believers in traditionally Catholic nations, ecumenism is somewhat episodic, with few reverberations. In countries where Catholicism is a minority, it has much greater impact because, in the very lives of these communities, they have to deal with the reality of these "ecumenical" situations, such as mixed marriages. Within the Congregation, the theme of ecumenism appears as a theory in documents listed in the last General Chapters although, it seems, that it is only taken seriously in some regions of the Congregation. It is true to say that ecumenism, in general, is not one of our most pressing concerns. At best, we spend one week a year taking our "turn" to pray for Christian unity. And that's it.

However, our universal vocation has to be ecumenical. The missionary is not a tourist passing through, but someone who has left his own country and culture behind to live his own special exodus. This option requires a change of mindset, a widening of one's fundamental "ecumene", which is not done overnight. It's a slow conversion process, bearing the full impact of the Greek word "metanoia". A conversion of this type affects how we grasp things and how we handle them. Try to see the world through other peoples' eyes. Listen, because we all know the whole truth about ourselves and our environment can be found on the lips and in the minds of others. This is the deepest meaning of living the ecumenical missionary in places where the Catholic Church



has not yet been established or is a minority group, lacking in basic freedoms. The presence of Catholic missionaries is an asset for Christians and monks of other Christian traditions. In our dialogue about life and faith with our Orthodox or Reformed brothers, we discover our own hidden or forgotten riches because we have allowed some emphases to dominate others, which have grown with greater care and attention elsewhere (think of the actual centrality of the Word of God in the life of reformed believers or in the Orthodox liturgy, to give just two examples). But experience tells us of Catholic missionaries too, who in their poverty and limitations, can detect the voice and the richness of the Western Catholic tradition with its own singular historical expressions.





Amongst Catholic missionaries, Christian brethren of other faiths can feel that our tradition is accessible, approachable and fittingly ours. To put it succinctly, living the real ecumenism is trying to become bridges between worlds and realities which, for centuries, have been understood as different and distinct, and have been presented as antagonistic when, in fact, they share a lot of common ground.

While all this may sound very nice, there is a most uncomfortable truth. When you really live the ecumenical spirit, it transforms into an open wound in the soul. If we can't share the Eucharistic bread and wine with other brothers, why bother sharing in other things? It is true that the Eucharist is the key and the sacrament of unity, and that we can do many other things together. But the wound is still there. We must have faith in the historical efficacy of embraced suffering and patience. **A Claretian missionary who lives his life trying to be like Christ, suffers with Him through the wounds of his body.** But also pray and work all you can with the hope for the unity of his own body, the body of Christ, which is the undivided Church.

And this is something for which those consecrated are particularly called and charismatically endowed. Europe, both East and West, has been born and raised in the shadow of the monasteries. Here we discover once again the profound harmony that unites the monastic life in the East and West. The Monastery is both a workshop and school of unity in peace, coexistence, openness, hospitality, creative work and fraternity. Maybe that's why, within the Reformation, monastic movements have reappeared and, for several decades, we have had new communities such as Taizé (in France) or Bose (in Italy), places which are both ecumenical and creators of new ways

of developing unity, not only amongst the churches, but amongst religions.

These places are much closer to the undivided Church than all the discussions engaged in by diplomats and theologians of various confessions. Unity is not built around a negotiating table, where positioning depends on giving up ground. We are not talking about minimal unity, but the greatest unity possible, which is the Gospel. **When we become "intensely" Christians, we will find ourselves united in the roots of the gospel, in the person of Christ, can not be broken or split into several denominations.** Consecrated life is the home where the flame of evangelical "intensity" is kept alight (or should be so). In these fascinating places you can experience the call of the Wisdom of God that quenches our thirst and nostalgia for beauty with all the force of attraction that is the truth of the church united in diversity. Ecumenism is not therefore merely something academic or diplomatic. It is the life and the creed of believers, North and South, East and West, who profess every Sunday that "the Church is one." And so our efforts in this direction must also be continuous, doing what is in our power to get close to others, breaking down the walls of prejudice and misunderstanding and to keep praying, working and suffering for unity.

2.6. Claret and the universal mission: "My spirit is for the whole world"

Our Founder acknowledges in his autobiography that from an early age, he was blessed by the providence of God and prepared for his apostolic mission.

One of his first statements about himself is that by nature he is “very compassionate” (Aut 9), or “so soft-hearted and compassionate that I can’t bear seeing misfortune or misery without doing something to help”. (Aut 10). This soft-heartedness gives him a special insight into things around him, and sees them with “new eyes”. His view of things is different from that of others. Where most see nothing at all, or simply highlight things without doing anything about them, Claret detects calls or stimuli which impel him towards the mission.

It is interesting to trace in the writings of Claret the special way he has for observing all events around him: “when I see ...”, “if I were to see ...”, “seeing ...”. In the very same letter addressed to the Papal Nuncio, resigning from the episcopacy of Cuba, Claret states that “seeing the huge lack of evangelical and apostolic preachers ... the desire of the people to hear the word of God is so great ...” that he has decided to act: “I decided to gather together and train a few zealous companions”. It’s not just pure determination. Everything starts from compassionate contemplation of the needs that demand missionary involvement. For many contemporaries of our Founder, the fact that no one was preaching because the religious orders and congregations had been suppressed, was just a lamentable reality. They probably complained about anticlerical liberal governments who had taken these measures. But nothing more was done. Claret, however, saw things differently. He doesn’t complain or express regret. The Spirit helps him see in these developments the revelation of the gift he has within himself. “The Lord made me understand” is one of his favourite phrases when referring to the mission to be performed. These words apply to a particular verse of Scripture: “And in a very special way, God made me understand those words ... *Spiritus Domini super me*” (Aut 118). In these words are condensed all his varied experiences of being prepared, anointed and sent by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to every creature. In the appendix to his booklet *Information for a priest*, Claret proposed, even back in 1846, an explanatory description of the parable of the talents.

The servant who had received five talents is the apostolic missionary “to whom the Lord, more than just the talent of the dignity of the priesthood, has entrusted another four, which are the four corners of the earth, saying: “Go out to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (EE, 259).

God calls Claret, through the historical events he read about in the context of the Word, to leave the

narrow confines of the parish, to preach the gospel to all who “seek water and there is none” (text of Isaiah 41, 17 quoted in Aut 118). Claret is urged on by the Word (“in many places in the Holy Bible I heard the word of the Lord ... telling me to go out to preach”) and by the movements of the Spirit in prayer (“in prayer, the very same was happening to me”). He decided to accept these messages from the Spirit and made up his mind “to leave the parish and go to Rome, and present myself to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith so that they could send me anywhere in the world” (Aut 120). The gift that the Spirit has sown in his heart cannot be confined to a particular place. So when he writes to the Nuncio Brunelli, he tells him that if he accepted the appointment, he would tie himself down and reduce him “to just an archbishopric, when my spirit is for the whole world” (EC I, 305). Not even a diocese like Santiago de Cuba proved enough for his universal zeal. This is no more than “a small spot on the globe” where I can not “do all the preaching I want”; he realizes that, as a bishop, you have to devote yourself to curial and administrative tasks (“the many bits of business that an Archbishop has to attend to”).

Antonio Maria Claret discovered that the Spirit was calling him to a mission that encompasses the entire earth. As an apostolic missionary, he is endowed with the five talents and he is a man on fire with love. The fire of the Holy Spirit impels him, like the apostles, to travel the entire universe (cf. *L’egoismo vinto*, 9). Twenty years after writing “My spirit is for the whole world”, Claret described what this means in a special way: “Inflamed by the same fire [of the Holy Spirit], apostolic missionaries have gone, are going and will go to the ends the world,

from pole to pole, to proclaim the word of God; so that they might rightly say to themselves the words of the Apostle Paul: *Charitas Christi urget nos*” (*L’egoismo vinto*, IX). After this generic description, he has left us a lovely portrait of his own spirit. Although Claret really could not do all that he says, this is what dictated his heart, even in the autumn of his life. The roads God prepares for him to channel this flood of fire,

spreading over the world in all its breadth, and to all men, are becoming increasingly narrow. From a particular diocese, he then becomes a confessor to one person. It’s easy to understand how this contrast made him suffer. His letters and his Autobiography clearly reflected this (“Madrid is my Calvary – he said in a letter to Mother Sacramento in 1861 - however, I do not want to come down from the cross until they



remove the nails" (cf. also Aut 620, 621, 692, 693, 762 ..., EC I, 1334-1335, 1597 ..., EC II, 351-352, 397-398, 1388, 1391 ...). Yet, what seems like a reduction of his geographical horizons, turns out to uncover a laboratory teaming with a broad spectrum of apostolic channels, companions and beneficiaries of the mission. To the usual ministries (preaching, confession, written press ...) other new ones will be added (spiritual direction and lay apostolate, associations, teaching ...) with an ever deepening and "passive" knowledge gained from the mission, highlighting the suffering along with Christ, martyrdom, and the offering of one's own life (cf. Aut 742, 784, EA 574, 619). Even during the last years of his life, we can say that Claret uses all possible means (universality of means) to reach out to the most people possible (universality of beneficiaries).

The Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary are, for Claret, those "to whom God had given the same spirit" (Aut 489) as him. He knows he can not get to all people and places, as the fire of his heart dictated. Therefore, from the very beginning of his apostolic ministry he sought companions (cf. EC I, 95) to "do with others what I can not by myself" (EC I, 305). They re-ignite and recreate the same Claretian experience, feeling empowered, anointed and sent out to evangelize. Claret describes them with the same words that the Lord "in a very particular way" used to make him understand: "*Spiritus Domini super me ...*" (Aut 687). He goes even further and states: "The Lord said to me and to all my fellow Missionaries: (...) *Spiritus Patris vestri, et Mater vestrae loquitur in vobis*". The Spirit of the Father and Mother speaks to them.

Claret, tied to the Court, "like a dog to a post" (Aut 623) or "like a caged bird" (Aut 621) experiences a certain holy rivalry, "almost envy" of the missionaries "who are lucky enough to go from town to town preaching the Holy Gospel" (Aut 638). In an endearing letter of August 20, 1861, addressed to the Superior General, Fr José Xifré, after re-igniting the true spirit of freedom ("Oh that I had the power to travel throughout Spain preaching, even across the world" -EC II, 351-), describes the missionaries in terms of his own apostolic inclinations: "... when I consider that they are working so that God will become better known and loved; so that souls will be saved and not condemned, I don't know what I feel ... Oh Sons of the Immaculate Heart of my dearest Mother ... I want to write to you and I can not because of the tears in my eyes. Preach and pray on my behalf" (EC II, 352). They spread Claret's mission and take the place that he would have liked to occupy. He feels himself in communion with them, happy that they are his brothers. Then he placed himself in the bottom position of the missionary community, as a servant of all. In a most ingenuous way he states: "I have so much affection for the priests who are dedicated to the missions that I would give my blood and my life, I would wash

and kiss their feet a thousand times, I would make their beds, cook their food, and I would give them my scraps of food so that they might eat. I love them so much love that I go crazy for them. I would never know what I might do for them" (EC II, 352). This image of Claret who chooses the bottom position, with the most menial chores, is a telling commentary about the participation of all in the universal mission.

Extending from missionary enthusiasm and love, nothing is too small, everything is important and helps to make the Kingdom of God a reality. No one, whoever or wherever he is, is alien to this way of understanding the mission. Our missionary identity is expressed not only when we are engaged in specifically "missionary" activities (like preaching, liturgy, ecumenical dialogue, improvement of the human condition ...), but also when we do things well, even when the service we render is small and sometimes hidden from view, just because this is what we do. When we create a sense of beauty, we promote the culture of peace or of life in all its forms. The person made holy by the action of the Spirit (that is, the saint) is the one who sanctifies everything he touches and transforms the world. In the order of holiness, the small and simple things, even the invisible things, have been and still are the best missionary activities. Suffice it to remember the many great missionary Brothers throughout our history who illustrate this.

In one of his last pieces of writing (perhaps close to death in Fontfroide), Claret speaks about Missionaries not only as an instrument for the mission, like arrows in the hand of Mary, **but also as the very same arms and breasts of the Mother of God**. One of the most repeated words is precisely the word "everyone". Missionaries "must lead everyone to Mary" "The Missionaries of the Congregation are Mary's arms, which will zealously work for and embrace everyone" (EA, 665).



Exercise 3: By return of post

Start by re-reading this moving letter addressed to his fellow missionaries by Claret through P. José Xifré (cf. Appendix 2). The entire letter betrays a special situation of fervour and experience of the love of God. This is a week of “great grace” that the Lord will grant him on August 27th, 1861. Besides the content of the letter, which we have already discussed, we should highlight two small details at the end of the letter.

- The first is the reference to a “slip of paper” that Claret wants all missionaries to copy and carry with them. This is certainly what Claret elsewhere referred to as “reminders to self”. This is what we have come to call “the definition of the missionary,” a beautifully concise synthesis of his ardent universal spirit of mission.
- The second detail is in the postscript: “One day I had to preach at the train station, to people who were there waiting for the train.” The railway was at that time the quintessential symbol of progress, a portent of the future, communication and development. Claret happily accepted these new pulpits (today we call it the “new Areopagus”) to take the Word of God to all people. We might wonder what would our Founder have done if he had lived in an age like ours, with so many possibilities. Of course, he would not turn his back on any viable means of preaching the Gospel and reaching the four corners of the earth.

Now it’s your turn. Why not write a letter in response to your father, founder, teacher and companion in the universal missionary battles? Tell him how you live out the gift you have received: your hopes, your disappointments, your fears and your hopes. Ask him for help and advice on any particular aspect. And have no doubt that Claret himself, by return of post, will answer you.

2.7. Educating the senses

When it’s time to come down to earth and summarize what the mission is in its various aspects (cf. CC 48), the Constitutions ask us, when we think of concrete ways to carry it out, to promote, “before anything else”, that is to say in the very first instance, a number of senses that will give an especially Claretian colour and flavour to everything we do, which will help us also to choose those most appropriate ways of developing the mission in all circumstances, without falling into stereotypes.

a) The ability to win over

For some time now we have been seeking ways of being visible signs of God’s love in our world. We are trying intuitively to deliberately tune into fundamental ways and attitudes, in order to proclaim the Gospel in a credible way. It would seem that the winds are not blowing towards a Christianity that is widely extended throughout society, but rather seemingly to the level of a low social, political and cultural minority influence. We should not dream of a “re-Christianization” of countries where the “old Christianity” existed, nor of a triumphalist crusade across the world. Nor should we get hung up about it. **It is always possible, and indeed necessary, joyfully and freely to proclaim both Jesus and his gospel in understandable words and signs, for the people of our time, through the length and breadth of this world.** Maybe in some places, as in old Europe or elsewhere where there is a Christian tradition, it is a while since they “heard anyone speak” of Jesus

and they don’t seem much interested in what is on offer for the message to bear fruit. In this context of embedded secularism, it is vital to reconsider the prophetic message of our words and our way of life.

Maybe today, up against a landscape so little open to religious and moral propositions of a discursive kind, perhaps a shock therapy similar to that of the “mad people of God” of Eastern Christianity is necessary, which with their “naive” and “counter-cultural” way, turn upside down our attitudes to the value of money, power or knowledge where God has no place. We should try to focus our purpose on what people really expect from us and what we should really be experts in. **What is most urgent, timely and effective is to get people today engaged with the life of the Spirit.** When we speak of spirituality as an urgent and effective proposition for our time, we mean connecting with the deeper reality of ourselves where the reality of God is alive. To make this a reality, we must reclaim from our personal and community lives, the ability to overcome our spirit of suspicion as a way of analyzing reality. We must retrieve a new kind of innocence or lucid naivety, which experts speak about today in different fields. It takes faith to give birth to what is new. The universal mission, as we have said, may be the “kairos” of that faith in other people, in fact, in God who made everything “very good”. Our western world has educated us to mistrust and in the need to control others, to dominate them, even in a religious sense, so as not to experience the anguish that radical distrust has generated in us. Here the presence of Therese of Lisieux,

with her spiritual way of the child, giving importance to the small details, is an example for us to follow. Or the "lucid naivety" of Francis of Assisi or Claret, both compassionate and gentle. This faith, like a new birth, is given to us in our encounter with Christ and the life of the Spirit "which blows where it will." The Church today proposes, as a way to achieve this faith, that we live a "new evangelization", which according to the directives of the Synod of 2012 "consists of the courage to dare to walk along new paths, face up to the new conditions in which the Church is called to live the Gospel today. (...) It is the ability to give us, in these circumstances, the courage and strength of the early Christians, of the very first missionaries".

If we don't act with evangelical courage and boldness, for fear they will take us for fools, we may end up losing the fundamentals of the gospel and our very reason for being Christians. In order to gain more evangelical wisdom, perhaps we do need to stop using our heads so much. In other regions, such as Africa and Asia, they see the mission is having moved on to another stage. We need to move along different roads in dialogue with different cultures and religions, but always knowing that our contribution will be the result of a mutual discovery and enrichment of spirituality.

b) Availability to surrender and proclaim

The call from geographical, cultural or social boundaries of evangelization should challenge and push us to do crazy things in the name of the pilgrim missionary spirit, which requires uprooting ourselves and making ourselves available. **To a certain extent it means dying to our own identity to be reborn elsewhere, both geographically and culturally.** It is the old challenge, forever provocative and ever present, of the *xeneteia* (missionary itinerancy, for us). The Christians of the early centuries were aware of being pilgrims. When the apostle Peter wrote his first letter, he called them *par'oikus*, pilgrims, or outsiders without a homeland (cf. 1 Pt 2, 11). The *Letter to Diognetus*, in the middle of the third century, reminds us that for a Christian "any foreign land is homeland and every fatherland is a foreign land." Gradually, however, we get used to the strange environment and being *par'oikús*, becoming pastors with a title of ownership and roots which become deep and immovable.

Consecrated life found in expatriation, in the "*xeneteia*" ("becoming foreign"), is one of the most radical forms of poverty and profound testimony to the gospel, as the universal good news. This was already a very well-known phenomenon among Syrian monks, and then later amongst the restless iro-Celtic monks, who brought it under the name of "*peregriatio pro Christo*".

Claretian "*xeneteia*" is the readiness to make the essence of our universal vocation and mission a re-

ality. When Claret writes "My spirit is for the whole world" he understands that it can not take root in a particular place. He must be ready to go at any time to wherever obedience sends him. For him and for the first Claretians, parish work and missionary vocation were both incompatible. Availability demands, as the Constitutions say, that we "abandon all (...) in order to fulfil their duty of spreading the faith" (CC 48). One of the obstacles in the way of this availability for this universal mission is, according to the Constitution, an "inordinate love of their own country and culture" (CC 49). **Missionary itinerancy makes us go away from our homeland and turn our backs on the protection of our family home. It is a form of extreme destitution which points to one's own country being elsewhere, in everybody's common homeland.** The mission outside familiar territories offers us the possibility of "losing our roots" in order to gain universality and be born again in another world far from our own. Taking this step involves a profound reversal in life, which requires losing a lot and spending years without the possibility of being able to articulate a coherent word or phrase without having an expressionless face, to be almost without identity.

Poverty in word is the prelude to inculturation, of the Word made flesh. This spirituality of expatriation by the Kingdom helps us to open up ever wider spaces in our minds and hearts. In many parts of our world, where the Gospel is beginning to be proclaimed, the reality of the inculturation of missionaries is the sacrament of "the church taking root" ("*plantatio ecclesiae*"), which thus far has not been achieved, because people are still living with their foreign habits and customs. In many respects, it is simply a matter that missionaries refuse to try to become like the locals. The important thing is that, people in a particular culture that we engage with, must understand that they do not need to lose their own roots to become Christians. In some contexts, such as those we now culturally live in, where the "self" is given excessive prominence as an element of identity, the "*xeneteia*" of yesterday and today is a way of broadening horizons, giving wings to the mission and helping us to fly with the compass rose as our horizon.

Exercise 4: To be the arms of Mary

The exercise proposed here is more contemplative than reflective. We want to dig a little deeper into the text Claret writes about his missionaries at the end of his life (cf. EA, 665). Maybe it was the last thing that he wrote, a bit like his last will and testament. Claret mystically contemplates his missionaries not only as arrows in the hands of Mary, as an instrument in her hands, but rather as something more intimate and personal: the very same arms and breasts of the Mother of God. We are going to try and dig a little deeper into this picture.



We have before our eyes the oriental icon version of the picture which presided over the founding of the Congregation, the Mother of Divine Love. Mary has the typical attributes of the Theotokos: the colours blue (her tunic) and red (her cloak or “marforion”), the three stars indicating her perpetual virginity (before the birth, at the birth and after the birth). Mary is the throne of the Word of God, incarnate in her son Jesus, a child with adult traits (“*puer-senex*” experts call it) who, with his right hand, makes the gesture of the word and his left hand holds the scroll of the written Word. When you start looking at the icon, Mary is presented as grandiose, occupying almost the entire surface. But the more we look, the more we see that her figure decreases and that of her Son increases, which becomes the centre of our attention.

In the icons Mary never speaks. Her silence, however, has a special eloquence in the service of the Word Incarnate. Her eyes speak to us, looking at us and inviting us to listen to her Son, who is the Word: incarnate, spoken aloud, written down. Her heart, wounded by the sword that Simeon prophesied, is wholly inflamed by love, echoing the heart of her Son, who burns with the desire to carry out the will of the one that sent him.

The centre of the icon is occupied by Mary’s hands, which we want to contemplate for a while. These are not hands that speak to us, but they do fulfil two very important exercises in her Son’s mission. One of them is being held up, she keeps him upright. The other hand, stretched out, shows the way, “Jesus, blessed fruit of her womb”. So these images of the Mother of God are called “*hodigitria*”, which show the way. This is the iconographic interpretation of the last words that Mary pronounced in the Gospel: “Do whatever he tells you.” There is a whole diagonal of hands which show, extend forth, keep and proclaim the word. That is the mission of the arms of Mary.

Perhaps in the light of the beauty of these images we can understand what it means to be the “arms” of Mary. It may not always be that our mission of evangelization is necessarily linked explicitly to the preaching of the Word. Often, because of age, location or other circumstances of life, it will be our role to remain silent. Like Mary, we may have to extend forth the word in silence, keep it and meditate on it. This is part of our mission. And whatever we do, we must always be, like Mary and the disciples of the fourth gospel, people who “lead others to Jesus.” Probably this task of showing Jesus to others (“*indicating*” the way rather than “*exhorting*” or “*pushing*”) is now especially necessary on the mission. It will be a way of us becoming smaller so that He will grow bigger. Neither more nor less than what Mary did and continues to do.

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1. Contemplate and admire the icon in silence, especially Mary’s hands, eyes and heart.
2. Give thanks to her who has seen fit to let us share the gift of “cooperating in her maternal role in our apostolic mission” (CC 8).
3. Finally, ask her to help you understand specifically what aspects of your mission should continue to decrease so that Jesus might grow in those to whom you have been sent.

c) Catholicity to go wherever needed

The Greek term "*Katholikos*" has a double meaning, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cf. nn. 830-831): the integrity and fullness of the means of salvation, insofar as Christ is present in the Church as its Head; and universality, insofar as being sent for the whole of mankind. In a brilliant quotation from St. Augustine, the Church is Catholic "because it is not just an insignificant anything, and because it is spread across the earth" (*De Gen. ad lit*, 1: PL 34, 221). In many languages of the Christian East, the term "Catholic" translates to "reconcile" or "synodal", underlining the close connection of every believer with the total community. That's to say that catholicity, understood as the fullness of truth and universal expansiveness, is achieved to the extent that we live in profound communion with others. If someone reaches their own fulfilment by bringing out the "consubstantiality" of all people, it is understood that, for Eastern Christianity, individual salvation is a contradiction in itself. The desire for universal salvation of all human beings has always been one of the recurring themes of this spirituality, which has been found to be widely resonant amongst the people. In the East, some Fathers of the Church and many spiritual masters have believed in this salvation for all. Some, like Abraham, have haggled and argued with God, and like Ivan Jakovlevitch, one of "God's madmen" of the nineteenth century, asking: "that all may be saved, that all the world might be saved."

In the Western tradition there is no shortage of similar testimonies. Claret is one of them. Even as a child, when he thought about eternity, he was ignit-



ed with the desire to do everything possible to avoid the possibility of losing any human being forever (Aut 8-14). During his novitiate in the Society of Jesus, in prayer he expressed his burning desire with intense ardour that all men should be saved (cf. Aut 154-164). And ends up asking the Lord, following in the footsteps of St. Catherine of Siena: "Lord, let me stand at the gates of hell and stop anyone from entering, by telling each of them: 'Where are you going, poor fool?'"

Turn back! Make a good confession and save your soul. Don't come here to be lost for all eternity!" (Aut 212).

Moreover, our numerically low numbers, gladly accepted or simply tolerated, has helped us realize the full meaning of the mission as a task for the whole Church, especially for the laity. If we put this working in unison at the centre of our attention, it will profoundly affect the way we live our missionary identity. First of all, we lose the role of protagonists, because we have to decrease for others to grow, becoming brothers together in the universal mission. This is not generosity, but a rightful duty. Until recently, the Church's mission was almost entirely in our hands. We've been 'all things to all men' on the mission, because we've stripped our lay brothers and sisters of all their ecclesial rights. Now it is our role to help them, without patronizing them, to rediscover their rightful place in the Church. We are asked to be generous in the area of their training and preparation to engage in a shared common mission. And we are not just talking about the transfer of material or cultural property. **Today many lay people want, above all, to share in our spiritual property, to share in the roads we take towards spirituality and discipleship.** They want to accompany us in the reading of the Word, to help them discover evangelical spirituality, because they feel that it is not our exclusive prerogative, but the common property of the whole people of God.

In this field of shared mission, there are different levels of involvement and different ways to make it effective. In the circular letter "*Missionaries*", Fr Josep M. Abella, Superior General, makes a well-nigh complete analysis that should be noted. The involvement in missionary work must necessarily be different between a lay and consecrated person. We, through our divine vocation, have been called to "leave everything and follow him." This is our unique way of participating in the mission: with all that we are and all that we have. We have devoted body and soul to Christ so as to be sent anywhere. A married lay person, mother or father of family, with a full-time profession, cannot be engaged in the mission in the same way we are. This cannot be part of the dream.

The shared mission is not a fashion of the moment, nor a way of filling the gaps in our numerical scarcity. It is a question of fulfilling what we are asked in the Constitutions: "If any individual or group is led by a missionary spirit and wishes to collaborate with us, we should be glad in the Lord to have them associated in our apostolate" (CC 48). It is a practical way of broadening our missionary horizons. It is a real *kairos* that makes us more universal in our mission, which belongs to no-one exclusively. At one and the same time, it will help us to live a reality that, in recent times, is being experienced with growing force. Mission without ecclesial communion is propaganda or indoctrination. Many church documents, starting with "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*", spurred on by the historical

context in which we live, which is little given to speeches and theories, ask us to regenerate and strengthen the community fabric underpinning our experience of faith. **The Christian community is the natural place for an encounter with Jesus.** But this is only possible to grasp intuitively from the perspective of a new style of living in communion, embodying love in the acceptance of others. The best argument of the true Church of Jesus is unity in love, where every believer is able to renounce himself so that others may grow. The testimony of the unity and communion of the different charisms within the Church community is, therefore, essential so that faith can be aroused in response to people becoming a part of the community of Jesus Christ. And this communion has different ramifications. We should not think only about the “committed” laity. In other ecclesial charisms and ministries too, fellowship with other consecrated people, priests and especially with our bishops, to whom we are “steadfast helpers” (CC 6).



Exercise 5: Custody of the senses

The so-called “custody of the senses” is a well known ascetic way so that our bodily senses are not an obstacle in the way of spiritual life. We can borrow the term, but talk about something else. In number 48, our Constitutions present the need to foster in ourselves a number of ways of accomplishing the universal mission we have been given. The bodily senses (sight, touch, taste ...), together with others (aesthetic taste, musical taste, sensitivity to poverty ...) are innate abilities that require training and practice in order to develop. If this doesn’t happen, the huge potential becomes paralyzed and atrophied.

Taking the text of our Constitutions, you can take a small X-ray of your missionary senses. Having received the gift of grace of the missionary vocation means that you, without any merit of your own, have freely been granted many opportunities to live your life open to the world, as Claret did. During initial and ongoing formation, we have to implement those powers, that is to say “foster” (as the text says) these senses in ourselves.

1. After reading the text of the Constitutions (cf. CC 48) and the commentary given in this Booklet, take each of the “senses” and ask yourself:
 - What, specifically for me, is meant by the sense of alertness which responds to what is most urgent, opportune and effective? Is it an off-the-peg caption or something that, even without knowing how to define it clearly, I understand and live it?
 - What difficulties do I face when trying to foster this sense in myself? Am I anchored down, tied to places, people or activities and methods, which prevent me from taking off?
 - What stimuli can I find to help foster me and grow in this sense of alertness? Can you turn to an expert to help you stay “in shape” to respond to what is most urgent, opportune and effective?
 - What can you do in the future? How can you help your brothers in the community to foster this sense?
2. Do the same with the sense of availability and the sense of catholicity.
3. When you have finished, give thanks to God for the gift of vocation-mission received and end by reciting the apostolic prayer of Fr Claret (“God and my Father ...”).

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

Before the community meeting, it would be a good idea if a few of the community have been allocated the task of **choosing five diverse experiences of the Claretian mission on different continents, using the booklets on the "The Claretian Mission" of the past two years as a point of reference.** Since this is October, the month of the rosary, it may be appropriate that this very Claretian and universal prayer should serve as a setting for the various missionary experiences.

A world map or globe, the open Bible and a lighted candle should be prominently displayed at the meeting.

1. **Opening Prayer**, taken from the Spiritual Directory (for example, number 77 or another considered appropriate) recited by all.
2. A community member briefly presents **a missionary experience** on one of the continents. We should try to locate where the place is on the map. That done, the first mystery of the Rosary from the Mysteries of Light should be recited.
3. And so on, until all the five experiences of the five continents and five decades of the Rosary have been completed.
4. We conclude with **Claret's "Apostolic Prayer"**.
5. As an expression of fraternal missionary communion, we could write **a community letter to a missionary friend** who is working on one of the Congregation's frontier missions, expressing our closeness to them, our prayer and encouragement.

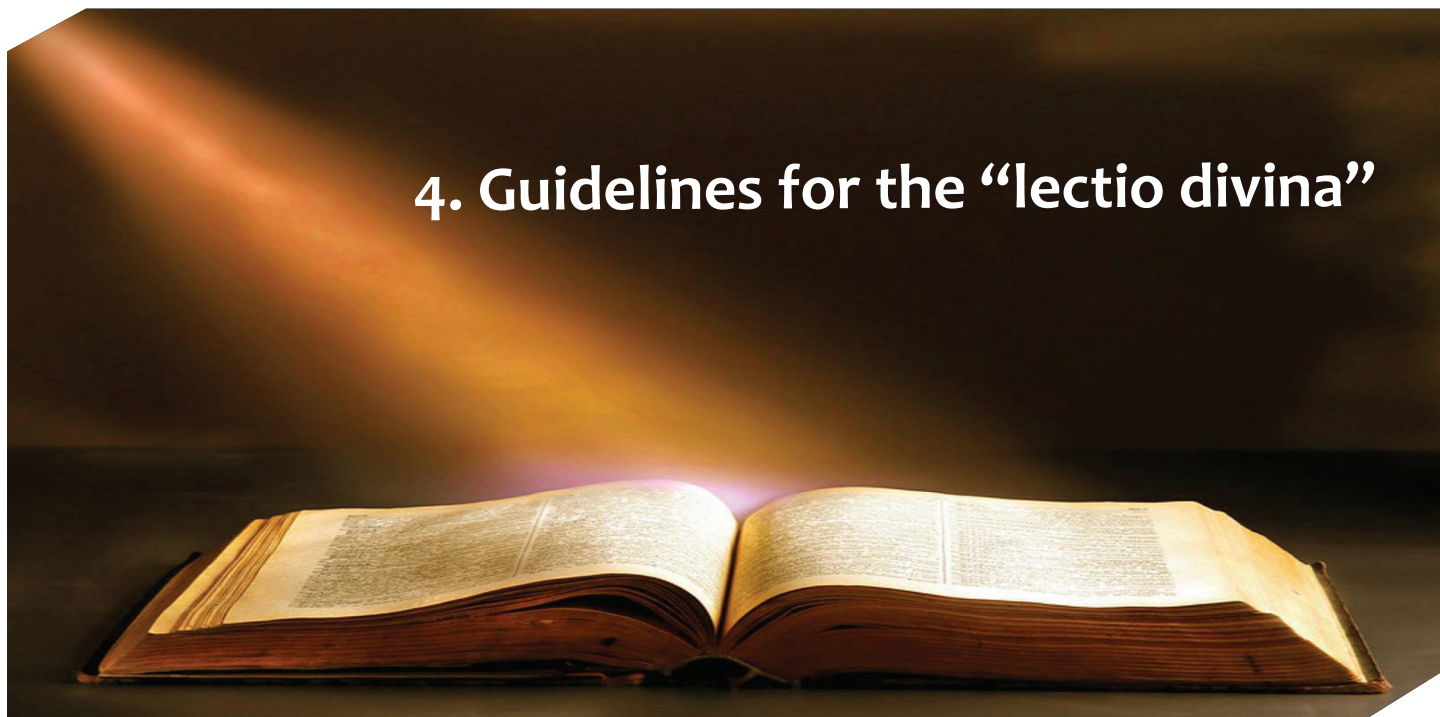
Sometime during the community retreat, we could watch a film about one of

the themes in this booklet. We suggest the film *The band's visit* (Bikur Ha-Tizmoret, 2007) directed by Eran Kolirin. An endearing film with a deep sense of humanity and a hugely important debate between religions and cultures. The young Israeli director Eran Kolirin presents the story of a small-time musical band of Egyptian police, which performs in a small, isolated Israeli town, after getting lost, and being forgotten by their embassy, as they headed to play at a formal concert. They are welcomed by villagers who, going beyond their prejudices and differences, share their lives with them, and what little they have. The cross-cultural coexistence between the Arab musicians and Israeli locals raises the fundamental questions that all human beings have to face concerning the same issues and that we all have the same desires. The authenticity of the characters puts before us a goodness that expresses a dignity and personal responsibility that go far

beyond what the laws or political and ethnic conflicts seem to declare.



4. Guidelines for the “lectio divina”



Wednesday, October 1, 2014. Memorial of St Teresa of the Child of Jesus

- Job 9: 1-12.14-16
 - Ps 87
 - Lk 9: 57-62
- October begins with the memorial of the patron saint of missions, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus. And the message of Jesus is clear: if you want to follow me, you have to be ready for anything. That ‘anything’ means readiness to live with insecurity, itinerancy, breaking with the past and making a choice that may include death. Or, to withdraw into a monastery and seemingly “do nothing” out of love. Are we able to revise our personal circumstances so as to be adaptable at all times? May the intercession of St. Teresa help us to be missionaries as Jesus wants. As our Founder wanted.

Thursday, October 2, 2014. Memorial of the Guardian Angels (Cal CMF, 361-365)

- Job 19: 21 to 27
 - Ps 26
 - Lk 10: 1-12
- Sending out the missionaries, in twos, to make it clear that one person can’t do everything. To proclaim the kingdom of God (not the kingdom of each one of them), meaning that God is stronger than evil, and is greater than the problems that surround us, and greater than our own and other peoples’ weaknesses. Trusting in God and not just in our own reserves or abilities, we can do great things. Though this is not to everybody’s liking, and some will oppose it. Nobody said it was easy, on the contrary, but we know it’s worth it. Fr Claret professed great devotion to all the Holy Angels, especially towards the Guardians of the people. They are messengers of God’s plan of salvation for men. May they, as Patrons of the Congregation, help us.

Friday, October 3, 2014

- Job 38:1.12-21; 40.3 to 5
 - Ps 138
 - Lk 10, 13-16
- Mankind’s freedom to choose, so loved by God, means that the message of the salvation of Jesus can be rejected. Up to that point the Father respects us. Not everyone who lived with Jesus accepted his word. Today there are many people who cannot see the wonders God is doing. They have a heart of stone. We missionaries must have a heart of flesh, to be able to talk about the Good News, and say that Christ will not reject us at the Last Judgement, for the things we did not do and could do, for our lack of love, or our lack of solidarity. May we always be close to the Master, and give him no grounds for complaint. Never.

Saturday, October 4, 2014. Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi

- Job 42:1-3.5-6.12-16
 - Ps 118
 - Lk 10: 17-24
- Sometimes apostolic work is rewarding, because things have gone well. It happened to those 72 sent by Christ. And Jesus himself was happy with things, but warned of the dangers. The important thing is that we are helping to build the Kingdom of God, where we are all citizens. Being accepted by the people or victories against evil, these are all of secondary importance. The main thing is to know who is our Lord. St Francis knew the answer very well, and with his humility and obedience became a model for many. A simple man who understood exactly where God manifests himself. Are you counted amongst the wise, who do not understand because they don’t know where to look, or do you see the world through God’s eyes?

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2014. 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 5: 1-7
- Ps 79
- Phil 4: 6-9
- Mt 21: 33-43

Isaiah, using the image of the vineyard, denounces the betrayal of the people of Israel. Paul describes how the Christian community must meet the Lord. It is a community that lives of thanksgiving and faith, seeking everything that is noble and pure. Because of that, it bears the fruit that God expects of it. In the Gospel, Jesus confronts the religious authorities of his time. But now the vineyard is the Church. God wants us to respond with fidelity, not as the wicked tenants. The preaching of the Founder intended to raise awareness of the people to accept Jesus as the “cornerstone” rejected by all those who want to build their lives apart from Him. And you, how are you responding to the call of Jesus?

Monday, October 6, 2014. Memorial of St. Bruno. Episcopal Ordination of Fr Founder (Cal CMF, 367-371)

- Gal 1: 6-12
- Ps 110
- Lk 10: 25-37

Listen. It is the beginning of Jesus’ answer to the question of what we must do to gain eternal life. Love God and your neighbour, because you can not love God, whom you cannot see, if you do not love your brother, whom you can see. The first characters to appear make their choice. The priest and the Levite do not stain their hands and remain pure. The Samaritan, a foreigner, takes pity and has mercy on the injured man. Do we help lift up the fallen of our time? Or do we pass them by, so as not to arrive late at the temple? Our mission is to be bearers of the Good News. Not to accept the mission itself has its own price. Always. Just ask Jonah. Our neighbour awaits us.

Tuesday, October 7, 2014. Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary (Cal CMF, 373-378)

- Gal 1: 13-24
- Ps 138
- Lk 10: 38-42

Today we have two ways of looking at life, including missionary life. Contemplation or action? Or rather, exhaustion for want of resources. Receive Christ, look at him, be humble at his feet, whether listening to or doing many things, accumulating merit in the quest to feel important. As missionaries, we can - and must - do many things, but only after having understood what the best options are. May we never be without the daily measure of listening and worship, to know what God wants from us at all times.

Remembering Mary with her title of Our Lady of the Rosary, let us renew this awareness and that much valued practice, fervently bequeathed to us by our holy Founder.

Wednesday, October 8, 2014

- Gal 2: 1-2,7-14
- Ps 116
- Lk 11: 1-4

Because we are children of God, we often make bold to pray the Lord’s Prayer to him, recalling that He is the Father of all, and asking Him to give us what we need every day, both physically as well as spiritually, and alternating between the vertical (Father’s) and the horizontal (our) dimensions. May we do the Father’s will, as good missionaries, taking with us everywhere the message of the Kingdom, and showing concern that everyone has a life that is dignified, happy, and free from all evil.

Thursday, October 9, 2014

- Gal 3: 1-5
- Lk 1.69 to 75
- Lk 11: 5-13

One of the missionary’s ‘two feet’, prayer, explained by Jesus himself. Because we should be consistent in our contact with God, to show that we want to be his friends and pass on his Word, not ours. Pray always, trusting that we are heard and that God knows what we need and when we need it. Knowing that if we ask, seek and knock on the door, we will be given it, we will find it, it will be opened to us. Let us pray for the Spirit to enlighten us. And to be able to teach others to pray in this way, confidently, persistently, and continuously.

Friday, October 10, 2014

- Gal 3: 7 to 14
- Ps 110
- Lk 11: 15-26

Jesus was on everybody’s lips. And when his enemies were not able to deny the value of his work, they criticised his intention. The Lord defended himself with logic, trying to get everyone to see that the Kingdom of God is already in this world. This is a good job for a missionary: to convince others with his own life that the Kingdom is getting closer and closer to us. Doing good and fighting evil by all urgent, opportune and effective means. The victory is already on our side, after the death and resurrection of Christ.

Saturday, October 11, 2014

- Gal 3: 22 to 29
- Ps 104
- Lk 11: 27-28
-

Popular religious consciousness is not just a thing of today. Ordinary people know how to appreciate the role of Mary in the History of Salvation. She was always next to Jesus, as the first disciple, obeying his Word, putting it into practice, with her eyes open, so she could understand the needs of the people around her. This is a good strategy for the life of a Claretian, hear the Word, implement it and so do the will of God. So we too will be blessed. Like our Mother.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2014. 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 25: -10a Faced with the Assyrian threat of invading Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah suggests God's judgment. Then will come the time of renewal symbolized by the image of the banquet. Paul, from prison, gratefully accepts the gift of the community of Philippi. Jesus, in the Gospel, tells us the parable of the banquet organized by a king to celebrate the wedding of his son. The first guests apologize for not attending. The table is filled with poor people found on the roads. But they should take the "party dress" to go to the banquet. How do you accept the invitation that Jesus drives you? What are your excuses? Do you have your dress ready?
- Ps 22
- Phlp 4:12-14.19-20
- Mt 22: 1-14

Monday, October 13, 2014. Brother Manuel Giol (Cal CMF, 379-385)

- Gal 4: 22-24.26-27.31-5,1 The first reading is very 'missionary', talking about getting "the Gentiles to respond to the faith for the glory of his name." Many seek signs, but now there are no more signs. Jesus Christ is the last sign. Some we have seen clearly, and we now live to testify to that. Hopefully, our preaching, our witness and our lives will speak of this, of Christ the Saviour, so that many hardened hearts can be converted and receive the light of Christ through us. Hopefully we can be the signs for others.
- Ps 112
- Lk 11: 29-32

Tuesday, October 14, 2014. Fr Joaquin Gelada and fellow martyrs (Cal CMF, 387-391)

- Gal 5: 1-6 Rules and more rules complicated the lives of Jews. The most important thing was not merely understanding the meaning of the law, but fulfilling it. Christ comes to go beyond the law, giving new meaning to the things we do. In our society, in our Church, we need laws, but always putting the person and the salvation of souls first. We need to go from the inside out, to purify our hearts, our motives, and to give true worship to the God who gives his love freely. That is the power of salvation for those who believe in Him. Are you going deeper into it, or will you stay on the outside? What moves you to do things? Does your life proclaim the glory of God? Today our congregation commemorates the martyrdom of the Servants of God, Fr Joaquin Gelada and companions, killed for their faith near Torrelavega (Cantabria, Spain).
- Ps 118
- Lk 11: 37-41

Wednesday, October 15, 2014. Feast of St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and doctor (Cal CMF, 393-399)

- Gal 5: 18-25 We continue yesterday's narrative. Jesus does not reject the law. He prefers the love of God over the law. And he warns us against the temptation of vainglory, which often surrounds the missionary. We should not talk so much about us, but about God. This may be our hypocrisy. In our work, in our ministry, do we see God or just ourselves? The rules help us, but we must go further. What is our relationship with God like? Is it formal or based on emotions? What image do we project of God in our lives and in our preaching? The nun from Avila understood this very well. And set about trying to reform herself so as to later undertake the reform of Carmel and of the Church. May our Co-patron enlighten us.
- Ps 1
- Lk 11: 42-46

Thursday, October 16, 2014. Br Miguel Palau (Cal CMF, 401-406)

- Eph 1: 1-10. Perhaps today's text may seem very remote. We are neither Pharisees nor doctors of the law. We do not go around killing prophets. But we all run the risk of judging by appearances and making our faith a ritual or purely external matter. And we also, at times, find it difficult to accept what Jesus says. By closing ourselves off from Jesus, we are rejecting Him, we kill Him a little. May the Lord give us the sensitivity of our Father Founder, to reject any hint of sin. May we live forever with Jesus. It is possible. On October 16th, 1929 Br Miguel Palau, servant of God, died in the odour of sanctity, in Cervera (Lleida, Spain). A life devoted to the Lord and to his brothers. A surrendered life is the best kind of missionary preaching and a great pastoral vocation.
- Ps 97
- Lk 11: 47-54

Friday, October 17, 2014. Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

- Eph 1: 11- 14 Paul reminds us of Abraham's worthiness. This old man believed what God told him, because at the age of 75 he left his homeland, like a true missionary. He was not afraid of losing everything. Without knowing where he was going, he still went. Sometimes fear can get the better of us, preventing us from leaving our homeland. At other times, we are afraid to take any action of change, because it is forced upon us. You cannot follow Christ and live in comfortable circumstances. Ignatius of Antioch had no fear of death, because he had nothing to lose. His life was Christ. Our brothers, the Barbastro Martyrs, with their lives of sacrifice and dedication, were prepared for martyrdom. We too can inspect our own hearts, see what our own shackles are, and learn how to carry less baggage in our lives, so as to be available for the mission.
- Ps 32
- Lk 12: 1-7

Saturday, October 18, 2014. Feast of St. Luke, Evangelist

- 2 Tm 4: 9-7 Today the liturgy has a very missionary tone. Whenever we commemorate an evangelist, like one of the apostles, something must move within us, especially if we hear that "the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few." There is so much to do, and we must do it together, in community. That was what prompted our Founder, St. Anthony Mary Claret, to live as he did and do what he did. Always trying to see where we can serve more and serve better. Today is a good day to check the level of our missionary availability, to be sent wherever the Church and the Congregation need us. There were five of them and all very young, and they were able to begin great work. May we not be worse than them. May we not be lacking in the sense of excitement that engenders the enthusiasm.
- Ps 144
- Lk 10: 1-9

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2014. 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

[Fr Jaime Girón and companions, martyrs (Cal CMF, 407-412)]

- Is 45: 1.4-6
- Ps 95
- 1 Tes 1: 1-5b
- Mt 22: 15-21

Prophet Isaiah foresees the coming end of Babylon. The new rising empire is Persia, whose king Cyrus will be an instrument of God for the salvation of the people and, above all, the anticipation of another servant, entirely different, who will carry out God's plan. The letter to the Thessalonians is centered on the idea of the final coming of the kingdom. In the Gospel, Jesus is tested by the Pharisees, who want to see if he is faithful to Roman authority. Jesus denounces their misconduct and gives a norm that is valid for all times: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". Do you know to live the autonomy of temporal realities? Today we remember God's servants Fr Jaime Girón and his fellow martyrs, killed in Cervera (Lleida, Spain). May their blood be the seedbed of many Christians. May it encourage us to be good missionaries and call on many to serve others by sharing our own lifestyle.

Monday, October 20, 2014

- Eph 2: 1-10
- Ps 99
- Lk 12: 13-21

There are extremely poor people and all they have is money. And this is what causes many problems. Jesus does not want to intervene, but he does give us some standards for how we should live and, above all, what to live for. Money is not evil in itself, it is necessary for living. But if everything revolves around money, the need to have more and more, something starts to go wrong. If we cannot share, we move away from what God wants, from the universal ownership of all goods and the idea that we are all brothers. Our legislation prohibits us, as a community, from accumulating material things, thanks to the common purse, but it is good to check what our rooms are like and, above all, the state of our hearts. Are we rich in the eyes of God? Or do we rely on material things? What are we attached to? How do we feel about sharing what we have, our personal property, personal talents and our time?

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

- Eph 2: 12-22
- Ps 84
- Lk 12: 35-38

Today's text brings several parables together, about being vigilant and waiting for the second coming of the Lord. Always waiting for Christ, because we know neither the day nor the hour. And being ready, because he who is coming is the Judge. As missionaries, we should be prudent ministers, because we have been chosen, we have received a lot and we have been entrusted with a beautiful task: the proclamation of the Kingdom. If we sleep, if we do not share what we have received, if we are not dressed and ready to go, they will tell us one day that we have not been faithful.

Wednesday, October 22, 2014

- Eph 3: 2-12
- Is 12: 2-3.6
- Lk 12: 39-48

We are stewards of God's grace, so we cannot act as we want, but only as God wills us. Living for others, not for oneself, and labouring with love, without violence. If Peter expected a different answer, it became clear to him that the sole privilege of a follower of Jesus is the privilege of service. If we live with this in mind, we will be closer to the Master, each with his specific vocation, but all in the same spirit. It may be that you do not have many duties or obligations, but you have certainly received many gifts, either material or spiritual, from God. So, much depends on your answer to Him. May the Lord find us prepared.

Thursday, October 23, 2014

- Eph 3: 14-21
- Ps 32
- Lk 12: 49-53

The Kingdom of God frequently moves us to action. Therefore, the Lord prepares us for the challenges ahead. And that is where we can make our contribution: either letting irenism reign supreme, a false peace, based on a lack of courage to face up to the problems, or we can face up to the challenges with the power of the Spirit. The Spirit that helps us feel the peace and love of God. To act as God wants us can cause problems, even within the family or community. But sometimes it's necessary to attribute value to life, so as to give life to others, and so that the testimony might prove to be true. In order to speak of true peace, which is more than just the absence of war. And build it with others.

Friday, October 24, 2014. St. Anthony Mary Claret, bishop and founder (Cal CMF, 413)

- Is 61: 1-6
- Ps 22
- 2 Cor 5: 14-20
- Mk 16: 15-20

The *dies natalis* of our Founder is the reason to give thanks to God for his life, for his work and for us, his children, his beloved Congregation. A call to feel for ourselves that the Spirit of God is upon each of us, as did Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, and as experienced by Claret. On the feast of St. Anthony Mary Claret, the mission of the apostles is put before us. Our Founder felt himself to be apostle and missionary. At the frontier of life almost anywhere, always looking for what is most important, timely and effective, and in so doing using whatever means available to build the Kingdom of God. Each with his own vocation, his own personal charisma, within the common charisma of the Congregation. And being creative, as was Claret. Giving others the opportunity to work with us, so that the Good News reaches all corners of the world, from pole to pole.

Saturday, October 25, 2014

- Eph 4: 7-16
- Ps 121
- Lk 13: 1-9

We are not the one to judge others. The Jews of today's Gospel did, because they thought themselves superior. But God is love, he is not vindictive. He is patient, he watches the passage of time more patiently than some would like. We want everything to be solved quickly, put an end to the bad things, and that everything be as it should be. The vineyard worker asked for more time, to pay special attention to the barren fig tree. Life does not change suddenly, it needs time to mature. It's all a question of developing a positive attitude, seeing things through the eyes of God, and doing everything on our behalf. We will have to dig and fertilize.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2014. 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Ex 22: 20-26
- Ps 17
- 1 Tes 1: 5c-10
- Mt 22: 34-40

The law of Moses translates the profound demands of a man freed from slavery. Paul explains to the Thessalonians what the love of God is and asks them to be models of faith and love. Jesus, in response to a question from a doctor of the law about the most important precept, puts at the same level the love of God (Deuteronomy) and the love of neighbor (Leviticus).

Both loves are inextricably linked. Do you live like this or are a victim of dichotomies that split your life? Our Founder wanted that God might be known, loved, served and praised, and that human beings were happy.

Monday, October 27, 2014. Fr Domingo Fabregas, cofounder (Cal CMF, 415-419)

- Eph 4: 32 to 5.8
- Ps 1
- Lk 13: 10-17

Once again, Jesus is with the poorest of the poor. With a woman who is sick. This daughter of Abraham had few options. Being healed means getting up, looking at the world before her and praising God. A simple woman who understands that God has passed through her life. We, children of God, have many moments of grace in our lives. We do not always recognize it. It is a good day for giving thanks to God for the times that he has come our way, for letting us touch him and for giving us his strength. And tell lots of people about it, so that they too are liberated. On October 27, 1895 Fr Domingo Fabregas, the co-founder of the Congregation, died. He believed in the great work that began on July 16, 1849. He gave thanks to God through his words and his life. A model for all 21st century missionaries.

Tuesday, October 28, 2014. Feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles (Cal CMF, 421-427)

- Eph 2: 19-22
- Ps 18
- Lk 6: 12-19

The commemoration of the apostles is always a call to recognize our own ecclesial roots. And in the presence of prayer, we are all reminded that the here and now is important. The era of the new people begins, the new Israel, which will demonstrate that the Kingdom is already present in the world. We have received the call to live together in the manner of the apostles, continuing the work begun many years ago, and which should be made relevant to our times. To renew our own resolve is to feel the gaze of the Master, over and over again, asking us to be part of something bigger than ourselves, the Church, the Congregation, the Province, the Community. Living together as brothers, we are telling the world that it is possible to live differently, and that it is worth it. It is a path to happiness or, in other words, a path to holiness. An eloquent, and universally valid, testimony.

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

- Eph 6: 1-9
- Ps 144
- Lk 13: 22-30

Everything gets turned upside down. Look at the world in a different way. Jesus deals with situations in a radically different way. For those who know everything, who understand everything, who can do everything, he puts them at the end of the queue, and the humble, the simple, those who are teachable, he puts them first. The door is narrow. Jesus invites us to use all our strengths to enter the Kingdom. May we have just one Lord, that we remain undivided, and we rejoice in sharing the banquet of the Kingdom. "Guard me lest in proclaiming the gospel to others, I remain excluded from the Kingdom", we recite in the filial and apostolic prayer to the Heart of Mary. May we be prepared and sent out to everyone, but always maintaining our relationship with Him. Knowing also that, whatever happens, everything is for the good. An enthusiastic view of the world.

Thursday, October 30, 2014

- Eph 6: 10-20
- Ps 143
- Lk 13: 31-35

Many people are unreceptive to the message of Jesus. To the extent of even wanting to kill him. Despite all the good things that Christ did. With the kind of preaching that our Founder loved so much, Jesus gives us the example of animals, the care with which a hen gathers all her chicks under her wings. That was the spirit of Jesus and that was the wish of Claret, to bring all men under the cloak of God's love. Resistance to the Gospel should not halt us in our tracks. For us missionaries, it should give us motivation. It should pain us that a lot of people, today, live without God, and it should move us to give everything on behalf of the Kingdom.

Friday October 31, 2014

- Phil 1: 1-11
- Ps 110
- Lk. 14: 1-6

Lots of people gathered around Jesus. Some to praise him, others to criticize him. They criticized the timing, when they could not deny that a miracle had been performed. When healing people of dropsy, Christ placed the individual above absurd laws which, instead of liberating people, enslaved believers. The Good News of the Gospel can't be limited in time or space (in season and out of season) and so the Master is free to act. We can follow Jesus' example and paddle against the current, supporting those who suffer most. I hope that everyone will recognize us as being committed and compassionate people, ready to welcome others and make gestures of support. One way of coping with pain and overcoming it, is by sharing it with someone who can help you overcome it. May we always be there, ready, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

5. Texts for going deeper

Appendix 1: Vita Consecrata 77-78

77. Those who love God, the Father of all, cannot fail to love their fellow human beings, whom they recognize as brothers and sisters. Precisely for this reason, they cannot remain indifferent to the fact that many men and women do not know the full manifestation of God's love in Christ. The result, in obedience to Christ's commandment, is the missionary drive *ad gentes*, which every committed Christian shares with the Church which is missionary by nature. This drive is felt above all by the members of Institutes, whether of the contemplative or of the active life. Consecrated persons, in fact, have the task of making present even among non-Christians Christ who is chaste, poor, obedient, prayerful and missionary. While remaining ever faithful to their charism they must know that they have a special share in the Church's missionary activity, in virtue of their interior consecration made to God. The desire so often expressed by Theresa of Lisieux, "to love you and make you loved", the ardent longing of Saint Francis Xavier that many, "meditating on what the Lord God will expect from them and from the talents he has given them, would be converted, using the right means and the spiritual exercises to know and feel within themselves the divine will, and so, adapting themselves more to that will than to their own inclinations, they would say: Lord, here I am, what do you want me to do? Lead me wherever you will", and other similar testimonies of countless holy men and women, manifest the un-suppressible missionary drive which distinguishes and ennobles the consecrated life.

78. "The love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor 5:14): the members of every Institute should be able to repeat this truth with Saint Paul, because the task of the consecrated life is to work in every part of the world in order to consolidate and expand the Kingdom of Christ, bringing the proclamation of the Gospel even to the most far-off regions. In fact, the history of the missions testifies to the great contribution made by consecrated men and women to the evangelization of peoples: from ancient monastic Families to recent Foundations committed exclusively to the mission *ad gentes*, from Institutes of active life to those devoted to contemplation. Countless consecrated persons have given their whole lives in this primary activity of the Church, which is "essential and never-ending" because it is addressed to the growing number of those who do not know Christ.

Today too this duty continues to present a pressing call to Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: they are expected to make the greatest possible contribution to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Also those Institutes which are being established and are at work in the younger Churches are invited to open themselves to the mission among non-Christians, inside and outside their own countries of origin. Despite the understandable difficulties which some of them will meet, it is good to remind everyone that just as "faith is strengthened when it is given to others", so the mission strengthens the consecrated life, gives it new enthusiasm and new motivation, and elicits faithfulness. For its part, missionary activity offers ample room for all the different forms of the consecrated life.

Appendix 2: From the Letter of Fr Claret to Fr José Xifré, CMF (August 20, 1861)

“... Yes, yes indeed, this is my most savory meal, my only meal. If only I were able to be off and running, preaching throughout Spain and the whole world! The greatest temptation I have is to escape from Her Majesty’s side. But I put up with it all because they tell me that it’s God will that I stand by her and, for the moment, I believe that it is so. This and this alone enables me to put up with it, hoping that the Lord will see fit to release me. Meanwhile, tell my dearest brothers the Missionaries to take heart and work as hard as they can. God and the Blessed Virgin will reward them for it. I have such great affection for priests who dedicate themselves to missions that I would give my life’s blood for them. I would wash and kiss their feet a thousand times. I would take the food out of my mouth to feed them. I love them so much that I would do crazy things for them. In fact, I can’t say what I wouldn’t do for them... Even while I’m writing this, I have to put down my pen in order to dry my eyes... O Sons of the Immaculate Heart of my dearest Mother Mary! I want to write to you but I can’t, because my eyes are filled with tears. Preach, and pray for me.”



Appendix 3: A Community of Kindness of Heart and Simplicity (Br Roger Schutz)

When I was still a child, some summer afternoons we would get together to read texts aloud. Among the stories that were often read were some excerpts of the history of Port-Royal, written by Sainte-Beuve. It told of a Cistercian community of women that lived near Paris in the seventeenth century.

When the abbess died in 1602, Angélique Arnauld, the daughter of a Parisian lawyer, replaced her. According to the custom of the time, her grandfather had taken steps to ensure that she would be elevated to that office despite her young age. She remained in the monastery against her wishes and lived there for several years in great inner distress.

One day, writes Sainte-Beuve, when the young abbess was seventeen years old, a priest passed through and gave a meditation to the community. It was common knowledge that this priest led a disordered life, but that day he expressed clearly God's love, his inexhaustible and unlimited goodness. Those words caused an inner upheaval in the young Angélique Arnauld: "God touched me so deeply that, from that moment on, I considered myself more fortunate to be a religious than I had previously thought myself unfortunate to be one."

As a result, returning to the wellsprings of their vocation, she introduced radical changes in the life of the community; gradually it became known far and wide and had a great impact. Among others, Blaise Pascal's sister entered the com-

munity. Men came to live beside the monastery for shorter or longer periods of prayer and study; they were known as the "Messieurs de Port-Royal."

My mother had so much admiration for that period of the history of Port-Royal-des-Champs that she had placed a portrait of Mother Angélique Arnauld on her desk. "She's my invisible friend," she used to say.

And myself, I was captivated to discover what a few women, living in community, had been able to accomplish. Close to our house there was a large yew tree with very dense foliage. One day when I was about sixteen, I stopped by that tree and said to myself, "If those few women, responding in all lucidity to a call to community life and giving their life for Christ, had so much impact on those around them, could not a few men living in community do the same thing?"

Since then, I think that I never lost the intuition that community life could be a sign that God is love, and love alone.

Gradually the conviction took shape in me that it was essential to create a community with men determined to give their whole life and who would always try to understand one another and be reconciled, a community where kindness of heart and simplicity would be at the center of everything.





finalized beforehand. In the process of finalizing the project of evangelization, we must show respect for, and patience with, the reality of the place and the situation of the people. True listening requires humility in knowing how to recognize existing wisdom and to let reality question our own opinions and methods. Listening is a demanding process.

b) Discernment

However, we will not go empty handed. We have been entrusted with the treasure of the Gospel message. We hold in our hearts the experience of encountering Jesus which has broken new ground in our lives and filled it with meaning and hope. This experience, which is fundamental in our lives, has grown within the ecclesial community which is called to be a sign of God's loving presence in the world, and to be a place of welcome for "seekers of truth, justice and peace" as we are told in the message of the Synod which I have quoted. The questions that arise from dialogue with people and from situations that we encounter along the way, call on our discernment. We must clarify them in the light of the Gospel in order to answer them adequately; and this must be done in communion with the Church, the community of the disciples of Jesus. Discernment requires fidelity to the Gospel and a deep ecclesial sense. For us, the religious community, the Congregation is our point of reference in this discernment.

c) Creativity

We cannot keep repeating schemes and programmes. Dialogue requires us to be always open to the new surprises which happen throughout history and throughout the world. Projects of evangelization must be able to integrate the demands of dialogue with the local culture and with other cultures, with other religious traditions and with other Christian Churches. This obviously calls for study and reflection. Our formation programmes should be much more aware of the reality of our world and of the new cultural tendencies; they should be more directed to an understanding of the experience of those who have grown up and lived within other religious traditions, and a deeper understanding of the theological and pastoral approaches of sister Christian Churches should be ever present in our effort to better understand the world we live in and the questions of our contemporaries. Without study and reflection, without good preparation, pastoral creativity cannot be achieved, nor can meaningful answers. The call to being on the cultural, social and geographical front lines of evangelization requires study, reflection and missionary boldness. The Congregation must continue promoting good formation for all its members. We should not be afraid of the new, even if it requires us to give up what we have become accustomed to or whatever we feel most comfortable with. Creativity also requires us to move to where the questions of concern to humanity today are resonating most strongly, and to those places where the yearning for peace and justice is most strongly evident, because there the oppressive weight of an unjust, violent world is felt most strongly.

Appendix 4: Mission in dialogue (Josep M. Abella, Missionaries)

The last General Chapter tells us in the document "Men on fire with love": "We will take as a criterion and key to all our ministries 'the dialogue of life' which always takes others into account and does not exclude anyone -women or men, one Christian denomination or another, one religion or another, one culture or another"(MFL 58.2). This is the path of evangelization. Taken in this sense, the final message of the Synod on "the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church" is beautiful and inspiring. After presenting the Word of God as the creative Word of life and of the people, whom he is guiding on this great pilgrimage that is the Old Testament; after inviting us to contemplate the Word incarnate - with a 'face': Jesus the Son of the Father, who is present among us; and after reminding us that in the Church we will find the community, the 'house', where the Word is welcomed, celebrated and shared, the message of the Synod tells us: "The embodied Word of God "issues from" his house, the temple, and walks along the roads of the world to encounter the great pilgrimage that the people of earth have taken up in search of truth, justice and peace". Dialogue is where evangelization really happens. It may be that we have wanted to do too much "teaching" and that we have "listened" too little. Maybe we have enthusiastically invited people to "come" to us, but we have not been so willing to "go out" ourselves. Only through relating to others can we accompany people on the road to encounter Christ. As a result, it is essential to cultivate certain attitudes, give a dialogical orientation to the way of implementing our ministries and activities, and create platforms and structures to facilitate dialogue. I will point out some aspects that can help us guide and evaluate our missionary task from this perspective:

a) Listening skills

It is the first requirement of being able to engage in dialogue. We are talking about a way of listening that seeks to understand the meaning of what is said or the situation that is being revealed to us. It is listening which makes each person feel valued and knows how to keep mind and heart open to the questions that are uncovered in situations encountered. Dialogue demands attention to reality. We cannot simply proceed with a project and programme already

"Isn't it true that the phenomenon of globalization is something we also live and experience, in some way, within the Church and in our own Congregation, which is increasingly multicultural and multi-centric? Both the Church and the religious life, along with our own Congregation, have a long experience of "catholicity"." (Josep M. Abella, *Missionaries*)

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