

caritas christi

# The Forge

in our daily life

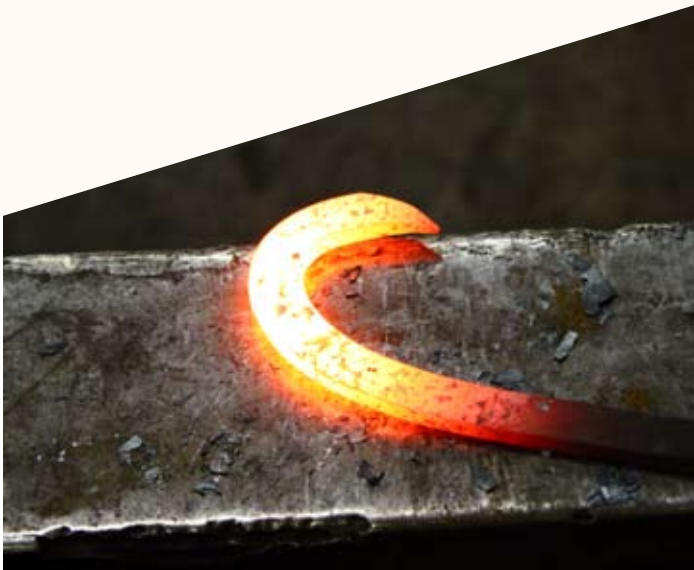
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Poor in fact and in spirit

Lent

# CARITAS CHRISTI

2013



This stage of the forge -focused on the activity that makes the blacksmith on the anvil- **symbolizes the process of being conformed to Christ.**

## OBJECTIVES

- Moving from individualistic and self-centered attitudes to self-giving attitudes.
- Going deeper into the knowledge of the person of Jesus.
- Growing in the experience of following Jesus Christ through the vows and apostolic virtues, in the style of St. Anthony Mary Claret.
- Rediscovering the Eucharist as a “meeting place” with Christ.
- Improving the capacity for community life and dialogue.

## BOOKLETS

1. Encountering Jesus  
*(Advent - Christmas)*
2. Consecrated to God and to people  
*(Ordinary Time I)*
3. **Poor in fact and in spirit**  
*(Lent)*
4. Seekers of God’s will  
*(Easter)*
5. Chaste for the Kingdom of heaven  
*(Ordinary Time II)*
6. Until Christ lives in us  
*(Ordinary Time III)*
7. United so that the world may believe  
*(Ordinary Time IV)*
8. Transformed by the Eucharist  
*(Ordinary Time V)*
9. Impelled by the love of Christ  
*(Ordinary Time VI)*

# contents



## Introduction > 4



## Suggestions for the community meeting > 16



## Guidelines for the *lectio divina* > 17



## Reflection > 6

- 2.1. Sociological poverty
- 2.2. Postmodern hyper-consumption
- 2.3. Solidarity with the poor
- 2.4. Apostolic poverty
- 2.5. Communal poverty
- 2.6. Spiritual poverty



## Texts for reflection > 25

- Appendix 1: The story of the happy man's shirt
- Appendix 2: Spiritual, material and voluntary poverty
- Appendix 3: The vow is to radicalize the following of Jesus
- Appendix 4: Poverty against the idolatry of money
- Appendix 5: Poverty and the Gospel
- Appendix 6: The progress towards the poor in the Church
- Appendix 7: What the Church loses without the poor

# 1. Introduction

**Jesus**, at His Baptism, listened to the voice of the Father who spoke to Him: “You are my Son, my beloved, in whom I am pleased”, at the time the Holy Spirit anointed Him as Messiah. Overwhelmed in realizing the great mission that awaited Him, he went to the desert (*Week 1*). He tried to confirm the type of messianic call he should discharge according to the will of His Father (*Patris Mei*), because at this time there were many diverse versions of a messiah. So as to avoid distractions and expressing the greatest confidence in His Father, He opted for a total fast. It was in this deprivation – which includes the basic needs that don’t satisfy – that He suffered temptation: to exercise universal salvation by taking advantage of His divine power. He could have been a spectacular Messiah, successful, one who would correct his own weakness – and those of the world – magically (changing stones into bread), without touching the human heart. With that power he could possibly empower the Israelites over the whole world, thus implementing this power for universal Salvation. But by working in

this manner He would have failed by not following the will of the Father: a suffering Messiah, united with the poor. What would this apparent success have served (*Quid Prodest*)? Obviously, temptations would not go away once and for all. This required frequent prayer to sustain the decisions made and to continue discerning the will of the Father. Such divine will is manifested and grounded in the Word (*Week 2*), and in the actions of one’s life, converted into the signs of the times (*Week 3*). One should be attentive to these calls which leads us to conversion and a return to the Father (*Week 4*), ready to defend the weak and vulnerable (*Week 5*).

We who are the followers of Jesus, know that in our loving configuration with Him, we too must suffer certain privations and discomforts. **Lent is a favorable time for prayer and reflection.** This way we participate in that “kenosis” or “emptying oneself” in the Lord, “that being rich he made himself poor”. Now we have the opportunity to savor this liturgical time to renew ourselves once again, like Jesus, in that crossroad of one’s way of thinking (*Quid Prodest*). As one experiences, when encoun-



tering similar situations of radical discernment, the temptations don't fail to disappear from leading one away from the will of the Father and falling into the seduction of idols (from "power", from "wanting" and from "pleasure" egoism).

To feel any material want, awakens the desire, not only to quench - something which would be normal-, but also for other things that are not essential, including artificial needs that our consumer society is responsible for encouraging. Our consecration leads us to imitate Christ who "had nowhere to lay his head", and who always was seen surrounded by poor and needy, sharing with them their needs.

Anthony Mary Claret was obsessed in literally imitating Jesus. During his time as an apostolic missionary, he traveled through towns with his elemental belongings, on foot and without money in his purse. One may re-read chapter 3 of our Constitutions to review the distinct aspects of his spirit of poverty, which is so clearly expressed. Concretizing this is not easy, before the current situation of the world, which is much more complicated than during the time of the gospels, as

well as the time when our Founder lived. Now that the Congregation is preoccupied in clarifying theologically its mission, it should also be our apostolic-missionary vocation from where we should plant our vow of poverty.

In some regions where we find the Claretians, it is lived in a culture of hyper-consumerism which gropes and seduces.

In other places, we are found in settings of extreme poverty, where it is a challenge to announce the "good news".

**What feelings are you having in living your vow in your assignment and in fulfilling your mission?** What uses and limits do you place on our technological resources? How do you suffer the limitations that you encounter in your community or Province? What level of social sensibility do you believe you have? Enter deeply into this booklet to find some clues with respect to this.

## 2. Reflection

**Lent has been, after a long tradition, a time for prayer, fasting and sharing of one's goods.** Aside from imitating Jesus in your own desert during Lent, it is a good opportunity to re-evaluate your vow of poverty, in a complex society such as ours. You may begin looking at the diverse extremes which in our religious consecration views this vow: emptying oneself before God, simplicity of life, frugality, community of goods, interdependence, gratitude, solidarity, etc



### Some types of fasting

**Therapeutic fasting.**- Natural medicines recommend periodical fasting so as to purify one's body of accumulated toxins. This type of fasting may be completed in one or several days, by taking only lemon juice so as not to deplete one's potassium.

**Ascetic fasting.**- A prescription to correct one's mind or any other addition, in a rigorous diet. This type of fasting strengthens one's will and cultivates moderation.

**Fasting from greed.**- It is depriving oneself of food or of any other satisfaction, by the simple desire to accumulate. Money ceases to be a means to acquire nice objects and becomes an end in itself. Just like the lazy individual, who abandons opportunities to develop humanly and to relate with others.

**Militant fasting.**- The "hunger strike", of the one who stops eating, including the risk of dying for a cause which has greater value than the life of the individual.

**Fasting of the poor.**- It's a fast which is not pleasing to God our Father, who does not want his children to suffer, or go hungry. It is the forced fasting of the one who lacks the possibilities to be satisfied.

**Fasting of solidarity.**- It is a question of "sharing bread with the hungry". It calls one to stop consuming superfluous things, so that others will not lack anything necessary.

**Religious fast.**- The experience of human pain faced with the loss of a loved one which causes you to lose your appetite. This experience coincides with one of the Christian meanings of fasting: "They are taken to the Groom" and so expresses the grief for this absence. This religious dimension of fasting is united with other experiences like silence, mercy and prayer.

## Exercise 1: Lenten Fast

- A form of your Lenten fast could be **to omit some of your addictions (tobacco, cookies, liquor)**, and the money that you save, offer it to someone who is needy, or to a charity or divide it for pastoral assistance projects.
- Another way is to take advantage of your free time during this Lent **to arrange your dresser and your desk, and get rid of things that you haven't used in the last three years**, and if they are in good shape to donate them to someone or use them for the service of the community.
- A better thing would be **to use this money for projects of Justice and Peace**, so as to combat poverty.

### 2.1. Sociological poverty

Let us begin with a scandalous phenomenon: poverty in the world. **One can calculate that half of the world's population is poor, and that one-fifth survives at the least in terms of infrasubsistence.** We can take as an example, the problem of hunger – the 'forced fasting' –. Despite the commitment that the Governments of the world made in the year 2000 ("Objectives of the millennium"), which was to reduce by the year 2015 half the number of those who were hungry (with reference to statistics of 1997), these have increased. In that year there were 815 million people under-nourished in the world; in the year 2006, the number rose to 873 million; and in the year 2009 it grew by 1.2 million; in 2010 the count would be some 925 million, and in 2011 reaching 1 billion human beings who are in chronic hunger. Something similar happens in the precariousness of other situations (education, housing, health).



The problem is exacerbated if we consider these conditions of poverty in comparison to the other side of the coin, the wealth of the minority. **It seems that 80 billion dollars a year would be sufficient to meet the basic needs of all.** This is equivalent to a tenth of what the world spends on weapons ("they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks": *Is 2:4*). To continue with the example of hunger: it is not for lack of food. On the contrary, this has grown (in 2011 there was a harvest of 2,315 million tons, or 3.5% more than 2010). The problem is its inequitable distribution (also complicated with the demographic factor, because in addition to the seven billion that we currently number, it will grow by another two billion people by 2050). **Never before in history has there been so much wealth; but at the same time, never before has poverty had been as great as we have now.**



## In order to think ... and act

- We are residents of a planet in which 20% of the first world countries control 85% of the world's wealth; whereas the 20% of the world's poorest countries have only 1.5% of the world's wealth.
- In dividing all of the countries into five groups, in accordance of their wealth, those within the first group are 150 times richer than the group of countries which are poorest.
- Life expectancy has improved for the affluent countries, whose inhabitants are easily above 75 years. Meanwhile, in some African countries the average age is around 40 years.
- It is revealing to know where the prosperous countries spend their wealth: to ensure the basic education of the world it would cost about \$6 billion more than what is currently invested in this area; but here is an example of where money goes, in the U.S. they spend about \$9 billion a year on cosmetics alone.
- When the drinking water is running out and there is a lack of about \$9 billion dollars to provide enough water for the world's population; Europe and North America spends about \$11 billion on ice cream a year.
- It is not surprising that in Europe they spend \$50 billion dollars on tobacco, and the amount of money that is spent on drugs is \$400 billion dollars. So as not to overwhelm one with figures, governments spend about \$800 billion dollars on military weapons.

The damage caused by waste and the squandering of the wealthy has also had an impact on our natural resources. Climate change, the diminishing of the ozone layer, the decline in biodiversity, water pollution, air and land, etc., makes for conditions that allow life on the planet to be on the decline, aggravated by the fact that the 70% of the resources are used by only a quarter of humanity. Ambition, coupled with technology, came with the unconscious assumption of a world with unlimited resources, and that it was o.k. to throw out the trash, without realizing the polluting consequences of this practice

**The pastoral implications for us who have these figures will depend on geographical or social workplaces where we develop our mission.** The context determines the modalities of our vows: If you live in poor countries - Africa, Asia and some regions of Latin America-, it would be selfish to take refuge in religious life to simply improve your social status. A vow to work with the poor implies a link with the people. It could be working together to fight poverty, thus contributing to the transformation of the structures. It could be, at the very least, attending in some way to its consequences, be it encouraging alternative programs of self-sustaining development. On the other hand, if you live in the consumerist societies

of Europe and North America, the vows imply promoting solidarity and responsible consumption, and pressing for a greater transfer of resources towards the Third World.

### 2.2. Postmodern hyper-consumption

Consumption is essential to every living being. We consume to satisfy our needs. But the modern economy is based on the creation of artificial needs, encouraging unnecessary purchases. Starting in the nineties of the last century was born the "Consumer Society" which encouraged this compulsive hyper-consumption, with its own specific characteristics:

- Unlike what happened recently, when products were uniform and made in series, now the supermarket offers to the potential buyer an overabundance of options (if you want cookies, you have to choose between 285 varieties, and if you are looking for a shampoo, you are presented with 360 different products).
- Today people have numerous choices, since there is something for every type of consumer (there is even a special make-up cream for black women between 35 and 50 years). This, thanks to the fact that the modular production



- allows multiple small variants in products.
- We have been turned into a “society of waste”, things turn obsolete immediately: we are hardly - joyful- in acquiring something, then there is a sale for something better; the novelty of the item quickly goes out of fashion... and the trash overwhelms us.
- Many articles that are offered, more than being about durable goods, are now “experiences”. The consumer today demands a “better quality of life”, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being, along with unusual diversions (high-risk sports, spending a night in an igloo, etc.).
- To encourage consumption, advertising relies, sometimes, on very legitimate motivations (happiness, prestige, success, youthfulness), others, which are sinful (those which arouse envy, vanity, lust, etc.).

The current hyper-consumption forms a **new social psychology** among consumers:

- The current consumer is more individualistic. Advertising focuses more towards the individual than for the family.
- We tend to become fickle and unfaithful, we resemble the obsolescence of goods, like changing a computer, or like in changing a spouse or a job. This is why the young people today question options “for life”.
- Men and women live perpetually dissatisfied. It is thanks to this dissatisfaction, that raises-up new desires, which is how the market functions.

- Unlike before, when immediate gratification of the present was postponed, for the sake of a better future, today the younger generation wants things “immediately” or right now. They see everything as ephemeral and enjoyed before it is gone.
- Also, life becomes hedonistic, since what is offered are experiences of enjoyment for the moment; and each time these moments of pleasure are more difficult to attain.
- Young people feel freer, because they have more choices and enjoy greater autonomy than their parents (with cars, the Internet, cell phones).
- It’s exhibitionist: to be noticed, showing off the latest acquisition. In this way, the consumer becomes a reflection of the goods purchased, like being an exhibitionist who tries to “sell himself”, as their acquisitions are more easily seen in the social networks.
- One should not forget that there is also the environment of poverty where consumption exercises its seduction. Lacking the luxury of being able to consume goods is a frustrating factor, above all for the young people.
- Additionally, consumerism is a factor of crime, as Eduardo Galeana says, “consumerism has converted America into a school of crime”: advertising repeats that you are not truly a human being if you don’t have a new pair Nike tennis shoes or the most up-to-date mobile gadget. If you don’t have work to buy a mobile phone, you can steal one, or in some cases, even kill for a pair of shoes.



## Exercise 2: The responsible consumer

If possible, do a community exercise of a “responsible consumer”:

- When you need to go shopping, gather together **to make a list of all the things** that you would like to buy.
- Then go back and look at the list again, **questioning those so called ‘needs’**, those popular consumer products, and see if they are really necessary.
- If it is possible, **consult a consumer guide or bulletin of consumer goods**, to see where you could get the best price.
- Sometimes there are advisories **to support boycotting certain companies**: such as those that cause ecological damage, those which exploit children workers, those supporting dictatorial governments, etc.
- Now with this new list **go as a group to the shopping center and purchase what is necessary**, not purchasing anything extra, avoiding the offers. If there is something tempting, note it and reflect on it later.
- **Commit yourself to the decisions you made** before going to the shopping center.

### 2.3. Solidarity with the poor

The Claretians, by their love for Jesus, who lived with the poor and simple, declared “blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God” (*Lk* 6:20). We need to have an almost inborn sensibility for those who are the poor (cf. *CC* 24). **Our vow of poverty is converted, justly, in the commitment to fight against poverty and injustice that causes it.** The lack of satisfaction for the basic needs on the part of large contingents of human beings is an evil that must be abolished. Jesus opted for the poor, not for the poverty, which is an evil. They, the poor, are the sacrament of Jesus (“as you did to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me”, *Mt* 25:40)... Nevertheless, this option does not go without implications.

It is easy to understand that St. Anthony Mary Claret would discover the value of the virtue of poverty in making an “analysis of reality”: He felt sent on a formidable undertaking – “to deal with the flood of corruption”-. To this end, it was necessary to know the diseases that impacted the social body, to have the power to cure them later. It is guided by the three lusts, especially “the love of riches”. Once detected “this dreadful giant, which worldly people call all-powerful, had to be confronted with the holy virtue of poverty. Wherever I encountered greed, I countered it with poverty. I had nothing, wanted nothing and refused all”... (*Aut* 359) and he continued to describe us as his famous “little flock” (cf. *Aut* 357-371).

In our time, this “formidable giant”, is the neo-liberal economic model, the same principle that governs the decisions on the states themselves,

and that permeates throughout our modern culture. It is a model which is sustained with sin and idolatry. It is also a project of death, not only because it implies the immolation of great human sectors (reduced to the “remaining population” or “collateral effects”), but because, on having committed a serious outrage against the ecology, it puts the survival of all the human beings in danger, in a relatively short time. This model can only sustain itself with aggressive publicity, whose ideology associates happiness with possession of articles of consumption. **The testimony of the community which chooses to live in poverty is converted, then, into a prophetic denunciation.**

Today we find it impossible to live in that type of simplicity, even in a smaller elementary way, as that of Jesus or even, of Anthony Claret; but there is always the possibility of doing something. This is how some alternatives have been forged into a prevailing model of “development”. As if trying to benefit the poor nations, their hope would be to deploy the consumerist model of development of the West. We would need two other planets similar to the current one to satisfy this, or else, we would fail miserably with our global resources in twenty years. So now it is that we are looking for the so-called “self-sustaining development” or “self-fulfilling development”: to look for the recycling of resources and the balance between what we consume and what we reject. If we are managing to live from this developmental model, we might have a planet for several centuries more; as Ghandi said: “In the Earth there are sufficient

resources to satisfy the needs for all; but not so many people as to satisfy the ambition of some”.

Our contemporaries need, today more than ever, community testimonials who show by their example that, once basic needs have been met, you can happily live a simple way of life. This is conclusively verified. For example R. Layard argues that the richest countries are those that have the greatest degree of dissatisfaction. It is true, that if the consumer class decides to reduce the amount they spend by 20%, or living simpler within their means, they live happier; and at the same time, there will be fewer poor, in which the world would have greater security and care more for the ecology. **Our vow for the poor, living with an awareness of the ecology, will lead us to look for ways to live a more integral life with nature.** Prophetic communities will bring about these new

models, which could easily be multiplied, repeatable, and transmitted into various sectors of humanity. These new styles of life don't necessarily have to be austere. It would suffice that they be simpler. Even by living in settings of poverty or simplicity, religious communities could try other forms of living more rationally, so that, joining together with other neighbors of that place; they will make better use of available resources. For now, it does not need to be utopian; but in the medium term, there will be no choice but to implement something similar. And who better than the religious communities to take the initiative! Sometimes, to choose the option for the poor will lead to many problems that involve slander, suffering or, at least, the loss of opportunities. It is then that one should recall the story of Christ's Passion and to ask the Holy Spirit to give you the gift of fortitude.

### Exercise 3: Contact with the poor

**Category 1.-** Make it a point to get in touch with someone who is poor (maybe getting close to someone outside the church asking for alms). After offering this individual help, see if he is willing to talk to you. Show interest in him and his problems, and what does he do to survive? What are his greatest needs? Has he ever tried to get out of this situation? What's his day like, etc.

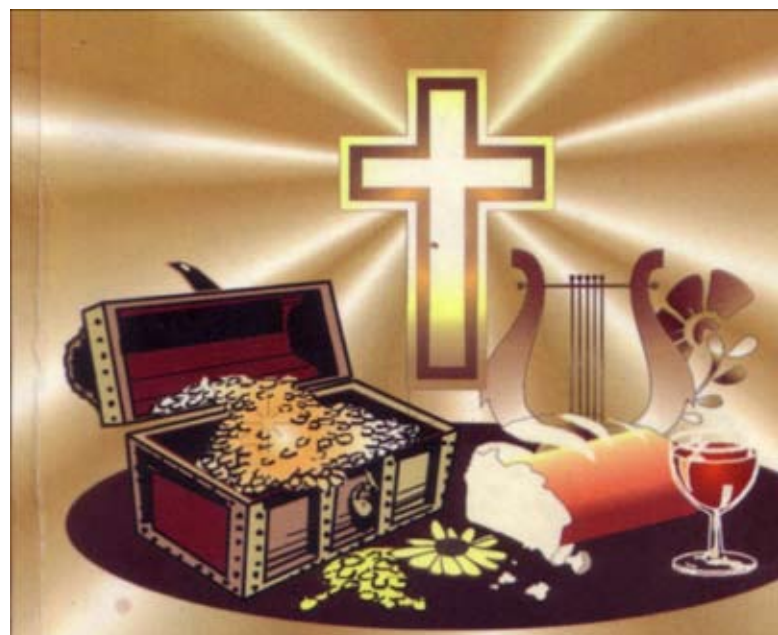
**Category 2.-** Visit a neighborhood. Take your time walking through it, perceiving in detail everything that you see, hear or even smell. It is preferable that you do this tour accompanied by one or two people. In this case, try to not communicate your observations among yourselves. Then, each write down objectively what was perceived, without making value judgments. When you're done, swap your notes with each other (supposing you were living in the same reality), and last but not least, comment on what was perceived.

**Category 3.-** Invite a humble or poorer family to share a meal with your community.

#### 2.4. Apostolic poverty

Return again on your journey to meet-up with Jesus in your Lenten desert. Remember that in this absolutely precarious situation, He was tempted to develop his messianic mission from the comfort of power - “the whole world I will give you ...” (Mt 4:9), and to use his power in a paternalistic way – by magically changing stones into bread– (cf. Mt 4:3). This will challenge you to reconsider the apostolic-missionary consequences of your option for the poor.

St. Anthony Mary Claret opted to live poorly, to be effective as an Apostolic missionary. Our Constitutions tell us that “our poverty is apostolic”. Claret wanted our lifestyle to be - personally and in community – a testimonial sign of the Gospel (cf. CC 25).



“I knew that people were deeply impressed by this detachment, and for that reason I was determined to maintain the position I had taken. To encourage myself, I would recall Christ’s teaching on the matter and meditate on it constantly, especially these words: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, give to the poor and follow me.*” (Aut 362).

When Jesus sent his disciples on a pre-mission – to prepare the peoples to where he wanted them to go–, he sent them out on the most precarious of situations: without money in the purse; without traveling bag or backpack (as were then used by the cynical philosophers of Greece, where they kept the alms which the people gave them). Not even wearing sandals if they had to flee, nor a walking stick to fend off the dogs... He sent them completely devoid and vulnerable, only armed with the power of the Word (cf. *Mt 10:5-15*). **With this he showed that the effectiveness of the message is not because of economic resources, but of the testimony of the one who was sent** (“to speak other languages” –inculturation–, with the powers of healing and expulsion of demons: the illnesses and their own demons, which societies also have). Our consumer society operates in a completely different way. The effectiveness of the sale of products does not depend on the quality of the product, but on marketing and advertising. The considerable resources spent on marketing are in inverse proportion to the quality of the product (whether it be a product on the market, or a political candidate turned into merchandise for consumption). Good articles speak for themselves; while the garbage needs a showy facade which has nothing to do with the product (to increase a hunger for it, to eroticize it, to present in such a way that it will make you more successful or happy, etc.).

To send out his disciples with practically nothing, Jesus was not claiming that they were to stop satisfying their basic needs. He was presupposing that they would obtain those necessary things by resorting to what is supposed to be done by living in the world: to work; and to see the service of the Word as a form of work, for scriptures says “for the

laborer is worth his wage” (*Mt 10:10*). Like every living being, we as missionaries also have to acquire the necessary goods to survive and to support our institutional needs. Except those who live off their income, no one can be exempted from work. That is why in our Constitutions we are clearly told: “feel obliged to the common law of work, sharing in the condition of the poor” (*CC 26*). Our work is the apostolate, a job that is usually not subject to the regimen of a salary or even the legitimate desire

for retribution. We freely give what we freely receive. But the recipients of those we are called to serve tend to be generous when they see a missionary motivated by apostolic zeal, that is to say, renunciation of unnecessary goods, so as

to free more resources for evangelization.

These considerations raise certain problems when time is needed to invest resources in evangelization. Today, for example, it is not possible to do without the Technologies of Information and Communication (TICs) or with multimedia; but it is necessary to put a limit to them, so as not to be captivated by consumerism. Often sophisticated Web pages or Power Point presentations are made; or costly television broadcasts are acquired, with poor contents. On the other hand, one can perform excellent works with computers that are not trendy; or even, with “precarious media” (the flip chart, popular theater, or news photocopies). Do not forget that what is important is not so much the media, as the message.

If we love of the Kingdom of God and seek it earnestly, “and these other things shall be yours as well” (*Lk 12:31*). If we commit ourselves to making effective the ideal of universal fraternity, built from the poorest and most vulnerable of society –and we along with them– we will ensure the sat-

“Putting all our trust in the Lord,  
and never in power and riches,  
we seek first the Kingdom of God  
which belongs to the poor.”  
(*CC 24*)



isfaction of our basic needs. On the other hand, if we look for the first places at the table of the consumption, we will never notice if those at the last table had their meal (cf. *Lk 14:8*). Rather we would be legitimizing our privileged position: “exclusive” circles of the rich are usually, at the same time, “excluding of others”. True evangelization cannot exclude us from seeing those who are last, in whatever geographic space in which we move. In justice our ministry should reach everyone. This, as it is presumed, will not go without consequences. If we are serious about working for the Kingdom, we will lose certain donations and perhaps we will be criticized; but we will enjoy a happy life, “in addition” (*Mt 6:33*).

### 2.5. Communal poverty

The early Christians “had all things in common” (*Acts 2:44*), by way of a certain utopian socialism. Following their example, we also seek a type of communal economic system, and that is the reason why we have chosen not “to use anything as our own” (*CC 26*). Obviously, our vow of poverty cannot be reduced to simple community dependence. Communities such as these can also fall into the temptation of implementing foreign lifestyles in this way, even with “luxury or immoderate lucre”, of which we are warned in the Constitutions (cf. *CC 25*). **We should give personal and communal testimony to poverty, which implies the interactive dialogue among our brothers with whom we gather around common ideals.**

The vow of poverty is related this way with community life. It’s goal is to optimize resources, avoiding offensive inequalities, and sharing our things in common. This goes against the current of today’s consumerism: in contrast to some years ago, when the consumption was for the family (domestic appliances); now the publicity proclaims “that everyone should have his own things”. Everyone has to have his own laptop, his own cell phone, his own camera, his own iPod, his own video camera, his own television, his own personal sound system, his own automobile, and even, thanks to the microwave, everyone can choose the time it is most convenient to eat. This, obviously, has made community life a little more difficult.

Evangelical poverty should avoid the two extremes: that is greed and waste. The opposite of waste is generosity. Among us this is manifested by putting our things or our surplus at the disposition of others (the Community, the Province, the

## “Rejoice when experiencing some of the effects of poverty.” (CC 26)

Congregation, the Church, the poor). And also, to offer our work: when someone chooses to do the minimum amount of work, this may be viewed as an abuse of the other brothers in the community. There is also a stinginess which is similar to the accumulation of money or of goods. I do not believe that it bodes well with our religious vow, if for example, being able to take medicine, you neglect your health or that of your brothers. Or if you are able to organize some pastoral event with good foreseeable results, you chose not to participate so as to save money. The *saving* – hindering the good that may have been done – is different from avarice, because it hordes money to the extreme.

Curiously, to be a miser is not only with money, but it usually includes feelings (before, when the culture of saving money was dominant, parents were somewhat distant from their children, saying that to pamper children was poor education, and didn't prepare them for the rigors of life). The pleasure of being generous with another is a way to be generous with oneself. The religious who is well grounded in his vow of poverty has a greater sense of community and is closest to his brothers.

When the followers of those early saintly leaders who began this lifestyle of radical poverty had to organize themselves, poverty took on a new direction. The institutions needed material goods to obtain a certain stability and to fulfill its mission, as well to continue its' spiritual works. The vow of poverty contributed to capitalization, thanks to the austere style of life of its members: religious, individually, do not possess goods; but the institution does.

The Provinces and Delegations tended to handle the finances of the institution like any company, and then - in practice more than in the speech - the priorities were distorted and the finances came before authentic ministry; or social sensitivity was diminished to look after the maximization of the earnings. It is possible that at times you have noticed some shortcomings in your own community. Do not avoid your responsibility, alleging that it is the responsibility of the economy or the Superior, because in the Community you are jointly responsible and have a voice and a duty. It is in the intra-community dialogue where you are able to make pertinent decisions. There are, on the other

hand, some exemplary communities, which happily choose to live with greater austerity, willing to “experience some effects of poverty” (CC 26).

### 2.6. Spiritual Poverty

As we find in, the imitation of Christ, “though rich, he became poor for us, so that we might become rich” (CC 23). It is in surrendering to material goods, as best we can, that we may better live from heavenly goods. Many cultures have found it worthwhile that some of its members remind them, with this austerity of life, that to obtain the true meaning of happiness - as St. Teresa of Avila said, “only God is enough”. The vow of poverty, lived from this perspective, invites you to share with Christ his “kenosis” or “emptying”: to feel stripped of everything to live enriched with the All, who is the Father. In this way, we are freer to follow the path that Christ has chosen for us. Our Constitutions offers us this recommendation: “Putting all our trust in the Lord, and never in power or wealth, we seek first the Kingdom of God, which belongs to the poor” (CC 24).

You have surely experienced in this current culture –that more and more you feel overwhelmed–, and at times suffocated by “bushes and thorns” surrounding you, feeling asphyxiated by the delicate little plant that was sown in you (cf. *Mt 13:7*). You are constantly invited to experiment with unusual experiences and fun activities. You are shown a large amount of things, some surely useful for your apostolate. Your head is filled with projects that are well planned. You're overloaded with meetings and tasks that tend to absorb all of your time. You establish multiple relationships, which are more available now through cyber communication (chat, *Facebook, Twitter...*), so that your email box is overloaded to the point where your computer, which was set up to save you time, seems overwhelming. Taking all of this in, you listen to Jesus who is telling you the same thing he said to Martha: “You are anxious and troubled about many things, one thing is necessary” (*Lk 10:41*). You want to make the most out of your life, by making the most of every moment; but you remember the Teacher, who says: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever who loses his life for my sake will find it” (*Mt 10:39*). Fear not, strip yourself of all things; go to the desert for your Lenten reflection; become poor, and you'll experience your Father (*Patris Mei*) in all His richness.

## Exercise 4: Your relationship with money

Examine **what your attitude is towards money, in relation to your vow of poverty.** Maybe these questions may be of help:

- What attitudes towards money do you feel you have tendencies (greed, savings, waste, individualism, domination, communitarian, generosity, social sensitivity, selfishness, etc.)? Are you able to distinguish when it is a genuine experience, and when it is contaminated with neurotic attitudes?
- Are you trying to spend as little as possible, even going beyond what you were taught in formation, in your health and in your apostolate? Are you not giving in to greed?
- Do you think that for pastoral effectiveness you need to have the latest equipment of new technologies, even though in reality you will not take advantage of all its possibilities? Do you have a tendency to buy things that later you will no longer use (books, music)? Have you added to this wastefulness?
- Do you take care to use the goods of the community as if they only belonged to you? Are you not guided by selfishness?
- When you are approached by a beggar or someone who asks you for money, do you systematically think you're about to be swindled, cheated or a fraud? How do you deal with your social sensibility?
- In your pastoral ministry do you look for "benefactors" for your own needs and not for the mission?
- In the house community meeting do you take the time to review the monthly report, or rather are you uninterested, relegating all material problems to the econome?
- When you are suffering some type of illness, do you look for the best doctor or best treatment?
- Do you know how to put limits to your desires for useful things? Do you try getting sufficient results with the reading materials in the community? Or do you purchase other things, only because they are being better or more in tune?
- The last time you were transferred to a new community, did you keep an account of the amount of things that you had accumulated?
- Does your community have a rule (a quota) that is used to share with the poor or vulnerable individuals?



### 3. Suggestions for the community meeting

These gatherings are an attempt to analyze how one lives the vow of poverty. For this:

- After an opening prayer, **read Chapter III of the Constitutions**, giving attention to the distinct aspects of the vow.
- **Take a moment to examine how your community is living the vow.** In what aspect do you feel the community is fulfilling its commitment in imitating Christ, and what areas are in need of greater clarification or an adjustment?
- After each one has reviewed the exercises in this workbook, **suggest some ideas of what could be done.**
- **Has Lent been a grace filled time for you**, so that in participating in the Lenten penance service you experienced special meaning?

Is it possible to watch a film about the Passion of Christ? Some are indicated in the Lenten notebook for the year of *Quid Prodest*. But there are others, for example: "The Gospel according to St. Matthew" (*Pier Paolo Pasolini*), "The Man who Makes Miracles" (*Stanislav Sokolov*), "The Journey towards Jesus" (*J.L. Sáenz de Heredia*), "Jesus, the Passion of Christ" (*Roger Young*), "The Color of the Cross" (*Jean Claude Lammare*), "Jesus of Nazareth" (*Franco Zeffirelli*), "Jesus" (*Roger Young*), etc. You need to take into account that behind each version of the Passion there is a certain theology or ideology in which it would be a good idea to explain it and look at it from the image that each member of the community may have about it.







## 5. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

The readings during this season of Lent and Holy Week will help you to imitate Jesus Christ in situations of conflict, abandonment, and suffering. Conflicts and tensions are inevitable. Sometimes, these are as a result of our commitment; but others, due to our carelessness. Also suffering is inevitable in life; but we can live it with an understanding that we are continually growing and changing, and as Claretians - "men who burn with love" -, in service to the people with whom we minister. This dispossession of divine dignity can relate to spiritual poverty. Take advantage of the density of the readings of this time to get a new light on this.

Some highlights in the liturgical text during this time will be for us the relationship between Lenten fasting and the vow of poverty, conversion towards God, and towards the poor, the problems and persecutions which often accompany the prophets, the conflicts which they should confront, the fears and the reasons for the motivations that led to the passion of Jesus, etc.



### Wednesday, February 13, 2013. Ash Wednesday

- Joel 2:12-18
- Psalm 50
- 2 Cor 5:20-6,2
- Mt 6:1. 16-18

When in your commitment to fight against poverty, do you share your bread or give alms, avoid exhibitionism or fleeting notoriety. Penance and repentance are not synonymous with sadness and discouragement: how will you bring about a change this Lent to happiness and conversion?

### Thursday, February 14, 2013. Feast of St. Cyril, monk, and St. Methodius, Bishop

- Dt 30:15-20
- Psalm 1
- Lk 9:22-25

Starting this season of Lent once again you find yourself at a crossroads - life and the good, or death and evil – Note that you are outside your “comfort zone”, risking to hand over your life? Are you willing, like Jesus, to renounce your personal projects and the accept abandonment, so that you will opt for a more authentic life as well?

### Friday, February 15, 2013

- Is 58:1-9a
- Psalm 50
- Mt 9:14-15

Your Lenten fasting does not have to be an asceticism centered on itself, like that of the Pharisees, but it can reflect the happiness of being in solidarity. Fasting in itself is not worthwhile, if one does not work at the same time in support of the poor. Namely it has to have ethical repercussions in justice and in charity. You will better understand it when you are thoroughly concerned that all the inhabitants of the world satisfy their needs of “house, clothing and sustenance”.

### Saturday, February 16, 2013

- Is 58:9b-14
- Psalm 85
- Lk 5:27-32

To share one’s bread with the hungry is complimentary with sharing one’s faith with those who are hungry for the Word of God. Are you inclined to come in contact with the outcast – like the outsiders in the time of Jesus-, who have the need to understand? Or do you prefer to interact comfortably with your attached parishioners, who only demand of you regular religious services?

## Sunday, February 17, 2013. First Sunday of Lent

- Dt 26:4-10
- Psalm 90
- Rom 10:8-13
- Lk 4:1-13

Temptations are tendencies which cause us to lean toward things that incite us to evil. Nobody - not even Jesus - was free from temptation. The temptation that He suffered was being unable to carry out his mission as the Messiah accommodating to the expectations that people had, and not as the Father had wanted. What are your current temptations? How do you use the Word of God to overcome them?

## Monday, February 18, 2013

- Lev 19:1-2. 11-18
- Psalm 18
- Mt 25:31-46

To be holy is our challenge. The model of holiness that we are asked is derived from the same holiness of God. For the Christian, the criterion of holiness, more than fulfilling the ten commandments, are the works of mercy, seeing in the needy the presence of Jesus himself. It takes into account that the complexity of modern life makes it difficult for the individual, one by one, to have to work on the social level and on a global scale. Do you care about this?

## Tuesday, February 19, 2013

- Is 55:10-11
- Psalm 33
- Mt 6:7-15

The Gospel reading today is an occasion that you pray the "Our Father", without merely reciting it. It contains an entire religious program, proposed by the Father and promoted by Jesus. Thus like the rain that falls from the sky, and returns to the heavens, so it is when you are able to fulfill the program contained in Sunday prayer. The Word of the Father returns to Him. How do you make the daily bread not only "mine", but "ours"?

## Wednesday, February 20, 2013

- Jon 3:1-10
- Psalm 50
- Lk 11:29-32

Lenten fasting – motivated by the prediction of Jonah – carried the Ninevites to go through a conversion. In what ways are you preparing for your Lenten penance so that you will experience a conversion? Is it possible that your fasting prepares you for a greater conversion in your interaction with the poor?

## Thursday, February 21, 2013

- Esther 12:14-16. 23-25
- Psalm 137
- Mt 7:7-12

The prayer of petition, taking as an example Queen Esther, does not have to have an anthropomorphic connotation (moved by God). God knows what we need before we ask him-, but that we assume the condition of the poor, and the need for God. Why not, in your prayer today, don't you ask God for an attitude of the poor and that you will trust in his mercy for your needs?

## Friday, February 22, 2013. Feast of the Chair of the Apostle St. Peter

- Ez 18:21-28
- Psalm 130
- Mt 5:20-26

The final destination of a person isn't definitive or immutable. While we live in our physical situation, we can always change the general direction of our life, whether it is for good, or for evil. In general, a change of direction is usually not radical or instantaneous, but it is the product of an entire process. Christian conversion is not so much in ritual practices (nor even the Eucharist), but in the concern or interest for your brother. Is it time this Lent to be possibly reconciled with someone? It may be up to you to take the first step?

## Saturday, February 23, 2013

- Dt 26:16-19
- Psalm 119
- Mt 5:43-48

Like the people of Israel, you, as a Claretian, have a sacred commitment with the God the Father: He has given you the gift of your vocation, and you, in reciprocation, the promise to love everyone as your brother. Do you see yourself trying to appreciate even those who do not seem to care for you?

## Sunday, February 24, 2013. Second Sunday of Lent. Fr. Nicolás García (Cal CMF 63-69)

- Gen 15:5-12,17s
- Psalm 26
- Phil 3:17-4,1
- Lk 9:28b-36

Like the covenant Yahweh made with Abraham, we too, with our vows, have a covenant of consecration to God. However, there is the temptation to break this covenant again and again. Hence the need to pray fervently, as did Jesus, to come face to face with the Word of God. Do you know how to overcome the seductions of consumerism or accumulation? How have you learned from the example of Christ to pray after reflecting on the Word so as to sustain your commitment?

## Monday, February 25, 2013. Beatification of Fr. Founder (Cal CMF, 71-76)

- Dn 9:4b-10
- Psalm 78
- Lk 6:36-38

In your Lenten reflection, you might feel embarrassed to recognize your infidelities in your religious commitment; but at the same time, keep confident in God our Father. Jesus offers you a penitential key so that you may participate in the mercy of the Father, without any tricks that have double meanings, one to buy and another to sell: to give (share what you have) and to give yourself (handing yourself over). To what extent are you willing to give of yourself?

## Tuesday, February 26, 2013

- Is 1:10, 16-20
- Psalm 49
- Mt 23:1-12

In your Lenten examination of conscience perhaps you have recognized in yourself some “unhealthy actions” and that you need “to learn to make them right”. One area could be in helping the needy (oppressed, orphans and widows). Make use of the forgiveness that God offers you; but examine it: Do you make use of your status as a religious to favor the weak? Or do you place heavy burdens on the shoulders of the people, while you enjoy your ‘status’ as privileged, including the honors or economic benefits?

## Wednesday, February 27, 2013

- Jer 18:18-20
- Psalm 30
- Mt 20:17-28

The prophets have always been opposed to the power of domination, and this caused them problems and persecution. In contrast, Jesus sees power as a service to those who lack power. In some regions, we religious still maintain a statute of power. How do you use your power as ‘service’ in favor of the poor and needy, in spite of the criticism and persecution and that your option may prove to be a threat to you? Or have you permitted that religious legitimization be utilized as ‘power’, obtaining in return the honors of this world?

## Thursday, February 28, 2013

- Jer 17:5-10
- Psalm 1
- Lk 16:19-31

The rich one whose wealth was in pleasures was condemned for putting his confidence in perishable goods. Such goods only offer the sterile unhappiness of “a thistle in the steppe”. His condemnation was his lack of sensitivity for the poor one, who was his neighbor, who he didn’t even notice. Can you “look” at the poor who you encounter? Do you have a compassionate heart for them?

## Friday, March 1, 2013

- Gn 37:3-4,12-13a,17b-28
- Psalm 104
- Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

God usually operates through the small and weak, like Joseph. This arouses the envy of the strong, whose goal is to destroy him; even though his sacrifice will benefit the entire community. It also goes for the tenants - who, it was supposed, had the privilege to cultivate the vineyard favored by the Lord-, they tried to seize the land, beat the servants, and killed the heir. Jesus was also killed as a result of the fraternity he formed with the poor. Do you identify yourself with the social project of brotherhood and justice, characteristic of the Kingdom of Jesus? Or do you get carried away by economic interests that hinder the fraternity?

## Saturday, March 2, 2013. Fr. Martin Alsina (Cal CMF, 79-84)

- Micah 7:14-15, 18-20
- Psalm 102
- Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

In the parable of the merciful Father, the youngest son asks for his inheritance (which is to say, I consider my father as dead), and he wasted his money in debauchery. The Father is extremely generous in forgiving. God the Father is also generous in forgiving me, on condition that I pardon my brother who has gone astray. Review your attitude toward material goods. Are you wasteful, or greedy? Fix your attention on each of the three characters in the parable, to see what aspects you express in each one of them in your Lenten reflection.

## Sunday, March 3, 2013. Third Sunday of Lent

- Ex 3:1-8a. 13-15
- Psalm 102
- 1 Cor 10:1-6. 10-12
- Lk 13:1-9

The works of daily life - the collapse of a tower, the retaliation of Pilate - are signs through which God manifests himself. Moses was viewed as a liberator in a context of tremendous oppression. The fate of such divine revelations is to call someone for a particular mission in which He wants to entrust us. The Father patiently awaits our response. Think about what God wants from you right now, to contribute more to the cause of Jesus.

## Monday, March 4, 2013. Memorial of St. Casimir

- 2 Kings 5:1-15a
- Psalm 41
- Lk 4:24-30

Jesus' own countrymen believed that to benefit from the favors of the Messiah it was sufficient to be in communion with the place of their birth. But the salvation of God is not exclusive, nor is it a patrimony of a particular group, or religion. His mercy was available to everyone. The only thing he hoped for was an attitude of thanksgiving, like that of Naaman, the Syrian.

## Tuesday, March 5, 2013

- Dn 3:25, 34-43
- Psalm 24
- Mt 18:21-35

The vicissitudes of the exile were an occasion in which the Israelites would become aware of their failings and purify their religion. The repentance of our failings, raised in this Lenten season, awakens the need for forgiveness toward the brother ("seventy times seven"). Do you recognize the need to be reconciled with someone? It is time for you to take the first step. Ask God our Father for the grace you may need.

## Wednesday, March 6, 2013

- Dt 3:25-34-43
- Psalm 24
- Mt 18:21-35

The legislation given by God through the mediation of Moses, is composed of wise and sensible laws, that express the fidelity of the people toward God and mark their style of life. Jesus respected and did not come to abolish the laws, but they are all subsumed under the law of Love. Facing the crisis of values that we suffer today, we would do well to recall this. Let us make Lent a time to examine our conscience, taking as a criterion the ten commandments.

## Thursday, March 7, 2013. Memorial of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

- Jer 7:23-28
- Psalm 94
- Lk 11:14-23
- 

Psychological rationalizations are an impediment to surrender to the will of the Father. Such "rationalizations" are seemingly clear arguments, which in reality are dictated by the inclinations of a stubborn heart. Sometimes we construct very sophisticated rationalizations. At other times, such rationalizations fall into a level that is grotesque (Satan expelling Satan). It would be worthwhile to expose the rationalizations that you eventually build which circumvent the response that God wants from you.

## Friday, March 8, 2013

- Hosea 14:2-10
- Psalm 80
- Mk 12:28b-34

The Lord is ready to "heal your infidelities" with a graceful love. You will always encounter this healing when you are open to His forgiveness. However, this forgiving love from the Father is conditioned on a sincere desire to change and the willingness to correct your ways, and it is concretized in how you love your neighbor as yourself. Think about this as you continue to prepare for your Lenten confession.

## Saturday, March 9, 2013

- Hosea 6:1-6
- Psalm 50
- Lk 18:9-14

The sin of pride lies in believing that one is superior, looking down at others. Sometimes we would like to believe that our status as religious is enough to be closer to the Lord. The repentant sinner, on the other hand, puts his trust in God, without comparing himself with others. It is Hosea who warns us: "let us return to the Lord... He will cure us".

## Sunday, March 10, 2013. Fourth Sunday of Lent

- Jos 5:9a. 10-12
- Psalm 33
- 2 Cor 5:17-21
- Lk 15:1-3. 11-32

For your Lenten conversion, the liturgy presents us with the beautiful parable of the merciful Father, who we saw earlier. Perhaps, at some point in your life, you felt that you were at your bottom; and getting yourself up, you experienced the generous forgiveness of our “Abba” (Father), and with it, the end of your sufferings and the festive joy of reunion. Israel also experienced the end of its shame and was very happy when it finished with the manna in the desert, and was able to enjoy the fruits of the Promised Land. The failure is not in falling, but in not getting up!

## Monday, March 11, 2013

- 2 Sam 7:4-5.12-14
- Psalm 88
- Rom 4:13.16-18.22
- Mt 1:16-18.21-24

Easter is quickly approaching: the joy before the creation of a new heaven and a new Earth where justice awaits. Jesus pre-announces it with His cures, even from a distance. May your Lenten penance, for which you’ve been preparing, not falter in Easter hope and the joy that accompanies the healing of your bad habits.

## Tuesday, March 12, 2013

- Ez 47:1-9.12
- Psalm 45
- Jn 5:1-3a. 5-16

Water - especially that of the temple - is a symbol of life, healing, and cleaning. If you see yourself as paralyzed in your Lenten walk, submerge yourself back into the waters of your Baptism and continue in your pursuit of Christ: give your life for the same reason He gave His.

## Wednesday, March 13, 2013

- Is 49:8-15
- Psalm 144
- Jn 5:17-30

As we progress through Lent, the liturgy of the Word has shown an increase enmity of the religious authorities toward Jesus. One of the main reasons for this enmity is the conduct of Jesus toward the Sabbath. For Jesus, the Sabbath is the Lord’s Day, therefore, it is a day of joy and healing. For the religious leaders, it was simply a taboo. Has it ever happened to you that a good work has been misinterpreted? Do you have enemies? Tell me who is your enemy and I will tell you where your faith is. Jesus’ enemies are the most powerful men of religion and politics. How do you handle unavoidable conflicts that tend to occur in the community life?

## Thursday, March 14, 2013

- Ex 32:7-14
- Psalm 33
- Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Life is always motivated by some god: it can be an idol (a human construction to satisfy our sad ambitions), or, the loving “Abbá”, whose face was manifested in Jesus. There are enough witnesses who credit it; but these cannot be sufficient before the prejudgemental resistance to accept it. If you believe in Him, you must renounce the idols of things, or the idol of the money. Here is another occasion to reflect on your vow of poverty.

## Friday, March 15, 2013

- Wisdom 2:1a. 12-22
- Psalm 33
- Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

The antagonism between Jesus and his enemies is growing more and more. Resistance to the will of God translates into hatred toward those who do it. Hatred, can sometimes reach even to the point of murder. Jesus begins his journey consciously and courageously to Jerusalem to give his strong final testimony. Are you willing to suffer and testify as a believer? Or are you led by fear?

## Saturday, March 16, 2013

- Jer 11:18-20
- Psalm 7
- Jn 7:40-53

There are conjunctures in which to declare oneself a Christian involves risks. The martyrs put their confidence in the Lord. Sometimes the prophetic word can be shocking; but one is not always able to avoid martyrdom. Would you be ready to “pass” through your “Barbastro”? Have you ever dared to be like Nicodemus, to defend an innocent person?

## Sunday, March 17, 2013. Fifth Sunday of Lent

- Is 43:16-21
- Psalm 125
- Phil 3:8-14
- Jn 8:1-11

God is a God who saves. This is how His wonders were manifested in the Hebrew epic of the Exodus. The actions of Jesus in the image of the Father, were also salvific. However, these same salvific actions alarmed those who enjoyed undue privileges. Opposition to justice can reach the height of seeking retribution and condemning a vulnerable person - for example, as in the adulterous woman, or maybe any woman that has had an abortion. Those who resort to this cowardly strategy do so to exhibit an irreproachable morality. Jesus, on the other hand, approaches not to condemn, but with pardon. Would you be willing to take the risk of defending someone vulnerable?

## Monday, March 18, 2013

- Dn 13:1-9.15-17.19-30.33-62
- Psalm 22
- Jn 8:1-11

The timely intervention of the Prophet Daniel illuminates a criminal case that condemned an innocent woman to death. When you turn on a light, the whole room, even in the most hidden corners, is illuminated. Jesus is the light that allows us to judge situations with the eyes of God, highlighting the most hidden and sinister intentions. Ask for this light, so that you may see reality with the eyes of God and know how to expose injustices.

## Tuesday, March 19, 2013. Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Cal CMF, 85-89)

- 2 Sam 7:4-5a.12-14a.16
- Psalm 88
- Rom 4:13.16-18.22
- Mt 1:16.18-21.24a;  
or Lk 2:41-51a

The gospel has not given us a single word of Joseph. He decides everything in secret seeing what happens with Mary. He keeps quiet but does not hold a grudge nor plots continuously in his heart. It is a real silence, on the inside and the outside. The silence of someone who knows how to keep quiet. The silence of the one who knows how to listen and for this reason, hears, understands, and is capable of discovering God in what is happening around him: "the life growing in Mary comes from the Holy Spirit". Keep quiet and listen in such a way that what you have to do comes alone, and is quite natural. There is nothing in him that is resisted, is questioned, or is fleeing. Simply, he wakes up and does what the Lord has commanded. We can ask God to help us to be like this holy and faithful man. Perhaps you have in hand, that which can also change your Lent.

## Wednesday, March 20, 2013

- Dn 3:14-20, 91-92. 95
- Psalm (Dn 3:52-56)
- Jn 8:31-42

To be free means to accept the truth and defend the right to believe in it, even life itself. This is sometimes the result of accepting Jesus and his teachings. This is what happened with the young Jews in Babylon, prepared to defend their religious liberty; even though it would be God who would finally release them. Would you be willing to considering all the consequences that might follow in opting for the project of Jesus? Do you love your freedom, to the point of being disposed to die for the truth? Or do you fear freedom?

## Thursday, March 21, 2013

- Gn 17:3-9
- Psalm 104
- Jn 8:51-59

The antagonism between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities reaches the end. There are two conflicting irreconcilable religious projects that can no longer continue to co-exist. One of them will have to disappear. Jesus has already openly declared who he is: the only Son of God, and therefore, greater than Abraham, father of the people of Israel. To accept it means an entire new way of looking at life... and death. As Abraham trusted in God, would you trust your life to Him? Or when your beliefs lead to problems, do you try to find a balance or make compromises, trying to evade your commitment?

## Friday, March 22, 2013

- Jer 20:10-13
- Psalm 17
- Jn 10:31-42

Our prophetic charism can provoke stumbling blocks in how we authentically measure our commitment. Jesus attracts; but is rejected by saying he is God. Similarly, you can tolerate some countercultural behaviors of Christians; but not the divine sign that may hold such behavior. God is the only absolute, and the absolute is not acceptable in a relativistic time such as ours. You too, if you live in congruence with your vocation, can provoke the scandal. Are you prepared to deal with it?

## Saturday, March 23, 2013

- Ez 37:21-28
- Psalm (Jer 31:10-13)
- Jn 11:45-57

The unity of the people was the utopia, from the time of Ezekiel to Jesus - the union of all the scattered children of God. Before the Roman invasion, such unity of the people implied their autonomy: the crowd that had wanted to proclaim Jesus as king could now proclaim him as their liberator, and this would lead to the Roman reprisals. It was, therefore, fear that condemned Jesus. Review your own fears that prevent your ability to be prophetic, that you may be faithful to your vocation: "Nothing daunts him... he takes pleasure in slanders and rejoices in torments".

## Sunday, March 24, 2013. Palm Sunday – The Passion of the Lord

- Is 50:4-7
- Psalm 21
- Phil 2:6-11
- Lk 22:14-23, 56

Shortly after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem - the moment when the crowd finally recognized him as the Messiah - Jesus will face his passion. Every moment of this painful process is an example of his spirituality: his immense love, his strength, his compassion, his offering of himself.... What other traits of Jesus do you observe in the story? Ask him to help you transform yourself so as to identify with Him. You can also look at each of the characters who appear here (for example, the disciples) and check whether the mood of your life is willing to take risks or to deny him.

## Monday, March 25, 2013. Monday of Holy Week

- Is 42:1-7
- Psalm 26
- Jn 12:1-11

Isaiah presents the type of Messiah chosen by God: the “Servant”, who fights to implant the right and free all from oppression, all the causes of poverty. On a day like this, Jesus eats with friends and receives an unexpected offering - the anointing of his feet. The mention of the poor made by Judas is only a pretext to justify his pettiness. One more reflection on our vow of poverty.

## Tuesday, March 26, 2013. Tuesday of Holy Week

- Is 49:1-6
- Psalm 70
- Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

The Word of the “Servant” of Yahweh is a sharp sword, a sharp arrow; but it implies “embracing the sacrifices”. For this reason, some of the disciples of Jesus fall into the betrayal or denial of the Teacher. Being a missionary involves the gift of fortitude. Ask the Lord, so that you can keep your word and not deny your Claretian commitment.

## Wednesday, March 27, 2013. Wednesday of Holy Week

- Is 50:4-9a
- Psalm 68
- Mt 26:14-25

To betray the Teacher, who was admired and loved, doesn't cease to be a mystery. Perhaps it was the disillusion of Judas, who expected a Messianic leader to the extent of his temporary expectations; which is an example of what happens when, for self-sufficiency, we do not have an attentive ear for listening as a disciple. Judas was teetering on the occasion to deliver the Teacher; Jesus, on the other hand, had been offered for us by love.

## Thursday, March 28, 2013. Holy Thursday

- Ex 12:1-8, 11-14
- Psalm 115
- 1 Cor 11:23-26
- Jn 13:1-15

Jesus, “who had loved his own, took his love until the end”: this abandonment (*kenosis*), initiated since his birth, is now shown as a servant to his friends, in the washing of the feet. Think about your religious vows as a form of abandonment, by renouncing your selfishness so that you may give yourself to others. In the Last Supper, eating the lamb was a memorial of the history of salvation. The bread and the wine, signs of sharing life, to be converted into His Body and Blood separated, was signifying His death given in love. What is the meaning of the Eucharist for you? Is it a source of your missionary spirituality?

## Friday, March 29, 2013. Good Friday

- Is 52:13-53, 12
- Psalm 30
- Heb 4:14-16 – 5, 7-9
- Jn 18:1 – 19:42

Reflect on each step of the Passion of Jesus and stop in at those points that best apply to the situation in which you're living. Your identification with Christ must reach the point of handing over your life as a service to others. Each person dies as he has lived. Would you be prepared for an eventual time of martyrdom? Be ready to do this with the heroism of everyday life and with the practice of your religious vows.

## Saturday, March 30, 2013. Easter Vigil

- Gn 1:1-2, 22, 1-18
- Ex 14:15 – 15:1
- Is 54:5-14
- Is 55:1-11
- Bar 3:9-15; 32-44
- Ez 36:16-28
- Rom 6:3-11
- Mk 16:1-8

This day, when Jesus is in the Tomb, can evoke in us the death of God, an expression that seems to characterize our era. But when it seems that the story ends in despair, the community comes together, in the darkness of the night, to commemorate the brighter fact of humanity, the Resurrection of the Lord. The Easter Vigil is an evening spent in listening to the Word, which is delivered in profusion. The readings remind us of important milestones in the History of salvation; all oriented towards the jubilant celebration of the triumph of Life over death; of Grace over sin. If you lived Lent in an experience of dying to the “old self”, you can now rejoice with the new life which Christ brings to you.



## 5. Texts for reflection

### Appendix 1: The story of the happy man's shirt

There is a story that a long time ago a King became very ill and depressed. His doctors predicted that only way he could be cured was by putting on the shirt of a happy man. The king then sent several messengers with the order that they find a man who was happy and to bring him the shirt. His messengers searched in the palaces of the nobles; but noticed that behind the luxury, living in the midst of misgivings they lived in the midst of suspicion before the intrigues of power.

They searched in the taverns, where there was abundant wine, food and beautiful maidens; but recognized that the music and songs were not so strident as to overshadow the profound sadness that existed and choked those present. They decided to return, thus feeling defeated. Crossing a

forest, they heard a song that could only come from a happy man. It was a lumberjack. -"are you happy?" - They asked. -"Of course I'm happy" - he responded. - "But are you really happy?" -"Why would I not be, with these beautiful forests, with the fresh air, the birds and the fresh water from the stream" - he replied again. What could not be more frustrating for the messengers was to see that this man... had no shirt!

### Appendix 2: Spiritual poverty, material poverty, voluntary poverty (Alain Durand, OP)

It is important to specify a distinction that is presented as a fact essential to both the Gospel and the Christian tradition, and whose ignorance or misinterpretation may lead to the worst confusion and including the scandal for the victims of poverty. It is the distinction between the 'poverty of spirit' (or 'spiritual poverty') and the 'material or social poverty' which is the lack of the necessary goods for a decent human life. There is no case in the Gospel that one is asked to tolerate, accept, and even to choose degrading poverty.

The same 'voluntary poverty' that the Gospel recommends needs to be vigorously distinguished from this social evil. To understand the importance of this distinction between 'poverties', it suffices to mention an excerpt of a

speech delivered by John Paul II in Chalco, Mexico, on May 7, 1990: "The poverty that Jesus called 'blessed' is made out of trust in God, of sobriety and availability to share with others, of a sense of justice, of hunger for the Kingdom of Heaven, of availability to listen to the Word of God and save it in your heart. The poverty that oppresses a multitude of our brothers and sisters in the world and that which prevents their integral development as people is different. The face of this poverty which is need and deprivation, the Church raises her voice by invoking and calling everyone in solidarity to overcome it."

### Appendix 3: The vow is to radicalize the following of Jesus (Carlos R. Cabarrús, SJ)

The vows are historical structures to live in the following Jesus." And the one who chooses the Kingdom of God implies that this Kingdom is the final justification of what can appear to be 'abnormal' in the vows. From this perspective, the vow of poverty concretizes itself in the face of God through the impoverished in the world, whose cause we intend to restore.

In the first place, by living with a greater possible austerity, by more imitating and following the way that Jesus chose, thereby creating the pillars of a 'civilization of austerity' on the basis that one must share the limited goods of creation. Con-comitantly, placing all our energies to eradicate injustice affectively and effectively helping the struggle of the disinherited of the Earth, in whom we know that the Son is present, who still carries the cross in the world. The

'passion' for this cause is a great gift of God to his people, and it is the way of committing oneself to Him for the cause of the needy (impoverished, sick, etc.). Some live that vow anonymously, others offer it to us to make it a way of personal and communitarian explicit testimony."

## Appendix 4: Against the idolatry of money, evangelical poverty (St Anthony M. Claret)

I see that we are in a century in which not only is the golden calf worshipped, as the Hebrews did, but that there is a worship that gives way to an extreme worship of gold, having pushed the sacred virtues of generosity off its pedestal. I have seen this become a time of selfishness by forgetting the most sacred duties that man has with its neighbors and brothers, because we are all made in the image of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and destined for heaven. Consider that in order to deal with this enormous task that is called almighty, one needs to face the holy virtue of poverty, and thus as I know it, I put it in my work.

## Appendix 5: Poverty and the Gospel (Pedro Casaldáliga, CMF)

Hay una pobreza mísera  
y una pobreza evangélica.  
Pero existe el pobre pobre.

¿Qué hacemos de la pobreza?  
¿Qué hacemos del pobre pobre?  
¿Qué hacemos del Evangelio?

There is a poverty of misery  
and a evangelical poverty.  
But there exist the poorest of the poor.

What do we do with poverty?  
What do we do with the poorest of the poor?  
What do we do with the Gospel?

## Appendix 6: The progress towards the poor in the Church (Víctor Codina, SJ)

Behind the phenomenon of the progress towards the poor in the Church, I believe that it is necessary to look at what is its authentic foundation. Many people have thought that this is a passing trend or a Marxist influence. Others believe that this is a third-world conjuncture and that it only benefits these poor countries ... I believe that these reasons are not the real definitive reasons. The definitive reason is strictly theological, and even more strongly I would say it is spiritual, 'virtue'. Namely, that it is God who has made an option for the poor ... And to follow Jesus, focused from

the perspective of the Kingdom, leads one to be with the marginated. The radicality of the option for the poor is not sociological, political, economical, cultural ... but strictly theological, virtuous, religious, mystical ... Whenever the Church has sided with the poor, it has been an evangelical Church. When the Church has separated itself from the poor, it has lost its charism, its prophecy, its spirit, its evangelical dimension.

## Appendix 7: What the Church loses without the poor (Moacyr Grechi, Brazilian bishop)

"Without the poor, the Church loses practically everything."

*It loses its universality*, making itself a church of the elite, into a church of minorities.

*It loses a sense of history and its function of fermenting the world*, sitting on the sidelines of the progress of men and women of our time as a ghetto or a 'ethnological reserve'.

*It loses the strength of incarnation in the world* by not planting its roots in the concrete and painful reality of the majority who suffer (because they only feel and live the drama of the world) and being reduced to a church lost in the rarefied atmosphere of a disembodied spiritualism.

*It loses the force of its unity*: what is a Church that does not have in the poor, one of the epicenters of its unity, around the permanent center that is Jesus Christ?

*It loses the force of its holiness*: How does one enter into the kingdom passing through the crowds fallen on the paths of the world?

*It loses the force of its Catholicity*: how can it be the

Church of all, if the majority of the poor, by their numbers and aspirations, do not find in her welcome?

*And it loses the force of its Apostolicity*: how is it the Church of the Apostles without living their life style described in the Acts as 'all in common' and thus 'there were no poor among them'?

Finally, without the poor *the Church loses its Lord*, who was identified with them and constituted them final judges of the world. "Without the poor, the Church simply is lost."

*Agnoscamus peccata nostra ut apti simus ad sacra mysteria celebranda.  
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison  
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis  
Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi: miserere nobis  
Domine non sum dignus ut intres...*

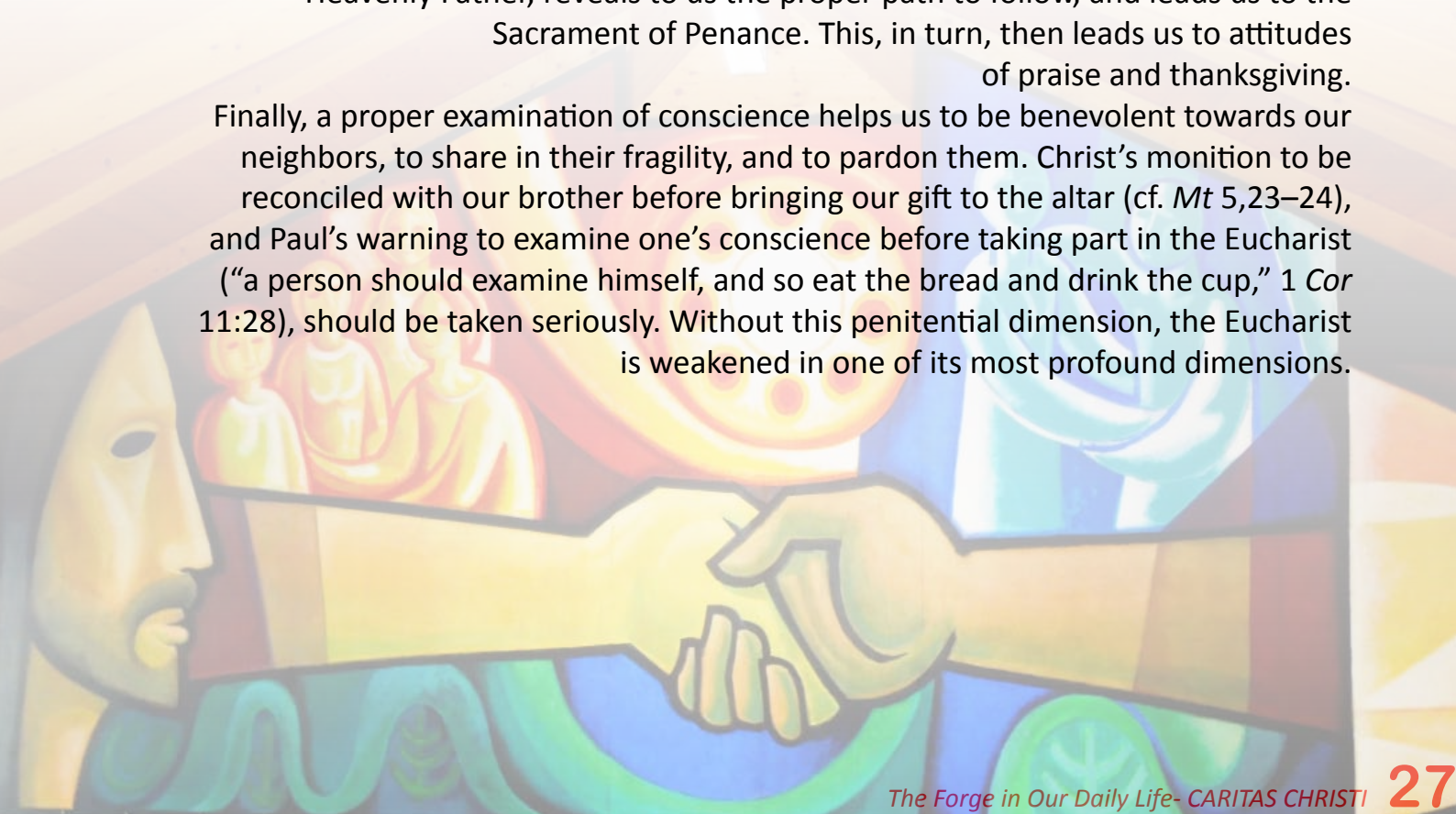
As the above cited texts make clear, the penitential dimension is clearly present in the Eucharistic Celebration. This dimension does not only emerge during the penitential rite at the beginning of the Mass, with its various formulas invoking the Divine Mercy, but also emerges in the supplication to Christ in the *Gloria*, in the chanting of the *Agnus Dei* during the breaking of the bread, and in the prayer we direct to the Lord before participating in the Eucharistic banquet.

**The Eucharist purifies the penitent's heart and stimulates him to conversion, making him aware of his own miseries and moving him to seek God's pardon.**

It must be stated, however, that this penitential aspect in no way substitutes the need for sacramental confession, which remains the only ordinary means whereby grave sin is forgiven, and the sinner is reconciled with God and with the Church. This spiritual disposition should prolong itself throughout the day, sustained by the examination of conscience – that is, by the confrontation of our thoughts, words, works and omissions with the Gospel of Jesus.

Seeing our miseries clearly, as they are, frees us from attitudes of self-pity, maintains us in the truth before God, moves us to profess the mercy of the Heavenly Father, reveals to us the proper path to follow, and leads us to the Sacrament of Penance. This, in turn, then leads us to attitudes of praise and thanksgiving.

Finally, a proper examination of conscience helps us to be benevolent towards our neighbors, to share in their fragility, and to pardon them. Christ's monition to be reconciled with our brother before bringing our gift to the altar (cf. *Mt* 5,23–24), and Paul's warning to examine one's conscience before taking part in the Eucharist ("a person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup," *1 Cor* 11:28), should be taken seriously. Without this penitential dimension, the Eucharist is weakened in one of its most profound dimensions.



# The Forge in Our Daily Life

## CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

I always remembered that Jesus had become poor Himself; he chose to be born, to live, and to die in the utmost poverty. I thought of how Mary, too, had always wanted to be poor. And I thought, too, of how the Apostles left everything to follow Jesus Christ. **Sometimes the Lord made me feel the pinch of poverty but only for a short time.** Then He would console me with whatever I needed, and the joy **I experienced in feeling poverty was so great** that the rich could never enjoy all their riches as much as I enjoyed my beloved poverty.”  
*(Aut 363)*