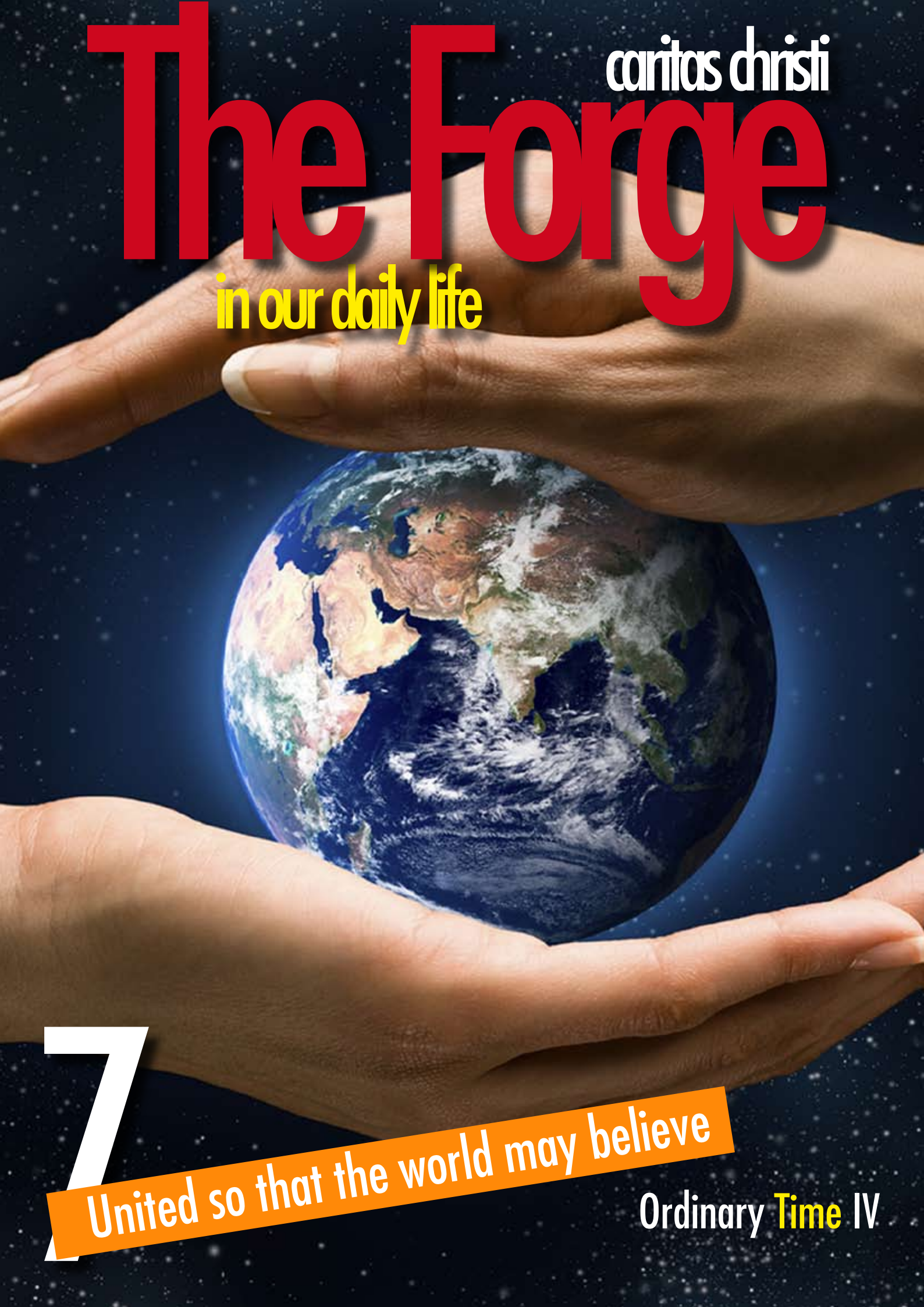


caritas christi

The Forge

in our daily life



7

United so that the world may believe

Ordinary **Time** IV

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 the Father’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)

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1. Introduction

A close-up photograph of a human hand gently cradling the Earth. The hand is positioned from the top right, with fingers curved around the planet. The Earth is shown from a perspective that includes the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Europe and Asia. The background is a deep black space filled with numerous small, bright white stars. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the colors of the Earth's surface.

This seventh booklet of the *Caritas Christi* section focuses on our community experience. Its title is significant: Our communion has a missionary perspective. It offers a new tool for personal growth. It takes its starting point from number 4 of the Constitutions which recalls that “we have also been given the gift of following Christ in a communion of life ...”. This gift is the basic foundation of our community, its crux, its living source. Much more than a man-made thing, the community is a gift freely received from God. Praise God for it. And offer yourself freely to be fashioned in the image of Jesus. Let’s hope you can go beyond just saying “How beautiful is my community!” but also be able to say “How beautiful it is to build my community”.

In fact, community is often a goal to be achieved, but it usually turns out to be a blessing. Rising from our awareness of this gift, these pages aim to hold you in a deep and renewed appreciation for the Congregation and for your community. This is given expression when each

A close-up photograph of a person's arm and hand, with a view of Earth from space in the background. The arm is in the foreground, and the hand is reaching out towards the bottom right. The background shows the Earth's surface with clouds and oceans, set against a starry space background.

person is valued, when our missionary work is appreciated, we then feel part of its story and we identify ourselves with its symbols (cf. *TMHL* 49). You share in a grace that has brought you together with others for the missionary proclamation of the Word. You have not received it so as to live apart from others. Receive warmly the recommendations offered to you in these pages, so that every day you will build community in a sincere, open and transparent spirit (cf. *MFL* 19).

Those who know the Congregation and its communities well truly value us. They see us as a sign of the kingdom: they appreciate our attitude of welcome and family atmosphere; they admire the care that we give to our elderly and sick members, and they speak highly of the discernment and shared quest for God's will that some of our communities display (cf. *MFL* 17).

But even bearing this in mind, there is something in our fraternal life that leaves us feeling dissatisfied (cf. *TMHL* 50). It needs some attention and care, otherwise it could become a place "where demons grow" (*G. Uribarri sj*). So, where

the temptation is to see irregularities and shortcomings, we must be able to identify messages and calls to greater responsibility.

Throughout the months of August and September, take the opportunity to strengthen the community as a living organism and in its missionary commitment (cf. *TMHL* 51) provided by this booklet. Its structure follows the lines of Chapter I of our Constitutions, dedicated entirely to the missionary community. It also takes into account what has been stated in the last three General Chapters, both in terms of their resolutions and in relation to their guidelines and proposals. Do your utmost to "renew our partnership in community and recreate and strengthen the bonds that unite us as a family, in one body (cf. *MFL* 16).

2. Reflection

2.1. New challenges for the community

Reviewing the resolutions made by our last three General Chapters, the challenges currently facing our community life become clear. Embedded in our history and current culture, Claretian communities have suffered from the abrupt turn towards privacy, so characteristic of the neo-liberal and neo-conservative spirit, as well as from the phenomena of consumerism, new technologies and ethical relativism. We have to live in a highly interconnected world, but one which is divided and unsupportive (cf. *IPM 27*). Confining ourselves specifically to the effects these trends have on the

lives of our communities, it can be seen that, just as in society itself, the era of social gatherings and common ownership has come to an end; so too amongst ourselves there seems to be a downturn in our need for communion and sharing that were a striking feature of past years. This not only damages our relationships, but may even affect the economic balance between regions and organisms in the Congregation (cf. *IPM 31*).

Our most recent Chapters detect that the new social trends are pushing some communities towards disintegration and are generating a progressive detachment from the regular rhythm of the community, the loss of a sense of a common



way of life, passivity, individualism, subjectivism, the tendency to withdraw into ourselves and our own problems. It is often the case that members of the community excuse themselves, for no discernible reasons, from being with their brothers, from praying with them, from eating and relaxing together, from planning, developing and assessing missionary life (cf. *IPM 28*).

The increasingly private use of money is easily exonerated, so too of material resources and the private use of one's own time.

The old model of inter-de-

pendence, rejected after Vatican II, is now being replaced by independence. As community life is difficult anyway because of diversity and the legitimate assertion of oneself (cf. *IPM 29*), the emphasis is on privacy (cf. *MFL 16*) and personal charisms; the focus is now on the effectiveness of the individual apostolate and one's personal input. The resistance to move from "I to us" is almost insurmountable

The power of that individualism and certain divergent interpretations of the Gospel, lead to the obsessive pursuit of happiness and self-fulfillment. It

is not easy to rectify the considerable degree of loneliness and dissatisfaction, with respect to community life, that leads people to acquire personal possessions, to look for distractions or become ensconced in their own areas of responsibility, adopting an independent and defensive air (cf. *TMHL 50*). But most worrying of all is the constant stream of people giving up. Most of them have to do with a poor community experience: "The most common reason by far, when seeking dispensation from vows, secularization (for religious and priests) or to give up



altogether, is a weariness with community life, more so than the problems of celibacy, than a crisis of faith or a problematic relationship with the organization and the lack of vocations, or any other reason" (*A. Cencini*).

These phenomena are nurtured as much by the scattering of tiny Claretian communities of two people (or even fewer?), where it becomes difficult to live a reasonable fraternal life, as by the identity crisis of authority. In fact, there are many obstacles that prevent our superiors from becoming effective leaders of fraternal life (cf. *MFL* 17). People

become less committed to the planning and development of community projects, ignoring the benefits that come from a sincere adherence to the gainful discipline of community life (cf. *Evangelica Testificatio* 39). It also negatively affects our community decisions with regard to our own parishes and the shared mission (cf. *IPM* 33 and *SCC* 17).

New technologies, on the one hand, provide us with more immediate communication with the rest of the world, but on the other, they run the risk of impoverishing communication within the local community. We used to

blame television for discouraging community dialogue, but these days we really miss it because, at least, we watched it together, and together we discussed the news and programmes that were broadcast. The personal computer, which gives us easy access to contacts, news and films, entices all of us to stay in our rooms.

In short: It is difficult to establish criteria that embody the paradigm of missionary community life in the huge variety of circumstances we live in today (cf. *TMHL* 50). This is, in short, the challenge we put before you and which we hope to address.

Exercise 1: Analysis of my community experience

- The previous paragraph has highlighted, above all, the problematic aspects of our community. No doubt, from your own experience, you will also appreciate the positive side, the achievements gained during this recent period of renewal. **Can you identify any of them?**
- **Ask yourself also if any of these shortfalls affect you personally in a significant way.** This could be a topic to discuss with your companion.

2.2. The missionary community: blessing and conquest

In response to these circumstances, priests, deacons, brothers and students who share the same vocation and gather within the same community (cf. *CC* 7), what can we do? First of all, we must accept our own community as a blessing. Much more than just being a man-made edifice, our fraternity is a gift of God's love poured into our hearts through the Spirit. It is he who has formed us into a truly united family in the name of the Lord. No one can understand the purpose of our community mission without accepting, in the first instance, that it is a mystery and that it is rooted in the heart of the Trinity itself. The divine lives within us. If it's not the Lord who builds our

community, it will be impossible to describe it as "Confessio Trinitatis" (cf. *Vita Consecrata* 14).

From this awareness of the received gift comes the obligation of living under the gaze of others and that we all strive actively to become brothers in the local community where we live. This is a conquest, in that it welcomes and cultivates the gift. It demands that each of us renews the covenant which unites us in the community, personally opting for it and fostering community relationship (cf. *MFL* 56) in order to make it a home, laboratory and workshop-forge. In the following chapters you will find guidelines for exploring the contents of these three metaphors, which can seemingly appear only as contradictory or incoherent.

Exercise 2: Three community rules

- **Read the document "An always-missionary community"** by Josep M. Abella, which you'll find in **Appendix 4** (page 32).
- After reading it, **draw up three community rules**, based on the light this text sheds on your own personal experience of community life.

2.3. The missionary community as home

“Home” evokes the idea of a warm hospitable place that encapsulates personal relationships and relaxation. This is where there should be space and time for creating a hospitable environment that favours free and honest dialogue, prayer and shared recreation (cf. *MFL* 56.2). It is the *green zone* of cordial, fulfilling human relationships, of communication and spontaneity. It provides areas of warmth for storytelling, for celebrations, for sharing nostalgic memories ... A home is not built merely on the foundation of group dynamics, but on the basis of a love shared.

It is the love of Christ, poured into our hearts, which initially inspires us, a single-minded love which takes the initiative of loving our brothers,

even to give of ourselves; then we progress to a shared love, which implies mutual harmony. Love is not limited to a mere feeling, it is also a decision. Fr Claret was right to recognize it with the following words: “Doing and suffering are the greatest proofs of love” (*Aut* 424), which fits perfectly with community life.

Christ gives us two fundamental truths: that of being infinitely loved and that of being capable of limitless love. Only the cross of Christ can impart these certainties, and the freedom that comes from them, in such a full and definitive manner. Thanks to them, you free yourself gradually from the inertia of putting yourself in the centre and taking possession of the other person, and from the fear of giving of yourself. On the other hand, you learn to love as Christ loves you,

with that same love which has been poured into your heart and which makes you able to forget yourself and give of yourself as the Lord has given of himself (cf. *Fraternal Life in Community, FLC* 23).

This love is nurtured and expressed through various dynamics that make our missionary community a home. **Number 12 of the Constitutions mentions the four most fundamental dynamics: the Eucharist, prayer, family life and shared responsibility.** They not only give birth to fraternal love in our community but they also maintain it. They should not be reduced to mere routine activities, nor be seen as mere statutory elements of life.

Only when they are expressed freely and lovingly can they provide a meaningful and effective growth of fraternal life, as explained below.

1) *The Eucharist converts many into one body.*

The first, and most indispensable, member of our community is the Lord Jesus. He is present in the Eucharist; he calls us with his Word and continually draws us towards Him. Without Him there is no community. The Claretian community has always lived by the Eucharist. The early acts of community used to be visits to the Blessed Sacrament after meals. The Risen Lord, present and active through the

Word and the Eucharistic gifts, honours the Father, he edifies and renews our brotherhood and unleashes it in our missionary work. Therefore, our community becomes a “home” when it is fully embraced (cf. *CC* 35) and time is made for common prayer, its undisputed focal point, though not uniquely so, is the Eucharist, the very table where we meditate on and share the Bread and the Word.

Sharing food at table is a great symbol of conviviality, of reconciliation and inclusion. In the Bible the feasts are the best metaphor for what God prepares for his people (cf. *Is* 25:6-8). For this reason, the image that Jesus chooses for telling us about what



is central in the Kingdom, is a banquet, a festive meal. This repeated gesture of sharing food at a table with a diverse range of people prepared the way for the Eucharist (cf. *Mk* 2:14 to 17 and 14:3; *Lk* 5:29, 7:36, 10:7, 11:37, 14:1 and 19:1-10; *Jn* 6 etc. and, of particular note, the accounts of the last supper). The Eucharist brought out into the open Jesus' hidden intentions: to make the logic of mutual surrender the only way of bringing unity to the members of his community.

The early Christians understood the Eucharist as the "community in operation." For its sake, the small fragmented group, made up of disparate individuals, as mentioned in *Acts* 4:32, becomes "one in heart and mind." St. Paul drew it to the attention of the Corinthians: "The bread is one, and

so we, though many, form one body, sharing the one bread" (*1 Cor* 10, 17). The Eucharist always creates a sense of communion. If we all share the same food, we will make up one body.

It is therefore vital that, in an effort to make all this possible, "Every day we should wholeheartedly celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist" (*CC* 35). Far from being a devotional or private ritual, the Eucharist takes a stance against a mentality that tries to divide us into opposing groups. Its primary emphasis is to highlight and perfect fraternal life together (cf. *CC* 12). We are "truly Eucharistic" (Casaldàliga) when the Eucharist awakens in us a concern about sharing life and giving birth to knowledge and mutual love.

Exercise 3: Dynamics of inclusion

- Spend quality time in making a **prayerful reading of the accounts of the Last Supper**, especially the version of the Gospel according to John (*Jn* 13-17).
- Let yourself be "moved" by the Eucharistic story and **try to detect the dynamics of rapprochement, acceptance and inclusion** which are present and active. Write them down in your booklet.
- Think carefully how you can continue to grow in your disposition to be involved in, united with, attracted to, and bound together with this story ... **Plan your "strategies of inclusion"**, definitive ways of keeping the experience of being included, which you live in each Eucharist, in the everyday routines of your life.
- Each time the communion host is broken, the celebrant says: "The body of Christ" and we respond "Amen." You know that saying "Amen" really means "Yes, I welcome you," not only to Jesus, the Son of God, but also to your neighbour, your brothers. For this reason, and remembering the exercise done in the Christmas *Quid Prodest*, again find a photo of the members of your own community, and put it in a visible but discreet place (desktop, breviary, ...). **Look to see if there have been any additions or changes.** Also look carefully to see if you have noticed any change in your personal relationship with any of the permanent members. Finally, repeat this "spiritual communion" several times ("Amen; yes, I welcome and embrace you") looking carefully at each one of them for a few moments.

2) Common prayer, especially the liturgy.

Our community becomes a "home" if we also find quality space and time to pray together. The community is fed and strengthened by prayer, both personal and communal, especially by liturgical prayer (cf. *CC* 35), and above all by the sacrament of Penance and the Liturgy of the Hours. Prayer is, therefore, another powerful dynamic of communion that should never be neglected.

Community and liturgical prayer have been one of the areas where we have tried to deepen our fraternal relationships. This has become possible thanks to the great opportunities opened up by the Council: participative Masses, dialogue homilies, community liturgies of penance, prayer vigils, liturgies of the Word ... Through them we try to find, in a creative and shared manner, a deep spiritual level of communication with our brothers in the community.

More especially, and from relatively recent times, the *lectio divina* has gradually become more prominent (at a personal level, but also shared with others), which not only contributes to our personal understanding of the Word of God, but also to the growth of our communion, thanks to the collatio, and to our communication of the resonances and echoes that the Word conveys (cf. *CC* 34) and to our subsequent life commitment. Along with the Eucharist and the

Liturgy of the Hours, they are the two most common expressions of prayer in the building of community.

Both personal and liturgical prayer take us out of ourselves and bring us into the mystery of Christ himself. It is he himself who calls us every day, as a body of brothers, and keeps us together in love. Our proximity to Christ brings us closer together. St. Paul mentions charity in the context of prayer: It comes from God (cf. *Eph* 6:23) and is the fruit of the Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:22). So

are members who do not feel heeded, welcomed, accepted, understood or even cared for in their needs. Such circumstances are not desirable for anyone.

By contrast, we really need to create a different atmosphere within our community groups; we crave the warmth of a home, of family life.

One of the important signposts on the route of the congregational journey has been the leap from life in common to communion of life. They are not interchangeable terms, although

respect our personal differences, welcome those differences and have regular periods where we can share our life together and our apostolic insights.

There is no doubt that the integration of the human sciences into the dynamics of our community has influenced our current conception. However, this type of interconnection is not based on human links, nor does it try to imitate the relationships that occur in the natural family unit, but those of the new type of family that Jesus established



that this dynamic may be more effective it is essential that our schedules are synchronized so that we allow sufficient time for common prayer as well as personal prayer. Both reach their maximum effectiveness when they are closely linked.

3) Family life.

We don't call any kind of living together 'fraternal life'. There are communities that have been canonically instituted which amount to nothing more than a group of individual people, however hard-working and active they are. There are some in which, unfortunately, there

both are necessary. The first refers to those tangible structures that hold community members together: rule of life, timetable, certain channels for personal relationships, the important sense of unity, the acceptance of leadership ... The second, on the other hand, puts greater emphasis on gratitude for the gift of the community (cf. *FLC* 11) and on the virtues and attitudes that promote personal relationships: humility, charity, sincerity, meekness, fraternal correction, reconciliation, mutual respect, interest and concern for each other (cf. *CC* 16; *MFL* 56.1). The latter is impractical if we do not

: "Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me" (*Mk* 3:35). Such language defies both common sense and the differences imposed on us by nature: how can you be simultaneously brother and sister and mother? A strange paradox lies beneath these puzzling words. Blood ties are vital and cannot be denied, but here we are talking about another, completely new, type of family tie that involves a new birth. Only he who does the will of God can become part of the family of Jesus. But what is "doing the will of God"?

The first Christian communities, supported by the teachings

of the Lord and the apostles, discovered the will of God through the mandate, not just recommendation, concerning fraternal love (cf. *Jn 15:12*) involving all the virtues (cf. *CC 10*). It is the most vital gift and is encapsulated in the famous hymn of love (cf. *1 Cor 13*) and also in various other similar instructions scattered throughout the New Testament: “Love one another and be considerate. Outdo one another in mutual respect” (*Rom 12:10*), “live in peace with one another” (*Rom 12:16*); “Welcome one another as Christ welcomed you” (*Rom 15:7*), “advise each other” (*Rom 15:14*). “Wait for one another” (*1 Cor 11:33*), “make yourselves slaves of one another through love” (*Gal*

5:13), “build one another up” (*1 Thes 5:11*); “bear with one another in love” (*Eph 4:2*), “be good and understanding, mutually forgiving one another” (*Eph 4:32*), “let all kinds of submission to one another become obedience to Christ” (*Eph 5:21*), “pray for one another” (*Jas 5:16*), “treat each other with humility” (*1 Pt 5:5*), “we are in fellowship with one another” (*1 Jn 1:7*), “let us do good to all especially our family in faith” (*Gal 6:9-10*). The Word of God once again becomes the light that illuminates, especially in the matter of our communion (cf. *CC 15*).

Exercise 4: Farewell to the Congregation

- **Go over the New Testament texts listed above.** Select three of them. Spend some time in prayer pondering on them, to let their meaning sink in and let them intercede on your behalf.
- In **Appendix 3** you will find the famous “**FAREWELL TO THE CONGREGATION OF FR. JOSEPH XIFRÉ**”. Read this spiritual testament carefully, with an open heart. Underline the three expressions in which you detect the greatest expression of fraternal affection.
- Then **write your own “FAREWELL TO THE CONGREGATION”**, trying carefully to pick out your own experiences and deepest feelings about belonging to, and appreciation of, the Congregation.

4) Shared responsibility in the community.

Our community, like any human group, in order to stay together, needs common goals and visible structures of organization and authority. Even with all this, there is a need to have people formally assigned to be able to lead it according to our own constitution, and not to forget that “the government should involve everyone” (*CC 93*).

The beginning of the renewal process of community life was characterised by an anti-institutional tendency, and by the need of finding personal human relationships that were more intimate and meaningful, free from stereotypes.

There may have been some conflict between life in common and communion of life, two aspects which, however, can not be placed in opposition to each other, as indicated earlier. A new mindset gradually shaped a shared style of government, seen increasingly not only as a tool for good management of the community and the conduct of its work, but especially as a form of motivation to action.

Since then procedures have been put in place to facilitate the involvement of everyone in the government of the community as responsible adult members. These instruments allow every-



one to have an input and to make sure that everyone's inalienable personal rights are respected (cf. CC 135). The inner sensibilities of each person are guaranteed in this way, through a greater sense of shared responsibility, decentralisation that favours people's involvement, subsidiarity, and information and shared dialogue within the community (cf. CC 95). Authority is primarily understood in its role of guidance, service and encouragement. From a community that used to revolve around authority, we have moved to being a community that puts fraternity in the centre, but not excluding authority entirely.

In this new context, the plenary meeting of the community (cf. CC 110) is called to encapsulate the expression of that dimension. Alongside this, there are other forms of participation that are not a concession to the spirit of our time, though they largely concur with them, but are ways of expressing that we all share responsibility. Shared responsibility does not imply that we eschew our own gifts, but that we decide not to use them for our own personal benefit. It calls for establishing a sense of solidarity, communion and exchange of powers and charisms.

Exercise 5: Constitutions and Directory

Side by side, read **Chapter 1 of the first part of Constitutions** (CC 10-19) and **numbers 36-54 of our Directory**, which is a commentary on this constitutional text. Pause only to make a note of anything new you find there, anything you hadn't noticed before. Make a note of them in your booklet.

2.4. The community as a laboratory

The community can also be seen as a “laboratory”, here understood as that reality in which experience is gained or where something is created. In the Claretian community we experience and create all that we have to communicate in our missionary work. That makes it a place of formation where, in addition to planning mission projects, it is also the place where we live them. The community is there for the mission, not just for itself. The defining principle has profound implications not only in the field of missionary commitments, but also in shaping our own life of fraternity. The quality of community life has a decisive influence on our apostolic effectiveness, as John Paul II emphasized in his message to the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation of Religious (21 November 1992): “All the fertility of religious life depends on the quality of fraternal life within the community”. From this point of view, the first sentence of number 13 of our Constitutions cannot be overlooked: “Collaboration in the ministry of the Word pertains to the very origins of our common life.”

1) Communion in our Mission (CC 13).

- *The community exists because there is a mission.* Calling to mind the importance given by Jesus to brotherly love (cf. *Jn* 13:34-35; *Mt* 25:40), fraternal life in community is our first missionary word (cf. *EN* 21; *FLC* 54; *IPM* 28). But, at the same time, the mission is not a service to the outside world that is superimposed on an already established community. The chronological sequence that argues that community comes first, followed by the mission, is not correct. The correct interpretation is just the

reverse: the community exists because there is a mission. It is the mission that provides the very purpose of our evangelical community.

- *The Word is at the centre:* “Collaboration in the ministry of the Word pertains to the very origins of our common life” (CC 13). The Word is at the very core. As “servants of the word” we belong to it; it governs our lives. We are a community only to the extent that the Word has created it. When the Word is proclaimed in unison, communion amongst us becomes evident.
- *Ways of sharing the mission.* We are all involved in the mission, which has been entrusted primarily to the community (cf. *FLC* 40.c), although not in the same way. We share the mission in three different ways: firstly, the ministry of the Word puts people into an apostolic team. Secondly, a particular duty may be entrusted to a single missionary. Thirdly, participation in the mission is through “praying and suffering on behalf of the Church” (CC 13). This points to the fact that the mission is not just identified by team collaboration, because it can also be carried out by individuals on behalf of the Congregation. Nor does it neces-



sarily require the work to be done within our own institutions or in collaboration with other Claretians. It may be a question of the community providing a missionary service outside the community environment.

- Besides, *mission is not just about action*. Action is not the axiom for what can be carried out in other ways. Suffering is also the mission, and is of the most outstanding and unique importance, because Jesus himself consummated his mission by being nailed to the cross.

2) Communion within the social and ecclesial framework (CC 14).

- *Built upon a charism, not by human design* (cf. FLC 8). A charism is not an untouchable relic, but an experience of the Spirit, given to St. Anthony Mary Claret as our Founder, and to each of us as followers of his great work (cf. MR 11). Our communities have come into existence founded on such a charismatic experience.
- *Our first and principal affiliation*. This charismatic link is so strong that “our first and principal affiliation must be a deep communion with our brothers who, like him, are called and sent to be witnesses and promulgators of the Good News” (CMT 133). “First”, “principal”, “deep” are clearly defined terms that do not admit any retractions or exemptions (cf. MFL 16). They convey a formational journey of acquiring knowledge, identification, affection and loyalty to the “congregational us”.
- *Outward appearance and special features of the community*. Our fraternity is not interchangeable with another type of community nor can it be confused with any other type of group. But it does admit to interpretation and adaptation according to various socio-cultural contexts, provided that its charismatic identity is not lost or damaged.
- *Relationship with the Church and the world*. The Spirit carries it into this “relationship” and helps it to overcome the temptation to retreat into its own private projects. It shares a common cause with the Church and the world, with its people and groups, with its suffering and confusion; and also with its joys, achievements and hopes. It exists in a state of affinity and reciprocity, in an exchange of gifts.
- *Insertion into a socio-cultural context*. It is vital that each community throws open its doors to its local environment and culture, to the culti-



- vation of a broad perspective, to a concern for the problems of the local people, and to collaborating with other projects that go beyond our brief. It is also called upon to be a persuasive factor in the counterculture of the Gospel, salt of the earth and light of the world.
- *The right balance between community life and apostolic work*. It is possibly one of our most difficult challenges. We must never set the two dimensions up against each other. However, it is not easy to bring them together in harmony. This is an area of frequent conflict which needs to be solved in a spirit of togetherness. Within ourselves, we should allow the “disciple” to grow in us, the one who lives with Jesus and with the group of those who follow him, and the “apostle” too, who should participate in the mission of the Lord (cf. FLC 59.c).
 - *Fraternity as a sign* (cf. FLC 54-57). The service of the Word is not limited solely to conveying doctrinal content. It is called to disseminate an

apostolic lifestyle. Fraternal communion contributes directly to evangelisation. The ultimate sign, left behind by the Lord, is the one of true fraternity, “By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

- *In receptacles of clay.* Nowhere is it written that the community should be perfect. Perfection simply does not exist. But it must be consistent and honest. Integrity and consist-

ency do not require that we never make mistakes, but that we don't persist with them. So, a community bears witness when it provides an evangelical path to showing off the best of itself (without strutting about) and the worst of itself (without denying or belittling itself). God has never felt the need to eliminate weaknesses from your community, for his power is manifested precisely in human frailty (cf. 1 Cor 2:5).

Exercise 6: Walking together

Spend some time going over the outlines of the Claretian Community, put together by Fr. Aquilino Bocos cmf, (cf. **Appendix 1**) where he brings together some of the elements which make up our community life. After reading it through, ask yourself:

- Which aspects seem **the most fundamental?**
- **Is some important aspect of our life and mission missing?** If so, what aspect and where?

2.5. The community as a workshop-forge

Besides praying for it, meditating on it, planning it for the mission ... you have to create fraternity, you have to “forge it”. **This is precisely what is done in the workshop-forge, a community's area for handiwork, where communion is built, and the place where we come to be brothers.**

But, who are the artisans (and subsequent beneficiaries) of the community? Who are the people who build it? We are referring to being the builders, not just the beneficiaries of the community (cf. FLC 27). Our Constitutions highlight four groups of people at its core: Our neighbours, those with whom we live in our local community (cf. CC 16); those who are different, who are separated from us by age, race, culture or other factors (cf. CC 17); those who are rich in fraternal love, those who are sick and elderly, the frailest members of our fraternity (cf. CC 18) as described in number 68 of “*Congregavit nos in unum. Fraternal Life in Community*” which we suggest you should read, and finally our departed brothers, whose departure to the House of the Father is a truly decisive moment in the life of the community (cf. CC 19).

To succeed in getting a community to be, and to function as, a veritable workshop is no easy or quick matter. There is no point in rushing to



achieve unity. It requires the work of a craftsman in a forge so that its members achieve maximum human and spiritual maturity (cf. FLC 36), so that they open their hearts to God's gift and succeed in building communities “full of joy and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52). This task is achieved through timely pedagogical assistance (“hammer blows” using Forge language) which guides the continuous process of renewal until it becomes “Schola Amoris” (cf. FLC 38). Let's go over some of the most important aspects of this kind of assistance.

1) *The transparency of community dynamics.*

Original sin also corrupts community relationships. In fact, negative forces which are both mysterious and persistent endeavour to separate



us, driving us away from our community ideal and reducing the quality of our fraternal life. We all suffer from its consequences, and we must all fight against it and negate its devious manipulations.

One of the most accessible forms of protecting fraternal unity is to stick steadfastly to the rule or routine of the local community. It not only provides the framework of our communion, but it also endeavours to put the brakes on self-centred and personal diversions which strain to break up the community. Without a doubt, the Gospel continues to be the supreme rule of life, the only standard of life. Nevertheless, with the birth of the true community, we immediately see the need to establish rules and practices that protect its status. These bring the gospel principles of fraternity into practice. Arising from this premise, each community should establish its own inner order, where the many diverse aspects of its life and mission are decided and organised. Curiously, we are all asked to include amongst them the use of the mass media (cf. CC 57).

We are not trying to go back to just observing the letter of the law, but many problems could be avoided if our community timetables were followed more responsibly, and if there existed a periodic form of assessment to check and improve on achievements in our living together as a community. This also goes for the economy, the liturgy, the maintenance of the house, the dynamics of the community meetings, the timetabling and assessment of apostolic work ... for everything.

We must freely surrender to certain rules of life (cf. CC 12), and be willing to change them and

adapt them with great flexibility, in accordance with the new demands that circumstances bring about, and the new faces that join the community. It is only as such that the dynamics of communion will not be impaired by neglect, forgetfulness, inertia or any other barriers of worse note.

2) *Care in communication.*

Communication is one of the most vital factors in the building of fraternal life. Living in a community requires knowing each other, and knowing others personally is not possible without communication (cf. FLC 29). **Communication implies approaching the other person; seeing the best in the other person and having something pertinent to give or to say when you make the approach.** It helps to develop relationships, it feeds the family spirit, it encourages involvement, it sensitizes people to the problems they have in common and it unites people around the common mission. When you relate to others, your own circumstances decrease in importance. Without free and open communication, a community cannot advance either humanly or spiritually.

But real communication is difficult and always brings with it certain risks. It is an exercise of being true to oneself, which demands that we know ourselves and allows ourselves to be known as we are, in order to accept ourselves and be accepted by others. It implies being open to the other person, acknowledging him and welcoming him unconditionally. If communication does not exist or it is poor, the sense of fraternity is weakened, our brother becomes a distant unknown person, anonymity invades our relationships and, as a consequence, it causes distressing situations of isolation and loneliness.

The most important way of avoiding these situations, although not exclusively, is through dialogue. Now recognised as the new word for communion, it is not merely an exchange of words or a sharing of ideas. It is more a presence and encounter, involvement and enquiry, an offering of oneself and a welcome to another, of opening ourselves up and listening. For it to be right, dialogue demands four conditions: clarity, affability, trust and prudence (cf. *Ecclesiam suam* 31).

Experience suggests some useful practices to protect and encourage levels of community communication. Let's point out a few that are indisputable and are obligatory by nature:

- Involvement in the meetings dealing with timetabling, assessment and fraternal life,



especially when (for apostolic reasons) people live in a scattered community.

- The cultivation of vital qualities in any good human relationship: education, warmth, honesty, listening, control of oneself, tact, sense of humour and a spirit of involvement.
- Avoid that TV, the internet and your mobile phone etc become the only form of recreation and communication. Together, discuss levels of moderate and prudent use of the media to avoid obstacles and impediments in fraternal communication (cf. *FLC 24*).
- Increasing levels of heartfelt welcome, trust and reliability in order to improve levels of communication. But there is no reason for communicating with everyone at the same level of familiarity. Jesus also differentiated his relationship with each of his disciples.
- Encouragement of relationships with brothers of different cultures, discouraging the predominance of one culture over others, fostering mutual understanding and the acquisition of skills for living and working together (cf. *TMHL 28* and *MFL 56.7*).
- Improving the homely atmosphere of our communities and Organisms, carefully fostering the space and time that increases the warmth of our welcome, the meaningfulness of our com-

munication, shared prayer and recreation (cf. *MFL 56.2*)

- Encouraging the creation of spaces in our communities which enable formation for the mission and its planning to take place (cf. *MFL 56.3*)
- Making sure that the community project is tied up with the plans of the local churches and with the Congregation, constantly using them as a point of reference in the community's activity and in its periodic assessment.

3) *The boldness of forgiveness.*

- *Sin and evil do exist.* Any debate within the community that does not acknowledge the existence of conflict and differences, would be guilty of being unrealistic and naïve. It is true that our community is founded on the premise, and harmony, of some fundamental values, not simply on innate sympathy. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of differences and difficulties amongst our membership, which is entirely normal when people live together. A Claretian community differs from other social groups, not by its absence of problems and conflicts, but by the way it handles them and works through them.

There are two problems

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Of communion.

(Pedro Casaldáliga)

- *The proximity of evil.* We do not live with friends of our choosing, but with brothers that we make welcome. Notice that, strangely enough, our problems originate with those who are closest to us! Those to whom we should ask forgiveness, and to forgive, are not far away, but happen to be our nearest neighbours. Only if we learn to forgive and ask forgiveness, will conflicts, which inevitably arise when people are rubbing shoulders together, become an opportunity for growth. Jesus called us to love our neighbour, those nearest to us. But also to love our enemies. But it turns out that our enemy ... is our neighbour! That person close to us who has allegedly offended us. The environment of the community, which should be harmonious, sometimes becomes a territory of enmity.

- *What does not count as forgiveness.* And often, the thought strikes us that forgiveness is unfair. We sometimes believe that justice demands that we put a distance between us and those who have caused the offence. Then, to mete out some punishment, even if it is just silence or an attitude of disdain ... And only when all has calmed down and it hasn't caused too much disruption, perhaps, as a gesture of magnanimity, we forgive them.

But is that forgiveness? Is that what Jesus means when he asks us to forgive our brother sincerely? And not once, not seven times, but seventy times seven? No. Forgiveness is much more than a benevolent gesture when, over time, the offence has gradually faded away. Forgiveness is more than a gesture of understanding offered with an air of superiority. Forgiveness is more than just looking in another direction. Forgiveness is not simply to ignore the offence or to forget it; nor to let time heal matters, making it the remedy. Forgiveness is not to justify or exonerate, nor should it be confused with a psychological transcendence of the negative effects caused by the offence. Much less is it callous indifference.

- *So what is forgiveness?* Forgiveness, as with Jesus at the sublime moment of the cross, is to forget yourself and be able to empathize with the other. The person who manages to stand in the shoes of the offender will end up seeing him differently and will adopt an attitude of compassion. Conflicts between individuals become providential space for a new encounter and for loving them in a new way; not space for installing tribunals and courts of law. Forgiveness of this kind is to have a "generous spirit" (CC 16); it is not just a matter of will. Don't simply forgive the person you choose, but the one who has been given to you. Spontaneous revenge can arise from the offence. But those who feel wrapped in the cloak of sincere Mercy, they use love as their most powerful weapon. Instead of cursing, they give a blessing. Instead of vengeance, they seek entreaty. Yes it's true. Forgiveness is the greatest gift that the Holy Spirit gives us, so that we can give it away.

4) *The risk of fraternal correction.*

- This is another evangelical tool for engendering community activity (cf. Mt 18:15) recommended by our Constitutions (cf. CC 54-55).



Fraternal correction should never be equated with a settling of accounts. Nor is it a list of grievances, nor an inquiry about the circumstances of a clash of personalities or misunderstanding, nor a way of letting off steam, nor a requirement that the other person should be perfect in my opinion. Far from all of this, fraternal correction is an act of heartfelt acceptance and responsibility for the weakness of the other person, a brave gesture of love in truth. "Conflicts are not overcome by mere force, but by turning hearts towards goodness and truth" (*Benedict XVI*). Let's highlight some of the rules of fraternal correction which may lead to rescue it from its frequent neglect and deferment.

- *When should correction be used?* Never when it is elicited by negative feelings of anger, impatience, resentment, sadness, etc.. Always in a climate of prayer, unhurried and with a gentle hand, considering all the permutations. Avoid prejudice and take advantage of an opportune moment of calmness, on the part of the one who corrects and the one who is being corrected.
- *How should correction take place?* Always "face to face" (*Prov 10:10*) and "in private" (*CC 55*), never in public, nor behind someone's back or anonymously. "With meekness and humility, remembering one's own weakness," as stated by our Constitutions (*CC 55*) and avoiding anything that might be hurtful in our language and tone of voice. "With love" (*2 Thess 3:15*), "excusing their intentions but not excusing their actions" (*CC 16*), always recognizing what is good in the other person (Claret's tactic of the snails) and entrusting the matter to God.

- *What needs to be corrected?* Only major issues: "If we happen to see one of our brothers going astray and committing faults that might harm himself or others" (*CC 55*). Correction should not, therefore, be too frequent or concerned with trivial matters. Be as much aware of global condemnation as of trying to correct several issues at the same time. Only admonish concerning specific issues, not about mere impressions; nor those mistakes that the other has been unable to avoid. Fraternal correction should always look for alternatives.
- *How to accept correction?* "With outward thanks and inner gratitude" (*CC 54*). It should be accepted without becoming self-defensive. If you do not agree with the actions ascribed to you or with the assessment of your actions, then you must ask for clarification. Sometimes, you should consult a third person who is familiar with the situation and is impartial. Then later, after careful deliberation, an appropriate decision can be made by asking God for humility and strength, and by seeking your brothers' understanding and help.



Exercise 7: Community photo

To recapitulate on this section of the booklet, we suggest the following exercise:

1. **With a photo of the current members of your community and in an atmosphere of prayer, ask yourself:**
 - Do you feel responsible for the personal growth of your brothers? Do you support them with truth and love? Why?
 - Do you allow yourself to be challenged and corrected by your brothers? Do they feel comfortable when it comes to correcting you? What are your feelings about it? How can that learning relationship be improved?
 - Do you forgive others? Do you ask for forgiveness? Is there a brother with whom you need to clear up some misunderstanding which separates you and creates an atmosphere of hostility?
2. **Consider the detail of the community project.** Read it carefully and in a spirit of goodwill ... Ask yourself about your basic attitude towards its suggestions. Renew your determination to help build your community by being, at least, faithful to the decisions of the community.

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

The topic of the community meeting in the context of the *Forge in Our Daily Life* will be the “revitalizing memories of our fraternal life in community.”

Order of the meeting

In preparing for the meeting, there should be an announcement of what is going to happen, and the meeting place and its furniture should promote fraternal communication in a relaxed atmosphere.

1. **Greeting and welcome** by the person who presides over or conducts the meeting.

2. Short prayer from Acts 2:42-47:

“They were faithful to the teaching of the apostles, the common life of sharing, the breaking of bread and the prayers. A holy fear came upon all the people, for many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. Now all the believers lived together and shared all their belongings. They would sell their property and all they had and distribute the proceeds to others according to their need. Each day they met together in the Temple area; they broke bread in their homes; they shared their food with great joy and simplicity of heart; they praised God and won the people’s favour. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved”.

3. Motivation – scene setting

4. Talking Points:

The suggested points for discussion revolve around the focal points of community life, as mentioned in the summaries of Acts of the Apostles. **It is to do with relating stories or personal experiences, even though they may be very simple.** Its

value is in the meaning we bestow upon it, and the enrichment that comes from our spiritual heritage. We are not now concerned with an analysis of how we are, but to bring to the conversation our personal memories, in a discussion that aims to include listening to each other and sharing our common story.

a. Experience of fraternity (*Koinonia*): you are invited to remember other Claretians with whom we have lived or known, and who have been important for their ability to create community and promote fraternal relationships. Remembering pleasant and happy moments spent in the Congregation may also be a suitable topic of conversation.

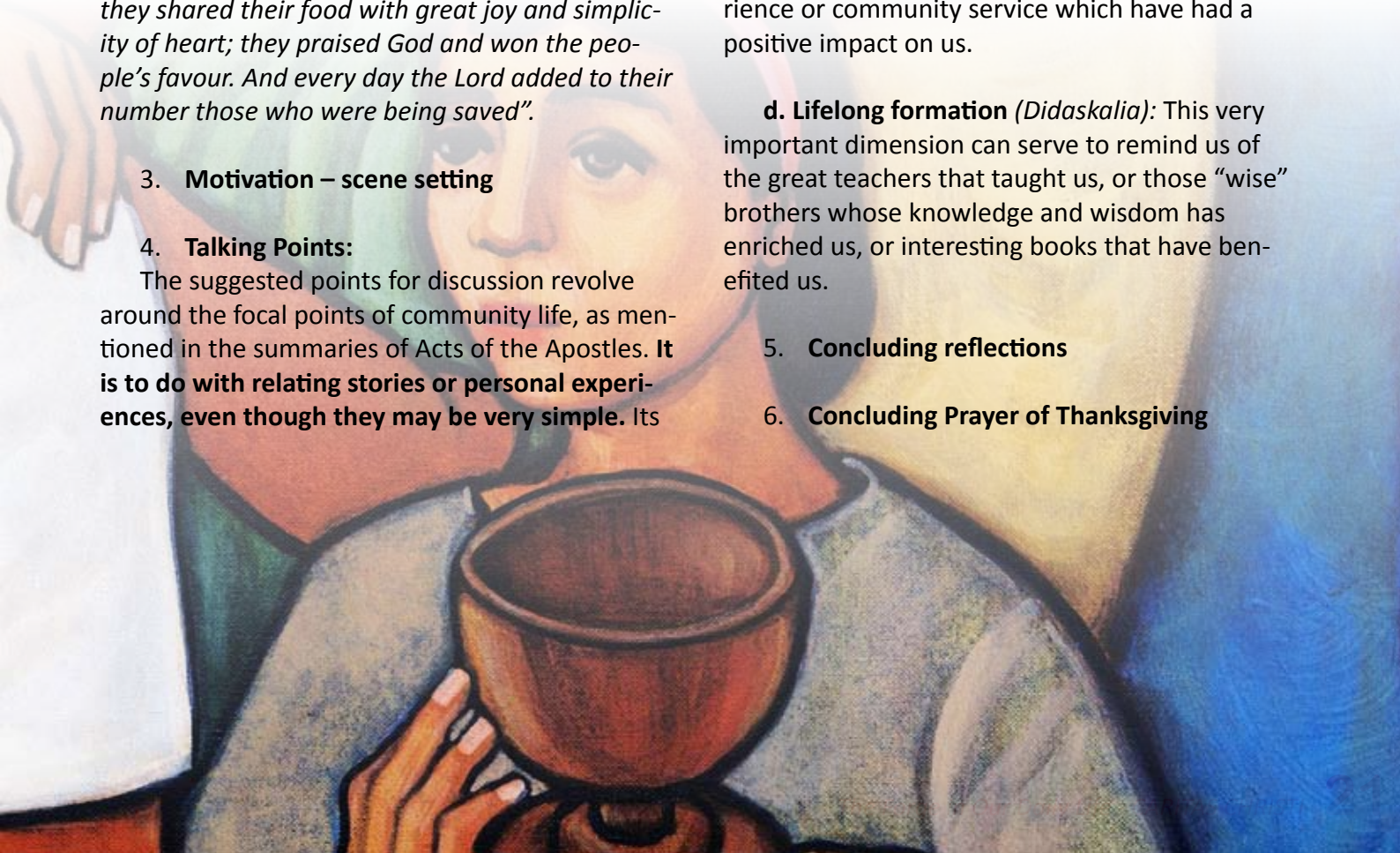
b. Praying together and sacramental celebrations (*Liturgy*). At this point we should recall some deeply moving religious occasions experienced within the community (in Spiritual Exercises, in apostolic activities, in specific celebrations, in periods of formation ...)

c. Ad intra and ad extra community services (*Diaconia*): There are many apostolic stories which, when called to mind and discussed, prove to be of great benefit to us. It is apostolic experience or community service which have had a positive impact on us.

d. Lifelong formation (*Didaskalia*): This very important dimension can serve to remind us of the great teachers that taught us, or those “wise” brothers whose knowledge and wisdom has enriched us, or interesting books that have benefited us.

5. Concluding reflections

6. Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving





4. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

Thursday, August 1, 2013. Memorial of St. Alphonsus of Liguori, Bishop and Doctor (Cal CMF, 257-262)

- Ex 40:14-19, 32-36
 - Psalm 83
 - Mt 13:47-53
- This parable reminds us of the universality of the gift of the Kingdom of God. The opportunity to be a part of this Kingdom of heaven, the possibility of a full life, have both been offered to everyone. The Kingdom of heaven is a valuable gift we have been offered. With this gift, not just any attitude will do, and as a gift, it deserves an appropriate response, it requires a positive attitude of acceptance.

Friday, August 2, 2013

- Lev 23:1, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 34b-37
 - Psalm 80
 - Mt 13:54-58
- Listening to the words of wisdom that came from the mouth of Jesus, the people were amazed and asked - "Where does this wisdom, and the miracles he performs, come from"? People did not expect such feats from the son of a carpenter. So too with us today. How easy it is to judge by appearance, but how misleading this can be. In today's world, your name or origin carries more weight than what you are or do. We fall into the same error as always "Can something good come out of there?" But if we open our hearts, we will realize that within each of us, no matter how stupid or incompetent we may seem, there hides a wisdom that can enrich us.

Saturday, August 3, 2013

- Lev 25:1, 8-17
 - Psalm 66
 - Mt 14:1-12
- There is a Herod in each of us; that's why it hurts when the truth does not correspond with what we want to hear. We declare war on those who dare to tell us the truth. We all love to be flattered. Pride and a false understanding of personal honour make us defend ourselves, tooth and nail, when we are criticized. The Herod in us does not let us do an examination of conscience to see the truth in the criticism. When we are unable to accept criticism, we lose an opportunity for personal growth. It is a sign of maturity to listen calmly to what others have to say, even if it hurts.

Sunday, August 4, 2013. 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Is 55:1-3
 - Psalm 144
 - Rom 8:35, 37-39
 - Lk 12:13-21
- If your life depended on the wealth that you had, what would become of the poor! Our life depends on God, and material possessions are only of importance when they allow us to give ourselves to God. Therefore, when material possessions divert us from the source of our life that is God himself, they stop fulfilling their role and they become the god of our lives. Woe to him who amasses wealth for himself and is not rich in the eyes of God – as the Gospel warns us.

Monday, August 5, 2013

- Num 11:4b-15
 - Psalm 80
 - Mt 14:13-21
- How were the disciples going to react when, with only five loaves and two fishes, the crowd would have more than enough to eat? Human logic would have dictated that it would be more convenient to send the crowd off to look for their own food in the villages. But Jesus taught them an unforgettable lesson: when you share what you have, God takes care of how far it will stretch. No matter how great the world's suffering, we can always do something to relieve it, and God will do the rest.

Tuesday, August 6, 2013. Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

- Dan 7:9-10.13-14
 - Psalm 96
 - 2 Pt 1:16-19
 - Lk 9:28b-36
- In the presence of God's glory, man feels himself to be poor and empty, he recognizes that he is nothing. But God's answer to human misery has been to share it out in order to re-clothe us in his own glory. So, man created in the image and likeness of God becomes the glory of God here on earth. The Transfiguration of Jesus in front of Peter, James and John is a revelation of what awaits those who do not withdraw from being their true selves: the image and likeness of God. By allowing these three apostles to be eyewitnesses of his glory, Jesus wanted us to have a faint glimpse of what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no mind has conceived: what we will become when we listen to the beloved Son of God.

Wednesday, August 7, 2013

- Num 13:2-3a.26-14.1.26-30.34-35
 - Psalm 105
 - Mt 15:21-28
- What a difficult response Jesus gives the poor woman! Who hasn't sometimes felt disappointed after praying at length to God for a specific need? The Canaanite woman teaches us what persistent faith can achieve. She has humility and meekness, and she kneels before the Lord and begs. We have to understand that true faith does not rely on favours received from God, but on the person of Jesus. Therefore, we must persevere in prayer even when we do not hear anything in reply. A mature faith is not rocked by God's silence.

Thursday, August 8, 2013. Memorial of St. Dominic, Priest and Founder

- Num 20:1-13
 - Psalm 94
 - Mt 16:13-23
- Jesus' question in the Gospel has two levels of understanding. The first is impersonal, "Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?". Here anyone can answer; there is no need for a personal knowledge of Jesus in order to respond to him. It's enough to have read a book on Christology or to have seen a film about Jesus to know what people think of him. We are talking about giving a considered, heeded response. As expected, the disciples repeated like parrots what they had heard. But Jesus did not want his popularity amongst the people to be the measuring stick, and so he comes down to a personal level. "And you: who do you say I am?" Now he asks them a question you can only ask of a friend whom you trust; a question that requires personal knowledge of Jesus. What others say is of no importance. Who am I to you? Do you know me?

Friday, August 9, 2013. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Virgen and Martyr, Co-patroness of Europe

- Nah 1, 15;2,2; 3,1-3.6-7
 - Psalm (Dt 32)
 - Mt 16:24-28
- The Gospel of Christ and his message of happiness comes through the cross, the cross of Christ. However, the invitation of Christ to bear that cross does not mean making suffering the focal point of our loyalty to him, but to prevent suffering from separating us from Him. We must avoid the unnecessary "crosses" that we sometimes impose on ourselves. And above all, we must not be a cross for our brothers to bear. Let us distinguish between the cross of Christ and the useless and harmful "crosses" that are generated by our own sins or by our own imperfect way of life. The invitation to take up our cross in pursuit of Christ means to eliminate these unnecessary sufferings if we want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Saturday, August 10, 2013. Feast of St. Lawrence, Deacon and Martyr

- Dt 6:4-13
 - Psalm 17
 - Mt 17:14-19
- Nothing is impossible for one who has faith because he sees reality through the eyes of Christ. Faith gives us inner peace, a peace that arises from the awareness that he, who is infinite power, holds everything in His loving hands, and it is he who carries it all towards the ultimate goal, with his great wisdom and love. Faith gives us a sense of security and peace, and the conviction that God's love embraces us always. With this conviction, the man of faith moves forward in humanly impossible situations.

Sunday, August 11, 2013. 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Ws 18:6-9
 - Psalm 32
 - Heb 11:1-2.8-19
 - Lk 12:32-48
- Always be prepared and vigilant, that is the attitude of a follower of Christ, because we know neither the day nor the hour. The Lord can knock at our door when we least expect it, but if we are prepared, there is nothing to fear. We shouldn't have to be worried about the hour, but engaged in the things of the Lord, and he will find us worthy and blameless when our time comes.

Monday, August 12, 2013

- Dt 10:12-22
- Psalm 147
- Mt 17:21-26

Paying taxes is a way of contributing to the common good of the country. Of course, our religious vocation does not relieve us of our civic responsibilities. However, beyond taxes, there are many other ways to contribute to the common good of society, such as fighting for justice, sowing seeds of love, etc.

Tuesday, August 13, 2013. Memorial of the Blessed Martyrs of Barbastro (Cal CMF 263,270)

- Dt 31:1-8
- Psalm (Dt 32:3-4a.7-9.12)
- Mt 18:1-5.10.12-14

Jesus has made it clear. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; whereas he who humbles himself will be exalted. God has other criteria that are not like ours. Only the humble are great in the eyes of God and, therefore, they will be great in the kingdom of heaven. This teaching of Christ strikes at the heart of the false order of the world's wisdom. Jesus' logic - "become like a child in order to be great" - does not fit in with our logic and clashes with the way the world thinks, and this challenges a global culture dominated by the struggle for power and prestige.

Wednesday, August 14, 2013. St. Maximilian Kolbe, Martyr. Br. Saperas and others (Cal CMF, 271-282)

- Dt 34:1-12
- Psalm 65
- Mt 18:15-20

Forgiveness is a reflection of divine mercy. To forgive is to share with others the grace of forgiveness which we have received from God. Just as God forgives us, we must do the same for others. Forgiveness is divine, but it is also human. So we must avoid two mistakes: reducing forgiveness merely to a form of human behaviour or seeing it as an act of God alone. Forgiveness is an expression of love in its purest form. Forgiveness is a powerful weapon against evil. Only if I am able to forgive people who have hurt me, will I be able to melt the block of ice of my feelings of hate, and only then will I be able to turn a little bit of evil into good. Without forgiveness, evil multiplies rapidly like a cancerous tumor.

Thursday, August 15, 2013. Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- Rev 11:19a; 12, 1.3-6a.10
- Psalm 44
- 1 Cor 15:20-27a
- Lk 1:39-56

To celebrate the feast of the Assumption is to celebrate the joy of Mary: Blessed are you, for having believed. This expression addressed to Mary by Elizabeth shows us the blessing given to those who believe. He who carries out God's plan will be blessed and happy. The naked and unconditional faith that leads us to trust completely in God makes us happy. Mary, blessed for having believed, is an anthropological figure of man's calling to happiness.

Friday, August 16, 2013

- Josh 24:1-13
- Psalm (Is 12:2-3.4bcd-6)
- Mt 19:3-12

We Claretians have accepted the gift of chastity for the Kingdom of Heaven, in imitation of Christ. Our Constitutions remind us that we embrace chastity as a gift in order to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the things of the Father. The chastity we acknowledge promotes a new fraternal communion in Christ and builds a community that is founded, not on flesh and blood, but on the will of God.

Saturday, August 17, 2013. Br. Pedro Marcer (Cal CMF 283-288)

- Josh 24:24-29
- Psalm 15
- Mt 19:13-15

The disciples in the Gospel tried to prevent the children from getting near Jesus so as not to disturb the Master. Jesus said to them: "Let the children come to me." There are many ways of preventing children from coming to Christ. Our gestures, words, attitudes, etc., may also dissuade children from coming to Christ. Elsewhere Jesus has already warned us with these harsh words: "If anyone harms one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to tie a millstone around his neck and jump into the sea" (Mt 18:6).

Sunday, August 18, 2013. 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Fr. Schweiger (Cal CMF 289-294)

- Jer 38:4-6.8-10
- Psalm 39
- Heb 12:1-4
- Lk 12:49-53

The message Jesus brought to us is the Good News for those who accept it. Some experience the Good News as if it were a threat, hence, in some places and situations, the message of Jesus is harshly rejected. And there are those who, because they accept the Good News of Jesus, find themselves discriminated against, their rights violated and even rejected by their own people. In these cases we literally see the fulfillment of the Gospel today.

Monday, August 19 2013

- Jgs 2:11-19
- Psalm 105
- Mt 19:16-22

As religious, we may think that today's Gospel is a statement of what we have already done: sell everything to go with the Master. Or in much the same way, leave everything to answer our missionary calling. However, an honest and sincere reflection will reveal that despite our yes to the call of Jesus, we still have much to get rid of in order to be totally free to follow the Master. Maybe we are not dealing with money or material things. They may be habits, attitudes and so on, which encourage us to follow Christ. Whatever the case, today Jesus reminds us: if you want to make a total commitment, get rid of the shackles and come with me.

Tuesday, August 20, 2013. Memorial of St. Bernard, Abbot and Doctor of the Church

- Jgs 6,:1-24a
- Psalm 84
- Mt 19:23-30

If Jesus calls us to get rid of everything to follow him, it does not mean that riches are bad or that we have to cut our family ties as a condition of following Christ. What happens is that Christ does not want a half-hearted follower who is only lukewarm. When you say yes to Christ, He should become the only absolute in your life; from Christ's point of view, everything else is of minor importance; which means that "nobody who puts his hands to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Wednesday, August 21, 2013. Memorial of St. Pius X, Pope

- Ez 34:1-11
- Psalm 22
- Mt 20:1-16a

We live in a hierarchical world: there are poor and rich, first world and third world. There are ranks of social and religious order: those who preside over others and those who simply participate. But God has other criteria, and according to these criteria many of those who are now at the top, will be at the bottom. The justice of God goes beyond our own system of justice.

Thursday, August 22, 2013. Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- Jgs 11:9-39a
- Psalm 39
- Mt 22:1-14

The kingdom of heaven is not the privilege of a few, it is a gift that God makes to the whole world. However, it has to be received properly. This acceptance brings responsibility upon each one of us personally. Objectively, God has given everyone the same chance to enter his kingdom, but subjectively we must realize that it is only a possibility. The least we can do is "dress ourselves" properly. The hardest thing has already been done by God through his Son Jesus.

Friday, August 23, 2013. St. Rose of Lima, Virgin (Cal CMF, 295-299)

- Ruth 1:1.3-6.14b-16.22
- Psalm 145
- Mt 22:34-40

There is probably no other word that is used and abused as much as the word love. Sometimes this word is used merely as an empty formula. Love is a divine quality; only through the love of God can we truly love others. He who truly loves becomes a channel for divine love to reach others.

Saturday, August 24, 2013. Feast of St. Bartholomew, Apostle (Cal CMF 301-304)

- Rev 21:9b-14
- Psalm 144
- Jn 1:45-51

"We have found the one that Moses wrote about in the law and the prophets," says Philip. The meeting is his first step in following Christ. To follow Christ, you must first meet up with him. Before deciding to follow, there is a decisive moment or moments that prompt us to follow. We only follow someone we know; we don't follow a stranger. So to follow someone, we must get to know him, and to know him we must find a way of meeting him first. Christian life is an encounter with Christ.

Sunday, August 25, 2013. 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cal CMF 305-310)

- Is 66:18-21
- Psalm 116
- Acts 12:5-7.11-13
- Lk 13:22-30

This gospel is a real wake-up call: you can drink and dine with the Lord without having any personal relationship with Him. Salvation is no-one's prerogative; salvation is a result of having listened to the Lord maturely and having lived according to what you have heard. The call to religious practices will be of no use if it is not accompanied by the undeniable truth in the final judgement: the love we have for others, especially for those in need.

Monday, August 26, 2013. Great grace received by Claret in 1861 (Cal CMF, 311-317)

- 1 Thes 1:1-5,8b-10
 - Psalm 149
 - Mt 23:13-22
- Wise people will recognize where to put their priority in life and what to minimize. This gospel is critical of bigotry, especially religious bigotry. Religious bigotry makes people blind so they become unable to understand the signs of the times, and therefore unable to respond to the needs of people according to their circumstances. The bigot is often intransigent and unable to share in dialogue. His favourite phrase is: "We must fulfill the law."

Tuesday, August 27, 2013. Memorial of St. Monica

- 1 Thes 2:1-8
 - Psalm 138
 - Mt 23:23-26
- Jesus continues his criticism of bigotry and fundamentalism. Jesus' criticism in the Gospel is an invitation to go beyond the letter of the law, in order to understand the spirit of the law, an invitation not to worry so much about compliance with what is established as to understand why it was established in the first place. What is the point of fulfilling the law if the fulfillment does not produce the required effect? Therefore, what is more important is our attitude and inner willingness to obey rather than simply fulfilling the law. Let's not be hypocrites in our compliance with what has been established.

Wednesday, August 28, 2013. Memorial of St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- 1 Thes 2:9-13
 - Psalm 138
 - Mt 23:27-32
- Fanatical compliance does not produce a change of attitude; it does not lead to either human or spiritual growth. So when someone strives to be compliant without careful forethought, he usually puts on a respectable appearance, while his life behind the scenes is far from what it seems. He leads a corrupt life on the inside, but on the outside everything seems perfect. The bigot is more concerned with appearances than with reality; that is why he spends his life pretending, giving the impression of what he really is not.

Thursday, August 29, 2013. Memorial of the Martyrdom of John the Baptist

- 1 Thes 3:7-13
 - Psalm 89
 - Mt 24:42-51
- The Christian must always be prepared not to be caught unawares. As Claretians, we can not afford to neglect the task the Lord has entrusted to us, because He will hold us accountable for how we have worked. We have the responsibility of feeding the people with the Word of God. We must be careful servants, busying ourselves with our allotted tasks and conducting ourselves as faithful servants in the vineyard of the Lord, so that when the Lord of the vineyard comes, he will find us awake.

Friday, August 30, 2013

- 1 Thes 4:1-8
 - Psalm 96
 - Mt 25:1-13
- This parable tells us that at the end of time, the criterion of judgment will not be whether we belonged to the group of wedding guests, but the wisdom and fidelity shown during our wait for the Bridegroom. The parable teaches us what the fundamental conditions should be, which the Christian disciple should demonstrate while waiting for the Lord. This is true Christian wisdom. It is not enough to belong to the group of those who are waiting for the Lord. The decisive factor is loyalty and obedience to His Word during the time of waiting; that means having the lamp filled with oil. The fact that the wise virgins did not ultimately share their oil with the others does not imply a selfish act, but it is a detail that emphasizes the dimension of personal responsibility when dealing with the word of Jesus. Be prepared, "with lighted lamps", means to be faithful to the Father's will each day.

Saturday, August 31, 2013

- 1 Cor 1:26-31
 - Psalm 32
 - Mt 25:14-30
- We have all received various gifts from God. Our talents are for the common good. Our talents will grow to the extent that we use them for the common good. Each gift received brings with it responsibility, God does not endow us with talents for them to be hidden, but to be put to good use. We've all received some talent to be used for the good of the community. All that we are and all that we have, we have received from God. We are mere administrators and the Lord will make us accountable for the talents we have received. On the day of judgement, the number of talents will not matter. What will matter is whether we have been faithful in the use of those talents.

Sunday, September 1, 2013. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Sir 3:17-18
 - Psalm 67
 - Heb 12:18-19,22
 - Lk 14:1,7-14
- We must do good selflessly. The person who only helps others when motivated by personal gain is selfish. Maybe it is not material gain that is sought, but praise and other compensation for their actions. Jesus invites us to be so selfless as not to expect anything in exchange for our help. Everything we do for others should not be motivated by any personal interest, but be done out of pure love for our neighbour.

Monday, September 2, 2013

- 1 Thes 4:13-18
- Psalm 95
- Lk 4:16-30

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises. Jesus himself is the Good News of God the Father. The humble, simple people were astonished at the gracious words which proceeded from the mouth of Jesus. What attracted their attention was that he talked to them about God as if he were very close; so close that even the most humble people could understand him. Jesus was bringing the Good News of the Gospel to the most humble and the poor, and they welcomed it with open arms. Those who believed they were experts, and understood the law, did not accept Jesus. Humility makes us attentive to the word of God.

Tuesday, September 3, 2013. Memorial of St. Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church

- 1 Thes 5:1-6.9-11
- Psalm 26
- Lk 4:31-37

The people admired Jesus because he spoke with authority. That is to say, his words had impact; they were words full of life. But more than that, what Jesus was saying was fulfilled; God acted through his words. Jesus' words were not empty words. He did not intend to impress his audience with long speeches, but to convey the liberating presence of God through his words and actions. Through these same words, Jesus healed the sick and freed the possessed.

Wednesday, September 4, 2013

- Col 1:1-8
- Psalm 51
- Lk 4:38-44

Jesus is already at the height of his public ministry. We see him preaching in the synagogue, healing the sick, etc.. Today he heals Peter's mother of her fever. As you would expect, Jesus' goodness elicits the admiration of the people; they want to keep hold of him, they want him to stay with them, they praise him, Jesus becomes famous. But he is not distracted from his mission. He does not let fame or personal success truncate the Father's plan. Jesus becomes an example to us missionaries; I must also take the Good News of the Kingdom of God to all the other cities. He feels compelled to go where he is needed and not simply seek his own satisfaction. In short, in the Gospel today, Jesus has given us an example of what it is to be available.

Thursday, September 5, 2013. Fr. Mateo Casals and Companions, Martyrs (*Cal CMF 321-327*)

- Col 1:9-14
- Psalm 97
- Lk 5:1-11

"Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will lower the nets." These were Peter's words, a man who has spent all night fishing without results, but who knew the importance of listening to the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord that is heard and acted upon will bring positive changes to our lives, because it gives meaning to our efforts and work. Don't get discouraged when things don't happen straight away, or you've tried many times. You have to row out to sea without being discouraged, but above all, you have to pay close attention in order to hear what God's word asks of us. Hopefully, like Peter, we will act only from and through the word of the Lord.

Friday, September 6, 2013

- Col 1:15-20
- Psalm 99
- Lk 5:33-39

Some things do not go together: New wine, new wineskins! Simply put, there are lifestyles that do not go with the Christian faith. There are lifestyles that are incompatible with our Claretian life. Through baptism we are the new creation, the old has passed. Our Claretian vocation calls us to intensify our experience of this new life in Christ. Living the new life in Christ excludes other "lives" that symbolize the old man.

Saturday, September 7, 2013

- Col 1:21-23
- Psalm 53
- Lk 6:1-5

Jesus invites us to reflect on two very different ways of understanding morality: ritualistic observance of the law and the evangelical experience of the law. The Pharisees in those days (and those of today as well) were always more concerned about external appearances. For Christ is not so concerned about the fulfillment of ritual as much as purity of heart.

Sunday, September 8, 2013. 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Wis 9:3-18
- Psalm 89
- Phlm 9b-10.12-17
- Lk 14:25-33

It's not enough simply to carry the cross; the new Christian way is to carry it like Christ, to follow him. Carrying the cross, then, is not a stoic acceptance of adversity, but the attitude of one who wants to follow Christ in spite of suffering. On the cross Jesus teaches us to suffer and to die in a different way, not in a state of dejection, but in a state of attachment to a cause full of hope.

Monday, September 9, 2013

- Col 1:24-2,3
 - Psalm 61
 - Lk 6:6-11
- The Pharisees and the lawyers do not want to see Jesus because his success will overshadow them. Jesus continues preaching and healing the sick. People admire the words that come out of his mouth. The admiration enjoyed by Jesus instills envy and hatred in the Pharisees and lawyers; they spy on him to have something against Him. But Jesus continues in his good work untroubled by fear. Today he heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath because the goodness and mercy of God does not recognize days or hours. God's love is unconditional; it can not be hemmed in by human laws. Jesus teaches us that whoever is motivated by the desire to do good, can not be just concerned by the letter of the law.

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

- Col 2:6-15
 - Psalm 144
 - Lk 6:12-19
- Even Jesus felt the need to pray and he spent hours in prayer. The Bible has several texts in which we are told about the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus spent many hours preaching and healing the sick, but he also knew when to withdraw, to reconnect with his source. If we don't want to be left empty, with nothing to offer others, we need to be like Jesus and know when to withdraw, to be fed by the word of God. A long period of prayer can transform us into true disciples. In prayer we learn what we have to say and how we must say it.

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

- Col 3:1-11
 - Psalm 144
 - Lk 6:20-26
- The Beatitudes pronounced by Jesus turn everything upside down. Blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the poor, blessed are the hungry, and blessed are the persecuted. The Beatitudes clash with the anti-beatitudes of our world. It is a revolution of the normal principles of happiness. The Beatitudes are God's answer to those whom the world has denied happiness. Jesus shows us where true happiness lies. Living the Beatitudes brings us closer to, and makes us more like, Christ.

Thursday, September 12, 2013

- Col 3:12-17
 - Psalm 150
 - Lk 6:27-38
- Today's Gospel may be misunderstood as a call to be passive in the face of evil. Nothing is further from the truth. This teaching of Christ is a practical interpretation of what Christian love is. We must confront evil, but from a position of love. Evil cannot be banished by evil, it simply multiplies. Addressing violence with violence only generates a spiral of violence. Love softens even the hardest heart; so to conquer the enemy you have to love him; more than this, you should not judge anyone, but just love him and win him over as a friend.

Friday, September 13, 2013. Memorial of St. John Chrysostom, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- 1 Tim 1:1-2,12-14
 - Psalm 15
 - Lk 6:39-42
- Through personal pride, minor faults that affect others are blown out of proportion; whereas, by contrast, more grievous personal faults tend to be played down and justified. Furthermore, pride tends to project onto others what, in reality, are imperfections and errors in oneself. These words of St. Augustine are very illuminating here: "Try to acquire the virtues that you think are missing amongst your brothers, then you will no longer see their flaws, because you will not have them."

Saturday, September 14, 2013. Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

- Num 21:4b-9
 - Psalm 77
 - Phil 2:6-11
 - Jn 3:13-17
- Jesus accepts the cross to be consistent with the purpose of his mission. He accepts the cross because he does not want to deny himself, nor deny the Father who, out of love for the world, has sent him for the good of our salvation. By taking up the cross, Christ simultaneously confronts the evil that comes with the cross and he destroys it with the power of love. So for the Christian the cross immediately ceases to be a symbol of evil and suffering, and becomes a symbol of love and triumph. On the cross, Christ teaches us that when you confront unavoidable suffering from the standpoint of love, it loses its power. On the cross Christ teaches us that nothing, and no one, should distance themselves from the will of the Father.

Sunday, September 15, 2013. 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Ex 32:7-11,13-14
 - Psalm 50
 - 1 Tim 1:12-17
 - Lk 15:1-32
- God is a merciful Father who forgives without counting the cost. Each one of us is unique in the eyes of God and He loves each one of us as if the others did not exist. Therefore, God is delighted when a sinner comes home. No sin can change the love of God for each one of us. All you need to do is think things over and return home to the Father and He, with the tenderness of a Father, will welcome you back with a warm embrace.

Monday, September 16, 2013. Memorial of St. Cornelius, pope, and St. Cyprian, bishop, martyrs

- 1 Tim 2:1-8
 - Psalm 27
 - Lk 7:1-10
- While it is certainly true that doubt is a human trait that dogs our heels in our life of faith, nevertheless, faith in Jesus in no way endorses the doubt felt by the insecure, hesitant person. It is essential to maintain complete trust in our relationship with Jesus. The man of faith leans on God with a selfless surrender. To lean on Christ and to abandon ourselves totally to him, are expressions of the confidence that we have in him. A prayer said out of distrust cannot be effective. A prayer arising from a trusting faith, like the one made by the centurion, can not fail to be effective.

Tuesday, September 17, 2013

- 1 Tim 3:1-13
 - Psalm 100
 - Lk 7:11-17
- The people of Nain, when they recognized Jesus, would have missed out on something really important if they had only viewed him as a prophet, even though a great prophet. God has now visited his people! That's right. Jesus is not only a great prophet; he is Emmanuel, God-with-us. Through his words and actions God visits his people. May we recognize the presence of God through the small ordinary experiences of life.

Wednesday, September 18, 2013

- 1 Tim 3:14-16
 - Psalm 110
 - Lk 7:31-35
- Who has not had the experience of being totally misunderstood? Living in a community, such an experience may have its own story to tell. Needless to say such an experience will not be a pleasant one. If you do not like being criticized unfairly, don't do the same to others. Nothing is gained simply by complaining, or bearing a lasting grudge towards our brothers.

Thursday, September 19, 2013

- 1 Tim 4:12-16
 - Psalm 110
 - Lk 7:36-50
- It is easy to misunderstand this text from the Gospel. I think the key is to understand Jesus' question to Simon and then the latter's reply. He who is forgiven a lot, loves a lot. The gesture of love shown by the woman is the outward expression of what she felt inside: to have been accepted and forgiven by Jesus. Because much has been forgiven of her, she can love much; and God's forgiveness is free and unconditional. We simply have to recognize the great need we have of this forgiveness and welcome it. And the least we can do in appreciation of how much God forgives us, is to love him and forgive others, as He forgives us.

Friday, September 20, 2013. Sts. Andrew Kim, Paul Chong and Companions, Martyrs

- 1 Tim 6:2c-12
 - Psalm 48
 - Lk 8:1-3
- Those seeking riches, as the first reading tells us, become entangled in a thousand temptations, and create absurd and harmful needs for themselves. To be a Claretian means to live free from the bonds of wealth and greed. We cannot go creating unreasonable needs for ourselves in order to justify a lifestyle that has little or nothing to do with the Claretian charism. We have been called to eternal life and for that reason we have made our profession before several witnesses. So, let's practise justice, love and gentleness, fighting the good fight of our faith.

Saturday, September 21, 2013. Feast of St. Mathew, Apostle and Evangelist (Cal CMF, 329-334)

- Eph 4:1-7.11-13
 - Psalm 18
 - Mt 9:9-13
- The fact that Jesus called Matthew, who did not enjoy a good reputation because of being a tax collector, shows us that God does not call us on our own merits. Every vocation is a free gift that God gives to whom He will, giving him the help he needs to fulfill the mission entrusted to him. God has been the one who has noticed us, giving us the free gift of a vocation to be a Claretian Missionary. We must gratefully accept this gift and strive to nurture it, and live like those who are called by Christ.

Sunday, September 22, 2013. 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cal CMF, 335-339)

- Am 8:4-7
 - Psalm 112
 - 1 Tim 2:1-8
 - Lk 16:1-13
- No servant can serve two masters, for he will hate one and love the other, or he will be faithful to the first and despise the second. You can not serve God and other powers at the same time. Only if God becomes your only treasure, can you serve him with all your heart, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. When someone has decided to serve God, everything else becomes of minor importance. And we serve God wherever we find ourselves, through whatever tasks have been entrusted to us, no matter how insignificant they may appear. For only he who is faithful in little things, can be likewise in big things.

Monday, September 23, 2013

- Esd 1:1-6
- Psalm 125
- Lk 8:16-18

The Christian is an illuminated lamp that should light up his surrounds. A Christian, who does not shine forth, is like an illuminated lamp that is covered or placed under a bed. As such, a lamp loses its purpose and does not merit being called a light. So it is with Christians. The Christian is not a Christian by name but by how he lives. The Christian should shine forth through his good deeds, like an illuminated lamp placed on a lamp stand so that those around him can see the light.

Tuesday, September 24, 2013

- Esd 6:7-8.12b
- Psalm 121
- Lk 8:19-21

Jesus put great store on family relationships; nevertheless, by his answer he wanted it to be clear that the new family he wants to establish is not based on the bonds of blood kinship. Its foundation is much deeper, much more radical. Anyone who allows himself to be guided by the Word of God becomes a member of this new family of God, regardless of race, language or nation. This is where you will find the spirit of the Claretian family, a family that knows no boundaries.

Wednesday, September 25, 2013

- Esd 9:5-9
- (Tob 13:2.5-8)
- Lk 9:1-6

Jesus sends out the Twelve and commands them not to take anything with them; which means he invites them to trust in the providence of God which will be manifested by the people who will give them shelter and food. Today the missionary has everything he needs, maybe even things he does not need; perhaps that's why we don't really know what the providence of God is. These days, we rarely talk about the providence of God amongst ourselves. However, those who are genuinely poor do know what the providence of God is because they live and survive through it.

Thursday, September 26, 2013

- Hag 1:1-8
- Psalm 149
- Lk 9:7-9

The persuasive words pronounced by Jesus, and his good works, stirred the admiration of many people. One sector of society did not look kindly upon Jesus because they felt threatened by his preaching. So, not everyone who wanted to know Jesus had honest intentions. Herod was one of them, and he wanted to see Jesus, not to follow him, but to destroy him once and for all. It is useless expressing an interest in Jesus if you don't follow him. Those who are merely curious onlookers will be left dissatisfied and frustrated.

Friday, September 27, 2013. Memorial of St. Vincent de Paul. Fr. Manuel Vilaró (Cal CMF, 341-346)

- Hag 2:1-9
- Psalm 42
- Lk 9:18-22

But who do you say I am? This is a question that demands that we know Jesus personally, and not merely be interested in Him. Many speak of faith and religious issues without, in the eyes of God, personally adopting a responsible attitude. This personal response to Jesus Christ is the most important and decisive step in the life of every believer. One answer takes on special meaning when it moves from saying "it is said" to saying "I say". In my faith, what really counts is what I say about Jesus. When I pronounce "I say ...", I am accepting the consequences of that decision.

Saturday, September 28, 2013

- Am 6:1a.4-7
- Psalm 145
- 1 Tim 6:11-16
- Lk 16:19-31

Several biblical texts, like the first reading of today's Eucharist, talk to us of celestial beings and their role as God's allies. Sometimes they act as intermediaries between man and God. They take the Good News of God to men and watch over their wellbeing. Perhaps we can begin to understand our own vocation by observing the angels': intercede on behalf of our brothers before God, watch over their wellbeing, especially the homeless. In short, haven't we been called to be God's allies?

Sunday, September 29, 2013. 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Am 8:4-7
- Psalm 112
- 1 Tim 2:1-8
- Lk 16:1-13

The scene here described by the Gospel is not a fairy tale, but a reality which many of the poor among us have to endure. Without denying people's spirit of solidarity, however, the rich do become richer, and more so at the expense of the poor. The global economic structure is such that it does not favour the equitable division of property in the world, and engenders many poor people who would be happy to eat the leftovers from the tables of the rich, if they were allowed to. As far as we are able, we must alleviate the suffering of so many poor people around us. Our vow of poverty must manifest itself as an indictment of the economic injustices suffered by the majority of the population.

- Zec 8:1-8
- Psalm 101
- Lk 9:46-50

Even Christ's disciples wanted power, everyone wanted to be the greatest. They hadn't yet understood the message. The greatness of Jesus before God is measured by different criteria. True greatness is in serving others and not being served by others. Therefore, the positions that men consider to be great are, according to Jesus, opportunities for serving others. It is only through service and humility that we can become truly great, can be "the first". That is the true path of greatness and glory.



5. Textos for reflection

Appendix 1: Heritage and Prophecy (Fr. Aquilino Bocos, cmf)

Walking together in the great areas

70. The origin of our Congregation is marked by communion and mission. Communion with Christ and with the people; fraternal communion and ecclesial communion; communion in the apostolic spirit and in the facts of life and work; and always communion for mission, the beginning and end of our reason for being in the Church. From this communion springs our collaboration with the Shepherds of the Church in the missionary service of the Word. Vatican II insisted that the People of God are walking as pilgrims toward their eschatological goal. It allowed them to see that itinerancy and walking together are proper of them. It took on a “synodal” behavior. Since the celebration of the Council nine Church Synods have already been held. The last three have highlighted, under the same ecclesiological heading of mystery, communion and mission, the identities of the lay, priestly and consecrated life. Their guidelines have provided “a more articulated and complete image of the Church, while at the same time making it easier to respond to the great challenges of our time with a choral contribution of its gifts.” More recently the Synods have presented the diverse faces of the Church in Africa, America and Asia, and will next present the faces of the Church in Oceania and Europe. This manifold ecclesial experience can serve as a paradigm for the Congregation.

71. Some years ago the Congregation proposed to initiate an experience of communion in a diversity of cultural and geographical areas. In the plurality of expressions of our missionary service of the Word --always understood as a way of being, acting and signifying-- we want our missionary communion to be felt throughout the Congregation. We felt that our different ways of expression and operative commitments were a treasure for everyone by way of a mutual questioning and a spur to co-responsibility. Now the shared life and reflection that is going on in the different continental Synods encourages us to continue the process we have begun in the Congregation. It would be profitable for us to keep on intensifying our work in these fields: 1) Fostering the spirit of ecclesial communion which is endowed today with a special prophetic accent through dialogue, collaboration and co-responsibility. 2) To grow more deeply in the two notes involved in “traveling a road together” (which is what ‘synod’ means), namely, itinerancy and sharing which are counterpoints to immobilism and selfishness. 3) To design some lines on we can live the missionary charism of Claret in our diverse contexts, maintaining both unity and pluralism. The Conferences of Major Superiors would have to establish a program for acting in this sense. 4) To reinforce, in this “walking together,” collaboration with Bishops, priests and religious, and above all with the laity. All of this would help us to enhance in our missionary life, a thrust toward insertion in particular churches and toward inculturation among different peoples. At the same time that we highlight the universal dimension of our evangelizing mission, we must also care for our belonging to a particular Church and our responsibility in the growth of its life and mission.

Spirituality of communion

72. Our world is agitated by many centrifugal and dis-integrating forces. We are becoming accustomed to looking without greater astonishment on the consequences of uncontrolled passions which spring from spurious interests and incomprehensible hatreds. Within the Church we likewise lament the conflicts, disagreements and tensions that we are suffering. There is no lack of groups that ignore, distrust and confront one another. This is one of the great obstacles to evangelization. We, who by our founding charism were born in the Church to collaborate in the announcement of the Gospel and in the transformation of the world, are especially urged to assume the proposal, made to all consecrated persons, to promote the spirituality of communion. This boils down to saying that we must highlight our ecclesial thrust, that is, the interior attitude that leads the Claretian to share all the dynamism of Trinitarian love both toward those inside and outside of the Church. It entails “a new way of thinking, speaking and working that makes the Church grow in depth and breadth. The life of communion will thus be a sign for the world and an attractive force that leads to belief in Christ.” This spirituality should be the natural climate in which the Claretian Missionaries should move. It is not ethical or strategic recommendations, but rather charismatic demands that lead us to the dialogue of charity on all fronts and on all levels, both in the Church and outside the Church. Our source and goal must be ecclesial communion and universal brotherhood. As Claretians we have to collaborate in order that all members of the Church and all people of good will should think, speak and work in harmony for fraternal communion and solidarity among all. Obviously, this demands opening dialogue or reestablishing it wherever it has been interrupted, and only those who have shown themselves to be experienced in communion and in fraternal cooperation will be able to open this dialogue and to persevere in it. Having reached this point, we are probably questioning ourselves on the quality of our communication, participation and co-responsibility in community life; on the interest we give to pastoral programming and teamwork; to the value we give to joint pastoral ministry, to collaboration with the Church’s Shepherds and to the integration of the laity into missionary activities.

Appendix 2: A new family: our Congregación (MFL 37-40)

37. A Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary does not follow Jesus alone but as a member of the Congregation, a new charismatic family raised by the Spirit in the Church (cf. CC 4, 10). Because we are sons we are also brothers, brought together to share the same plan of evangelical life. "The grace which reaches and congregates us" is called to be the "principle that organizes and articulates all our hopes, aspirations and projects" (cf. MCT 126, 133) For this, although we live in a network of multiple belongings (family, social, ecclesial...) our belonging to Christ, expressed in the vocation we share in the Congregation, takes the first place over all.

38. Therefore, we do not join the Congregation through a contract which we are able to rescind at will. We are not part of an association in which we dedicate part of our time and energy. We are a new family in the Spirit which is not based on flesh and blood but on love and in listening to, welcoming, and proclaiming the Word of God (cf. Mt 12:46-50; Jn 15:12). Our new relationship and our community life is symbolized and realized in the Eucharist and is nourished by prayer, family lifestyle, co-responsibility in government and collaboration in the common mission (cf. CC 12-13).

39. The Congregation, as our tradition says, is the "Mother Congregation". Towards her we bear feelings of gratitude, respect, loyalty, and dedication. It is moving to note that "mother" is the title most used by the Martyrs of Barbastro when speaking of the Congregation. In them, like

in an icon, we find gathered all the basic elements which make up our identity: love for Jesus Christ, for the Heart of Mary and the Church, missionary zeal, devotion to the Word and to the Eucharist, a sense of community, a preference for the poor, etc.

40. The Congregation is made up of priests, deacons, brothers, and students sharing the same vocation (cf. CC 7). This diversity of gifts and functions enriches our common life and mission (cf. SW 8; IPM 30) and commits us to promote and nurture all these vocational paths.

41. Today the Congregation has many faces. We have been enriched with brothers from different countries, ethnicities, languages and cultures. The challenge to live in unity amidst diversity can be addressed with hope when we respond faithfully to the gift of love for God and one another, which is the basis of our communion (cf. CC 10). When we enkindle the charismatic fire of our origins we can express and build up the global community of the Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Spirit, who distributes his gifts and unites diversity, will strengthen our ties and bring forth a new body. In this era of globalization and exclusion, of longings for peace and the reality of violence, the Claretian community, in its smallness and fragility, wishes to continue being a living sign of the Kingdom.

Appendix 3: Farewell of the Congregation (Fr. José Xifré)

Last farewell to his beloved Congregation, asking the one who finds this paper to read or to make it read to the community, and insert it in the Annals.

My beloved Congregation: I have loved you as well as I could until the end and I will not forget you in eternity. I have lived only for you, without shunning sacrifices or danger. However, as miserable and very flawed man, not a few times have I offended and scandalized several individuals.

That's all I feel, I deplore ... I beg all your pardon and I hope to get it, as I forgive and love them all in God, as I love myself.

Pray for whom you loved, apply to him a plenary indulgence, and I will thank you.



27. There have been great changes in the consecrated life relating to the theme of community. In the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life's document, "Fraternal life in community", published in 1994, it was stated that "the climate of living together has improved; the active participation of all has been facilitated; we have passed from a life in common, overly based on observance, to a life that is more attentive to the needs of each member and more caring on a human level." Nevertheless, we will all agree that there is still a long way for us to go in order to create the kind of living and life-giving communities that we long for.

28. I will cite the last General Government's diagnosis in its document "That they may have life": "Many of us Claretian Missionaries feel a deep gratitude toward the Congregation as our life-giving environment: we value its people, we appreciate its works and we are moved by its symbols. Nevertheless, the Chapter has detected a considerable degree of dissatisfaction in regard to the development of community life. Dissatisfaction with community leads us to look for other types of belonging or to lock ourselves into our own responsibilities, assuming individualistic and competitive attitudes" (TMHL 49-50). This gave rise to one of the priorities for this sexennium: "Therefore, we choose as a priority to strengthen the community as an environment that fosters life and apostolic commitment" (TMHL 51).

29. It is curious to note the contrast that often exists between the desire for greater depth in community life and the lack of commitment toward it that is sometimes manifested in the very persons who express this desire.

Nevertheless, we have all experienced some intense moments of fraternal life that have helped us to consolidate in our hearts a deep and sincere adherence to the community with which the Lord has gifted us, and to remain firm in our commitment to communion with our brothers. Community is a gift from God, a precious gift from God. In it, each one of us becomes for the other a sacrament of our heavenly Father's infinite love for his children. Moreover, as community, we are a parable of the newness of the Kingdom, a sign of the new relationships that arise between persons when the interests of the Kingdom occupy the center of their lives. In the World Congress on the consecrated life held in 2004, we heard loud and clear the voices of young religious who were asking for greater quality in community relationships. They were expressing a longing that was deeply rooted in the heart of each one of us.

30. How beautiful it is, during visits, to meet with Claretians who feel happy in community and desire the same experience for the rest of their brothers! In his circular letter "Toward a Renewed Missionary Commitment," Fr. Aquilino Bocos invited us to conjugate some verbs in our everyday life: trust, qualify, build, make credible, inculturate, expand and collaborate. He would now have to look for ways of amplifying this dictionary and of learning to conjugate these verbs in "distinct languages" in the midst of a community that is becoming more and more multicultural. In conjugating all of these verbs there is only one subject: "we": a "we" that is a gift and a vocation, a "we" that we have an obligation to care for and deepen, a "we" that we have—and these are two new verbs to add—to "be thankful for" and "celebrate."



Mission

Oratio universalis
Vere Sanctus es, Domine,
...quia per Filium tuum,...
Spiritus Sancti operante virtute,
...populum tibi congregare non desinis,
ut a solis ortu usque ad occasum
oblatio munda offeratur nomini tuo (Eucharistic Prayer III).
Benedicat vos omnipotens Deus... Ite, missa est.

Made up of believers from every tongue, people and nation, the Church is fruit of the mission Jesus entrusted to the Apostles, and is permanently invested with the missionary mandate (cf. *Mt 28:16-20*). “From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 22).

In the universal prayer, the Eucharistic Prayer, and in the prayers for various intentions during the Mass, the intercession of the Church which celebrates the sacred mysteries embraces the whole world – humanity’s joys and sorrows, the sufferings and cries of the poor, and the longings for justice and peace felt in every corner of the globe. The rite of dismissal within the Mass is not simply an announcement that the liturgical action is coming to a close. The blessing preceding the final dismissal, especially in its solemn formulations, reminds us that we leave the Church building with the mandate to testify to the world that we are “Christians”. Pope John Paul II reminds us: “The dismissal at the end of each Mass is a charge given to Christians, inviting them to work for the spread of the Gospel and the imbuing of society with Christian values” (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, 24).

The encounter with Christ is not a talent to be buried, but is meant to bear fruit in both word and work. Evangelization and missionary witness separate like centrifugal forces from their center in the Eucharistic banquet. The mission is to bring Christ into all the different facets of life, of work, and of suffering in a convincing manner, so that the Gospel spirit becomes leaven within history, and the “project” of human relations be marked by solidarity and peace.

How can Christ be announced unless we regularly come to know him in his holy mysteries?

How can we witness to him without first nourishing ourselves at the fount of Eucharistic communion with him?

How can we hope to participate in the Church’s mission, by overcoming our individualism, unless we foster the Eucharistic bond which unites us to every brother and sister in the faith, and in fact to every person?

The Eucharist can justly be called the bread of mission.

The Forge in Our Daily Life

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

Thus we had begun and thus we continued, **living together strictly in community**. All of us were going out regularly to work in the sacred ministry ... My God, may you be blessed for condescending to choose your humble servants to be Sons of the Immaculate Heart of your Mother!” *(Aut 491-492)*