

caritas christi

The Forge

in our daily life



6

Until Christ lives in us

Ordinary Time III

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

"We who have been called to follow the Lord and collaborate with him in the work assigned him by the Father, must keep our gaze fixed on Christ, imitate him, and be so steeped in his spirit that it will no longer be we who live, but Christ who truly lives in us. (CC 39)

"Repentance" (1984), a semi-allegorical movie that critiques Stalinism, ends with a rhetorical question that leaves its audience in deep thought. In its final scene, we see a woman preparing a cake, the same scene with which the movie had opened. An old lady walking along the road comes up to her and asks, "Excuse me, does this road lead to a church?" The woman responds that it is Varlam Street and it does not lead to a church. The old lady then retorts: "Then what do

you need it for? What good is a road if it does not lead to a church?" And she turns back and walks away.

Ever since we entered the portals of the Congregation, we have been on a very long journey. What good is our journey if it does not lead us to Christ? Of what use is our life if we do not become Christ?

Our objective in this *Caritas Christi* phase has been to grow more and more into the likeness of Christ, our soul's Beloved, in our being and in our doing. Our Constitutions want us to conform to Christ to such a degree that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us, just as St. Paul realized in his life on earth (*Gal 2:20*). To this end, we have been reflecting on how to encounter Jesus (*Booklet 1*) and consecrate ourselves to God in him (*Booklet 2*) through our vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity for the sake of the Kingdom (*Booklets 3-5*). We now turn our attention to yet another means to pursue this conformity with Christ—by fixing our gaze on him to learn the virtues that Jesus embodied, and making those apostolic virtues our own.

"Virtue" (Latin, *virtus*; Greek, ἀρετή) refers to a positive and desirable quality or character trait that endows an individual with a certain moral excellence. "Apostolic virtues" are those inspired in us by the Spirit, who conforms us to Christ and forms us into Christ's apostles. By these virtues we imitate Christ and give effective witness to him. Who will help us identify these apostolic virtues? Who else other than our beloved Father Claret! For, becoming Christ was the be-all and end-all of his life. In his autobiography, Claret identifies the virtues that he sought to practice in his life, and recommended to his missionary sons: humility, poverty, meekness, modesty, mortification, obedience, and love of God and neighbor (cf. *Aut 340-453*). We have already meditated on a couple of them in the earlier booklets of this liturgical year. The sixth chapter of our Constitutions gives us a redaction of the apostolic virtues in this order: *zealous love* (40), *humility* (41), *gentle meekness* (42), *mortification* (43), *passion and compassion* (44), and *conformity with Christ in sickness and death* (45).

In this Ordinary Time of the liturgical year,

which spans the entire month of July, we will focus our energies on these six apostolic virtues. As **we celebrate the 164th anniversary of the founding of our Congregation in this month**, we shall strive to make these virtues the foundation of our spiritual and apostolic edifice. We shall seek the intercession of **Our Lady of Mount Carmel** and the apostles whose memories we keep in this season: **Thomas and James, and Mary Magdalene** who was an "apostle to the apostles".

Ordinary Time presents us with ordinary and low-risk opportunities to train ourselves in certain skills before a more demanding, extra-ordinary Solemn Time approaches. A medical intern practices his newly acquired skills in ordinary medical situations so that he can achieve the required level of confidence and dexterity to handle extraordinary medical emergencies.

Similarly, let us learn and practice these apostolic virtues in this Ordinary Time so that we attain enough confidence and dexterity to put them on when the Solemn Seasons of the year, and extraordinary missionary demands, beckon us to imitate and become Christ. Until he lives in us.

Before you begin, **take a look at Exercise 1: Self Appraisal & Goal Setting.**

Exercise 1 : Self Appraisal & Goal Setting

Before you begin the Reflections on the Virtues, take a moment to decide where you stand currently on each of the virtues (column 'b') and where you want to be, by the end of this liturgical year (column 'c'). Even though you are just at the beginning of a deeper reflection on these virtues, you do have some knowledge about them and an awareness of their presence in your life. Based on such hunches, fill in columns (b) and (c) using a rating scale of 1-7, as indicated below:

- 1= nearly absent;
- 2= rarely present;
- 3= below average;
- 4= average;
- 5= above average;
- 6= frequently present;
- 7= exceptionally present.

Do not fill in column (d) at the beginning. It is to be completed as you read and reflect on each virtue. After reflecting on each virtue, identify one or two or three practical means (and preferably not more than three) that you can use to grow to the desired level in that virtue.

Apostolic Virtue (A)	Current Status (B)	Desired Status (C)	Means to realize my Goal (D)
Zealous Love (apostolic charity)			1. 2. 3.
Humility			1. 2. 3.
Gentle Meekness			1. 2. 3.
Mortification			1. 2. 3.
Passion and Compassion			1. 2. 3.
Conformity with Christ in Sickness and Death			1. 2. 3.

2. Reflection

2.1. Zealous Love (Apostolic Charity): On Fire with God's Love

“Christ was so driven by a burning love for his Father and for humankind, that he willingly spent himself in work, suffering and even death. The Apostles, too, impelled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, hurried throughout the world, witnessing to the joy of Christ’s resurrection.” (CC 40)

The very theme for this second stage of the *Forge in Our Daily Life* is “Caritas Christi,” Love of Christ. Claret was fired by this love; so must each of us be! For, “a Son of the Immaculate Heart of

Mary is a man on fire with love, who spreads its flames where he goes” (*Aut* 494; *CC* 9). This love has two dimensions: it refers to the love Christ has for us as well as the love that wells up in our heart for Christ. The first causes the second: “We love because he first loved us” (1 *Jn* 4:19).

What happens when you have the fire of love within? As with any fire, its flames leap upward and outward, in the direction of others, igniting them as well. Thus, love manifests itself as zeal. The word “zeal” comes from *delos*, a derivative of *deo*, which means “to boil,” to “throb with heat.” Zeal indicates vehemence, intensity, or directionality. Thus, love boils over into zeal with

a certain directionality. We find this in Christ. His love has two directions—towards his Father and for humankind. So must our love be: a burning love for God in Christ and an overflowing love for our brothers and sisters. We love as Jesus loves. We love as the apostles did, in imitation of Christ.

You began this journey in religious life, fired up by such love and zeal. It might have driven you to dream up new ministries for God’s poor, opt for distant and difficult mission fields, and walk the extra mile on the margins of society. How alive is your zeal now? Are you still fired up with apostolic charity as much as or even more than before? It is also possible that, as years passed by, you might have lost the initial steam. This may happen because of several reasons. Perhaps your desire for God waned or you became victim of lesser loves. Perhaps you got busy with many chores of daily life, or the many sacrifices you made along the way took

their toll. Perhaps struggles in community life dampened your spirits, or the exacting demands of ministry so overwhelmed you that resentment began building up in you toward God and the people you served. Love of God and neighbor is not always a path strewn with roses, but involves much purging from God and persecution from people. Sometimes we are caught in the pain of the moment and lose the bigger picture. Is there a way to rediscover the lost fire for God and His people? How can you dream of the Kingdom again? Even if the fire of charity has not been dampened in you, you might want to fan it up. How do you do it? Paolo Manna writes in his “Apostolic Virtues”:

“Let us not delude ourselves: apostolic zeal, without which we are nothing as missionaries, does not blaze up except from a heart aflame with the love of God. When our heart is united to God in the intimacy of meditation and prayer, then we will be fervent and our love will inspire us with

that diligent, practical persevering and untiring zeal which characterizes the true apostle of Jesus Christ.” (2009, p. 36).

Our Father Claret offers us specific means to grow in apostolic charity (cf. *Aut* 442-444). Here are his recommendations:

- Keep the commandments of God’s law.
- Practice the evangelical counsels.
- Respond faithfully to divine inspirations.
- Make one’s daily meditation well.
- Ask and beg for love.
- Hunger and thirst after love.

Let us practice these means in the coming days, and surely we will witness the fire growing in us.

Take a moment to do exercise 2. Then, return to **exercise 1** and fill up column (d): the means you want to use to grow in this virtue.



Exercise 2: Meditation on “The Dark Night” (St. John of the Cross)

Steps:

1. **Set aside 40 minutes for this exercise.** Settle down in a calm and peaceful place without any distractions. Prepare yourself for the session by some breathing exercises or awareness techniques that you know. Invoke the Holy Spirit. (5 minutes)
2. **Read the poem once.** Pause. Read it again, slower than before. Pause. Read it a third time, still slower and visualizing the narrative. Pause. (15 minutes)
3. The poem is rich in imagery. **It speaks of the purification of our love and its rich consequences.** Which image/scenery resonates with you? What affective reaction(s) does it cause in you: joy, sadness, longing, dryness, restfulness, distraction, or any other? What does the reaction tell you about your spiritual life in general and the virtue of zealous love in particular? (15 minutes)
4. **Read the poem again.** Ask for the grace of apostolic charity. Say a prayer of thanksgiving. (5 minutes)

1. One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
- ah, the sheer grace! -
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.

2. In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
- ah, the sheer grace! -
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.

3. On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.

4. This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
- him I knew so well -
there in a place where no one appeared.

5. O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.

6. Upon my flowering breast
which I kept wholly for him alone,
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing him
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

7. When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted his hair,
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.

8. I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my Beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.

2.2. Humility: The foundation of Christian Perfection

“If we are to experience within us the attitude of Christ Jesus, who emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, we must seek humility.” (CC 41)

It all began in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve, the prototypical human beings, did not like it when the serpent told them that God had kept them away from the tree at the center of the Garden to prevent them from becoming like Him. They wanted to be like God and hence, they broke God’s commandment. Pride went before the Fall.

It took God Himself to show us how to become like Him. Not by the way of pride, but by the way of humility, a humble ac-

ceptance of who we are before God so that God can raise us up. The model of our humility is Christ himself. St. Paul exhorts us: “Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant” (cf. *Phil 2:5-8*). This is the self-emptying—*kenosis*—of Christ. Out of his love for his Father, he emptied himself of his will and took upon himself his Father’s will. Out of his love for humanity, he emptied himself of his divine privileges, took human flesh, and died on the cross. “Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart,” he said (*Mt 11:29*). Conformity with Christ is impossible without an active praxis of this kind of humility, which is the very founda-

tion of Christian holiness and perfection.

Father Claret considered humility to be the primary virtue necessary for becoming an apostolic missionary. He found much pride and vainglory within himself: “The memory of my vanity has brought many a bitter tear to my eyes,” he wrote (*Aut 341*). For him, the practice of humility was not for its own sake, but for the glory of God: “I will do everything solely for Jesus and Mary. Therefore I will never praise myself, or speak of myself or what I have done, or of my country, parents, studies, books, places I have been, etc.” (*Retreat Resolutions, 1843, n. 10*).

Though we priests and religious are sometimes looked upon with no little contempt in these modern times when the Church is afflicted with many



scandals, we are still held in esteem and respect in many cultures. It is not unlikely that the honor and prestige bestowed on priests and religious partly attracted us to this way of life. It is tempting to claim our privileges and impose our will on the people we serve, and the brothers we live with. The danger of pride always lurks around the corner, waiting to pounce on us. But when Christ called us, he called us to come and die—for him and for our brethren. Now, he did not ask us to “kill” our self—that would be a violent suicide, which is against the Gospel of Life. Rather, he invited us to let go of our self, offer ourselves to God with a virginal openness as Mary did, so that he can grow in us and make us apostolic channels of his grace for the world.

What happens to us when we practice humility? (a) We acknowledge our nothingness before God so that God can be everything in us. The word “humility” comes from the word *humilis*, meaning “lowly, of the earth.” In practicing humility, we declare our limitedness and God’s transcendence. (b) We acknowledge our sinfulness and need for God. The humbler we are, the more conscious we are

of our sins. It is for this reason that holy men and women continually wept for their sins. The only occasions where we find Jesus getting angry with people is when he found them self-righteous. Scripture warns us: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy” (*Prov 28:18*). Again, it invites us: “Do not be ashamed to confess your sins” (*Sir 4:26*), for God alone is without sin. (c) We relate to others with compassion, and refrain from harsh judgment. Once we have true humility and are conscious of our sinfulness, we look at others with kindness and refuse to judge them. For, everyone has sinned, and all stand in need of God’s redemption.

We are all fellow pilgrims, walking into the embrace of the Father. (d) We receive the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit with gratitude and seek to multiply them with God’s grace. Whereas we acknowledge our nothingness, it is false humility that refuses to entertain anything good in us. True humility recognizes what God can do within us. Thus, we say a wholehearted “yes” to the many gifts and fruits that the Holy Spirit chooses to

fill us with, and put them to effective use at the service of our community and the world at large. True humility is apostolic in that it seeks to share the gifts of the Gospel with the people of the world. We seek to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly before the Lord (cf. *Micah 6:8*). (e) We give all glory, honor, praise, and thanksgiving to God. “By the grace of God, I am what I am” (*1 Cor 15:10*). Having done everything God has asked us to do, we humbly say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty” (*Lk 17:10*).



Exercise 3: The Seven Tests of Humility

Please turn to **Appendix 2**. It presents seven tests of humility, proposed by Fr. Joseph Horn. Each test presents a common situation that challenges a person's humility and reveals whether one is proud or humble. Read each one of the seven questions. Hold it before you so that you see your life mirrored in it. Ask yourself: "How do I respond in this situation? What does my response signify—my humility or pride? If it is pride, how can I modify my response in similar situations so as to grow in humility?"

After having completed the exercise, turn to **exercise 1** and fill in **column (d)**: the means to grow in this virtue.



2.3. Gentle Meekness: Apostolic Honeycomb

"We should earnestly strive to practice that gentle meekness which the Lord commends and which is a sign of an apostolic vocation. . . . [W]e must . . . be so imbued with the gentleness of Christ in our ministry that we will be able to win many hearts for him." (CC 42)

Meekness has received much bad press. The world considers it a sign of weakness, inferiority, and timidity. However, in the dispensation of the Kingdom, meekness has a lofty status.

Including it as the third of the Beatitudes, Jesus declared: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5). Inherit the earth? That's a lofty reward, indeed! Commenting on this third Beatitude, Alexander MacLaren writes, "[Meekness] is the conduct and disposition towards God and man which follows from the inward experience described in the two former Beatitudes, which had relation only to ourselves" (*Expositions of Holy Scriptures*, vol. 6, "St. Matthew," p. 130).

St. Paul lists gentleness which is at the core of meekness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal*

5:22-23). In spiritual theology, meekness is considered one of the seven capital virtues. Meekness or patience is the antidote of the sin of unjust anger or wrath or rage. Whereas the sin of wrath is about unjustified and disproportionate anger and uncalled for vengeance, the virtue of meekness is about patiently seeking out healthy, creative, and respectful solutions to conflicts, and the capacity to forgive and show mercy. Meekness is often confused with humility. Whereas they are related, humility is the virtue that counters pride. Humility has a fundamental orientation to a person's

attitude toward one's own self, whereas meekness is primarily concerned about one's behavior towards others. St. Bernard commented that we please God by humility and our neighbor by meekness. A gentle spirit is the hallmark of meekness. Meekness has a passive dimension as well as an active dimension. In its passive dynamics, it is capable of taking in the hostile and unjust behavior of others with equanimity; in its active dynamics, it reaches out to the other in kindness and gentleness, even when the other is undeserving.

was meek, but he was as stern as steel against evil, injustice, and false worship (cf. *Ex* 32:25-28). Gandhi, who fought against apartheid and colonization through nonviolent means, was one of the meekest men of his times, but fierce against injustice and inequality. Such assertiveness (and not aggressiveness) is deeply dyed in gentleness, compassion, and a caring attitude; and it is at the service of building a civilization of love.

Claret considered meekness the third important apostolic virtue, after humility and pov-

flies than with all the acid and vinegar in the world. . . . I have never regretted using sweetness, especially if you make people see that you love them" (quoted in *Our Project of Missionary Life*, vol. 2, p. 621). Confessing that he has found many missionaries bilious by nature and prone to arrogance, Claret warns us against a false zeal that emerges from bad temper and hostility.

In our religious life and apostolic ministry, we might encounter situations where our meekness can be challenged. As it does with humility, power and



Yet, this meekness does not take everything lying down. It can be tough as steel, a steeliness that comes from a deep authenticity and conviction. We find this in Jesus who was meek and humble (cf. *Mt* 11:29), but was fierce in his cleansing of the temple (cf. *Mk* 11:15-17; *Mt* 21:12-13; *Lk* 19:45-46; *Jn* 2:13-22). Moses

erty. "Humility is like the root of the tree, and meekness is its fruit," he wrote (*Aut* 372). He likened it to honey with which one could attract and catch more sinners than with acid or vinegar: "I am of the opinion that one must preach *suaviter et fortiter*, and that with this honey we will catch more sinful and impious

prestige can cause us to be lacking in meekness. Familiarity with our brothers in our communities and being aware of their weaknesses and shortcomings can take away meekness from our relationship with them. Similarly, in our apostolic ventures, meekness and patience may fail us, especially when the world around



us considers them to be signs of weakness and inferiority. So, how can we grow in meekness? Claret offers us seven means to grow in this virtue (*Our Project of Missionary Life*, volume 2, pp. 623-624).

You might want to consider a few of them for completing **exercise 1, column (d)**.

- Ask Jesus and Mary for this virtue.
- Contemplate the meekness of Christ.
- Contemplate the meekness of Mary and the apostles.
- Meditate on Jesus' exhortations on meekness.
- Meditate on one's sinfulness and God's abundant mercy.
- Practice silence when slandered and pray for the slanderer.
- Avoid gossip about others, especially about our slanderers.

Exercise 4: Scriptural Mirror

Consider the following Scriptural verses on gentle meekness as mirrors held before you. Do you recognize yourself in them? If there are more “yeses” than “nos,” give thanks and praise to God. If “no” outnumbers “yes,” identify means and ways to grow in meekness.

- “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” (Prov 16:32)
- “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” (1 Pet 2:21-23)
- “If anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.” (Gal 6:1)
- “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness.” (2 Tim 2:24-25)
- “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.” (1 Pt 3:15)

2.4. Mortification: Glorifying God in our Body

“We should keep careful watch over our senses, glorifying God and carrying him about in our bodies.” (CC 43)

We live in a pornographic world which has reduced the human person to an object and agent of unredeemed pleasures. The body has become an end in itself, leading to its exaltation to the highest throne. But nature rebels against such misplaced and unnatural glorification, through the eclipse of the body. As Robert Romanyshyn notes in “Technology as Symptom and Dream”, the body is so abused these days that it rebels by disappearing through anorexia nervosa and other psychosomatic illnesses. We must keep in mind that the abusive excesses the world delights in are not merely of the body, but of the mind and the intellect as well. Yet, the raw materials for such abuse enter our person primarily through the pathway of the senses. Thus, when we refer to the “body,” the whole person is implied as well. In the previous

booklet, we reflected on how such abuse turns addictive, altering our brain chemistry and personality structure. And how it destroys our soul, making it a slave of the body!

What does it mean to live the apostolic virtue of mortification—moderation, temperance, and modesty in our bodily way of being—in a world addicted to excesses? Mortification is a prophetic witness before the world concerning the place of the human person in general, and the human body in particular, in God’s order of things.



Corporal mortification refers to the practice of temperance and modesty in bodily needs, and *spiritual mortification* refers to reining in our preferences, imagination, passions, and intellect. The human body has a certain honor and dignity in God's scheme. It is the temple of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul asks: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor 6:19). The human body is dignified because God created it. The human body is sanctified because the Son of Man took human flesh and dwelt among us. The human body is to be glorified in our resurrection. So what are we to do? St. Paul advises us: "For you were brought with a price; therefore *glorify God in our body*" (1 Cor 6:20).

Using St. Paul's words as a point of departure, our Constitutions invite us to practice mortification of the senses for two purposes: as a way to glorify God in our body, and as a way to carry him around in our body. Thus, our body is to be a temple where we praise and worship God, and our body is to be a monsternace which shows forth the presence of God to the world before us. What does this imply? At its core, it implies a Christ-like self-denial. "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16:24). As has already been mentioned, this does not mean a violent rejection of self, but a gentle letting go of our self-centeredness so that God's will and desire can enter us.

This self-denial may have several practical applications—frugality in food and drink, a practice that was so close to the heart of our Father Founder (cf. *Aut* 404; 406); temperance in sensual appetites, care for the physical cleanliness of the body; temperance in the use of words and expressions; indifference to our own self; and a willingness to take up any responsibility assigned to us, without clinging to one's favorite ministries and locations.

Such self-denial and mortification does not take away our capacity for celebrating the gift of life. Rather, it releases us into the freedom to delight in the gift of life without suffering from the compulsion to hold on to it, or make an idol out of it. In his "Ascent of Mount Carmel", St. John of the Cross gives us a beautiful sketch of holy mortification:

*To delight in everything,
seek to delight in nothing.
To possess everything,
seek to possess nothing.*



*To become everything,
seek to be nothing.
To come to know everything,
seek in everything to know nothing.
To reach what you like not,
you must go through where you like not.
To reach what you know not,
you must go through where you know not.
To reach what you have not,
you must go through where you have not.
To reach what you are not,
you must go through where you are not.*

Exercise 5: Crucify Your Excesses

What are the physical, psychological, and social excesses that are hindering your conformity with Christ? Identify them and crucify them on the Cross of Christ. You may do so in one of the two following ways:

1. **You may write the names of the excesses** (e.g., gluttony, laziness, addiction to alcohol, etc.) or symbolically represent them on each of the balloons hanging from the Cross (in the picture given below). After doing so, pray for healing. Pray for the grace to glorify Christ in your person.
2. Or, **you may take a few balloons, label them with your excesses, and tie them on a real Cross.** After reflecting on their ill-effects and having prayed for healing, take a pin and burst the balloons, believing that your excesses are taken away.

2.5. Passion and Compassion: Sharing in the Sufferings of Christ and his People

“Strive to rejoice in all sorts of hardships: hunger, thirst, nakedness, hard work, slander, persecution and every tribulation ... The Lord himself chose to be identified with those who suffer, and he invites us to recognize him, suffering in them.”
(CC 44)

The apostolic virtue of passion and compassion implies a capacity and willingness for a two-fold identification: identification with Christ in our own personal sufferings, joining them with the passion of Christ, and identification with the people who suffer in the world. When Peter asked what they would receive for having left everything to follow him, Jesus was unequivocal in declaring that they would receive one hundredfold of everything they renounced, but along with persecutions (cf. *Mk 10:28-30*). “They will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name” (*Mt 24:9*), he forewarned them. In the Beatitudes, Jesus blessed those who would face such sufferings and promised them the Kingdom (cf. *Mt 5:1-12*). Thus, persecutions, tribulations, and sufferings will be, in varying degrees, an everyday presence in the life of an apostolic missionary.

You might have already experienced this in your missionary life! We cannot shake them off; we can only choose how to respond apostolically and in imitation of Christ. We have our model in St. Paul and our Father founder. St. Paul delighted in the opportunities to suffer for Christ, and he

exclaimed: “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (*Gal 6:14*). Again, “I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong” (*2 Cor 12:10*). Father Claret, who suffered much physical and mental suffering, writes thus:

“In the midst of all these turns of events I somehow got through. I had some good times and some so bitter that they made me weary of life. At such times the only thoughts and words I could summon up were about heaven, and this consoled and encouraged me greatly. I never refused suffering; rather, I loved it and even wanted to die for Jesus’ sake.” (*Aut 465*)

We, Claretians, are invited to mold ourselves after Paul, Claret, and the apostles, who drank the cup of suffering, and above all, to conform ourselves to Christ who was willingly subjected to passion for our sake. Read the Definition of a Claretian again, taking a deeper look at this sentence: “Nothing daunts him: he delights in privations, welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, rejoices in all the torments and sorrows he suffers, and glories in the cross of Jesus Christ” (*Aut 494*). What does it ask of you in the specific context of your life and ministry?

The second identification implied in this virtue is our willingness to identify with the sufferings

of others. As Mother Church never fails to remind us, “The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). The preferred option for the poor and the suffering is not really an option for us apostolic missionaries; it is, rather, a gospel mandate. The solidarity with the poor is not a mere heartfelt compassion for them, but an existential commitment to their needs. To the disciples who were compassionate about the hunger of the multitude, Jesus gave a direct order: “You give them something to eat” (*Mk 6:37*). “The Mission of the Claretian Today”, the nineteenth General Chapter document, articulates this mandate powerfully:

“Driven, as Claret was, by the power of Jesus, and nourished by the example of so many Claretians who have given or are giving their lives for the sake of the Kingdom, we accept the risks of prophetic denunciation and commitment which is entailed in our evangelizing mission. We wish for

solidarity with the human being to whom we have been sent sharing in their anguish, their privations and their hopes. And at the same time that we confess that Jesus is living in the midst of men, we also hope to put an end to the unbelief, the hate, the injustice, the lies, the oppression, the sorrow, hunger, ignorance and all the other absences of love, which are also absences of God.” (n. 172)

In this task, the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk 10:25-37*) becomes our prototype. He was willing to be inconvenienced by the need of the other. He stopped in his tracks, changed his direction, cared for the wounded, and enlisted the help of others in the inn, all this at risk of being misunderstood and taken as the aggressor by others. It is not easy to follow this model, for we are naturally inclined to play it safe rather than take risks. It calls for an active wrestling with God and the willingness to lose ourselves to Him.

Take a few minutes to do the proposed **exercise 6**, before completing **exercise 1** on this virtue.

Exercise 6: Wrestling with God

Here is a piece of dialog between young Kazantzakis and an elderly and holy monk, Father Makarios, taken from the former’s spiritual semi-autobiography, “Report to Greco”. Read it and reflect on it, applying its insights into your own approach to Cross and suffering. Do you wrestle with God, and with what intent?

- “Do you still wrestle with the devil, Father Makarios?” I asked him.
- “Not any longer, my child. I have grown old now, and he has grown old with me. He doesn’t have the strength. I wrestle with God.”
- “With God!” I exclaimed in astonishment. “And you hope to win?”
- “I hope to lose, my child. My bones remain with me still, and they continue to resist.”
- “Yours is a hard life, Father. I too want to be saved. Is there no other way?”
- “More agreeable?” asked the ascetic, smiling compassionately.
- “More human, Father.”
- “One, only one.”
- “What is it?”
- “Ascent. To climb a series of steps. From the full stomach to hunger, from the slaked throat to thirst, from joy to suffering. God sits at the summit of hunger, thirst, and suffering; the devil sits at the summit of the comfortable life. Choose.”

2.6. Conformity with Christ in Sickness and Death: Dying Like and For Christ

“Since Christ suffered for us and left us an example, we should bear our own sickness and suffering with humility and submission to God’s loving will ...

In this way, we shall preach to others through the witness of our life.” (CC 45)

Samuel Johnson once commented: “Nothing concentrates the mind of a person better than the prospect of one’s death.” Indeed! How different our life would be if we were to begin our day with the meditation that this particular day might be our last day on earth! There is nothing that helps us see our life in the right perspective more than the thought of the reality of death and the life after. This apostolic virtue invites us to be conformed to Christ in our aging, illness, and death, letting go of our physical life with serenity and loveliness.

Once during our hour-long evening prayers at home, I looked intently at the hands of my aging mother, feeling pained at the way her skin was going loose and wasting away. Having read my thoughts and felt my emotion as only a mother can do, with a profoundly peaceful smile, she whispered to me: “That’s what happens when one gets old.” I was struck by her serene and peaceful acceptance of the reality of aging and the inevitability of death.

But generally, our hearts rebel at the prospect of illness and death. The world rejects the reality of suffering and death, and goes to any length to preserve its youthfulness or at least a façade of it. Ernest Becker declared in “The Denial of Death”, the 1974 Pulitzer winning classic, that human cultural advancements, as well as cultural neuroses, emerge from the frantic denial and suppression of the reality of death. In “An Experience Named Spirit”, John Shea presents a piece of dialog (paraphrased here) between the human heart and the divine lover. The heart complains





of all the suffering, illness, limitations, tragedies, and death. “Why all this suffering?” she asks. The divine lover responds with compassion: “Why not? That is the way human life is.” But then he promises to hold her hands and walk with her through the valley of tears and death. For he has walked the way himself, known our terrors, and hence, can lead us through the way into the promise of the Resurrection. So, we can let our guards down, welcome the reality of aging, illness, and death, imitate Jesus in our manner of suffering and death, and hand our soul over to him saying, “Into your hands I commend my spirit” (cf. *Lk* 23:46).

Such conformity with Christ in our attitude toward illness and death is apostolic and prophetic, inviting the world to sit up and take note. The suffering and death of John Paul II was such a prophetic witness before the world. There is a time to engage in active mission by investing all our energies in our ministries. But then comes a time of passive mission that one embraces by graciously accepting passion, suffering, and death.

This virtue also invites us to examine our attitude towards those brothers in our communities who are gravely ill and cannot contribute to our collective mission in measurable ways. Do we think of them as burdens? Do we feel resentful that they lay a claim on our time and availability? Do we look at their illness as God’s punishment on them? Or, do we treat them with respect and appreciation for everything they have done in their life and continue to do with their brave witnessing to the value of suffering and death? Do we take time to visit them, care for them, do faith-sharing with them, and listen to their valuable wisdom? Do we take their example as a graced moment to reflect about the moment of our own death so that we can live our active life more effectively at the service of the Kingdom?

Take a few moments now to do **exercise 7** and the final segment of **exercise 1**.

Exercise 7: Spiritual Will and Testament

“This very night your life will be demanded from you” (Lk 12:20).

1. **Presume that you will die tonight.** You want to bid farewell to your significant others on earth. Who are they? Write a letter addressed to them all.

In the letter,

- What will you share about your life?
- What final insights will you offer them from your experience of life on earth?
- Which apostolic virtues will you bequeath to them as your spiritual legacy?

2. You want to introduce yourself to Christ at the Pearly Gates. **Write a letter of introduction.**

- How would you introduce yourself?
- What will be your marks of identification?
- What specific virtues of yours will help Jesus recognize and welcome you into his home?

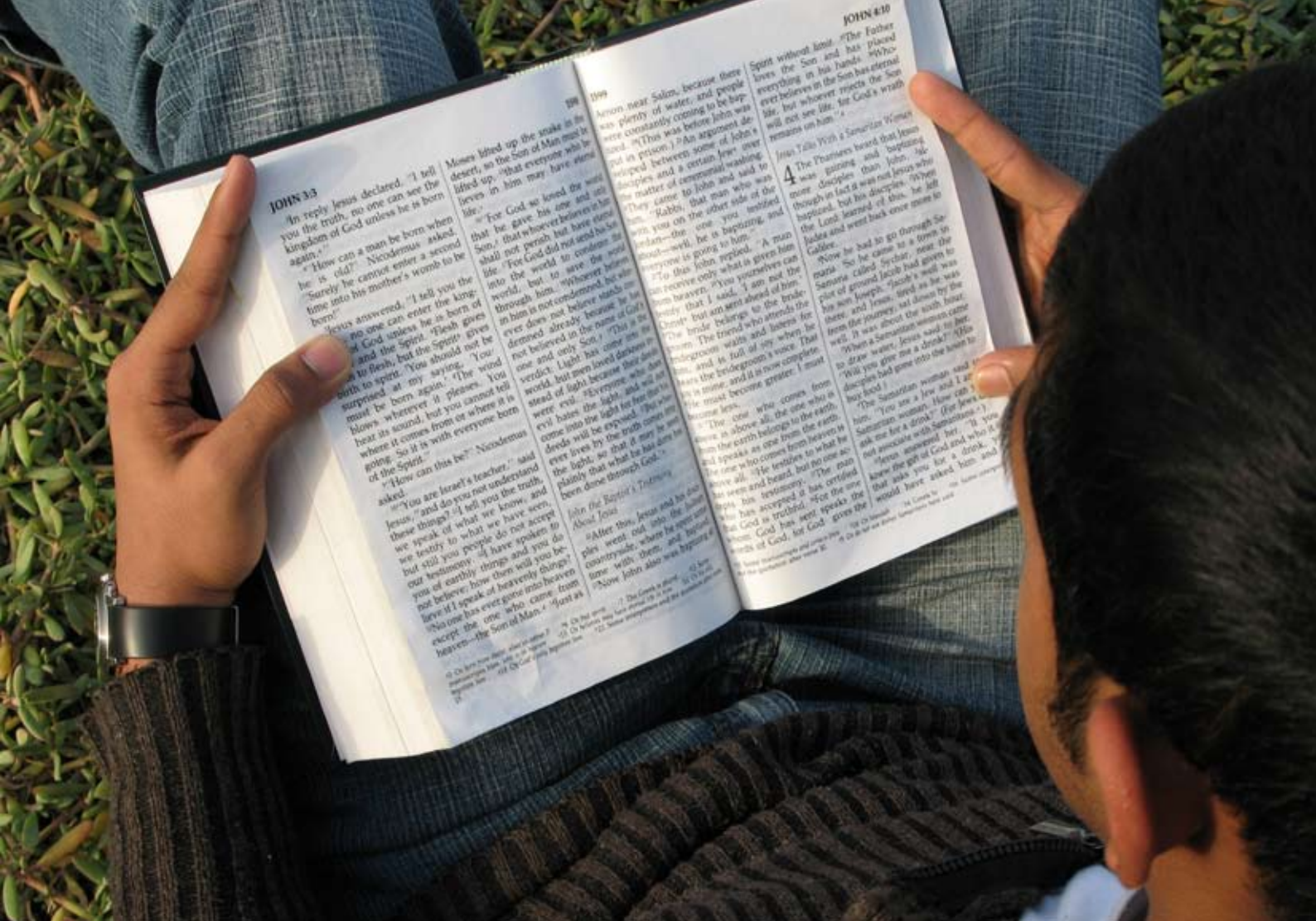
3. End the exercise **with a prayer**, “Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

The community should set aside an evening (at least 3 hours) free from all other commitments and distractions. As a community, watch the movie *Of Gods and Men* (directed by Xavier Beauvois). The movie tells the true story of the kidnapping and murder of seven French Trappist monks in the predominantly Muslim village of Tibhirine in Algeria in 1996. It focuses on the monks’ dilemma: to risk dying or save their lives. Each monk painfully ponders the question, plumbing the depths of his soul. Finally, each of them reaches a decision. The movie is a beautiful meditation on laying down our life for the sake of our brothers and sisters, even when our death is seemingly a wasted effort. After watching the movie, discuss your thoughts with your community members. You may use any one or two of the following points for discussion:



1. **Share a scene or two from the movie** that touched you deeply. Why is it significant for you?
2. **Share your hopes and fears about illness, aging, or death.** Do you specifically identify with a character in the movie, with regards to your attitude toward death?
3. If you are called upon to witness to Christ through martyrdom today, **how prepared are you?** How will you respond?
4. **What lessons for your religious vocation and apostolic life** do you draw from the movie?



4. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

In the document ***Our Missionary Spirituality along the Journey of the People of God*** we read:

Holy Mother Church offers all Christians, and thus us missionaries as well, an outstanding path of spirituality: the cycle of the liturgical year. It is a cycle of waiting and preparation (Advent), generation and birth (Christmas), initiation and purification (Lent), death and resurrection (Easter) and day-to-day life. Through it we relive, year after year, all the mysteries of Christian life and integrate into our life, in a progressive and pedagogical way, the food of God's Word and the spiritual teaching of the Church.

We live the cycle of the Liturgical Year day after day, at the various moments that fill our day with spiritual meaning: the celebration of the Eucharist, the Office of Readings, the celebration of Lauds and Vespers, the praying of the Daytime Hour and Compline. Our integration into the mystery of the Church's liturgy is the best path of spirituality for us. We travel it along with the People of God, some as ordained ministers, others as missionary brothers.

The *Forge Project in Our Daily Life* is a concrete way to insert ourselves in the journey of God's people, especially through the *lectio divina* of the texts that are proclaimed every day in the Eucharist. The "clues" that are offered in each booklet are not, as it has been insisted from the beginning of the project, exegetical, theological or pastoral comments, but just a reminder. The following pages are a reminder that every day we have an appointment with the Lord through a cordial, serene and free encounter with his Word.

Monday, July 1, 2013

- Gen 18:16-33
- Psalm 102
- Mt 8:18-22

Following Jesus is a radical act. It demands giving the highest priority to him. No human relations or obligations can stand in the way of following Jesus. The reward is immense indeed: God will confide in us and trust us with His plans, as He did with Abraham. Do I dare?

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

- Gen 19:15-29
- Psalm 25
- Mt 8:23-27

If Jesus leads us into the boat, why are we worried? If Jesus invites us to participate in his mission, can we ever be lost? If we are too scared to do his mission (like the apostles), or keep looking back longingly at the places left behind (like Lot's wife), we are only as good as a pillar of salt that has lost its saltiness.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013. Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle (Cal CMF, 205-209)

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

We tend to associate Thomas with unbelief. But, wait a minute! Deep behind his child-like insistence on seeing Jesus, don't we find a deeper faith? For, he insists on seeing the true identity of Jesus in his wounds! Indeed, the proof of the risen Christ is in his wounds of love, which remained even after his resurrection! You are in the process of being conformed to Jesus. Are you conformed enough to show to the world your wounds of love as your authentic marks of identity?

Thursday, July 4, 2013

- Gen 22:1b-19
- Psalm 114
- Mt 9:1-8

Did the paralytic have faith? We do not know. But we are clearly told that Jesus saw the faith of those who brought him and, for their faith, he healed the paralytic. Similarly, Isaac is blessed, thanks to the faith of Abraham. Sometimes some of our brothers struggle in their faith, vocation, and ministry. Do we bring them before God so that God may see our faith and thereby heal and bless them?

Friday, July 5, 2013

- Gen 23:1-4,19; 24,1-8, 62-67
- Psalm 105
- Mt 9:9-13

It is rightly said that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. Jesus called us in spite of our unworthiness, as he did with Matthew. But it is possible that we might gradually lose that memory and grow too proud in our calling and become judgmental towards other people, including our fellow Claretians. If Jesus desires mercy, shall we not give it to him by offering it to others?

Saturday, July 6, 2013

- Gen 27:1-5, 15-29
- Psalm 134
- Mt 9:14-17

Christian penance is unique in that it is done not out of fear, but out of sheer joy. All the apostolic virtues, be it humility, mortification, passion, and suffering, are lived with a spirit of joy that celebrates a loving relationship with Christ (cf. CC 40). Maria Goretti and other martyrs gave up their life not out of fear, but out of a love that transcended everything. Ask yourself: do I experience joy in my religious living?

Sunday, July 7, 2013. 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Is 66:10-14c
- Psalm 65
- Gal 6:14-18
- Lk 10:1-12, 17-20 (or Lk 10:1-9)

Jesus sends the disciples two-by-two. *How enthusiastically do I engage in shared mission with my brothers?* They blessed whatever house they entered, and wished it peace. *Am I a conduit of God's blessings and peace?* They healed the sick. *Do I bring healing into the life of people?* They returned full of joy. *How do I return from my ministries—full of joy and life, or with a feeling of burnout?* May the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord be with us! Amen.

Monday, July 8, 2013

- Gen 28:10-22a
- Psalm 90
- Mt 9:18-26

There are times when Jesus bursts into our life, takes us by the hand, and declares us healed. Let us spring to our feet and give thanks! And then there are times Jesus passes us by, seemingly unaware, or unconcerned about our need for healing. Do we then have the courage to push our way through the crowd, reach out, and grab him so that his healing energy will flow into us? Surely, Jesus would not take offense!

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

- Gen 32:23-32
- Psalm 16
- Mt 9:32-38

Do you wrestle with God? Good for you! Turn to Exercise 6 and read the episode mentioned there. It is a blessing to wrestle with God and lose out. It is better to walk into the Kingdom of God with a hip that is unseated than to be dragged into eternal damnation with a life untouched by God.

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

- Gen 41:55-57; 42, 5-7a, 17-24a
- Psalm 33
- Mt 10:1-7

“Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.” Why not? Doesn’t Jesus himself visit pagan territories later? Aren’t we supposed to bring Good News to all the nations? Indeed, at a later time Jesus will commission them to go to all peoples. But for the time being, this is his plan, and so we obey. Aren’t there times when the discernment of our religious superiors seems senseless and even downright stupid? Can we still trust God enough to comply? God’s will brooks no why.

Thursday, July 11, 2013. St. Benedict, Abbot, Patron of Europe. Fr. Felipe Maroto (*Cal CMF*, 211-215)

- Gen 44:18-21, 23b-29; 45,1-5
- Psalm 104
- Mt 10:7-15

The dynamic between Joseph and his brothers is educative of the highs and lows in our community life. How often do we “sell” our brothers for a moment’s revenge! Can we humble ourselves before our wronged brother and reunite with him? Perhaps we have been sold several times by our brothers in faith. Can we then take a leaf from Joseph’s life and wholeheartedly forgive and even provide for them in their needs?

Friday, July 12, 2013

- Gen 46:1-7, 28-30
- Psalm 36
- Mt 10:6-33

Jesus predicts much suffering, betrayal, and even death for his missionaries. He also assures us that we need not panic at such moments, as God’s Spirit will guide us through them. Claret has advised us to rejoice in our many sufferings for the sake of following Christ. What is my approach to the many sufferings that come my way? Do I trust the Spirit to guide me through such moments or do I worriedly run after human solutions?

Saturday, July 13, 2013

- Gen 49:29-32; 50,15-26a
- Psalm 104
- Mt 10:24-33

“In everything God works for the good of those who love him” (Rom 8:28). Joseph seems to be the perfect personification of the truth of this statement. Right at this moment, we might find that our life is in utter darkness and God has abandoned us. But there is nothing covered that will not be uncovered, and at the time of the uncovering we will be amazed to see how God has guided us through our moments of darkness, failure, and deep pain. Do you believe?

Sunday, July 14, 2013. 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Dt 30:10-14
- Psalm 68
- Col 1:15-20
- Lk 10:25-37

There was a certain risk in what the Samaritan did. Given the enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans, another Jew who passed by would have mistaken the Samaritan to be the victimizer of the wounded Jew! But the Samaritan did not worry about the possible danger. He saw a wounded man and his heart was moved with pity. He did not play it safe. He followed his well-formed heart’s directives, at his own risk. Can I risk my securities in life and commit to loving God and neighbor as the Samaritan did?

Monday, July 15, 2013. Memorial of St. Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor

- Ex 1:8-14,22
- Psalm 123
- Mt 10:34-11,1

“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” Would Jesus have also said, “Whoever loves his ministry more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves his Congregation more than me is not worthy of me? Any excessive love that compromises our first love—love of God—is idolatrous and adulterous.

Tuesday, July 16, 2013. Our Lady of Mount Carmel. 164 Birthday of the Congregation (Cal CMF, 217-224)

- Ex 2:1-15a
- Psalm 68
- Mt 11:20-24

Exactly 164 years ago, Christ called us through Mother Mary to be a community of apostles. He formed us in the heart of Mary, worked many miracles in us, and blessed us with many gifts and fruits of the Spirit. Have we responded adequately to God's choice and blessings? Will he weep over us or rejoice over us today? Let us pledge to double his happiness over his investment in us.

Wednesday, July 17, 2013

- Ex 3:1-6, 9-12
- Psalm 103
- Mt 11:25-27

Moses had a certain curiosity that led him to explore the burning bush. When our peers were busy with the mundane affairs of the world, a certain uncommon curiosity led us to explore God's fire deep within our hearts, and landed us in religious life. Is that curiosity still alive in us? If it is, we will continue to encounter God in the strangest of places, and never feel lonely anywhere in the world. Let us pray for a spurt of growth in the virtue of “apostolic curiosity.”

Thursday, July 18, 2013

- Ex 3:13-20
- Psalm 104
- Mt 11:28-30

Jesus is the prime model of humility and meekness (gentleness). Claret rated these apostolic virtues very high. We shall look to Jesus to learn how to be humble and meek. Sometimes being humble and meek may make us suffer much at the hands of the world. We shall not snap then, but lean on Christ and rest in him. He can refresh us so that we can continue to walk with him the path of humility and meekness.

Friday, July 19, 2013

- Ex 11:10-12,14
- Psalm 115
- Mt 12:1-8

Keeping the letter of the law may kill the spirit of the law. One who knows the heart of the law knows when to break the law at the service of its heart. Thus Jesus allows his disciples to break the Sabbath law, for he knew the heart of the law and the intention of the Lawgiver. Do you have the courage to go beyond the law in order to serve the highest commandment, “Love!”?

Saturday, July 20, 2013

- Ex 12:37-42
- Psalm 135
- Mt 12:14-21

“He will not argue or shout, nor will his voice be heard in the streets. The bruised reed he will not crush, nor snuff out the smoldering wick.” Isaiah attests to the meekness and humility of the Son of God. Knowing about the murderous plots of his enemies, he calmly withdraws to another place, but with certain steeliness, and continues his ministry. How do we respond to the challenges and threats to our ministry?

Sunday, July 21, 2013. 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Gen 18:1-10a
- Psalm 14
- Col 1:24-28
- Lk 10:38-42

Sometimes in our ministry, we may experience an imbalance between its Martha-Mary dimensions. Do we plunge into action or rest at the foot of the Lord? How can we best combine both dimensions? Abraham seems to be a good case study. He sits at the entrance of his house with a certain meditative restfulness that helps him recognize God at His coming. From the fullness of the restfulness, he plunges into action, with a heart set on serving the Lord.

Monday, July 22, 2013. Memorial of St. Mary Magdalene

- Song 3:1-4b (or 2 Cor 5,14-17)
- Psalm 62
- Jn 20:1-2, 11-18

Mary, who had been a close friend and disciple of Christ, fails to recognize his body until he calls out her name. In other words, it is when Jesus called her by name that she recognized his body. Such a wonderful example of chaste loving where recognition of the other takes place at the soul level! How do I love other people—in my community and outside? Does my love flow from a deep spiritual communion or does it remain merely at the level of external and peripheral attractions?

Tuesday, July 23, 2013. Memorial of St. Bridget of Sweden, Co-patroness of Europe

- Ex 14:21-15,1
- Psalm [Ex 15:8-9, 10,12, 17]
- Mt 12:46-50

Ever felt a “holy jealousy” towards Mary and the apostles? For, they had the privilege of belonging to him and interacting with him very closely. We don’t really have to feel deprived. “My food is to do the will of the One who sent me,” declared Jesus (Jn 4:34). By eating of the same food, we become sharers in Jesus’ identity—we become his brothers, and share in his inheritance.

Wednesday, July 24, 2013

- Ex 16:1-5, 9-15
- Psalm 77
- Mt 13:1-9

As missionaries, are we too careful about sowing our seeds only on fully prepared fertile soil alone? Are we satisfied only when the yield is a hundred percent? If so, we might be too careful to a fault! God, the sower in the parable, is willing to risk his seeds everywhere—even on the least productive of lands; and he is delighted as long as there is some yield—even if it is only thirty percent! Let us not place limits on the possibilities of the Kingdom.

Thursday, July 25, 2013. Feast of St. James, Apostle (*Cal CMF*, 225-230)

- 2 Cor 4:7-15
- Psalm 125
- Mt 20:20,28

It looks like James, John, and their mother considered the following of Christ to be a means to something greater. The following of Christ is not a means, but an end in itself. Through the practice of the apostolic virtues of passion and compassion, we shall drink the cup of suffering that Christ drank and continues to drink through the poor and the marginalized. Discipleship of Christ shall be its own reward.

Friday, July 26, 2013. Memorial of Sts. Joachim and Anna, Parents of the Virgin Mary

- Sir 44:1.10-15
- Psalm 131
- Mt 13:16-17

It takes a certain sensory attunement and trained skill to see or hear or feel anything through our senses. Someone who has no taste for music cannot distinguish between subtle variations in the elements of music such as rhythm, tempo, timbre, et caetera. Only a trained physician can diagnose a disease from the symptoms presented. Similarly, it takes a certain spiritual attunement and training in virtues to discern and recognize spiritual realities. We need to periodically check if our spiritual antenna is fully functional.

Saturday, July 27, 2013

- Ex 24:3-8
- Psalm 49
- Mt 13:24-30

How careful God is not to damage a single good plant! He would rather bear with the weeds in order not to risk the loss of the good wheat. Jesus reaffirmed it when he said, “It is not my heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish” (Mt 18:14). What does it tell me about my salvation? What does it command me to do with the care of the souls entrusted to me?

Sunday, July 28, 2013. 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Gen 18:20-32
- Psalm 137
- Col 2:12-14
- Lk 11:1-13

“The one who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to him who knocks the door will be opened.” As missionaries and apostles, what do we ask for? The needs of others necessarily become the content of our prayer. Abraham gives us the best model in this regard: he intercedes for Sodom and Gomorrah. How alive and expansive is my intercessory prayer?

Monday, July 29, 2013. St. Martha. Fr. Cándido Casals and Companions, Martyrs (Cal CMF, 243-248)

- Ex 32:15-24, 30-34
- Psalm 105
- Mt 13:31-35

Moses might have been a very disappointed man, seeing the infidelity of the people whose spiritual estate was under his care. Sometimes we too may experience such disappointments in our ministry. Do we give up then? Or like Moses, do we continue to climb the Mountain of the Lord, beseeching on behalf of the people? Our fidelity may appear insignificant—like a little mustard seed or some yeast—before the greater infidelities of the world. But, in the end, the Kingdom triumphs.

Tuesday, July 30, 2013

- Ex 33:7-11; 34,5b-9, 28
- Psalm 102
- Mt 13:36-43

Judgment is to be left to God; its execution, to his angels. Our task is to keep working for the Kingdom, doing our best to tend to the good seed, and convert the weeds into wheat as well—for nothing is impossible by the grace of God! Like Moses, we pray on behalf of the people: “Please come and walk in our midst.”

Wednesday, July 31, 2013. St. Ignatius of Loyola, Priest and co-patron (Cal CMF, 249-253)

- Ex 34:29-35
- Psalm 98
- Mt 13:44-46

Who finds the Kingdom? Anyone can! Sometimes, we chance upon the Kingdom by sheer grace, like the person who happens to find a treasure hidden in the field. At other times, we find it as a result of active searching, like the merchant who was looking for the finest pearl. But what matters is what we do once we have found it—are we willing to risk everything we have in order to own the Kingdom? Do we dare?

5. Texts for reflection

Appendix 1: On Apostolic Charity (Aut 438-441)

438. Love is the most necessary of all the virtues. Yes, I say it and will say it a thousand times: the virtue an apostolic missionary needs most of all is love. He must love God, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and his neighbors. If he lacks this love, all his talents, however fine in themselves, are for nothing. But if, together with his natural endowments, he has much love, he has everything.

439. Love in a man who preaches the Word of God is like fire in a musket. If a man were to throw a bullet with his hands, he would hardly make a dent in anything; but if he takes this same bullet and ignites some gunpowder behind it, it can kill. It is much the same with the Word of God. If God's Word is spoken only naturally, it does very little; but if it is spoken by a priest who is filled with the fire of charity—the fire of love of God and neighbor—it will wound vices,

kill sins, convert sinners, and work wonders. We can see this in the case of St. Peter, who walked out of the upper room afire with the love he had received from the Holy Spirit, with the result that through just two sermons he converted 8,000 people, three in the first sermon and five in the second.

440. The same Holy Spirit, by appearing in the form of tongues of fire above the Apostles on Pentecost, showed us this truth quite clearly: an apostolic missionary must have both heart and tongue ablaze with charity. One day the Venerable Avila was asked by a young priest what he should do to become a good preacher. His ready answer was, Love much. And both experience and the history of the Church teach us that the greatest preachers have always been the most fervent lovers.

441. In truth, the fire of love acts in a minister of the Lord in much the same way that material fire acts in the engine of a locomotive or a ship: it enables them to move the heaviest cargo with the greatest of ease. What good would either of these two huge machines be without fire and steam to move them? None at all. What good is a priest who has finished all his studies and holds degrees in theology and

canon and civil law if he lacks the fire of love? None at all. He is no good for others because he is like a locomotive without steam. Instead of being a help, as he should, he may only be a hindrance. He is no good even for himself. As St. Paul says, If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal.

Appendix 2: The Seven Tests of Humility (Joseph K. Horn)

There are seven common situations that test a person's humility, and reveal clearly whether they are proud or humble. As you listen to each of these seven tests, let it rip open your soul, if need be, and decide what needs to be operated on.

Test 1

What do you do when somebody wrongs you? Do you anger easily? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that we are little gods who should never be inconvenienced. When somebody wrongs us, it hurts our pride, and rather than being humbled by the experience, we get angry, like little Zeuses throwing little lightning bolt temper tantrums.

Or do you take it in stride, remaining cool, calm and collected, rolling with the punches and remaining strong enough to take a few knocks? That's humility. Humility reminds us that we are all sinners, and that we're no better than anybody else.

Test 2

When was the last time you consciously decided to forgive somebody for some wrong they did to you? Was it long ago? Do you only rarely forgive others? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that people have no excuse for hurting us, that they did so on purpose, that they are lower than sewer sludge, and that they deserve our wrath and scorn.

Or do you remember being recently wronged, and immediately forgiving them? That's humility. Humility reminds us that they probably didn't know what they were doing, that they have their own daily struggle just like we do, and that while to err is human, to forgive is divine.

Test 3

What do you do after realizing that you've sinned? Do you pretend it never happened? Do you say that it's not really your fault? Do you plead extenuating circumstances? Do you blame someone else? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that we are too wonderful and excellent and awesome and perfect to really sin, so there must be some other explanation. Since we do not believe that we really sinned, we feel no guilt. Since we feel no guilt, we do not ask for forgiveness. Since we do not ask for forgiveness, we are not forgiven, and we continue to sink deeper and deeper into the quicksand, all the while saying, "Quicksand? What quicksand? I don't see any quicksand!"

Or do we tell God, "I have sinned; please forgive me"? That's humility. Humility reminds us to face the facts, admit our sin, and beg forgiveness. We offer no excuses. We don't

blame the situation on other people. We know that we are sinners, but we humbly trust that our sins will be washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

Test 4

How often do you ask God for favors in prayer? Rarely? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that the greatest people are the self-made billionaires, and that since we are great too, we must in some way be self-made and self-reliant, needing nobody else, never needing to ask anybody for any favors, including God.

Or do you find yourself occasionally asking God for help? That's humility. Humility reminds us that everything we have is from God, that even our bodies and talents are on loan from God, that we are in need of salvation and that Jesus is our Savior.

Test 5

Are you easily annoyed by other people? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that it is we who define "normal", so that anybody who behaves differently from our esteemed selves is behaving abnormally, probably on purpose, just to annoy us.

Or do you enjoy the presence of other people, and interact easily with them? That's humility. Humility reminds us that everybody is different, that each person has a unique role in God's plan, and is therefore given different tastes, desires, abilities, and opportunities. The humble man sees God's will in this diversity, and rejoices in it.

Test 6

Do you find it difficult to submit your will to another person? Do you only watch the TV shows and movies that you want to watch? Do you only eat what you want to eat? Do you complain when [your superiors, community members, or friends] ask you to do something above and beyond the call of duty? Do you refuse to do things because they are beneath your dignity? Or do you do them, but bellyache about it to everybody, as if you were being exploited or martyred? That's pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that we have the right to do anything we want to do, and to avoid doing anything we don't want to do. It was pride that made Lucifer say, "*Non serviam!* I will not serve!"

Or do you gladly accept God's will for you, as expressed by those who have legitimate authority over you or a claim to your time? That's humility. Humility reminds us that God is in charge. He knows what He's doing, and so we can trust Him completely. Every task we are given is a task that must

be done by somebody. The humble soul says, “Here I am Lord; send me,” and then works patiently and gladly. It was humility that made Mary say, “Let it be done to me according to thy will.”

Test 7

When you experience success or good fortune, do you boast about it? That’s pride. Pride lies to us, telling us that success is always due to our own hard work, superior intelligence, brilliant imagination, keen sense of timing, and the simple and obvious fact that we’re just destined to be successful. It also tells us that good fortune isn’t a gift; no, it’s really a karmic thing; it’s the universe paying off its debt of gratitude in appreciation for our magnificence; it’s evidence that God himself is a member of our fan club. So we feel justified in bragging.

Or do you take success in stride, remaining as cool, calm and collected in good fortune as in bad? That’s humility. Humility reminds us that when it rains or shines it does so on both the just and the unjust. Success is always caused

by many factors, some of which we have no control over, and good fortune is a pure grace from God, undeserved and nonrepayable. We thank God on our knees for such gifts, but we don’t boast about them.

Appendix 3: A Story Meditation: *The Holy Rabbi’s Modesty* (Tony de Mello)



An old rabbi was lying ill in bed and his disciples were holding a whispered conversation at his bedside. They were extolling his unparalleled virtues.

– “Not since the time of Solomon has there been one as wise as he,” said one of them.

– “And his faith! It equals that of our father Abraham!” said another.

– “Surely his patience equals that of Job,” said a third.

– “Only in Moses can we find someone who conversed as intimately with God,” said a fourth.

The rabbi seemed restless. When the disciples had gone, his wife asked him,

– “Did you hear them sing your praises?”

– “I did,” said the rabbi.

– “They why are you so fretful?” said his wife.

– “My modesty,” complained the rabbi. “No one mentioned my modesty!”

He was indeed a saint who said,

– “I am only four bare walls—with nothing inside.”

No one could be fuller.

Appendix 4: A Poem Meditation: Patience (Rabindranath Tagore)

If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence
and endure it.

I will keep still and wait like the night with starry vigil
and its head bent low with patience.

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish,
and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking
through the sky.

Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one
of my birds' nests,
and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my
forest groves.



Appendix 5: On Salvific Suffering (John Paul II, “Salvifici Doloris”, nn. 21-22)

21. The Cross of Christ throws salvific light, in a most penetrating way, on man's life and in particular on his suffering. For through faith the Cross reaches man together with the Resurrection: the mystery of the Passion is contained in the Paschal Mystery. The witnesses of Christ's Passion are at the same time witnesses of his Resurrection. Paul writes: “That I may know him (Christ) and the power of his Resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Truly, the Apostle first experienced the “power of the Resurrection” of Christ, on the road to Damascus, and only later, in this paschal light, reached that “sharing in his sufferings” of which he speaks, for example, in the Letter to the Galatians. The path of Paul is clearly paschal: sharing in the Cross of Christ comes about through the experience of the Risen One, therefore through a special sharing in the Resurrection. Thus, even in the Apostle's expressions on the subject of suffering there so often appears the motif of glory, which finds its beginning in Christ's Cross.

The witnesses of the Cross and Resurrection were convinced that “through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God.” And Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says this: “We ourselves boast of you... for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.” Thus to share in the sufferings of Christ is, at the same time, to suffer for the Kingdom of God. In the eyes of the just God, before his judgment, those who share in the suffering of Christ become worthy of this Kingdom. Through their sufferings, in a certain sense they repay the infinite price of the Passion and death of Christ, which became the price of our Redemption: at this price the Kingdom of God has been consolidated anew in human history, becoming the definitive prospect of man's earthly existence. Christ has led us into this Kingdom through his suffering. And also through suffering those

surrounded by the mystery of Christ's Redemption become mature enough to enter this Kingdom.

22. To the prospect of the Kingdom of God is linked hope in that glory which has its beginning in the Cross of Christ. The Resurrection revealed this glory—eschatological glory—which, in the Cross of Christ, was completely obscured by the immensity of suffering. Those who share in the sufferings of Christ are also called, through their own sufferings, to share in glory. Paul expresses this in various places. To the Romans he writes: “We are ... fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.” In the Second Letter to the Corinthians we read: “For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to things that are unseen.” The Apostle Peter will express this truth in the following words of his First Letter: “But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”

Appendix 6: Thoughts on Death (Thomas a Kempis, “The Imitation of Christ”)

Very soon your life here will end; consider, then, what may be in store for you elsewhere. Today we live; tomorrow we die and are quickly forgotten. Oh, the dullness and hardness of a heart which looks only to the present instead of preparing for that which is to come!

Therefore, in every deed and every thought, act as though you were to die this very day. If you had a good conscience you would not fear death very much. It is better to avoid sin than to fear death. If you are not prepared today, how will you be prepared tomorrow? Tomorrow is an uncertain day; how do you know you will have a tomorrow?

What good is it to live a long life when we amend that life so little? Indeed, a long life does not always benefit us, but on the contrary, frequently adds to our guilt. Would that in this world we had lived well throughout one single day. Many count up the years they have spent in religion but find their lives made little holier. If it is so terrifying to die, it is nevertheless possible that to live longer is more dangerous. Blessed is he who keeps the moment of death ever before his eyes and prepares for it every day.

If you have ever seen a man die, remember that you, too, must go the same way. In the morning consider that you may not live till evening, and when evening comes do

not dare to promise yourself the dawn. Be always ready, therefore, and so live that death will never take you unprepared. Many die suddenly and unexpectedly, for in the unexpected hour the Son of God will come. When that last moment arrives you will begin to have a quite different opinion of the life that is now entirely past and you will regret very much that you were so careless and remiss.

How happy and prudent is he who tries now in life to be what he wants to be found in death.

Perfect contempt of the world, a lively desire to advance in virtue, a love for discipline, the works of penance, readiness to obey, self-denial, and the endurance of every hardship for the love of Christ, these will give a man great expectations of a happy death. . . .

Keep yourself as a stranger here on earth, a pilgrim whom its affairs do not concern at all. Keep your heart free and raise it up to God, for you have not here a lasting home. To Him direct your daily prayers, your sighs and tears, that your soul may merit after death to pass in happiness to the Lord.



Memorial

Memores igitur, Domine, eiusdem Filii tui salutiferae passionis necnon mirabilis resurrectionis et ascensionis in caelum (Eucharistic Prayer III).

“If from the beginning Christians have celebrated the Eucharist and in a form whose substance has not changed despite the great diversity of times and liturgies, it is because we know ourselves to be bound by the command the Lord gave on the eve of his Passion: “Do this in remembrance of me” (CCC, 1356).

The Eucharist is, in a specific sense, “memorial” of the Lord’s death and resurrection.

In celebrating the Eucharist, the Church celebrates the memorial of Christ, of all he has said and done, of his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. In it the Church commemorates the memorial of all of salvation history, prefigured in the Old Testament.

It commemorates all that God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – has done for humanity, from the act of creation to mankind’s “re-creation” in Christ, awaiting his return, in which he will recapitulate all things in himself at the end of time.

The Eucharistic “memorial” urges us gratefully to recognize all the gifts received from God in Christ. It gives rise to a life marked by “gratitude,” springing from a sense of “gratuity,” and leading to a sense of “responsibility”.

In effect, remembering all that God has done for us nourishes our spiritual path. The prayer of the Our Father reminds us that we are sons of the Heavenly Father, brothers of Jesus, and sealed by the Holy Spirit who has been poured out into our hearts. By remembering the gifts of nature (life, health, family...) we are moved to value them each with gratitude.

By remembering the gifts of grace (baptism and the other sacraments; the Christian virtues...) we are moved not only to thank God for them, but to put these talents to work, not letting them go to waste, but multiplying and fructifying them.

The Forge in Our Daily Life

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

Jesus Christ was meekness itself, and because of this virtue He is called the Lamb. The prophets foretold that He would be so mild that He would neither break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; that he would be persecuted, calumniated, and covered with reproaches and yet remain as one without a tongue and say nothing. What patience and meekness! **Yes, by his labors, his suffering, his silence and death on the Cross, He redeemed us** and taught us how we must act to save the souls He has entrusted to us.”
(Aut 374)