

caritas christi

The Forge

in our daily life

4

Seekers of the Father's will

Easter

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 live 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

Our memories resound with the famous *Hallelujah* in Handel's *Messiah*, where the stomping beat of the chorus and the triumphant sound of trumpets and timpani fill us with joy.


With the onset of the Easter season, we are invited to participate fully in the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord. The passion and the cross have been necessary steps, but we must not become entranced, nor paralyzed, before the Crucified Christ, without a grateful and jubilant opening up of ourselves to the life that springs from the "sweet wood" and "sweet nails" .

We must confess and share our joy (Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!) because we believe in the resurrection of Christ; and because we also believe in our own resurrection.

We celebrate not only the resurrection of Jesus, but also that of his followers. By faith and the celebration of the sacraments (especially baptism) we enter into the paschal mystery: passion-death and resurrection of the Lord. His "new presence", which transcends time and space, leads us into the new era of fuller communion with God.

Paul's exhortation, delivered at the Easter Vigil, resonates within us with particular emphasis: Don't you know that in baptism which unites us to Christ we are all baptized and plunged into his death? By this baptism in his death, we were buried with Christ and, as Christ was raised from among the dead by the Glory of the Father, so we begin walking in a new life (cf. *Rom* 6:3-11).

But also, this belief should be reflected in our lives. We must seek the things above, where



Christ is seated at the right hand of God (cf. *Col* 3:1).

We are invited, especially during this Easter season, to consider the whole mystery of Christ from the dimension of the virtue of obedience. Jesus' entire life was spent in obedient acceptance of the wishes of the Father: "Here I am. I will do your will, O God" (*Heb* 10:5). "My food is to do the will of the One who sent me" (*Jn* 4:34). Jesus is our model of obedience and, simultaneously, is the personification of all authority. Christ, victor over death through his resurrection, has become our authority, our Lord, precisely because of his obedience, his annihilation and death upon the Cross.

Through his obedience unto death, even death on a Cross, Jesus Risen has been endowed with power (cf. *Rm* 1:4), with a state of majesty, with

a name that is above every name ... and every tongue must proclaim the Lord (cf. *Phil* 2:9-11). The Father has given him all power and authority over all things (cf. *Mt* 28:18). That is to say, he is the only Lord, the only authority to which we submit and obey, because ultimately, all obedience in the Church consists of obeying Christ and, through Christ, the Father. And it is obedience in the Spirit.

We complete this stage of "Caritas Christi" delving into the paschal mystery, identifying ourselves more and more with Christ through our consecrated obedience. **And, during this stage, we carefully contemplate the mother figure of Mary, the handmaid of the Lord**, the first and faithful disciple of her Son Jesus, who kept everything in her Heart ... and we try to adapt to his radical and unconditional attitude of faith - obedience to the will of God.

2. Reflection

2.1. “The true missionary is known by his obedience” (CC 29)

A television advert, shown a few years ago, assured us of the effectiveness of a cleaning product in the following way: a butler used a shiny piece of furniture, with a freshly polished surface, and gave it the “cotton test”. If a cotton ball, which is rubbed on the surface, remains immaculate ... then the said brand can be proved to be really effective. “Cotton cannot cheat,” said the butler. Otherwise ...

The “cotton test” of a true missionary is obedience. This is what the Constitutions of 1857 stated, reflecting the thinking of the Founder himself, “By this we will know the true missionary and the one who is pretending” (CC, 1857, no. 65). And the current revised Constitutions (1982), repeat the same thing: “The true missionary is known by his obedience” (CC 29). It’s an infallible test!

So, brother, analyse your practice of obedience, because there you will discover your true identity as a Claretian missionary. If you pass this test, you can consider yourself a missionary in every respect. But if you see any blemishes in your practice, then your identity will be compromised as a missionary.



Exercise 1: Examination of conscience (the “cotton test”)

- Do you stick to your own point of view, even in the light of others’ opinions?
- Do you overly question orders and directions which do not fit with your own thinking?
- Do you always try to get your own way?
- Do your brothers in the community feature at all in your decision-making?
- Even though they may not be that important, do you nearly always make your own “decisions” for yourself, without consulting anyone, not even the person who is in authority over you?

2.2. To be obedient you need to be truly free

It is not a platitude. It is a statement that is not obviously true at first glance. **To become obedient, you must first be truly free.** He who is not free cannot be obedient.

The human process through which one reaches the goal of true freedom goes through developmental stages characterized, first of all, by *submission* (something which is characteristic of childhood) like a forced, though unconscious, *acceptance* of what has been laid down by

parents or teachers ... it is followed by a posture of *defiance* (typical of adolescence), marked by behaviour which is opposed to what is laid down, with the desire for self-assertion; and, finally, it is crowned by the attainment of a state of *autonomy* (characteristic of adulthood) as

a sign of maturity which we have more or less assumed.

The religious, from the moment of gaining his independence, becomes conscious of the freedom that is in his power, and can offer up his life in faith to the Lord and accept the variety of human interventions.

The winds which waft in breaths of individualism, secularism, freedom bordering on licentiousness (“do what you please”), of the exaggerated value of personal autonomy, the invasion of a democratic dogmatism without further definition or limitation ..., all make it very difficult to accept consecrated obedience, so often caricatured as a childish, irrational, absurd subjection to the will of another.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata (VC)*, of John Paul II, recognized that we live in a world in which we experience the “provocation” that emerges from distorted conceptions of freedom (cf. VC 91).

But we cannot dance to the tune of those who, from the outside, judge us and decide that the lifestyle of religious obedience, that we aspire to, is inhumane and is injurious to the dignity of the person. Consecrated life offers the world an existential answer that is living testimony that “there is no con-

tradition between obedience and freedom” (VC 91).

In actual fact, we try to live and be a witness to the obedience which comes from a position of personal freedom: to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, to be obedient to the will of the Father, in an atmosphere of brotherhood and common effort to join forces in the mission.

We try to re-live the mystery of radical obedience lived by Jesus during his earthly existence, which consisted of submitting himself totally to the will of His Father, often expressed through human intervention.

So do we, through divine vocation, strive to imitate Christ in his total filial obedience to the Father through multiple interventions, including: the Word of God, the Church’s magisterium, the signs of the times, the voices of humanity and the needy, the community of brothers, the guidance of our own institute (the Constitutions,

especially), our superiors ... and our own conscience!

Thus, in response to the grace of the vocation with which God has enriched us, we try to demonstrate in the Church the mystery of Jesus’ radical obedience, his historic way of living in total surrender to the will of his Father.

So, brother, will you feel truly free and fulfilled in your consecration to the Lord when you obey, as a member of a local and provincial fraternity, and as an



apostle in the performance of the mission entrusted to you?



Exercise 2: Test of a mature attitude of obedience

On the journey towards self-realisation, which we never quite achieve, we can take up various positions, which are indicative of the degree of maturity that we have reached. Have a guess at what approximate percentage of success you have had at this point in your life, analyzing some of your own reactions to the field of religious autonomy-obedience:

1. Predominance of **attitudes of passive submission** in the practice of religious obedience and in our relationships with others:

About 75 %

About 50 %

About 25 %

2. Predominance of **rebellious attitudes or systematic opposition** to the orders or directives handed down:

About 75 %

About 50 %

About 25 %

3. Predominance of **mature attitudes**: active and responsible obedience, freedom to discuss opposing views, friendly relationships with superiors and brothers:

About 75 %

About 50 %

About 25 %

2.3. To obey - what is really meant by to "obey" - we must obey God alone

The practice of obedience requires a finely tuned ear. Obedience comes from *ob-audire*, which means paying attention, listening carefully ... it is particularly important to have acute hearing for listening to the voice of God speaking through our superiors, through the brothers of our community, through people we work with in the apostolate, through the events of history and just ordinary life.

Some consider themselves obedient because they "fulfill" what is required of them. Some people are perfectionists when it comes to their professional and religious obligations. He is a perfect Pharisee. Maybe he should ask himself whether his standards of behaviour really respond to God's plan for his life ... or whether he just uncon-

sciously goes through routines or responds to ingrained habits that give him a feeling of blessed security.

Don't simply try to be a mere accurate observer of rules, but be faithful and obedient to what God asks and expects of you. To do this, clean out your ears, pay attention to the murmurings of the Spirit, get used to listening to God's voice, which is very different from other voices, other sounds, other noises, or the din that comes from outside.

And be aware that **to obey is not the same as to show deference in a servile or childlike manner**. Obedience is not a form of "listening" appropriate to slaves or children. It is, above all, a filial attitude of trust:

"It is that particular kind of listening that only a son or daughter can do in listening to his or her parent, because it is enlightened by the certainty that the parent has only good

things to say and give to him or her. This is a listening, full of the trust, that makes a son or daughter accept the parent's will, sure that it will be for his or her own good." (Instr. *Faciem tuam, Domine* 5).

In the process of your assimilation to Christ, obedient to the Father until his death on the cross, you really must go forward taking care to keep a keen ear open so as to hear God's voice clearly; and a clear line of vision, so that you can see as clearly as possible that the most important thing is to know the will of God, and then to respond to it in your life and your activities.

When, in the process, you spend too much time observing the intercessions which convey the will of God, you risk a lot. You forget that what matters most is simply to obey God, and not to discount out of hand other peoples' guidance, however good or bad it seems to be.

2.4. The Virgin Mary, an example of total devotion to the person and the work of her Son

“Imitating Jesus Christ, who was sent to do the Father’s will, and following the example of the Virgin Mary who, as the Lord’s servant, devoted herself totally to the Son and to his work, we too, moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to fulfil the will of the Father in our Congregation.” (CC 28).

Our model of obedience is Jesus Christ himself. The example of obedience is Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

She is the obedient servant of the Lord. With her words in the mystery of the Annunciation (“I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said”, *Lk 1:38*), Mary responds to God with an act of conscious self-abandonment to his will.

As John Paul II mentioned in one of his catecheses (4-IX-1996), the term “servant of God” in the Old Testament applies to all who are called to exercise a mission for the chosen people: Abraham (cf. *Gn 26:24*), Isaac (cf. *Gn 24:14*) Jacob (cf. *Ex 32:13*, *Ez 37:25*), Joshua (cf. *Js 24:29*), David (cf. *2 Sam 7:8*) and so on. The prophets and priests are also servants, those who were entrusted with the mission of educating the people for the faithful service of the Lord. The book of Isaiah exalts the meekness of



the “Suffering Servant”, a model of faithfulness to God in the hope of redemption for the sins of the people (cf. *Is 42-53*). Some women also offer examples of faithfulness, like Queen Esther who, prior to interceding for the salvation of the Jews, addresses a prayer to God, several times calling herself “your servant” (*Est 4:7*).

So Mary, she who is “full of grace”, proclaimed herself the “servant of the Lord”, personally pledging to perfectly perform the service that God expected of her, fully assuming her maternal role with respect to Jesus, and accompanying him on her mission as his Servant .

Alongside this commitment to live her life in total dedication to the person and work of her Son, she has added her commitment to serve others, as we

witness in the episode of the Visitation: when the angel tells Mary that Elizabeth is expecting a son, she sets off and “in haste” (*Lk 1:39*) makes her way to Galilee to help her cousin in her preparation for the birth of the child, putting herself completely at her disposal. This is a sublime example of serving others.

The meek obedience of Mary is a proclamation and prediction of Jesus’ absolute obedience to his heavenly Father.

Along the same lines as her Son, Mary made the Father’s will the inspiring principle of her whole life, seeking in it the strength needed to fulfill the mission entrusted to her. With her full



obedience to the will of God, Mary was willing to undergo all that divine love had planned for her, including the “sword” that would pierce her heart.

Let’s look at the example of Mary’s obedience, so that we may better follow and imitate the model that is Jesus Christ.

2.5. Active responsible obedience

At one time we held in reverence a type of religious obedience that we called “blind”. In the wake of conciliar renewal, the kind of obedience that is now promoted is preferably called “active and responsible” (cf. *PC 14*).

Obedience that we called “blind”, once practised by the good religious of former times, did not admit (as a matter of principle) any hint of disension or questioning of the decisions made by those who exercised the office of superior. The voice of the superior was automatically seen as the voice of God. No-one entertained any doubts, apart from the most critical and

sharp-thinking religious.

It is clear that this inner picture of “blind obedience” is just a mere simplification, a caricature. But it serves to contrast it with the kind of obedience that is now recognized as not only valid but also nearer to the ideal: “active and responsible” obedience.

The Claretian who blindly accepts the orders of his superior is not obedient. In the light of his faith, he must open his eyes to look at the mandates, orders, suggestions, simple nudges and firm decisions, from his own point of view ... and must have the courage, if necessary, after consultation with God (cf. *CC 31*), to share his opinion (should it be contrary to that handed down) in a spirit of humble sincerity. Without a doubt, in the end he must comply with whatever is decided. But this end does not prevent him from thinking, and declaring openly, his own point of view.

The obedient person is not the one who does not see (“blind obedience”), nor the one who does not want to look

... (obedience with an ulterior motive), but the one who sees the arguments against, expresses them with humility and freedom of spirit, then accepts and carries out what is ordered “with all his energy” as if it were his own initiative, in a spirit of resolution and even enthusiasm, knowing that he does the will of God, not the will of men.

The Constitutions urge us to practise a well-motivated obedience (“driven by love”), diligent and perfect (cf. *CC 31*). They urge us to carry out what has been decided, with full implementation of the recommended actions, performing them to the best of our ability.

Is it not true that this kind of obedience, which is “active and responsible”, continues to be a difficult challenge, even harder than “blind obedience”? The world out there will never understand it. We have to understand it, at least, as a grace given to us to imitate Jesus Christ more closely, obedient to the will of the Father.

Exercise 3: Re-visit the different appointments in your life

You are invited to think back, rewinding the video tape of your own life history, and remember the assignments you’ve had throughout your life.

Remember them one by one. Each one of them caught you by surprise in a different place, alongside activities that identified you as a person, perhaps surrounded by people from within and without who valued and supported what you were doing ...:

1. Quietly study, in an atmosphere of personal prayer, **the reasons for these postings**, these transfers and changes (either unexpected or clearly expected by you). And above all, analyze your personal reaction when faced with each of these new postings.
2. Ask yourself if each of them allowed you to demonstrate **this spirit of obedience** in order to accept them; or if it was you yourself who suggested or even asked for these appointments, and the reasons that led you to it.
3. Try and remember if there was **obedient acceptance and a collaborative attitude** in accepting them (an attitude of perfect prompt obedience) ... or if they had to force you, convince you, encourage you to accept them. In short, try to decide if a fundamental attitude of true obedience was, or was not, evident in your postings.



munity are, in turn, also called together to seek the divine will. This is what is called “community participation” (cf. Instr. *Faciem tuam, Domine* 25a).

There are some religious who have a hard time with this community participation activity. They would prefer it to be left to one person, the superior, who would take on the responsibility of thinking and deciding for himself what has to be done, what is God’s will.

But you cannot abdicate from this right and this obligation to work together in seeking God’s will. This does not mean you yield to a common democratic mood, something which is more and more evident in the modern world.

The community as a whole, including the superior, makes up the all-important environment for this process of searching and the realization of God’s loving

plan for the whole community, and for each of the individuals who form the whole.

We must all accept and acknowledge that “the community is the best place in which to recognize and accept the will of God” (Instr. *Faciem tuam, Domine* 20e cf. VC 92).

Dear brother, have you become aware of this responsibility which rests on your shoulders as a member of a particular community, one in which you live and from which you carry out your apostolate?

2.6. The joint search for the will of God

The Constitutions say: “All of us, sharing as we do in the same vocation, jointly seek to know and to do God’s will” (CC 29).

The one who holds the position of superior is expected to perform a duty, a mission, which without doubt in the community of brothers, is irrevocably a sign of unity and guidance in seeking God’s will and its realization.

Now, that does not mean that all members of the com-

Exercise 4: Communication and dialogue within the community

Dialogue is a valuable tool in human communication, worthy of appreciation and implementation in our communities, both between superiors and those under their care, as well as amongst all members of the community. The Constitutions mention it as an aid to brothers in search of the divine will, along with prayer and counsel: “In searching for and carrying out God’s will, we are all obliged to help our brothers by prayer, advice and fraternal dialogue” (CC 29).

But dialogue requires preparation and it has its own requirements or rules. Reflect on each of them and try to put them into practice:

1. Get rid of self-centredness and build up sincere altruism that moves you to value other people through an attitude of dialogue.
2. Always be open to others with the responsiveness of a learner and without the pretensions of arrogance.
3. Be genuinely interested in those who think differently, so that they help you see what you cannot or do not want to see.
4. Continue improving your level of tolerance, so as to avoid falling into bigotry, discrimination and disrespect.
5. Pay attention to the person who talks to you, so you grasp not only their words but all their expressions and emotions.
6. Assimilate the ideas of others with an understanding that allows you to put yourself in their shoes.
7. Communicate in an atmosphere of love, serenity and simplicity under the guidance of the best teacher: God.

2.7. The apostolic impact of our obedience

Mission and obedience are mutually interdependent. Jesus is our model of obedience to the will of God. He always does what pleases the Father. His entire life is the mission of the Father. “He is the mission of the Father” (Instr. *Faciem tuam, Domine* 23).

The Directory reminds us that we, as Claretian missionaries, must look on obedience as an essentially apostolic virtue (cf. *Dir* 76).

We have the shining example of our Founder, who always acted under the direction of his superiors, as a practical criterion

self, sent by the Father. So we have to value obedience as an eminently missionary virtue. The reason for our religious consecration is our relationship with Christ, “the Missionary of the Father” (cf. *17th Gen. Chap. 1VR* 4). And our experience of this virtue will only reach its full meaning if we can live it with that apostolic impact.

The mission for the Claretian is not merely a compendium of activities or work, however important they are. The mission is the central axis that runs through and permeates our whole life with evangelical meaning: consecration, fraternal life and works of the apostolate.

by the desire to fulfill the adorable will of God (cf. Instr. *Faciem tuam, Domine* 24).

2.8. Availability for the universal mission

“...our missionaries will be available to be sent anywhere in the world and ready for whatever ministries to which the Congregation through its superior might assign them” (CC 32).

In the old days (our older brothers will remember), it was quite normal to be given a destination by surprise. The “young fathers” who were doing their pastoral year after completing their studies, once it was



of his awareness, as a missionary, of being “sent by God”: “I had come to realize that a missionary must never thrust himself into an assignment. He should offer his services to the bishop, saying *Ecce ego, mitte me*: here I am, send me. But he should not go until his bishop sends him, because when he is sent, it will be by God’s sending”. (*Aut* 195).

The basic motivation for our Founder to act in this way was the example of Jesus Christ him-

self. As Claretians, we are “obedient” if we are simultaneously “missionaries”. And we are real “missionaries” if we embody in our lives the virtue of obedience, whatever the activity we engage in and wherever we are and wherever we carry out our duties, and whatever other tasks the Congregation entrusts us with.

“We are on a mission,” we truly are missionaries, when, far from seeking self-glorification, we first of all let ourselves be led

completed, received a sealed envelope from Fr General containing their appointment. Many began their missionary careers in distant lands, without the hope of someday returning to their home country. That’s how it was in those days. You left and you “burned your ships” for the sake of the mission entrusted to our care.

Times have changed. Today, I would like to believe that superiors consult, discuss, listen ... and then give an appointment. Many



missionaries continue to leave for distant lands. “Far away” from where they were. But from then on “near at hand” and as dearly loved as the lands they left behind. Nowadays they also return to their home countries. And they keep in touch with family by letter, by internet or by telephone.

But the spirit of availability for the mission is, and must be, the same. It is part of the essence of the Claretian vocation. Claret said: “My spirit is for everyone.” Precisely, “the gift we have received makes us a community in the service of the Church. This demands a constant effort on our part to find our vocational identity in the communion of the Congregation and in a sense of availability for its universal mission” (*Dir* 104).

The Constitutions exhort us to foster in ourselves this sense of availability, so that we will be ready to abandon all that we have grown accustomed to in order to fulfill our duty of spreading the faith, both within and beyond our native land, open to the guidance of the Spirit and obedient to our mission (cf. CC 48).

When the date for their perpetual profession approaches, missionaries in formation are invited to write a letter to Fr. General “manifesting to him their dispositions and aspirations as regards the missionary service of the Congregation” (*Dir* 225).

What if you plucked up the courage one of these days, after a period of prayer with the Lord, to write a letter to Fr. General manifesting to him your availability for the mission?

2.9. Priorities in the service of those in authority

If you are a superior, or if you carry out the duties of someone in charge or some other similar responsibilities in any area of ministry, **examine carefully how you perform that service** in the light of the Instruction *Faciem tuam, Domine* 13:

a) Is your service eminently spiritual? Or do you immerse yourself in roles that have little spiritual importance, like those of organization, administration, discipline ...?

b) Do you know how to listen to others? Do you have a daily prayerful familiarity with the Word of God, with the Constitutions, with the signs of the times?

c) Are you a shining example of good practice in the life of prayer for each and every one of your brothers in the community? Do you ensure that a dignified period of time is set apart for the practice of community prayer?

d) Do you seriously commit yourself to fostering the dignity of each member of your community? Do you rely on them merely for the jobs, services and ministries they can provide ... or do you also take an interest in their problems, concerns, health and their emotional states?

e) Are you an unconditional support to your brothers; are you self-sacrificing, available and attentive to them in their problems? Do you give them encouragement and hope in their difficulties?

f) Are you a "living reminder" of the congregational charism? Are you conversant with it and do you embody it in your own life? When you are observed carrying out your office are you clearly seen to be faithful to the Claretian charism?

g) Do you keep the *sentire cum Ecclesia* vibrant in the midst of your community? ¿Do you favour ecclesial communion in your own environment and circle of action: community, ministry, diocesan relationships ...?

h) To promote lifelong formation, do you lend a hand to the ordinary workaday activities that promote the human and spiritual growth of your brothers in the community (meetings, reviews, study, times of prayer and moments of sharing)?



3. Suggestions for the community meeting

The community meeting to address the issue of religious obedience and dialogue. We suggest the following notes:

1. Start with a prayer: “We want to do your will” (*Spiritual Directory*, No. 83, p. 72-73).

2. Reading from *Vita Consecrata*:

“The fraternal life is the privileged place in which to discern and accept God’s will, and to walk together with one mind and heart. Obedience, enlivened by charity, unites the members of an Institute in the same witness and the same mission, while respecting the diversity of gifts and individual personalities. In community life which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, each individual engages in a fruitful dialogue with the others in order to discover the Father’s will. At the same time, together they recognize in the one who presides an expression of the fatherhood of God and the exercise of authority received from God, at the service of discernment and communion.” (VC 92).

3. Community dialogue

Share open and relaxed discussion about how to enter into dialogue with our brothers. We recommend the following questions to get the ball rolling:

- Are we convinced that the community has to be that special place for discerning and accepting God’s will and walking together with one mind and one heart?
- Are we, in fact, overlooking the need we all have to be involved in this task? What are the real impediments or difficulties for its implementation? Are there personal objections, a lack of freedom, or a lack of opportunities ...?
- In which areas would we welcome the opportunity for dialogue amongst all of us, including the superior?
- What qualities or attitudes seem essential for the implementation of community dialogue?

4. Finish with a prayer: “Obedience in communion” (*Spiritual Directory*, No. 62, p. 58-59).





5. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

Easter is the oldest and most important Christian feast. Its celebration at the Easter Vigil is the heart of the liturgical year. This celebration, preceded by forty days of Lent, extends over the whole period of fifty days that we call Easter season. This is the great time of joy, culminating in the feast of Pentecost, which completes our Easter celebrations.

The General Roman Calendar provides a key to understanding this period in its section on the Easter season: "The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday are to be celebrated with joy and exultation, as if it were of one and only holiday, yea rather, as a great Sunday" (Nos. 22-26). These are the days when the *Alleluia* is sung mostly.

The church invites us to recover the spirit of the ancient Pentecost and the sense of celebration, not content with one day, even with an octave, to celebrate Easter, but requires a whole period of time. The mystery of the resurrection runs throughout this time. It is seen in all its aspects during the fifty days. The good news of salvation is the cause of the joy of the church. The resurrection is presented both as event and as omnipresent reality, a mystery of salvation acting constantly in the church.

Sunday, March 31, 2013. Easter Sunday

- Acts 10:34a. 37-43
- Psalm 117
- Col 3:1-4
- Jn 20:1-9

It was still dark when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. It was night outside, and inside the heart as well. The one who “had done all things well” had now died. All were memories of the past. And yet, a new life was dawning for the world. Jesus had broken down the gates of hell and had started the resurrection, a resurrection that will not end until his second coming. Let’s sing *Alleluia!*

Monday, April 1, 2013. Monday in the Octave of Easter

- Acts 2:14.22-23
- Psalm 15
- Mt 28:8-15

The Lord knows that the world wants the graves to be well sealed, and uses lies and corruption to prevent the news spreading that He is risen. Some people would do anything so as not to disclose the good news of liberation, of the victory of life over death, of the victory of love for others above self-love.

Tuesday, April 2, 2013. Tuesday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 2:36-41
- Psalm 32
- Jn 20:11-18

Mary Magdalene is next to the tomb of the Lord. She is looking for the Master. She makes an enquiry. At last she caught sight of Jesus, but does not recognize him. This is what happens to us with the Gospel. What helps us to know the Lord is not the eyes, but the voice. The timbre of the voice, its tone, the name pronounced with love. Mary Magdalene is an example of the true believer who seeks the Lord.

Wednesday, April 3, 2013. Wednesday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 3:1-10
- Psalm 104
- Lk 24:13-35

The two disciples return sadly to Emmaus, their old world, to resume their normal lives. And there’s no shortage of reasons for them doing that. How often moments like these appear in our lives! We need someone to approach us and remind us that the words and deeds of Jesus, his Gospel, will pass through our hearts again, so that, with hearts on fire, we may be able to say to him, “Stay with us”.

Thursday, April 4, 2013. Thursday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 3:11-26
- Psalm 8
- Lk 24:35-48

Finally Jesus appears to the apostles. The community is locked in the upper room, because they are afraid. A fear that we know well. Those times when we close the door of our hearts for fear of losing something. But the Risen One is able to pass through those doors to communicate the message of peace to us. A peace in which the disciples have no faith. Until he shows them his hands and feet, the proof to his suffering.

Friday, April 5, 2013. Friday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 4:1-12
- Psalm 117
- Jn 21:1-14

The disciples, who had left their nets to become fishers of men, once again go back to being fishers of fish, but now feeling incapable and useless. And that is how the Risen One finds them. They do not know him. The experience of failure has blurred their vision, as if it were night. The closeness of Jesus brings them light and an abundance of fish. Then comes the celebration, food and drink. He is with them once again.

Saturday, April 6, 2013. Saturday of the Octave of Easter

- Acts 4,13-21
- Psalm 117
- Mk 16:9-15

Mary Magdalene becomes the first herald of the resurrection. But the disciples do not believe her. It is difficult for this world to believe in the weak, people who have “no say in anything”. But the Lord has taught us that he wants to use the weak to confound the strong. It’s hard to accept that the first heralds of the resurrection were not those who would be the leading voices of the Church.

Sunday, April 7, 2013. Second Sunday of Easter

- Acts 5:12-16
- Psalm 117
- Rev 1:9-11a. 12-13. 17-19
- Jn 20:19-31

On the evening of Easter Day all the apostles were locked in the upper room. Jesus enters into the enclosed circle to open the doors and show them a new horizon. Not everyone wants to see it, but they can see the evidence that it is Jesus: his wounds. We can all see them. It is the moment of being sent. You have to reach into the wounds of the world. There is no time to lose.

Monday, April 8, 2013. Solemnity of the Annunciation

- Is 7:10-14; 8,10
- Psalm 39
- Heb 10:4-10
- Lk 1:26-38

Mary is just a girl, and lives the ordinary life of her community. But the Lord looked at her. And a look from God is able to bring transformations. Peter was made to weep, Mary was made to conceive the Word, the most high. But he not only looked at her, he also spoke to her through the angel. And the word of God cannot leave anyone feeling indifferent. God speaks and creates. But in this case, he needed Mary's consent.

Tuesday, April 9, 2013

- Acts 4:32-37
- Psalm 92
- Jn 3:5a.7b-15

Jesus makes it clear that being born from above does not limit you to a hazy sense of religiosity. We are talking about choosing a real person of flesh and blood, the Christ, with all that he brings with him. Man cannot be saved with a kind of spirituality that has a menu of options. It is vital that salvation comes from above, because no one has ever gone up into heaven except the Son of Man.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013

- Acts 5:17-26
- Psalm 33
- Jn 3:16-21

God has never been so close to man as when he became one of us. You cannot ask for greater proof of love than that. Contrary to what is customary among men, God made man does not consider his life of any worth if he does not give it for others. Love freely given becomes a new phenomenon that illuminates the darkness of selfishness. He does not come to condemn the world but to save it.

Thursday, April 11, 2013

- Acts 5:27-33
- Psalm 33
- Jn 3:31-36

There is a way of living life in a state of resignation that refuses to dream and hope for a better future for themselves and for others. It does not know how to look beyond everyday experiences, with its disappointments and failures, its obstacles and bitterness, refusing to observe reality with high expectation, as in the Gospel. Only if we are deeply rooted in the world can we feel the need to believe in the "One who comes down from heaven."

Friday, April 12, 2013

- Acts 5:34-42
- Psalm 26
- Jn 6:1-15

So long as people listen to Jesus they are able to forget even about eating. Jesus realizes this and asks the disciples to feed them. But their pockets are empty. They still do not know their Master well enough. The bread in the hands of Jesus multiplies. His hands do not withhold things, but give things away. They are used to being open, to sharing things generously. So, in the end, there is more than enough.

Saturday, April 13, 2013

- Acts 6:1-7
- Psalm 32
- Jn 6:16-21

In the stormy times of life, doubts easily plague you. Suffering is very upsetting, natural disasters leave you speechless, it's as if evil takes control of everything. And we have doubts about our future. And yet the Lord is near and is able to walk through the darkness and danger. It seems safer to hold on to the boat, until we hear: "It is me, do not be afraid" and then we see his outstretched hand.

Sunday, April 14, 2013. Third Sunday of Easter

- Acts 5:27b-32. 40b-41
- Psalm 29
- Rev 5:11-14
- Jn 21:1-19

“That night they caught nothing.” A bitter experience for Peter and the others. An experience that we are all familiar with, failure. That darkness which speaks of the absence of the Lord. But He comes to us to help us try again. We must cast the net again. His word is armed with authority and that makes everything possible. It is the word and the body given by the Risen One.

Monday, April 15, 2013

- Acts 6:8-15
- Psalm 118
- Jn 6:22-29

Jesus withdraws, alone, to the mountain. He needs to meet with the Father. He knows that people are pursuing him out of self-interest, not “for the food which does not perish, which leaps upwards to eternal life.” This is not what he expected. Becoming a disciple requires a commitment to him in the long, hard work ahead. It requires listening, decision, implementation, continuity, commitment and fatigue. Otherwise it is not possible to become his disciple.

Tuesday, April 16, 2013

- Acts 7:51-8,1a
- Psalm 30
- Jn 6:30-35

We know that bread from heaven is not far away, it is available to all of us. We will never lack this bread if know how to ask for it: “Give us this bread always”. With this bread, our yearning for happiness will be satisfied if we make use of our lives not to store it away, but to use it on behalf of others. It is the miracle that takes place every day in the Eucharist, the Body broken, the Blood spilled.

Wednesday, April 17, 2013

- Acts 8:1b-8
- Psalm 65
- Jn 6:35-40

Mankind has a hunger for meaning, for a lasting and fruitful life, and for happiness. Who has food that can satisfy this hunger? The Lord clearly says, “I am the bread of life ...”. This is the paradox on which the Eucharist is based: a lasting and fulfilling life is not one that keeps everything for itself, but one that is spent working on behalf of others. Don't lose anyone, save everyone.

Thursday, April 18, 2013. Esteban Sala, Co-founder and First Superior General (Cal CMF, 93-100)

- Acts 8:26-40
- Psalm 65
- Jn 6:44-51

Those listening to Jesus could not accept that he came from heaven, that he had been sent by God. They know exactly where he comes from. They are unable to understand that it is from the periphery where salvation comes from. It is a scandal that still continues today, to understand that the Word may manifest itself through the weakness of the words in the gospels. But we are at the heart of the Christian faith.

Friday, April 19, 2013

- Acts 9:1-20
- Psalm 116
- Jn 6:52-59

“How can this man give his flesh to be eaten?” They talk like that because they do not want to confess their own hunger, because they don't want to beg as the beggars do. They are full of their own importance. It is possible that we too need to hold out our hands, begging for love and attention, even though we do not want to admit it. But it is a condition for inheriting eternal life.

Saturday, April 20, 2013

- Acts 9:31-42
- Psalm 115
- Jn 6:60-69

The evangelist tells us that Jesus “is” the bread, not that he “has” the bread, as people thought. It seems an excessive claim, a hard one to accept. So, for that reason, they abandon Jesus. He addresses the twelve (this is the first time in this gospel where that expression appears) and asks them about their intentions. It is one of the most dramatic moments in the life of Jesus. He risks being left alone. But, without him, where do we go?

Sunday, April 21, 2013. Fourth Sunday of Easter

- Acts 13:14. 43-52
- Psalm 99
- Ap 7:9. 14b-17
- Jn 10:27-30

Being faithful to the Lord means listening to his voice and following him every day. If you do not follow him, his voice is lost, if you do not walk with him every day his voice disappears over the horizon and you get lost. But if you walk together as a community, you are likely not to falter. In any case, the Lord's will is that no one should perish, that no one should be separated from his side. And we know that the Lord is good, strong and jealous.

Monday, April 22, 2013

- Acts 11:1-18
- Psalm 1
- Jn 10:1-10

Jesus introduces himself as the Good Shepherd. In such an aggressive, competitive, and sometimes cruel society, we need an image like this: someone who cares more for others than for himself. There are too many mercenaries and, as St. Ambrose once said, "So many masters end up with only those who have rejected the Lord!" Jesus enters through the front door, the heart.

Tuesday, April 23, 2013

- Acts 11:19-26
- Psalm 86
- Jn 10:22-30

A few are moved by curiosity, "How long will you keep us in suspense?", others are inspired by need: they asked for healing, for forgiveness, for a new life. For that reason the Lord's works have different effects. While some are led towards salvation, others find those works irksome or useless. It is the difference between those who are disciples and those who are not, those who need salvation and those who are seeking only out of curiosity.

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

- Acts 12:24-13,5
- Psalm 66
- Jn 12:44-50

The Lord is the light that came into the world. But the light is not just for lighting up the emptiness, but a light that warms, that points the way, which means that we can see and we meet up with others. The Lord is the Word, not to judge but to communicate the goodness of God, who wants salvation for all of us. "I came not to condemn the world but to save it."

Thursday, April 25, 2013. Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist

- 1 Pt 5:5b-14
- Psalm 88
- Mk 16:15-20

With the account of the Last Supper we enter the final days of Jesus' life. There is just one more thing to communicate to his disciples. And he does it by washing their feet. Mark heard about it from Peter. The Master knelt before him and said, "Do likewise." And Mark, and doubtlessly the whole community of Rome, understood why Peter also gave his life on the cross.

Friday, April 26, 2013

- Acts 13:26-33
- Psalm 2
- Jn 14:1-6

Jesus has scarcely founded his community and the disciples are already listening: "I have little time left for being with you." How do you resign yourself to losing a friend like that? It is very easy to say "don't let your heart be troubled." But the Lord cannot deceive them when he says "I want you to be where I am now." "I want ...". It does not matter now, he is not going away, he is simply walking ahead of them.

Saturday, April 27, 2013

- Acts 13:44-52
- Psalm 97
- Jn 14:7-14

The disciples want to know the way. They do not remember that He is the Way. They want to see the Father, but do not remember that he is the Father's beloved Son, and whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. Walking beside him, looking at him, being with him, was the easiest and most human way of understanding the hidden mystery of God. They have seen him cure people, mourn for them, suffer with them and forgive them. They have seen the Father.

Sunday, April 28, 2013. Fifth Sunday of Easter

- Acts 14:21b-27
- Psalm 144
- Rev 21:1-5a
- Jn 13:31-33a. 34-35

The apostles sometimes meet with the risen Jesus in the Upper Room, other times on the road, other times on the lake. It happens to us too. And he who forgets to meet with the One who has conquered death is in danger of becoming lost in the midst of his loneliness. All it requires is to look up from our little lives to realize that we can find him amidst the suffering of others.

Monday, April 29, 2013

- Acts 14:5-18
- Psalm 113
- Jn 14:21-26

The address Jesus makes to Jude Thaddeus is the answer to a question we all ask ourselves about the words of Jesus: Why is it revealed to only a few? God's plan has been to providentially preserve the original faith which comes from the Spirit. It inspired the authors of the Gospels and it makes us think that God really knows how to select the words and the ears that will hear them.

Tuesday, April 30, 2013

- Acts 14:19-28
- Psalm 144
- Jn 14:27-31a

All goodbyes are difficult and painful, including that of Jesus. The only remedy is to pacify the heart and promise to return: "I am going away, but I will be back" It seems a contradiction, but being with the Father is being closer. When we go our separate ways, this demands another type of presence. It is the presence which we enjoy today, wherever we are. Love always finds an answer.

Wednesday, May 1, 2013

- Acts 15:1-6
- Psalm 121
- Jn 15:1-8

What makes a connection between master and disciple is friendship. So Abraham was called a friend and not a servant, because God did not hide anything from him. That's what Jesus does with his disciples. The word friend is not a mere expression, it is a commitment, a covenant. To the point of giving up one's life. When these things are said on the night before he died, they become very important.

Thursday, May 2, 2013. Memorial of St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- Acts 15:7-21
- Psalm 95
- Jn 15:9-11

Jesus openly admits what his love amounts to. In the last analysis love is the source of happiness. And when you love someone it is because you consider that person of greater importance. With Jesus, being united to Him gives us life. He is the vine and we want to live with Him. The story of the rich young man who sadly walks away, is a story without end, which disappears in the fog.

Friday, May 3, 2013. Feast of St. Philip and James, Apostles (Cal CMF, 111-117)

- 1 Cor 15:1-8
- Psalm 18
- Jn 14:6-14

Philip's question and Jesus' response point to a unity between the Father and the Son that is so close that they become words of salvation, love and surrender. The work of Jesus is the greatest proof of this unity. And then there come the two promises: he who believes will do even greater things, and he who goes to the Father in his name will always be heard.

Saturday, May 4, 2013

- Acts 16:1-10
- Psalm 99
- Jn 15:18-21

It is impossible to reconcile benevolence which is freely given, which should be the hallmark of the true disciple of Jesus, with worldly logic that always seeks personal advantage, or at least some profitable exchange. Anyway, we continue to be citizens of this world and, as the Letter to Diognetus says, to be involved in it, but we are like pilgrims who are heading towards the goal of a diverse and better reality.

Sunday, May 5, 2013. Sixth Sunday of Easter

- Acts 15:1-2, 22-29
- Psalm 66
- Rev 21:10-14, 22-23
- Jn 14:23-29

We begin to sense the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the great promise made by Jesus to fill his own people with confidence. First we must love, then we must study his word, that is the condition so as to be assured of the presence of the Father and the Son. But we are still at the beginning of things with regard to our understanding of the word. We need to deepen our understanding of it, so that the promise of Jesus becomes a reality.

Monday, May 6, 2013

- Acts 16:11-15
- Psalm 149
- Jn 15:26-16,4a

It is the moment for establishing mutual love, the love that has united them so far to the Lord. A gift that does not impoverish, on the contrary. The evidence of this bond will surely arouse hostility amongst those who do not know him. Hence the responsibility they have to proclaim the Gospel, to bring everyone to Him. In short, to uncover for the world another way of conceiving life.

Tuesday, May 7, 2013. Canonization of St. Anthony Mary Claret (1950) (Cal CMF, 119-125)

- Acts 16:22-34
- Psalm 137
- Jn 16:5-11

The teaching of Jesus is like an injection of energy that fills the heart and transforms life. He spoke to them of the hatred and persecution that exists in the world. He noticed sadness in their hearts, but that does not mean he will change direction. He has to go away. If not, "the Paraclete will not come to you." And without the Spirit, many of his words will simply not be understood. He will make everything clear.

Wednesday, May 8, 2013

- Acts 17:15,22-18,1
- Psalm 148
- Jn 16:12-15

It seems as if Jesus could not stop talking. "There are still many things ...". But he sees that his disciples are not yet able to bear the weight of the message of the Gospel. But it doesn't need wise men, nor strong people in whom to entrust the mission. What he wants is for them to allow themselves to be transformed, not to hinder the power of his message. He will never abandon them. He will never abandon us.

Thursday, May 9, 2013

- Acts 18:1-8
- Psalm 97
- Jn 16:16-20

Jesus is teaching his disciples how they should live with him when he is not there, in a new and different way. One way of life is just finishing, but another begins which will never end and will be able to overcome the sense of separation, but only if they continue to desire his presence and seek him. For the disciples, all this is a paradox: how can distance become proximity? The prayer of invocation will make it possible.

Friday, May 10, 2013. Memorial of St. John of Avila, Priest (Cal CMF, 127-133)

- Acts 18:9-18
- Psalm 46
- Jn 16:20-23a

Friendship with the Lord is not something improvised, it is like a birth whose result is the fruit of a long and exhausting period of gestation. The fruit is a new life. So we should not be discouraged by the difficulties that sometimes catch us out when we receive the Word. This is patient work which, in the end, will give us the ability to taste the sweetness that comes from the Gospel.

Saturday, May 11, 2013

- Acts 18:23-28
- Psalm 46
- Jn 16: 23b-28

The Lord teaches his disciples how to pray. And he does not do it with a lesson in theory, but offers himself as an example. They learn from his sense of confidence, the certainty with which He prays, reassured that the Father will not deny us all that is good for us and for everyone. This is "praying in his name." The recognition that we need his help, we can not survive by ourselves.

Sunday, May 12, 2013. Ascension of the Lord

- Acts 1:1-11
- Psalm 46
- Eph 1:17-23. (Or Heb 9: 24-28; 10, 19-23)
- Lk 24:46-53

The disciples had asked whether the time had finally arrived to found the new kingdom of Israel. In other words, are we now finished with evil? When? That is also our question too. But Jesus does not respond. He only assures them of his presence, a presence that extends in space and time. Which is cause for great joy for all. Through the Ascension we begin to sense our own future.

Monday, May 13, 2013

- Acts 19:1-8
- Psalm 67
- Jn 16:29-33

The disciples believe they have understood everything. As Jesus has opened their hearts to the beauty of life with the Father, they believe they now have it in their hands. But Jesus uncovers their weakness which, soon afterwards, would cause them to abandon him. We need his help. It is not enough simply to understand the Word, we must possess it. This requires recognizing our own inherent weakness and accepting his help.

Tuesday, May 14, 2013. Feast of St. Matthias, Apostle (*Cal CMF, 135-139*); M. Avellana (*Cal CMF, 141-147*)

- Acts 1:15-17, 20-26
- Psalm 112
- Jn 15:9-17

Matthias is an apostle who joined the group almost on tiptoe, and he did so with great humility. We hardly know anything about him, but we do know that he was chosen by the Holy Spirit, after a period of inner probing and intense prayer. It is an example of how we should put ourselves in the hands of the Spirit when it comes to making big decisions, without disregarding our own responsibilities.

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

- Acts 20:28-38
- Psalm 67
- Jn 17:11b-19

The Lord prays for his disciples. He does not think about himself, despite the threat of betrayal. He is worried about them. They are going to undergo the severest of tests. He knows that the temptation of them walking on their own brings with it a sense of weakness. It is our great temptation. But the last word does not belong to the evil one. He is going to show them the way, how to save themselves, by rejecting the logic of living only for oneself.

Thursday May, 16, 2013

- Acts 22:30; 23:6-11
- Psalm 15
- Jn 17:20-26

It's as if the wall enclosing the upper room were to fall away, and Jesus were to behold the multitude of men and women from all corners of the globe who seek solace and peace. Jesus prays for them and asks the Father that they be all as one. He knows what the spirit of division is capable of doing. Only Jesus' excessive love will protect his disciples and join them in a single vocation, his vocation.

Friday, May 17, 2013

- Acts 25:13-21
- Psalm 102
- Jn 21:15-19

Jesus asks Peter about love. He does not ask him about his sense of duty, nor about the strength of his will. And he asks him three times to help him understand that it is the most important question to be asked every day. Peter holds back, but eventually he finds the answer, which makes it clear that we must allow ourselves to be led by the Lord in order to accomplish his mission.

Saturday, May 18, 2013

- Acts 28:16-20, 30-31
- Psalm 10
- Jn 21:20-25

How difficult it is to bear fruit without the sun shining down from the Gospel! But when He comes and eats with them, hope is reignited. But now they know what it is like to fish on their own without catching anything. Now they realize that his proximity is what makes the miracle of abundance possible. They recognize the risen Jesus, the one who leaves them but stays with them forever.

- Acts 2:1-11
- Psalm 103
- 1 Cor 12:3b-7.12-13
- Jn 20:19-23

When the Holy Spirit came to them, they were all together in the Upper Room. This was surely the culmination of a process. They were ready, waiting for him. When you expect a piece of news, in a way it is already present and the welcome is prepared. The Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask. It's the right time. We shouldn't let another day pass by without asking for it. Any day can be Pentecost.

5. Texts for reflection

Appendix 1: Prayer of abandonment (Charles de Foucauld)

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

Appendix 2: Bridge over the River Kwai (P. J. Ynaraja)

I don't go to the cinema, says the Lord, but I've been told about the film and I will recall it now.

It happened one day that an English officer and his subordinates were taken prisoner. According to universally accepted conventions, enlisted soldiers could be subjected to menial tasks, but officers could only do work of a technical nature. And Colonel Boguey, true to his military stature, was given the task of directing the construction of a bridge over the River Kwai.

But the highest English authority ordered the bridge to be sabotaged. Upon learning the intention of his government, the Colonel was roused to anger. "Dynamite 'his' bridge?" he said indignantly. "No way!"

In the kingdom of heaven, there are those who claim to be faithful servants of my Father, says the Lord, and when

they are challenged to clarify if they really serve the kingdom or just themselves, or if they link their own interests, honour and criteria, with my Father's plans, we usually find they are making their own way through life, smug with their own success, satisfied only by their own efforts.

You, on the other hand, says the Lord, be sure to ask yourself if what you do pleases the Father, if he expects this of you or demands something else, if you're willing to grow smaller so that he grows bigger. If you act like this you will never be an obstacle, you will never assign to yourself jobs that are not yours, you will always enjoy my favour, you can ask me for help, you will have my company.

Appendix 3: The ten commandments for superiors (José San Román, CMF)

1. Above all things, love each and every one of the brothers in your community. This is your first love. Put it above your own interest, your work, and the works of your ministry ... Above everything! Love everyone with sincerity and make sure that everyone realizes that you truly love them.

2. Do not take the place of God in vain. Do not try to overshadow his divine presence, nor represent just yourself, but only Christ, whom no one can replace in the Church, but whose authority you are called to proclaim with special enthusiasm in the midst of your community.

3. Work for the sanctification of your brothers. You will be primarily the spiritual 'cheer leader' of the community. Don't waste your energies in trying to perfectly play the role of the boss, or the role of a born organizer or a leader ... or any other equivalent role in society.

4. Honour your religious family. Honour God, your Father, let him be the one who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and honour your brothers in the community, to whom you will entirely devote yourself, actively and discreetly.

5. Do not kill your community. Do not "decapitate" it by ignoring their opinions and too readily falling back on your rights as their leader (and back on your duty, in some cases), to make the decisions yourself and order what to do. Rather, it will give rise to the fact that the community, which itself is intelligent and has a sense of faith, should make decisions, be involved in the issues, come to their own conclusions and then collaborate in the execution of what has been decided by the majority (including the superior).

6. Do not commit, nor allow others to commit, acts that violate the highest ideals of community life, such as individualism, selfishness, going it alone ... Be a champion of fraternal communion, not just convivial uniformity. Be an

example of communion and the bond of unity and, as such, strive to awaken a genuine sense of community mysticism.

7. Do not deprive any of your brothers of the right to develop their own personal charism. Applaud their development and their willingness to work for the charism of the community, towards a more ready fulfillment of the mission entrusted to everyone.

8. Don't fall into the trap of fulfilling your duty at the expense of serving others as brothers. But do not try to live up to the clumsy parody of doing more than is necessary for them. Nor should you put, on the shoulders of only a few, the responsibilities of the community and ministry.

9. Neither in thought nor desire, should you allow the beauty of the original charism to be defiled. Rather, you will be the one who reminds others of the charism: you will promote a sense of vocational identity, you will awaken in them the sense of belonging to their own institute and you'll encourage in them their sense of availability for the mission.

10. Do not covet any good other than to know and fulfill, a little more each day, the Father's will concerning yourself and your community. So, for that reason, give precedence to the practice of community decision-making (starting by praying with your brothers) and assiduously practise the ministry of spiritual mediation which has been entrusted to you (learning also how to pray a lot on their behalf).

Appendix 4: “Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram” (No. 5)

“Listen, child” (Pr 1:8). First of all, obedience is an attitude of a son or daughter. It is that particular kind of listening that only a son or daughter can do in listening to his or her parent, because it is enlightened by the certainty that the parent has only good things to say and give to him or her. This is a listening, full of the trust, that makes a son or daughter accept the parent’s will, sure that it will be for his or her own good.

This is most completely true in regard to God. In fact, we reach our fullness only to the extent that we place ourselves within the plan with which He has conceived us with a Father’s love. Therefore, obedience is the only way human persons, intelligent and free beings, can have the disposition to fulfil themselves. As a matter of fact, when a human person says “no” to God, that person compromises the divine plan, diminishing him or herself and condemning him or herself to failure.

Obedience to God is the path of growth and, therefore, of freedom for the person because this obedience allows for the acceptance of a plan or a will different from one’s own

that not only does not deaden or lessen human dignity but is its basis. At the same time, freedom is also in itself a path of obedience, because it is in obeying the plan of the Father, in a childlike way, that the believer fulfils his or her freedom. It is clear that such obedience requires that persons recognize themselves as sons and daughters and enjoy being such, because only a son or a daughter can freely place him or herself in the hands of his or her Father, exactly like the Son, Jesus, who abandoned himself to the Father. Even if in his passion he gave himself up to Judas, to the high priests, to his torturers, to the hostile crowd, and to his crucifiers, he did so only because he was absolutely certain that everything found its meaning in complete fidelity to the plan of salvation willed by the Father, to whom, as St. Bernard reminds us, “it is not the death which was pleasing, but the will of the One who died of his own accord.”

Appendix 5: Say: “Here I am”, “Ecce” (Ángel Sanz)

Once a young novice asked the Abbot if there was a chance of getting to know Jesus Christ from the inside. The Abbot just opened the Bible in front of him.

- “Isn’t that too much?” the young man timidly asked when he saw how thick the book was.

The Abbot lowered his eyes and invited the young man to read exactly what he was pointing at in the book.

The novice read the Latin passage from Hebrews 10, 5: “On entering the world, he said “*Ecce* (Here I am), Father. I will do your will”.

- “No, no” said the Abbot smiling, “just the first word: *Ecce*. Remember this word carefully: it is brief, it reads the same forwards and backwards, but, above all, it is a well whose depth can not be measured.

Appendix 6: Prayer of Father Founder (Aut 755)

Lord, I do not seek or wish to know anything but how to fulfil your holy will. I want nothing but you, and in you and for you alone all other things. You are more than enough for me. I love you, my strength, my refuge, and comfort. You are my Father, my Brother, my Spouse, my Friend, and my All. Make me love you as you love me and as you would have me love you.

*Et ideo, choris angelicis sociatis,
Te aludamus in gaudio confitentes : Sanctus
Propter quod caelestia tibi atque terrestria
Canticum novum concinunt adorando...* (Preface II of the Most Holy Eucharist)

“Christian joy is, in its essence, a participation in the fathomless joy – at once divine and human – in the heart of the glorified Jesus Christ” (*Gaudete in Domino*, II) and this participation in the joy of the Lord “cannot be dissociated from the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery” (*ibid.*, IV), particularly from the Eucharistic celebration of the *Dies Domini*.

“The festive character of the Sunday Eucharist expresses the joy that Christ communicates to his Church through the gift of the Spirit. Joy is precisely one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22*)” (*Dies Domini*, 56).

Numerous aspects within the Mass highlight the joy of Christ’s encounter with the brothers, be it in the words spoken (for example, in the *Gloria*, or in the preface), the gestures used, or the festive climate presented (as expressed in the inviting atmosphere, the use of ornaments and flowers, and the musical accompaniment, according to Liturgical seasons).

One particular expression of this heartfelt joy is in the music used within the ceremony, which is not simply an external embellishment to the Eucharistic celebration.

The heavenly assembly, to which the Eucharistic assembly unites itself in celebrating the sacred mysteries, joyfully sings the praises of the immolated and eternally living Lamb, because with him there are no more tears or sorrow. The singing of the Mass, as opposed to simply singing “during” the Mass allows us to experience the Lord Jesus who comes to enter into communion with us, “so that [his] joy may be in [us] and [our] joy may be complete.” (cf. *Jn 15:11; 16:24; 17:13*). You fill us with joy, Lord, by your very presence!

The joy of the Eucharistic celebration reverberates throughout the Sunday, teaching us always to rejoice in the Lord; to experience the joy of encountering others in fraternity and friendship; to share the joy we have received as a gift (cf. *Dies Domini*, 55-58).

It would be contradictory for those who take part in the Eucharist to let themselves be carried away by sadness. On the one hand, Christian joy does not deny suffering, concern, or hurt – to do so would be laughable naivety. But on the other, it teaches us that the tears of sowing contain the joy of harvest.

The sufferings of Good Friday cause us to await the joy of Easter morning.

The Eucharist educates us to communicate the joy found therein to others, without seeking to keep this joy we receive as a gift to ourselves. God with us and for us marks our sadness, sorrows and sufferings with the seal of his presence. In calling us to communion with himself, he consoles us in every hardship so that we too can console those who in any way suffer affliction (cf. *2Cor 1:4*).

The Forge in Our Daily Life

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

I had come to realize that a missionary must never thrust himself into an assignment. He should offer his services to the bishop, saying, “Here I am, send me.” But he should not go until his bishop sends him, because when he is sent, it will be by God’s sending. All the Old Testament prophets were sent by God. Jesus Christ himself was sent from God, and Jesus in turn sent his Apostles. *Sicut misit me Pater et ego mitto vos.*”
(Aut 195)