

caritas christi

The Forge

in our daily life

8

Transformed by the Eucharist

Ordinary Time V

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



In Appendix 3 you will find the testimony of a Claretian for whom number 35 of the Constitutions synthesizes his own Eucharistic experience. We recall the first part of this section at the beginning of the booklet dedicated to the Eucharist: “First of all, we should daily celebrate, and with fullness of spirit, the mystery of the Eucharist, uniting ourselves to Christ the Lord, who proclaims words of life, offers Himself for his brothers, honors the Father, and builds-up the unity of the Church. We place in great esteem dialogue with Christ in adoration and in worship at the Holy Eucharist.”

Here the Eucharist appears as the “place” in which we unite intimately with Christ, the Lord. The whole *Caritas Christi* stage is like a force which helps us to continue growing in our relationship with Christ whom we follow. This kind of following does not consist simply in your imitating His conduct or way of speaking. This external imitation, when possible and desirable, ought to reflect your interior identification with His person; and is based, in turn, on the personal and deep experience of your encounter and friendship with Him. Jesus of Nazareth is not some sort of hero that you admire and try to imitate from a distance, but a very loving person who is close to you, to whom you have consecrated your life, and with whom you wish to share it eternally. It is His love that has conquered you, that has filled you with joy, and moves you to act like Him, continuing His mission at the service of the Kingdom. Your life aspires to that which is also fulfilled in the words of Paul and Claret: *The Love of Christ Impel Us*.

This love of Christ, which continues to identify and configure you existentially to Him, you experience with a special intensity in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In it – as Benedict XVI says – “The *agape* of God comes to us bodily to continue working in us and through us” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 14). It’s like a fiery furnace into which you are introduced and transformed until you are converted into a living

Eucharist. Because, like Jesus, you too are called to be like delicious bread which is given, broken, and shared for others. "In truth" – the Pope continues – "the vocation of each one of us consists in being, together with Jesus, bread broken for the life of the world" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 88).

In recent years there have been abundant documents and initiatives from the Pontifical Magisterium to place the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the center of the life and mission of the Church (cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 4-5). These calls continue with the renewing impulse of the Second Vatican Council which, for fifty years now, sees the Eucharist as the source and summit of the whole Christian life and the entire evangelizing activity of the Church (cf. *LG* 11 and *PO* 5).

Our Congregation has backed this ecclesial impulse with the *Eucharist-Life* project, which ended with the 150th anniversary of the Eucharistic grace granted to our Father Founder. This was the theme of a symposium celebrated in Segovia this past August 2011 and whose reflections are now published in one volume.

By means of these ecclesial and congregational channels, one can perceive the voice of the same Lord who insistently calls at your door (cf. *Rev* 3:20), and who invites you to enjoy the "meal which re-creates and wins the heart". Such is the call of St. John of the Cross.

This month of October ensures that the figure of Fr. Claret assumes a unique role in your Eucharistic life. For our Father Founder, the daily encounter with Christ in the Eucharist was a vital necessity. During his visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in the celebration of the Mass, and especially, by means of Sacramental communion, Claret lived an experience of deep interior transformation which carried him to be identified fully with the life and mission of Jesus Christ; "During the half hour after Mass, I feel that I am totally annulled. I desire nothing but his holy will. I live by Jesus' own life... My Father, take this poor heart of mine and devour it as I do you, so that I may be changed totally into you... Consecrate me; speak over me the words that will change me totally into you" (*Aut* 754, 756).

To explain this transforming experience Claret used the image of the forge:

"Those who receive Communion well, will be like an iron bar placed in the furnace, where it turns to fire. Yes, in this same way the soul that receives communion well, will be divinized. The fire rids the iron of its dross, its natural coldness and hardness, making it so soft that it may be shaped to the liking of the smith. The fire of divine love in the furnace of Communion acts in a similar way on the soul who receives Communion well and often: it removes the dross of its imperfections, its natural coldness, the hardness of its self-love, and makes it so tender and soft that it may be shaped completely to the will of God in all things, so that it says, as Jesus said to His Eternal Father: 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'" (*Ascetical Letter*, in *Selected Spiritual Writings*, p. 159).

At the same time that it formed and configured him personally to Christ, the Eucharistic experience of Claret impelled him to face all the evils of Spain (cf. *Aut* 694). The permanent presence of Jesus-Eucharist, experienced significantly in his own body, was for him an inexhaustible source of energy, which sustained his intense and multifaceted apostolic activity. Because, as with every charismatic gift, this "great grace" was also at the service of the Kingdom: its purpose was not to convert Claret into a kind of living tabernacle, but rather to transform the reality of this world according to the plan of God.

These ecclesial and charismatic perspectives are proposed to you in this booklet of the Forge so that you may probe their depths. The materials that are offered will, without a doubt, give a Eucharistic denseness to this month of October, the Claretian month par excellence. How necessary it is to return to the Eucharist and make it the "center, the high point, and the font" of missionary life, to offer as "food for the pilgrim people"! I hope it contributes to the renewal of your daily Eucharistic life as well as that of the Congregation, as a means of configuring to Christ, as a link of fraternal communion, and a transforming force of all reality.

2. Reflection

2.1. The Eucharist in Our Process of Configuration with Christ

The theme of configuration with Christ has a specific chapter dedicated to it in our Constitutions, and it deals principally with the apostolic virtues (cf. *Chap VI*). But, in reality, everything in it that is proposed as rule of life, comes to be summarized in the following and imitation of Jesus Christ, “that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who truly lives in us” (CC 39).

To further this process of configuration with Christ, you can rely on some particularly effective means and dynamics. The Constitutions introduce

you, first of all, to the experience of the love of God – which was centered in the *Patris Mei* stage of the Forge – as “the first and most necessary gift which marks us out as true disciples of Christ” (CC 10). In the same way, it is says that attentive listening to the Word makes you converted to the Gospel, configures you to Christ, and sets you on fire with his compelling love (cf. CC 34). From this listening, shared with the brothers, you can carry out your special vocation among the People of God as a servant of the Word (cf. CC 46).

Along these lines, the Constitutions will also present the sacrament of the Eucharist as a highly valuable and effective means to unite yourself



to the Lord and let yourself be transformed by Him, as is noted in the introduction: “In the first place, every day we should wholeheartedly celebrate the Eucharist, uniting ourselves close to the Christ our Lord as He proclaims the words of life, offers Himself for His brothers and sisters, honors the Father, and builds up the unity of the Church” (CC 35).

By way of synthesis, in that there are so many other defining characteristics of the missionary vocation, this Constitutional text identifies four key dimensions of the Eucharist:

- *The listening and proclamation of the Word of God, as the font which illuminates and the seed that germinates all life in the Church...*
- *The participation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us as an expression of such great love, and who through this sacrificial love liberates us, reconciles us, and gathers us in unity*
- *The praise and thanksgiving to the Father through the marvelous work of salvation, which has come to us and fills us with joy, but which yet needs to be extended to and reach the whole world...*
- *The building of the Church as the Body of Christ, the first fruits and leaven of the Kingdom, which is sustained and renewed by the effective action of the Word and the Holy Spirit.*

The nucleus which concentrates and binds together all these dimensions of the Eucharist is communion with Jesus Christ in the supreme act of His selflessness, for us and for all men. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation.



More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving” (*DCE*, 13).

In the same center of the Eucharistic celebration is the invitation that Jesus gives to His disciples that they take the Eucharistic gifts – a piece of bread, a drink from the cup – with those whom He is now giving-up His own life: “Take and eat, this is my body”... It is myself that I give for you. “Take and drink, this is my blood”... It is my own life, sacrificed for you... With this gesture of eating the bread and drinking the cup of Jesus,

the disciples accepted His self-sacrifice, took on His death, and were bonded with Him; disposed to follow His same destiny until the end.

Jesus had already raised this challenge with the sons of Zebedee: “Are you are able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am going to be baptized?” (*Mk* 10:38). At that time, they had no awareness of the scope of these words and, in fact, it would cost them much to understand and accept that “the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, and

to give His life as a ransom for many” (*Mk* 10:45; cf. *Jn* 13:7). On the other hand, this deep sense of Eucharistic communion is already clearly expressed in Paul’s words: “the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion with the blood of Christ?” “And the bread that we break, is it not a communion with the body of Christ?” (1 *Cor* 10:16; cf. *Jn* 6:53; *Mk* 10:38f).

Obviously, this is not about simple intellectual acceptance or a mere feeling of empathy. It is a question of giving life, of self-sacrifice and complete devotion to the other, following the

Exercise 1: Test of Eucharistic Vitality

The Eucharist is a gift from God that cannot be measured as we measure human realities. However, at the beginning of this Booklet 8, you may find it useful to take the pulse of your Eucharistic experience using this simple exercise. Its goal is to help you “to take an account” of what you’re living.

1. **Do you celebrate Eucharist daily?** Why do you do it? Where do you usually celebrate it? With whom?
2. How do you usually **prepare** for the celebration?
3. If a priest, **are you conscious of the ministry you have received** in relation to the Eucharist? How do you serve the community from the ministry you have received?
4. If you are a Brother or a Student, **are you aware that in the Eucharist you also exercise the priesthood of the believers** which has been conferred in Baptism? How do you live this vocation?
5. To what **dimensions of the Eucharist** are you more sensitive? Why?
6. In what dimensions of the Eucharist do you believe **you need to deepen more?**

example of the Master. Communion thus configures you with the One who understood his life as a pro-existence. Living in obedience to the Father, sharing our poverty and inflamed with passion for the Kingdom, he gave life to the extreme. And now, at every Eucharist, He personally invites you to take and eat of His body, to take and drink the cup of His blood. **He asks if you want to follow him until the end, to share his life and death: Can you drink of the Cup that I drink? How far are you willing to follow me?**

The Eucharist is the capacity to generate in yourself the ability to give life for others. Receiving communion with the Body given by Jesus, drinking of the Chalice of the Lord, you are configured with Him who gave life in ransom for others, you are inflamed in His love, which impels and moves you... When you live the Eucharist with this radicality, your perpetual profession is activated and proved: you are what you say you are. Even more, by means of eating and drinking it, Christ becomes your only instinct, until you are now unable to think of any other thing but to follow and imitate Him “in praying, in working, in suffering, in striving always and only for the greater glory of God and the salvation of mankind” (CC 9).

These keys will help you to better understand how Eucharistic communion is also for you the source and summit of your whole life, urged on

by love and given to the service of Jesus Christ in the mission He has entrusted you. This is - in the words of Benedict XVI - the “Eucharistic form” of life (cf. *SacCar* 70), with which you have to effectively search for the glory of God, your own sanctification and salvation of all men (cf. *CC* 2).

The same Pope recalls this purpose in a few words of St. Paul that “are the most synthetic formulation of how the Eucharist transforms our whole life in spiritual worship pleasing to God: “I urge you, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship” (*Rm* 12:1). And then he explains how “the new Christian worship covers all aspects of life, transfiguring it”, so that “every detail is exalted to be lived within the relationship with Christ and as an offering to God” (*SacCar* 71). In the Eucharist there is no distinction between worship, life, and the mission: worship is filled with life, life is transformed in worship, and both - worship and the life - are testimony and missionary announcement.

Before you is a “cloud of witnesses” who have experienced this transformation process. Fr. Claret, after the attack of Holguín, repeated this prayer: “Oh, my Jesus! As the water joins the wine in the Sacrifice of the Mass, so wish I join myself with You and offer myself to the Holy Trinity” (*Propósitos* of 1857: *EA*, p. 549). Our martyrs of

Barbastro made “the Eucharistic bread the center of that imprisoned community and the force of their intense and vigorous spirituality... With surprising alacrity they also learned to make of themselves bread broken and wine spilled for the life of the world” (A. Bocos, *Missionary Testament of Our Martyrs*, no. 19). Like St. Ignatius of Antioch, whom we commemorate in this month of October, martyrdom was his Eucharistic consecration (cf. the *Office of Readings* on October 17).

From the “Eucharistic way” of the Christian life perhaps you can better understand the experience that our Fr. Founder had when he received the “great grace” in the Church of the Rosary of La Granja. Certainly, he lived as he did before, and with great intensity, the mystery of the presence or indwelling of God in his interior; a communion

with loving surrender to Jesus and the passionate zeal of announcing his Gospel, facing all the forces of evil. Suffice to read his booklets of resolutions and spiritual notes to verify this. But these features of his spiritual face are now perceived as an effect and tangible manifestation of the Presence of the Lord who abides in him constantly, beyond the moment of communion, and is acted upon and spread out from him. The words of the Apostle continue to be fulfilled in Claret: “It is not I who live, it is Christ who lives in me” (*Gal 2:20*). But this experience reaches a particular “Eucharistic form” when, in the process of identification with Christ, the same human reality becomes sacrament which manifests the presence of the Risen Lord in our world.

This is what our Father Founder had desired with such feeling and asked so many times: “Take this poor heart of mine and devour it, as I do You, so that I may be changed totally into You... Consecrate me; speak over me and convert me totally into You” (*Aut 756*). “Oh, Jesus! When at the Holy Mass I pronounce the words of consecration, the substance of bread and wine disappear... Speak over me the words of consecration: consecrate me, my Jesus, so that I may disappear, and under my outward appearance may it be only You who lives”... Do not be surprised that, when Fr. Claret

walked by, some might feel inclined to kneel... as if the Blessed Sacrament was passing by!

2.2. The Eucharist in the Edification of Fraternal Communion

The same process of configuration with Christ, who transforms our consecrated and missionary life in a Eucharistic offering for the life of the world, is He who also builds our fraternal community as the body of Christ and family of the Kingdom. Like the Church, our community also lives from the Eucharist, because in it Christ is given up for us, edi-

fying us continually as His body. (cf. *SacCar 14; EdE 1*).

“We, the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, have also received a calling like that of the Apostles and have been granted the gift to follow Christ in a communion of life” (*CC 4*) and for this we aspire to live like the first community of believers, who were of “one heart and one soul” (*Acts 4:31*; cf. *CC 10*). Like them, we also try to be “devoted to the teaching of the Apostles and to the communal life, in the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (*Acts 2:42*). Through these community dynamisms,



the ties that unite us with the Lord and with our brothers are reinforced. In particular, “our fraternal life is best symbolized and brought to perfection in the Eucharist, which is the sign of unity and the bond of love” (CC 12). In the words of St. Paul, “because the loaf of bread is one, we, although many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Cor 10:17).

“As the bread is formed of many grains of wheat and the wine of many grapes, we learn that, although we are many different individuals, we do not have to have more than one heart or will, one faith and way of thinking.” (Fr. Claret, *Carta al Pueblo*, p. 57-58).

The family meal requires compromise. Avoid

the danger of interpreting this communion which is built on the Eucharist in an overly spiritualistic and abstract way, into making it compatible with individualism and selfish behavior. That is why Paul insisted on and emphasized the practical and concrete character that entails communion with the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist. He had to remind the community of Corinth of this when he attempted to celebrate this sacrament in the midst of stark divisions and inequalities (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). The lack of support and selfishness of the Corinthians contradicted, and in practice, made it impossible to celebrate the Supper of the Lord, because of this being the memorial of his love and his surrender until death. Hence the



need to “discern the body” (v. 29), which refers both to the Eucharistic body of the Lord and his ecclesial body, formed by a multitude of brothers (cf. 1 Cor 10:16f). For the Apostle, this means, specifically, “that no one seeks his own advantage, but that of his neighbor” (1 Cor 10:24). This is what Paul tries to do: “Just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they be saved... Be imitators of me, as I am of

Christ.” (1 Cor 10:33 – 11:1)

Thus, the imitation of Christ, and more precisely, conforming to his sacrificial surrender, will carry you to place the good of others before your own interests. Put bluntly, you become the servant and slave of others. The slave (*doulos*) does not belong to himself, because he belongs to his master, and his life is devoted to his service. Among the disciples of Jesus, this condition of slavery is a free personal choice, motivated by love for

Jesus Christ and the desire to serve Him as the only Lord. You can only understand and live it joyfully if it is your response in love to the One who loved you first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19).

“Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma” (Eph 4:32

– 5:1-2). Surrender and fidelity to the Lord is proved in love and service to others, for whom He also gave His life. Thus Paul is keenly aware of being “slave and apostle of Jesus Christ by vocation” (*Rom 1:1*), but his apostolic vocation leads him to become a slave to others: “Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible” (*1 Cor 9:19*); “for we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Christ” (*2 Cor 4:5*).

Lord’s sake” (*CC 31*). There is no intention here to servile submission, which would justify the dominion of some over others and break the fraternity. In the community of Jesus we are all brothers, and “if one desires to be first, he should be the slave of all” (*Mk 10:44*, cf. *Mt 23:8*). Rather, as an expression of fraternal love, the subordination to the other is not uni-directional, but reciprocal (cf. *Eph 4:2, 5:21*): we submit ourselves to and support one another out of love, recognizing in our brothers –

your sake.” (*Aut 448*).

The connection that exists between communion with the Lord and service to the brothers is very present in the story of the washing of the feet (cf. *Jn 13:1-15*), which is also where we encounter the institution of the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel. It is not difficult to see in the background of this passage from St. John the same problem that Paul faced in Corinth: the claim to hold the Lord’s Supper as a rite on the periphery of life, which does not question, but rather



This attitude of stripping and handing over their lives to the service of others is an attempt to follow the steps of He who, “being in the form of God... emptied himself taking the form of a slave” (*Phil 2:6-7*). As a disciple and follower of Jesus, you cannot aspire to be more than Our Lord and Master, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life in ransom for others (cf. *Jn 13:13, Mk 10:45*). Thus, our Constitutions offer you this invitation: “Our Missionaries should grow accustomed to obeying the Lord promptly and perfectly out of love, subjecting themselves to others out for the

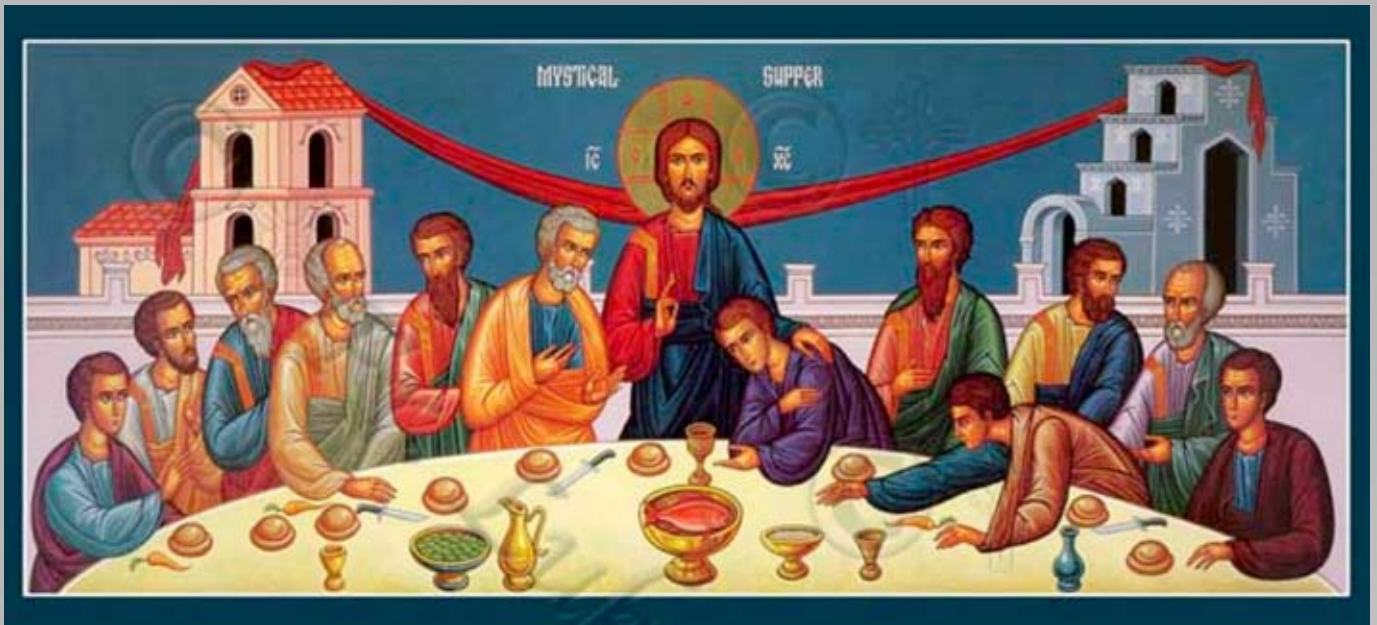
especially in the weakest – the presence of the Lord.

“My neighbor, I love and cherish you for a thousand reasons. I love you because God wants me to love you; I love you because God commands me to love you; I love you because God himself loves you. I love you because God has created you in his image for the life of heaven. I love you because you have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ. I love you because of all that Jesus Christ has done and suffered for you. To prove my love for you, I will strive and suffer; I will undergo any work or pain, even death, if necessary for

conceals the existing divisions and rivalries within the community. The Evangelist Luke expresses it in another way, by placing the dispute in ‘first place’ in the framework of the Last Supper (cf. *Lk 22:24-27*). In this particular context, both in the warning against the disciple who shares his table and is going to betray Him (cf. *Lk 22:21f*), as well as the misunderstanding and resistance of Peter to the gesture of Jesus (cf. *Jn 13:6-10*), do not refer only to the protagonists of that one historic moment. Today, also, any one of us can betray the Lord and pervert the meaning of the Eucharistic memorial, if you are

Exercise 2: The Eucharist in Images

1. Slowly **contemplate the two images below**. Do not be hurry to “draw conclusions”. Let yourself impress by the shapes and the colors. Watch carefully the details.
2. **Imagine that you are invited to participate in these two scenes**. What position would you choose in each? How do you think you feel?
3. In contemplating the images, **do you feel a call to improve your Eucharistic spirituality?**





not ready to love and to serve, concretely and effectively, as He has taught us by his example.

Participation in the Eucharist nourishes the passion for communion in which the XXII General Chapter saw “a prophetic trait that makes credible our service in a global village, which at the same time is divided and selfish”, since ‘communion’ is “the first fact of mission” (cf. *IPM* 27-28). Fifteen years later, our Congregation presents an even more pluralist face and is seen enriched with members from different countries, ethnic groups, languages and cultures. The love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit helps us to respond to the challenge of living ‘unity within the diversity’, overcoming differences that so often separate and confront the men. “In this era of globalization and exclusion, yearning for peace but with the reality of violence, the Claretian community – in its smallness and fragility – wishes to continue being a living sign of the Kingdom” (*MFL* 41). That’s why, with brothers who are of different origin, age, culture or opinion, we seek to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (cf. *CC* 17; cf. *Eph* 4:3). This ability to live fraternally, united and working together in the mission, will always be a relevant test of our “Eucharistic coherence” (cf. *SacCar* 83).

2.3. The Eucharist and the Transformation of the World

The transforming efficacy of the Eucharist is not limited to the circle of those who participate in the celebration. Benedict XVI, recently installed into the Petrine ministry, presided at World Youth Day in August 2005 in Cologne, Germany. The theme was “We have come to adore Him”. In the closing homily, the Pope explained the dynamic of the Eucharist as a chain of transformations which, through the same Jesus, reaches out to the gifts offered and those communicants who receive them, to then extend themselves to the ecclesial community and the whole creation. This process of transformation as ‘a chain’ - the Pope compares it to a nuclear reaction - is performed by the power of love and will only end with the Christification of the universe, when God will be ‘all in all’. It is worth recalling a couple of paragraphs in which this enormously deep and suggestive view of the Eucharist is reflected:

“Making the bread His Body and the wine His blood, He anticipates His own death, accepts it in the most intimate way and transforms it into an action of love. That, which from the exterior

is brutal violence, from the interior is transformed into an act of love, which is offered totally. This is the substantial transformation that was carried out at the Last Supper and destined to sustain a process of transformations whose last order is the transformation of the world until God will be 'all in all' (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

"This first fundamental transformation of violence into love, of death into life, brings other changes in its wake. Bread and wine become his Body and Blood.

But it must not stop there; on the contrary, the process of transformation must now gather momentum. The Body and Blood of Christ are given to us so that we ourselves will be transformed in our turn. We are to become the Body of Christ, his own Flesh and Blood.

We all eat the one bread, and this means that we ourselves become one. In this way, adoration, as we said earlier, becomes union. God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him. His dynamic enters into us and then seeks to spread outwards to others until it fills the world, so that his love can truly become the dominant measure of the world." (Benedict XVI, *Homily at Marienfeld*, 21 Aug 2005; these ideas are synthesized more briefly in the exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 11).

Participation in the Eucharist also introduces 'you to yourself' in this process of universal transformation driven by the power of Christ's love (*Caritas Christi urget nos!*). This love is a force capable of destroying the barriers and mechanisms of exclusion that exist in our world, to build a society in which all we recognize and treat each other as brothers. Each Eucharistic community has to be a visible sign that "another world is possible", in which the utopia of the Kingdom is fulfilled: "the Kingdom of truth and life, the Kingdom of holiness and grace, the Kingdom of justice, love and peace" (Preface of the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe).

This alternative society is what the Evangelist Luke describes at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 2:42-47; 4:32-35) and which has inspired many communities and ecclesial renewal movements throughout history. You, too, are called to share this aspiration (cf. CC 10) and to translate it into your life project through the Evangelical counsels. An expression of this is the poverty which you have professed: "Placing all our trust in the Lord and not in power and wealth, we seek before all the Kingdom of God, which belongs to

the poor. Voluntary poverty builds up a fraternal community in unity that is one heart and mind: a community which is expressed in sharing its spiritual and material goods with the poor and in serving them" (CC 24). This communion of goods with the needy is already a form of worship pleasing to God, whom you come to meet in the sacrament of the poor (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46), and is also an effective evangelizing action. Thus expresses the Apostle Paul regarding the collection for the poor: "The service of this liturgy does not only provide for the needs of the saints, but also overflows in abundant acts of thanksgiving to God. Undertaking this service, glorify God by your obedience in professing the Gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your communion with them and with all" (2 Cor 9:12; cf. *Rom* 15:27; *Phil* 4:18).

In the same way, "the chastity we profess fosters a new kind of fraternal communion in Christ. It builds up a community based neither on blood nor on carnal desire, but on the will of God. As a symbol of perfect love, it becomes a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. In a unique way it frees us to love God and all human beings, and strengthens us to struggle in our apostolic ministry against the powers of evil." (CC 21). Far from shutting-in on yourself, chastity for the Kingdom releases and opens your heart to a more universal love, one that turns especially to all who suffer the consequences of selfishness, injustice and social exclusion. And, at the same time, while it seeks to support and comfort, this supportive love fights against the roots of evil that feed, and the structures that sustain, these wicked situations. Like our Father Founder, to face these evil powers, rely on the *sword* of the Word of God and the power of the Eucharist (cf. *Eph* 6:10-17; *Aut* 101).

Eucharistic communion also has an ecological dimension. The bread and wine, fruits of the earth and work of human hands, by the action of the



Holy Spirit, are transformed into a real symbol of the offering and permanent presence of the Resurrected Christ, and a sign made in our communion with Him and with all members of His body. But this transformation also turns the Eucharistic gifts into the first fruits of the new creation, in which all things will be summarized in Christ and God will be all in all (cf. 1 *Cor* 15:28; *Eph* 1:10; *Col* 1:16-20). In this way, Eucharistic communion reaches out to the limits of the universe, pushing us to real reconciliation and harmonious coexistence with all created beings. The ecumenical document of Lima echoes this cosmic dimension of the Eucharist with these words:

“The Eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise through which the Church speaks on behalf of all of creation. Therefore, the world God has reconciled is present at every Eucharist: in the bread and wine, and the faithful people; and in the prayers offered by them and by all people. Christ joins the faithful to himself and includes their prayers in his own intercession, in such a way that they are transformed and their prayers accepted. This sacrifice of praise is only possible by Christ, with Him and in Him. The bread and the wine, fruits of the Earth and human labor, are presented to the Father with faith and thanksgiving. Thus, the Eucharist signifies what the world is called to be: an offering and a hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a Kingdom of Justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit” (*BEM* 4).

“I am the food of adults; it grows, and you can eat of me. You will not be transformed in substance, as what happens with physical food, but you yourself will be transformed in me” (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 7).

In celebrating this “mass over the world” (Teilhard de Chardin), you also need to be responsible for the care of creation. This ecological responsibility forms part of your mission as a Claretian at the service of life: “As servants of the Word in all its breadth, the commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation is not for us a discretionary counsel. It is a genuine duty and also a fundamental right of every believer, which obliges us specifically as religious and ordained ministers” (*TMHL* 13; cf. *CIC* 222, 287 and 672).

Additionally, our last General Chapter included the care of creation among the calls God has given us at this time: “Our challenge is to stimulate and sustain the “ecological conversation” which makes humanity more sensitive to our being stewards of creation” (*MFL* 2i).



Our Eucharistic Celebration passes through the eschatological tension which marks and animates the entire journey of the Church between Easter and the Second Coming. In it you can already taste the beginnings of the banquet of the Kingdom, but this joyful anticipation cannot but increase the desire that comes in fullness: *Maranatha*, Come, Lord! (cf. 1 *Cor* 16:22; *Rev* 22:20). The Church is like the wife who impatiently awaits the face-to-face encounter with her Beloved: “to discover your presence / and kill me with your look and beauty;/ see that the ailment / of love, which is not healed / but only with your presence and countenance” (St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, verse 11).

Our Father Founder experienced this eschatological gravitation with a special intensity in the final stage of his life. Thus, in his final Resolutions – on the 26th of May 1870 – he expressed his anxiousness to die and go to heaven and be united with God, making the words of Paul his own: “I long to depart this life and be with Christ” (*Phil* 1:23). And he adds: “I have to be like a candle that burns, consuming the wax and light until it dies. The members enjoy being united with the head, the iron to the magnet, and I to Jesus; to be with me in the Sacrament and in Heaven” (*EA* p. 588). Union with Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist was now for him an anticipation of heaven.



2.4. Conclusion

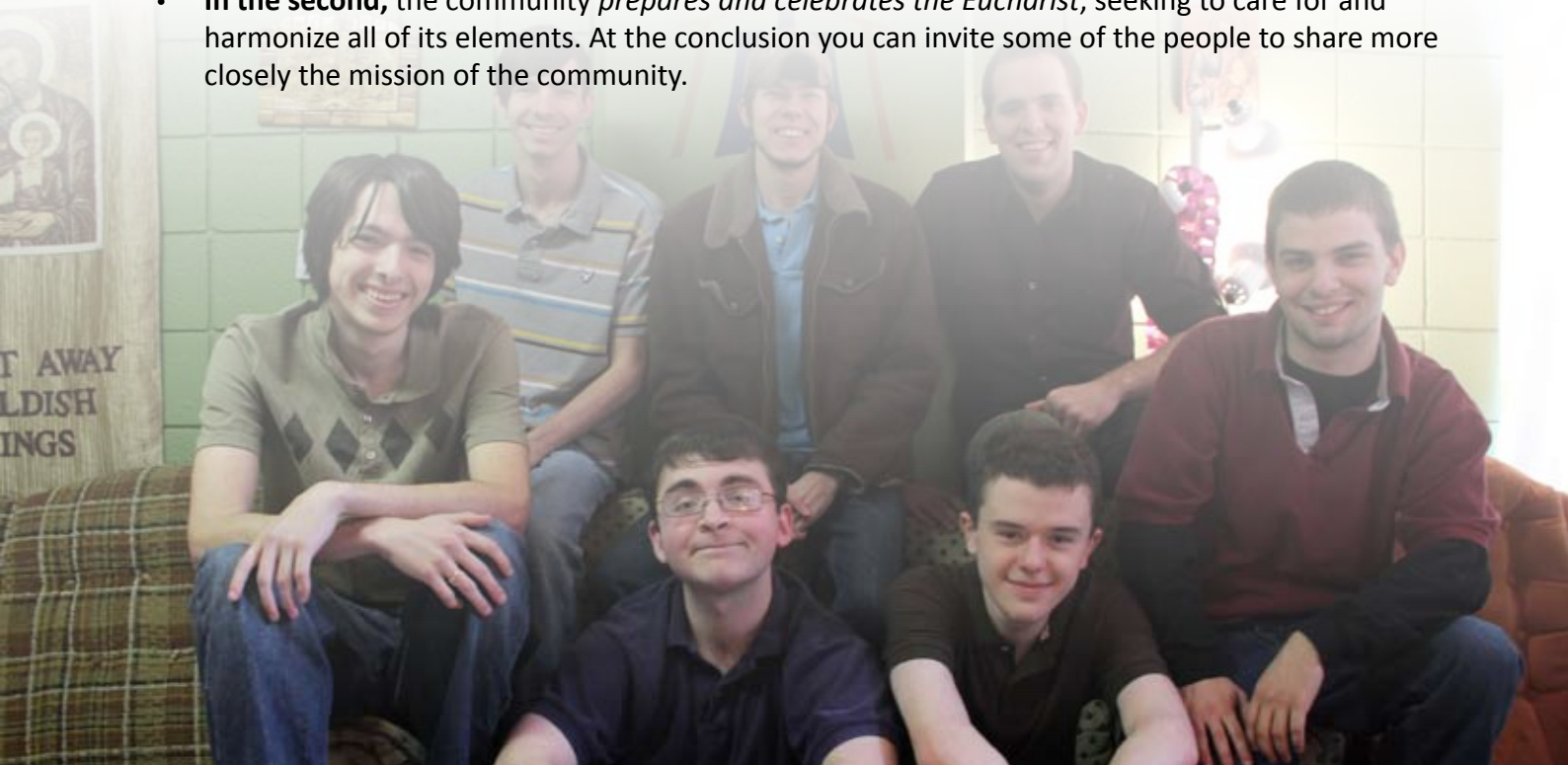
In conclusion, remember that, when you celebrate the Supper of the Lord, you enter into communion with the pro-existence of Jesus, this attitude of total and permanent giving, of humble and selfless service, which characterizes your whole life: “I am in the midst of you as one who serves” (*Lk 22:27*). “I have given you an example so that you do the same” (*Jn 13:15*). To accept and assume this self-surrender of Christ, embodied in the Eucharist, you too will become a gift for your brothers, bread broken for the life of the world. So will you go from the Mass to the mission, from the experience of “taking and eating” Eucharistic to the work of “you give them something to eat” (*Mk*

6:37). Surely you cannot give “neither gold nor silver” (cf. *Acts 3:6*), but you can and must share this bread that gives eternal life and sustains your daily walk. Thus, to participate in the Supper of the Lord you learn – with the words of our brother Pedro Casaldáliga – “to be With You, our daily bread”, a bread broken and delicious, a body given for the life of the world.

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

In this month of October, the community can dedicate an extended period of time – maybe a retreat day – to examine its Eucharistic spirituality. The community encounter can be divided into two parts.

- **In the first**, the members of the community can share the responses that each one has given to the questions in *Exercise 1*. Later, open a dialogue to deepen those aspects which indicate most directly the eucharistic spirituality of the whole community.
- **In the second**, the community *prepares and celebrates the Eucharist*, seeking to care for and harmonize all of its elements. At the conclusion you can invite some of the people to share more closely the mission of the community.



4. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*



Tuesday, October 1, 2013. Memorial of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, Virgin and Doctor of the Church

- Zec 8,20-23
- Psalm 86
- Lk 9:51-56

In the Gospels, the expression “he made the decision to go to Jerusalem”, applied to Jesus, it points to something more than the beginning of a pilgrimage whose goal is the main city of Judea. This expression marks the beginning of an itinerary taking Him to His passion and death. Jerusalem is the place of his definitive sacrifice. It’s about the path undertaken with self-assurance and resolution, passing through the region of Samaria. On being denied accommodation, precisely for going to the Jewish metropolis, the reaction of its disciples is violent and vindictive. But Jesus reproaches them for his conduct. They have not yet understood that the path faced and undertaken by Him, the culmination of his life and message, cannot now be governed by a dynamic of bitterness and visceral confrontation. On the contrary, the cross will be a sign of forgiveness and mercy.

Wednesday, October 2, 2013. Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels

- Neh 2:1-8
- Psalm 136
- Lk 9:57-62

At various times the gospel stories testify to how large crowds were attracted by the figure of Jesus, his prodigious signs and impressive speeches. However, there weren’t many called to follow him more closely and radically. But even among these, only a much smaller number accepted and assumed the offer until the end. The demands were harsh. We cannot draw a severe or distant image of Jesus from these passages. The imperious tone of his words is governed by the fundamental and pressing option that must guide the life of the disciple: the Kingdom of God. Anything else takes on a secondary and relative position.

Thursday, October 3, 2013

- Neh 8:1-4a.5-6.7b-12
- Psalm 18
- Lk 10:1-12

In the Gospel of Luke, the crucial task of proclaiming the kingdom of God is the responsibility of a large group of disciples, surpassing the circle of the Twelve. With this, the evangelist wants to emphasize the universality of the mission. Jesus is very specific in the form and content of the message to be proclaimed. The heralds of the Gospel not only have to bear witness to his word, but also, and especially, with their lifestyle.

Friday, October 4, 2013. Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi

- Bar 1:15-22
- Psalm 78
- Lk 10:13-16

The Gospels give clear and repeated testimony to a relevant fact: Jesus conceived of his mission from the beginning as a task that should be shared. Therefore, the first chapters of the Gospels relate the call to a group of disciples. The relationship of Jesus with the apostles comes to be of such intensity and proximity, that He himself is identified with his closest followers. The welcome and listening given to them is equivalent to receiving and listening to Him.

Saturday, October 5, 2013

- Bar 4:5-12.27-29
- Psalm 68
- Lk 10:17-24

The Good News is proclaimed and transmitted in the world through the mediation of normal and simple men. This human mediation always involves great conditioning and limitations. But it is the path that God has chosen to germinate the seed of the kingdom. It is a direct consequence of the incarnation of the Son of God. In the same way, to listen and accept the Gospel involves doing so with an open, generous, and humble heart. The great treasure of salvation is hidden from the proud, but it is crystal clear for the lowly. Jesus proclaims as ‘blessed’ those who are capable of accepting this great mystery.

Sunday, October 6, 2013. 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cal CMF, 367-371)

- Hab 1:2-3; 2, 2-4
- Psalm 94
- 2 Tim 1:6-8. 13-14
- Lk 17,5-10

The salvation to which the human being is able to aspire is not primarily based on capabilities, virtues, or personal qualities. The Kingdom of God is a gift, a grace, which man must accept with humility and deep gratitude. We cannot argue our own merits before God to demand His redemption; God grants us this great gift through pure mercy and kindness. This is the great secret of the faith: God saves us because he loves us. Everything we do or perform in his name, we must do so with a permanent and profound awareness of being only servants.

Monday, October 7, 2013. Memorial of Our Lady, the Virgin of the Rosary (Cal CMF, 373-378)

- Jon 1:1-2,1-11 Jesus leaves it very clear that “eternal salvation” depends largely on this question: “Who is my neighbor?”, “How must I treat my neighbor?” To love God necessarily implies the love of one’s brother. The
- (Jon 2:3-8) impressive parable of the “Good Samaritan” emphasizes that to pass by the suffering stranger is to pass
- Lk 10:25-37 by God, even when our external actions or daily customs pretend to show a pious attitude. Only he who is able to stand and sympathize with the marginalized and the vulnerability of others has truly entered into the dynamic of the kingdom of God. And often, our neighbor is the person closest.

Tuesday, October 8, 2013

- Jon 3:1-10 They say that, on one occasion, Mother Teresa of Calcutta said to a group of young novices: “we are not
- Psalm 129 here to achieve goals, not even to succeed in our mission;” “we are here to give ourselves entirely to
- Lk 10:38-42 God.” It is a phrase that always has given me much to think about. We are often inclined and predisposed to think that our consecrated life will be judged mainly by what we have done or achieved. Jesus reminds us, however, that the main thing is being and living with authenticity. Our activity will inevitably decline, but we are always compelled to give of ourselves each day with greater generosity. Martha is bound to decline, but Mary has opted for the part that always remains and grows. True self-giving knows neither defeat nor the limits.

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

- Jon 4:1-11 The disciples often saw how their Master retreated to solitary places at night or early in the morning, tak-
- Psalm 85 ing advantage of the silence and tranquility, to talk with the Father. It was one of the reasons that impels
- Lk 11:1-4 them to apply some guidelines on the prayer. Jesus reveals to them that the best way to learn how to pray is precisely praying. And the heart of the prayer of the Christian is to place oneself with humility and confidence before God as Father.

Thursday, October 10, 2013

- Mal 3:13-20a As we can deduce from the teachings of Jesus, the three fundamental qualities that should characterize
- Psalm 1 the prayer of the Christian are: perseverance, humility and confidence. We must pray without faltering,
- Lk 11:5-13 we stand before God with a simple and poor heart, taking into account that we are before Him who loves us as sons. The only bad kind of prayer is the one that is not said. Those who pray to God, always get a response.

Friday, October 11, 2013

- Jos 24:1-13 The Gospel narratives attest to a sour dispute between Jesus and the religious authorities of his time on
- Is 12:2-3.4 this topic: in whose name was the Prophet of Nazareth acting? Where did this sovereign authority, mani-
- Mt 19:3-12 fested in his words and works, come from? Here we are faced with a crucial question: what does it take to accept that Jesus will or will not reveal the genuine image of God? The evangelists give a response as clear as possible: Jesus spent time doing good and giving comfort to all those oppressed by evil. To confuse His person and message with iniquity is to reach the height of stubbornness.

Saturday, October 12, 2013

- Jl 4:12-21 The words of Jesus could in no way be interpreted as a snub or disaffection toward the figure of his
- Psalm 96 Mother. On the contrary, Jesus is speaking of a beatitude: she has been doubly blessed by God, not only
- Lk 11:27-28 for being the mother of the Savior, but also for being his first disciple. She who welcomed the word of God with a generous heart and trusted, and who put it in practice. In this sense, she is a model of those who have already entered into the saving dynamic of the kingdom of God.

Sunday, October 13, 2013. 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- 2 Kgs 5:14-17 The miracles of healing worked by Jesus cannot be limited to mere prodigious recoveries of physical
 - Psalm 97 or mental faculties. Jesus was not a particularly gifted miracle worker. In reality, the gospel narratives
 - 2 Tim 2:8-13 clarify to us that true miracles only exist when such signs lead individuals to enter into the dynamics of
 - Lk 17:11-19 the kingdom of God. In other words, when they germinate and grow genuine faith in God. In today’s pas-
- sage there are certainly ten healings, but only one miracle, because only one of those healed by Jesus recognizes the action of God in his life.

Tuesday, October 14, 2013. Fr. Joaquín Gelada and Companions, Martyrs (Cal CMF, 387-391)

- Rom 1:1-7 It deals with a phenomenon which is unavoidably repeated, something almost inevitable in the world of religion; men demand from God strong evidence, irrefutable manifestations of His presence and of His action to be able to believe, to be disposed to trust... The contemporaries of Jesus asked for this with vehemence. We also frequently fall into this attitude. Jesus responds that the only sign that will be given to men is the sign of his death and resurrection, through the symbolic evocation of the figure of Jonah. Such a sign, we know, does not absolve us from having to rely on God... sometimes without obtaining the assurances that we demand.
- Psalm 97
- Lk 11:29-32

Tuesday, October 15, 2013. Feast of St. Teresa of Avila, Virgin and Doctor (Cal CMF, 393-399)

- Rom 1:16-25 Jesus repeatedly had to deal with a problem that is recurrent in the ministry of the Hebrew prophets throughout the history of Israel: that of offering to God a worship that has been reduced to external and superficial ritualism, forgetting or diluting the real fulfillment of the will of God. Jesus is always looking for a faith that is based on a deep and sincere conversion of the human heart to the divine plan, playing down mere formalities or simple customs, even if they are dressed with piety.
- Psalm 18
- Lk 11:37-41

Wednesday, October 16, 2013. Br. Miguel Palau (Cal CMF, 401-406)

- Rom 2:1-11 Jesus never attacks the current Sadducees or Pharisees of his time as such. Rather, what he reproves them of is having distorted the religious principles they gave credit to. He proves to be especially critical when he discovers that such groups have misrepresented or manipulated the genuine will of God crystallized in the Scripture, offering interpretations for their benefit, finishing by acting in a manner that directly contradicts what they should in fact believe and transmit to the people.
- Psalm 61
- Lk 11:42-46

Thursday, October 17, 2013. Memorial of St. Ignatius of Antiochia, Bishop and Martyr

- Rom 3:21-30 Some members of Jewish religious currents have been erected as authentic and unique interpreters of the Law of God. The reality is that they tend to misrepresent and distort genuine divine will, accommodating their guidelines to their own criteria. The same behavior is a frequent example of purely external ritualism and vacuum, which seeks to safeguard their interests and prerogatives. As it has happened so many times in antiquity, they now pursue and mistreat the true prophets, credible bearers of God's Word. That is why they seek to silence the voice of Jesus. But Christ does not placate their steely denunciations.
- Psalm 129
- Lk 11:47-54

Friday, October 18, 2013. Feast of St. Luke, Evangelist

- 2 Tim 4:9-17a When Jesus sent his disciples to proclaim the Good News, he also provides them with a set of instructions and guidelines that he considers relevant. All of them are aimed at this principle: the Kingdom of God has to be announced, not only with words, but also with the testimony of a unique lifestyle. The life of his disciples now has to be the first word of his message. The people have to see them as men who are sent: poor, simple, dedicated, and available. These heralds of the Gospel must transmit, in short, what they have experienced in their coexistence with Jesus.
- Psalm 144
- Lk 10:1-9

Saturday, October 19, 2013. Fr. Jaime Girón and Companions, Martyrs (Cal CMF, 407-412)

- Rom 4:13-16-18 Among the dispositions and warnings that Jesus communicates to His disciples, at precisely the moment in which he prepares to share with them the proclamation of the reign of God to the Gentiles, he does not spare them the grave difficulties which they must face. As we know, the Apostles represent, at the same time, the future Christian communities scattered across the globe. Before the persecution and violent reactions that the preaching of the Gospel is often going to cause, Jesus promises them the assistance of the Spirit. As the messengers of the Good News, they have to be the voice of the Word that comes from the Spirit, and not of pure human initiative.
- Psalm 104
- Lk 12:8-12

Sunday, October 20, 2013. 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Ex 17:8-13 Luke is one of the Evangelists who with greater intensity and repetition deals with the theme of prayer in his work. Through his writings we contemplate a Jesus who always prays when facing important moments and decisions, and who also tends to offer important lessons on prayer. In brief summary we can say that, for Luke, the prayer of the Christian has to be sustained with these three qualities: perseverance, humility and confidence. The parable of the judge and the widow is a particularly eloquent and clear example of this message. The Christian has to be identified with the figure of this woman, in her tenacity, perseverance, and faith in prayer that reaches for justice.
- Psalm 120
- 2 Tim 3:14-4
- Lk 18:1-8

Monday, October 21, 2013

- Rom 4:20-25 Frequent in the Gospel are the warnings of Jesus on the power of money and riches. In fact, this theme
- (Lk 1:69-75) is a priority in his message. Greed is a sin that can inevitably lead us away from God. Money can become
- Lk 12:13-21 a divinity for man. For this reason, Jesus not only taught, but assumed a life of poverty in his earthly existence. This is a lesson and a warning to which we must be especially sensitized; those of us who have chosen to live evangelical poverty, following the example of Christ.

Tuesday, October 22, 2013

- Rom 5:12.15b.17-19 It often happens that, while we are awaiting the advent of a something we consider important in the future, but becomes diluted over time, our wait begins to lose intensity. Perhaps that is the reason why
- Psalm 39 Jesus often insisted, on a recurring basis, for the need to be persistent and steadfast in the confident expectation of the definitive eruption of the kingdom of God in the world. We must not allow ourselves
- Lk 12:35-38 to be broken down by disappointment or decay. In our hands is Him working every day to germinate the seeds of the Kingdom among us, leaving the times and final deadlines in the hands of God. This is how God wants to see us, always ready and alert at the beginning of each day. Our greater reward at the end of the day is in giving ourselves to the service of God and our brothers without reservation.

Wednesday, October 23, 2013

- Rom 6:12-18 The exhortations of Jesus on the necessity to be constantly on the alert, in waiting with perseverance, in living with the tensions of daily giving... are numerous in the Gospel of Luke. The Christian is called to follow Jesus in his day-to-day existence with patience and hope. A great woman of our day understood, in depth, the genuine sense of these Evangelical passages when she wrote this prayer: "Allow us, Lord, to recognize our sacred history in what happens to us every day. Let us transform the ephemeral events of every day into eternal events".
- Psalm 123
- Lk 12:39-48

Thursday, October 24, 2013. St. Anthony Mary Claret, Bishop and Founder (Cal CMF, 413)

- Is 61:1-6 St. Anthony Mary Claret felt called to go to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. The Lord accompanied this mission with numerous signs. He was not placed on the journey for money, prestige, or fame (*Quid Prodest*), but because he received the anointing of the Spirit to announce the Gospel to the poor (*Spiritus Domini*), and felt impelled by the love of Christ (*Caritas Christi*) to be a minister of reconciliation. His objective, in short, was to find in everything the glory of God (*Patris Mei*), the salvation of all human beings, and his own sanctification. On a day like today we give thanks to God for the life of Claret and we ask him to renew in each one of us the same spirit which animated him.
- Psalm 22
- 2 Cor 5:14-20
- Mk 16:15-20 (or Lk 10:1-9)

Friday, October 25, 2013

- Rom 7:18-25a The documents of the Church and the Congregation usually insist, especially in recent decades, in being very attentive to the "signs of the times." This attitude of observation and insight is deeply rooted in the Scripture in general, and in the teachings of Jesus in particular. Jesus was always a very observant person, who liked to contemplate the world through lucid, critical and, at the same time, compassionate eyes. "Interpreting the present time" means, primarily, learning to see the world through the eyes of God, with eyes of faith. To learn to discern the will of God in people and events, and to act accordingly.
- Psalm 118
- Lk 12:54-59

Saturday, October 26, 2013

- Rom 8:1-11 The belief that any calamity or misfortune that occurs to a person as an inexorable result of his sin or his evil was deeply rooted in the ancient Jewish religious mentality. Jesus sharply breaks with this way of conceiving things. On many occasions, good and just people suffer misfortunes that they do not deserve. But, in any case, the words of Jesus place the emphasis on the need for conversion, taking advantage of the time that has been given to us. All circumstances, be they good or bad, can serve to bring us closer to God, to increase our confidence in him. The real disgrace is not trusting in divine mercy.
- Psalm 23
- Lk 13:1-9

Sunday, October 27, 2013. 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cal CMF, 415-419)

- Sir 35:12-14. Again we have a parable focused on prayer. Luke argues on a theme which he sees as crucial, because ultimately, this didactic narrative of Jesus refers to the image we have of God and the personal conception about faith. Before God we must always present ourselves as poor and needy, moved by a deep spirit of humility and confidence. Arrogance and vainglory alienate us from God, even though they may be coated in false piety. Salvation is the fruit of grace and divine mercy, never won by our own capabilities and merits. But how difficult it for us to live this truth, which is in the heart of the Gospel.
- Psalm 33
- 2 Tim 4:6-8. 16-18
- Lk 18:9-14

Monday, October 28, 2013. Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles (Cal CMF, 421-427)

- Eph 2:19-22
 - Psalm 18
 - Lk 6:12-19
- Jesus conceives and develops his public ministry as a task which must be shared and transmitted to other individuals. Theirs is not an undertaking of a highly individualistic nature; on the contrary, the Gospels reveal to us how, since the very beginning, Jesus calls distinct persons around himself so they could share his greatest longing, which is none other than the growth and expansion of the Kingdom of God. From the beginning until the end of his public activity, Jesus lives and acts in a communion of life with other men and women. Christ thrusts them in the midst of the people and turns them towards others. But among these multitudes, the Master of Nazareth lays down the foundations on a peculiar community; calling, in a unique way, a group of people for a specific purpose. He calls them to experience a particular style of life, to make them recipients of select teachings, and to send them on their own mission. In other words, that they identify with his person and his work.

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

- Rom 8:18-25
 - Psalm 125
 - Lk 13:18-21
- The two short parables gathered from the passage of Luke compare the Kingdom of God with two humble and modest realities: a small grain of mustard and a little yeast. Both possess, however, a mysterious power inside: they have the ability to grow greatly, develop momentum, and expand prodigiously. So Jesus presents the eruption of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world: almost negligible in its early days, but with a potential to grow so amazingly as being incalculable. The seed of this tree, which has already begun to germinate in the person of Jesus, only needs to be watered with the water of faith and illuminated by the light of God's grace. The land in which it grows, however, must have a generous heart that welcomes it without restrictions or reservations.

Wednesday, October 30, 2013

- Rom 8:26-30
 - Psalm 12
 - Lk 13:22-30
- Judging by their words and behavior, some representatives of the religious groups of Jesus' time had arrogated the power to choose and determine who belonged to the circle of the saved and who did not, who were custodians of divine blessings and who should be marginalized by them. Jesus strongly denounces this arrogant and haughty attitude, diametrically opposed to the divine will. Many of those who are considered privileged, and participants of the religious elite, are in for a big surprise. The criteria by which God chooses his own has nothing to do with the merits that they believe they have. It is necessary to opt to enter through the "narrow gate" of the service, commitment and love, leaving the final judgment of people to God.

Thursday, October 31, 2013

- Rom 8:31b-39
 - Psalm 108
 - Lk 13:31-35
- The Gospels often tell us that disputes between Jesus and the religious and civil authorities of his time were so intense and sharp, that a decision was taken to kill him. In fact, the bloody death of Jesus can only be explained from his sovereign and irrevocable option to proclaim the Word of God, knowing that his message would be viscerally rejected by some. The history of Israel is full of those prophets whose lives ended violently because they remained faithful to their vocation as heralds of the divine word. These figures are evoked by Jesus in this passage from Luke. Jesus assumes one has to be consistent with His mission to the end, even if that end is bitter. He, however, will give meaning to the full itinerary of his ministry, including the death on the cross, saying that his life was not snatched from him, but that he himself offers it for the salvation of the world.

5. Texts for reflection

Appendix 1: “Our Missionary Spirituality on the Journey of the People of God” (III, 2)

b) In the heart of the Eucharistic Church

For us, Claretian Missionaries, the celebration of the Eucharist and the worship of the Presence of the Lord are the axis of our spirituality and the strength of our journey. This is what we have inherited from our father Founder. His whole spiritual life revolved around this mystery, and from it became his project, until culminating in the mysterious identification with the Lord (the grace of the conservation of the sacramental species).

The foundational eucharistic experience of Claret is now one of admirable continuity and a deepening in so-called “Eucharistic Ecclesiology”, surpassing mere Eucharistic devotionalism. It’s about being aware and living the mystery of the Church from its source and summit, from its roots and highest expression, that which is the eucharistic presence of the Lord.

So for us the Eucharist is no mere devotion, but the central generator of our missionary and community life. There where the Body of Christ is made and remade, which is the Church. There where the Revelation of the Word occurs with more intensity and efficacy. Indeed, the Word which we hear and proclaim is for ourselves and others the call to the Eucharistic table. And, in the Eucharist, the Church takes on the fullness of sacramental power in relation to the Body of Christ. At the same time it states specifically a better sense of an interiorized and ecclesial communion in he who participates in the breaking of bread. It is an attitude of sacrifice and solidarity with those whom he will later share as a servant of the Word in the encounter with his brothers.

Like Claret, we also live the mystery of the Eucharist in the passing of time. In our life it takes on different tones, different meanings. Because we are not capable of living once and for all the mystery, we thus we make of it “our daily bread”. Although it is the one single the mystery celebrated, for us every Eucharistic experience is different. We want to become identified and configured with Jesus until we can say: “It is not I who lives, it is Christ who lives in me”; and to make, with Him, our life a gift “so that all may have life and have it abundantly” (cf. *Jn* 10:10).

Gathered around the Table of the Lord, who shares his life with his disciples, we feel the pain of so many persons

excluded from the other table the Lord has prepared for all her sons and daughters: the goods of creation entrusted to the care of the human family. The Eucharist is a powerful call to work together to transform the world according to God’s plan.

c) To pray in and from the Eucharistic Presence

With our Father Founder we understand that the core of all Christian prayer is in the Eucharist. The Eucharistic celebration shows us that we pray “through Christ, with Him, and in Him”. The Church is not the author of his prayer, but it is she who welcomes the prayer of Jesus and the Spirit, which offered to it. The Jesus who called twelve Apostles “to be with Him” (*Mk* 3:14) wants to be “forever” with us in a perfect communion of life and prayer. The Jesus who gives us his Body and Blood, as Church-Spouse, also gives us His prayer, His intercession, His praise, and adoration.

The Eucharist is the prayer which the Church proclaims “through Jesus Christ Our Lord”. The eucharistic Church never prays alone. The Church and her Lord are united in the same flesh (cf *Eph* 5:31), in the same word, in the same passion; it is one body, in the same and only prayer. As Bride, the Church participates in the prayer of the Bridegroom. Making Eucharist, the Church becomes the same. “The Church makes Eucharist... Eucharist makes the Church”.

United to Christ, we intercede for men and women on earth. We beseech the Father to send His Spirit to make the messianic signs of the Kingdom. In prayer we stand in solidarity with all situations of conflict on earth. Let us penetrate the groans and cries of suffering humanity and nature, that they be converted into prayer, in intercession. Like Jesus, it is only when praying in the Spirit, that the cries of the people, which rise to the throne of God, are joined to our cry for mercy. Prayer is solidarity, spiritual communion with all ... “Pray for your enemies,” Jesus told us. The Eucharist becomes, then, the sacrament par excellence for re-union of the scattered, “sacramentum mundi.” At the same time, the contemplation of Jesus in the Eucharist frees our hearts of fear and selfishness, and leads inexorably to a strong commitment for the brothers who are suffering or oppressed.



Appendix 2: Friends of Jesus, participants in His mission (Fr. Josep M. Abella)

We are missionaries. Through our consecration we express the desire to unite our life to that of Jesus as an offering to the Father for the life of the world, so that his will is fulfilled. In no other place like the Eucharist are we united so intimately to Jesus and we join so closely to His mission. Moreover, to contemplate Jesus who offers His life so that all may have life, cannot leave us indifferent.

The Eucharist is memory and prophecy. It is the memory of the Easter of the Lord which inaugurates the “new times”. It is Prophecy that leads us to announce the Resurrection, walking toward the coming of the Lord where you will find fulfillment in the promises. The Eucharist makes us look forward to a future which is of God and which will fill the thirst for justice, love, and communion that exists in the heart of every human being. The fraternity will be universal (cf. Is 2:2-5), and it will be the same God who wipes away every tear in the heavens and the Earth renewed (cf. Rev 21:1-4). The Eucharist makes us look to this future and requires us to commit ourselves to build in this land, still suffering, the reality expressed in the gift that is promised.

The consecrated life is called to be the “epiphany of the love of God”, which is a total and free gift, and which finds its level of expression in “kenosis”, in a communion of solidarity with those who are hungry for respect and justice, closeness and consolation. Jesus, given in the Eucharist, is an eloquent icon of the meaning of “kenosis”. In communion with Him, we learn to be missionaries.

Closely united to Jesus we are sent, like Him by the Father, who anoints us with his Spirit, to fulfill the mission. By this we come to recognize: his voice in whoever asks for help, his pain in those who suffer, his thirst for justice in those who are oppressed and marginalized, and his gesture of love for all those who serve their brothers... The face of Jesus is recorded in the hearts of whoever who eat his flesh, and enables him to recognize it in the faces of those he encounters on the road. We cannot ignore the Jesus whom we have worshipped in the Eucharist in the suffering faces of any of these ‘little ones’ (cf. Mt:31-46).

He who eats His flesh and drinks His blood feels imbued with that immense compassion of Jesus that led him to proclaim the Good News and become closer to those seeking comfort, justice, truth, goodness. In the school of the

Word and Eucharist a sensitivity is also developed in us that allows one to discover the seeds of the Word present in the religious and cultural traditions of the people. It tells us of infinite and universal love the Father has for his sons and daughters; that love that we discover in the contemplation of the Eucharist. In the celebration of the Eucharist we give thanks on behalf of the whole of creation that welcomes the presence of the Lord in the gifts of bread and wine that we offer, “fruits of the earth and of the vine and work of the man”. The Eucharist alerts us to the relationship between “Creation” and the “New Creation”, united in the salvific plan of God. Hence we feel encouraged to take care of the creation that will be renewed by God under the sign of solidarity among all those to whom it has been entrusted, the whole of humanity. The Eucharist also has an ecological dimension (cf. SC 92)

Eucharist flows into mission because it is communion with Jesus whom the Father sent; and because he loves the world with a madness so that all may have life. The Eucharist has a missionary dimension.

The Fr. Founder, blessed by the Lord with the “great grace”, felt called to deal with “all the evils of Spain”, according to his expression in the number 694 of the Autobiography. He talks about things that we would surely translate today in a different way. Ultimately, they deal with situations which he considers undermine the dignity of the people and can alienate them from the Church. It being the fundamental point of reference for these people to continue living faithfully to their Christian identity in an era in which new questions are emerging that bewilder many and in which “the thirst for material goods is drying up the heart and soul of modern societies” (Aut 357).

We come to the year 1861, a difficult time in the life of Claret. He is experiencing persecution and calumny. It is a time characterized by the “to suffer”, the third verb in the definition of a missionary. Through the ‘great grace’ he will feel the comforting presence of Jesus who sustains him in this battle. Strengthened by the eucharistic bread, we also can confront the difficulties and the same martyrdom, as did our brother martyrs.

Appendix 3: Food for the Journey (Testimony from a Claretian)

The Eucharist has been food for my missionary spiritual life. I cannot conceive of this not being nourishment for the journey. Since my initial formation, with all the questions about its daily celebration “with fullness of spirit”, I have grasped that you cannot live in a Claretian way without considering this intrinsic element of our charismatic vocation.

The meaning of the Eucharist has been especially present in my life in moments of crisis and difficulty. Both in adoration as well as in celebration, the Eucharist has been a font to recover hope, sometimes “lost”. I remember, especially, certain moments in the “crisis of the 40’s” which, in going to the celebration with the People, sometimes without enthusiasm, exhaustion, or with a mountain of doubts of every kind, my faith and my hope were fed back. I don’t believe it had anything to do with theories, exegesis, or theological knowledge. In truth the Eucharist is “bread of life: that under Heaven heals wounds and rebuilds interior communion with oneself, with God, and with our brothers.

Appendix 4: The Eucharist Gives Me Everything I Need (Testimony from a Claretian)

Being young, the experience of the Sunday, and sometimes, daily Mass was very intimate, but very real: communion was a moment of encounter and personal relationship with Jesus was very close, very much alive.

Daily participation in the Eucharist, from the moment I entered the Congregation (directly to the novitiate), did not bring me any special newness. Instead what influenced me a lot was being in philosophy, the shift to the vernacular, the conciliar liturgical renewal, and the Missal. And above all what struck me - and continues very strongly even today - the reading of the book, "Liturgy and Spirituality" by Dom Gabriel Brasó, Abbot of Montserrat. I also cite, as well, the liturgy classes of various teachers. In all this, I became convinced that:

- Liturgical prayer is not opposed to the personal, but that there is a need to make sure that the liturgy is truly "personal;

- that it is not an "individualistic" prayer, but that it is a prayer "of the Church": which is to say, I pray with the Church and in its name; just as the Church, in turn, gives voice to the prayer of Christ and prays in His name. This makes me feel like a "member" of a community.

- that I am not the 'owner' of the liturgy to do with it as I please, and even less, to impose my style, texts, or prayers on others because they seem nice to me, but have not been approved (not because of some legalistic impulse on my part, but because they are not part of the patrimony of the

Church and do not allow me to pray in communion with the Church, like the way various ecclesial communities pray).

I believe that all this greatly helped me to overcome an attitude of rebellion or rejection of daily mass, which at one point in our student days was strongly manifested among us. It also helped me stand my ground, being a formator, in giving great importance to liturgical prayer, and to help students who confided in me to discover the true value of the Eucharist in our missionary vocation.

Personally, when I haven't celebrated the Eucharist some days out of laziness or neglect, I feel "bad", uncomfortable (sometimes also with a sense of guilt). I'm missing something vital. And it is because the Eucharist gives me, in each of its parts, what I need. It helps me to recognize myself as a sinner, in need of God's grace, and to give Him thanks and bless Him. It makes me listen to the Word of God (though not always with due attention); to pray and commit myself to the needs of the world and the Church, to all people, to join myself to Jesus Christ and give myself to him in the mission.

When I read no. 35 of the new Constitutions I felt very satisfied; not only because I found out what the Eucharist signified for us, Claretians, as a guide for my Claretian spirituality, but because it made me feel completely identified and supported in what I understood to celebrate and how I intended to live it.

Appendix 5: "Drink this, all of you" (Teilhard de Chardin)

How could I refuse this chalice, Lord, now that through the bread you have given me there has crept into the marrow of my being an inextinguishable longing to be united with you beyond life; through death? The consecration of the world would have remained incomplete, a moment ago, had you not with special love vitalized for those who believe, not only the life-bringing forces, but also those which bring death. My communion would be incomplete (would, quite simply, not be Christian) if, together with the gains which this new day brings me, I did not also accept, in my own name and in the name of the world as the most immediate sharing

in your own being, those processes, hidden or manifest, of enfeeblement, of ageing, of death, which unceasingly consume the universe, to its salvation or its condemnation. My God, I deliver myself up with utter abandon to those fearful forces of dissolution which, I blindly believe, will this day cause my narrow ego to be replaced by your divine presence. The man who is filled with an impassioned love for Jesus hidden in the forces which bring death to the earth, him the earth will clasp in the immensity of her arms as her strength fails, and with her he will awaken in the bosom of God.



There are different kinds of loneliness and different kinds of intimacy. We ache in many places. When I was a young priest, newly ordained and barely beyond the loneliness of adolescence, certain words at the Eucharist touched me deeply. I was a young and lonely and words about being drawn together inside one body and one spirit would incite feelings in me to do with my own loneliness. To become one body in Christ triggered, in me, an image of an embrace that would put an end to my personal loneliness, my endless aching, and my sexual separateness. Unity in Christ, as I fantasized it then, meant overcoming my own loneliness.

And that is a valid understanding. The Eucharist is an embrace meant to take away personal loneliness, but, as we get older, a deeper kind of loneliness can and should begin to obsess us. This deeper loneliness makes us aware how torn and divided is our world and everything and everyone in it. There is a global loneliness that dwarfs private pain.

How separate and divided is our world! We look around us, watch the world news, watch the local news, look at our places of work, our social circles, and even our churches, and we see tension and division everywhere. We are far from being one body and one spirit. So many things, it seems, work to divide us: history, circumstance, background, temperament, ideology, geography, creed, color, and gender. And then there are our personal wounds, jealousies, self-interest, and sin. The world, like a lonely adolescent, aches too in its separateness. We live in a world deeply, deeply divided.

And the older I get, the more I despair that there can be a simple solution, or perhaps even a human solution at all, to our divisions. Life slowly teaches us that it is naive to believe that all we need is simple optimism, good-will, and an unflinching belief that love will conquer. Love can and will conquer, but it doesn't happen like in a Hollywood picture, where two people who really have no business ever being together fall in love and despite having nothing in common, despite being deeply wounded, despite being immature and selfish, and despite having no shared faith or values, are able to rise above all their differences to sustained embrace and ecstasy, simply because love conquers all.

At a certain point, we know that real life doesn't work like that, unless we die in that initial embrace as did Romeo and Juliet. Our differences eventually have their say, both inside of personal our relationships and inside the relationships between countries, cultures, ethnic groups, and religions. At a certain point our differences, like a cancer that cannot be stopped, begin to make themselves felt and we feel helpless to overcome that.

But this isn't despair. It's health. As anyone who has ever fought an addiction knows, the beginning of a return to health lies in the admission of helplessness. It's only when we admit that we can't help ourselves that we can be helped. We see in the gospels where so many times, imme-

diately after finally grasping a teaching of Jesus, the apostles react with the words: "If that's true, then it's impossible for us, then there's nothing we can do!" Jesus welcomes that response (because in that admission we open ourselves to help) and replies: "It is impossible for you, but nothing is impossible for God!"

Our prayers for unity and intimacy become effective precisely when they issue from this feeling of helplessness, when we ask God to do something for us that we have despaired of doing for ourselves.

We see an example of this within Quaker communities when people gather and simply sit with each other in silence, asking God to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, namely, gives themselves harmony and unity. The silence is an admission of helplessness, of having given up on the naïve notion that we, as human beings, will ever finally find the right words and the right actions to bring about a unity that has forever evaded us.

The Eucharist is such a prayer of helplessness, a prayer for God to give us a unity we cannot give to ourselves. It is not incidental that Jesus instituted it in the hour of his most intense loneliness, when he realized that all the words he had spoken hadn't been enough and that he had no more words to give. When he felt most helpless, he gave us the prayer of helplessness, the Eucharist.

Our generation, like every generation before it, senses its helplessness and intuits its need for a messiah from beyond. We cannot heal ourselves and we cannot find the key to overcome our wounds and divisions all on our own. So we must turn our helplessness into a Quaker-silence, a Eucharistic prayer, that asks God to come and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, namely, create community. And we must go to Eucharist for this same reason.

Thanksgiving

*Vere dignum et iustum est, aequum et salutare,
nos semper et ubique gratias agere.*

On the night in which he suffered, the night in which he instituted the sacrament of his Paschal sacrifice, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples... Jesus' thanksgiving is re-lived in every Eucharistic celebration. The term, "Eucharist" comes from the Greek term for "thanksgiving" (cf. CCC, 1328). This dimension emerges clearly in the dialogue introducing the Eucharistic Prayer. When the priest invites the faithful, "Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God," they respond, "It is right to give him thanks and praise." The exordium of the Eucharistic prayer is always characterized by a formula which states the purpose of the gathering: "Father, all-powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks..." In expressing what takes place in the celebration, these formulas also express an attitude that cannot be lacking in those who have been regenerated in Christ. Thanksgiving is proper to whomever has been gratuitously loved, renewed, and pardoned. We do well to thank God always (*time*) and everywhere (*space*).

In this way a spirituality of true thanksgiving for the gifts received from God (life, health, family, the vocation, baptism, etc...) is irradiated. This gratitude towards God is not only something for life's great occasions, but is something we should always live. The saints thanked God in the midst of their trials, in the hour of martyrdom, and for the grace of the Cross... For whoever lives a Eucharistic spirit, every life-circumstance becomes an opportunity to thank God (cf. *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 26).

Thanking God always and "everywhere":

Wherever our daily affairs take us, at home, at work, in the hospital, at school...

The Eucharist also teaches us to unite ourselves in thanksgiving to all the Christians spread out throughout the world, thus uniting our thanksgiving to that of Christ himself.

The Forge in Our Daily Life

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

During the half hour after Mass, I feel that I am totally annulled. I desire nothing but his holy will. I **live by Jesus' own life**. In possessing me He possesses nothing, while I possess everything in Him. I tell Him, “Lord, you are my love. You are my honor, my hope, and my refuge. You are my glory and my goal. My love, my happiness, and my preserver. My delight, my reformer, and my master. My Father, Spouse of my life and soul.” **(Aut 754)**