

FEAST OF THE FOUNDATION - JULY 16, 2018



Every year July 16 invites us to tune ourselves to the foundational inspiration that gave birth to the Congregation in 1849. Our humble beginning did not count on material possessions or on a large number of preachers to embark upon “*the great work*” began on that day. We have “*no silver and gold*” (cf. Acts 3:6) to secure our life and mission, but only the spirit of the Risen Lord alive in our lives as the “*fire of God’s love.*”

Hence, there is nothing to be alarmed about the natural aging of our members, or the need to close some missions, or about the dwindling numbers in some parts of the Congregation. The real danger is when the fire of our charism is absent or extinguished in the heart of our members, or when it ceases to alight the life of our communities. Only this fire of God’s love in us will fuel our community life and awaken the vocational seed in the heart of those whom God calls to embrace Claretian life.

“*The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link.*” Our Congregation is as strong as how its members give in to the work of the Spirit in them. I have observed an interesting fact in the national geographic films on the behavior of lions. They rarely attack a herd of strong animals head-on. They normally prey on weak ones and those who keep away from the herd after dispersing the herd. Often our brothers whose hearts grow cold for lack of contact with the Word and Eucharist and stray away from Community fall prey to the enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (cf. 1 Pet 5:8).

Each of us is personally called to become an event of re-foundation of the Congregation. There cannot be any collective charismatic fire without individual

Claretians being on fire and radiate the light around. Recall the fate of the virgins who did not take care of the oil in their own lamps (cf. Mt 25:1-13).

Let us resolve to keep the fire of our charism alight in us. On the foundation day I invite you to contemplate and imagine yourself close to our Founder in the room of foundation. Claret would tell you too that you are also one "*whom the Lord had given the same spirit that motivated me*" (cf. Aut. 489). How do you understand that spirit in you? How do you want to express this gift in your concrete circumstance of life? What do you need to do in your personal life and in your community to keep the fire of love ablaze?

I also invite you to remember once more the words of Archangel Gabriel to Mary: "*The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you*" (Lk 1, 35). That same Spirit came upon Jesus at Baptism, on the Church at Pentecost, on that little community gathered on June 16, 1849 in Vic, and continue to hover us with his shadow of counsel and knowledge, of zeal and passion, of wisdom and prophetism in each of us. May that Spirit that fuels that fire in us, incite our creativity, move our imagination, provoke our dreams in making God known, loved, served, and praised.

Lastly, on October 3 to 28, 2018, the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will focus on the Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment. To be one with the universal Church and keep this fire ablaze, I invite you to adhere to what the XXV General Chapter Document tells us: "*to go forth to meet them, to walk with them and to help them be attentive to Jesus' call*" (MS 68). May the same Spirit continue to uphold the authenticity and fidelity of each one of us to the gift received and the mission entrusted to us; for it is our testimony and not the comfort that we give them that arouses and attracts new vocations (cf. Pope Francis to the participants of the Congress organized by the Vocation Ministry of the Italian Episcopal Conference held on January 5, 2017).

Wish you all a fruitful celebration of our foundation day!

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