

TO ALL THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARIES

Rome, March 23, 2015

Dear Brothers:

I write this letter when you have just received the Letter of Convocation to the XXV General Chapter. The Congregation has set off on the road toward the Chapter, aware of the importance of this new opportunity of discernment to which all of us are committed. I will not repeat what I have already said to you in the two recent circulars of announcement and of convocation of the Chapter. However I want to encourage you again to live this time with hope. Our sincere desire to seek the will of the Lord at this moment and to accept it with generosity and boldness is what moves us.

We are immersed in a social climate marked by situations of violence and which, therefore, should awaken in us greater desires to work for peace. We perceive in many places impulses of vengeance in the presence of facts which deeply hurt the sensitivity of many persons but, because they nourish the circle of violence, they will never contribute to bring about the peace that we all crave for. Let us be builders of peace. Dialogue is the way that opens the hearts to reconciliation, the only one which can change the persons. Our prayer for peace must be more fervent than ever and our commitment to create a true culture of respect to the dignity of persons and peoples must be intensified in these times. Let us hope that our rulers will be able to discover the way to restrain this escalation of violence. Let us see to it that in each of the places where we are present we contribute, through our pastoral, educative or social action, to recover those values on which the culture of peace is based. I think in a special way about some of our brothers, above all those who are working in the northern zone of Nigeria, who are suffering, together with their people, the consequences of this violence and are forced to constantly live under the threat of being specifically affected by it. Let our support and our communion go to them all and let our prayer for them and for the people they serve never cease.

The Pope has announced the celebration of a “Jubilee Year of Mercy.” Perhaps it was never before so necessary to open our hearts to the mercy of God which heals, consoles, strengthens and enables us to love. Let us prepare ourselves to actively participate in the ecclesial journey of this jubilee year and let us encourage the Christian communities and all the people with whom we share our life to live it as a time of grace.

We have concluded the meetings of the Government which we usually have during the month of March. I share with you the most important points that have occupied our attention.

Government

As you can imagine, the preparation of the XXV General Chapter has taken the centre of our attention. We have evaluated the echo that the circular letter of announcement and the theme of the Chapter have encountered in our communities and we have verified that it depends much on the direct involvement of the Major Superior and of the members of the government teams in the animation of this process. In agreement with the guidelines of Pope Francis, it is important that we focus on the theme proposed for the reflection of the Chapter, “*Called to evangelize: witnesses and messengers of the joy of the Gospel,*” which is of primary importance at this moment.

We will immediately start to work on the elaboration of the Reports, keeping in mind those that will be coming from all the Provinces and Delegations, the information from other congregational instances that we have received in these last years and our own congregational experience.

All the delegates have already been elected and the General Government has named the six capitulars that were allowed by the last General Chapter. The list of capitulars has thus been completed. They have a special responsibility during this time of preparation for the Chapter. It must be for each one of the capitulars a time to deepen their knowledge of the charismatic heritage of the Congregation which constitutes the basis of the discernment they are called to make. I encourage them to re-read and meditate the Constitutions and other congregational documents about which they must have a thorough knowledge in order to be able to responsibly respond to the mission their brothers have entrusted to them. I ask them not to stop meditating on the requests that both the Pope and the different continental Churches are directing to the religious. I ask from all of you Claretians not to fail to contribute your opinions and suggestions to the capitulars from your Provinces and Delegations in order to enrich the capitular discernment. May the Lord fill us with his Spirit and may we learn to open our hearts to his presence.

The processes of congregational reorganization continue on their course. They have almost been completed in America, Asia and Africa. That of Europe is still pending; it is encountering greater difficulty for different reasons -age of the persons, cultural plurality, lack in many of them of a more universal experience of the Congregation, etc. - although, on the other hand, it already presents a pressing urgency. We find it difficult to see ourselves in a perspective that will go beyond our own Organism. We think about insuring our own positions, but we are not aware that doing so we lose the possibility of strengthening and better coordinating our missionary response.

During this same month of March, the General Postulator organized in Segovia (Spain) a gathering with some vice-postulators. We want to promote the memory of our brothers who lived their vocation with joy and radical nature and who are, therefore, reference points for our own way and intercessors in heaven. He has informed us that the process of beatification of our martyr brothers of Cervera, Barcelona, Vic, Sallent, Lleida, Sabadell, Valencia and Castro Urdiales, a total of 109 Claretians, is proceeding at a good pace.

Spirituality

We have concluded the itinerary of "The Forge in our daily life" and the XX edition of the residential Forge in Spanish has been celebrated. Those who wanted it have already been able to benefit from this marvelous instrument of Claretian charismatic renewal. I want to be the spokesman for the gratitude of all the Claretians to those who have carried the weight of this project for their generous dedication. It is an instrument that still remains in our hands so that we can continue benefitting from it.

The Prefect is preparing the publication of the materials of two congregational forums which have taken place during this sexennium: the symposium "Eucharist-Life" and the encounter on "The vocation and mission of the Missionary Brothers". Ten more booklets will also be published of the "Claretians of yesterday and of today" collection.

In the next month of May there will be in Vic a workshop with some professors of our Institutes of Theology of consecrated life, taking the opportunity of the celebration of the year of consecrated life. Other Claretians from Provinces and Delegations which are systematically organizing programs for religious men and women will also participate in it. We are looking for a better coordination among the Institutes to improve our service to consecrated life.

Formation

We have evaluated the two workshops that have been held for the formators of Asia. It is a new initiative which has been well received by the participants and which we hope will produce abundant fruits. The central theme of the workshop revolved around the personal accompaniment and its methodology was experiential. Before the workshop, which lasted 12 days, the participants had to follow an interactive process through internet which prepared them for the presential days. At present a third workshop is being prepared for the formators of Africa. We believe it is a matter of an initiative that responds to one of the strongest challenges we have in the field of initial formation: personal accompaniment. For this reason it will be good to think about the continuity of this experience.

Thank God we have a good number of young men in the processes of initial formation. At any rate, the ministry of vocations is still our concern. It seems that we just can't be able to raise vocational interest in the youth. Even in the places where we have abundance of vocations, we observe that the majority do not come from our own centres but from vocation campaigns that are conducted in other places. From the Secretariat of Vocation Ministry a very important effort has been exerted. All of us must get involved in creating among us and in the Christian and educative communities the "vocation culture" about which Saint John Paul II so insistently spoke.

Apostolate

The General Prefect is working, with the collaboration of the Prefects of the Provinces and Delegations, on a statistical and evaluative study on the apostolate of the Congregation. It will be presented to the General Chapter and will doubtless constitute a great help for the study of the Chapter theme and to determine orientations for the future in the area of the apostolate.

The person-in-charge of the Secretariat of JPIC informed us of its activities in the formative Centres of the Delegation of Saint Charles Lwanga and of the challenges we encounter around our presence in the United Nations. We are trying to strengthen this position and to establish a more dynamic connection with the work that is being carried out in this area in many places in the Congregation. Bro. Robert Apiyo Omondi actively participates in the organizations of Justice and Peace which the Unions of Superiors General (USG and UISG) have in Rome.

From the General Missions Procure and from the *Proclade Internazionale*, P. Manuel Tamargo gave us abundant information. We must insist on the necessity to consolidate the keeping of the congregational norms on the information and coordination with regard to the projects that are presented to the agencies and on the responsibility in the rendering of accounts on the use of the money that has been received. I ask a further effort to invigorate the "*The Claretian Universal Mission Day*". All the Organisms, even those which are not economically self-sufficient, are called to present to the people the Claretian mission in the diverse parts of the world and to make some economic contribution to the General Mission Procure.

Economy

As it is already usual in the meetings of the General Government in the month of March, we tackled the examination of the balances and budgets of the Provinces, Delegations and General Houses. The previous work of the General Council of Economy helped us. We have seen with optimism that some Provinces and Delegations have consolidated their capacity to assume the total coverage of their economic needs. At the same time, we are still concerned for a certain excessive weight given to the economic dimension in the discernment of the new apostolic initiatives. I know that the

economic factor is necessary, but we should not let this to be the main guide in our decisions. Another theme on which we have been insisting for several years is the necessary gradualness at the time of creating new structures that demand important investments of money. Sometimes the guidelines of the General Government have not been listened to, and then we are confronted with the impossibility of financing such a high number of structures at the same time.

There is another aspect in the field of economy that we must face at once. In most of the Provinces and Delegations the juridical persons or corporations from which we manage our patrimony and our activities are declared as “non-profit-making organizations” or “charitable organizations” and, in fact, they are. This circumstance which, on one hand favours the development of the economy on behalf of the mission by exempting us from some fiscal charges, on the other hand it hinders the possibility to share the economic resources with other congregational zones in need. We see the need to look for a system that will allow the sharing of goods, which is essential in an international Congregation like ours. We have asked several Provinces and Delegations which find special difficulty in this sense, to study the possibility of establishing one of those corporations as commercial, assuming the corresponding fiscal charges, because this would make it possible to send economic aids to other more needy Organisms. There is a certain resistance on the part of some to take this step, but I consider that it is worth trying it as soon as possible. The availability to share is what has allowed the development of the Congregation.


The General Econome will soon send to each Province and Delegation a communication with the observations about the balances and budgets and their approval and, at the same time, will indicate the changes introduced in the quotas and the subsidies.

This letter that I send to you is almost a farewell. There are still five months till the General Chapter. We will continue working till the last day, but knowing that we must prepare the way for those who will assume the government service in the Congregation during the next years. Personally I feel that I am ending a long period of service in the General Government. I am grateful to all for your support, your understanding and your prayer. I will have the opportunity in the Chapter to share some feelings that fill my heart at this moment and some reflections that I am articulating as I recall this journey of 24 years. I truly thank you. I know I have erred many times. I am deeply sorry that I have failed in many things and, above all, that I may have left wounds in the heart of some brothers. The only thing left to me is to put my trust in God’s mercy and in your fraternal forgiveness.

As sons of the Heart of Mary we want to open our heart and our lives to whatever God may ask from us. I wish we knew how to translate it in generous projects that will accept his will. The General Chapter is a good chance to do it.

I end wishing you all a joyful celebration of Easter. *The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this he breathed on them and said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit”* (Jn 20, 20-23). My wish is that this may be precisely our paschal experience: to feel the deep joy of an encounter with Jesus that fills us with peace and to listen to his word sending us to share this experience. The openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, which He gives us, will be the only guaranty of success in this task. HAPPY EASTER!




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