

Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Claretian Guidelines

Vic 2014

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Promotion of justice, peace and integrity of creation in the missionary action of St. Anthony Mary Claret as the Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba

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Introduction

I would like to express my pleasure at participating in this workshop with you who come from different parts of the world where our Congregation works to promote justice, peace and integrity of creation as part of our missionary labour. I am grateful to Fr. Miguel Angel Velasco, the General Prefect of Apostolate who offered me this responsibility. At first, I didn't want to accept so as to concentrate on my doctoral thesis; but now I am thankful for this opportunity to deepen my knowledge in the social dimension of the life of our Father Founder and I hope that it may be an illuminating contribution for your missionary work.

What does it mean to promote justice, peace and integrity of creation in the context of the financial crisis in the world? You work side by side with others to overcome this crisis, even in many of the countries from where you come, this is not a recent crisis, but a prolongation of years of injustices, internal corruption, fight for power and violent fratricide. Finally, the economical crisis has touched everyone like an ethical alarm clock that reminds us that we all face the same destiny on this planet. We are in Vic, the historical place which sheltered our charismatic origin; it is also a city that challenges our mission today. Its population is over 41,000, of whom around 25% are immigrants, which is to say 4,000 to 5,000 families have left their countries and cultures in search of a better livelihood and they have unexpectedly found themselves against the wall of unemployment and recession that stops them achieving their dreams and in many cases it makes them return to their homelands frustrated or condemned to live in growing poverty. In this world that was promising progress and well-being for all, we experience what Pope Benedict spoke about in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*,

“The world's wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase. In rich countries, new sectors of society are succumbing to poverty and new forms of poverty are emerging. In poorer areas some groups enjoy a sort of “super development” of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation. `The scandal of glaring inequalities´ continues”¹.

As Christians we are aware of the demands of the gospel leading us into the social field to overcome the basic routes of charity and solidarity to recognize that there is a

social, economical and political structure where people's present and future is decided. The development of a critical awareness illuminated by the Gospel opens us to dialogue as citizens in democracy and to search together for the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. The Vatican Council II invited us to wake up from the spiritualism that was making us lethargic, seeking refuge in a subjective devotion and far from real life. The social Magisterium of the Church has been offering us constantly the necessary food to become mature Christians living together in harmony in society and offering the light of the Gospel.

Our Congregation is also aware of these challenges. The teaching coming from the General Chapters, the circular letters of our Generals and the documents of our congregational encounters have pointed out the missionary sense of this work; and it is enough to remember one article from our last General Chapter "Men on Fire with Love" where the global and comprehensive sense of this commitment in our life and mission is perceived,

"We reaffirm, in the same way, the priority of the Congregation for prophetic solidarity with the impoverished, marginalised and those whose right to life is threatened, in such a way that this has repercussions in our personal and community lifestyle, apostolic mission and in our institutions"².

We need to deepen the charismatic sense of this social commitment and we are not able to confront it as other groups, that have neither our faith nor our charismatic gift, can do. It doesn't mean isolating ourselves by differentiating ourselves but it is to be what we are, in the context of plurality. Our work in the shared mission amidst the wider ecclesial and social networks demands a greater fidelity to the special gift we have received in the Church. That is why, we need to turn our eyes towards the sources of our charism, particularly to the life and mission of our Father Founder which is the seed of this fruitful tree of which we are a part.

On this occasion we are dealing with only one aspect of the life of Claret: his social work as bishop in Santiago de Cuba. We restrict ourselves to these years of his life because we consider that it was there he was specially challenged by the social realities that demanded from him creative and adequate responses that could enlighten our current historical moment³.

A year ago I made a trip to Santiago de Cuba to conduct a retreat and had the grace of visiting all our communities and living with our brothers. I considered it as an encounter with Claret, and I had even prepared materials to help me when visiting the most important historical places he frequented, but it was surprising for me to note how our Founder continued to live in Cuba through his missionaries who risk their life with a discreet and compassionate presence amidst a lot of privations and controls. You have made a long journey to come to Vic, Claretian territory par excellence. I propose to you to make a big effort with your imagination and heart to accompany Claret throughout this day in his onward and return journey across the Atlantic and let us make a special stopover in Santiago de Cuba to contemplate his social commitment during the six years and two months of his stay there. This journey can be a good pedagogical resource to allow ourselves to be questioned and animated by his missionary inspiration.

Let us begin to cross the ocean. First of all, we need to have two basic attitudes to make use of this journey. In the first place, open mindedness. Undertaking a journey

back two centuries requires us to leave behind the prejudices that our present sensibility has built up against the life styles of the unappreciated nineteenth century⁴; only thus we will be able to take up the integral historical keynotes with its peculiar form of understanding the social, ecclesial, spiritual and pastoral life of the time. Our journey that goes from the middle of the 19th century to the beginnings of the 21st century is marked by a series of rapid changes that have affected the entire world and also the Church. Claret, who is alive for us and accompanies us in the spirit, was a man of his time: his thoughts, writings and actions are fruit of his personal mentality conditioned by the Church and society of a turbulent century which we have to know and understand. That's why we too need to give it a **warm welcome** also. The life and mission of Claret are a gift for us with its fortunes and misfortunes. It is easy to fall into the temptation of not accepting the other as he is and to manipulate him to tell us what we want to hear or making him to keep quiet about what we don't like. It is not infrequent to read or hear about Claretians who exaggerate or extract from his context some anecdote or quote to justify their aims or to criticize the affairs of others. Being aware of these dangers and with an open heart and mind, we shall try to approach his own testimony as far as possible.

Well disposed, we shall join Claret in the preparative stage for crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Then we shall board at Barcelona the steam ship called *La Nueva Teresa Cubana* and on our arrival at *The Pearl of the Caribbean*, we shall deal with the social action of the missionary Archbishop in his vast archdioceses. We shall try to discover the key issues of his labour, the meaning of his dedication and criteria of his commitment. After observing closely his 6 years and 2 months as the residential archbishop we shall board the ship *Pizarro* to come back from Havana with the future confessor of Queen Isabel II. Let us begin our journey.

I. From Catalonia to Cuba: stamped by an indelible missionary identity

Claret did all that was possible during two months to refuse the appointment as archbishop; he expresses it as follows, "Therefore I forcefully rejected all the overtures of the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Brunelli, as well as those of the Attorney General of Spain, Don Lorenzo Arrazola..."⁵. on the day after receiving the communication about his election on 12th August, 1849, he explained to the Nuncio his reasons,

"Because first of all, I don't like dignities.....the second one is because it turns down all my apostolic plans.....Seeing the great lack of gospel and apostolic preachers in our Spanish territory, people's great desires to listen the divine word and the many calls I receive from all over Spain to go and preach the Gospel, I decided to gather and form some zealous companions to do what I cannot do alone....."⁶.

He concluded the letter defending his main argument, "Besides, if I tie myself and remain in one diocese, when my spirit is for the whole world: I cannot even preach as I would like in this small dot of the world, because I have seen with my own eyes all the business which an archbishop has to take care of"⁷.

The Nuncio and the minister did not give up their efforts with this response and approached the bishop of Vic, Luciano Casadevall who *ordered* Claret not to reject this petition because it seemed to him that it was the will of God. Before this intervention, Claret wrote, "This order shook me deeply: on the one hand I didn't dare accept and on the other, I wanted to obey"⁸. He asked time for solitude and discernment. At the end of this process and having asked his closest friends⁹ to help him to discern and on 4th October, he wrote to the Nuncio, "after much prayer, my spiritual director decided that it was the will of God to accept the appointment as the Archbishop of Cuba to which I humbly surrender"¹⁰.

Why did Claret resist so much in accepting the bishopric? We find him in 1849 as a 42 year old man who knew very well what he wanted to do in life; he was convinced about the gift he received to serve the people; he had difficulties in the past with the discontent and vocational search he experienced on leaving the textile industry¹¹. Amidst the prohibitions of the liberal government, in 1841 Claret had begun to preach the Word of God through the popular missions in a hidden, simple and stealthy manner. After the success of the first three missions, he offered himself to his bishop to dedicate himself exclusively to this hard and risky itinerant evangelization.

The whole decade of the 40s was a constant confirmation of his missionary vocation. In July, 1841 he received from the Holy See the title of Apostolic Missionary which was for him the seal of his identity in the Church. In this decade, Claret was a witness of people's thirst for the Word of God, and so he dedicated himself to go around tirelessly the difficult roads of Catalonia and the Canary Islands, he wrote many books and advices, founded with Fr. Joseph Caixal, The Libreria Religiosa, preached numerous retreats to the clergy and founded different lay and clerical associations to evangelize, especially, The Mission-House of Vic.

Claret considered the bishop's mitre was putting in danger, not only his apostolic plans but also, mainly, his universal missionary vocation. When as an elderly archbishop he wrote his autobiography, he made it a point to highlight in the numbers around the narration of his episcopal ordination that the man walking towards the cathedral of Vic to be anointed as bishop was above all a missionary. In the earlier numbers he wrote, "During this period I conducted the Spiritual Exercises for the clergy of Gerona and gave a mission in that city, preaching every day from a balcony in the Casa Pastors to a huge crowd that filled not only the plaza, staircase, and porch of the cathedral..."¹². After the consecration and before his voyage to Cuba, he described his farewell as an authentic missionary campaign,

"..... I arrived in Igualada on October 31 and preached there for All Saints' Day. The following day I visited Montserrat, where I also preached. Next I went to Manresa..... I preached there in the evening, and on the following morning....., in the afternoon I went to my home town, Sallent, At night I preached to them from a balcony overlooking the town square because the church wasn't large enough to hold the crowd. Next day....., the following morning I travelled to the shrine of Our Lady of Fussimanya, I said Mass in the shrine and preached..... From there I went on to Artés, where I also preached, as I did at Calders, as well. I ate at Moyá and preached there that night. The following morning I was off to Collsuspina, where I preached; then I went on to Vich where I had dinner and preached that night. Next I went to Barcelona, where I preached every day in various churches and convents until December 28, when we sailed...."¹³.

This insistence on "I preached...I preached...", could be interpreted as the way Claret

wanted to express that he did not give up his missionary identity despite accepting the bishopric; on the contrary, he wanted to live a difficult existential process to allow him to place the new ministry received from his personal charismatic centre.

Apart from these preachings, Claret dedicated himself to the works already begun and to prepare for his travel. He sought to strengthen The Religious Publishing House through Fr. Joseph Caixal and the Mission-House of Vic through Fr. Stephen Sala, known as his *heir* by being the priest most identified with the spirit of Claret. He too committed himself to recruit future mission companions; It is interesting to note that 9 of the 13 priests were apostolic missionaries whom he himself won over in his missionary journeys.

Once we embark in the frigate *La Nueva Teresa Cubana*, we are amazed at the originality of the new bishop. Speaking of the voyage he tells us that the bad weather obliged them to make a stopover for three days in Malaga where he was occupied, “....Meanwhile, some work was found for me and I preached 15 sermons in the cathedral, the seminary, schools and convents, etc”¹⁴. The rest of the journey was organized with the moments of prayer, formation and recreation and he undertook a mission for 15 days on board. He says about this, “On reaching the Gulf of Damas, I began conducting a mission on deck. Everyone on board attended it, passengers and crew, from captain to cabin boy, and everyone went to confession and received Communion at a general Communion service. We were on friendly terms with the crew...”¹⁵. A simple territorial shift was converted into a missionary campaign in the middle of the ocean.

II. Santiago de Cuba: gestures and actions that confirm the Word announced

We arrive, at last, on dry land. There is no doubting that on that sweltering 16th February 1851 in the port of Santiago de Cuba a missionary bishop disembarked with some well-defined pastoral dreams, plans and a select team to put them into practice.

1. First and foremost, missionary

Hardly reaching the Island, he went to the Sanctuary of our Lady of Charity of Cobre to entrust to her the governing of the archdiocese: she will be *the prelate*. On returning to Santiago, he began a mission in the city. In a letter to Joseph Caixal he relates, “I can’t explain the great and abundant fruits we are reaping from the Holy Mission.....Before Lent I gave a mission for the clergy and it brought such good results.....”¹⁶. The bishop was enthusiastic with the missions and he continued leading them throughout the four pastoral visits he undertook. The Archbishop divided his team of collaborators into 2 groups, one to help him in the government (curia, secretariat, seminary, etc.), the other, to undertake the missionary campaigns that he himself was concluding with preachings and confirmations and thus he could go to all the cities and villages, the plantations and farms of his jurisdiction as much as possible.

The whole Episcopal ministry of Claret is coloured with this indelible missionary identity; we won't be able to understand him if we don't read from this missionary perspective what led him to discover the social needs and take up the unsuspected commitments creatively and boldly during this period.

2. A new reality that needed to be well understood

To carry out an effective governance of his diocese, Claret decided to know deeply the reality of his archdiocese. Before travelling to Cuba he tried to be informed as much as possible¹⁷ and as soon as he landed there he made use of his pastoral visits to have direct contact. After the first visit he wrote to the Queen, "I have travelled, dear madam, a great part of my vast diocese; I have sensed directly the wounds this people suffer. I have studied its evil results. I have discovered their origin and it is nothing but abandonment and betrayal...."¹⁸. He realized at once that he was amidst a reality which was very different to what he was accustomed to live in Catalonia and the Canary Islands.

What was the situation of Cuba at this time? The vast Island of Antilles had extensive territories that became the ideal scenery for the sugar cane, tobacco and coffee plantations. These products built up the new gold of a period of the industrialized countries that were anxiously searching for the raw material for their great businesses. Thanks mainly to sugar, Cuba was enjoying a peak moment in its economy. Hugh Thomas entitled the period from 1825 to 1868 as a *Golden age* and affirmed,

"The wealth of Cuba from 1823 to the end of the 19th century reached its highest levels. The prolonged absolute powers of the attorney generals were converted into also a true dictatorship...., The slavery and slave trafficking, although the latter was illegal, were the institutions on which the wealth and dictatorship were set up"¹⁹.

The Cuban population was more than one million among whom some 450,000 were coloured people, some 60,000 were Chinese, some 30,000 were different origins, like Haitians, French, English, North Americans, Portuguese, etc. The rest were Hispanics among whom the greater part of the population was born in Cuba and they were called *creoles*. The wealth had brought economic development to the extent that in 1830 Cuba was the first place in the whole of Latin America that had a railway track even before Spain. But unfortunately this development was founded on the sweat and blood of slaves. It is calculated that between 1823 to 1865 some 400,000 slaves bought in Africa, entered the island; in 1841 they constituted 43.5% of the total population. It was also a hotbed of unrest for independence, because that was the period of many movements of upheaval against Spain; this was the situation aggravated by the strong internal divisions. Some wanted to preserve the status quo as such and others were longing for total independence from Spain or annexation by the USA that assured the continuation of slavery laws.

On the Church level, the Island was demarcated into two dioceses, the Dioceses of Havana and that of Santiago de Cuba. The latter was the oldest and consisted of a territory of 55,000 kilometres with a population of 240,000 inhabitants for whom there were only 125 priests in 41 parishes. The archdiocese was without a bishop for 14 years since Mgr. Cirilo Aladeda i Brea one of the most politicized churchmen of the 19th century had to flee from there in 1837 to avoid imprisonment for having openly declared his support for the Carlist party²⁰. This prolonged absence of the pastor had

caused a relaxation among the clergy and lack of pastoral care and also taking into account that all the religious congregations that were carrying out the main task of evangelization were expelled, as had happened on the Spanish peninsula in 1835. The new archbishop is met with a precarious situation in all senses.

In short, we can affirm that among the main social challenges of this Cuban period were: the lacerating problem of slavery, the injustice by many European businessmen converted into tyrant bourgeois, the strong web of political corruption that has been woven, the scandalous social differences, the tense situation in favour or against independence, the influence of USA that was searching for regions to widen its economic influence, the prohibition of interracial marriages and an anti-clerical wave coming from Masonic groups in Europe.

What were the key points for the analysis of the reality made use of by the new Archbishop? In various letters, Claret revealed that his study of the reality was addressed mainly to discovering the causes for the evils that were hindering his people from living the faith in their social context. He was not a spiritual archbishop who took shelter in the intra-ecclesial world turning his back on the reality of the suffering of his people. In the lucid letter addressed to Fr. Stephen Sala, after 2 years of his arrival at Cuba, he manifested his concern in painfully discovering the presence of “some destructive principles, corruption and provocation of the divine justice which they will certainly get”²¹.

For Claret these principles of destruction were not theories, but they were incarnated specially in three groups of persons enumerated and described in the same letter. First, there were the little lawyers, the young men who had studied law in the USA, but who did not live as Christians and favoured the interests of foreign powers. The second, the men who owned the black people, who, though they baptized their slaves, lived “like brutes” who did not know the dignity of the human being, treating the sons of God as if they were horses or mules and hindered the evangelization of the slaves. Third, the big businessmen about whom he affirms, “They are very bad, never go to confession, nor receive communion, don’t go to Mass; all live in cohabitation or have illegal relationships with women of mixed race or coloured women and don’t appreciate any other God than their own interest”.

In his letter addressed to the Queen, already mentioned above, Claret went deeper to the roots of the social evils and spoke about the *abandonment* and *betrayal*. The *abandonment* referred to the situation of the simple people because the clergy was not sufficiently formed and the civil authorities, moved only by their petty interests, were not promoting justice and peace. By *betrayal* he meant the proselytising by the protestant sects who encouraged in the people of the Island religious confusion and aversion against Spain. Amidst the inevitable ideological conditions of 19th century, the archbishop managed to discover the root of the evils, namely, the absence of prepared leaders and the need for an integral catholic education. So he emphasized to the Queen,

*“Let us not leave the education in the hands of business oriented speculators, let us overlook the preoccupations and if we can find a wise and holy institute in the church capable of unifying perfectly the lights of the century with the light of the gospel; let us invite it to help us....let us look only on the evils of society that demand a quick remedy....”*²².

In sharpening his look to detect the *evils* of his archdiocese, Claret never lost sight of the overall reality, because he too knew how to discover its *goodness*. In the same letter addressed to Fr. Sala, he affirmed, “The people cannot be in a better disposition than this, all participate in the holy Mission and receive the holy sacraments.....”²³. In his earlier letter addressed to Fr. Fortian Bres, he affirmed, “The docility of these people cannot be explained, the effect made by the missions and are continuing at present, what fervour! What devotion!...”²⁴. The Archbishop perceived the religious soul of his faithful open to the seeds of the Gospel and knew that all his missionary zeal and care to improve their spiritual and social life were worthwhile.

Claret’s breaking of the ecclesiastical moulds of the period draws our attention that he was making this sort of shrewd and bold analysis of the reality, when our present sociological resources were not available. He was not a theoretician of the reality; he was a missionary who asked himself, “Why the gospel message was not getting rooted in the heart of the faithful and filling their social and cultural life? He was a practical man who analyzed the reality to begin skilfully his missionary actions.

3. His life of poverty, like Christ, radical response to the social injustice

When speaking on poverty as an apostolic virtue, Claret presents us an accurate analysis of the liberal society of his time,

*“I see that we live in a century that not only adores the golden calf as did the ancient Hebrews but also worships gold so avidly that it has pulled down the most generous of all virtues from their pedestals. I have seen this era as one in which selfishness has made men forget their most sacred duties to their neighbours and brothers--for all of us are images of God....”*²⁵.

This diagnosis corresponds specially to the reality he found in a Cuban society full of injustice and social differences, fruit of the greed and avarice of the businessmen and politicians. The first significant step he undertook to fight against this unjust and idolatrous system would not be external actions, but a radical decision to commit his own life, “I believed that this dreadful giant, which the world call all-powerful, had to be confronted with the holy virtue of poverty”²⁶.

Claret was not a social activist who was day-dreaming to change the world, but he was an apostle of Jesus Christ who knew that he could confront the evil following in the footsteps of his Master, “I always remembered that Jesus had become poor Himself; he chose to be born, to live, and to die in the utmost poverty”²⁷. There are many testimonies about the poverty of the archbishop, for example, Fr. John Nepomuceno Lobo, one of his very close collaborators, wrote to Fr. Joseph Xifré affirming about the saint, “very poor in his personal belongings and household articles and with regard to his person, modest to a high degree and lover of the poor”²⁸.

4. Preference for the ones preferred by the Lord, the poor and needy

It is not enough to be a poor missionary, his zeal for conformity with Christ led him to opt preferentially for the poorest and the neediest those Jesus preferred. He didn’t doubt in spending his time for them, his best efforts, even a good part of his salary and income. Fr. John Nepomuceno Lobo affirmed in the letter I have already referred to, “he made use of all his income as a true apostle: all for the good of the

poor.....”²⁹. The evaluation made by Claret himself in his autobiography about his work as archbishop is eloquent,

*“With the Lord's help, I saw to the needs of the poor. Every Monday of the year, as long as I was in Cuba, I gathered together the poor of whatever town I happened to be in..... Many of them did go to confession to me, because they knew I loved them--for the Lord has indeed given me a heartfelt love of the poor”*³⁰.

Later on he affirmed, “For the poor I bought a ranch in the town of Puerto Principe....”, “I also set up a licensed credit union in the diocese, for the use and benefit of the poor....”, “I also was visiting the prisoners in the prisons; I taught them catechism and preached them frequently and then I gave one peso to each one...”, “I was visiting with the same frequency the poor in the hospital....”, “I was the president of the committee of the friends of the country; we came together in my residence and were concerned about the developments on the Island; we were trying to find work for the poor boys.....” and “I facilitated marriages for the poor.....”³¹.

Among the poor he had to take care of, there were also his own priests. After a few months of his arrival in the Island on 27th May, 1851, he wrote a circular letter to his clergy telling them, “Seeing first of all with our own eyes the sorrowful state of the misery to which most of you have been reduced, we have decided to represent to Her Majesty the Queen.....on this point and to send a prebendary to hand it over to the attention of the government.....”³². He did so and sent Fr. Jerome Usera to Madrid with two big letters, one for the Queen³³ and another one for the president of the Council of the Government³⁴, in which he explained the calamitous situation of the clergy and asked for an urgent increase of their stipends. At the end, there was a significant change. The archbishop himself reduced his salary to increase the salary of his priests³⁵.

The Episcopal ministry of Claret had very clear favourites. The poor occupied the centre of his heart because he knew that in them he served the Lord. It meant a love of special preference that did not exclude anybody, as lived by his Master. Fr. Lobo affirms in his testimony, “lover of the poor, approachable to all, obliging in general, and personally with the heart of a real father for all, ever loving to attract all to God....”³⁶. In the most difficult moments, this special preference was very palpable and is very clear as mentioned in his autobiography, “During the cholera epidemic, all the clergy acquitted themselves admirably, day and night. I and all the priests were among the sick constantly, caring for their spiritual and corporal needs”³⁷; the same could be told about the hard moments when the earthquakes threatened the Island.

5. “So wherever I encountered greed, I countered it with poverty”³⁸: a practical and effective missionary

This statement that Claret, utilized to express his option for the poor to embrace the radical poverty of Jesus, can help us to highlight the intuitive and practical way of life he had, not only in the resolutions of his personal life, but also in his apostolic plans. The archbishop studied the reality of his time and made some practical conclusions for his ministry. It is providential to find among his manuscripts a document titled *The evils to be rectified*³⁹, which is converted into the social line of his ministry as a response to the above problems. On pointing out the *evils*, he proposed his respective challenges: to take care of the education of the children, to institute the houses of charity, to pay more attention to the hospitals, to ensure the good

functioning of the prisons, to set up small credit unions, to publish books for teaching and to promote healthy places for sports and games to avoid idleness and vices.

Let us accompany the archbishop more closely in our apostolic journey with him by paying special attention on how his plan of actions did not just remain on paper.

.1 Efforts for family stability

Claret found one of the most difficult problems to be concubinage, not only because it was against catholic morals, but also because it was the cause of a very serious social evil that was undermining the family and leaving the native women and their children in a totally abandoned situation. General Concha, one of the attorney generals of this period wrote in his memoirs about this,

“In these circumstances, in proportion to this population, no country has got a greater number of abandoned children among the white as well as in the coloured people; if they are not accommodated in the charitable institutions, they perish or are converted into these disastrous elements for the society who later on crowded the prisons and presidiums”⁴⁰.

After his first pastoral visit, the archbishop wrote to D. Lawrence Arrazola, the Attorney General of Cuba, “I have rectified 9,000 marriages from public concubinage, resulting in legitimizing more than 40,000 children. I have reunited 300 broken marriages....”. After this joyful news, he expresses paradoxically his desire to renounce his office,

*“I request youto help me as for as possible to support my resignation, because I have fulfilled what I could do, namely, I have established the general reform of the customs; but it is not possible for me. There are a lot of contradictions I am facing, especially when I am not able to give way for certain prevailing practices on marriages between different races.....”*⁴¹.

What were these contradictions? In the same letter Claret denounces the existence of a strong protection of the people living in concubinage and referred to the royal document of 15th October, 1805 that required the governor’s permission for the so called noble and pure blood people to contract marriage with the persons of mixed race, coloured or other races. It was a law to safeguard the interest of the European businessmen who were going to the Island to amass wealth and go back to their own country, but leaving behind the women who served them. Supported by a wider interpretation of this legislation, it became a custom to consider all white people as pure blood and so have an excuse to avoid the responsibility of marriage. Claret broke this custom and took up a strict interpretation of the law and thus he went ahead with the blessing of marriages between mixed races. This prophetic gesture brought him a lot of problems from the powerful class of the Island.

Claret was convinced that those living in concubinage were not only offending God and harming themselves, but were leaving their children and damaging the common good of society⁴², that is why he confronts this problem head on. He takes great efforts in the religious field, “I made it easier for the poor to straighten out their marriages and baptismal records so that they could escape the evils of concubinage”⁴³. The popular missions were the most practical platform to achieve this goal. He also wrote to the civil authorities not to hinder the procedures. He was

very strict on this issue to the extent of using the means of putting pressure which we can't even imagine in our secularized society; but in his historical context they were a sign of his concern to defend the rights of the weaker section of society; for example, he demanded the administrative functionaries to collaborate with him and his missionaries giving them list of the people living in concubinage in each town. The denouncing, threats and persecutions from those who found their privileges in danger made the archbishop suffer much; he was not scared but continued.

5.2. Commitment for an integral and qualitative education for the poor

Claret sensed the need to establish an integral and qualitative education as a strong base for a social reform with a long term vision. He began it by the renewal and empowering of his clergy and the reorganization of the seminary of St. Basil; because the priests were the educators of the faith of the people. He made the seminary not only a good centre for priestly formation, but also in the face of an absence of quality education centres, he converted it into an institute with university level education that formed numerous young people of his time⁴⁴.

He was also committed to the civil education despite the opposition of an influential group of the society that considered the enablement of young people as a danger in the colonial territory as causing turbulence and reforms⁴⁵. In his letter addressed to the Queen after his first pastoral visit, he clearly notified his commitment for education, "we cannot leave the education in the hands of speculators as if it were some sort of commodity...."⁴⁶. Claret felt the responsibility of searching for good educators and so he makes all possible arrangements so that the government could allow some religious institutes into Cuba. In 1852, a royal document opened the doors of the Island to them, but the superior generals could not respond to the petition of the archbishop because of the lack of personnel; only the Piarists reached there to found a school in Camaguey, while the Jesuits and Paulines would arrive there when the archbishop had already left the Island.

In his autobiography, Claret left on record, "I was always visiting and in all the towns the schools of the children and preached to the teachers and the students"⁴⁷. Besides, to take care of the education of the poor children, he founded with Mother Antonia Paris, the Institute of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, dedicated to teaching.

The social project of education and human development most appreciated by the archbishop was certainly the Farm-School of Puerto Principe. Claret himself writes, "For the poor I bought a farm.....When I left from the Island, the expenses from my savings were 25,000 duros". He bought it in 1855 and appointed one of his very close collaborators, Fr. Paladio Currius to plan and supervise the construction. Let Claret tell us his vision,

"My object in starting this ranch was to gather together poor boys and girls, many of whom were wandering the streets begging. At the ranch they were fed, clothed, and taught their religion, as well as reading, writing, and whatever art or trade they wanted to learn. One hour-and only one hour--a day they had to work on the ranch. This provided enough food to make the ranch self-sufficient. Whatever else they might earn had to be put into a savings account. In this way, when they left the ranch they had had some formal education, learned a trade, and earned some money for their efforts"⁴⁸.

The project was given the name “Casa de Caridad” (House of Charity) as a clear reference to his Episcopal motto⁴⁹. Claret considered this work as the mature fruit of the love of Christ which impelled him to love the poorest children and youth. He was generous in saving and making efforts in being dedicated to taking forward this difficult dream. But sadly after the assassination attempt of Holguin the work was weakened and the growth diminished and on his return to Madrid the project was not continued by anybody. But here we have a project that enlightens our social commitment today.

5.3. In favour of economic solidarity

During the time of Claret, the wealth in Cuba was growing considerably, but it was in the hands of a minority that made use of the poverty of the majority. When the workers, craftsmen and the small property owners were in need of a loan to undertake some business or project, they had no other option than going to the hands of the usury of big businessmen who were demanding inflated interest and making them poorer. The archbishop thought it timely to establish in his archdiocese a credit union, an institution of economic solidarity created in 1803 in Tottenham, a district of London, by Mrs. Priscila Wakefield and producing good results in different places.

On 1 January, 1854, Claret published the *Reglamento de la Caja parroquial de ahorros o sea depósito y guarda maternal* which he himself wrote and then it was published as part of his work *Las delicias del campo*⁵⁰. When reading carefully the Rules we find out how he wanted this institution to be filled with the spirit of the gospel⁵¹. In the introduction of the Rules, he expresses his motivations, “Desiring to conserve the good customs he (the archbishop) has taught by word and writing, to promote the public morality and foster in its own time the agricultural and mechanical arts, he installs it in his diocese as an efficacious means to that effect”⁵². This social initiative was approved by the Attorney General, Marque de la Pezuela on 15th August, 1854⁵³.

Claret wanted the establishment of a credit union in each parish to educate the people in the virtue of saving to avoid falling prey to the usury of the businessmen. This project did not remain merely as a desire, he put it into practice and for that he fulfilled what the Rules said, “The prelate himself offers to lend 1,000 pesos to each parish to begin this great work of charity”⁵⁴. Each credit union was in the hands of a team of three persons: the parish priest, a member of the government and one of the parishioners who inspired more trust by his morality, religiosity and benevolence. These persons chosen by the archbishop were working ad-honorem and each had one of the three keys of the box where the money was deposited or taken from on each Sunday and thus the transparency was ensured in this delicate matter. Besides, the bishop was going through the accounts and was evaluating the good operation of the bank on his pastoral visits.

To avoid any comment on the possible intention of enrichment, he determined not to take back the money granted at the beginning and the benefits attained to be shared among the poor widows as alms and among the respected spinsters as a prize for their virtue. Here we see how this powerful enterprise is breaking once again the mould of the typical prelate strictly restricted to the pastoral works alone. Claret realizes that the faith practice is strictly conditioned by the economy and he is concerned to help the neediest to overcome shortages and the dangers of being

excluded. In one of his letters written to Fr. Paladio Currius we come to know that the credit unions continued to function one and half years after his departure from the Island⁵⁵; and sadly afterwards, it was discontinued.

5.4. Striving for a more just and better quality agriculture

Claret realized at once that he was in a land where agriculture was the main source of work, but at the same time he found out about the deficient formation and bad labour conditions of the farmers. His apostolic charity moved him to seek once again the integral good of his faithful. In his booklet *Reflexiones sobre la Agricultura*, he explains his zeal in this field, “This love and desire for their well-being obliges me in the course of the mission and pastoral visit of the village parishes....to teach the method of sowing, planting and grafting.....”⁵⁶.

In this little book of 22 pages published in 1854, Claret explains his reflections and advice to improve agricultural work, he feels in continuity with the evangelizers who did not close their eyes to the needs of the faithful but be committed to an integral and liberating evangelization. Among them, he highlighted the example of the famous Bartolome de las Casas about whom he mentioned, “He did a lot of good for the tenant farmer and the indigenous people with agriculture and other industries which he made use of as his zeal and love commanded him in these very vast countries of America”⁵⁷.

The practical and realistic view of Claret led him not only to give useful advice, but to make a bold proposal by which he knew that he would close down the interests of the landlords. In the first place he explained his own reading of the agricultural reality,

“I have observed various labourious and industrious tenant farmers, after having worked hard to make those lands fruitful, they are taken away from them in the third year or they are sent away by the owner or by the ambition of another tenant farmer who offers better profit than the first one. This is very damaging to the development of agriculture, because the tenant farmer, due to the fear of being thrown off the land, neither cultivates nor makes it fruitful; he would make it so should he have some security of remaining on it permanently”⁵⁸.

As a response to these challenges he launched a proposal of making a law on the tenancies of the land to avoid unjust evictions; he too proposed an agrarian reform at the regional level that could illumine the reality of the whole Island, “Division of the land is an absolute need”, the distribution of the same among the small farmers, mainly “in the jurisdiction of Tunas and Bayamo from the side of the Cauto”. The archbishop was convinced that when the property is not assured “nobody cultivates nor builds house on it....there will only put up some miserable huts by the interim providence”⁵⁹. We cannot imagine how he could dream this proposal that was going in line with the socialist and progressive thinking of this time. Lebroc affirms, “The archbishop’s relationship with the agrarian reform is noted through another famous Cuban, Francisco de Frias Jacott....who was asserting that the destination of our country would be a flattery if a bright future is not opened to the small rural property”⁶⁰.

Claret knew that these reflections, advice and proposals would not leave his readers indifferent and he would be reprimanded for interfering in matters that do not correspond to him and so he himself expressed his reasons for getting involved in

this profound social issue,

“Why should a prelate be occupied with these matters, when his work is the Holy Theology and Christian canons and morals? Of course, this must be my main obligation; but I don’t think my concern to propagate and perfect agriculture is unreasonable, because it powerfully influences the improvement of the customs which is my main mission; it also brings to the people wealth and joy that I have to provide as far as I am their Prelate and spiritual Father who loves them so much. And love is to desire the good for others, I have to provide them this great good and utility through agriculture”⁶¹.

Two years later in 1856, the archbishop publishes his second work on agriculture; this time it deals with a more complete and detailed work entitled *Las delicias del campo*. Through quoting from Scripture and “old and modern, national and foreign authors”, he vindicated the role of agriculture in the social life and highlighted its dignity against those who were trying to relegate it as a work proper of the lowest class people. Following this, in a didactic form, through some conversations between imaginary persons he presented the different themes of geographical formation and mainly, on agriculture along with practical advice to make better use of the land and its fruits. He also presented certain biblical and spiritual notes to help the farmers to live an intense relationship with God through their work on the land⁶².

The contribution of Claret to agrarian reform is not limited to the reflections and proposals of his first book, as we have already pointed out; he also intervened directly in a plan to convert the “the peasants” into property owners and cultivators of the land. Marqués de la Pezuela, the attorney general of Cuba consulted the archbishop on the situation of some extensive lands that had been formerly administered by the Dominicans and were now in the hands of the Ministry of the Royal Property because of the confiscation law of 1836; they were about to be sold by a royal decree to give back the money to the Church. The archbishop replied, “These lands....should be appropriated with the preference without excluding the poor who have cultivated it or could cultivate as tenants, excluding the rich or at least delaying them in alienating the small properties”⁶³.

Claret ended his letter saying, “Apart from this, there is a numerous and very useful class of people for the cultivation; they will find a powerful encouragement to foster a great wealth with their work that offers a strong base for the Island, if they are ensured with the property of the land that will give them benefit from the sweat of their brow”⁶⁴. He was convinced that the system of the distribution of land should be corrected to avoid injustices and he did not lose the opportunity to apply them when it was in his hands. But sadly, when the Marques de la Pezuela was about to execute this measure in conformity with the indications of the archbishop, he was substituted by Mr. José Gutierrez de la Concha as the attorney general who acted very differently.

In this agrarian field, we cannot leave out some traits that highlight the ecological sensibility of Claret to form a botanical garden to educate the Cubans in this topic, “A botanical garden will be formed and trees and plants of the country capable of some improvement will be planted and we shall bring from outside those plants that can give good results here.....”⁶⁵. In the same work, the first book on agriculture, to fight against the indiscriminate felling of trees, he proposed that given “the lack of so many trees, we have to try to prevent it, in anticipation, by leaving some forests, planting

fruit trees and other trees for good timber, etc.”⁶⁶. An ecological sensibility is reflected at a time when it was sorely lacking.

5.5. In favour of Justice and peace without getting involved in politics

While Claret brought from his missionary experience in unsettled Catalonia a firm conviction about not getting involved in political matters⁶⁷, in his approach in Cuba he needed to assume an even greater balance due to the turbulent political experience arising from the repeated attempts to revolt against Spain. The process of emancipation in the rest of the Americas had awakened on the Island a greater enthusiasm for independence, but these longings were cruelly suppressed because of the fear that the Island would fall to the hands of Negro Slaves as had happened in Haiti⁶⁸.

The uprisings were controlled but the Cuban national identity was more and more accentuated among the Creoles, in particular among the intellectuals, writers and strong political and economic figures. Despite strong Hispanic roots, the distance from Spain which in 1837 had withdrawn Cuba's status as a Spanish province to submit it as a simple colony under Captain Generals. The liberal laws that governed the Spanish peninsula could not be applied in the colonial territories and moreover Cuban deputies elected to the courts were excluded from it. This disaffection towards Spain was increasingly awakening the possibility of annexing Cuba to USA, a neighbouring emergent country⁶⁹.

The situation of Claret as a Spanish Catholic Archbishop was not easy because on the one hand he had been appointed by the Pope for an ecclesial service and on the other, he was an officer of the Spanish Crown, sent by the Minister of Grace and Justice to a colonial territory. We are referring to an era in which the civil and ecclesial powers were interfering and supporting one another without a clear consciousness of a necessary and legitimate separation. The complexity of the public role of the Archbishop aggravated the threat from protestant influence that different groups from the USA were propagating. In a period in which there was not yet a sensibility about openness to ecumenical dialogue, this situation was lived with fear and a combative spirit. Claret was partly aware of these cultural and religious conditions⁷⁰, but his great evangelical and missionary spirit led him to transcend them on many occasions. We see here a very clear example.

A few months after his arrival on the Island, in August 1851, the Archbishop was a witness to the second landing of Narciso Lopez Urriola⁷¹, with 434 men, in one of the most important attempts at an uprising for independence. Lopez was defeated, captured, and sentenced to be garrotted along with three others. A few days later the Archbishop had to pass through Puerto Principe, the place of the rebellion, where he had very carefully to avoid the rejection and the close mindedness of some people. He himself narrates in his Autobiography,

“At the start of the mission (in Puerto Principe) many people came to see whether or not I was going to talk about the political upheavals taking place all over the island of Cuba, and especially those at Puerto Principe. When they observed that I didn't breathe a word about politics either from the pulpit or in the confessional, publicly or privately, they were greatly impressed and I won their confidence”⁷².

This prudent attitude, of not meddling in thorny political matters, did not prevent him

from being bold in trying to seek peace at any cost. At the request of relatives of those condemned to death, he wrote two letters to the Attorney General requesting the pardon of the condemned. Unfortunately he could not get anything, but we are left with evidence of a man who without getting involved in political matters in order to ensure his missionary freedom, was committed to peace and reconciliation by suggesting alternative proposals and expressing opinions that could be illuminating in the discernment of this delicate social situation. In the first letter he alludes to his duty to defend the right to life, “how can I be a good shepherd of these sheep whom the Lord has entrusted to me, if I don’t try by all possible means to save the lives of these unhappy souls who although rebels and disobedient to authorities, are my subjects and sheep?....” Later he said, “Your Excellency will tell me that according to all the laws they must die. I know it, my lord; but I must also say that sometimes circumstances mediate that capital punishments should be switched to exile or imprisonment.....”⁷³.

In the second letter he went beyond expressing his concern for the future of the social environment of the Island, “If this sentence is executed, the people will feel resentful and never again support the Spaniards except through force and on the external level.....”⁷⁴. Claret tries not to get involved in the politics, but he knows that his missionary presence commits him to defend life and promote peace.

5.6. Sincere and realistic efforts to defend the dignity of slaves

We are touching upon a more complex and inhuman issue that Claret had to confront on the Island, namely, the scandal of the slavery system. It is good to pause here to see the concrete reality that he had to face because if we don’t, we run the risk of superficial conclusions about his actions, judging that he did not make a clear and strong prophetic denunciation, or devaluing the importance of his actions and concrete gestures, made in favour of the slaves.

Slavery was already abolished in Spain in 1820 during the Liberal Triennium, but in 1837, Parliament decided that constitutional laws were not applicable in the Spanish territories overseas; the reason given was economical as the General Leopoldo O’Donnell referred explicitly, “The slavery system is an absolute necessity to prevent the Island rapidly falling from importance to becoming instead financially burdensome to the State within a few years.”⁷⁵. Large landlords, producers of sugar and coffee, the main foundation of the economic boom, were seeking to ensure cheap labour to maintain competitive costs in the international market. Slave trafficking not only favoured them, but they counted on an international network of great scope which benefited many: on the one hand, the tribal leaders of coastal Atlantic African tribes were selling their own brothers⁷⁶, and on the other hand, the business companies that were responsible for the management and transportation of “goods”; not to exclude the Attorney Generals and other customs authorities who were receiving their fee for each slave that entered. From 1829 to 1865, more than a million people entered, torn from their lands and in 1835 alone, there were 35,000.

Apart from economic reasons, the maintenance of the slavery system was based on the strong fear that the slaves would become independent and *Africanise* the Island, as had happened in Haiti⁷⁷. The foreign press fed these suspicions and created an atmosphere of panic that led to the merciless repression of any type of revolutionary movements caused by black people. The existence of a political party seeking the africanization of Cuba and the many outbreaks of rebellion that arose between 1838

to 1845 gave weight to these suspicions to deem it necessary to avoid any kind of change in the current legislation regarding the subjugation of slaves.

To avoid churchmen meddling in this situation, a law forbade them to make any public criticism of state legislation under the pain of immediate exile⁷⁸. The clergy remained so terrified that sadly they quickly became accustomed to this sad situation to the extent that in the rural churches there were even announcements after mass about the sale of slaves⁷⁹. Black people were retaining their beliefs and native rites; but officially they were to be baptised as Catholics and receive catechesis. Commitments were not fulfilled in practice because employers subjected the slaves to such exploitation so there was no time to participate in worship or catechesis; moreover the owners avoided permitting the slaves any type of formation even religious.

Certainly, we cannot say that Claret was a fighter for the abolition, like his contemporary, Don Julio Vizcarrondo⁸⁰, but neither can his lack of explicit pronouncement against the slavery system be judged as his consent to this great social sin; on the contrary, seen from the complicated social context in which he had to move, we can better understand his valiant activities and prudent silences.

The Archbishop was shocked by the slavery system he encountered in Cuba; in one of his letters addressed to Fr. Esteban Sala, he describes his impression about this inhuman situation,

“It is true that the owners of black people are men who make their slaves be baptised; but in other matters they are brutes. They themselves direct the male slave to the female slave, as they do with their horse and mare, and very often they themselves and their brothers and sons have sex with the black women; and are of course, the enemies of missions, religion and morality....”⁸¹.

Many of his collaborators gave testimony in the process of the beatification of the archbishop rejecting this evil, “He wanted to abolish slavery, but this not being possible, he worked to make it milder exhorting the owners and consoling the slaves”⁸². Claret knew that if he publicly denounced this social sin, he would at once be exiled as had happened to Julio Vizcarrondo. In addition, he knew very well the suffering of this archdiocese during the 14 year absence of his predecessor who had to flee from there for political reasons which had had dreadful consequences in the quality of the clergy and evangelization. The Archbishop had to put aside the impulses that impelled him to publicly denounce the slave system and to take a more realistic and practical attitude that would permit him to fight with all possible means within his reach for the dignity of the slaves to ensure them a better life.

Examples of his discontent with respect to the prevailing system of slavery and his desire to undertake prudent actions are not isolated and are present in his consultation in 1853 with Msgr. Francis Fleix i Solans, bishop of Havana. First he expressed his concern and prudent dealings, “God willing I am thinking of visiting the diocese, before Easter....Till now I haven’t gotten involved with slaves. I have only collected what was spontaneously presented to me. In some places of this diocese the slavery system is widely practised”⁸³. And finally , he expressed his discomfort and appeals for advice, “I hope that in your goodness and zeal you can with your higher wisdom and experience show me the way I should deal with this very delicate and important issue”⁸⁴.

The only strategy Claret saw as viable was that used by St. Paul with respect to this same issue: clearly expressing the slaves' human dignity as children of God and appealing for Christian charity to improve their condition of life. Any other initiative would have put all his evangelization work in serious danger. In his Pastoral Letter he dedicated a chapter to the care of children and slaves where he affirmed prudently and astutely, "The servants and slaves are part of the family"⁸⁵. Throughout the chapter he developed the duties of the slaves and their owners, recalling in particular the list of civil laws already promulgated in favour of slaves and which if they were being observed would have ended the inhuman treatment they were receiving from their owners⁸⁶. He finishes the chapter addressing the owners, "According to the author Festo, this word *family* is taken from the name *Famel* which means *slave*.....so you should remember the obligations that you have not only to your children, but also to your slaves and that you have to behave as good parents...."⁸⁷.

In his personal life he showed that it was certainly possible to treat the slaves with dignity. When hearing confessions and giving communion he did not allow any differences and so he treated all equally whether slaves or free while encouraging them to mix. He preached to slaves as well as to free and also complained about owners not allowing their slaves to participate in missions because of the excess of work they had given them. He also established that loans from Credit Unions be impartial. Fr. James Clotet left some simple anecdotes that show the strong conviction of the Archbishop in favour of abolishing racial difference. Among them, he recalls that a poor woman came to ask for money to buy a slave and Claret replied to her categorically, "Dear lady, the Archbishop of Cuba has neither slaves nor money to buy them"⁸⁸.

Claret had a very good understanding with the Attorney General of the Island, Marques de la Pezuela, making proposals and actions to suppress slave trafficking, slowly working to attain the abolition of the slavery system. The Marques published a series of articles in *El Diario de la Marina*, demanding an end of slave trafficking and praising the attitude of the Archbishop in the same line, unsettling the atmosphere of the big slave merchants who presented their opposition to the Madrid Government accusing the Attorney General and the Archbishop of being abolitionists. The warning from the new government was not delayed in arriving in November, 1854 with the change of the Attorney General for his stand against slave trafficking. Despite all these intimidations, the Archbishop did not give up his fight for racial equality and the improvement in treatment of slaves; thus Mr. Laureano Figuerola, a famous fighter for the cause of black people, recognized in his speech to the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, "Although I was not a friend of Fr. Claret, I couldn't remain without appreciating what His Excellency did in Cuba in favour of the black people"⁸⁹.

5.7. Inculturation and love for the people and their idiosyncrasies

Though the concept of inculturation as a "process of integration of an individual or of a group, into the culture and into the society with which it enters into contact"⁹⁰, is relatively recent, we find in Claret the traits that show us a missionary sensitivity, capable of adapting himself to the new cultural and social reality of the people. First of all, I highlight what has already been said about his careful attempts to study the reality which led him to a conscientious analysis identifying the benefits that should be utilised and the evils that should be fought against. Claret realized immediately that the Antilles was not Europe and as he told his friend, the bishop of Urgell, in a

letter in September, 1853, “You cannot get an idea of this country.....All the plans made from Europe cannot be put into practice in America”⁹¹. Therefore he made a serious effort to adapt to this new reality and did not hesitate in approaching people through direct conversation during pastoral visits; as he expressed it to the Attorney General in a letter written at the end of the first pastoral visit, “Perhaps there is no corner in my diocese that I have not visited. Therefore I can say that I know my sheep and all know me and perhaps there is no evil which I haven’t sensed and studied in order to apply a remedy which is my duty”⁹².

Secondly, I focus on the commitment of Claret in the social and cultural development of Cuba through his participation in the *Junta de Amigos del Pais* (Committee of the friends of the Country). A lay institution founded in the times of the famous King Carlos III, which he established in 1787, in Santiago de Cuba to foster the development of the people. The Archbishop had no hesitation in approaching them to offer himself as a member and later accepting the nomination as President. Though we do not have any minutes of their meetings, we know the following from Claret, “We met in the Palace and all of us occupied ourselves with the advancement of the Island; we were trying to find work for the poorer boys”⁹³. Seeking the progress of a country is to love its people, their culture and believe in their capabilities.

Thirdly, I highlight the concern of Claret for native vocations. Given the urgent need for new clergy for his vast diocese; he applied to the Spanish bishops to send him seminarians who were doing their final years studies to be ordained in his diocese. He improved the living conditions of the conciliar seminary and opted for the promotion of native vocations. Fr. Cristobal Fernández writes with regard to this, “The hope for a final solution (to the lack of clergy in his diocese), though it is still distant, Claret had placed his hope in the indigenous element that he was to recruit, select and then form with great care according to the orientations pointed out....”⁹⁴. Claret commits himself to the native clergy and he makes the effort to offer them the best possible formation.

At the same time we cannot overlook how Claret affirmed his preference for the Spanish candidates rather than the Cubans⁹⁵, when speaking on another occasion about vocations for the Religious Sisters of Mary Immaculate and when speaking about the candidates who would join the seminary, among others he excluded those that were black⁹⁶. In this data we clearly see the cultural conditionings that were heavily influencing Claret which did not permit the creation of inconveniences and impediments that he saw in some social groups being able to approach the priestly and religious life, without falling into very strongly rooted cultural generalizations of his time. We also see how in many cases he was able to overcome these conditionings and to stand for an inculturation of the gospel in this new culture he embraced with missionary love.

Finally, I highlight the adaptation Claret achieved in his ministry as a writer, since he chose the issues and style that better helped him reach into the hearts of the Cubans; for example, he wrote on agriculture and other subjects people were interested in. But particularly, the attention he paid to the editing and presentation of books that interest people bearing in mind the cultural taste of the Caribbean. In a letter to the Director of the Religious Publishing House, he expressed,

“Kindly inform the binders that the Americans very much like clear and bright colours, such as, pink, red, clear or marbled and so the cut of the book’s pages should have

these colours and the back label or title the book another bright and shining colour; because we have to present them with attractive things. Don't forget to tell them as this was requested from the beginning but I see they have forgotten because they have sent us pathetic looking books about which we feel very bad"⁹⁷.

Going beyond the visual effect he was seeking, it is important to note the Archbishop's concern for grasping the cultural mind of his people and adapting to it as a sign of his true inculturation.

6. The intimate life of the Apostle, a passionate heart ready to shed his blood

To really get to know a person, we need to move from information about their activities to an understanding of the intimate reasons that were motivating their behaviour. During his Cuban period as Archbishop, Claret experienced a very significant human and spiritual process of maturation. Now we have to ask ourselves about that inner strength that helped him overcome the obstacles, persecutions, fears, weariness and which led him to creativity and boldness in mission.

6.1. An unifying and inspiring passion: the love of Christ

In the introduction to *la Carta Pastoral al Pueblo* (The Pastoral Letter to the People) Claret has left an explicit response to this point, "Don't doubt children, the Prelate who is occupied as he should be in pondering what Jesus Christ did and suffered to save the souls; his heart is enkindled with such fire by means of this meditation that doesn't allow him to be calm or to at rest...."⁹⁸. Here is the secret that enkindles his heart: the experience of his personal love of Jesus Christ. In addition to this intimate experience, the archbishop points out, "the fire enkindled in this meditation, impels the Prelate to forget himself and go where the Spirit of the Lord leads him so as to be able to say with St. Paul, "Charitas Christi urget nos...."⁹⁹. The fruitfulness of his Episcopal ministry can't be explained as a simple fulfilment of a religious function, but as the passionate response to a personal love that seduces him and make him other-centred as the result of being impelled by the Spirit into the new ways of mission.

Before journeying to the Island, Claret as bishop elect, during his recovery from a delicate leg operation in Barcelona, committed himself to design his Episcopal coat of arms. Certainly, it was a good occasion to form a synthesis of his essential life journey. Claret chose the Pauline sentence, "The love of Christ impels us"¹⁰⁰. In the same *Carta Pastoral al Pueblo*, he explained the meaning of this sentence, "Dear sons, you know that this is our emblem, our motto and our all; because the love of Christ has made us take up many works in visiting, exhorting you and teaching catechism and preparing your hearts to administer the holy sacraments...."¹⁰¹.

The archbishop has no other motive other than to live, work, pray and suffer, than the centrality of the love of Christ in his heart. It is a personal experience that was maturing in the course of time in a dynamic way. Already in his native Catalonia he was seduced by the love of the missionary Christ,

"I am ever more deeply impressed at the thought of Jesus moving from town to town, preaching everywhere-not just in big cities, but in little villages and even to a single woman. When he spoke to the Samaritan woman, he was tired and thirsty from travelling, and the moment was inconvenient for him as it was for the woman"¹⁰².

In Cuba the contemplation of the Missionary Christ is enriched by other dimensions of the person of Christ that enlighten the new ministry which he received. Let us see an important example: the presence of Christ as the Good Shepherd, who seeks, knows, loves and gives his life for his sheep. On his arrival at Cuba we find the following important text in his personal notes,

“Arrival of the shepherd. *I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and they know me* (Jn 10,34). Jesus Christ always spoke with simplicity and in parables; he says that he is the teacher, physician and shepherd of the souls. Through his teaching, he was feeding and healing his sheep. He was to leave and so he instituted the Apostolate (the Apostles) and his successors....That’s why the Lord has sent me as shepherd to take care of you. Three obligations: 1. To live with you...2.To look after you...3. To feed the sheep. He tries every day to give them good pasture, food and drink. Corporal food: oh my dear children, all my work is yours and I shall do all that is possible. God knows my love for all, especially for the poorest. Spiritual food.....”¹⁰³.

The love of Christ, the Good Shepherd, in Claret has two dimensions, on the one hand, it is the love he experiences from Christ who seeks, seduces, saves and discovers the immensity of the love of the Father in the Spirit and on the other, it is the love that awakens in him his missionary passion. The love of Christ moves him to take up social actions as an expression of the love of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, who feeds the hungry, who heals wounds, who fights with wolves and who is ready to give his life by shedding his blood.

The love of Christ in Claret is not a woolly idea or an intermittent sentiment, but a grace that he gratefully receives in his heart, conserves and tries to make use of responsibly through specific means and proposals, such as receiving the sacraments, daily meditation, *lectio divina*, spiritual reading, nurturing of virtues, etc. This experience comes together to such an extent in his being so as to make him live in the presence of God despite his hectic ministerial functions and social functions. Among the notes of Fr. Anthony Barjau, member of the community of the archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, we find a resolution Claret proposed to his clergy while talking about priestly spirituality and which can shed light on this mystical character he was acquiring during his impressive missionary action,

“Imitating St. Catherine of Sienna who, invited by the Jesus Christ himself, built a small cell in her heart and was constantly saying, ‘Deus cordis mei...’ We should never complain of being involved in the business of our neighbours, caring for their salvation and not looking after ourselves; let us be like St. Catherine of Sienna, the little cell and amidst the traffic of the world, we shall be in the presence of God”¹⁰⁴.

When he arrived at Madrid on finalizing the retreat of 1857, he wrote as the first resolution, “I shall have a chapel built in my heart and in it I shall adore God day and night.....”. Continuing, he specifies the mystic-apostolic unity of this resolution, “My soul will be at the feet of Jesus like Mary listening to his voice and inspirations, and my flesh or body, like Martha will go about working with humility and attention so that all I know to be for the glory of God and good of my neighbours....”¹⁰⁵. The missionary experience in Cuba led him to a deeper and integral spiritual maturity that makes clear the possibility of unifying the missionary existence in the love that we receive and give.

6.2. Crisis and martyrdom as part of the Pascal journey

This process of maturity is not a grace received amidst the cloying mystically ecstasy, but a gift and task lived amidst social problems and the consequences of the fight against sin and injustice. The Archbishop did not turn a blind eye, on the contrary, as we have already seen, he studied the reality, identified the evil he had to confront and undertook a series of actions to transform this reality as far as he could; it was natural that all this led him to run the same fate as his Master: to suffer slander, persecution and assassination attempts.

Let us not think that Claret was a strong man who was not bothered about problems or that they did not affect his inner self; it was not so. In Cuba, he underwent various moments of crisis. I just want to refer to two of them, which led him to consider the possibility of resigning. The first one was at the end of his pastoral visit in April, 1853. He wrote to Brunelli, “at the same time I am thinking of writing to His holiness and to the Queen about resigning and withdrawing to my seminary in Catalonia or to the Society of Jesus, if they want me, because I am tired of being the Archbishop and I have fulfilled my mission in this Island”¹⁰⁶. Some days later, he wrote to his friend Joseph Caixal, the recently consecrated bishop of Urgell about his new ministry,

“May God make you happier than me, because I assure you that for me it is a very heavy and bitter burden. In the retreats and daily prayer I make a resolution of conforming myself to the will of God; but every day and every minute, I almost forget this resolution and I have the desire to shake off this yoke to escape and flee from here. May God grant me the strength to do his most holy will”¹⁰⁷.

During this same period, in a letter to the Attorney General he expressed his dissatisfaction and his desire to resign, but this time he expressed his reasons, “I shall tell you some of my sorrows that tear at my heart....”¹⁰⁸, and continued to chart out the obstacles he had found in his fight against the system of concubinage and in the excuses of the white men who did not take responsibility for the mixed marriages. Claret suffered the consequences of some social evils that crushed his hope and were making him doubt the efficacy of his presence as Archbishop. We don’t know whether or not he sent the resignation letters to the Pope and the Queen, but we know from his resolutions of 1854, “I shall conform myself entirely to the will of God. Without thinking or asking for resignation...., but I commit myself fully to what God asks of me.....I shall not lose heart....I shall not renounce because of persecutions, slanders or contradictions; the more the better.....”¹⁰⁹. Claret did not give in because of fear, of weariness, of difficulties; on the contrary he trusted in God and withstood boldly to continue his mission.

The other more intense moment was in February, 1856 that could be described as the pinnacle of a process of martyrdom. It was a situation full of difficulties, sufferings and persecutions. We know well that on February 1st he suffered his bloodiest and most significant murder attempt in Holguin: a shaving knife that sought to slash his throat, cut open the left cheek and cut a part of his right arm. Who sent the hired killer? We don’t know; there are various possibilities; perhaps someone living in spiteful concubinage or a white man opposed to mixed marriages or some priest that resented the corrections of the Archbishop, or some landlord or some envious slave

trafficker affected by Claret's favours for the slaves, etc. On the contrary, we know that this situation led him to a long and difficult time of convalescence and to ask the Pope about his possible resignation. In a long letter on 23rd February, he wrote to him,

"By the grace of the Lord, if it is the will of God I am willing, dear Holy Father; but I would not be reckless and put myself in needless danger. The man who wounded me is a stranger who does not know me personally.....the evil did not come from his heart, but it was suggested to him.... So to know the will of God, I approach Your Holiness so that you may kindly point out to me what must I do, to resign and retire myself or continue completing the Sacrifice"¹¹⁰.

In this lucid discernment open to the will of God, the Archbishop expresses his fears while at the same time his longing to be faithful till "completing the sacrifice". The Pope replied asking him to remain in post. There were difficult moments, because the convalescence was complicated and doctors forbade him to preach for a long time while many of his team of priests decided to return to Spain or to join religious institutes. In addition, work on the project of the House of Charity in Puerto Principe about which he was so enthusiastic had to be postponed. The Archbishop had many reasons to be depressed and perhaps he was; but he did not allow himself to be overwhelmed, because he received as a grace during his convalescence the idea of the Academy of St. Michael and in September of the same year he began his fourth pastoral visit to his archdiocese which he had to interrupt when the Queen called him to Madrid in March 1857.

Suffering from the consequences of the mission on his body and the persistent possibility of martyrdom in his life, was transformed for Claret into his journey towards Jerusalem which although it could provoke in him fear and horror; he decisively accepted as the Good Shepherd who did not hesitate to embrace the cross. The love of Christ became the force to overcome these obstacles and to continue announcing the Gospel of justice and peace despite the risk to his own life.

III. The return from Cuba: a new way of living the mission

We have accompanied Claret during the six years and two months of his stay in the Archdiocese of Santiago. On 12th April, 1857, he embarked in the frigate Pizarro from Havana to Spain. We shall follow him in this journey with a different itinerary and return to our own destinations with the challenges his testimony left us. In this last part, I want to highlight by way of conclusion some historical notes on Claret's return to Spain and some other matters while reflecting upon our Claretian mission today.

1. A missionary and apocalyptic mysticism that urges a social commitment

Once I heard Fr. Joseph Villarubias say that the current Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, when he came to Vic to celebrate the bicentenary of Claret, expressed that we Claretians have still not made good use of the wealth of Claret's social work in Cuba. I think that the challenging social reality of Cuba left such an impression in the

missionary identity of Claret that his spirituality was made deeper and his mission achieved wider social horizons. Now I invite you to see this in two fundamental aspects of his life.

1. The apocalyptic life as a source of confidence and apostolic good

Before travelling to Spain in February, 1857 Claret makes a list of important events in his Review of Life, noting, "Knowledge: Angel of the Apocalypse, 2 September, 1855"¹¹¹. This mysterious revelation won't be clarified until four years later when he explained in his autobiography,

"On September 24, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, at 11:30 in the morning, the Lord gave me an understanding of another passage in the Apocalypse (10:1): "Then I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow about his head; his face shone like the sun and his legs like pillars of fire. In his hand he held a little scroll that had been opened. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land [first in his diocese of Cuba and later in other dioceses], and then he gave a loud cry like the roar of a lion. When he cried out, the seven thunders raised their voices too." Here come the sons of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It says seven, but seven is an indefinite number here, meaning all. They are called thunders because they will shout like thunder and make their voices heard. They are also called thunders because of their love and zeal, like that of Sts. James and John, who were called the sons of thunder....."¹¹².

The previous day he had received an illumination on the text of Rev. 8:13. "Then I looked and heard the voice of an eagle". He perceived the Lord telling him, "You shall fly throughout the world or walk with great speed and preach of the great punishments that are approaching"¹¹³. Following this he mentioned the three punishments, the first Protestantism and communism; the second the love of pleasures, money, independence of reason and independence of will, and the third was the great wars and their consequences. Certainly this list of punishments seems shocking to us, but in the context of a turbulent period, the Church had neither the necessary peace nor farsightedness to develop a more insightful analysis. Very few theologians were equipped in this regard and the majority of them looked at these "punishments", as threats endangering the social relevance of the Church and its possibilities for announcing the Gospel to the common people¹¹⁴.

In the light of his experience in Cuba in 1855, Claret began to develop an apocalyptic mysticism with respect to his vocation and mission with their social repercussions which also reached the members of his Congregation. This personal and communitarian grace led him to understand with inner peace and a sense of reality ¹¹⁵ that he and his missionaries were messengers of God chosen to announce his Word. Thus universal missionary horizons were opened for them along with the conviction to fight against evils that were opposing the Kingdom knowing that the power of God guaranteed them the final victory.

1.2. Anointed and sent to preach the Good News to the poor

On his return to Spain, Claret wrote in line with the notes handed over to him by Mother Antonia Paris, his book 'Notes of a plan to conserve the beauty of the Church' that gathered his own episcopal experience, addressed to the bishops of the

whole Spain. A summary of his action plan to take care of the poor and needy presented as one of the obligations of bishops, , “1. To visit and help the poor, sick and prisoners....2. To help those who are healthy, poor, orphans, widows and elderly...3. ensuring that orphans and the abandoned to have a craft, work and a good state of life thinking that the Prelate is father of the poor”¹¹⁶. Claret not only paid attention to social welfare which was so typical of his time, but he also urged the bishops to be fathers who look after the human and cultural development of those who need them most so that they could be persons to take care of themselves in society; thus we have a call to the promotion of social justice through education and job training.

Followed by the illumination of the Apocalyptic Angel, Claret identified another grace received through the Word for himself and his missionaries. There were two biblical texts that revealed the presence of the Spirit in his life and mission. The first one is, “You yourselves will not be the speakers; the Spirit of your Father (and of your Mother) will be speaking in you (cf. Mk 3:17)”. So true is this that each one of us will be able to say, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to give good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted (cf. Lk 4:18)”¹¹⁷.

As a fully mature man, Claret receives the joyful confirmation that his mission is not a personal work realized more or less skilfully, but the participation in the One Mission of Christ, anointed by the power of the Spirit and sent out to preach the Good News to the poor. He discovers himself and each one of the missionaries who share his spirit as men sent by God to give the Good News to the poor. During his 12 years of ministry as the royal confessor, he never ceased to serve the neediest people¹¹⁸ and take up actions that went beyond simple social welfare work, such as promoting culture and education through the Academy of St. Michael, Popular Libraries and the various educational entities of the Monastery of El Escorial. Apart from serving the Queen in Paris, he had time to take care of the Hispanic immigrants found in deplorable life situations¹¹⁹. Solidarity, social education, human and cultural development formed an inalienable element of his missionary announcement of the Gospel until the end.

3. Markers for talking about the charismatic style of our social commitment

Coming to the end of this long journey with our Founder, each one of you will have received various impressions and can draw your own conclusions. For my part, I have tried to clarify the sense that social development had in the context of Claret’s missionary action as bishop in Santiago de Cuba. Now it only remains for me to propose, in the form of conclusions, some markers that can help us to continue his journey.

As I have already pointed out. Claret was in continuity with the social action of other evangelizers who offered their lives in the American continent before him, among them Bartholomé de las Casas, the defender of human dignity and promoter of justice and peace. Claret is one among many men and women of God, who had the audacity to open new avenues for the proclamation of the Gospel with their life and mission, without trapping themselves in the accustomed positions of the intra-ecclesial shackles and without running away from the complex social reality in which they had to live. They were witnesses to the power of the Spirit who was impelling them to embody the Word in the life of nations and individuals.

Throughout these last two centuries the Church has travelled different routes that have led it to a more lucid and evangelical understanding of its identity and mission. She is aware that she is not the protagonist of this mission, but she cooperates with the liberating action of the Spirit¹²⁰ who goes beyond limits and ecclesial strongholds to make present the Kingdom in the world. And she is also aware that all evangelization, to be faithful to Jesus of Nazareth, must have a preferential option for the poor, which goes beyond charitable action to a commitment to the transformation of political and social structures that can promote justice and peace.

When speaking on the place of poor in the new evangelization, Pope Francis says, “The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in the lives of the poor putting them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them”¹²¹.

In this time of the new evangelization we feel challenged by the missionary witness of Claret who knew how to live this closeness with the poor, which the Pope calls for. We can’t give the same answers that Claret gave in his time, as farsighted and advanced as they were. But his testimony can certainly inspire us to anchor ourselves in the centre of the Gospel and to be bold and creative in our missionary responses. It is time now for us to ask ourselves, “What would Claret do today? What challenges he would take up? How would he respond in these changing times? Our General Chapters have responded to these questions with clarity and courage. Now from my part, I place some suggestions about the features of a Claretian style of JPIC work in the light of the testimony of Claret in Cuba.

3.1. Witnesses of the preferential love of God for the poor

The social commitment of Claret did not spring from adherence to political projects nor from purely charitable desires; he felt called by God to be His missionary and from that particular vocation, he deeply loved his people. The love of Christ, the anointing of the Spirit, the strength of the Word, the Eucharist and the motherly presence of the Heart of Mary led him to live his Episcopal ministry with a missionary fire that impelled him to watch out for the things of the Father and therefore, to the needs of His neediest children. It is from here flows his untiring zeal to offer to all, especially the poorest, the bread of the integral Life: the Word, Eucharist, catechesis, bread, human dignity, education, justice, work, etc.

We Claretians are not some employees of a humanitarian multinational company, but men seduced by the love of Christ and anointed by his Spirit to evangelize the poor. We are Sons of the Heart of a Mother with our own missionary spirituality which sets us on fire with love and unifies our whole being in God. We are, first and foremost, missionaries fascinated by a love that makes us sensitive to realities that cry out to heaven demanding that the Gospel is announced. We must be very careful not to lose or be confused about our missionary identity as witnesses of the primacy of God; we may be tempted to become mere executives who are working for the poor and allow ourselves to be seduced by criteria opposed to the values of the Gospel. We need to be fed with the sources of our missionary spirituality.

3.2. Gestures and actions that confirm the Word that is announced

Claret was seduced by the Word and what's more, it was the Word that uprooted him from the world, manifested to him his vocation, strengthened him in moments of difficulty, and led him through mystical missionary paths. Claret was not a simple propagator of doctrines, but a witness to a Word that gave him freedom and life which he wanted all to enjoy. He knew that this Word could not remain in mere words carried away by the wind so he put them into many written works, but above all, put them into practise through concrete missionary actions which became efficient gestures of the Word of Life among the people; which is where his actions promoting human development acquire their true meaning.

As missionaries we cannot content ourselves with the announcement of very well spelt out words; no, this is not enough. We need our preaching of the tenderness of the Father and the dignity of his children to be accompanied by an anointing that shows us to be credible witnesses of what we announce by accompanying our message with concrete gestures that express life, justice and peace for all, especially for those who need it most. We cannot announce words of consolation without also making efforts to become ourselves healthy medicine where life is in danger.

3.3. In missionary community and solidarity networks

Claret did not engage in apostolic and social projects in a solitary manner, on the contrary, he always took them up as part of a missionary team and even more, although able to live alone, he preferred to live in community with his collaborators. Though this community was not a Claretian Mission House as such, it was impregnated with his style, as Claret expressed in a letter to the Bishop of Vic at the end of 1851, "I and all my companions share the same way of living as in La Merced"¹²². Using the example of a "beehive", he referred to the style of community living they were leading: a fraternity centred on the call of God sending them to preach the Gospel with words and gestures of life¹²³. Claret, apart from living and working in community went further, knowing how to establish apostolic-social networks with others: priests, laity, civil and political authorities, the association of Friends of the Country, etc. As a good weaver, he knew how to weave strategic networks making the humanizing power of the Gospel more effective.

Our particular gift in the Church is the community that lived with a missionary keynote becomes our first prophetic cry, namely, it is the first announcement of the humanizing power of God who is capable of making us brothers and a sign of universal brotherhood. Without taking up the challenge of living brotherhood in our community, our decision to help to build a just world with solidarity will be less credible; here lies our special gift that enriches the mission shared with others. We too need to work in ecclesial and social networks of local, regional and global scope, the Mission of the Spirit that exceeds the limits of our Congregation invites us to join with others from different confessions or existential attitudes to seek justice, peace and life for all.

3.4. In geographical, social and cultural mission frontiers.

Claret could have lived peacefully in his Episcopal palace or in the royal palace, but he preferred to go out to the borders of society to meet with the poor and moreover, as we have already seen in the testimony, "His house looked like a house of the

poor". He had the poor in the depths of his heart and offered to them his time, preaching, money, and the creative and bold management of his ministry. He toiled hard against poverty, injustice, violence and destruction. He lost the possibility of a quiet peaceful life and suffered slander and persecution to the point of shedding his blood in martyrdom. He did not take shelter in structures that could protect him from danger; the love of the Good Shepherd impelled him leave places of security in search of the weak sheep that were lost and threatened by wolves

What are the new slaveries, poverties, ignorance and injustices that Claret would confront today? It is our turn to ask ourselves, as inheritors of his missionary spirit, who are the poorest, neediest and most marginalized today? What are the new geographical, social and cultural frontiers of mission today? Of course, we cannot provide remedies to all the evils of this world, we cannot take up the responsibility of looking after the needs of the whole diocese as did Claret. But yes, we can discern what are the most pressing ills that cannot leave us indifferent as Sons of the Heart of Mary. Who are the people and where are the places that most need our missionary cordiality? Much missionary sensitivity, personal and communitarian discernment are required. Certainly our tradition will give us some hints to avoid falling into depression while at the same time, have the freedom of spirit to not close our eyes to the particular needs arising in every place and time.

3.5. Attentive to the reality and to the signs of the time

Claret was able to immediately recognize that Cuba was a different land from the life he was accustomed to in Spain; that's why he dedicated himself to study and analyse it closely. Overcoming the frameworks of churchmen of his time, he didn't apply things of Europe to America; he was able to contextualize his missionary action in the light of a lucid analysis of reality. In direct contact with the people, he tried to identify what were their concerns and needs so as to discover both the ills he had to fight against and the goodness he could make use of. Claret was grounded and so from his reading of reality with missionary eyes sprang up an integral missionary plan with a solid and effective line of social action.

We live in an era in which social sciences allow us to be more aware of our own political mentality and our cultural conditioning opening us to a more farsighted analysis of reality. Vatican II has encouraged us as Christians, to read the signs of the times, as signs of the presence of the Spirit who wants to guide us in the Mission of God that we collaborate in as missionaries of the Word of Life. We can't undertake any missionary action without a deep study of reality, that leads us to understand it better, to love it and choose the best actions to transform it according to the values of the Kingdom.

3.6. Strategies ranging from love to the transformation of structures

"If indeed the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics, the Church cannot and must not remain on the side-lines in the fight for justice. All Christians, including pastors, are called to care for the building of a better world."¹²⁴. When reading these words of Pope Francis, it is confirmed in us how Claret was one of those shepherds truly concerned to build a better a world; he didn't do it in any particular way, but he knew how to develop a plan of social action that would allow his evangelizing work to genuinely affect the social life of the people of God. He was able to be moved to the level of love and solidarity to take care of the

most urgent needs of the poor who were knocking at his door; he knew how to engage in the fields of the transformation of economic, political and social structures of his environment to promote new conditions that promote justice and peace as in the case of La Casa de la Caridad (the House of Charity), credit unions, proposals for agrarian reform, collaboration in the Association of the Friends of the Country, etc.

As Claretians we know very well that love and solidarity so present in our congregational tradition are expressions of a missionary passion that seeks to provide an abundant life for all, especially to the needy, along with the Word. But as the Pope Benedict XVI says, charity “is not only the beginning of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)”¹²⁵. In recent decades we have become more aware of the importance of taking up, with others, the commitment for the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, not as a particular work of just some Claretians, but as a requirement of our Christian vocation and a way of living the values of the Gospel and our sonship and brotherhood as a key to our missionary style. Our Congregation has made great strides in this regard and the testimony of Claret invites us to engage more deeply in the defence of human rights, in the promotion of a more just economy and solidarity, in the social inclusion of the poor and marginalized, in the care immigrants, in civil and religious dialogue, etc.

3.7. Realistic, practical and efficient means

Claret as a good son of Sallent was endowed with good Catalan *seny*¹²⁶ that made him a practical man with a clear analytical sense that pondered criterias and creative solutions. He knew how to apply adequate strategies to discover remedies for the needs he encountered; he did not remain at the level of daydreams or focused on insignificant details; he had a wider vision and the inner strength to undertake daring missionary actions. He took risks and initiatives without allowing himself to be crushed by fears, complexes and difficulties; that’s why he has been seen in history as a modern apostle who broke the moulds of the typical churchmen of his time. He made use of all possible means choosing particularly those that allowed him greater apostolic effectiveness.

Work in the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, with its complexity and depth in particular, requires us to be lucid, realistic and practical like Claret. We live in an era with many problems, more so, in times of crisis and specific places where social realities challenge us as missionaries. What to do? Where to begin? Who to take care of?

Here I keep the door open for the fraternal dialogue to complete our reflection on the Claretian style we seek.

¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, 22.

² CLARETIAN MISSIONARIES, *Men on Fire with Love. Called to live our missionary vocation today*, Rome, 2009, n. 58.3.

³ To look at the totality of his social action throughout his life, I recommend the following studies: Francisco, *San Antonio María Claret: su programa apostólico liberador: Claretianum*, XIX (1979), 227-257; PALACIOS, Jesús M^a, *La acción social de san Antonio María Claret. Studia Claretiana*, XXV (2010), 9-59. For a more complete vision about the missionary presence of Claret in Santiago de Cuba we can refer to LEBROC, Reynerio, *San Antonio María Claret, Arzobispo Misionero de Cuba*, Madrid, 1992.

⁴ The Spanish vocabulary used by the author for the 19th century is “decimonónico”. He quotes, “Adj. despect. Anticuado, pasado de moda” (REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, versión electrónica: avance de la trigésima edición). “Adj. Despect. Antiquated, old fashion”.

⁵ SAN ANTONIO MARÍA CLARET, *Autobiografía y escritos complementarios*, Buenos Aires, 2008, n^o 495. (From now on we shall quote as Aut. when we refer to some particular number of the Autobiography and as A.E.C., when we refer to some other page from the book)

⁶ GIL, José M^a, *Epistolario Claretiano I*, Madrid, 1970, pp. 304-305 (From now on this will be cited as E.C.; followed by the number of the corresponding volume and page number.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

⁸ *Aut.*, n^o 496.

⁹ The persons consulted were: Fr. James Soler, Rector of the seminary and vicar general of the chapter Vic; Fr. James Pasarell, Secretary of the Bishop Casadevall; Fr. Peter Bach, Spiritual Director of Claret and Fr. Stephen Sala, the Claretian confounder, his most confident man (Cf. Cf. CLOTET, Jaime, *Notas para los Anales*, citado en FERNÁNDEZ, Cristóbal, *El Beato Padre Antonio María Claret*, Madrid 1947, pp. 565).

¹⁰ *E.C.*, I, p. 321.

¹¹ We remember the main vocational stages: the discernment in Barcelona, the effort to be a Carthusian monk, leaving for Vic to be formed as priest, the 4 years of priest in his native parish, the travel to Rome to offer himself for the foreign missions, the effort to become a Jesuit and finally, returning to Catalonia where he was sent as co pastor in the parish of Viladrau.

¹² *Aut.*, n^o 497.

¹³ *Ibid.*, n^o 500-501. During this time of his stay in Barcelona, that so called anecdote took place in which a group of university students, amazed by seeing him so active and tireless in preaching, asked him how he could work so much without becoming tired. He replied them, “Fall in love with Jesus Christ and the souls and you will understand everything and do more than me” (Cf. *A.E.C.*, p. 357, note n^o 10).

¹⁴ *Aut.*, n^o 504.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, n^o 509.

¹⁶ *E.C.*, I, p. 469.

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 517, 529.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 647.

¹⁹ THOMAS, Hugh, *Cuba, la lucha por la libertad, 1762-1909*, Barcelona, 1973, p. 153.

²⁰ During the 19th century three civil wars called “Carlists” broke out in Spain and fought in two bands: “the carlist” (conservatives) and “the isabelines” (liberals) according to the aspirer to the throne they were supporting.

²¹ *E.C.*, I, pp. 704-707.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 650.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 706.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 620.

²⁵ *Aut.*, n^o 358.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, n^o 359.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, n^o 363.

²⁸ Letter of Fr. Juan Nepomuceno Lobo to Fr. Joseph Xifre, 22 January, 1880. The original copy of the letter is preserved in the Arxiu Pairal of Vic and it was published in *Studia Claretiana* XVI (1988) p. 144.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁰ *Aut.*, n^o 562.

³¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 563-572.

³² *E.C.*, I, pp. 512-514.

- ³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 515-525.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 526-534.
- ³⁵ Claret left a note about this change, "During my time the salaries of the cathedral and parochial clergy were adjusted and raised; my own salary was cut. Previously the Archbishop of Cuba had received a salary of 30,000 duros, plus parochial stole fees of 6,000 duros; in my time I had it reduced to 18,000 duros, minus all stole fees" (Aut., nº 551). To see more about the management of Claret in this field: Cf. SIDERA, Joan, *Claret frente a la miseria del clero cubano: Arxiu Claret – Vic* Vol. IV, nº 48 (Marzo de 1944), pp. 35-59.
- ³⁶ Letter of Fr. Juan Nepomuceno Lobo, o.c., *Studia Claretiana* XVI (1988), p. 144.
- ³⁷ *Aut.*, nº 537.
- ³⁸ *Aut.*, nº 359.
- ³⁹ Cf. FÉRNANDEZ, Cristóbal, o.c., pp. 731-732.
- ⁴⁰ General Concha, *Memorias*, p. 56; cited in LOZANO, Manuel, *Una vida al servicio del Evangelio, Antonio María Claret*, Barcelona 1985, pp. 256-257.
- ⁴¹ *E.C.*, I, p. 830.
- ⁴² Cf. CLARET, Antonio, *Carta pastoral al pueblo*, en CLARET, Antonio, *Escritos pastorales*, Madrid 1997, p. 274.
- ⁴³ *Aut.*, nº 572.
- ⁴⁴ BUCH LÓPEZ, Ernesto, *Del Santiago colonial...*, La Habana 1947, p. 27, cited en PALACIOS, Jesús M^a, o.c., p. 40.
- ⁴⁵ LEBROC, Reynerio, o.c., p. 112.
- ⁴⁶ *E.C.*, I, p. 650.
- ⁴⁷ *A.E.C.*, p. 560.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 564
- ⁴⁹ Cf. *E.C.*, p. 1089.
- ⁵⁰ CLARET, Antonio, *Las delicias del campo*, en CLARET, Antonio, *Escritos pastorales*, Madrid 1997, pp. 326-330.
- ⁵¹ Cf. LAVASTIDA, José Ignacio, *El Padre Claret y las Cajas de ahorros parroquiales en Cuba: Studia Claretiana* XVI (1998), pp. 23-43.
- ⁵² CLARET, Antonio, *Las delicias del campo*, o.c., p. 326.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 330-331.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 327.
- ⁵⁵ *E.C.*, I, p. 1685.
- ⁵⁶ CLARET, Antonio, *Reflexiones sobre la agricultura*, in CLARET, Antonio, *Escritos pastorales*, o.c., p. 299.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- ⁶⁰ LEBROC, Reynerio, o.c., p. 374.
- ⁶¹ CLARET, Antonio, *Reflexiones sobre la agricultura*, in CLARET, Antonio, *Escritos pastorales*, o.c., p. 298.
- ⁶² Cf. LEBROC, Reynerio, o.c., pp. 381-386.
- ⁶³ *E.C.*, I, p. 987.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 988.
- ⁶⁵ CLARET, Antonio, *Reflexiones sobre agricultura*, o.c., p. 304.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 304.
- ⁶⁷ He himself says, "When I started preaching missions, in 1840, we were in the midst of a civil war between the royalists and the constitutionalists, and so I had to be on my guard not to make any political remarks pro or con regarding either party. There were members of each party in all the towns I preached in. I had to be very careful because some people came to the mission only to catch me in some slip of the tongue, But, thank God, they never succeeded" (Aut., nº. 291).
- ⁶⁸ Cf. LOZANO, Manuel, o.c., pp. 266-271.
- ⁶⁹ The North American annexing of Texas, New Mexico and California between 1854 to 1848, encouraged the desire of the Cuban adhesion that resulted to be attractive for both groups. On the one side, the slavery states of the south of the North American Federation were seeking territories to increase the business and get greater support to maintain their pro-slavery politics. On the other side, the big Cuban businessmen were interested in ensuring the stability of the slavery system which was the base of their economical growth and it was already abolished in Spain and allowed to remain in force in their colonies.
- ⁷⁰ In a letter to the Attorney General he told, "Your Excellency know that I have never interfered in political matters, but in this Island the religion and state are very much united that we can hardly speak of the one who does not come across with other even if wouldn't like....." (*E.C.* I, p. 580).
- ⁷¹ Narcio Lopez Urriola. Born in Caracas (Venezuela) in 1798. As a Young man he went to Spain where he fought against the carlists and then was appointed as the governor of Valencia and general. He was sent to Cuba where he exercised as the President of the Military Executive and permanent Commission and as governor of Trinidad. In 1848 he was obliged to be exiled to New York where he designed the Cuban flag and entered in contact with the guerillas of the independence and organized two landing in Cuba. (Cf. BLEIBERG, Germán (Dir.), *Diccionario de historia de España*, Madrid 1981, pp. 789-790).
- ⁷² *Aut.*, nº 522.

⁷³ *E.C. I*, pp. 578-579.

⁷⁴ *Ibíd.*, pp. 586-587.

⁷⁵ *Oficio*, directed by the Minister of the State, 10.11.1847; quoted by LEBROC, Reynerio, *o.c.*, p. 117.

⁷⁶ The main countries from where the slaves were bought were Guinea, Sudán, Mali, Senegal, Nigeria and Congo (cf. *Ibíd.*, p. 112).

⁷⁷ The Haitian revolution (1791-1804) was the first revolution of Latin America that culminated with the abolishing of the slavery system in the French Colony of Sait-Domingue and the proclamation of the Republic of Haiti. However the political powers of this period did not recognize immediately the independence of Haiti and did not pardon the revolution of the slaves; economic sanctions were imposed on them.....”(http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revoluci%C3%B3n_haitiana).

⁷⁸ The church man who in sermon, discourse, edict, pastoral and other document would give publicity, censor any law as contrary to the religion, decree, order, disposition or providence of the public authority, will be punished with exile” (Código penal, Capítulo IX, art. 304; en LEBROC, Reynerio, *o.c.*, p. 541).

⁷⁹ The 19th century saw such an identification of the Church with the slavery system in such a way that in the temples the announcement for the sale of the slaves were made during the celebration of the mass, in front of the doors of the church” (HUGH, Thomas, *o.c.*, p. 203).

⁸⁰ Julio Vizcarrondo Coronado, politician, charitable man and advertiser from Puerto Rico who was born in San Juan de Puerto Rico in 1830 and died in Madrid in 1889. He undertook a abolitionist campaign in 1850 that led him to the exile in the United States. He freed the slaves from his property in Puerto Rico and in 1863 he went to Madrid to dedicate himself in politics. In 1856 he created la *Sociedad Abolicionista Española* and founded the news paper *El abolicionista español* who fought till attaining the abolition of the slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico on 7 October, 1886. (Cf. VILAR, Juan Bautista, voz: VIZCARRONDO CORONADO, Julio, en REAL ACADEMIA DE LA HISTORIA, *Diccionario biográfico español*, Vol. L, Madrid 2013, pp. 377-378).

⁸¹ *E.C. I*, p. 704-705.

⁸² Cf. ÁLVAREZ GÓMEZ, Jesús, *Misioneros Claretianos I: Retorno a los orígenes*, Madrid 1993, p. 238.

⁸³ *E.C.*, I, p. 776.

⁸⁴ *Ibíd.*, p. 777.

⁸⁵ CLARET, Antonio, *Carta pastoral al pueblo*, *o.c.*, p. 279.

⁸⁶ The third obligation of the owners gathers various laws that ensure the Sunday rest and festive days for the slaves; it is noted that Claret not only seeks the fulfillment of the religious precepts, but also the avoiding the exploitation of the slaves with excessive work (Cf. *Ibíd.*, pp. 281-282).

⁸⁷ *Ibíd.*, p. 284.

⁸⁸ Another history deals in a pedagogical and prophetic gesture of the archbishop who before a property owner who was insisting in the inferior state of the coloured people, burnt a white and colour paper and mixed the ashes and asked, “could you distinguish the ashes of the white paper from the black paper? We all shall be so before God” (Cf. CLOTET, Jaime, *Resumen de la admirable vida del Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. D. Antonio María Claret y Clará, Arzobispo de Trajanápolis, in partibus infidelium*, Barcelona 1882, p. 279).

⁸⁹ AGUILAR, Francisco de Asís, *Vida del Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. Don Antonio María Claret*, Madrid 1871, p. 199.

⁹⁰ REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, versión electrónica: avance de la trigésima edición.

⁹¹ *E.C.*, I, pp. 891-892.

⁹² *Ibíd.*, I, p. 955.

⁹³ *Aut.*, nº 571.

⁹⁴ FERNÁNDEZ, Cristóbal, *o.c.*, p. 826.

⁹⁵ In a letter dated on 15 February, 1853, he was responding a consultation of Fr. Paladius Currius about the native vocations for the Sisters of Teaching, told, “.....it is not good that you receive many girls of the country as novices, because it will be placing from the beginning on the relaxation in the Religion unknowingly and without willing it; because it would happen that being the daughters of the country by nature and by custom which is the second nature, weaker than European girls and particularly the Catalan girls, though they may be (the daughters of the country) very good and fervent; they cannot carry the burden of the institute.....” (*E.C.*, I, p. 771).

⁹⁶ The secretary of the archbishop affirmed in a communication in February, 1854 addressed to the priests of the archdiocese, “The M. Excellent and M. Illustrate Archbishop, my Lord kindly demand.....that when the respective Parish Priest sees a young man from the white class, legitimate marriage, good customs, particularly chaste, lover of the functions of our Sacrosanta Religion, frequents the Holy Sacraments, attends the catechism classes, assiduous in the school, grows in learning to read, write and count, call him and ask him about his vocation; and if he has an inclination to the ecclesiastical life, it will be good for him to be a seminarian” (Cf. FERNÁNDEZ, Cristóbal, *o.c.*, p. 826).

⁹⁷ *E.C.*, p. 659.

⁹⁸ CLARET, Antonio, *Carta Pastoral al Pueblo*, *o.c.*, p. 198.

⁹⁹ *Ibíd.*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁰ 2Cor 5: 14. “There is no doubt that the Apostle of the people was for Claret a model of vocational identification. Throughout his life this Pauline responsibility is noticed which is drenching and transforming him” (BERMEJO, Jesús, *La caridad de Cristo nos apremia – Lectura carismática de San Pablo-*, en *Studia Claretiana*, XXII (2005), p. 11.

¹⁰¹ CLARET, Antonio, *Carta Pastoral al Pueblo*, *o.c.*, p. 198.

¹⁰² *Aut.*, nº 221.

¹⁰³ CLARET, Antonio, *Manuscritos*, vol. XI, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ CLARET, Antonio, *Escritos pastorales, o.c.*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁵ *A.E.C.*, p. 681.

¹⁰⁶ *E.C.*, III, p. 130.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 791-792.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 804.

¹⁰⁹ *A.E.C.*, p. 671.

¹¹⁰ *E.C.*, I, pp. 1172-1176.

¹¹¹ *A.E.C.*, p. 538.

¹¹² *Aut.*, nº 686.

¹¹³ *Aut.*, nº 685.

¹¹⁴ It is not the time for us to know about what Claret understood for each one of them. Please see the accurate explanation: ÁLVAREZ GÓMEZ, Jesús, *o.c.*, p. 251-270.

¹¹⁵ In his conversations with M. Anthonia Paris, Fr. Paladius Currius understood much more: the Church was in need of a General Reform urgently and Claret was the chosen man by God to carry it out. He (Claret) did not apply very literally, but neither he had it without use; he reflected on it for years" (BLANCO, Severiano, *La fe centro vital de san Antonio María Claret: Claretiano de Santiago XIII*, Abril – Junio 2013, p. 45).

¹¹⁶ CLARET, Antonio, *Apuntes de un plan para conservar la hermosura de la Iglesia*, Madrid 1857, p. 54.

¹¹⁷ *Aut.*, 687

¹¹⁸ "His house seemed to be the house of the poor. When we go there we always find anyone explaining their needs to get some common help; but at the time of audience many beggars and needy people were there; and sometimes it was difficult to pass through them and go up to the staircase" (AGUILAR, Francisco de Asís, *o.c.*, p. 292).

¹¹⁹ "God our Lord wanted to make use of me to found some conferences of the Holy Family....to help the Spaniards, men, women and children who come to this (Paris) from Spain or America. In this the foreigners need protection, if not they become mad and commit suicide (I was horrified other day, when I read that 1.200 persons commit suicide in Paris every year" (*Carta de Antonio Claret a Doña Jacoba Balzola*, París, 28 de marzo de 1869; *E.C.*, II, p. 1375).

¹²⁰ Cf. FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, nº 177.

¹²¹ FRANCIS, *o.c.*, nº 194.

¹²² *E.C.*, I, p. 608.

¹²³ *Aut.*, nº 608-609.

¹²⁴ FRANCIS, *o.c.*, nº 181.

¹²⁵ BENEDICT, *o.c.*, nº 2.

¹²⁶ "Sana capacitat mental que és penyora d'una justa percepció, apreciació, captinença, actuació" (CARRERAS I MARTÍ, Joan, *Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana*, 3 ed., Barcelona 1993, p. 1784). Free translation: healthy mental capacity that goes accompanied with a just perception, appreciation, behaviour and action.

“He made himself poor for you”
The prophetic solidarity with the poor and the oppressed
 Illumination from the New Testament

Ricardo Volo

1. The Biblical Roots of Our Vocabulary

In the declaration of the XXIV General Chapter “Men on fire with love” it is stated: “We reaffirm, in the same way, the priority of the Congregation for prophetic solidarity with the impoverished, marginalized and those whose right to life is threatened, in such a way that this has repercussions in our personal and community lifestyle, apostolic mission and in our institutions” (n 58,3a). In the analysis and in the reflections that we carry out on the situation of humanity at the present time, as well as in the documents where we write our conclusions, we frequently use concepts such as “justice”, “poverty”, “solidarity” or “peace”, among others. These terms possess deep roots in the Scripture, especially if we speak of “prophetic solidarity”, a formula that brings to our mind the great Prophets of the Bible. It is not always possible to find the explicit use of these words in the languages in which the Bible was written, but no doubt the content they express is very clearly present in the sacred pages.

I have been requested to prepare a New Testament illumination for this workshop on JPIC. Therefore, my starting point cannot be other than the figure and the message of Jesus of Nazareth, just as both of them are witnessed by the Gospel. I try to throw light on some of the themes handled by our General Chapter, emphasizing their application to the person of Jesus Christ in an eminently biblical key. However, making a synthetic exposition on the use of these mentioned denominations is not an easy task: in the first place, because they support very broad and complex themes; in the second place, because the Bible does not always offer a uniform assessment on them. Both the semantic value of these terms and their theological meaning may be suffering important changes along the canonical books. Even practical tools to undertake this task, as is the case of biblical encyclopedias or exegetical dictionaries, have to be taken with proper criterion, because, when you have to cover up a very profuse content, you may fall into certain generalizations and leave out important nuances.

On the other hand, in the New Testament it is possible to perceive immediately that a great part of the vocabulary used acquires there the peculiarity of the figure of the Lord, whose person and message frequently convey to the words a meaning that goes beyond the limits of the formal and proper language. Let us see an example which speaks for itself: How should we understand Paul’s sentence when he refers to Jesus in these terms: “...who became poor for your sake, although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8,9). What do the concepts of “rich” or “poor” reflect here as applied to Christ? Without going too deeply into it, the reader quickly understands that the words have acquired a sense that goes beyond their merely economic or material meaning. What meaning can the sentence have, which affirms that Jesus has “enriched us with his poverty”? The response to this question

forces us to carefully study the particular and distinctive characteristics of the theme of poverty in the Bible, and specifically in the Gospels. We already have the feeling that we are not dealing exclusively with material goods, although they are certainly included, but we are decidedly entering into the spiritual realm.

Let us see another example. In the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians we find this passage: "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (see Phil 2,5-11). This Christological hymn expresses in a deep and synthetic way, the whole mystery of the existence of Christ and the transcendental aim of his incarnation. From my viewpoint, it is possible to find in it a reference to what we call "solidarity". Now then, this is a reference sublimated in Jesus. The mystery of the whole incarnation is seen as a radical solidarity of the Son of God with the human being, which reveals an inner feeling of commiseration with the situation of man immersed in evil and in sin, and all that this implies in the personal and social order, to the extent of detaching himself of his privileges and taking the form of a "servant." This is what the biblical theology will gather under the name of *kenosis* or "lowering"- "despoiling".

It is necessary to notice that the incarnation is considered here as self-lowering of the Son of God in deep humility, not only because of what assuming the human condition with all its consequences involves, but because the earthly life of Christ develops in the greatest poverty and in an attitude of permanent service. This service ends, as we know, in self-giving till death out of love in the suffering of the cross. Now then, this existence assumed as total oblation in faithful obedience to the Father, and under the dynamism of the love for man, is what Paul expresses with the phrase "...who became poor for your sake, although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich". Christ's "poverty", then, certainly includes his material indigence, experienced in his earthly life, but not only that; it also refers to his obedience to the Father's designs, which carries with it the renunciation to his divine prerogatives, the acceptance of all human conditionings, after bravely and willingly confronting all the sufferings derived from his mission, the total and absolute giving up of his own life.

Let us end this section with another meaningful sentence. At a certain time Jesus exhorts his disciples: "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness; and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt 6,33). What did the Master of Nazareth refer to when he spoke of the "righteousness" of God's kingdom? Responding to this question obliges us to a superficial incursion into the justice in the history of salvation, the fullness of which is attained in the very person of Jesus. But it is already possible and necessary to start from a fundamental premise: all those realities which we include in the struggle for justice in this world, like the eradication of the social inequalities and the poverty, the opposition to all sort of oppression and violence, the respect for human rights, or the defence of creation are indissolubly linked and form integral part of the mystery of redemption. This is a truth based on Scripture. In fact, when Jesus refers to the final Judgment, he relates it to our behavior in this field. This is what the impressive parable referred by Matthew teaches (Mt.25,31-46). There Jesus, speaking of the time to come, and establishing the essential criterion that God himself will apply in his final judgment on each person's behaviour, he identifies himself with the needy and marginalized of the

world: the hungry, thirsty, foreigners, naked, sick, prisoners... In short, Jesus identifies himself with the dispossessed of the world, which are the preferential subjects of God's kingdom.

2. Changing Stones into Loaves

To continue properly framing the themes that we are dealing with, we deem it convenient to continue our exposition with an original scenario in the gospels: the passage of the temptations. The synoptic gospels unanimously place the narrative of Jesus' temptations at the beginning of his public ministry, although each author gives it a personal style (see Mk 1,12-13; Mt 4,1-11; Lk 4,1-13). We would like to focus our attention on the narrative of Matthew, emphasizing the first of the temptations: The tempter approached and said to him: "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply: "One does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4,3-4).

The gospels mark a clear line of thematic inclusion between the desert and the Calvary, since in both places, which begin and end the plot of his missionary work, Jesus must suffer the most acute and anguishing trials. Matthew's version is the clearest and most explicit in this point, as he establishes an evident parallelism between the words of the tempter and the insults of the people in the face of the spectacle of the cross: "If you are the Son of God..." (4,3); "If you are the Son of God..." (4,6); "if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (27,40). With it he wants to emphasize that the temptation which Jesus experiences directly refers to the orientation which his mission is to acquire in the world. Since, in this crucial decision what is at stake is nothing else than the genuine understanding of his message on the part of men: the acceptance or not of his exhortations and teachings, the reception or rejection of the very image of God which he has come to reveal. Since the basic question is knowing if Jesus will accept to present the kingdom of God like a Messiah in power and glory, as the tempter is urging him to do, or rather like a humble and suffering Messiah; as Son of God who manifests his nature in a miraculous, triumphant and dominating way, or rather in a fraternal and peaceful way, inviting to accept his salvation from freedom and trust, never by imposition. In other words, the temptations affect more the way in which Jesus understood his *messianic role*, following the Father's designs. It is here where the text illumines in a relevant form the theme that we are dealing with.

The first of the temptations proposes to Jesus to reduce his ministry to a sort of revolution or social reform. It is what changing the stones into loaves of bread symbolically represents: offering the remedy of every material need, of every shortage. Martín Descalzo appropriately comments on this scene: "This is the reduction of the paradise to the fullness of material goods. Is this not the very same ambition of all the men of today? Do they not reduce and confuse their hope with that? That is why Satan proposes it now to Christ: if he dedicates himself to changing all the stones of the world into loaves of bread, soon everyone will follow him and his word will not have to make any effort to look for open hearts because it will be enough to keep all bellies satisfied."¹²⁷

The gospels show Jesus deeply concerned for the material deprivations of his fellow men. Starting with the daily food: "Jesus summoned his disciples and said, 'My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for they may

collapse on the way.” (Mt 24-25,32). Don’t we ask for our daily bread in the prayer of the Our Father? But his message is not reduced to solving these problems, because he has been called to communicate the bread of God’s Word. And he is incisive when he warns about the danger of having both levels confused: “Amen, amen I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you...” (Jn 6,26-27). Jesus does not despise or underestimate any of the struggles for human justice, for the defense of the most destitute, for the integrity of the dignity of any person. Such realities are integral part of his message. But Jesus never becomes the leader or social revolutionary which some people pretended to see in him. His Messianic mission is not reduced to social justice, although such concept is implied in his life and in his words. We shall go deeper in these details.

3. The Kingdom of God and its Justice

In this third section of our exposition we will continue confirming the importance and the extent of the previously established premise on the meaning of the terms used in the New Testament. How could we understand concepts like “social justice”, “prophetic solidarity” or “poverty” within the frame of Christ’s message, the epicenter of which is “God’s kingdom”? When Jesus spoke, for example, about poverty and about the poor, did He understand these words with the same sense with which our present society normally understands them today? This is a matter in which we must advance with circumspection.

Whatever Jesus did and said throughout his earthly existence is understood in that salvation dynamism which he frequently calls “God’s kingdom”. The expression reveals that God is going “to reign” in the world, conquering evil in all its manifestations and bringing salvation to all people. This divine kingdom is being expressed by Jesus with intimately connected words and deeds. Because in Jesus, his life and his message are one and the same thing: he witnesses with his own life what he announces and explains in his preaching. And the first thing that his own life teaches is this: that all justice is based on the recognition of the deepest and most profound and proper identity of the human being, which is being son of God. This nuclear and original identity represents at the same time the foundation of his dignity.

Let us recall that the gateway to the so-called “Jesus’ public ministry” is the scene of his baptism at the hands of John. The synoptic gospels give us again a uniform witness of this fact (Mc 1,9-11; Mt 3,13-17; Lk 3,21-22; see also Jn 1,32-34). The said scene is narratively articulated around the “voice of the Father”, which reveals to the reader Jesus’ genuine identity: “You are my beloved Son, in you I take my pleasure.” Identity and mission make up one and the same thing in Christ. And both spheres of his figure, indissolubly intertwined, are in perfect tune with the love and approval of the Father. The narrative of the baptism is like an icon which reveals the full meaning of the incarnation of the Son of God. *Doing the Father’s will* is the vault key of all his existence and the cornerstone of his entire mission. Everything that Jesus thinks, says and does has as its goal the faithful observance of this mission.

When the sacred authors reflect on the incarnation of Jesus and on the essential aim of his entire life and ministry, they do so by looking at Christ as the One who has come to the world to restore the broken relationships between God and the

human being; or to recover the bond between the Father and his beloved creature and to do it in such a way that it will become permanent and unbreakable. This new alliance is precisely obtained through the radical obedience to the Father's will, which emanates from an absolute confidence in his goodness. And, at the same time, as a full solidarity with the human condition, which finds itself immersed in evil and sin. This is the key premise which makes it possible for us to understand the genuine meaning of the "kingdom of God" and its justice.

Therefore, expressions like "social justice," "poverty," or "solidarity" must be properly placed in the widest and most organic semantic sphere of the concept "kingdom of God." A good example of this wider and more transcendent sense of the "kingdom of God" concept is the double value that the "poverty" acquires when it is applied to Jesus: one pejorative value indeed, but also another positive one. In our world, the poverty includes strongly negative dimensions: injustice, oppression, violence, lack of the most essential means of subsistence. In short, poverty may be the result of unjust and oppressive structures which carry a great many crowds of human beings to social exclusion and to misery. All throughout his earthly existence, Jesus dauntlessly struggled to change this situation of unjust and inhuman poverty, which attempts against the will of God. This is one of the reasons why Jesus will assert that the "poor in spirit" are the favoured children of the Father, to whom the Good News of his kingdom is preferably addressed.

But it is not the only motive. It is necessary to notice that, from the viewpoint of Jesus Christ, poverty has also a positive and saving side when we are dealing with an option that is correctly integrated in the dynamic of the divine dominion. It is a matter of the *gospel poverty*, which must be assumed by man as the subordination of all things to the obedience and the love of God, considered as our greatest "treasure." This is the reason why Jesus made a fundamental option for poverty, understood according to the Gospel, and requested his disciples to adopt it as such. Now we will stop for a while on this point, which we consider very important.

4. The Outcry of the Poor and the Oppressed

In the sacred books poverty is presented as very close to and in tune with the semantic field of social justice. Throughout the Old Testament, the biblical authors use various terms to refer to poverty, among which we may emphasize, because of their importance and frequent use, the Hebrew words *'ânâw*, *'ânî*, *ebyôn* or *dal*. In many texts these qualifiers are used as synonyms. From among them, perhaps *'anaw* and *'ânî* are the best known. The verbal root etymologically means "to lean", whence the meaning of "to be oppressed," "to be wretched" or "to be poor" derives by extension. Generally the concept of *'anawîm* is translated by "poor," "oppressed," "humbled," "wretched." This group of words is integrated in the New Testament under the concept *ptôjos*, which is the most important and most frequent word to refer to the poor in the gospels.¹²⁸

The poor are those who "do not have", or those who "lack" not only economic or material resources, but also rights, defence, social recognition. The poor are those whose dignity as human beings is not recognized. But within this wide frame, there are obviously different categories of poverty. In a country like the old Israel there were many citizens who worked a small piece of ground, owned or leased, which allowed them to subsist. They were poor people, whose economic and social situation was always very precarious because of a bad harvest, or an increase of taxes. But they were not totally miserable, as was the case of the beggars, those

miserably poor who had nothing and were forced to beg daily for their daily maintenance.

Therefore, within this wide and general field of poverty, it is possible to distinguish different realizations. The couple “widow/orphan” or the sequence “widow/orphan/emigrant” makes up one of the groupings of individuals more frequently mentioned in the Bible in the context of the poverty and of the social defencelessness and, therefore, in the frame of the Hebrew law and morality (Ex 22,21-23; Dt 10,16-19; 14,23-29; 24,17-18; 26,12-13). In the circle of the old Jewish family, the lack of the husband or of the father entails the lack of the main responsible person for the house maintenance, as well as the representative and legal defendant of the family in general. For this reason, the terms “widow” or “orphan” indicate in numerous passages something more than the mere civil situation of the individuals. In many cases they are synonyms of vulnerability, abandonment and indigence. The immigrants were also the frequent objects of abuse and violence. In his parables and teachings, Jesus himself likes to put the widows as examples of poverty and humility. And he also evokes on certain occasions the helplessness of the foreigners in Israel.

In the book of Job we find this eloquent description of the life of the miserable: “They harvest in alien fields and glean in the vineyard of the wicked. They pass the night naked, without clothing, for lack of covering against the cold. They are drenched with the rain of the mountains. For lack of shelter they cling to the rock. They go naked for lack of clothing; they carry the sheaves and go famished. Between the rows they press out the oil and tread the wine presses, yet suffer thirst. In the city the dying groan and the wounded cry out, yet the Lord does not listen to their plea” (Cf Job 24). At times, the extreme necessity forces the individuals to become indebted and leave as security their domestic animals, and even their own children! The phenomenon of slavery was frequent. We recall, at this time the narrative taken from a passage of the Prophet Elisha: “A certain woman the widow of one of the guild prophets, complained to Elisha: ‘My husband, your servant, is dead. You know that he was a God-fearing man, yet now his creditor has come to take my two children as his slaves.’: ‘How can I help you?’ Elisha answered her” (2Kgs 4.1-2).

The situation must not have been too different in Jesus’ times. To get a shallow idea of the social stratification of his epoch we will make use of a text of J.P. Meier: “In an insignificant principality, submitted like Galilee, the true “rich” were a very small group which would include Herod Antipas, his powerful court officials (cf. Mk 6,21), the great landowners, the very important merchants and a few chief collectors of taxes and fees. Many people belonged to a vague intermediate group, in which the merchants and artisans of big and small villages, as well as farmers owning regular-size farms. (...) The small farmers had a precarious existence, at times at a sustenance level, as they were subjected to the whims of the elements, to the market prices, the inflation, the greedy governments, the wars and the high taxes, both civic and religious. Going down the social scale, there were the daily labourers, the wage earners, the itinerant artisans and the farmers dispossessed of their properties and forced to practice banditry (...) The slaves were in the lowest step of the ladder (...) In this social stratification, expressed in a broad way, Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, would find himself in the lower part of the intermediate group...”¹²⁹

The dramatic situation of the poor and the oppressed, their pain and suffering, are translated into a despaired cry for help, into an outcry. Crushed and subjected to

violence by the powerful, left to their fate by the corrupt courts of their people, objects of abuse and exploitation, bent by work or sickness, reduced to merchandise or enslaved, the needy lift their eyes to God. For this reason, the so far considered terms acquire also a more and more important religious or spiritual value. The poor are preferential subjects of Yahweh's attention and salvation. They become "Yahweh's *'anawîm*", "the poor of Yahweh".

The "poor of Yahweh" appeal to God as the only Judge and Lord who can help them in their state of absolute helplessness. In the Book of Psalms, Hebrew terms like "pleas", "petitions", "laments", "wails" or "cries for help" are frequent. Before these "humble people", Yahweh must "save them" from their hopeless situation, whatever it may be. It is enough to take a quick look to some poems to illustrate this observation: "I know that the Lord renders justice to the afflicted, judgment to the poor" (Ps 140,13). From a global vision of the pleading psalms, H.J. Kraus comments: "Judging by the privileges that the God of Israel promised to all the defenceless, the needy and the oppressed, the "poor" have a *preferential right* to God's help. Paradoxically, this right is not based on what one "has", but on what one has not. The preferential right of the "poor" to God's help is based on not having, on that which really constitutes their 'poverty'"¹³⁰

Yahweh is angry for their unjust situation, listens to their outcry and acts vehemently on their aid: "The Lord rises to accuse, standing to try his people. The Lord enters into judgment with his people's elders and princes: 'it is you who have devoured the vineyard; the loot wrested from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, and grinding down the poor'" (Is 3,13-15). In the canticle of the Magnificat, Luke puts in the mouth of the virgin the cry of these poor of Yahweh, of whom she herself feels to be an integral part: "...for he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness"; "he has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty" (see Lk 1, 46-53). Jesus himself, crucified in Calvary, personifies the outcry of the hopeless before God, by reciting Ps 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mc 15,34).

Reconciling both sense dimensions, the material and the spiritual, R. Fabris offers this definition of poverty in the Bible: "poor is he who is deprived of the essential goods to live, to have human freedom and dignity. Justice and the fundamental rights of the person are also included in the concept of dignity. But being poor is not only a social or economic category, neither is it only a spiritual or religious category. Both are integrated; the economic-social condition of the poor becomes a spiritual quality, a religious category."¹³¹ Both sense spheres are also explicitly gathered in Matthew's version of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5,3). The formula "poor in spirit" does not entail a mere spiritualization of the terminology about poverty. Rather, it wants to correct a poverty understood in an exclusively material sense. It indicates a poverty which reveals an absolute confidence in God, considered as the only treasure of one's life, as we previously pointed out. With regard to the vow of poverty of a consecrated person, the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* comments: "Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart"(n 90). But it is equally true that the poor, because of their very situation, are open to a special presence of God. For this reason, Jesus will carry out a fundamental option

for them. Now then we will go deeper into the form in which Jesus confronted this crucial response to the outcry of the poor and the oppressed of his society.

5. Jesus Assumes and Prolongs the Prophetic Denunciation

In St. Luke's gospel, the two disciples who go to Emmaus describe Jesus as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (24,19). Doubtless, these pilgrims reveal to us the general opinion on the figure of the Master of Nazareth, which was on the lips of his contemporaries, as the gospels frequently testify: "Who do people say that I am?' They said in reply: 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets'" (Mk 8,27-28). Why was the title of "prophet" one of the most frequently given to Jesus? Luke's passage offers us an important key to give a response to this question: by the peculiar form in which Jesus spoke and acted, which was vividly similar to that of the old prophets of Israel. More specifically: because his words and actions manifested the word and action of God. And this action was preferentially addressed to the poorest and most disadvantaged of society. This observation reminds us that it is not possible to approach Jesus without a panoramic vision: from the wide horizon of the history of his people, where we find the historical and theological premises of his entire mission. That is how we discover that, to a great extent, Jesus assumes and prolongs the denunciation of the old prophets against the social injustice painfully enacted on his people.

In this section then we look closely at some important data of the Old Testament which clarify the pages of the New One. The books that belong to the most important normative core of the Hebrew Bible, the Torá or Pentateuch, manifest the ideal of a people where poverty or indigence should not be existing. The reason derives from the fact that, since the people is chosen by God and the object of a communitarian donation of the land, there should be no reason for the tribe, the family or any individual to suffer any need or deficiency (Dt 15). But Israel's history dramatically belies this religious ideal. Throughout its secular existence, the weeds of oppression, misery and even slavery spring up in its bosom ever more strongly. In fact, the pressing need to confront numerous and very serious social problems is revealed as early as in the oldest legislative codices. Along the pages of the Old Testament we encounter a great sensitivity towards the poorest and most unprotected members of society: "Injure not the poor because they are poor, nor crush the needy at the gate; for the Lord will defend their cause, and will plunder the lives of those who plunder them" (Prov 22,22-23).

But doubtless, the prophets are specifically authorized witnesses of these social injustices. In the prophetic books the critical outlook on the social sphere acquires a preeminent place. To a great extent, the prophets' action is born of the indignation caused by the terrible and unjust situation in which many of their contemporaries live. It is precisely in this matter that we encounter some of their heaviest and most vigorous oracles. The prophets denounce straight to the point all sort of violence, oppression or social injustice that they observe around them. They observe how the social life of their epoch has degenerated into a growing and bloody struggle for power and riches, which provokes at the end an acute misery and marginalization of most of the population. With decision and bravery they assume as their own the hopeless situation of the victims of greed and high-handedness. They aim fiery speeches against what they consider one of the greatest evils of their time and one of the main reasons why the nation is walking on a knife edge: the oversight

or the violation of the divine commandment, which demands the respect of the Hebrew brother or of any human being. They denounce how the more powerful strata of the nation and the laws that rule the government and the institutions have gradually displaced God himself to put in his place the material goods, making it possible for corruption to totally subjugate the social fabric.

Practically the whole reality of the tensions and excesses related to social injustice is dealt with in one way or another by the prophets: the abusive application of legal prescriptions, or the violation of law and the corruption of justice, the fraud and swindle in commercial transactions, slavery, the possession of large estates, the opulence and the apathetic luxury in the face of the indigence of the neighbor, the oppression and the violence caused by greed... In this sense, the prophets set themselves up as bitter defenders of law and justice. They are the voice of a God, angry at the disgrace of the most indigent and vulnerable members of his people.

Together with the social injustices, the other capital sin denounced by the prophets is related to the perversion of the religiosity and the worship offered to God. This phenomenon of iniquity has two main manifestations: On the one hand, idolatry, which consists in adoring other gods different from Yahweh. It is here where we should be very aware that money, riches and power may become also an idol to which man may render worship and service. This is a matter that Jesus will emphatically take up, as we will see a little later.

But there is also another deviation from the religious attitude, less evident or manifest, but no less harmful: that of distorting the very image of God, offering him a worship that is corrupt from its very root. It is precisely this aspect that the prophets vehemently reproach in their oracles, since there can be no true worship of God if it is not accompanied by acts of justice, honesty and love, as the Law establishes. The commandments towards God and the prescriptions towards neighbour are indissolubly related in that Law (Ex 20,1-17). The divine heralds severely denounce the cult and the liturgy offered to God while hiding the infringement and the permanent contempt of the law and the duties towards the weakest members of society. The sacred service that Israel renders to God is not the expression of a pure and sincere love for him, but, on the contrary, it hides much hypocrisy, if it is reduced to mere external formality. In other words, the true worship of God must always entail the search and the keeping of his will. In contrast, the prophets frequently observe that the holocausts and sacrifices above all look forward to silence consciences and falsely bury all sorts of oppression. These dimensions of the prophetic message will also be very present in Jesus' activity. In fact, it would not be possible to understand well Christ's figure without an explicit reference to this reality of his past.

6. The Lifestyle Adopted by Jesus

Let us take up again the quotation of our last General Chapter which guides our exposition, focusing our attention on the last part, which I have transcribed in italics to emphasize it: "We reaffirm the priority of the Congregation for prophetic solidarity with the impoverished, marginalized and those whose right to life is threatened, *in such a way that this has repercussions in our personal and community lifestyle, apostolic mission and in our institutions.*" What in this paragraph seems to be a consequence may, in reality, be taken as a premise: our action in the field of social justice would be of little value were it not endorsed by the witness of our lifestyle. In fact, if we start from the gospel, what we frequently call "lifestyle"

represents the foundation and the spring from which the entire action emanates. That is what we see in the person of Jesus, whose life, we insist, is already his message. Perhaps it would not be superfluous to remember that re-living and radically experiencing the very lifestyle adopted by the Son of God in his earthly existence is really an integral part of the vocation of the consecrated in the Church. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* already indicated it: "This state (the religious vocation) accurately exemplifies and perpetually makes present in the Church the form of life that the Son of God had accepted in entering this world to do the will of the Father and had proposed to his disciples" (n 44).

Jesus is God's final response to the outcry of the poor and the oppressed of this world. It is a response that starts with the lifestyle that he chose and recommended to those who wanted to follow him. From the day of his birth till the last day of his public ministry, Jesus does not only preferentially speak to the poor, but he also stays among them and lives as they do. His words and actions reveal a full and total solidarity with the marginalized and the excluded of this world: "Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross (...). Even more: he identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 544).

Jesus was born in the bosom of a humble family, and his entire life passes in the circle of a modest and even needy family. The evangelist Luke asserts that, when the family of Nazareth must undergo the journey to Bethlehem because of the census ordered by the emperor Augustus, crossing the land of Israel from North to South, Mary, is in an advanced state of pregnancy, lays her firstborn son in a manger "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Lk 2,7). A little later, Luke offers another very eloquent historical note, when he makes mention of the presentation of Jesus in the temple: "When the days were completed for her purification, according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord: 'Every male that opens to womb shall be consecrated to the Lord' and to offer a sacrifice of 'a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,' (Lk 2,22-24). In truth, Luke is presenting to us a simplified version of the Mosaic prescription about the purification of a woman who has given birth and the ritual and official incorporation of her son to the Hebrew society. Specifically, Luke refers to the legal option available to the poor, since the legal offering that was to be offered to the Lord in the temple was a lamb, as we can see in the book of Leviticus: This is the law for a woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl: "If she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves, or two pigeons, the one for a holocaust and the other for a sin offering)" (read the complete regulation in Lev 12,2-8).

Jesus lives his youth as the son of a humble carpenter or craftsman, Joseph, who must earn his daily bread with the sweat of his brow (Mk 6,3; Mt 13,55). We may now add an important fact that must be kept into account: how can we combine this panorama with the words of the angel to Mary at the moment of the annunciation? Let us remember some of the formulae applied to Jesus: "he will be great," "he will be called Son of the Most High," "of his kingdom there will be no end" (cf Lk 1, 32-35). It is clear that the evangelists are already indicating to us the specific form in which Jesus will understand his Messianic mission. As we go deeper into the public ministry of Jesus, we discover that he not only makes a preferential option for the proclamation of the Good News of God's kingdom to the poor and the needy of his society, but he also assumes for himself their own situation of poverty, marginalization and vulnerability. When on a certain occasion he himself describes

his lifestyle, he pronounces this flat sentence: “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests; the Son of man has nowhere to rest his head” (Mt 8,20).

In the gospel of Luke Jesus inaugurates his public preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth with these words, taken from the prophet Isaiah: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4,18-19). Applying the oracle of the prophet to himself, Jesus presents himself expressly as the Messiah of the poor, of the oppressed, of the marginalized. From the beginning he makes it clear that the Good News of the kingdom of God has a privileged target group: “It is evident that Jesus’ mission is directed to the poor. They are referred to not only in economic terms, but in a holistic sense, as all those who are expelled outside of the limits of God’s people for any type of socio-religious reason. In centering the good news on this group, Jesus is expressing therefore his refusal to assume such social and religious marginalization. On the contrary, he asserts that such poor are precisely the target group of divine grace. While many are considering them excluded from salvation, God opens for them the gates of his own family.”¹³²

Among the conclusive notes that J. Jeremías contributes on his analysis of Jesus’ figure and the message of the gospels, we find this: “The followers of Jesus consisted mainly of slandered persons, persons who enjoyed low reputation and esteem: the uneducated, the ignorant, to whom their religious ignorance and their moral behaviour closed the gates to salvation, according to the conviction of the time. But together with this, there is another totally different aspect. If we look to these same persons with the eyes of Jesus, we see them with a different light. Jesus calls them “the poor”, “all you who labour and are burdened” (Mt,11,28). Jesus contemplates these beggars of God with infinite mercy (...). Because their weight is doubly oppressive: it embraces both the public scorn which they received from men, and the lack of hope of ever finding salvation in God.”¹³³ In this sense, “Jesus makes of the option for the marginalized the distinctive mark of his mission.”¹³⁴

For this reason, his gaze, always lucid and sharp about the social reality of his people, stops on those people, marginalized or humiliated in any sense or field: “Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute and many others. They placed them at his feet and he cured them” (Mt 15,30); “When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be, because of their inability to repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Lk 14, 13-14). This group of needy and marginalized people is as numerous as it is heterogeneous: children, widows, sick of all kinds, prostitutes, publicans, Samaritans, ignorant... His is a gaze of deep compassion and mercy towards all the suffering: “When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd...” (Mk 6,34); “When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her: ‘do not weep’” (Lk 7.13). Professor G. Perego comments: “In the New Testament, the poor delimit the space in which the kingdom of God enters with the greatest facility and where the proclamation of the Gospel is accepted and listened to. The Master identifies himself with them strongly underlining: “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me” (Mt 25,45).¹³⁵

But, doubtless, the decisive moment in this existential option for the detachment and the poverty is revealed to us in the narratives of the passion and

death: “Jesus nailed on the cross is the “poor” par excellence: poor of heart, in deep communion with the will of the Father and with the fate of his brothers; poor also in the midst of the misery to which his own incarnation has led him...”¹³⁶ Jesus dies in the torture destined to the slaves in the frame of the Roman empire, the crucifixion, and is subjected to all types of humiliations and torments, the object of which is to take away from him the last things that even the poorest individual could keep: his dignity as a person. Jesus is reduced to a being without rights, without defence; he is totally helpless, revealing the most extreme poverty, that type in which the human being does not count anything in the face of others. He is a mere object of taunt, opprobrium, rejection and punishment. In this regard, we would like to stop at a small but eloquent detail of the passion.

In the praetorium, the soldiers take off his clothes to clothe him as a king (purple cloak, crown and sceptre) in a context of sinister and humiliating mockery (Mk 15,26-20). In the crucifixion Jesus is totally stripped of his clothes. Apparently, the fact of dividing among themselves the possessions of the condemned was a custom among the troop that acted as executioner. But under the reflective and believing gaze of the evangelists, the gesture acquires a much deeper meaning. It is not casual that the previous mention to Jesus’ “clothes” was precisely the passage of the transfiguration (Mk 9,2-8). The revelation of Jesus under the light of his glory serves as contrast of the presentation of his person in the moment of his greatest humiliation, in which the darkness take the primacy and all sign of power remains hidden. In the transfiguration, Jesus’ clothes manifest the indescribable brightness of his divinity.¹³⁷ In the passion Jesus is stripped of them, as a sign of total and definitive vulnerability. The man who is stripped of his clothes is also stripped, in some way, of his own dignity as a person. Jesus on the cross is naked; this definitively puts out all light about his identity and his dignity.¹³⁸

Jesus, seeing that his strength is declining in the summit of suffering, addresses the Father reciting the beginning of Ps 22: “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” which is translated: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Mk 15,34; Mt 27,46). The text speaks of “giving a loud cry”, which indicates the intensity of his pain and desperation. Christ incarnates in his person the same prayer of the suffering righteous persons who, throughout the ages, have claimed to God on the moments of anguish and darkness. His passion is sign of absolute and full solidarity with the suffering and oppressed man... till the last consequences.

7. Gospel Poverty.

Once we have presented some traits of Christ’s life in poverty, as the fundamental option of his existence, we are now going to take his teachings into consideration. When Matthew outlines the first steps of the Lord’s public life, he does it with the so-called “Sermon on the Mount,” in the region of Galilee (Mt 5-7). All along this dense block of exhortations, Jesus speaks on several occasions on the theme of riches and poverty.¹³⁹ The solemn entry gateway to his long speech are the Beatitudes (5,1-12; see Lk 6,20-26). Precisely, the first of these statements affirms that, before the eyes of God, the “poor in spirit” are the favourites of the kingdom: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5,3).

The first “macarism” lights up the rest of the exclamations: the poor that Jesus refers to are indeed the “meek” (5,4), those who “mourn” (5,5), those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (5,6). The commentators coincide in indicating that the

reference or pointing out to the poverty “in spirit” wants to emphasize that Jesus is not speaking only of a specific *state* of man, but also of an *attitude*; it is not only a matter of a material poverty, but also of a disposition of humility and confidence before God. In this way, Matthew gathers the most genuine sense of the expression “poor of Yahweh,” as we have commented in previous paragraphs. In the last analysis, the poor that is blessed is he who has received God’s kingdom as his greatest treasure. Santiago Guijarro comments on the first Beatitudes: “They are a declaration of the happiness possessed by those who open themselves to the action of God in an attitude of sincere acceptance. He addresses those who are poor in spirit, that is to say, to the poor of Yahweh, who have placed their trust only in Him, and feed their spirituality in the psalms of the Old Testament, hoping that God will manifest his kingdom and fulfill their hope”.¹⁴⁰

But Jesus does not limit himself to proclaiming the beatitudes of the poor of Yahweh, but also criticizes and denounces the attitudes and structures which subject this collective of needy persons to oppression and to the most absolute misery. This polemical and prophetic dimension of his message is particularly emphasized in the gospel of Luke who, after the sermon of the beatitudes, enumerates a series of prophetic denunciations in these terms: “Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for your ancestors treated the false prophets in this way” (Lk 6,24-26).

The warnings of Jesus about the danger of power and riches are as numerous as they are incisive. Taking again the gospel of Matthew, we see that, after stating the beatitudes, there is a broad reflection about the material possessions (6,19-34). Let us point out the most important passages: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. Store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroy, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be (Mt 6,19-21). “No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6,24). Jesus exhorts not to be anxious or distressed for material needs, such as food or clothes (6,25), to conclude with this emphatic recommendation: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil” (Mt 6,33-34).¹⁴¹

Luke amplifies these reflections of the Master, by giving them, as an introduction, the parable of the rich man from whom his life is suddenly taken away, thus losing all the goods that he had tried to store up (Lk 12,16-21). This didactic narrative is pronounced when somebody asks Jesus to be judge in a discussion about inheritance between brothers. His response is forceful: “Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Lk 12,15). Talking about this warning, F. Bovon comments: “Behind “greed” a fear is hiding which makes us accumulate more than what the others have, and more than what is needed for one’s maintenance. And behind this fear there is an erroneous conviction: that is to say, that being depends on having and, more serious yet, that life is maintained and defies death, by the will to refer everything to ourselves. As though our life could only find and recover its breath in our own goods.”¹⁴²

As we have already seen, we can easily find in the prophetic books of the OT the denunciation of the idolatry of power that is born of riches and luxury. We speak of idolatry when money becomes God's direct rival, effectively displacing him from his preeminent place in the life of man (the term frequently used is *mammon*). When this phenomenon takes place, money and riches totally rule and gain control over man's will and energies, becoming his primary longing.¹⁴³ This is what Jesus seems to be referring to when he warns that money may become our "lord," and provoke the scorn of Him who should be the only "Lord," the only or main "treasure": God. But even when the attitude of the individual does not reach such extremes, the out-of-all-proportion worries for one's future, for securing one's means of subsistence, may stifle in fact the option for God and for the kingdom.

When Jesus calls to follow him, to form part of his closest disciples, he demands the sharing of his own poor and detached lifestyle, as we see in an eloquent way in the passage of the individual who approaches him asking him about eternal life: "You are lacking in one thing: Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad for he had many possessions" (Mk 10,21-22). The scene makes it very clear that the main motive of the rejection of Jesus' offer is the affluent situation of the man. T. Matura emphasizes an important element: "To acquire life, to enter into the new existence preached by Jesus, the total abandonment of all possessions is a need. It is not an arbitrary abandonment, because it must be done on behalf of the poor. It is not, therefore, a mere abandonment or detachment; it is a donation. The goods are sold in order to give their fruit to the poor. Whoever fulfills this demand has already a treasure reserved in the world to come, entering from this very moment in the number of the disciples."¹⁴⁴

The poverty to which Jesus convokes his disciples and which he requests his disciples to assume when following him is integral; it implies breaking away from any bond of the past, detaching oneself from one's familiar and social roots, abandoning all material security to start a new way of following his steps: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy, goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Mt 13,44). Let us notice, however, that Jesus, at the same time that he sharply clarifies the demands of this vocation, establishes a relationship between what is demanded and what is acquired, in terms of net disproportion. Since he who loses all for His sake and for the gospel, gains it again, although in a different way. And, in addition, he has access to eternal life. From this viewpoint, the words of Jesus are like another kind of beatitude for the disciple. Let us not forget it, then; Jesus made himself poor "to enrich us with his poverty."

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- ¹²⁷ *Vida y misterio de Jesús de Nazaret* [Life and Mystery of Jesus of Nazareth], Salamanca 1990, 319.
- ¹²⁸ To go deeper in these themes, cf. J.M. Liaño, “Los pobres en el Antiguo Testamento” [The poor in the Old Testament], *EstBib* 25 (1966) 150-190; D.E. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament. The case of Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner”, *IB* 45 (1995) 341-353; R. Fabris, *La opción por los pobres en la Biblia* [The option for the poor in the Bible], Estella 1992.
- ¹²⁹ *Un judío marginal* [A Marginal Jew], vol I. 293-294.
- ¹³⁰ H.J. Kraus, *Teología de los Salmos* [Theology of the Psalms], Salamanca 1996, 206.
- ¹³¹ *La opción por los pobres en la Biblia* [The Option for the Poor in the Bible], 21.
- ¹³² J.B. Green *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1997, 211.
- ¹³³ *Teología del Nuevo Testamento*, [Theology of the New Testament] vol. I, Salamanca 1985. 137-138.
- ¹³⁴ J.L. González Faus, *La Humanidad nueva. Ensayo de cristología* [The New Humanity. Essay on Christology]. Santander 1984, 89.
- ¹³⁵ *Nuevo Testamento y vida consagrada* [New Testament and Consecrated Life], Madrid 2010, 190.
- ¹³⁶ J.M. Tillard, *Le salut, mystère de pauvreté* [The Salvation, Mystery of Poverty], Paris 1968, 28.
- ¹³⁷ In other passages too Jesus’ clothes reveal the power that emanates from his person: “A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel of his cloak. She said to herself, ‘If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured.’” (Mt 9,20-21); “They begged him that they might touch only the tassel of his cloak, and as many as touched it were healed” (Mt 14,36).
- ¹³⁸ We have gathered this paragraph from our study: Ricardo Volo Pérez, “Para que se cumpliera la Escritura” [So that the Scripture May Be Fulfilled]. Use and sense of the Psalms in Jn 19,16-37 in comparison with the Synoptics in: “As I have loved you” (Jn 13,34). Anthology on the Joannic writings. Homage to Francisco Contreras Molina. Granada 2011.
- ¹³⁹ In Matthew’s gospel we find five great discourses of Jesus: the Sermon on the Mount (5,1-7,29), the speech on the mission (9,35-10,42), the speech in parables (13,3b-52), the ecclesial speech (18,3-34) and the eschatological speech (23,1-25.46). Each one of these great interventions of the Master tries to gradually reveal and explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The Beatitudes are literarily configured as the preamble of the Sermon on the Mount. See R. Aguirre Monasterio, *Evangelio según San Mateo* [Gospel According to Saint Matthew], in: R. Aguirre Monasterio-A. R. Carmona, *Evangelios sinópticos y Hechos de los Apóstoles* [Synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles], 200 f.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Comentario al Nuevo Testamento* [Commentary to the New Testament] The Gospel of Matthew, Salamanca 1995. This is what U. Luz calls process of “*ethicization*” and “*internalization*” of the words of Jesus, which do not refer only to a state or social category of the persons to whom he refers, but also embraces the indispensable virtues which must be present in him who is called to possess the kingdom of God: humility, absolute trust in God, or the perseverance in faith in the midst of difficulties (cf. *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, Mt 1-7, vol. I, Salamanca 2001, 301 f.).
- ¹⁴¹ R.T. France points out that, in Matthew’s gospel, the reference to the “concern” or “worry” is the antithesis of the confidence that must be placed in God; that is, faith (cf. 8,10; 9,2.22.29; 15,28; 17,20; 21.21). He who is “worried” always shows lack of faith (*The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2007, 270).
- ¹⁴² *El Evangelio según San Lucas II*, Salamanca 2002, 345.

¹⁴³ Idolizing riches means, in a few words, substituting God with money or material goods, and this is tantamount to making them divine. But this wicked attitude may have, on its turn, various nuances. The attempt to acquire, at any cost, the power of riches may have its spring and root in *greed*. This vice reveals the most corrupt and malevolent face of the worship of wealth, because it pushes man to obtain his objectives by any means, without scruples, despoiling his neighbour of all his possessions in order to appropriate them. In the last analysis, this would be tantamount to changing his equals into objects of merchandizing. In this frame of wicked actuation, both violence and robbery as well as the abusive or corrupt use of the very laws may enter, manipulating them in their own benefit. But together with the phenomenon of *greed*, *selfishness* may also be found, with which it has a profound relationship, but not a total similitude. The selfish attitude does not imply in itself a tendency to directly or indirectly violent or wicked actions, but it still continues being another manifestation of the worship of wealth which allows the development and the strengthening of the social differences from an openly unjust side.

¹⁴⁴ *El radicalismo evangélico* [The Gospel Radicalism] , Madrid 1980, 101.

Characteristics of our Style of Missionary work in JPIC and Solidarity

JPIC & Solidarity Workshop Vic 2014

0. Introduction

Gathered in Vic, the cradle of the Claretian 'great work', beginning each day next to the tomb of Fr. Founder, 37 representatives of Organisms of the whole Congregation met from the 3rd to 9th of February, convoked by the General Prefecture of the Apostolate, by the General Secretariat of JPIC and by the General Mission Procure to exchange experiences and understanding of the reality and the possibilities to qualify and to reaffirm our missionary activity in one of the dimensions that define our charism: the option for the impoverished in terms of prophecy, liberation and the dignity of the human being and his social and ambient surroundings.

Reality and response

We listen not so much to the recounting of what we do, but rather through that to the voice of the most poor and oppressed, of the abused and the displaced, of those silent in the ancestral resistance and the 'outraged' today, because they can no longer bear the situation in which they live and the violation of their personal human rights and those of their people. We continue to be preoccupied by the different kinds of violence and armed conflict that are present in our continents and for the thousands of victims they produce. They leave us, on the one hand, shocked by the data and the testimonies of suffering, of abandonment, inequality, and human evil and, on the other, we are surprised by the tremendous effort of many Claretians and their communities to confront in a profoundly creative, risky and in solidarity way and even heroic in these critical situations, accompanying peoples in the process of self-recognition and the recuperation of their rights, for building alternatives for survival, the communitarian economy, political participation, a profession of faith committed to the reality and valuable processes of interculturality.

Besides, we admire and value the institutional initiatives of several Organisms to create or consolidate entities such as Mission Procures or Foundations to incentivize the missionary spirit, for the work for justice and for the transformation of the world, to serve as a channel of solidarity for other individuals and entities, to bring projects before organizations of solidarity, to enable services such as Volunteers, to highlight the plight of the most needy, to guarantee the protection and the reclaimed rights and the structures that protect them.

Inspiration and motivation

We are left asking ourselves about the quality of our following of Jesus who made himself one of us to save everybody, who dared to present himself as full of the Spirit in favour of

the excluded in the plan of liberation and grace, even to giving his life for this cause. As Sons of the Heart of Mary, we intone with her the Magnificat (Lk. 1: 46-55) and we're not able to avoid being confronted with the committed proclamation of the power of her weakness before the powerful and the oppressors.

We reflected on Claret and the impact of his pastoral ministry in Cuba. We have been in contact with his high social sensibility and his valiant actions in the complex social environment of the island and which would be replanted and adapted later in Spain in the remaining days of his ministry.

From this rich analysis of a Claretian awareness and social action, we are left with these pointers to the charismatic style of our missionary dimension for justice, peace and the integrity of creation:

1. To be witnesses to the preferential love of God for the poor
2. To express it with gestures and actions that confirm the proclaimed Word
3. To work as a missionary community and through networks of solidarity
4. To be placed in the geographic, social and cultural frontiers of the mission
5. Always attentive to the reality, to the signs of the time
6. Generating strategies that go both to the urgent needs and to the transformation of unjust structures
7. Using realistic, practical and effective means

We propose to revise and refine these characteristics of the ministry of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and the dynamic and structure for putting it into practice and animating it.

For this we present the following.

1. Characteristics

1.- To live the reality of the impoverished in a contemplative and creative way, knowing how to look, listen and respond in a committed way.

1. Critical looking that Analyses the causes and consequences. A looking that leaves one affected (touched) by the impoverished. A looking that leaves one questioned by the realities of the impoverished.
2. Active and empathetic listening, that accepts and allows one to be accepted
3. That generates, with them, creative responses to their needs

2.- To accept cordially and accompany individuals, marginalized groups and communities in such a way that they be protagonists in their own process of self-dignity, self-determination and liberation.

1. That all of our communities be houses for everybody, of welcome, of home, that builds fraternity and inclusion.
2. Quality accompaniment that helps them recover their own voice.
3. Ministry of consolation and reconciliation, from resilience and the construction of capabilities.
4. To go out to meet other realities, making them also ours.

3.- Articulate processes of transformation, taking on a development that respects and promotes the proper culture and identity of the communities and peoples, that enables them to be active subjects of the new society.

1. Transformation of PERSONS: recovery of the persons
2. Transformation of COLLECTIVES (Communities, peoples)
3. Transformation of unjust ECONOMIC structures to a new ECONOMY OF SOLIDARITY
4. Transformation that creates SOCIAL INCLUSION
5. Transformation that promotes FORMATION AND INSERTION IN WORK (EMPLOYMENT)
6. Transformation that CREATES BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
7. Transformation OF CLARETIAN AND LAY AGENTS IN THE COMMITMENT TO JPIC AND SOLIDARITY

4.- Prophetic witness from a love that calls together and mobilizes, with passion and courage, for the Kingdom

1. Witness of life in fraternity, simple and austere, and committed to the people and their causes.
2. Witness that takes on risks, denounces injustice, resists threats with bravery
3. Witness that organizes and promotes the commitment to the cause of the poor

5.- To promote and create associations or foundations to do the work of JPIC and Solidarity which, in turn, network with others, without pretending to be protagonists and being able to transfer it to others when appropriate.

1. Social Movements
2. Political Movements
3. Ecclesial Movements
4. With other congregations
5. Others

6.- Political and social involvement. Denouncing and struggle against the system that produces poverty, destruction of nature and violence.

1. To favour a more critical and wider vision
2. To be involved in politics, constructively and critically
3. Favour active involvement

7.- Promote the care and protection of creation

1. Care and harmony of nature: water, land, sustainability, abusive exploitation.
2. Ecological conversion: promote life in its totality
3. Educate and make aware of the ecological and social problems in the commitment to the care and defence of creation as a gift from God.
4. To begin a real change in our life-style that respects nature
5. Open ourselves to the ecological wisdom of our peoples that our mission may be able to reconcile both human beings and nature

8.- Promote a culture of peace in sincere dialogue

1. Inter-cultural, inter-religious, and ecumenical dialogue
2. Education For Peace: prevention of conflicts, resolution of conflicts and reconciliation; promoting the rights of victims for the truth, justice and integral reparation
3. Promote international humanitarian justice in favour of native / indigenous peoples throughout the world

2. The organization we propose

A- Organization chart

1. We propose that there exists at a congregational level, under the Prefecture of the Apostolate, a structure that will be called “**Solidarity and Mission**”
2. Solidarity and Mission will be motivated by a work team, where there will be lay people.
3. Solidarity and Mission will have two areas of work:
 - a. Area of JPIC. The work at the UN and other Forums are included in this area.
 - b. Area of Mission Procure. Included in this area are PROCLADE, similar organizations and international volunteers
4. It will count on a team of consultants formed of Claretians with experience and qualified professionals.
5. ‘Solidarity and Mission’ will be driven by a team with the involvement of lay people.
6. Team of consultants with Claretians with experience in this matter and other qualified personnel.

B.- Reasoning. (Explanation of the organization chart)

1. Coordination of all aspects of Solidarity and Mission.
2. Coordinate the various agencies working in these dimensions.
3. Formation processes of Claretians and laity to ensure excellence in this service.
4. Make an impact in all areas of the work of Solidarity and Mission, the reflections, approaches and motivations on JPIC into a concerted action.
5. Facilitating and channelling information and sharing of resources.
6. Knowing better the work of Solidarity and Mission in the whole Congregation.
7. Major social and political impact in our processes and social actions.
8. Foster greater collaboration with other religious, ecclesial and social platforms.
9. Encourage, advise, energize the appropriate bodies at a continental and Major Organisms level.

3. Lines of work

(Suggestions for the Team of Solidarity and Mission)

1. Encounters by conferences and the whole Congregation of Solidarity and Mission

1. Of each of the areas together
2. Of each one of the areas

2. Formation in Solidarity and Mission

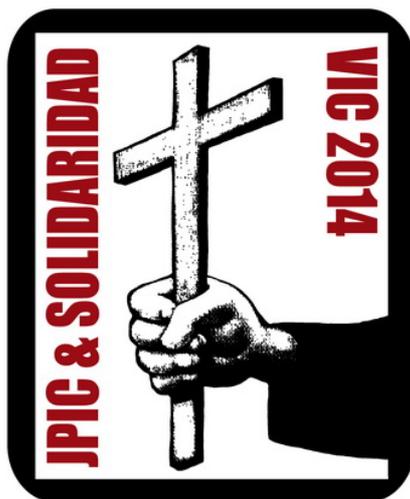
1. Courses of Formation at a congregational level and / or continental
2. Creation of material
3. The Team of Solidarity and Mission to be in charge of this formation

3. To propose joint actions on relevant themes in general or by conferences

1. Rights of 'minorities' and of peoples
2. Exploitation of natural resources and ecology
3. Migration and displacements
4. Responsible consumption
5. Situations of armed conflict, etc.

4. To optimize the resources offered by the new technologies for communication and sharing

1. Existing portals: of the Congregation, Procures, etc.
2. Intranet
3. National and international platforms through the internet
4. Data banks



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