

Lay Claretian Movement
Study Guide #10

**THE LAY CLARETIANS AND
THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION**

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Rome - 1994

Second English Edition
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July 12, 1994

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FOREWORD

The following pages were not written at leisure, but were put together during intervals in a busy traveling schedule. They are meant as a synthesis and a reflection: a synthesis of what the Congregation has done through its Collaborators and Associates, and is now doing through the Lay Claretians; a reflection on what a Lay Claretian is, on the position of Lay Claretians within the Claretian Family, and on the commitment which Lay Claretians must undertake in furthering the lay movement begun by St. Anthony Mary Claret.

This study is not my own personal position paper, or that of the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians, whose organization has been entrusted to me. Rather, it is simply one contribution toward the larger effort of clarifying the meaning of the charism and mission of the Lay Claretian. More than a contribution, it is an invitation to those best qualified to make such a clarification, namely, to those who have received the Lay Claretian charism, as well as to our own theologians, whose studies can enlighten and guide Lay Claretians in the task of reflecting on their own special gift.

This task --to which the whole Claretian Family should contribute-- will, it is hoped, result in the compilation of a SOURCEBOOK FOR LAY CLARETIANS, which will describe as precisely as possible the charism, mission and spirituality of Lay Claretians, their role and relationship with other branches of the Claretian Family, their formation, their apostolic commitment, and some general outlines for their organization.

The contributions submitted by various groups on this theme will be studied at the regional meetings which the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians is planning to hold.

I hope that this and other studies (such as Frs. Viñas and Bermejo's El Apostol Claretiano Seglar) will prove helpful to anyone undertaking the formation of any Lay Claretian group.

Antonio Vidales, CMF

Chapter One

ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET AND THE LAITY

1. CLARET: FIRST AND FOREMOST AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

It is not hard to discover Claret's most outstanding trait, since he has inadvertently left us a self-portrait in his Autobiography. There he describes a missionary as a "man of fire," whose "only concern is how he can best follow Jesus Christ and imitate Him in working, suffering and striving constantly and singlemindedly for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls" (Aut., n.494). The salient feature of Claret's spiritual profile is an irrepressible apostolic zeal, and it is this trait that polarizes and gives meaning to all other aspects of his life.

The figure of Christ the Evangelizer stirred Claret's imagination, and he strove as faithfully as he could to imitate the Son, consumed by zeal for the glory of the Father and the salvation of his fellow human beings.

Claret was a giant of an apostle, hewn from a single rock. A man whose indestructible spiritual unity drove him on to work for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor. The presence within him of the Son, sent by the Father, of the evangelizing Spirit, and of Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Church, all contributed toward making his missionary efforts fruitful and kept him from discouragement. What he said of the missionary was perfectly true of himself, "Nothing daunts him: he delights in privations, welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, and rejoices in suffering."

There is no human explanation for Claret's prodigious evangelizing activity. The missionary campaigns he carried out in Catalonia, the Canary Islands, Cuba and during his travels with the Spanish royal family, would have worn out a whole crowd of people, but not Claret. On the contrary, after a number of days when he preached as many as twelve long sermons a day, he wrote: "I know God wants me to preach, because I feel as peaceful, rested and energetic as if I'd done nothing at all. The Lord has done it all. May He be blessed forever"(Autobiography, n.703).

In him, apostolic zeal was an inexhaustible source of creativity that led him into the vanguard of evangelization and made him use the most modern and effective means for the proclamation of the Gospel.

2. CLARET: A MAN WHO MULTIPLIED EVANGELIZERS

One of Claret's most noteworthy traits was his drive to increase the number of agents for evangelization. He wanted to make an evangelizer out of every person who received the Word of God through him. He showed incredible spontaneity in founding religious congregations, lay associations and organizations of diocesan priests, all with one primary objective, evangelization. The three-year period of 1846-1849 was particularly fruitful. During this time --without abandoning his tireless commitment to itinerant evangelization-- he founded The Fraternity of the Most Holy Heart of Mary, Nuns in their own Homes (Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary), the Religious Library (a printing house), and the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretian Missionaries).

Claret understood, perhaps better than anyone else in his time, that lay people had to resume the same active role of evangelization that they had played in the very origins of the Church. Claret's charism for organizing and engaging the laity in evangelization took institutional form in a whole gamut of groups. Claret organized no less than twelve institutions for the laity.

How many people did he mobilize by means of these institutions? We do not know exactly how many. We know that in Cuba alone, the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had more than 100,000 members. We also know that in 1868 in Spain, the Academy of St. Michael had more than 500 groups of fifteen members each.

3. THE MOST OUTSTANDING CLARETIAN LAY GROUPS

Not all of these lay institutions originated with Claret. Some were of his own creation, while others, already existing, were greatly expanded by him. The following are the ones that best represent the Lay Claretian charism.

a) The Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (1847)

In Claret's day, lay associations and fraternities were mainly pious and devotional groups. As Claret conceived it, this fraternity had several innovative traits:

- ! Its aim was not to promote lay piety, but to organize the laity for apostolic activity.
- ! It brought together in one association, priests and laity, men and women.
- ! It broke with the paternalistic model of relationships which the clergy had generally maintained with the laity (See John M. Lozano's treatment of this matter in Constituciones y Textos, pp. 118-120).

This Fraternity, a true anticipation of 20th century Catholic Action, began functioning in Vic, Spain in 1847. The Archbishop of Tarragona refused to approve its statutes for two reasons: the "mixed" (clerical-lay) character of the Fraternity, and its inclusion of women in the active apostolate. This Claretian project had proved to be too far ahead of its times. Claret obeyed the archbishop, but not without some critical misgivings, as we can see from a letter to his friend, Canon Joseph Caixal, in January, 1848, accompanied by another set of rules for a very 'Claretian' project, called "Nuns in their own Houses": "I don't know what the Archbishop will have to say about this, since it states that they'll be teaching Christian doctrine. It's well known that he can't see women teaching...but I can see the great good that can be and is being done by some zealous women who are well instructed in catechizing" (Epistolario Claretiano, v.I, Letter #81).

b) Nuns in their own Homes (1847)

This group is ordinarily described in terms of Claret's foreseeing of Secular Institutes, a form of apostolic life which was not to receive its 'citizenship papers' until a hundred years later, with the publication of Provida Mater Ecclesia in 1947. However, it must be said that the little book, "Nuns in their own Homes," is a far cry from what we would expect to find in the statutes of a Secular Institute. In fact, the stress is less on secularity than on a flight from the world. What Claret offered in this book was a solution to the problem of women who felt called to the religious life, but were prevented by insuperable obstacles from entering the convent. Obstacles were such as poor health, lack of a dowry, family problems, or the difficulties posed by the political situation of the times. Claret offered them a project for a sort of religious life in the world: "If you could possibly enter a convent, I would encourage you with all my heart to do so" (NOH p.77). One page later, he tells them that, even though they cannot enter a convent, they "should not give up trying to be sisters, since you really can be sisters, and for this reason I have written the following rules and constitutions" (NOH p.78).

Nevertheless, this little book does contain the germinal idea of a Secular Institute. Claret does not view the inability to enter a convent as something disgraceful or fatal; on the contrary, he sees God's gracious plan in all this:

"But above all, we can see in this the designs of God's mercy for others, to whom God only knows how useful you may be, by remaining in the world... Perhaps God has made it impossible for you to enter the cloister, so that you might win these souls for him" (NOH p.90).

Claret undoubtedly saw the possibility of leading a consecrated life of great apostolic effectiveness amid the normal conditions of family and social life. Encased in this

Claretian form of life, the seed of lay consecration was buried in the earth for a century. When history provided a favorable climate, it blossomed into the Secular Institute which we now call "Cordimarian Filiation."

c) The Academy of St. Michael (1858)

God inspired St. Anthony Claret with the idea for this important lay apostolate, as he lay recuperating from the grave wounds he had received during an assassination attempt at Holguin, Cuba in 1656. Through this institution, the Saint aimed at incorporating scientists, writers and artists into the work of evangelization. "Their exclusive aim will be to combat religious errors and human vices, by means of truth and virtue" (PA p.16). "Gathered together in a literary and artistic society, they will be able to join forces in combating errors, disseminating good books, and with them, good doctrine" (PA p.4).

The Academy was actually founded in 1858 in Madrid, and soon managed to enroll some of the most important literary and artistic personalities of the time. A few years after its foundation, Claret could write: "There are several branches in Madrid and in all the major cities of Spain, and the amount of good they are doing is incalculable" (Aut., n.332).

d) Popular Parish Lending Libraries (1864)

Claret, who was always alert to the signs of the times, realized that he was living in an era of great enthusiasm for reading, and he took advantage of the trend. "There is such a passion for reading that if people don't have good books, they'll read bad ones" (Aut., n.311). "Although not everyone can go to church to hear God's word, a book can go to a person's house" (Aut., n.310). This feeling had already led him to found a publishing house, the Religious Library, in 1848, and through it he had flooded Spain and its colonies with books, pamphlets, leaflets and holy cards. Through the Popular Parish Lending Libraries, he aimed at putting good books within everyone's grasp. "Since we are unable to send people missionaries, we provide them with good books" (Epistolario Claretiano, v.II, p.836).

The Popular Parish Lending Libraries quickly expanded to a hundred branches. However, they were to be short lived, since four years after their foundation they were swept away in the chaos of the Spanish Revolution of 1868, which sent Claret into exile in France. For our present purposes, one of the most interesting features of these libraries was the fact that they were completely entrusted to lay people. In practice, they depended on collaboration with the Academy of St. Michael.

e) The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine (1849)

Claret first established this Fraternity in Vic and brought it with him to Cuba in the following year. Lay catechists would go in pairs through the villages of Claret's immense Archdiocese. On arriving, they would ring a bell and catechize the children gathered together in a circle. In cities they would go into factories and workshops, or hold open air meetings.

4. TRAITS COMMON TO ALL THESE LAY GROUPS

a) Apostolic Character

All groups set in motion by Claret were oriented to the apostolate. Even those groups that were structured as 'pious associations' were committed to prayer for the conversion of sinners. No one can be considered a Claretian if he or she does not have a missionary spirit.

One thing that Claret demanded of all laypersons belonging to his institutions was apostolic zeal: "They should continually live a life consumed with zeal for the greater glory of God and the good of souls" (PA, p.42).

b) The Missionary Presence of Mary

Mary, especially the Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, held a prominent place in every work founded by St. Anthony Mary Claret (who added her name to his, at his episcopal ordination in 1850). In an age of Jansenistic coldness and pessimism, Claret saw Mary's Motherhood and her Heart as clear symbols of the nurturing kindness of a God who is not bent on condemning human beings, but on saving them.

Claret placed all of his institutions under the protection of the Heart of Mary, and relied on her not in some remote way, but as an active, maternal presence in their work. Mary, who was the first human being to receive the Good News in her Heart, as well as in her womb, evangelizes the Claretian. Her Heart is the furnace in which the apostle is formed (Aut., n.270). She sends the apostle out to evangelize, and she evangelizes through her apostle. This is her way of exercising her apostolic maternity in the Church. Claret liked to think of Mary as Queen of the Apostles, not only the original Twelve, but also all

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those modern apostles who, "gathered together in the Heart of Mary, form an awesome group" (RCLC, p.4).

The usual formula for entry into one of these lay groups fostered by Claret, consisted in an act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In fact, for many years, this was the formula for incorporation into the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

c) Lay Participation and Co-responsibility in Apostolates

It is here that Claret appears as a pioneer well in advance of his times, so that Pius XI could truly call him the great forerunner of Catholic Action. In his rules for the Popular Parish Lending Libraries, he insists that the laity, not priests, be totally responsible for running them, "since the latter are too busy with their own ministry, and do not have the opportunity to be involved with the townspeople, as laypersons do. Moreover, in these last times, it seems that *GOD WANTS LAY PEOPLE TO PLAY A GREAT ROLE IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS*" (Lib, p.18).

In the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine, Claret also insisted on the presence of laity on the parochial, regional and diocesan levels. Both on the parochial and diocesan Boards of the Fraternity, two of the voting members had to be laypersons (FCD II,1 and III, 1 and 3). In the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (1847), two of those voting on the Board of Directors had to be laypersons. In this group he also demanded the active participation of laywomen -- an idea which seemed altogether too daring to the Archbishop of Tarragona.

5. APOSTOLIC COMMITMENTS TO WHICH CLARET CALLED THE LAITY

The evangelizing activities in which Claret wanted the laity to be involved, coincide in great part with those which they are currently fulfilling in the Church. For Claret, the three great means of evangelization were prayer, witness, and the Word.

1) Prayer

In the Autobiography, speaking of the means of evangelization, Claret states: "The first means I have always employed and still do is prayer. In my opinion, this is the greatest means that can be used for the conversion of sinners" (Aut, n.264). He desired to pass this personal conviction on to all of his lay groups.

In the statutes of the Pious and Apostolic Union of Prayer, he states that their aim is to cooperate in the salvation of souls, "especially by prayer, which is the most universal, the easiest and most effective means" (BNA, p.133). He especially recommended Marian prayer, but with an essentially apostolic thrust.

2) Life Witness

Claret stressed that the witness of a good life was a most effective means of the apostolate and a guarantee of its authenticity. He told the members of the Academy of St. Michael: "You may do a poor job of communicating the love of God and virtue to your peers, if you yourselves are not on fire with both" (PA, p.7). And he also reminded them that they "should at all times live in a good and holy manner, keeping the holy laws of God and the Church, perfectly fulfilling the duties of their state in life, edifying others by their good example, and giving scandal to no one" (PA, p.42).

Those who joined the Pious and Apostolic union of Prayer were above all asked to strive for "an exact fulfillment of the duties of their state in life" (BNA, p.71). And members of the Confraternity of the Heart of Mary were told "not only to avoid all sin, but also to practice the virtues and lead an exemplary Christian life" (3NA, p.71). All laypersons belonging to these groups were asked to lead a serious prayer-life and receive the Eucharist frequently.

3) The Word

The most genuine expression of the apostolic charism of St. Anthony Mary Claret was "the service or ministry of the Word, in the style of the Apostles" (DC, n.10). Evangelization by the written word should be an outstanding characteristic, not only of Claretian priests and religious, but of Lay Claretians as well.

a) The Written Word

Claret considered the press as one of the most effective means of evangelization. He himself created a printing and publishing firm that had a tremendous influence on the evangelization of Spain during the second half of the 19th century. He asked that the

Academy of St. Michael maintain at least one printery and bookstore in each country (PA, p.16). To some extent, he considered books to be more effective than preachers. In his Memoir of the Academy of St. Michael (1866) he states:

"Good books are the best of counsellors, always firm in their dictates. They are never upset if we neglect them. If we question them again, they calmly and carefully give us the same answer. They are always ready to instruct us, they are unafraid of work, they are not out after honors. They candidly speak the truth, upbraid, beseech and warn us, in all patience and doctrine. Our self love is never aroused against a good book which, without rancor, opposes our feelings" (op. cit., p. 13).

Among the activities of the Academy of St. Michael, writing and distributing books held a privileged place. To bring good books to the widest possible public, Claret formed the Popular Parish Lending Libraries. Members of the Fraternity of the Most Holy Heart of Mary were asked "to write good books and articles or to have them written; to distribute good books and edifying prints; to gather all the alms they can to buy good books, and to give them away free" (FHM, p.13).

b) The Spoken Word

Claret wanted to involve the laity in a number of forms of the apostolate of the spoken Word. The following stand out in a special way:

- Catechesis

Claret mobilized a vast number of laypersons for evangelization through catechesis. He wanted parents and teachers to become genuine teachers of the children God had entrusted to them, and for this purpose he prepared carefully explained catechisms, and even drew illustrations for them. In 1849 he founded the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine in Spain, and established it the following year in Cuba. "Its aim is to promote the teaching of Christian Doctrine during Lent, on all Sundays and Holy Days, and on other days when possible; not only in church, but in factories, homes, or any other place that may be deemed suitable" (FCD, art. 12)

- Teaching Others How to Pray

Claret wanted laypersons not only to teach people their prayers, but also how to pray, to participate in the Eucharist and to make mental prayer (FHA, art.4). "Let them simply and briefly teach others a method for making mental prayer"(art.12).

He tells the `deaconesses' of the FHA "to teach the way of making mental prayer not only to young girls, but to older women as well" (art.19).

- Familiar Conversations

For Claret, this form of the apostolate of the Word supports that of the press. He counsels laypersons that, when they are distributing, lending or collecting books, they should take advantage of the situation to talk about the contents of the books (Memoir of the Academy, pp. 5 and 11). Good conversations "bring an immense benefit, not only to those who start them and keep them going, but also to those who hear them, since they enkindle the fire of God's love in both parties" (ibid., p.6).

4) Works of Charity and Social Advancement

St. Anthony Mary Claret had a deep concern for the poor and for their social advancement, although by present-day standards we can see that he could not altogether break through the somewhat paternalistic structures of his times.

In Cuba he started a number of quite modern agencies for social service (Aut, nn.562-568). He asked several of his lay institutions to become involved in work for the poor, the sick, the elderly, prisoners, orphans and widows (FHA, n.16). He tells the members of the Fraternity of the Heart of Mary to teach children and adults how to read (FHA, n.19), and asks its deaconesses to help in the work of rehabilitating "fallen women" (FHA, n.16).

6. DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LAY CLARETIAN LEGACY

All of the institutions created by Claret had to undergo two extremely harsh trials at almost the same time: the Spanish Revolution of 1868, and the death of their Founder in 1870. Nearly all of Claret's lay groups and associations perished in the test. The sole survivor was the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, which had been entrusted to the Congregation by Pontifical Rescript of October 19, 1860. This authorized the Congregation to establish the Archconfraternity wherever they preached. As late as Vatican II it still had a large membership, although its decline had already begun, and it went into rapid eclipse after the Council. This decline was due in large part to a failure to adopt the new theology of the laity, but also to the fact that the group remained a pious association without any serious commitment to the apostolate.

Nevertheless, during the 70 years following Claret's death, the Archconfraternity, and somewhat later the Cordimarian Youth, were practically the only institutionalized expressions in which some traits of the Claretian lay charism lingered on.

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In view of the sorry fate of most of the lay groups created by Father Claret, the following are observations of note:

- 1) Claret certainly did not bind any of the lay apostolic groups he founded, to the Claretian Missionary Congregation. For him, the Congregation was one of the many institutions which he, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, started in the Church.

At one time, near the end of his life, he considered organizing a sort of great army of evangelizers under the protection and influence of the Heart of Mary. This proposed group would have been made up of the Claretian Congregation, diocesan priests, and laypersons. Within this unrealized project, it seems that he intended the Congregation to play a unifying, coordinating role.

He regarded the Congregation as his most important and cherished work, but he did not confer on it any authority or patronage over his other works, except, to some extent, over the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary.

- 2) Nor did the Congregation, once consolidated, assume the responsibility for maintaining and furthering the other institutions created by its Founder.
- 3) It seems undeniable that the Congregation lost a very important aspect of its Claretian heritage by failing to mine the extremely rich vein of the lay apostolate which Claret had uncovered. The drive to multiply lay evangelizers is an outstanding trait of Claret's missionary genius, and we, his Missionary Sons, have missed a golden opportunity by not supporting the lay works of our Founder, and by not following his example in founding new works aimed at fostering lay evangelizers.

The Congregation, under the strong hand of Father Xifre, who governed it for 41 years (1858-1899), turned in upon itself and, concentrating on its own development, successfully devoted its efforts to recruiting religious Claretian evangelizers, while neglecting lay evangelizers in the process.

Chapter Two

THE CLARETIAN COLLABORATORS (1938-1967)

The Claretian lay charism has never disappeared from the Church, although nearly all the groups in which it was visibly expressed during Claret's lifetime collapsed after his death. But the charism did live on in many laypersons who received it with the missionary spirit of Claret, and they have worked as genuine evangelizers in the Church, usually alongside the Missionaries of the Claretian Congregation.

In a circular letter of December 18, 1897, Father Xifre spoke of two kinds of persons who had the Congregation's interests at heart and who were in some sense forerunners of the Claretian Collaborators: Protectors and Benefactors. "Protectors use their talents and influence on our behalf," while "Benefactors, through their material support help us to subsist" (AN 1897, p.229)

In the Claretian General Archives, there are lists of these persons, yet these lists do not mention many people who could most genuinely be called Lay Claretians, namely, all those lay men and women who were involved with us in direct evangelization. And there were and are many of them. We need only think of the many catechists who have worked in our missions. Before the creation of the Claretian Collaborators in 1938, Father Postius recalls that they were preceded by the catechetical ministry of Father Clotet, by the Claret Institute in Ovalle, Chile, by Father Ozamis' Academia Claret, by the Missionary Union, and by the Apostles of the Heart of Mary in Equatorial Guinea.

Toward the beginning of this century (1907), Father Damian Janariz established the educational association of the Infantes del Corazon de Maria (Children of the Heart of Mary) in Aranda, Spain. An outgrowth of this association was Cordimarian Youth (a Claretian version of the Catholic Action movement), which showed considerable vitality from 1940-1970, but has now practically disappeared.

The two works that best exemplify the Claretian lay spirit during this period are the Claretian Collaborators (1938) and Cordimarian Filiation (1943), although the latter was for some time listed as a branch of the Collaborators.

1. THE ASSOCIATION OF CLARETIAN COLLABORATORS

1) The Idea

The idea for the Claretian Collaborators arose as the Congregation took stock of its need to intensify one means of evangelization which its Founder had enthusiastically used, the press, the apostolate of the written Word.

Claret's fifth successor in the leadership of the Congregation, Father Nicolas Garcia, in a circular letter of July 16, 1938 on the apostolate of the press, announced the formation of the Association of Claretian Collaborators, whose provisional rule had been approved by the General Government on May 22, 1938. In this letter, Fr. Garcia stressed our need to be faithful in the task of preserving our Founder's heritage:

"Few apostolic men can compare with him in the modern apostolate of the pen. Perhaps no one has surpassed him... The apostolate of the press is something proper of us, something very much in keeping with the Congregation... We cannot set aside this characteristic of our Father" (AN 1938, pp. 393, 397) Along with this apostolic trait of Claret, another great characteristic of his missionary genius was also being revived, his drive to multiply lay agents of evangelization. In another circular letter, Fr. Garcia recalled the great army of evangelizers created by Claret --Nuns in their own Houses, the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, the Academy of St. Michael, the Religious Library, etc. In conclusion, he stated, "This marvelous apostolate is our lawful heritage" (An 1939, p.4).

2) Motivation

The motives that gave rise to the Association of Claretian Collaborators were not as unmixed as we would perhaps like to think. We turned to the laity with the Congregation's needs uppermost in our minds, rather than with the aim of fostering the lay vocation as such. Independently of our own needs, we should have been helping them discover and achieve their own vocation as lay evangelizers. This would have been more in line with the ideas of Claret.

"The Congregation, in order to exercise the ministry of the press on the scale demanded by our state as missionaries and heirs of Father Claret, requires that we have collaborators" (AN 1939, p.400). "The achievement of this apostolate calls for a large number of personnel and for material resources. Although there are thousands of us Missionaries, there are not enough of us to incarnate our Founder's ideal. We need to ask for the cooperation and collaboration of new helpers" (AN 1939, p.5).

Although the point of departure for establishing the Collaborators was a scarcity of Claretian Religious, there was at least a glimmer of a richer motive, of which Claret had been aware, and which Vatican II would later stress with great clarity:

The Claretian Missionaries, "by means of the Collaborators, will be able to gain access to circles which are sometimes off-limits to priests, and it is there that the Collaborators will be able to play an evangelizing role"(AN 1939, p.402).

3) Goals

The Goals of the Claretian Collaborators were quite subordinate to those of the Congregation. We might say that the Association was originally a work of the Congregation for the Congregation, rather than a work of our Founder, or even an attempt at recapturing Claret's model of a responsible and autonomous lay evangelizer.

"If they are well trained, they will be a wonderful means for spreading our thought (which will be that of God and the Church), of our reviews, our books, our vocation, our worship, our missions, our teaching centers, our ministries and our apostolic action" (AN 1939, p.401).

In Fr. Garcia's letter of January 25, 1940, to the directors of the Collaborators, he states that he is putting before them "the needs of the Congregation, which this year would be, first, an increase in our Postulancies and Novitiates as a source of missionaries to go throughout the world preaching the Holy Gospel, and second, the need to finish the great work of the Votive Temple" (AN 1940, p. 118). Note that these two objectives, together with sending aid to our missions, were the principal goals of the Claretian Collaborators.

4) Who Were the Claretian Collaborators?

Any person or group that was consecrated to the Heart of Mary, wanted to live according to the spirit of the Congregation and wished to collaborate in its apostolate, could be Claretian Collaborators (Statutes, 3.1). "Any person, of whatever age or profession, provided they are not positively unworthy, may belong to the work of the Claretian Collaborators" (1950 Rules, n.2, AN 1950, p.458).

The 1943 Statutes (art. 4) expressed the intention of restoring and incorporating into the Collaborators, the many works created by Claret, such as Diocesan Priests Living in Community, Nuns in their own Houses, the Academy of St. Michael, Popular Lending Libraries, etc. None of these works existed at the time and none was to be established later, except for Nuns in their own Houses, which at that very time was being organized

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in Plasencia, Spain -- although the General Government seems not to have been aware of the fact as they were drawing up the statutes for the Claretian Collaborators.

Although there were plans to incorporate the Collaborators in our works at the time they were being established, what actually happened was that their role was confined to providing economic aid for our seminaries and missions, and for the construction of the International Votive Temple in Rome, with no direct and personal commitment to works of evangelization.

In some parts of the Congregation, another group was considered to be genuine Collaborators were the catechists who worked with us. Fr. Ciuro wrote that the catechists in our missions in Equatorial Guinea were "an indispensable factor in the Christian organization of the people" and that they should be regarded as true Claretian Collaborators. Indeed, since 1930, there was a functioning school for the formation of catechists in Nkuefulan, founded by Fr. Gomez Marijuan. Within a few years this mission had lay catechists who, besides teaching catechism, prepared the people for the sacraments and led them in prayer on those Sundays when the Missionary could not get there to say Mass (AN 1940, p.346).

5) A Short Life

The Claretian Collaborators had, as such, a very brief life. Nowadays, one often hears people speak indiscriminately of Claretian Collaborators, Claretian Associates and Lay Claretians. I believe that they are all distinct groups, and that the Association of Claretian Collaborators no longer exists. Among the causes of their brief existences, I would single out the following:

- ! A lack of enthusiasm for this work, on the part of the Claretian Missionaries
- ! A lack of firm criteria for the selection and formation of members
- ! A failure to adapt to the new theology of the laity, stemming from Vatican II
- ! A lack of commitment to the work of direct evangelization.

Fr. Nicolas Garcia had already warned against some of these potential problems, "Our priests should not just think of multiplying numbers, but rather, of intensifying and active, sacrificing and apostolic spirit, so that we may form a compact body enlivened by one soul, one mind and one burning passion for the things of God" (AN 1945, p.68).

2. CORDIMARIAN FILIATION - FROM COLLABORATORS TO SECULAR INSTITUTE

Cordimarian Filiation began in 1943 in Plasencia, when three young women under the direction of Fr. Vicente Gomez chose as their rule of life St. Anthony Mary Claret's little

book, "Nuns in their own Houses." The following year there were already four centers of Cordimarian Filiation in the Claretian Province of Betica. In 1944, the four Claretian directors in Spain met to draw up the first statutes of Cordimarian Filiation. These were approved by the Claretian General Government on October 1, 1946, and it was noted in the text that Cordimarian Filiation formed a part of the worldwide organization of Claretian Collaborators (art.2). The 1951 statutes bear the subtitle, "Section of the Claretian Collaborators."

Cordimarian Filiation expanded rapidly. In his memo to the 1949 Claretian General Chapter, Fr. J.M. Rodriguez stated that Cordimarian Filiation already had 15 centers with 253 members. A little later, centers were established outside Spain in Portugal, Colombia, Argentina, the USA, Italy and the Dominican Republic. By 1959 there were 64 centers with 709 members and postulants.

The publication of Provida Mater Ecclesia (1947) authorized a new state of consecrated life in the Church -- Secular Institutes. A year later, Primo Feliciter, another motu proprio from the Holy See, stated that:

"Societies of clerics or laypersons who profess Christian perfection in the world, and who have, in a certain and full degree, the elements and requisites prescribed in the Apostolic Constitution, Provida Mater Ecclesia, cannot and should not, under any pretext, be left arbitrarily among common associations of the faithful. Rather, they must be separated and elevated to the condition and form of Secular Institutes, which corresponds perfectly with their character and needs" (Primo Feliciter, I).

Some Claretians believed that Cordimarian Filiation was clearly included in these norms of the Church, and that it ought to become a full-fledged Secular Institute. Others disagreed. Therefore the Holy See was asked for a clarification:

"The Sacred Congregation of Religious was officially asked whether it was possible to apply the norms of Provida Mater Ecclesia to Nuns in their own Houses, without detracting from our Holy Founder's idea. And the official, but sure and normative response was that, far from departing from Father Claret's idea, its reform was the most effective means of safeguarding that idea, giving it consistency and assuring its success, and that the will of the Church was clear on this point" (Circular by Fr. Peter Schweiger, Oct. 23, 1957, AN 1957, p.327).

Consequently, the reform of the Cordimarian Filiation statutes was undertaken, in order to conform them to the Church's dispositions concerning Secular Institutes. The new statutes represent Cordimarian Filiation as a Secular Institute (art.5), but also go on to describe it as a "work proper" of the Congregation (art.87).

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The process of autonomy that had begun did not please some Claretian Missionaries or even some groups of Cordimarian Filiation. This gave rise to divisions between Cordimarian Filiation groups who wanted to be faithful to Claret's idea by becoming a Secular Institute, and other Cordimarian Filiation groups who wanted to be faithful by remaining united to the Congregation as one of its "works proper." Both groups had support from Claretian Missionaries.

Fr. Peter Schweiger addressed this problem in a circular letter, October 23, 1957:

"It is clear to us that the changed course and new internal organization of the Association of Nuns in their own Houses has understandably produced some perplexity among us. It has been said that the new institution is no longer that of St. Anthony Mary Claret; that Cordimarian Filiation is not the same as Nuns in their own Houses; that the original members are disoriented and that the priests no longer feel like recruiting new members.

Once the Constitution Provida Mater Ecclesia was published, we did what our Founder would have done if he were alive and were leading the Nuns in their own Houses... Doubtless our Founder would not have had the slightest difficulty with adapting his institution fully to the guidelines of the Holy See. We know how deeply he was attuned to the Church in all things, and we know perfectly well what he would want us to do" (AN 1957, p.328).

Cordimarian Filiation continued its process of transformation. On December 8, 1959, the Sacred Congregation of Religious approved Cordimarian Filiation as a "work proper" of the Congregation, "in the style of a Secular Institute." The 1967 Cordimarian Filiation General Assembly definitively opted for juridical autonomy, in order to become a true Secular Institute, independent of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries.

On March 19, 1971, Arturo Tabera, CMF, Archbishop of Pamplona, recognized Cordimarian Filiation as a secular Institute of Diocesan Right. Two years later, Bishop Tabera, as Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes, signed the formal recognition of Cordimarian Filiation as a Secular Institute of Pontifical Right. With this, one group of Lay Claretians attained full autonomy from the Claretian Missionary Congregation. In the 1973 Cordimarian Filiation Statutes, there is no reference to dependence on the Congregation. There is only one reference to it, and that is within the broader circle of the Claretian Family,

"Cordimarian Filiation, as part of the Claretian Family, is nourished by its spirituality and shares its apostolic concerns. It maintains fraternal bonds with other Claretian institutions, especially the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (Statutes, art.4).

The 1979 Cordimarian Filiation General Assembly introduced a new reference to the Congregation in their Statutes:

"The bonds of fraternity which Cordimarian Filiation maintains with the Claretian Congregation, presupposes not only the living of a common spirit, but also mutual collaboration in apostolic tasks, in order to carry out fully the mission in the Church which they have received from their common Founder" (art.50).

Two words sum up the new relationship, autonomy and fraternity. Cordimarian Filiation is no longer viewed as a work of the Congregation, but as a work of Claret. They are two sister institutions which share the same father.

It was surely necessary for Cordimarian Filiation to pass through a period as a "work proper" of the Congregation. The 1973 Claretian General Chapter was keenly aware of the plight of those Cordimarian Filiation groups that wanted to remain bound to the Congregation as Collaborators. The Chapter Document on Claretian Associates was, in part, a response to the situation and aspirations of these groups.

Are the members of Cordimarian Filiation still lay Claretians? Of course. They are not religious, but are laywomen who want to live the evangelical counsels in the world and from a context in the world. They incarnate a special way of being Claretian -- the way of consecrated laity.

3. "WORKS PROPER" OF THE CONGREGATION

Collaborators, Cordimarian Filiation, and later, Claretian Associates, have all been described as "works proper" of the Congregation. We should clarify the scope of this term, because of its repercussions in the past and its implications for the plans of the Lay Claretians.

Fr. Nicolas Garcia, in a letter informing the Congregation of the Holy See's approval of Claretian Collaborators and the Consecration of Families to the Heart of Mary as "works proper" of the Congregation, explains the nature of this privilege:

"By the new rescript, these works become proper of our Congregation, united to it as an extension of its being. They do not become independent entities in the strict sense, but are always in company with the Congregation, its provinces, delegations and houses. They are like a Third Order, having their own life, but closely connected with the Congregation. These works are, so to speak, instruments and apostolic arms furnished us by Holy Mother Church" (AN 1945, p.64).

"Works proper" imply, thus, a certain liberty, communion and dependence:

- Liberty, on the part of the Congregation, which can establish them anywhere it exists, without need for authorization from the bishop;
- Communion with the Congregation, its spirit, charism and apostolic action;
- Dependence on the Congregation for their structure, government and apostolate.

These "works proper" do not have their own structure or anything resembling a vertebral column that would allow them to stand on their own two feet. They are like climbing vines that stand in virtue of their clinging to the Congregation. As far as their government is concerned, they depend totally on the superiors of the Congregation. All authority is vested in the Claretian Superior General and his delegates.

Thus, the Association of Collaborators "is governed by the Superior General in his own right and, in his name and delegation, by the major superiors of the Congregation" (AN 1945, p.85). "It shall have a general director, namely, the Superior General of the Congregation, as well as provincial and local directors who are all delegates of the Superior General. Nevertheless "each branch and section may have its board of directors, formed of Collaborators designated by the local superior" (AN 1950, p.459).

Fr. Garcia gave exaggerated importance to the role of the religious director of the Collaborators, "All works, great and small, depend on their directors and leaders. The director is the soul, life, impulse, heart and mind of these works" (AN 1950, p.117). This dependency extended even to the apostolate, "They should be good instruments of the apostolate of our Institute" (AN 1945, p.65) . "Their object is to aid this Congregation in its apostolic works" (AN 1950, p.558).

We can now see how this dependence figured with respect to Cordimarian Filiation. Its rules, as approved by the General Government in 1946, stated that :

"The general directorship belongs exclusively and totally to the Superior General of the Congregation" (n.19). "The provincial director will be named by the director general" (n.20). "The local director will be a priest of the Claretian Congregation, who will be responsible for the work in his locality, direct its meetings and approve its aspirants" (nn.22, 23).

A decree of the S.C. of Religious, dated August 10, 1959 and signed by Claretian Fathers Arcadico Larraona and Anastasio Gutierrez, recognized the following as "works proper" of the Congregation -- The Consecration of Families to the Heart of Mary, the Claretian Collaborators, the Children of the Heart of Mary, Cordimarian Youth, Cordimarian Filiation, the Pious Missionary Union of the Heart of Mary, and the Marian Union of Suffrages (AN 1959, p.149).

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Chapter Three

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1967

THE LAITY AS AGENTS OF EVANGELIZATION

The fundamental objective of the 1967 Chapter was the renewal of the Congregation and the adaptation of its Constitutions to the requirements of Vatican II. The Chapter adopted the Council's teaching on laity and applied it to laypersons connected with the Congregation through its Associations (See AP, 73).

The Council had stressed the laity's vocation to holiness, and their essential and irrevocable status as evangelizers in virtue of their belonging to the People of God, of their baptismal consecration, of their Confirmation and of their sharing in the Eucharist.

The guidelines of the 1967 Chapter concerning the laity, which were in some respects new, may be summed up in the following three points.

1) Above All, Laity as Agents of Evangelization

The aim of our work with the laity is to raise up and form evangelizers. Until now, we have viewed our lay associations as a field for our apostolate, as a place for evangelization. Our main objective was to develop the Christian life of their members, a life characterized by fidelity to moral norms and religious practices. We sometimes asked them to undertake certain apostolic commitments, but this dimension was not stressed.

Two tendencies surfaced during discussions at the Chapter. One group kept insisting that our activity "be mainly directed toward their spiritual awakening," while another group held that "the object of these associations was not so much our accomplishing our apostolate with them, as our enabling them to engage in apostolic action for which they themselves were mainly responsible" (Acta of the 1967 Chapter, p.145).

The 1967 Chapter Document on the Apostolate reflects the second point of view:

"The promotion of the lay apostolate by our Missionaries must aim at fostering the development of the special ecclesial vocation of laypersons themselves, and at augmenting the evangelizing work of the Church (AP, 75).

Speaking of youth ministry, the Chapter states that its goal is to help each individual to discover and respond to his or her vocation as an evangelizer, whether as a priest, a religious or a layperson (AP, 80).

As regards our Associations, the Chapter observed on their overall decline, and stated that the only solution for this was by way of living the Claretian charism -- apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary and commitment to an active apostolate (Minutes, p.146). "Aware of the general crisis in pious associations, the Chapter urges the Missionaries responsible for our associations to develop the spiritual heritage of these associations, and to get them involved in truly apostolic lay activity" (AP, 82).

2) Associate the Laity in our Apostolate

"One highly effective way to link the lay apostolate with the apostolate proper of our Institute, would be to use lay groups in our missionary campaigns in Christian countries, and to incorporate lay apostles, foreign-born or native, in our missions to non-Christians" (AP, 83). Here we can see that the Chapter has surpassed the older attitude that regarded the Collaborators almost exclusively as benefactors of the Congregation. What is now asked of them, above all, is a serious commitment to evangelization.

There is also an important change of attitude regarding our motives for drawing upon lay resources. We do not approach them to make up for our limitations, offering them those complementary or supplementary tasks that we ourselves cannot cover. Their missionary vocation does not arise from our limitations, but from their very being as Christians, and from their specifically lay vocation. We are no longer offering them tasks where they act as our substitutes; rather, we are offering them channels whereby, with full responsibility, they can develop their own Christian lay vocation.

3) The Claretian Lay Wing

The Chapter speaks of the need to form a Claretian lay wing made up of laypersons who feel an identity with the Claretian spirit (AP, 84). "The Congregation joyfully and gratefully accepts the aid of those laypersons, either singly or in groups, who voluntarily choose to serve the Church from within our charism and participating in the works proper of the Congregation" (AP, 77). "In response to the desires of many laypersons --former students, Claretian ex-seminarians, relatives of Claretians, and certain members of our

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associations-- the Chapter affirms, in principle, the opportuneness of a Claretian lay wing along the missionary lines of our charism, characterized by our consecration to the Heart of Mary, and even open to the model of a Secular Institute" (AP, 84).

What did the Chapter mean by a "Claretian lay wing"? And even in this case, what was the derivation of the adjective "Claretian"? Did it mean "of Claret," or "of the Claretian Congregation"? In other words, was it the Chapter's intention to create a lay wing of the Congregation, or to restore the lay wing of the Claretian Family which Claret had planned? Everything leads us to believe that the Chapter was speaking of a lay wing of the Congregation, one that would arise from a sharing of its own spirit and mission with groups of laypersons. The Chapter speaks of laypersons who are to "serve the Church from within our charism" (AP, 77).

One more proof that the 1967 Chapter was thinking of a lay wing of the Claretian Congregation, is the fact that the Constitutions that were later drawn up along this Chapter's guidelines devote a whole chapter to the "Associates of the Congregation." For the first time in the history of our constitutional texts, the Constitutions include a chapter dedicated to the laity. Moreover, this chapter is located in the second part of the Constitutions, which deals with "The Members of the Congregation." This would lead us to believe that these Associates were considered as members of the Congregation. And this is in fact the way in which some religious and laity have understood the matter, as we shall see when we come to deal with the Congress in Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter Four

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1973: THE CLARETIAN ASSOCIATES

In the period immediately preceding the 1973 Chapter, one of the most important sections of the Claretian Collaborators, Cordimarian Filiation, achieved its autonomy. Many persons, even whole groups, refused to continue belonging to a Cordimarian Filiation that was no longer a "work proper" of the Congregation. The Congregation had to look to the welfare of these lay groups, precisely because they wanted to be bound more closely to the Congregation. The General Chapter had to say something to these groups, and it had to think about offering them some sort of organization.

At the same time, especially in Latin America, groups of associates of a quite different character were being formed. These groups were not made up simply of single women with private vows, but of married couples and single people of both sexes focused around some work of the Congregation and directly committed to the apostolate. The Chapter also had to say something to these groups.

In January, 1972, a number of Latin American Claretian Provincials met in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) to discuss, among other topics, that of Claretian associates. The document prepared at this meeting served as a basis for the Chapter Document on Associates which in some points literally reproduces the Belo Horizonte document.

The Congregation's thinking about Associates at this time, is reflected in three official documents coming directly or indirectly out of the 1973 General Chapter:

- The 1973 Chapter Document on "The Associates of the Congregation";
- Ch.12, Part II of the Constitutions, worked out by the General Chapter;
- The Directory (nn. 250-255) drawn up by a post-chapter commission, and published in 1975.

We are now going to sum up this thinking in four points. I repeat that this was the thinking of the Congregation, not of the Associates, since the latter did not participate in the development of the theme, nor did they have any input into the Chapter.

1. WHO IS, OR CAN BE, A CLARETIAN ASSOCIATE?

In the Spanish version of the 1973 Constitutions, we read that:

"There are others who are also incorporated in the Congregation, better to serve the whole Church by sharing the same spirit and participating in the same apostolic mission" (n.164). "Priests, deacons, and lay men and women may be Associates of our Congregation, whether they are evangelically professed or are following their vocation in the world" (n.165).

The General Chapter Document on Associates states simply that:

"Those of the clergy and laity who share in the Claretian charism and are committed permanently, in varying degrees, to live that charism in communion with the Congregation of Missionaries, are considered to be Claretian Associates (AS, 4.1).

The Directory, which contains the norms of Canon Law applied to specifics of the Claretian Missionaries, adopts the last cited paragraph almost literally, adding the words, "and are committed to work toward common objectives" with the Congregation.

The Chapter speaks of various classes of Associates, distinguishing them according to their varying degrees of commitment. Thus, it distinguishes:

- a. Married couples;
- b. Single persons without vows or promises;
- c. "Evangelically committed persons," including those with vows.

As a criterion, "according to their varying degrees of commitment," is not a very clear one. Commitment to whom? Moreover, it would seem that the various classes are ranked according to their degree of closeness to a mode of "evangelical" (= religious) life. In this case, it would be a very poor criterion, since there is no good reason why a lay vocation should imitate the religious life.

The phrase "evangelically committed" as applied to only one of these classes is not a happy choice, since it would lead us to think that only they had an evangelical commitment, and that they formed an ideal to which all Associates ought to aspire. This idea is not very far from the 1967 Chapter's statement on the "opportuneness of a Claretian lay wing...open to the model of a Secular Institute" (AP, 84). It is quite obvious, however, that married couples and single persons without vows can be evangelically committed just as truly as these others.

Perhaps this threefold classification of Associates was meant as a word of esteem and affirmation for the groups of consecrated members who separated from Cordimarian Filiation.

The 1975 Directory seems to hold this same attitude when it states:

"Special attention will be given to those groups of Associates who live, in the world and from a context in the world, the evangelical dimension which our Holy Founder conceived of in his early project" (Dir., n.254).

As regards these statements, we should note that not all of the lay apostolic projects of Claret involved living "the evangelical dimension" (expressed in vows). Quite the contrary: only Nuns in their own Houses involved a consecration of this sort, and this was certainly not the only project for the lay apostolate planned by Claret.

In the 1973 Chapter Documents, in the Directory, and even in the General Statutes issued in 1976, one can note a certain preference for Claretian Associates who have made some sort of "consecration."

2. TWO MAIN TRAITS OF A CLARETIAN ASSOCIATE

Summing up the teaching of the 1973 Chapter Document on Associates, of the 1973 Constitutions, and of the 1975 Directory, we would say that Claretian Associates are characterized by the following traits:

a) They share the same Charism and Mission as the Congregation does

"They share its missionary charism" (Dir., n.250). "They share the same spirit and participate in the same apostolic mission"(CC 1973, n.164). Precisely because they have the same charism, spirit and mission as the Congregation does, they tend to be regarded as a prolongation of the Congregation and in some sense as members of it. According to this way of thinking, in order to perform their apostolic works, Associates would have to receive their mission from the superiors of the Congregation.

b) They live their Charism and fulfill their Mission in communion with the Congregation

"They are committed permanently, in varying degrees, to live this charism in communion with the Congregation...to work toward common objectives" (Dir, n.250). According to

this, association with the Congregation, far from being something accidental, is quite essential to this lay movement, and it must be expressed in some sort of stable and mutually acknowledged commitment.

c) Apostolic Spirit

No one can properly be termed a "Claretian" unless he or she has a missionary spirit and feels impelled, like Claret, by the love of Christ (See CC 1973, n.166; Dir., n.251; AS, n.4, 2a).

d) Life Witness "in the style of the Apostles" (Dir., n.251)

"All of which presupposes a following of Christ similar to that undertaken by the first Apostles" (AS, n.4, 2b).

e) Direct or Indirect dedication to the missionary service of the Word

In doing so, they should use all apt means, such as a keen sensitivity to what is most urgent, timely and effective (See AS 4,2c; Dir., n.251).

f) Apostolic Consecration to the Heart of Mary

The Heart of Mary is the "forge" in which a religious or lay Claretian is shaped as a missionary. She evangelizes us, and through us, she evangelizes others (See CC 1973, n. 166, Dir., n.251; AS 4,2d)

g) Living all of these traits in a lay, secular way

This is the aspect which most clearly characterizes Associates as distinct from Claretian religious.

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CONGREGATION

The relationship between Associates and the Congregation, during the period between the 1973 and 1979 General Chapters, is characterized more by a model of communion-with-dependence, rather than a model of autonomy-and-communion.

a) Communion with the Congregation

Communion with the Congregation is strongly stressed in all official documents. The 1973 Constitutions state that Associates "are united with us in proclaiming the Good News" (n.165), and "share our spirit and participate in the same mission" (n. 164).

b) Tension between Autonomy and Dependence

The 1973 Chapter Document on Associates defends a considerable degree of autonomy for Associates, which marks a great change from earlier positions. It calls for co-responsibility of Associates with the Congregation, and teamwork in reviewing, programming and executing their work in common (AS 4.3). It goes on to state that:

"Groups of Claretian Associates will enjoy total autonomy" (5.1). "The discipline or organization needed by these groups should arise within them, and not be imposed by the Congregation" (5.2). The Congregation should not direct them, but simply help them, "so that they may arrive at their own maturity (5.1). It should offer them its services in accord with their needs for reformation and orientation (5.3).

Along these same lines, the Open Letter of the 1973 General Chapter states that:

"The Congregation should give them an efficacious testimony of fraternity in the Claretian spirit by aiding them in their spiritual formation, by encouraging them, by assisting them in the development of their apostolates, etc." (OL n.36).

In contrast, the Directory, which has more juridical weight than the document on the Associates of the Congregation at the Chapter of 1973, is clearly on the side of dependence. The same is true of the 1973 Constitutions, which make it understood that the Associates must be governed by the statutes of our "works proper," as approved by the Holy See in 1943 -- which means total dependence (See CC1973, n.168).

The Claretian Directory is even more explicit:

"Since the Associates are an embodiment of the work proper of the Claretian collaborators, approved by the Holy See, then their linkage, even on a juridical level, to the Congregation, is recognized through its major superiors" (Dir, n.253).

This would put things back to the situation of dependence of 1943, when associates were considered as "instruments of our apostolate," completely controlled by us. On this point, certainly, the Directory is far out of line with the teaching of Vatican II on the laity.

This tension between autonomy and dependence continued until the 1979 General Chapter.

4. ORGANIZATION

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From 1973 to 1979, the Congregation attempted to work out a sort of organization common to all groups of Associates. The 1975 Directory mentioned the need of establishing for the Associates "fitting norms of life, worked out in dialogue with them" (n.252).

The General Prefecture of Religious Life drew up some statutes which it sent for correction to provincial delegates and to groups of Associates. These statutes came in for a good deal of criticism, for two fundamental reasons: 1) because they only referred to Associates with "evangelical commitments," as if that were the ideal type of Associate; 2) because they were rooted in the Constitutions of the Claretian Missionaries and suffered from a certain imitationism of the religious life. With these corrections to the Provisional Statutes in mind, the General Government drafted the "Fundamental General Statutes for Claretian Associates" (An 1976, pp. 300-309). These statutes aimed at forming a common ground within which each group could shape its own statutes, "which must be approved, after respectful dialogue, by the Claretian Superior General" (n.19c). They continue to represent the Claretian Associates as a "work proper" of the Congregation:

"Nevertheless, since these 'Claretian Associates' belong to the 'work proper' of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries, according to the norms of the Holy See, they depend, in the ultimate instance, and without prejudice to the autonomy due them, to the Superior General of the aforesaid Congregation and his Delegates, as the symbol and bond of union, and as the source of their apostolate" (AN 1976, p. 304).

After this, four groups of 'evangelically committed' Associates presented their own statutes for the Superior General's approval, which he granted, with a few emendations, on the following dates: 2/2/77, Missionary Daughters of the Imm. Heart of Mary (Brazil); 3/19/78, Claretian Women Associates, Evangelically Committed to the Service of Evangelization through the Word (Colombia); 8/22/78, Claretian Missionary Laywomen (Mexico); 10/24/78, Claretian Fraternity (Italy). All of these particular statutes recognize their group as a 'work proper' of the Congregation; hence, they depend on the Superior General and his Delegates. The General Assembly of each group is presided over by the Superior General or his Delegate, with voice and vote. The Superior General confirms the election of the Coordinator (Mexico). If any internal problems arise, members always have the right of recourse to the Superior General or to the Provincial Superior (Mexico and Colombia).

5. THE 1976 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CLARETIAN CONGREGATION

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The Claretian General Assembly held in Costa Rica from November 15 to December 3, 1976, also dwelt on the theme of the Claretian Associates, especially in connection with the missions (See AN 1976, pp. 460-463).

The Assembly urged Provinces to create a program for promoting Associates, and asked that a greater effort be made to send laity to our Missions, after previously providing them with a careful preparation for their work.

Neither of these recommendations has received the immediate support that might have been expected. However, programs for Lay Missionaries have begun in several provinces and have been functioning successfully for several years (1994). Some of these programs have extensive formation and preparation before leaving for the mission to which they are assigned. Commitments differ from province to province. The Lay Missionaries are usually a part of the mission pastoral plan. The laity usually work in a collaborative participative way with the Claretians.

Chapter Five

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AT RIO DE JANEIRO

The First International Congress of Claretian Associates was held in Rio de Janeiro from April 17 to 21, 1979. Eighty Claretians attended, one-third of them religious and two-thirds laity. The laity represented groups from a dozen countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, England, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela.

The study areas proposed for small group and full session discussion were as follows:

- 1.- The Charism and mission of the Claretian Associates.
- 2.- New Lay Ministries.
- 3.- Personal Promises and Integration of Lay Associates into the Claretian Congregation.
- 4.- Promotion of Lay Associates through the Formation of Basic Communities and through the Exercise of "New Ministries."
- 5.- Organization and Ecclesial Interrelation Among Groups.
- 6.- Planning with a View to the Future, and to the Upcoming General Chapter.

As representative expressions of the predominant ideas at the Congress, the following remarks are limited to the inaugural address by the Claretian Superior General, and the final Conclusions of the Congress.

1. ADDRESS BY SUPERIOR GENERAL

Father Antonio Leghisa, then Superior General of the Congregation, opened the Congress with an important address which awakened the interest and enthusiasm of all present. Father Leghisa summed up the relationships that should exist between the Associates and the Congregation, as well as some of the aspirations of both parties. I will now summarize some of the ideas expressed in this address.

a) The Associates are Necessary for the Congregation

They are necessary for two reasons -- because they complete its very being, and because they complete its apostolic activity.

- 1) They are necessary because Claretian Religious are few, "and we alone can not carry out our mission. There are fewer vocations to the priesthood and brotherhood in the Church, yet there are more fronts to work on" (13).

2) They are necessary because there are places and social strata where we as religious cannot go. "There are areas which are inaccessible to us as priests and brothers... and these too must be illumined and enriched by the Claretian charism" (13).

3) The Congregation needs them in order to develop its own charism to the full. "I don't know if it is too daring to state that the Congregation cannot fulfill its evangelizing charism without your collaboration" (15). They are necessary "in order to live our charism more theologically...and because our charism is more complete because of their collaboration" (3). "It has been said that the Associates have been chosen by the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill the mission of Claret, which has been entrusted to the Congregation" (33).

b) The Associates are Part of the Congregation and Need to be Integrated

- They are born of the Congregation as the "fruit of the ecclesial feeling of the Claretian Congregation" (10).
- They are "in a sense, members of the Congregation" (11).
- They participate in our charism and "are very Claretian, some of them perhaps more so than we who have made a profession of Claretianism" (1).
- "Let us keep this idea clearly before us, Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of our charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters" (34). (Charism, mission, sons and daughter!)
- Hence their integration must be total, "Their primary integration is that which comes with participation in the same charism and mission of the Congregation, achieved by some through their religious vocation and by others as laypersons" (36).
- If we are here at all, it is because we want the Claretian Associates to have their voice and their determination in the Congregation, insofar as that is possible" (29).

c) Aspirations of the Associates

"What they want of the Congregation, according to what they have told me, is:

- Greater recognition and interest, and for the Congregation to devote more time to these works.

- To share the Congregation's apostolic unrest.
- A better Claretian, Apostolic and Cordimarian formation.
- To be, not "alongside," but "in" the Congregation, perfectly integrated.
- That our communities open to them our doors, our fraternity, our spirit.
- To share in our missionary spirituality, centered in evangelization.
- Greater involvement in the local Church.
- To be called in on our local, provincial and general planning.
- To participate in our courses of continuing formation, in order to be, in truth, more Claretian.

2. CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AT RIO

The dominant idea behind all the conclusions worked out by the Congress at Rio is this: Religious and Lay Claretians have one and the same charism and mission to fulfill in the Church, and must hence bend their efforts toward a greater **communion, integration and co-responsibility**. These three words sum up perfectly the central theme of the Conclusions. Along with this theme, we may also point out others that were less prominent.

a) The Basic Idea

The Congress starts out from the principle that Claretian Religious and Claretian Associates have one and the same charism and mission, transmitted through one and the same person, St. Anthony Mary Claret. Some live this charism-mission in the context of the religious state and others live it in the context of the lay state.

"Mutual acceptance and coming together should grow out of a joint search for and accomplishment of our mission" (1.2). "In order to assure unity, Lay Claretians should depend in the last instance on the Superior General, who is the symbol of unity in our charism and mission" (6.7). "Communion in our common mission should be established on the various levels of prayer, renewal, action and government" (2.2).

b) The Dominant Idea: Communion, Integration, Co-responsibility

It came to light that relations between the Congregation and the Associates were often characterized by ignorance and lack of interest. Groups of Associates have been more closely bound to individual Claretians, than to communities, provinces or the Congregation as such. This situation must be overcome. For this reason, the Conclusions of the Congress stress taking measures to bring about a change in the relationships between the Congregation and the Associates.

1) Measures for Obtaining Greater Integration and Co-responsibility

In the first place, beginning and continuing formation:

- "Candidates for the Claretian Congregation should be formed in a spirit of co-responsibility with the laity" (3.1).
- "Joint continuing formation of religious and lay Claretians should be favored: also contact at Provincial Assemblies, short courses in formation, retreats and shared get-togethers, fraternal welcome, joint planning, mutual aid..." (3.2).
- "Lay Claretians should be informed of the dates for provincial and general visitations, sufficiently in advance to avail themselves of these opportunities for encounters between the laity and the Congregation" (2.6).
- "Claretian feasts should be celebrated in common" (2.4).
- "General and Provincial Bulletins and, in general, all Claretian publications concerning them, should reach the Associates. Publications by the Associates should likewise reach the Congregation" (8.1).

2) How Far Should This Integration Go?

- "Without prejudice to the identity and autonomy of either group, there should be joint pastoral planning" (4.2).
- "It is suitable, when warranted, for Lay Claretians to take part in pastoral and provincial councils" (4.5).
- "Lay Claretians may be represented at Chapters of the Congregation in some manner. It is suggested that competent bodies in the Congregation study channels to enable such sharing in future Chapters, even with voice and vote, in matters pertaining to the laity" (5.2).

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- "Provinces and local communities of the Congregation should be responsibly open to active mutual sharing, especially in what concerns the discernment and achieving of our common mission" (2.3).
- "Joint pastoral planning...demands full co-responsibility in activities that are jointly carried out by religious and lay Claretians" (4.3).
- Finally, there should be a certain sharing of goods. "Starting from the demands of the Gospel, we should study the feasibility of a sharing of goods between the Associates and the Congregation (9.1). "In every case, there should be an availability for mutual aid" (9.2).

Underlying these aspirations for participation and co-responsibility within the proper spheres of the Claretian Congregation, such as councils, provincial and general chapters, is the idea that Associates are part of the Congregation. The implication is, then, that they are not properly "associates" --they are not "alongside"-- but rather, "in" the Congregation.

3) Other Themes in the Conclusions

a. Interrelation and Communication

An effort should be made to interrelate the different groups of Claretian Associates by creating a minimal organization which will unite them and foster the creation of channels for encounter and communication.

- "Charismatic groups still need some sort of structuring, however minimal, in order to avoid subjective interpretations of their charism, or a dispersal of energies" (5.1).
- "There must be some minimal structure and bonds that identify all groups. Upon this structure, the distinguishing features of each group can be added" (6.1).
- "A secretariat for matters relating to Lay Claretians should be established in the Congregation" (5.3).
- "Annual regional meetings of Lay Claretians should be fostered" (2.5). "Zonal, regional and national encounters should be programmed annually" (8.2).

- "As far as possible, Lay Claretians should have media of communication, and in each group a special delegate for communications should be designated" (8.3).

b. Formation

Some attention was paid --although not enough, considering the need for it-- to formation. Some subject matters for formation were suggested. "Every formation program should include these key points: charism, mission and Claretian spirituality"(3.5). "Meetings for lay formation should be fostered on all levels" (3.3). "Joint continuing formation between religious and lay Claretians should be favored" (3.2).

c. Name

The designation used for lay Claretians is not an arbitrary matter: names should indicate content and meaning. Mention was made of "sympathizers...collaborators... Claretian missionary fraternity...lay Claretians." The Congress manifested its preference for the designation, "Lay Claretians," although in its conclusions, it sometimes refers to "Associates."

3. ACCORDING TO RIO, WHO AND WHAT ARE THE LAY CLARETIANS?

Throughout its 50 conclusions, there is no clear description of what a Lay Claretian is. This was one of the shortcomings of the Congress. There was one presentation on this theme at the beginning of the Congress, but it did not have sufficient influence on the conclusions.

- *"We believe that the apostolic traits distinguishing a Lay Claretian are, among others: having a vision of the reality from within which one is starting; being creative and critical; living out one's political commitment; making one's own, Christ's option for the poor" (4.7).*

But this is a very partial list, and it lacks what one might call more specifically Claretian traits -- evangelization in the style of the Apostles, the service of the Word, apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary, etc. It is true that in speaking of the designation "Lay Claretians," it was stated in passing that "a Lay Claretian is one who is living the charism (= is involved in a Claretian work), either singly or in a group. The Lay Claretian shares in the charism and mission by working in a well defined commitment" (7.1b).

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A chronicler of the Congress wrote: "The final impression, though not necessarily a unanimous one, is that there was a lack of theological light and depth. Some felt that there was not enough in-depth study of the theological identity of the Lay Claretian. Paths for missionary spirituality and action were not traced out, nor were any concrete options taken with respect to the present reality of the Church and the world. Everything focused on the clarification of nomenclature, organization, bonds and the relationship between religious and lay Claretians" (T. Cabestrero).

The short final letter from the participants to their brothers and sisters in the greater Claretian Family, provides a richer vision of what a Lay Claretian is, by summing up Fr. Viñas' contribution on the charism-mission of the Lay Claretian:

"A Lay Claretian is a baptized person in whom the Holy Spirit unfolds and intensifies the prophetic being he or she received in Baptism, through a communion of charism with St. Anthony Mary Claret. The Spirit makes such a person sensitive to the urgent needs of the Church and the world, causes him or her to search for the most opportune Gospel responses to these needs, and stirs up his or her creativity in order to transmit these responses through the most effective means. Such a person embraces Christ's option for the poor. Such a person seeks to enter, with his or her gifts, into the Claretian mission in the Church, in co-responsibility with the Congregation."

Although the Congress did not go deeply enough into some themes of great importance for Lay Claretians, it was a positive achievement and an enthusiastic encounter between brothers and sisters who had previously not known each other. The Congress of Rio gave an impulse to the Claretian lay movement and to the growth of the great Claretian Family.

Obviously, its conclusions needed substantial qualifications, but these were accomplished in part at the 1979 General Chapter, and continued to be improved in the calm of future reflections.

Chapter Six

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1979:

THE LAY CLARETIANS

The topic of the Associates was something of a news item from the outset, since the General Government sent an advance notice inviting four Associates to attend the General Chapter, although it left it up to the Chapter members to actually approve their attendance after the Chapter had opened. Some Chapter members felt that this put some pressure on the Chapter's freedom, since the Associates had already been invited and were on their way to Rome. Others, on the contrary, viewed the General Government's gesture as a good response to the aspirations recently expressed by the Associates at the Congress in Rio. Still others felt that there was no reason for this privileged treatment, since the right thing to do would have been to invite the Associates to the "Claretian Family Day," just like all the other institutions related to St. Anthony Mary Claret.

Beneath this contrasting facade of opinions, there were different notions of what Lay Claretians should be and how they were connected with the Congregation. For some, they were a part of the Congregation and should therefore participate in the Chapter, even with voice and vote. For others, in contrast, the Associates were just one more institution among many in the Claretian Family.

"One Chapter member noted that the Claretian spirit is multiform, and is to be found in the Claretian Missionaries, in Cordimarian Filiation, in the Claretian Associates and in the Claretian Missionary Sisters. If we wanted to have a focus for common dialogue, the proper thing to do would be to convoke an assembly of all those who share this Claretian Spirit. We, however, are gathered here only as members of the Claretian Congregation, and it does not seem right for other groups to take part.

"Other Chapter members responded that, although other Claretian groups have their own independent and well-defined existence, the Claretian Lay Associates are, on the one hand, bound to us in a special way without their own autonomy and, on the other hand, are mentioned in our Constitutions" (Minutes, p.10).

The Associates were allowed to attend some sessions of the Chapter, but only to inform it concerning the groups they represented, and to deliver the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio de Janeiro. It was also agreed that they might participate in "the discussion of those

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aspects of our Claretian mission which directly affect them, but not in our decisions on such themes" (Minutes, p.31).

In fact, the Associates intervened only twice in the Chapter Hall. Once, to inform the Chapter about their groups (Minutes, p.77), and a second time, to present the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio (Minutes, p.93). They were also present at the "Claretian Family Day," together with the other institutions related to St. Anthony Mary Claret.

The presentation of the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio was met with a clear division of opinions. Some felt that the Conclusions were totally out of focus, since they were based on the assumption that the laypersons in question formed part of the Congregation. Others, in contrast, felt that they were precisely on target, and held that the Chapter should respond to them affirmatively. Finally, it was decided to send a message of encouragement to the Lay Claretians, a message that would also be an overall response to their aspirations. Even on this, not all the Chapter members were agreed, as we read in the Acta of the Chapter: "It was questioned whether the message should be addressed to the Lay Claretians alone, or to the whole Claretian Family, with special mention of the Lay Claretians" (Minutes, p.122).

Some Chapter members or Associates may have viewed these discussions as displaying a degree of animosity against the Lay Claretian movement. I do not believe that there was any such animosity, but simply a genuine desire to do a thorough job of clarifying the nature of the Associates and the kind of bonds that should exist between them and the Congregation. The thought of the 19th General Chapter concerning Lay Claretians is expressed in three documents:

- The Chapter's Message to Lay Claretians Throughout the World;
- The Constitutions of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries;
- The Mission of the Claretian Today.

1. CHAPTER MESSAGE TO LAY CLARETIANS THROUGHOUT WORLD

This message, drawn up by a small commission, was minutely discussed on the floor of the Chapter. Its final draft was approved by a vote of 63 pro and 8 con.

The discussion began on the subject of how to designate this lay movement, keeping in mind that it was not a matter of empty names, but of content. Some wanted to abandon earlier designations and to refer to all its members in the future simply as "Lay Claretians." Others wanted to continue with the title of "Claretian Associates. In the voting, 39 were for "Lay Claretians," while 27 favored "Claretian Associates" (Minutes,

p.124). Even so, the Lay Claretians were still referred to here and there in the document as "Associates."

This document, written in a truly encouraging and supportive style, is rich in doctrine and notably innovative in respect to previous conceptions of the Lay Claretians. In what follows, we shall attempt to focus on some of the highlights of the document.

a) A Different Way of being Claretian

We both have a common Father, but a distinct charism, a different way of being Claretians. This is perhaps the greatest change of posture. Up to the 1979 Chapter, it had generally been held that we and the Associates shared the same charism and mission, and a phrase often used was "our common mission." In this document there is an important change. The Associates are no longer considered to be a "work proper" of the Congregation:

"Something common unites us. The same person who is at the origin of our vocation is also at the origin of your vocation, and he shapes both. We have a different form of being Claretians, and yet there is a force that makes us converge, with our own special gifts, in building up the Church as Claret wished it to be done, both through his Missionaries and through laypersons, by different forms of service to the Gospel. From this convergence of different gifts, there results a true Claretian communion" (n.3).

The preceding paragraph and other passages in the document recognize that the Lay Claretians have their own being and their own charism.

"We all know that the work of Claret goes beyond our own frontiers. By the grace of God, there are other Claretian groups whose intercommunion is required by the Claretian vocation. Your riches are our riches. Your power is the expression of the sweeping vitality of Claret's spiritual being. Both of us must always respect our distinctiveness, your special charism, your own mission as laypersons in all the rigor of your secularity" (n.7).

No longer is it held, as it was before the Chapter, that the Lay Claretians are a "work proper" of the Congregation, born of the Congregation. Now it is stated that:

"We rejoice that you are a reality in the world. We extend this rejoicing even to the point of acknowledging your existence as something that is not an outgrowth of our own particular form of being Claretians, although it indeed comes from Claret the evangelizer, who chose you as servants of the Gospel, from your context in the world,

with his apostolic spirit, with his commitment to proclaim the Word and with his love for Mary" (n.4).

Even though the expression "works proper" does occur in one paragraph (n.5), it is obviously only a convenient label for facilitating procedural steps toward the formation of groups of Lay Claretians. This was clarified in the Acta of the Chapter: "This was only an official expression used for juridical and official effects and purposes" (Minutes, p.122).

b) A New Evaluation of what being a Lay Claretian Means

The Congregation promoted Collaborators and Associates more to make up for the scarcity of religious vocations, than for the discovery of the specifically lay Claretian vocation. In the "Message," a quite different evaluation of Lay Claretians appears:

"Our Congregation values you for your vocation considered in itself... Hence, the reason for the support that we as a Congregation offer the Lay Claretian vocation, can never be our own limited numbers or the need for collaborators in our works. Above and beyond these conditions of ours, is your very own being, which does not depend on our anxieties or limitations. It transcends all of these, just as Claret's charism does" (n.10).

c) Relationship with the Claretian Family

The "Message" makes it clear that the Lay Claretians do not form part of the Claretian Family together with the Congregation of Missionaries, as a sort of lay appendage to the latter. Rather, they enter the Family in their own right, since they are an institution having Claret as their Father. Thus it is said that they come "marching into history on their own power, alongside those other Claretian groups that have already been purified, strengthened and in a sense consecrated, by history" (n.6).

The charism of Claret transcends each of the Claretian institutions, all of which today form the Great Claretian Family. "Your particular being will fill out the total being of Claret, the source and inspiration of us all" (n.12).

d) Relationships with the Congregation of Missionaries

Here, too, the "Message represents an important change of focus. The Lay Claretians no longer appear in a relation of dependence on the Congregation. Although they are once referred to as a "work proper" of the Congregation, we have already explained the quite

different meaning that this expression had prior to the 1979 Chapter. According to the "Message," our relationships must now be characterized by:

- ! fraternity, without any note of paternalism, since Lay Claretians are not Sons of the Congregation, but sons and daughters of Claret;
- ! collaboration in evangelization, "working together, out of our respective gifts, on the great evangelizing project of Claret" (n.5).

The Congregation is happy to be associated with Lay Claretians in its works of evangelization:

"We wish to see you at our side on all evangelizing fronts to which the Church has missioned us... And with your association, our apostolic work will be fittingly complemented and strengthened" (n.12).

- ! a commitment of aid. Finally, the Congregation commits itself to aid the Lay Claretians, not as a part or extension of the Congregation, but as the most recent and least developed shoot of the Claretian Family, which needs the most help from already consolidated Claretian institutions.

"The reason for showing more interest in this group is that they are newborn and need more care" (Minutes, p.122). "It should be remembered that the Congregation has always helped other Claretian groups in their initial stages or in periods of special need. This seems to be the historical moment of the Lay Claretians" (Minutes, p.123).

For its own part, the "message" states:

"Our Congregation believes that out of fidelity to its own Founder, and within the measure of its mission in the Church, it could do no less than favor the rise of your groups" (n.6).

"We would like our voice to find an echo among all Claretians in the world, on all levels of government, so that as a general, provincial and local community, we might offer a response to the urgent needs of your beginning, formation and development" (n.13).

e) Some Wise Advice

Finally, the "Message" counsels Lay Claretian groups not to tie themselves to one member or just a few members of the Congregation, because of the obvious dangers inherent in such a course:

"Do not cling to, or pin all your hopes on, the support of a single individual or small group, since they are necessarily subject to limitations of time and space... Always remain open to the fullness of God's plan in Claret, a plan that is fulfilled in universality" (n.14).

2. THE LAY CLARETIANS IN THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CONGREGATION

The definitive text of the Constitutions, approved by the 1979 General Chapter, also offers some important innovations with regard to Lay Claretians. The most glaring of these is that they are not mentioned as such in the text. In the new text, the chapter on "Associates of the Congregation," which was introduced after the 1967 Chapter, has disappeared. This should not be taken as a negative statement. Rather, it indicates a higher esteem for the lay vocation.

In the new Constitutions, there are two references of a general nature, applicable not only to the Lay Claretians, but also to other institutions that make up the Claretian Family. This is not intended as a detraction from the importance of the Lay Claretians, but puts them on an equal footing with the other, historically more consolidated Claretian groups. Neither is it intended to distance them from the Congregation, but simply to give them the autonomy which is their due, thus replacing any paternalistic relationships with truly fraternal ones. The following are the two references in the new Constitutions:

"Others, too, have received the same apostolic spirit, and in varying ways live in some kind of communion with our Congregation" (n.48).

"If an individual or group is so imbued with the missionary spirit that they wish to collaborate with us, then we should be glad in the Lord to make them associates in our apostolate" (n.48).

3. THE LAY CLARETIANS IN THE MISSION OF THE CLARETIAN TODAY

The General Chapter Document, The Mission of the Claretian Today (MCT), insists in several places on the need for accepting the teaching of Vatican II concerning the mission of the laity in the Church, and on the active role they should play in evangelization. In the MCT there are a number of references to the Lay Claretians, all of which agree, of course, with the teaching of the "Message to the Lay Claretians." Above all, we would like to point out how exactly it focuses the theme of Lay Claretians within the outstanding charismatic trait of both Claret and the Congregation -- eagerness to raise up and form new evangelizers. This is the context in which the Lay Claretians must grow.

The MCT denounces the Congregation for carelessness in letting Claret's extraordinary initiatives in the lay apostolate die out, and it feels called upon to repair this lack of

fidelity to its Founder and to its own charism: "The Congregation feels responsible for activating those missionary initiatives that he (Claret) was unable to realize personally" (n.70).

The MCT recognizes that the vocation and mission of the Lay Claretians does not arise from our limitations, but from the Lay Claretians' own kind of Christian living.

Among the laity who work with us or are in contact with us, there may be some who are particularly drawn by the figure of Claret and identify with his missionary spirit. These people, with the help of a good, solid formation, can become "Lay Claretians."

The Congregation, while respecting the autonomy of Lay Claretian groups, also recognizes that, in these early moments of their development, they need special help, and so makes a social commitment to offer that help. "Hence, we should organize, foster and support the Claretian Associates movement" (MCT, n.234).

The MCT reminds us that we Claretian Religious (understanding that it is not just we alone) must commit ourselves to make Claret's great dream come true, namely, to mobilize a great evangelizing force, a great evangelizing family, made up of all those --whether religious or laity-- who have Claret as our Father.

"We believe that the present moment of the Church offers optimal conditions for shaping the project of an ample Claretian Family. This would have to be seen as the realization of Claret's own (uncompleted) project, thought out along the lines of a great movement for evangelization in our own time" (MCT, n.179).

Chapter Seven

WHAT ARE THE LAY CLARETIANS?

1. Do Lay and Religious Claretians Have the Same Charism?

The Lay Claretians are a movement with a specific charism (a charismatic movement) for evangelization, raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, by way of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

As they are a charismatic entity, what the Lay Claretians are, is entailed in the nature of their charism. In all extant literature on this lay movement, since the Congregation in fidelity to its Founder (however belatedly) has begun to promote it under various titles (Collaborators, Associates, Lay Claretians), the predominant notion has been that Lay Claretians have no charism of their own, but share the same charism as the Congregation. It has even been said that they share in this charism through the Congregation, or that the Congregation communicates it to them.

The Constitutions of the Claretian Missionaries of 1973, in reference to Claretian Associates, states:

"There are others associated with us in serving the whole Church they share our spirit and wish to share in our apostolic mission" (CC 1973, n.164).

We find the same notion in the Directory written in connection and in keeping with the guidelines of the 1973 Chapter. It states that the Congregation welcomes the association of "clergy and laity who share its missionary charism, and are committed, in varying degrees, to live that charism in communion with the Congregation" (Dir., n.250).

In his address to the First International Congress of Lay Claretians, held in Rio de Janeiro in April 1979, The Claretian Superior General stated that the Claretian Associates are the "fruit of the ecclesial feeling of the Claretian Congregation" and are, "in a sense, members of the Congregation... Let us keep this idea clearly before us: the Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of (this) charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters." (Note that charism, mission and even filiation are connected here.) "Their primary integration is that which comes with participation in the same mission and charism of the Congregation."

The same notion occurs in a number of the Conclusions of the Congress: "mutual acceptance and coexistence should grow out of a joint search for and accomplishment of our common mission" (1.2). "Communion in our common mission should be established on the various levels of prayer, renewal, action and government" (2.2).

The issue of whether Lay and Religious Claretians do or do not have the same charism is fraught with extremely important consequences for both them and us.

For example:

- in defining their identity, specific vocation and evangelizing work in the Church, as well as our own;
- in deciding how they are to be organized, who their superiors will be, and which mediating groups they will be subject to;
- how are they to be integrated into the Congregation (if at all), and how far will their participation and co-responsibility extend?

Some have even gone so far as to request that they enjoy by right, the ability to have voice and vote in the Congregation's assemblies, and provincial and General Chapters.

We are dealing, then with a fundamental question: Is or is not the charism of the Lay Claretians the same as that of the Congregation of Missionaries?

My response to this question is clearly in the negative. It seems to me that it is a contradiction in terms to state that a lay group has the same charism as a Religious Institute. What really identifies and defines a charismatic group in the Church, is precisely its charism, which also includes its mission. Our being Religious is not something merely accidental and extraneous to the gift we have received. We are not Claretians by the grace of God and Religious by our own decision. Our vocation and charism includes both elements, indissolubly united. If we were to attempt to raise up a group of lay evangelizers and associate them with the Congregation, assuring them that they shared its charism and mission, wouldn't we be undermining their specifically lay vocation and mission?

A charism is a special gift of grace which God imparts through the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church. Such a gift implies:

- "a distinctive way of being utterly for God" (consecration),
- "a living out of this gift for building up the Church, in a particular way"(mission),
- "and this being-for-God, for the building up of the Church, must be expressed and lived in certain concrete forms of activity" (action).

(Cf. Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, "Teologia Sistemática de la Vida Religiosa," Madrid: 1979, p.269).

If we, lay and religious Claretians, had the same charism, then religious consecration would add nothing new or specific to our way of being-for-God, nor would we have a distinctive way of contributing to the building up of the Church. Moreover, we would be called to fulfill the same activities, with the same inherent characteristics as the laity.

"In the case of a call to the religious life, the charism consists above all in a vocation to a form of existence consecrated to the service of God through celibacy and fraternal life" (J.M.Lozano, CMF, "El Fundador y su Familia Religiosa," Madrid: 1978, p.90).

How could it be said, then, that a lay group has the same charism as a religious Institute? Obviously, on a matter as important as that of charism, there is still a great deal of confusion among us members of the Claretian Family, since not only the Lay Claretians, but also Cordimarian Filiation both speak of having the same charism and mission as the Congregation. For example, Cordimarian Filiation, in its message to the 1979 General Chapter for the "Claretian Family Day" states:

"We start out from the same reality, a sharing in the same charism, a consciousness of having received an identical GIFT in the Church -- a gift that must be lived in different circumstances and vocations..."

There are obviously two different underlying points of view:

- a) One of them states that the Claretian Missionaries, Cordimarian Filiation and Lay Claretians all have the same charism and mission. The differences among us are not entailed in the gift of God, but derive from the distinctive form of life in each of our institutions. We all have the same, unique Claretian charism, but some of us live it as religious, others as a Secular Institute, still others after the manner of a Secular Institute, and finally, others simply as laypersons.
- b) The other point of view holds that we have different charisms for many reasons, the most important of which are, respectively, religious consecration, lay consecration, and basic Christian lay life. These are not mere circumstances of our life, but special callings from God, gifts of God for contributing in a special way to the building up of the Church. And if these are special gifts of God, then our charisms are differentiated

not by our lifestyles, but by the fact that we have received distinct charisms.

2. The Claretian Charisms

Not all of us who have St. Anthony Mary Claret as our Father, and are members of the Claretian Family, have the same charism. We are a Family because the same person is at the origin of our existence as a group in the Church, and because we have many charismatic and spiritual traits that bear a family resemblance. Claret received a great diversity of gifts from God, in order to set a number of institutions in motion in the Church, for the building up of the Church. It is not correct to speak of "our common charism," since each Claretian Institution has its own distinct charism.

In preparation for the 1979 General Chapter, Fr. Lucas Gutierrez made some basic observations for the commissions preparing the MCT and the initial draft of the new Constitutions. The following are some of his references to Claretian Associates or Lay Claretians, since they shed some light on the matter at hand:

"To say that the Associates have the same CHARISM-MISSION as the CMFs, is simply false, without further qualifications.

"There is not a unity of mission in what is called the Claretian Family. The CMFs, the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate, and Cordimarian Filiation, for example, each has its own mission. Our Founder's project of Nuns in their own Homes and the Associates, if they really correspond with Claret's notion, have THEIR own mission. To reduce all this diversity to a mere difference of members, ministries and forms of carrying them out, would be a failure to understand what charism is or what mission is. It would be a failure to use theological, ecclesial or, in the long run, livable language, since it would break down the basis for our identity, making us like associates or associates like us, and so both of us would cease to exist.

"We are not Father Claret, nor do all the charisms of Father Claret pass on to us:

- not his purely personal charisms,
- not his charism as Founder, along with Mother Antonia Paris, of the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate,
- not his charism as Founder of the Secular Priests Living in Community,
- not his charism as Founder of Nuns in their own Homes " (Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, Observations for the Position Paper, Preparatory Study, p. 6).

"The Claretian Associates or Lay Claretians should be understood within the following perspective:

- a) They have their main origin and charism in Claret.
- b) Their charism is a different gift from all others: CMFs, Teaching Sisters, CFs.
- c) They do not have that charism by participation in the CMFs, Teaching Sisters or CFs.
- d) They do have it in communion with us, and in order to form one Claretian communion, within the context of our respective differences in charism and mission.
- e) IF they are a "work proper" entrusted by the Church to the ecclesial mission of the Congregation, then they have a certain DEPENDENCE on us. But this dependence does not diminish their distinctiveness, their charism and their distinguishing mission as laypersons in the full sense of their secularity. Even if they enter as a "work proper" of the Congregation, they enter with their specialness and their identity intact.

"It is to be regretted that proper use has not been made of this reality, since it is more than a play on words or a mere juridical fiction. It is even more to be regretted that some of us have wanted to shape these Lay Claretians into a carbon copy of ourselves, as a group of semi-religious or frustrated religious. This is evidenced in the obsessive compulsion to push them into vows, consecrations and community" (Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, Observations for the CC, p.4).

3. The Charism of the Lay Claretians

a. Layness or Secularity

In Lay Claretians, the "Claretian" and the "Lay" are not two realities set alongside each other; rather, they so compenetrates each other as to form an existential unity. The Christian vocation of someone who has been called by God to live according to the lay charism which Claret received in order to transmit it to the lay groups he raised up in the Church, is totally qualified by this charism or special gift of the Holy Spirit. One cannot think of or describe the charism of the Lay Claretians, without putting a strong stress on their lay being and mission. Their Claretian vocation is totally lay, and their Christian vocation is totally Claretian.

Many features of the charismatic profile of the Lay Claretians might seem to be simply the same as those of other branches of the Claretian Family, but in reality, they are

distinctive and characteristic, inasmuch as they are stamped with the mark of layness or secularity.

Moreover, we should note that secularity is not lived in the same manner by all Claretian lay groups. In some of them, there is a consecrated secularity (with vows), while in others, there is a secularity without any further consecration than baptismal consecration.

Vatican II, which contributed so decisively to the development of the theology of the laity, chose to use the examples of the ministerial priesthood and the religious life as contrasting means for identifying the laity:

- The priesthood is characterized by a special vocation "to exercise the sacred ministry." This gift entails a special communion with Christ the Priest, as well as a specific ministry: to contribute to the building up of the Church by means of the exercise of the "sacred ministry."
- "Although those in Holy Orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities, or even practice a secular profession, yet by reason of their particular vocation, they are principally and expressly ordained to the sacred ministry" (LG 31).
- Religious, too, are characterized by a special vocation and mission in the Church. Religious life is a charism which implies a special conformity with Christ and with his lifestyle. This gift is received by religious so that they may contribute to the building up of the Church by witnessing to and anticipating the definitive state of the Kingdom of God.
- "They give outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes" (LG 31).
- The laity are not distinguished by their lack of a specific vocation. They are not, so to speak, what is left over after subtracting those with a priestly or religious vocation. Christian secularity is also a calling from God, a gift which implies a distinctive communion with Christ, and a special mission within the Church for its building up. This conformity with Christ is achieved through the Sacraments, especially Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation.
- "Incorporated into the Church by Baptism, the faithful are appointed through their baptismal character to Christian worship; reborn as children of God, they must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church. By the Sacrament of Confirmation they are more perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit.

Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread the faith by word and deed" (LG 11).

- "But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business on earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitutes the very web of their existence. There they are called by God, so that being led by the spirit of the Gospel they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way, so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated, that these may be brought to be and grow according to Christ, and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer" (LG 31).

b. Distinctive Traits of the Lay Claretian Charism

To discover these traits, we should have recourse to:

- Claret's writings on the lay groups he founded.
- Other writings by Claret, especially his Autobiography. But in reading the Autobiography, we should bear in mind that he wrote it, under obedience, as an instructional tool for his Missionary Sons, and that for this reason not all of it can be simply applied to the laity.
- The life of Claret himself, in his work to promote the laity.

In what follows is assembled a rough sketch of the traits that make up a Lay Claretian. It will be a rather imperfect one but it will include four main features: charism, mission, spirituality and evangelizing activity. All of these elements are fundamentally connected with charism. A charism is given to us with relationship to some mission in the Church, so that mission itself is given us in our charism. A spirituality, which is also fundamentally a gift, is the way we live our charism-mission. Evangelizing activity, in turn, is the expression of our charism and the carrying out of our mission. Let us examine these features one by one.

(1) Charism

A charism is a gift of grace, a special communion with and conformation with Christ, in the context of which we live all aspects of our relationship with God and our fellow human beings, and perform our work in building up the Church.

The charism of a Lay Claretian is a particular gift of grace, through which God confers on a layperson a special conformity with Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and under the maternal action of Mary.

a) A special conformity with Christ the Evangelizer, who was always concerned for "the things of his Father" and for the salvation of the human race.

Claret had a particular enthusiasm for certain traits in the image of Christ. In stressing some of these traits more than others, he was actually giving us a self-portrait of his own charism, as he became aware of those gifts he had received from the Holy Spirit in order to follow Christ and carry out his mission. He desired to see many of these traits in those he invited to join him in the task of evangelizing, whether they were priests, religious or laity.

Claret saw Christ mainly as the Son who was concerned for the things of his Father (for the glory of God); the Son who was anointed and sent to bring the Good News to the poor (the salvation of souls).

These two characteristics --zeal for the glory of God, and for the salvation of others-- were lived by Claret in an incredibly intense manner. And they were not simply the result of his own personal effort. Rather, they were a gift of God which he began to experience when he reached the use of reason (See Aut., nn. 15,16). These were to be, so to speak, the coordinates within which his whole missionary life would develop, as we can see throughout his Autobiography:

"Whenever I went to a town, I did so without any worldly goal in mind: my only aim was to glorify God and save souls" (n.199), "My aim is to make God better known, loved and served by everyone" (n.202). "I tell you quite frankly that whenever I see sinners, I grow restless, I cannot quiet down, I cannot be consoled, my heart goes out to them" (211). "I can't abandon them: they are my own dear brothers and sisters" (n.208). "Charity urges and impels me; it makes me run from town to town" (n.212).

This zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, which was the result of his conformity with Christ, was held up as an objective for all the lay groups which he established or inspired.

b) Through the Holy Spirit and Under His Continuing Action in Us

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings about within us our conformity with Christ the Evangelizer. And Christ continues his evangelizing activity in the world by means of the Holy Spirit who, in a sort of silent Pentecost, continues acting in each and every apostle, first evangelizing the apostle, and then others, through the apostle.

"It is the Holy Spirit who, today as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who permits him or herself to be possessed and led by him... (and it is He who) places on their lips the words which they would not find by themselves... It is he who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood" (EN 75).

What Claret said of himself and of his Missionaries, is perfectly applicable to every Claretian:

"The Lord told me both for myself and for all these missionary companions of mine, 'You yourselves will not be the speakers; the Spirit of your Father (and of your Mother) will be speaking in you.' 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 bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted!'" (Aut., n.687).

The Holy Spirit is the Gift, the fountainhead of all gifts. Each charism is a distinctive sharing in the Holy Spirit, a special presence and continuing action of the Spirit in us. He does not give a charism and then take it away; he continues to give it always; he continues being the Gift and the charism in us. He, who destines us to proclaim the Word, helps us find adequate words in which to proclaim it, and gives us the strength to back it up with personal witness.

c) Under the Maternal Influence of Mary

Mary is involved in the Mystery of Christ, in God's saving plan. Communion with Christ entails an encounter with Mary and creates a special bond of communion with her as Mother. Mary's maternal influence on a Lay Claretian draws him or her to conformity with Christ, making him or her another evangelizing Christ.

The apostolic presence of Mary in the life and evangelizing work of St. Anthony Mary Claret, is one of the most salient characteristics of his charism. Confronted by the Jansenistic pessimism of his times with regard to salvation, Claret saw in Mary, especially in the Heart of Mary, the most human and shining expression of the kindness of God our Father, "who wills that all be saved (I Tim 2:4). For Claret, the Heart of Mary is the richest" and most all-embracing perspective within which the Blessed Virgin may

be seen. For him, the Heart of Mary was the great symbol of love, optimism, hope, liberation and salvation.

Claret placed all his works under the protection of the Heart of Mary. In many of the lay or religious groups he founded, admission was expressed by way of an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary. He always laid stress on the apostolic dimension, since for him, Mary was not merely an admirable "object of devotion," but rather, an evangelizer and the Mother of salvation.

- Mary made both Claret and his Sons to be evangelizers:
"You are well aware that I am your son and minister, formed in the "forge" of your mercy and love." (Aut., n.270)
- Mary sends both him and us to evangelize:
"I am like an arrow poised in your mighty hand. Release me, my Mother, with the full force of your arm" (n.270). "Although I am bereft of every natural talent for this end, it matters not, mitte me (send me): thus it will be all the better seen that gratia Dei sum id quod sum (by the grace of God I am what I am)" (n.161).
- Mary evangelizes through Claret and through us:
"It is you who are at work, not I" (n.156).
- Mary acts on hearts of evangelized, opening them to receive the Good News:
"Grant all men, I beseech you, the grace of conversion, for without it we can do nothing. Then send me and you will see how they will be converted" (n.160).

(2) Mission

The Lay Claretian is called to contribute to the building up of the Church by means of the proclamation of the Gospel, within the context of his or her lay existence.

The mission of the Claretian Congregation has been defined as the missionary proclamation of the Word "in the style of the Apostles" (DC 10). For Claret the expression "in the style of the Apostles" meant an itinerant apostolate and living in community. Claret did, in fact, want his Missionaries to devote themselves to the preaching of the Gospel as itinerant preachers, not tied down to ordinary pastoral offices and charges. In contrast, neither the secular priests living in community nor any lay Claretian groups were called to an itinerant mission. Both the Claretian Missionaries and the secular priests mentioned above were devoted to evangelization while living in community. In contrast, the laity were to live by preference in the natural communities of their families or neighborhoods.

LAY CLARETIANS AND THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

The Lay Claretians are called to share the total Mystery of Christ with others by means of word and witness, while living immersed in the normal conditions of social life. By their life, word and work, they must be a leaven in family, social, economic, political, working, cultural, sporting and religious groups.

"Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering" (EN 70).

The very first thing Claret demanded of those entering lay groups established by him was the witness of their own lives. This witness is the most unmistakable statement of the word of evangelization. As Vatican II put it, the laity are also called to be "witnesses of Christ in all circumstances, and at the very heart of the community of mankind" (GS 43). Claret repeatedly stressed the need of witness. "Members should in all things live a good and holy life, keeping the precepts of God's holy Law and those of the Church, fulfilling the duties of their state in life and edifying others by their good example" (PA, p.39). "They shall strive by good example to edify everyone, so that they might be able to say: 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ'" (FHM, n.11).

Evangelization through the word took many forms for Claret. He gave special importance to catechesis and to the apostolate of the press. I believe that these two forms should still be priorities for today's Lay Claretians.

"It is not just priests and clerics who are to engage in this sort of teaching (catechesis), but men and women who teach children as well... This same obligation weighs even more heavily on parents, tutors and householders; they must teach Christian doctrine to their children, servants and dependents" (FCD, 98).

The Lay Claretians, too, are called to work in various forms of catechesis and the catechumenate. In basic Christian communities, they have an extraordinary field of action in which to serve as delegates of the Word, community animators or leaders, thus taking full advantage of the manifold possibilities offered by new lay ministries (See EN 73).

Those Lay Claretians who have or can acquire the proper professional training, should strive to find a position in the media of mass communication, which are so powerful in our times. This would be very much in keeping with our Founder's view of the lay apostolate.

(3) Spirituality

Spirituality is the living of a charism, the response to the gift with which the Holy Spirit endows us for the building up of the Church. There are different spiritualities, because there are different charisms. In a spirituality there are some personal elements, and there are elements that are common to the group or institutions. Of these latter elements, our Founder is a model.

Father Viñas, who is deeply knowledgeable concerning Claret and his work, points out **the following traits of Lay Claretian spirituality:**

- a) *Union with Christ the Evangelizer, whom Claret saw mainly as*
 - the Son who is anointed to preach the Good News to the poor,
 - the Son of Man who has nowhere to lay his head, and as
 - the Sign of contradiction.

- b) *Living an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary:*
 - who evangelizes us and makes us evangelizers, by conforming us, in the "forge" of her Heart, with Christ her Son, and
 - who evangelizes others through us.

- c) *Apostolic virtues:*
 - lived as a way of following Christ the Evangelizer, and
 - lived as realities demanded by the proclamation of the Gospel.
 - among these virtues, the most important are charity, poverty, mortification, humility and meekness.

- d) *The Eucharist:*
 - as an encounter with
 - Christ, the evangelizer and redeemer.

- e) *Apostolic Prayer:*
 - of which Claret left us an extraordinary example (See Viñas, *El Apostol Claretiano Seglar*, pp.29-37).

To these traits mentioned by Father Viñas, we should add:

f) A Love for Holy Scripture:

- This was one of Claret's principle traits. He discovered his own vocation in the Scriptures, and urged the laity to read the Bible frequently: "Each member shall daily, or at least weekly, read a chapter of the Gospels" (PA, p.28).

g) Burning Apostolic Zeal:

- The most outstanding trait of Claret's missionary spirit.
- Claret defines a missionary mainly in terms of apostolic zeal (Aut, n.494).
- The local director of the Popular Lending Libraries "must be a layperson of zeal, prudence and action" (Lib, p.17).
- A member of the Academy of St. Michael "should continually live a life consumed by holy zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls" (PA, p.42).

(4) Evangelizing Action

The kind of evangelization done by Lay Claretians would be strongly characterized by the following traits:

a) Communion, love and obedience toward the Pope and Bishops

A deep love for the Pope and the acceptance of the Church's magisterium is a very notable trait of Claret. Even when he was a simple priest, he always sought the mediation of the bishop in being sent to evangelize (Aut, nn.194, 198).

He wanted his Missionaries and everyone who belonged to his lay institutions to have this same love and fidelity:

"The Academy of St. Michael places itself under the auspices of the supreme Leader of the Church, to whose decisions it does and will submit in all things, defending his authority and that of the Church" (PA, p.14).

b) From a context of total insertion in the world

The evangelizing action of a Lay Claretian cannot be an imitation of priestly and religious action. Rather, it must be of a genuinely lay character, marked by a total immersion in the normal conditions of life in the world.

"This evangelization, that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and life-witness, acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world" (LG 35).

"The laity, however, are given this special vocation -- to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth" (LG 33).

Our affection for our Founder should not lead us to overpraise him, or to represent him as a pioneer in everything he did. He was in many respects a man of his times, a pioneer only in certain fields. Like all evangelizers in his day, even the most advanced ones, he was still far from Vatican II's vision of the lay apostolate. His ideas about immersion in the world are somewhat pessimistic by today's standards, and a note of 'flight from the world' is not only voiced in his Nuns in their own Homes, but to a lesser degree in other groups (See NOH, 25-29). Nevertheless, he does show good insight when he observes that priests "hardly have the same opportunity to really mix with the townsfolk that laypersons do" (Lib, 18).

Although insertion in the everyday world was not a characteristic of the lay movements promoted by Claret, it should be today. The guidelines and perspectives of Vatican II would doubtless have been a joyful discovery for Claret, and one which he would have unhesitatingly brought to his lay evangelizers, so that they could act in the world "from within, like leaven" (LG 31).

It would be completely out of place to lead laypersons toward an 'imitationism' of priests or religious. Their mission and their evangelizing action has a specifically lay character in the Church.

c) Alert to whatever is most urgent, timely and effective

Claret had an extraordinarily keen perception of the most pressing needs of the People of God, and was most creative in responding to those needs immediately and effectively. He had an excellent grasp of the great appeal and influence of all forms of printing in his day -- books, reviews, leaflets, printed pictures, etc. This was one of the fields in which he personally did a great deal of work, and one to which he wanted nearly all of his lay evangelizing groups to be committed.

If Claret were alive today, we may be sure that he would be urging his lay people to get involved in the powerful modern means of mass communication. We, his modern day followers, must prove that his spirit is still alive, by encouraging and promoting the laity to become involved in these nerve centers.

d) A preference for the poor and the marginated

Claret had a great love for the poor and considered them to be a gift of God (See Aut., nn. 19, 20, 118, 435). He felt personally called by the Isaian text that Luke places on the lips of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry: "He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners" (Lk 4:18 -- a key text, unfortunately missing from the English version of Aut., n.118).

Claret says of those entering the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary:

"They shall visit the sick in hospitals and in private homes when they have the opportunity to do so. They shall visit those in prisons. They shall attend to the poor, especially those who are shamed by poverty, giving them alms for which they shall ask the rich. They shall take care of the elderly, widows and orphans. Insofar as they can, they should try to help fallen or scandalous women mend their ways. They should help reconcile those who are divorced" (FHM n.16).

In our times, when the whole Church feels called not only to evangelize the poor as a preferential option, but also to evangelize all social classes within the context of an option for the poor, Lay Claretians would be lacking in fidelity to the Church and to Claret himself, if they were deaf to the "cry of the poor."

This option for the poor necessarily entails a commitment to their cause, which is the cause of justice and, as John Paul II remarks, a commitment which cannot remain at the level of mere words:

"It is not enough for a Christian to denounce injustice: rather, one must be a true witness and agent of justice" (Puebla, n.793). "In all cases the laity must seek and promote the common good in defense of the dignity and inalienable rights of humankind, in protection of the weakest and neediest, in building for peace, liberty and justice, and in the creation of the most just and fraternal structures" (Puebla, n.792).

Commitments and actions that aim at building a more just world, are themselves a form of evangelization. They are a proclamation of the Good News that the Kingdom of God is on its way.

e) Multipliers of agents of evangelization

Another characteristic of the missionary spirit of Claret, which led him to create so many groups of lay evangelizers, was his desire to multiply the number of agents of the Good News. Pope Paul VI's words apply to Lay Claretians"

"The person who has been evangelized, goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give him or herself to the Kingdom, without becoming one who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn" (EN 24).

It was Claret's hope that those laypersons whom he had evangelized and enrolled in his lay movements would in turn bring new members into these movements:

"In their gatherings, the members of the Academy should strive to live with the simplicity and fervor that marked the first Christians, who were of one heart and mind. They should try to attract honorable, zealous and prudent persons to join their ranks, so as to continue and spread the Academy, for the good of the Church and of souls, and by counteracting prejudicial trends... (PA, p.15).

AND WHAT IS A LAY CLARETIAN?

I wish I could say that through this description we have come up with a clear and unmistakable portrait of a Lay Claretian. But this accumulation of traits only gives us a mechanical image which could apply to many sorts of persons.

Doubtless, every lay institution has an unmistakable charismatic and missionary profile, but any description of it is deceiving, since it embodies a picture that is valid for other groups. A charism is a grace, and as such it is indescribable -- it is life, and its most specific nuances; although charisms can be lived, they cannot easily be expressed.

Nevertheless, the Lay Claretians' attunement to the grace they share with St. Anthony Mary Claret, and the intensity and manner in which they share the traits we have listed above, allow us to distinguish them both from other lay groups and other institutions founded by Claret.

Chapter Eight

THE LAY CLARETIANS AND THE CLARETIAN FAMILY

1. Do they really belong to the Claretian Family?

This is precisely where we should begin -- by asking whether or not the Lay Claretians belong to the Claretian Family and indeed, to which Claretian Family, since this can be understood in at least two senses:

a) In a restricted sense

The Claretian Family is made up of all those in the Church who regard St. Anthony Mary Claret as their Founder or their direct inspiration. In this sense, there is no doubt that the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CMF), the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate (RMI) and the members of Cordimarian Filiation (CF), form part of the nuclear Claretian Family.

b) In a broader sense

Others may be said to belong to the Claretian Family, namely, all those persons or institutions which have a special relationship, either directly through St. Anthony Mary Claret, or indirectly through other persons or branches of the nuclear Claretian Family.

By direct binding to Claret, the Carmelites of Charity, the Adoratrices and, to some extent, those Congregations that have a fraternal charter with the Claretian Missionaries, are considered to be part of the great Claretian family.

Another group of institutions that belong to the Claretian Family in the larger sense, are those founded by Claretian Missionaries, such as the Cordimarian Missionary Sisters (Fr. Collell, CMF, Mexico), the Missionary Sisters of Claretian Instruction (Fr. Pujol, CMF, Spain), or the Missionary Sisters of St. Anthony Mary Claret (Bp. Fernandes, CMF, Brazil).

There is no doubt that the Lay Claretians belong to the Claretian Family. The question is, to which Claretian Family -- the nuclear or the larger Claretian Family?

If we ask this question of the current groups of Lay Claretians, it is hard to come up with an adequate answer. Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that there are groups that

belong to the Claretian Family in the strict sense, and others that belong to it in the larger sense. There are some lay groups founded and directed by Claretian Missionaries almost by personal title. These do not connect directly with St. Anthony Mary Claret, but with one or another of his Sons, and are hence related in the same degree as religious Institutes founded by Claretians.

In contrast, the Lay Claretians as conceived by the 1979 General Chapter, belong to the Claretian Family in the strict sense, since they are animated by the same lay charism that the groups founded by Claret himself had.

2. What is their position in the Claretian Family?

The place they hold depends on the reason why they belong to the Claretian Family, and on how they come to be part of it, i.e., on whether they enter of their own right, or as part of the Claretian Missionary Congregation. There are two different ways of visualizing the family tree of the nuclear Claretian Family:

a) A family with three branches: CMFs, RMIs and CFs

We can say that this was the prevailing attitude prior to the 1979 General Chapter, the Collaborators, and later the Associates, entered the Claretian Family not only led into it by the Congregation, but as actually forming a part of it. The prevailing notion was that the Associates were deeply united to the Congregation, and not with the other branches of the Claretian Family.

Recall what Fr. Nicolas Garcia had to say about the Collaborators: "They are a 'work proper' of the Congregation, united to its being as extensions of it" (AN 1945 p.64). Fr. Leghisa told the participants in the Congress of Rio, in April 1979: "Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of (the Congregation's) charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters" (34).

From this point of view, we would have to say that the Collaborators and Associates enter the heart of the Claretian Family by forming part of the Congregation of Missionaries, and not as an independent institution. However, if we did take this point of view, we would have to ask whether we should cease calling them a part of the nuclear Claretian Family, since they would be sons and daughters of the Congregation, rather than direct children of Claret.

b) A family with four branches

The other outline of the Lay Claretians does not view them as work of the Congregation, or as bound to the Congregation by their very nature, but as the work of Claret. Consequently they form part of the Claretian Family in their own right, under the same conditions as the three other institutions which have Claret as their Founder. Thus the Claretian Family in the strict sense would be made up of the CMFs, the RMIs, the CFs and the Lay Claretians. This outline squares most adequately with the project of Father Claret, and with the teaching of the 1979 General Chapter on the Lay Claretians.

In fact, St. Anthony Mary Claret did not organize a single lay group with the intention of aggregating them to the Congregation as Collaborators. Nor did he give the Congregation any authority over them, or even entrust any of them to its tutelage.

It would be false to Claret's idea, to think of the Lay Claretians as analogous to the Cooperators of the Salesian Congregation. Don Bosco founded the Cooperators in 1887 with the express wish that they be collaborators of the Salesian Congregation, and so he placed them under its direction.

When the Claretian General Government created the Collaborators in 1938, they seem to have been thinking more of the Salesian model than anything Claret had in mind. In fact, during the period when Lay Claretians were called and actually were Collaborators (1938-1967) or Associates (1967-1979), their role seemed clearly that of cooperators. Thus understood, their connection with the Congregation could not be accidental, but had to be essential. Since they were regarded as 'works proper' of the Congregation, the Congregation could hardly regard them otherwise than as its collaborators. Moreover, since this seemed to be the only framework available for Lay Claretians at the time, it was assumed that there was no viable way of giving them their autonomy, or of linking them to any other branch of the Claretian Family.

3. Toward an autonomous institution of Lay Claretians

a) Not just a matter of names

From its restoration in 1938, the Lay Claretian movement has had various titles: Collaborators, Associates and Lay Claretians. Has this been merely a change of names, or is it a real change of meaning? I believe that the Lay Claretian, as understood since the 1979 General Chapter, is entirely different from the earlier Collaborator or Associate, for the following reasons:

- (1) It used to be said that the Associates shared the same charism and mission as the Congregation (CC 1973, n.164; Dir, 250). In contrast, we now say that the

charism and mission of the Lay Claretians is different from that of the Congregation.

- (2) The Associates were to "live their charism in communion with the Congregation and work on common objectives with it" (Dir, 250). The Lay Claretians live their charism independently, and may set their own objectives or, if they choose, work on common objectives with the Congregation.
- (3) In the Collaborators or Associates, there could also be clergy or even persons "who profess evangelical life" (CC 1973, n.165). In the Lay Claretians, there can only be laity. It is true that Father Claret also thought of forming groups of diocesan priests living in community, but this was a distinct institution, which does not exist, and if it did, we would have to bring it about in the heart of the Claretian Family.
- (4) Of their very nature, the Lay Claretians tend toward autonomy, although in their present state of development they need the Congregation's help. In contrast, the Collaborators or Associates did not share this future prospect of autonomy, since association with and dependence on the Congregation was something essential for them.

Nothing prevents the Congregation, like any other branch of the Claretian Family, from having:

- Benefactors, to help maintain the works of its apostolate,
- Collaborators, who contribute material and personal help,
- Associates in a particular apostolic work or project, whether these be priests or laypersons, whether they do or do not have a Claretian vocation.

But these must not be confused with the Lay Claretians, who do not have to be collaborators, associates or benefactors of the Congregation. They may indeed freely choose to associate with us in working on common plans and objectives for evangelization, but they are united with us in such cases, only out of fraternity, not dependence. Of course, when particular Lay Claretians work in some apostolic endeavor of the Congregation, they are necessarily dependent on those directing the work; but this dependence is not institutional, it is pastoral.

Throughout these pages we have been speaking of groups of Lay Claretians. We would like to make it clear, however, that there can be Claretian laypersons outside these groups. Decidedly, any layperson who has received this call and lives attuned to the grace given St. Anthony Claret, is a Claretian layperson, even if he or she is not bound to any group or branch of the Claretian Family.

Of course, this is hardly the ideal situation. It would be far better to have some connection with the Claretian Family, including the Lay Claretians. However the lay movement raised up by Claret is sufficiently open and pluralistic that it need not be restricted to those officially recognized as Lay Claretians.

b) Is the notion of "work proper" a valid one?

The Message to the Lay Claretians, as late as 1979, occasionally refers to them as a "work proper," although in a quite different sense than that expression had in 1945. Yet we should ask whether the lay movement raised up by Claret can fit within the limits of a "work proper," or whether it goes beyond them. In my opinion, it goes beyond them, since Claret was not thinking of simple collaborators of the Congregation.

Although the policy of regarding the Associates as a "work proper" of the Congregation could have worked out otherwise, I believe that it de facto led the Congregation to adopt certain clerical and paternalistic attitudes toward the laity, and that this, in turn, led to a certain lack of maturity and co-responsibility on the part of the laity. Often, instead of collaborating with us, they were collaborating under our orders. The notion of "work proper" does not necessarily lead to this state of affairs, but it does favor it.

c) Promoting the Lay Claretians, but within the context of their autonomy

The Congregation's commitment to "organize, foster and support" the Lay Claretian movement (MCT 234), should be carried out with a clear view to its autonomy in the future. But this should not lead us to jump the gun: the Lay Claretians presently need to depend on the Congregation, since the very notion of their charism and mission, let alone their position in the Claretian Family, have not been sufficiently worked out. Moreover, as a movement, they lack maturity and organization, although a few groups are fairly well organized.

This dependence is of a pedagogical nature, inasmuch as it aims at leading the movement to its maturity, after which dependence will cease. During the next few years the Lay Claretians will have to rely on structures of the Congregation for support, almost as if they were a "work proper" of the Congregation. However, this should be viewed only as a stage to be overcome, and not as a permanent goal.

Relationships of dependence should gradually dissolve, until they reach the stage of relationships of fraternity. This Claretian fraternity will doubtless lead us to collaboration and association in projects and activities for evangelization. Autonomy does not entail

doing away with association, it merely gives it a new meaning. In fact, the tendency to collaborate co-responsibly must be maintained, since our charisms are complementary, and because among us we must carry on in the Church the mission for which the Holy Spirit raised up St. Anthony Mary Claret.

In its most recent General Chapter, the Congregation expressed its desire for this sort of fraternal cooperation:

"We wish to see you at our side on all evangelizing fronts to which the Church has missioned us. Your particular way of being will fill out the total being of Claret, who is the fountainhead and inspiration of us all" (Message to Lay Claretians, 12).

A special kind of collaboration, which is unfortunately not widespread enough, is that offered by the Lay Claretians who work in our mission territories. With them, there is a deeper sort of integration on the levels of fraternal living, praying and working together.

Chapter Nine

THE ORGANIZATION AND PROMOTION OF THE LAY CLARETIANS

1. A Change of Mentality and Attitudes

The General Chapter, representing the highest authority in the Congregation, committed itself to "incorporate the laity, decidedly, in our evangelizing efforts. Hence, we should organize, foster and support the Claretian Associate movement" (MCT, n.234). We will not be able to carry out this commitment, unless many members of the Congregation undergo a change of mentality regarding the role of the laity in the Church, and a change of attitude regarding the Lay Claretians.

a) First there will have to be a change of mentality regarding the role of the laity in the Church.

It would seem that there is still a considerable number of Claretian Missionaries, even some heading important works of evangelization, such as parishes, schools and missions, who have a markedly clerical mentality.

Perhaps some of them have an image of the Church as a hierarchical pyramid in which the people are no more than passive recipients of evangelization. The laity are only brought in for material or supplemental tasks which, moreover, they are asked to carry out in complete dependence on the clergy. In many of our works, even when lay groups or associations are involved, they are not seriously entrusted with the responsibility of encouraging, organizing or leading the Christian community. The worst is that they will probably never be entrusted with this responsibility, so long as their leaders do not get rid of an image of the Church where the first and foremost value is the hierarchy, and not the People of God united in communion -- a communion within which there are many charisms and ministries, hierarchical and non-hierarchical, clerical and lay, for the building up of the Church.

b) Secondly, there will have to be a change of attitudes regarding the Lay Claretian movement.

In my rather broad tour throughout the Congregation, I came across a wide variety of negative and positive attitudes regarding the Lay Claretians:

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- I believe that among the majority of our Missionaries, the prevailing attitude is one of lack of interest in the Lay Claretian movement, as well as one of general ignorance concerning its nature and how it connects with our Founder.
- Some have a poor opinion of the movement, either because of the low apostolic level of commitment in some groups, or because certain groups seemed to be a closed clique of people who seem to be the "work proper" of some particular Claretian Missionary.
- Sometimes I noted a hostility on the part of those who regard these groups as ghettos that need to be cleared, in order to open the way for other lay movements that are better organized and are more open to the Church.
- In contrast to these negative attitudes, I met other Claretians (all too few), who see the Lay Claretians as a great discovery. For them, it has been an encounter with a brilliant idea of Claret's, and one which we should give life to, for the good of the Church, in this hour of the laity.

Claret's esteem for the Christian lay vocation, as well as his own great efforts to involve the laity in a commitment to evangelization, are enough to put us to shame. This is all the more true, if we bear in mind that, in the ecclesiology of his times, the only place for the laity was one of submission and passive receptivity. He was one of the great pioneers in the promotion of the laity. Many of his Sons have missed the boat and show a very poor appreciation of the apostolate of the laity. This is why there is so little incorporation of the laity into our evangelizing works and projects.

Many other religious Families have well-developed and organized lay branches, while we, the sons of a pioneer, are only just beginning. Hopefully, our awareness of this contrast with our Founder will shock us out of our sleep and bring us into the front ranks once more.

Without a change of attitude, lay participation in our evangelizing efforts has no future; nor do the Lay Claretians, since they can really flourish only in the context of works that call for great lay involvement and participation.

The Congregation can aid the Lay Claretians mainly by:

- clarifying their charism and mission in the Church,
- helping promote new vocations for them,
- providing them with initial and continuing formation,
- offering them help in working out their organization.

2. Helping them clarify their charism and mission

Glancing through the brief historical survey that forms the first part of this work, anyone can see that the Lay Claretians have not worked out such important points as their special charism and mission within the Church and the Claretian Family. In this connection, the help which the Congregation can offer through its specialists, is of inestimable value. The General Secretariat for Lay Claretians, founded in connection with the 1979 General Chapter, has proposed the following:

- Asking Claretian specialists to help formulate a more precise and better founded study on these issues.
- Submitting these studies to Lay Claretian groups for their reflection and for their own input.
- Convoking regional days for reflection, in which Lay Claretian leaders and those Claretian Missionaries interested in promoting the Lay Claretian movement can take part.
- This process has taken place with the active participation of many groups. The document drafted defines the being and mission of the Lay Claretians and has become the Sourcebook. What is now needed is continued study and reflection to absorb all the characteristics that have so far been discovered. With this there will be a strengthening of the identity of the Lay Claretians. At the same time the sharing of all this with others who may find themselves called to the same vocation to serve the people of God.

3. Helping to promote new vocations for them

a) The Proper Framework

This promotion must take place within the proper framework. And the proper And the proper framework is one of the most notable traits of the charism of Claret and his Missionaries: **multiplying agents for evangelization**. The MCT stresses this when it says that our commitment to mission demands that we make an option for evangelization that multiplies evangelizing leaders (See MCT, nn. 177-179).

All of the baptized have a vocation to evangelize, and one of the most important aims of our missionary activity is to help each Christian discover his or her vocation as a lay, religious or priestly evangelizer. And, within each of these types of vocation, we should attend to their Claretian vocation, should God have given them one.

Our immediate aim is not to increase the number of Lay Claretians by simply enrolling "nice people," or by rapidly surveying our lay leaders and sticking a Claretian label on them. Our aim is to help laypersons become aware of their unshirkable call to evangelize, to form and invite them to make an apostolic commitment inside or outside our own works, and to encourage them to assume responsibility for building up and leading Christian communities. Some of these laypersons will doubtless feel drawn to Claret and the Claretian missionary spirit, which we are called to witness in our lives. These are the people with whom we should begin a process of vocational discernment.

A sudden increase in the Lay Claretians, without the necessary requisites of vocation, formation, quality of life and apostolic commitment, would result in a tragic devaluation of the movement, and a progressive deterioration that would eventually end in its demise.

b) A strong sense of Church

This vocational promotion must be carried out with a strong sense of Church, which is the only way of achieving it with a genuine sense of our Congregation. This rules out any ghetto-like projects in advance. We are definitely not working for the Congregation or the Claretian Family, considered as entities apart. We are working for the Church. Our mission as evangelizers is achieved within the Church and forms part of the Church's evangelizing mission.

We are not trying to increase our ranks with personnel, whether or not they have a call from God. We are trying to help each individual discover the special services for Christian community to which God is calling him or her, services for which God has given them special gifts.

If we offer special attention to those God has called to the Claretian Family, it is not to corral them off in our own special preserve. Rather, it is because of our enthusiasm for contributing to the building up of the People of God, through gifts which God has given us.

It is God who makes Lay Claretians. Our work is limited to helping them discover whether or not they are called to our Family. The best help we can offer them is the witness of our own lives in conformity with the spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

c) Concrete activities for promoting the Lay Claretians

- 1) In some parts of the Congregation, the first step must be a consciousness-raising campaign aimed at showing our Missionaries the role of the laity in the Church, the extraordinary vision of Claret regarding the involvement of the laity in

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evangelization, and the urgent need for greater lay participation in our apostolic endeavors if we really want to be faithful to the Church and our Founder.

2) We should take every opportunity to make the person and spirit of Claret known to all laypersons related with us or involved in our works. We should make presentations on Claret's own example, thinking and projects concerning the lay apostolate, to all groups associated with our churches and schools. Claretian celebrations or scheduled events offer a natural and unforced setting for informing people about our Founder. Retreats, cursillos or encounters, especially those involving young people, must not neglect this essential dimension of the Claretian vocation -- evangelization. This would also be a good occasion for explaining the various Claretian vocations.

3) Openness on the part of our communities and personal contact with layperson is another means of helping them get to know the Claretian spirit.

4) The next step might be to organize a shared experience for people who feel especially attracted to Claret and his missionary charism. Experiences of this kind may be organized by people of one locality, or on a province-wide level, asking our communities to invite interested laypersons to participate in these days of information, deeper appreciation and discernment.

5) Our activities in this connection should not be limited merely to the scope of our own works. Faithful to Claret, who strove to involve the most influential persons of his day in evangelization, Claretians with contacts in of the powerful mass media of communication, should make a special effort to search out potential evangelizers in these fields. There should really be some modern-day equivalent of Claret's Academy of St. Michael.

Our option for the poor and for social justice is sometimes less effectual, because we neglect our duty to evangelize and involve in our evangelizing work, those persons who could do the most to change structures that create situations of injustice and poverty.

6) One field for promoting the Lay Claretians has not yet been duly exploited. I refer to those who once belonged to the Claretian Congregation. A campaign directed to maintaining contact with ex-Claretians who have kept up a good relationship with the Congregation, might help us recover some excellent lay evangelizers who already have a good apostolic, religious and Claretian formation.

d) Promoters, but not leaders

The enthusiasm of some Claretians in creating and fostering Lay Claretian groups, might lead them to exercise an excessive leadership role which, in the long run, could prove very harmful. The General Chapter put the Lay Claretians on guard against this danger: "Do not cling to, or pin all your hopes on, the support of a single individual or small group" (Message, n.14).

The forming of a clique or clan around one or a few persons, even when the latter have created the group, is prejudicial to the development and maturation of that group, and especially to its insertion into the Lay Claretian movement and the Claretian Family in general. In fact, there are presently a few groups who are not accepted by provinces or communities, because they seem to be the private preserve of certain individuals.

Those Claretian Missionaries who organize a group should be masters at disappearing into the background, yet remaining available for service to the group when it is required. A wise growth-philosophy is that attributed to John the Baptizer: "He must increase, I must decrease." It is a philosophy that is by no means easy to put into practice.

4. Providing help in their formation

Before anyone is admitted as a Lay Claretian, he or she must undergo a period of formation. But who is going to rule on the admission of new candidates? In already organized groups, this is done in accordance with their statutes. In other cases, the group must first be formed on the basis of a fundamental Sourcebook for Lay Claretians. The actual rite of admission might be, as in Claret's time, an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary which, since it is apostolic, should include a commitment of dedication to evangelization in keeping with the missionary spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

And it is not just new candidates who need help in their formation. One of the worst defects of already existing groups is a lack of formation, especially Claretian formation -- which, ironically, is what they most expect of us and is what we are best equipped to offer them.

The integral formation of a Lay Claretian involves a number of elements, but especially the following:

- Doctrinal formation in Scripture, Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology, and Catechetics, for a deeper appreciation of the message they are to deliver.
- Awareness and analysis of the current Church-world situation.

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- Formation in spirituality, as the foundation and condition for every valid apostolate (See AA 29).
- Claretian formation.

Our (i.e., the Claretian Missionaries') collaboration with the Lay Claretians will occasionally consist in urging them to attend courses which other groups have organized for the laity, or to take correspondence courses. As regards their Claretian formation, besides the help their religious facilitator might provide, it would be very helpful if some special studies were prepared --even, if need be, correspondence courses-- on various aspects of Claretian formation.

Another important collaborative service would be preparing some leaders who could direct formation within their own group or provide occasional services to other groups.

5. Helping them organize, both as local groups and as a movement

Groups that come to being on the basis of a charism "still need some sort of structuring, however minimal, in order to avoid subjective interpretations of their charism and a dispersal of energies (Rio de Janeiro, Conclusion n. 5.1). The Congregation has already offered a number of services to the Lay Claretians in connection with their organization. The Claretian Collaborators came into being with a well worked out set of Rules. Forty years later, the General Government prepared a set of Statutes for the Claretian Associates (See AN 1976, pp. 300-309).

At present, groups organized in the manner of Secular Institutes have their own statutes, drawn up in keeping with the guidelines of the 1976 General Statutes approved by the Claretian Superior General. Perhaps these groups may have to adapt their statutes in keeping with the new perspectives on the Lay Claretians. Other groups lack such statutes, except for the CLAS group of Bogota, who have a set of statutes approved by their General Assembly in July, 1971.

Among the services which the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians can offer the movement, might be the preparation of a general model for statutes, which could then be adapted by each group to its own circumstances, if it feels that it needs a set of statutes.

Another important service would be helping them organize on a general level. This is what they themselves asked for at Rio: "Be it resolved that: With due respect for the autonomy of Lay Claretian groups, some type of international relationship and communion be set up" (Concl. 2.7).

To lay a solid foundation for communion and coordination on a worldwide scale, the fundamental Sourcebook for Lay Claretians has been compiled. It summarizes basic notions of the Lay Claretians' charism, mission, spirit, and evangelizing activity in the Church. There is now the Commentary on the Sourcebook. It clarifies the notions in the Sourcebook and is a good tool for formation of those in the process of discernment or for continued formation of veterans. This work provides material for dialogue to help strengthen the movement and individual members.

These principles, are of their very nature somewhat general (so as to accommodate the great variety of lay movements begun by Claret). They have been worked out and accepted by all groups. This provides the best basis for Claretian identity, communion and coordination on the international level of the movement.

At present there is a source of communication for the Spanish speaking groups. A quarterly newsletter, Seglares Claretianos, is now published. There is need to provide a newsletter for the other language groups that now make up the movement. This should be further discussed at future international meetings. At present the Secretariat for the Lay Claretians who is a liaison with the Claretian Missionaries, is of service among the non-Spanish speaking groups. However, this is something the movement will have to eventually take as its own responsibility.

The Secretariat of the Claretian Missionaries is not a vertebral column for the organization of the whole Lay Claretian movement. It is one thing to speak of the organizational help that the Congregation might offer the Lay Claretians, and quite another to speak of organizing the movement itself. The Secretariat is an organization of the Claretian Congregation, aimed at helping the Lay Claretians in these early moments of their existence. The organization of the Lay Claretians must rest squarely on their own shoulders.

Members of other branches of the Claretian Family may also be involved, but always as persons invited to do so in a consultative capacity. Most of the involvement by the

Claretian Congregation and other members of the Claretian family is to help with formation. They share their knowledge of St. Claret -- his life and work.

Serious thought will also have to be given to have at least one full time person who will direct the movement. The size and responsibilities are pointing in that direction.

6. An endeavor of the whole Claretian Family

The other branches of the Claretian Family are also called to promote the development of the Lay Claretians, since the Lay Claretians are not a work of the Congregation but of Claret himself, for whose survival in the Church we are all responsible. Around the communities, groups and works of the other branches of the Claretian Family, vocations to the Lay Claretians may also arise.

The "Claretian-ness" that makes us brothers and sisters, is not an abstraction, but a living reality:

- we have one and the same Father,
- we are enlivened by one and the same missionary spirit, -among us, we complementarily express the total charismatic being of Claret,
- each of our institutions, with its own special way of being Claretian, cooperates with all the rest in carrying out the ambitious evangelizing project of our Founder.

He dreamt, especially during the last years of his life, of joining all his children, to form a great front for evangelization. This was his dying wish and, so to speak, a clause in his last will and testament -- a clause that we should carry out. (See RCLC, p.4)

Within the Claretian Family, fraternity is expressed and increased through personal relationships, inter-institutional communion and communication, development of other branches, and mutual collaboration in evangelizing works, projects and activities. We must all have a special interest in promoting vocations for the different branches of our Family. If anyone feels attracted to the person and spirit of Claret, and comes into contact with us, we should enthusiastically and impartially help them to discover their specific Claretian vocation, whether as Claretian Missionaries, members of Cordimarian Filiation, Lay Claretians, or as diocesan priests living in community (should we manage to bring this latter project of Claret into being).

LAY CLARETIANS AND THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

Second Printing
Edited by Richard Todd, CMF
Rome - July 16, 1994

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CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

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DOCUMENTS CITED IN THIS WORK DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH

- AA - Apostolicam Actuositatem (Vatican II: Apostolate of the Laity)
- EN - Evangelii Nuntiandi (Paul VI: Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization)
- GS - Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II: The Church in the Modern World)
- LG - Lumen Gentium (Vatican II: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)

DOCUMENTS OF THE CLARETIAN CONGREGATION

- AN - Annals of the Congregation
- AP - Document on the Apostolate (1967 General Chapter)
- AS - Associates of the Congregation (1973 General Chapter)
- CC - Constitutions of the Congregation (1973 Gen.Chapter)
- DC - Declaration on our Charism (1967 General Chapter)
- MCT - Mission of the Claretian Today (1979 General Chapter)
- MLC - Message to Lay Claretians (1979 General Chapter)
- SH - Declaration on the Spiritual Heritage of the Congregation (1967 Gen. Chapter)

WORKS BY SAINT ANTHONY MARY CLARET

(Note: Since some of Claret's works for the laity have rather long titles, they will be cited according to the following abbreviations)

- Aut - Autobiography
- Lib - Popular Parish Lending Libraries (Barcelona, 1865), 32 pp.
- BNA - Brief Notice on the origin, achievements, graces and instructions of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary (Barcelona, 1855), 733 pp.
- FHM - Brief Account of the Constitutions of the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (See John Lozano's Constituciones y textos sobre la Congregacion e Misioneros: Barcelona, 1972, pp.116-123).
- FCD - The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine (Appendix 6 to Claret's Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of Cuba. Barcelona, 1855, pp.97-105)
- PAM - Plan of the Academy of St. Michael, founded by His Excellency, Abp. Anthony M. Claret y Clara (Barcelona, 1862) 45 pp.
- NOH - Nuns in their own Homes, or Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Nary (Barcelona, 1850), 176 pp.
- RCLC - Rules for Secular Clergy Living in Community (Barcelona, 1864), 78 pp.(For a fuller bibliography of Claret's works, see J. M. Lozano, C.M.F., Mystic and Man of Action. Chicago, 1977, pp. 117-337).



**THE LAY CLARETIANS AND
THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION**

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**LAY CLARETIAN MOVEMENT
Rome 1994**

Second English Edition
Edited by Richard Todd, C.M.F.
July 12, 1994

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Antonio Vidales, CMF

FOREWORD

The following pages were not written at leisure, but were put together during intervals in a busy traveling schedule. They are meant as a synthesis and a reflection: a synthesis of what the Congregation has done through its Collaborators and Associates, and is now doing through the Lay Claretians; a reflection on what a Lay Claretian is, on the position of Lay Claretians within the Claretian Family, and on the commitment which Lay Claretians must undertake in furthering the lay movement begun by St. Anthony Mary Claret.

This study is not my own personal position paper, or that of the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians, whose organization has been entrusted to me. Rather, it is simply one contribution toward the larger effort of clarifying the meaning of the charism and mission of the Lay Claretian. More than a contribution, it is an invitation to those best qualified to make such a clarification, namely, to those who have received the Lay Claretian charism, as well as to our own theologians, whose studies can enlighten and guide Lay Claretians in the task of reflecting on their own special gift.

This task --to which the whole Claretian Family should contribute-- will, it is hoped, result in the compilation of a SOURCEBOOK FOR LAY CLARETIANS, which will describe as precisely as possible the charism, mission and spirituality of Lay Claretians, their role and relationship with other branches of the Claretian Family, their formation, their apostolic commitment, and some general outlines for their organization.

The contributions submitted by various groups on this theme will be studied at the regional meetings which the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians is planning to hold.

I hope that this and other studies (such as Frs. Viñas and Bermejo's El Apostol Claretiano Seglar) will prove helpful to anyone undertaking the formation of any Lay Claretian group.

Rome: September 26, 1980 Antonio Vidales, CMF

Chapter One

ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET AND THE LAITY

1. CLARET: FIRST AND FOREMOST AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

It is not hard to discover Claret's most outstanding trait, since he has inadvertently left us a self-portrait in his Autobiography. There he describes a missionary as a "man of fire," whose "only concern is how he can best follow Jesus Christ and imitate Him in working, suffering and striving constantly and singlemindedly for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls" (Aut., n.494). The salient feature of Claret's spiritual profile is an irrepressible apostolic zeal, and it is this trait that polarizes and gives meaning to all other aspects of his life.

The figure of Christ the Evangelizer stirred Claret's imagination, and he strove as faithfully as he could to imitate the Son, consumed by zeal for the glory of the Father and the salvation of his fellow human beings.

Claret was a giant of an apostle, hewn from a single rock. A man whose indestructible spiritual unity drove him on to work for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor. The presence within him of the Son, sent by the Father, of the evangelizing Spirit, and of Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Church, all contributed toward making his missionary efforts fruitful and kept him from discouragement. What he said of the missionary was perfectly true of himself, "Nothing daunts him: he delights in privations, welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, and rejoices in suffering."

There is no human explanation for Claret's prodigious evangelizing activity. The missionary campaigns he carried out in Catalonia, the Canary Islands, Cuba and during his travels with the Spanish royal family, would have worn out a whole crowd of people, but not Claret. On the contrary, after a number of days when he preached as many as twelve long sermons a day, he wrote: "I know God wants me to preach, because I feel as peaceful, rested and energetic as if I'd done nothing at all. The Lord has done it all. May He be blessed forever"(Autobiography, n.703).

In him, apostolic zeal was an inexhaustible source of creativity that led him into the vanguard of evangelization and made him use the most modern and effective means for the proclamation of the Gospel.

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2. CLARET: A MAN WHO MULTIPLIED EVANGELIZERS

One of Claret's most noteworthy traits was his drive to increase the number of agents for evangelization. He wanted to make an evangelizer out of every person who received the Word of God through him. He showed incredible spontaneity in founding religious congregations, lay associations and organizations of diocesan priests, all with one primary objective, evangelization. The three-year period of 1846-1849 was particularly fruitful. During this time --without abandoning his tireless commitment to itinerant evangelization-- he founded The Fraternity of the Most Holy Heart of Mary, Nuns in their own Homes (Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary), the Religious Library (a printing house), and the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretian Missionaries).

Claret understood, perhaps better than anyone else in his time, that lay people had to resume the same active role of evangelization that they had played in the very origins of the Church. Claret's charism for organizing and engaging the laity in evangelization took institutional form in a whole gamut of groups. Claret organized no less than twelve institutions for the laity.

How many people did he mobilize by means of these institutions? We do not know exactly how many. We know that in Cuba alone, the Archconfraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had more than 100,000 members. We also know that in 1868 in Spain, the Academy of St. Michael had more than 500 groups of fifteen members each.

3. THE MOST OUTSTANDING CLARETIAN LAY GROUPS

Not all of these lay institutions originated with Claret. Some were of his own creation, while others, already existing, were greatly expanded by him. The following are the ones that best represent the Lay Claretian charism.

a) The Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (1847)

In Claret's day, lay associations and fraternities were mainly pious and devotional groups. As Claret conceived it, this fraternity had several innovative traits:

- ! Its aim was not to promote lay piety, but to organize the laity for apostolic activity.
- ! It brought together in one association, priests and laity, men and women.

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- ! It broke with the paternalistic model of relationships which the clergy had generally maintained with the laity (See John M. Lozano's treatment of this matter in Constituciones y Textos, pp. 118-120).

This Fraternity, a true anticipation of 20th century Catholic Action, began functioning in Vic, Spain in 1847. The Archbishop of Tarragona refused to approve its statutes for two reasons: the "mixed" (clerical-lay) character of the Fraternity, and its inclusion of women in the active apostolate. This Claretian project had proved to be too far ahead of its times. Claret obeyed the archbishop, but not without some critical misgivings, as we can see from a letter to his friend, Canon Joseph Caixal, in January, 1848, accompanied by another set of rules for a very 'Claretian' project, called "Nuns in their own Houses": "I don't know what the Archbishop will have to say about this, since it states that they'll be teaching Christian doctrine. It's well known that he can't see women teaching...but I can see the great good that can be and is being done by some zealous women who are well instructed in catechizing" (Epistolario Claretiano, v.I, Letter #81).

b) Nuns in their own Homes (1847)

This group is ordinarily described in terms of Claret's foreseeing of Secular Institutes, a form of apostolic life which was not to receive its 'citizenship papers' until a hundred years later, with the publication of Provida Mater Ecclesia in 1947. However, it must be said that the little book, "Nuns in their own Homes," is a far cry from what we would expect to find in the statutes of a Secular Institute. In fact, the stress is less on secularity than on a flight from the world. What Claret offered in this book was a solution to the problem of women who felt called to the religious life, but were prevented by insuperable obstacles from entering the convent. Obstacles were such as poor health, lack of a dowry, family problems, or the difficulties posed by the political situation of the times. Claret offered them a project for a sort of religious life in the world: "If you could possibly enter a convent, I would encourage you with all my heart to do so" (NOH p.77). One page later, he tells them that, even though they cannot enter a convent, they "should not give up trying to be sisters, since you really can be sisters, and for this reason I have written the following rules and constitutions" (NOH p.78).

Nevertheless, this little book does contain the germinal idea of a Secular Institute. Claret does not view the inability to enter a convent as something disgraceful or fatal; on the contrary, he sees God's gracious plan in all this:

"But above all, we can see in this the designs of God's mercy for others, to whom God only knows how useful you may be, by remaining in the world... Perhaps

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God has made it impossible for you to enter the cloister, so that you might win these souls for him" (NOH p.90).

Claret undoubtedly saw the possibility of leading a consecrated life of great apostolic effectiveness amid the normal conditions of family and social life. Encased in this Claretian form of life, the seed of lay consecration was buried in the earth for a century. When history provided a favorable climate, it blossomed into the Secular Institute which we now call "Cordimarian Filiation."

e) The Academy of St. Michael (1858)

God inspired St. Anthony Claret with the idea for this important lay apostolate, as he lay recuperating from the grave wounds he had received during an assassination attempt at Holguin, Cuba in 1656. Through this institution, the Saint aimed at incorporating scientists, writers and artists into the work of evangelization. "Their exclusive aim will be to combat religious errors and human vices, by means of truth and virtue" (PA p.16). "Gathered together in a literary and artistic society, they will be able to join forces in combating errors, disseminating good books, and with them, good doctrine" (PA p.4).

The Academy was actually founded in 1858 in Madrid, and soon managed to enroll some of the most important literary and artistic personalities of the time. A few years after its foundation, Claret could write: "There are several branches in Madrid and in all the major cities of Spain, and the amount of good they are doing is incalculable" (Aut., n.332).

d) Popular Parish Lending Libraries (1864)

Claret, who was always alert to the signs of the times, realized that he was living in an era of great enthusiasm for reading, and he took advantage of the trend. "There is such a passion for reading that if people don't have good books, they'll read bad ones" (Aut., n.311). "Although not everyone can go to church to hear God's word, a book can go to a person's house" (Aut., n.310). This feeling had already led him to found a publishing house, the Religious Library, in 1848, and through it he had flooded Spain and its colonies with books, pamphlets, leaflets and holy cards. Through the Popular Parish Lending Libraries, he aimed at putting good books within everyone's grasp. "Since we are unable to send people missionaries, we provide them with good books" (Epistolario Claretiano, v.II, p.836).

The Popular Parish Lending Libraries quickly expanded to a hundred branches. However, they were to be short lived, since four years after their foundation they were swept away in the chaos of the Spanish Revolution of 1868, which sent Claret into exile in France.

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For our present purposes, one of the most interesting features of these libraries was the fact that they were completely entrusted to lay people. In practice, they depended on collaboration with the Academy of St. Michael.

e) The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine (1849)

Claret first established this Fraternity in Vic and brought it with him to Cuba in the following year. Lay catechists would go in pairs through the villages of Claret's immense Archdiocese. On arriving, they would ring a bell and catechize the children gathered together in a circle. In cities they would go into factories and workshops, or hold open air meetings.

4. TRAITS COMMON TO ALL THESE LAY GROUPS

a) Their Apostolic Character

All groups set in motion by Claret were oriented to the apostolate. Even those groups that were structured as 'pious associations' were committed to prayer for the conversion of sinners. No one can be considered a Claretian if he or she does not have a missionary spirit.

One thing that Claret demanded of all laypersons belonging to his institutions was apostolic zeal: "They should continually live a life consumed with zeal for the greater glory of God and the good of souls" (PA, p.42).

b) The Missionary Presence of Mary

Mary, especially the Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, held a prominent place in every work founded by St. Anthony Mary Claret (who added her name to his, at his episcopal ordination in 1850). In an age of Jansenistic coldness and pessimism, Claret saw Mary's Motherhood and her Heart as clear symbols of the nurturing kindness of a God who is not bent on condemning human beings, but on saving them.

Claret placed all of his institutions under the protection of the Heart of Mary, and relied on her not in some remote way, but as an active, maternal presence in their work. Mary, who was the first human being to receive the Good News in her Heart, as well as in her womb, evangelizes the Claretian. Her Heart is the furnace in which the apostle is formed

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(Aut., n.270). She sends the apostle out to evangelize, and she evangelizes through her apostle. This is her way of exercising her apostolic maternity in the Church. Claret liked to think of Mary as Queen of the Apostles, not only the original Twelve, but also all those modern apostles who, "gathered together in the Heart of Mary, form an awesome group" (RCLC, p.4).

The usual formula for entry into one of these lay groups fostered by Claret, consisted in an act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In fact, for many years, this was the formula for incorporation into the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

c) Lay Participation and Co-responsibility in Apostolates

It is here that Claret appears as a pioneer well in advance of his times, so that Pius XI could truly call him the great forerunner of Catholic Action. In his rules for the Popular Parish Lending Libraries, he insists that the laity, not priests, be totally responsible for running them, "since the latter are too busy with their own ministry, and do not have the opportunity to be involved with the townspeople, as laypersons do. Moreover, in these last times, it seems that *GOD WANTS LAY PEOPLE TO PLAY A GREAT ROLE IN THE SALVATION OF SOULS*" (Lib, p.18).

In the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine, Claret also insisted on the presence of laity on the parochial, regional and diocesan levels. Both on the parochial and diocesan Boards of the Fraternity, two of the voting members had to be laypersons (FCD II,1 and III, 1 and 3). In the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (1847), two of those voting on the Board of Directors had to be laypersons. In this group he also demanded the active participation of laywomen -- an idea which seemed altogether too daring to the Archbishop of Tarragona.

5. APOSTOLIC COMMITMENTS TO WHICH CLARET SUMMONED THE LAITY

The evangelizing activities in which Claret wanted the laity to be involved, coincide in great part with those which they are currently fulfilling in the Church. For Claret, the three great means of evangelization were prayer, witness, and the Word.

1) Prayer

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In the Autobiography, speaking of the means of evangelization, Claret states: "The first means I have always employed and still do is prayer. In my opinion, this is the greatest means that can be used for the conversion of sinners" (Aut, n.264). He desired to pass this personal conviction on to all of his lay groups.

In the statutes of the Pious and Apostolic Union of Prayer, he states that their aim is to cooperate in the salvation of souls, "especially by prayer, which is the most universal, the easiest and most effective means" (BNA, p.133). He especially recommended Marian prayer, but with an essentially apostolic thrust.

2) Life Witness

Claret stressed that the witness of a good life was a most effective means of the apostolate and a guarantee of its authenticity. He told the members of the Academy of St. Michael: "You may do a poor job of communicating the love of God and virtue to your peers, if you yourselves are not on fire with both" (PA, p.7). And he also reminded them that they "should at all times live in a good and holy manner, keeping the holy laws of God and the Church, perfectly fulfilling the duties of their state in life, edifying others by their good example, and giving scandal to no one" (PA, p.42).

Those who joined the Pious and Apostolic union of Prayer were above all asked to strive for "an exact fulfillment of the duties of their state in life" (BNA, p.71). And members of the Confraternity of the Heart of Mary were told "not only to avoid all sin, but also to practice the virtues and lead an exemplary Christian life" (3NA, p.71). All laypersons belonging to these groups were asked to lead a serious prayer-life and receive the Eucharist frequently.

3) The Word

The most genuine expression of the apostolic charism of St. Anthony Mary Claret was "the service or ministry of the Word, in the style of the Apostles" (DC, n.10). Evangelization by the written word should be an outstanding characteristic, not only of Claretian priests and religious, but of Lay Claretians as well.

a) The Written Word

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Claret considered the press as one of the most effective means of evangelization. He himself created a printing and publishing firm that had a tremendous influence on the evangelization of Spain during the second half of the 19th century. He asked that the Academy of St. Michael maintain at least one printery and bookstore in each country (PA, p.16). To some extent, he considered books to be more effective than preachers. In his Memoir of the Academy of St. Michael (1866) he states:

"Good books are the best of counsellors, always firm in their dictates. They are never upset if we neglect them. If we question them again, they calmly and carefully give us the same answer. They are always ready to instruct us, they are unafraid of work, they are not out after honors. They candidly speak the truth, upbraid, beseech and warn us, in all patience and doctrine. Our self love is never aroused against a good book which, without rancor, opposes our feelings" (op. cit., p. 13).

Among the activities of the Academy of St. Michael, writing and distributing books held a privileged place. To bring good books to the widest possible public, Claret formed the Popular Parish Lending Libraries. Members of the Fraternity of the Most Holy Heart of Mary were asked "to write good books and articles or to have them written; to distribute good books and edifying prints; to gather all the alms they can to buy good books, and to give them away free" (FHM, p.13).

b) The Spoken Word

Claret wanted to involve the laity in a number of forms of the apostolate of the spoken Word. The following stand out in a special way:

- Catechesis

Claret mobilized a vast number of laypersons for evangelization through catechesis. He wanted parents and teachers to become genuine teachers of the children God had entrusted to them, and for this purpose he prepared carefully explained catechisms, and even drew illustrations for them. In 1849 he founded the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine in Spain, and established it the following year in Cuba. "Its aim is to promote the teaching of Christian Doctrine during Lent, on all Sundays and Holy Days, and on other days when possible; not only in church, but in factories, homes, or any other place that may be deemed suitable" (FCD, art. 12)

- Teaching Others How to Pray

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Claret wanted laypersons not only to teach people their prayers, but also how to pray, to participate in the Eucharist and to make mental prayer (FHA, art.4). "Let them simply and briefly teach others a method for making mental prayer"(art.12). He tells the 'deaconesses' of the FHA "to teach the way of making mental prayer not only to young girls, but to older women as well" (art.19).

- Familiar Conversations

For Claret, this form of the apostolate of the Word supports that of the press. He counsels laypersons that, when they are distributing, lending or collecting books, they should take advantage of the situation to talk about the contents of the books (Memoir of the Academy, pp. 5 and 11). Good conversations "bring an immense benefit, not only to those who start them and keep them going, but also to those who hear them, since they enkindle the fire of God's love in both parties" (ibid., p.6).

4) Works of Charity and Social Advancement

St. Anthony Mary Claret had a deep concern for the poor and for their social advancement, although by present-day standards we can see that he could not altogether break through the somewhat paternalistic structures of his times.

In Cuba he started a number of quite modern agencies for social service (Aut, nn.562-568). He asked several of his lay institutions to become involved in work for the poor, the sick, the elderly, prisoners, orphans and widows (FHA, n.16). He tells the members of the Fraternity of the Heart of Mary to teach children and adults how to read (FHA, n.19), and asks its deaconesses to help in the work of rehabilitating "fallen women" (FHA, n.16).

6. DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LAY CLARETIAN LEGACY

All of the institutions created by Claret had to undergo two extremely harsh trials at almost the same time: the Spanish Revolution of 1868, and the death of their Founder in 1870. Nearly all of Claret's lay groups and associations perished in the test. The sole survivor was the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, which had been entrusted to the Congregation by Pontifical Rescript of October 19, 1860. This authorized the Congregation to establish the Archconfraternity wherever they preached. As late as Vatican II it still had a large membership, although its decline had already begun, and it went into rapid eclipse after the Council. This decline was due in large part to a failure to

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adopt the new theology of the laity, but also to the fact that the group remained a pious association without any serious commitment to the apostolate.

Nevertheless, during the 70 years following Claret's death, the Archconfraternity, and somewhat later the Cordimarian Youth, were practically the only institutionalized expressions in which some traits of the Claretian lay charism lingered on.

In view of the sorry fate of most of the lay groups created by Father Claret, the following are observations of note:

- 1) Claret certainly did not bind any of the lay apostolic groups he founded, to the Claretian Missionary Congregation. For him, the Congregation was one of the many institutions which he, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, started in the Church.

At one time, near the end of his life, he considered organizing a sort of great army of evangelizers under the protection and influence of the Heart of Mary. This proposed group would have been made up of the Claretian Congregation, diocesan priests, and laypersons. Within this unrealized project, it seems that he intended the Congregation to play a unifying, coordinating role.

He regarded the Congregation as his most important and cherished work, but he did not confer on it any authority or patronage over his other works, except, to some extent, over the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary.

- 2) Nor did the Congregation, once consolidated, assume the responsibility for maintaining and furthering the other institutions created by its Founder.
- 3) It seems undeniable that the Congregation lost a very important aspect of its Claretian heritage by failing to mine the extremely rich vein of the lay apostolate which Claret had uncovered. The drive to multiply lay evangelizers is an outstanding trait of Claret's missionary genius, and we, his Missionary Sons, have missed a golden opportunity by not supporting the lay works of our Founder, and by not following his example in founding new works aimed at fostering lay evangelizers.

The Congregation, under the strong hand of Father Xifre, who governed it for 41 years (1858-1899), turned in upon itself and, concentrating on its own development, successfully devoted its efforts to recruiting religious Claretian evangelizers, while neglecting lay evangelizers in the process.

Chapter Two

THE CLARETIAN COLLABORATORS (1938-1967)

The Claretian lay charism has never disappeared from the Church, although nearly all the groups in which it was visibly expressed during Claret's lifetime collapsed after his death. But the charism did live on in many laypersons who received it with the missionary spirit of Claret, and they have worked as genuine evangelizers in the Church, usually alongside the Missionaries of the Claretian Congregation.

In a circular letter of December 18, 1897, Father Xifre spoke of two kinds of persons who had the Congregation's interests at heart and who were in some sense forerunners of the Claretian Collaborators: Protectors and Benefactors. "Protectors use their talents and influence on our behalf," while "Benefactors, through their material support help us to subsist" (AN 1897, p.229)

In the Claretian General Archives, there are lists of these persons, yet these lists do not mention many people who could most genuinely be called Lay Claretians, namely, all those lay men and women who were involved with us in direct evangelization. And there were and are many of them. We need only think of the many catechists who have worked in our missions. Before the creation of the Claretian Collaborators in 1938, Father Postius recalls that they were preceded by the catechetical ministry of Father Clotet, by the Claret Institute in Ovalle, Chile, by Father Ozamis' Academia Claret, by the Missionary Union, and by the Apostles of the Heart of Mary in Equatorial Guinea.

Toward the beginning of this century (1907), Father Damian Janariz established the educational association of the Infantes del Corazon de Maria (Children of the Heart of Mary) in Aranda, Spain. An outgrowth of this association was Cordimarian Youth (a Claretian version of the Catholic Action movement), which showed considerable vitality from 1940-1970, but has now practically disappeared.

The two works that best exemplify the Claretian lay spirit during this period are the Claretian Collaborators (1938) and Cordimarian Filiation (1943), although the latter was for some time listed as a branch of the Collaborators.

1. THE ASSOCIATION OF CLARETIAN COLLABORATORS

1) The Idea

The idea for the Claretian Collaborators arose as the Congregation took stock of its need to intensify one means of evangelization which its Founder had enthusiastically used, the press, the apostolate of the written Word.

Claret's fifth successor in the leadership of the Congregation, Father Nicolas Garcia, in a circular letter of July 16, 1938 on the apostolate of the press, announced the formation of the Association of Claretian Collaborators, whose provisional rule had been approved by the General Government on May 22, 1938. In this letter, Fr. Garcia stressed our need to be faithful in the task of preserving our Founder's heritage:

"Few apostolic men can compare with him in the modern apostolate of the pen. Perhaps no one has surpassed him... The apostolate of the press is something proper of us, something very much in keeping with the Congregation... We cannot set aside this characteristic of our Father" (AN 1938, pp. 393, 397) Along with this apostolic trait of Claret, another great characteristic of his missionary genius was also being revived, his drive to multiply lay agents of evangelization. In another circular letter, Fr. Garcia recalled the great army of evangelizers created by Claret --Nuns in their own Houses, the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, the Academy of St. Michael, the Religious Library, etc. In conclusion, he stated, "This marvelous apostolate is our lawful heritage" (An 1939, p.4).

2) Motivation

The motives that gave rise to the Association of Claretian Collaborators were not as unmixed as we would perhaps like to think. We turned to the laity with the Congregation's needs uppermost in our minds, rather than with the aim of fostering the lay vocation as such. Independently of our own needs, we should have been helping them discover and achieve their own vocation as lay evangelizers. This would have been more in line with the ideas of Claret.

"The Congregation, in order to exercise the ministry of the press on the scale demanded by our state as missionaries and heirs of Father Claret, requires that we have collaborators" (AN 1939, p.400). "The achievement of this apostolate calls for a large number of personnel and for material resources. Although there are thousands of us Missionaries, there are not enough of us to incarnate our Founder's ideal. We need to ask for the cooperation and collaboration of new helpers" (AN 1939, p.5).

Although the point of departure for establishing the Collaborators was a scarcity of Claretian Religious, there was at least a glimmer of a richer motive, of which Claret had been aware, and which Vatican II would later stress with great clarity:

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The Claretian Missionaries, "by means of the Collaborators, will be able to gain access to circles which are sometimes off-limits to priests, and it is there that the Collaborators will be able to play an evangelizing role"(AN 1939, p.402).

3) Goals

The Goals of the Claretian Collaborators were quite subordinate to those of the Congregation. We might say that the Association was originally a work of the Congregation for the Congregation, rather than a work of our Founder, or even an attempt at recapturing Claret's model of a responsible and autonomous lay evangelizer.

"If they are well trained, they will be a wonderful means for spreading our thought (which will be that of God and the Church), of our reviews, our books, our vocation, our worship, our missions, our teaching centers, our ministries and our apostolic action" (AN 1939, p.401).

In Fr. Garcia's letter of January 25, 1940, to the directors of the Collaborators, he states that he is putting before them "the needs of the Congregation, which this year would be, first, an increase in our Postulancies and Novitiates as a source of missionaries to go throughout the world preaching the Holy Gospel, and second, the need to finish the great work of the Votive Temple" (AN 1940, p. 118). Note that these two objectives, together with sending aid to our missions, were the principal goals of the Claretian Collaborators.

4) Who Were the Claretian Collaborators?

Any person or group that was consecrated to the Heart of Mary, wanted to live according to the spirit of the Congregation and wished to collaborate in its apostolate, could be Claretian Collaborators (Statutes, 3.1). "Any person, of whatever age or profession, provided they are not positively unworthy, may belong to the work of the Claretian Collaborators" (1950 Rules, n.2, AN 1950, p.458).

The 1943 Statutes expressed the intention of restoring and incorporating into the Collaborators, the many works created by Claret, such as Diocesan Priests Living in Community, Nuns in their own Homes, Academy of St. Michael, Popular Lending Libraries, etc. None of these works existed at the time and none was to be established later, except for Nuns in their own Homes, which at that very time was being organized in Plasencia, Spain -- although the General Government seems not to have been aware of the fact as they were drawing up the statutes for the Claretian Collaborators.

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Although there were plans to incorporate the Collaborators in our works at the time they were being established, what actually happened was that their role was confined to providing economic aid for our seminaries and missions, and for the construction of the International Votive Temple in Rome, with no direct and personal commitment to works of evangelization.

In some parts of the Congregation, another group was considered to be genuine Collaborators were the catechists who worked with us. Fr. Ciuro wrote that the catechists in our missions in Equatorial Guinea were "an indispensable factor in the Christian organization of the people" and that they should be regarded as true Claretian Collaborators. Indeed, since 1930, there was a functioning school for the formation of catechists in Nkuefulan, founded by Fr. Gomez Marijuan. Within a few years this mission had lay catechists who, besides teaching catechism, prepared the people for the sacraments and led them in prayer on those Sundays when the Missionary could not get there to say Mass (AN 1940, p.346).

5) A Short Life

The Claretian Collaborators had, as such, a very brief life. Nowadays, one often hears people speak indiscriminately of Claretian Collaborators, Claretian Associates and Lay Claretians. I believe that they are all distinct groups, and that the Association of Claretian Collaborators no longer exists. Among the causes of their brief existences, I would single out the following:

- ! A lack of enthusiasm for this work, on the part of the Claretian Missionaries
- ! A lack of firm criteria for the selection and formation of members
- ! A failure to adapt to the new theology of the laity, stemming from Vatican II
- ! A lack of commitment to the work of direct evangelization.

Fr. Nicolas Garcia had already warned against some of these potential problems, "Our priests should not just think of multiplying numbers, but rather, of intensifying and active, sacrificing and apostolic spirit, so that we may form a compact body enlivened by one soul, one mind and one burning passion for the things of God" (AN 1945, p.68).

2. CORDIMARIAN FILIATION - FROM COLLABORATORS TO A SECULAR INSTITUTE

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Cordimarian Filiation began in 1943 in Plasencia, when three young women under the direction of Fr. Vicente Gomez chose as their rule of life St. Anthony Mary Claret's little book, "Nuns in their own Houses." The following year there were already four centers of Cordimarian Filiation in the Claretian Province of Betica. In 1944, the four Claretian directors in Spain met to draw up the first statutes of Cordimarian Filiation. These were approved by the Claretian General Government on October 1, 1946, and it was noted in the text that Cordimarian Filiation formed a part of the worldwide organization of Claretian Collaborators (art.2). The 1951 statutes bear the subtitle, "Section of the Claretian Collaborators."

Cordimarian Filiation expanded rapidly. In his memo to the 1949 Claretian General Chapter, Fr. J.M. Rodriguez stated that Cordimarian Filiation already had 15 centers with 253 members. A little later, centers were established outside Spain in Portugal, Colombia, Argentina, the USA, Italy and the Dominican Republic. By 1959 there were 64 centers with 709 members and postulants.

The publication of Provida Mater Ecclesia (1947) authorized a new state of consecrated life in the Church -- Secular Institutes. A year later, Primo Feliciter, another motu proprio from the Holy See, stated that:

"Societies of clerics or laypersons who profess Christian perfection in the world, and who have, in a certain and full degree, the elements and requisites prescribed in the Apostolic Constitution, Provida Mater Ecclesia, cannot and should not, under any pretext, be left arbitrarily among common associations of the faithful. Rather, they must be separated and elevated to the condition and form of Secular Institutes, which corresponds perfectly with their character and needs" (Primo Feliciter, I).

Some Claretians believed that Cordimarian Filiation was clearly included in these norms of the Church, and that it ought to become a full-fledged Secular Institute. Others disagreed. Therefore the Holy See was asked for a clarification:

"The Sacred Congregation of Religious was officially asked whether it was possible to apply the norms of Provida Mater Ecclesia to Nuns in their own Houses, without detracting from our Holy Founder's idea. And the official, but sure and normative response was that, far from departing from Father Claret's idea, its reform was the most effective means of safeguarding that idea, giving it consistency and assuring its success, and that the will of the Church was clear on this point" (Circular by Fr. Peter Schweiger, Oct. 23, 1957, AN 1957, p.327).

Consequently, the reform of the Cordimarian Filiation statutes was undertaken, in order to conform them to the Church's dispositions concerning Secular Institutes. The new

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statutes represent Cordimarian Filiation as a Secular Institute (art.5), but also go on to describe it as a "work proper" of the Congregation (art.87).

The process of autonomy that had begun did not please some Claretian Missionaries or even some groups of Cordimarian Filiation. This gave rise to divisions between Cordimarian Filiation groups who wanted to be faithful to Claret's idea by becoming a Secular Institute, and other Cordimarian Filiation groups who wanted to be faithful by remaining united to the Congregation as one of its "works proper." Both groups had support from Claretian Missionaries.

Fr. Peter Schweiger addressed this problem in a circular letter, October 23, 1957:

"It is clear to us that the changed course and new internal organization of the Association of Nuns in their own Houses has understandably produced some perplexity among us. It has been said that the new institution is no longer that of St. Anthony Mary Claret; that Cordimarian Filiation is not the same as Nuns in their own Houses; that the original members are disoriented and that the priests no longer feel like recruiting new members.

Once the Constitution Provida Mater Ecclesia was published, we did what our Founder would have done if he were alive and were leading the Nuns in their own Houses... Doubtless our Founder would not have had the slightest difficulty with adapting his institution fully to the guidelines of the Holy See. We know how deeply he was attuned to the Church in all things, and we know perfectly well what he would want us to do" (AN 1957, p.328).

Cordimarian Filiation continued its process of transformation. On December 8, 1959, the Sacred Congregation of Religious approved Cordimarian Filiation as a "work proper" of the Congregation, "in the style of a Secular Institute." The 1967 Cordimarian Filiation General Assembly definitively opted for juridical autonomy, in order to become a true Secular Institute, independent of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries.

On March 19, 1971, Arturo Tabera, CMF, Archbishop of Pamplona, recognized Cordimarian Filiation as a secular Institute of Diocesan Right. Two years later, Bishop Tabera, as Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes, signed the formal recognition of Cordimarian Filiation as a Secular Institute of Pontifical Right. With this, one group of Lay Claretians attained full autonomy from the Claretian Missionary Congregation. In the 1973 Cordimarian Filiation Statutes, there is no reference to dependence on the Congregation. There is only one reference to it, and that is within the broader circle of the Claretian Family,

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"Cordimarian Filiation, as part of the Claretian Family, is nourished by its spirituality and shares its apostolic concerns. It maintains fraternal bonds with other Claretian institutions, especially the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (Statutes, art.4).

The 1979 Cordimarian Filiation General Assembly introduced a new reference to the Congregation in their Statutes:

"The bonds of fraternity which Cordimarian Filiation maintains with the Claretian Congregation, presupposes not only the living of a common spirit, but also mutual collaboration in apostolic tasks, in order to carry out fully the mission in the Church which they have received from their common Founder" (art.50).

Two words sum up the new relationship, autonomy and fraternity. Cordimarian Filiation is no longer viewed as a work of the Congregation, but as a work of Claret. They are two sister institutions which share the same father.

It was surely necessary for Cordimarian Filiation to pass through a period as a "work proper" of the Congregation. The 1973 Claretian General Chapter was keenly aware of the plight of those Cordimarian Filiation groups that wanted to remain bound to the Congregation as Collaborators. The Chapter Document on Claretian Associates was, in part, a response to the situation and aspirations of these groups.

Are the members of Cordimarian Filiation still lay Claretians? Of course. They are not religious, but are laywomen who want to live the evangelical counsels in the world and from a context in the world. They incarnate a special way of being Claretian -- the way of consecrated laity.

3. "WORKS PROPER" OF THE CONGREGATION

Collaborators, Cordimarian Filiation, and later, Claretian Associates, have all been described as "works proper" of the Congregation. We should clarify the scope of this term, because of its repercussions in the past and its implications for the plans of the Lay Claretians.

Fr. Nicolas Garcia, in a letter informing the Congregation of the Holy See's approval of Claretian Collaborators and the Consecration of Families to the Heart of Mary as "works proper" of the Congregation, explains the nature of this privilege:

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"By the new rescript, these works become proper of our Congregation, united to it as an extension of its being. They do not become independent entities in the strict sense, but are always in company with the Congregation, its provinces, delegations and houses. They are like a Third Order, having their own life, but closely connected with the Congregation. These works are, so to speak, instruments and apostolic arms furnished us by Holy Mother Church" (AN 1945, p.64).

"Works proper" imply, thus, a certain liberty, communion and dependence:

- Liberty, on the part of the Congregation, which can establish them anywhere it exists, without need for authorization from the bishop;
- Communion with the Congregation, its spirit, charism and apostolic action;
- Dependence on the Congregation for their structure, government and apostolate.

These "works proper" do not have their own structure or anything resembling a vertebral column that would allow them to stand on their own their own two feet. They are like climbing vines that stand in virtue of their clinging to the Congregation. As far as their government is concerned, they depend totally on the superiors of the Congregation. All authority is vested in the Claretian Superior General and his delegates.

Thus, the Association of Collaborators "is governed by the Superior General in his own right and, in his name and delegation, by the major superiors of the Congregation" (AN 1945, p.85). "It shall have a general director, namely, the Superior General of the Congregation, as well as provincial and local directors who are all delegates of the Superior General. Nevertheless "each branch and section may have its board of directors, formed of Collaborators designated by the local superior" (AN 1950, p.459).

Fr. Garcia gave exaggerated importance to the role of the religious director of the Collaborators, "All works, great and small, depend on their directors and leaders. The director is the soul, life, impulse, heart and mind of these works" (AN 1950, p.117). This dependency extended even to the apostolate, "They should be good instruments of the apostolate of our Institute" (AN 1945, p.65) . "Their object is to aid this Congregation in its apostolic works" (AN 1950, p.558).

We can now see how this dependence figured with respect to Cordimarian Filiation. Its rules, as approved by the General Government in 1946, stated that :

"The general directorship belongs exclusively and totally to the Superior General of the Congregation" (n.19). "The provincial director will be named by the director general" (n.20). "The local director will be a priest of the Claretian Congregation, who will be responsible for the work in his locality, direct its meetings and approve its aspirants" (nn.22, 23).

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A decree of the S.C. of Religious, dated August 10, 1959 and signed by Claretian Fathers Arcadico Larraona and Anastasio Gutierrez, recognized the following as "works proper" of the Congregation -- The Consecration of Families to the Heart of Mary, the Claretian Collaborators, the Children of the Heart of Mary, Cordimarian Youth, Cordimarian Filiation, the Pious Missionary Union of the Heart of Mary, and the Marian Union of Suffrages (AN 1959, p.149).

Chapter Three

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1967

THE LAITY AS AGENTS OF EVANGELIZATION

The fundamental objective of the 1967 Chapter was the renewal of the Congregation and the adaptation of its Constitutions to the requirements of Vatican II. The Chapter adopted the Council's teaching on laity and applied it to laypersons connected with the Congregation through its Associations (See AP, 73).

The Council had stressed the laity's vocation to holiness, and their essential and irrevocable status as evangelizers in virtue of their belonging to the People of God, of their baptismal consecration, of their Confirmation and of their sharing in the Eucharist.

The guidelines of the 1967 Chapter concerning the laity, which were in some respects new, may be summed up in the following three points.

1) Above All, Laity as Agents of Evangelization

The aim of our work with the laity is to raise up and form evangelizers. Until now, we have viewed our lay associations as a field for our apostolate, as a place for evangelization. Our main objective was to develop the Christian life of their members, a life characterized by fidelity to moral norms and religious practices. We sometimes asked them to undertake certain apostolic commitments, but this dimension was not stressed.

Two tendencies surfaced during discussions at the Chapter. One group kept insisting that our activity "be mainly directed toward their spiritual awakening," while another group held that "the object of these associations was not so much our accomplishing our apostolate with them, as our enabling them to engage in apostolic action for which they themselves were mainly responsible" (Acta of the 1967 Chapter, p.145).

The 1967 Chapter Document on the Apostolate reflects the second point of view:

"The promotion of the lay apostolate by our Missionaries must aim at fostering the development of the special ecclesial vocation of laypersons themselves, and at augmenting the evangelizing work of the Church (AP, 75).

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Speaking of youth ministry, the Chapter states that its goal is to help each individual to discover and respond to his or her vocation as an evangelizer, whether as a priest, a religious or a layperson (AP, 80).

As regards our Associations, the Chapter observed on their overall decline, and stated that the only solution for this was by way of living the Claretian charism -- apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary and commitment to an active apostolate (Minutes, p.146). "Aware of the general crisis in pious associations, the Chapter urges the Missionaries responsible for our associations to develop the spiritual heritage of these associations, and to get them involved in truly apostolic lay activity" (AP, 82).

2) Associate the Laity in our Apostolate

"One highly effective way to link the lay apostolate with the apostolate proper of our Institute, would be to use lay groups in our missionary campaigns in Christian countries, and to incorporate lay apostles, foreign-born or native, in our missions to non-Christians" (AP, 83). Here we can see that the Chapter has surpassed the older attitude that regarded the Collaborators almost exclusively as benefactors of the Congregation. What is now asked of them, above all, is a serious commitment to evangelization.

There is also an important change of attitude regarding our motives for drawing upon lay resources. We do not approach them to make up for our limitations, offering them those complementary or supplementary tasks that we ourselves cannot cover. Their missionary vocation does not arise from our limitations, but from their very being as Christians, and from their specifically lay vocation. We are no longer offering them tasks where they act as our substitutes; rather, we are offering them channels whereby, with full responsibility, they can develop their own Christian lay vocation.

3) The Claretian Lay Wing

The Chapter speaks of the need to form a Claretian lay wing made up of laypersons who feel an identity with the Claretian spirit (AP, 84). "The Congregation joyfully and gratefully accepts the aid of those laypersons, either singly or in groups, who voluntarily choose to serve the Church from within our charism and participating in the works proper of the Congregation" (AP, 77). "In response to the desires of many laypersons --former students, Claretian ex-seminarians, relatives of Claretians, and certain members of our associations-- the Chapter affirms, in principle, the opportuneness of a Claretian lay wing along the missionary lines of our charism, characterized by our consecration to the Heart of Mary, and even open to the model of a Secular Institute" (AP, 84).

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What did the Chapter mean by a "Claretian lay wing"? And even in this case, what was the derivation of the adjective "Claretian"? Did it mean "of Claret," or "of the Claretian Congregation"? In other words, was it the Chapter's intention to create a lay wing of the Congregation, or to restore the lay wing of the Claretian Family which Claret had planned? Everything leads us to believe that the Chapter was speaking of a lay wing of the Congregation, one that would arise from a sharing of its own spirit and mission with groups of laypersons. The Chapter speaks of laypersons who are to "serve the Church from within our charism" (AP, 77).

One more proof that the 1967 Chapter was thinking of a lay wing of the Claretian Congregation, is the fact that the Constitutions that were later drawn up along this Chapter's guidelines devote a whole chapter to the "Associates of the Congregation." For the first time in the history of our constitutional texts, the Constitutions include a chapter dedicated to the laity. Moreover, this chapter is located in the second part of the Constitutions, which deals with "The Members of the Congregation." This would lead us to believe that these Associates were considered as members of the Congregation. And this is in fact the way in which some religious and laity have understood the matter, as we shall see when we come to deal with the Congress in Rio de Janeiro.

Chapter Four

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1973: THE CLARETIAN ASSOCIATES

In the period immediately preceding the 1973 Chapter, one of the most important sections of the Claretian Collaborators, Cordimarian Filiation, achieved its autonomy. Many persons, even whole groups, refused to continue belonging to a Cordimarian Filiation that was no longer a "work proper" of the Congregation. The Congregation had to look to the welfare of these lay groups, precisely because they wanted to be bound more closely to the Congregation. The General Chapter had to say something to these groups, and it had to think about offering them some sort of organization.

At the same time, especially in Latin America, groups of associates of a quite different character were being formed. These groups were not made up simply of single women with private vows, but of married couples and single people of both sexes focused around some work of the Congregation and directly committed to the apostolate. The Chapter also had to say something to these groups.

In January, 1972, a number of Latin American Claretian Provincials met in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) to discuss, among other topics, that of Claretian associates. The document prepared at this meeting served as a basis for the Chapter Document on Associates which in some points literally reproduces the Belo Horizonte document.

The Congregation's thinking about Associates at this time, is reflected in three official documents coming directly or indirectly out of the 1973 General Chapter:

- The 1973 Chapter Document on "The Associates of the Congregation";
- Ch.12, Part II of the Constitutions, worked out by the General Chapter;
- The Directory (nn. 250-255) drawn up by a post-chapter commission, and published in 1975.

We are now going to sum up this thinking in four points. I repeat that this was the thinking of the Congregation, not of the Associates, since the latter did not participate in the development of the theme, nor did they have any input into the Chapter.

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1. WHO IS, OR CAN BE, A CLARETIAN ASSOCIATE?

In the Spanish version of the 1973 Constitutions, we read that:

"There are others who are also incorporated in the Congregation, better to serve the whole Church by sharing the same spirit and participating in the same apostolic mission" (n.164). "Priests, deacons, and lay men and women may be Associates of our Congregation, whether they are evangelically professed or are following their vocation in the world" (n.165).

The General Chapter Document on Associates states simply that:

"Those of the clergy and laity who share in the Claretian charism and are committed permanently, in varying degrees, to live that charism in communion with the Congregation of Missionaries, are considered to be Claretian Associates (AS, 4.1).

The Directory, which contains the norms of Canon Law applied to specifics of the Claretian Missionaries, adopts the last cited paragraph almost literally, adding the words, "and are committed to work toward common objectives" with the Congregation.

The Chapter speaks of various classes of Associates, distinguishing them according to their varying degrees of commitment. Thus, it distinguishes:

- a. Married couples;
- b. Single persons without vows or promises;
- c. "Evangelically committed persons," including those with vows.

As a criterion, "according to their varying degrees of commitment," is not a very clear one. Commitment to whom? Moreover, it would seem that the various classes are ranked according to their degree of closeness to a mode of "evangelical" (= religious) life. In this case, it would be a very poor criterion, since there is no good reason why a lay vocation should imitate the religious life.

The phrase "evangelically committed" as applied to only one of these classes is not a happy choice, since it would lead us to think that only they had an evangelical commitment, and that they formed an ideal to which all Associates ought to aspire. This idea is not very far from the 1967 Chapter's statement on the "opportuneness of a Claretian lay wing...open to the model of a Secular Institute" (AP, 84). It is quite obvious, however, that married couples and single persons without vows can be evangelically committed just as truly as these others.

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Perhaps this threefold classification of Associates was meant as a word of esteem and affirmation for the groups of consecrated members who separated from Cordimarian Filiation.

The 1975 Directory seems to hold this same attitude when it states:

"Special attention will be given to those groups of Associates who live, in the world and from a context in the world, the evangelical dimension which our Holy Founder conceived of in his early project" (Dir., n.254).

As regards these statements, we should note that not all of the lay apostolic projects of Claret involved living "the evangelical dimension" (expressed in vows). Quite the contrary: only Nuns in their own Houses involved a consecration of this sort, and this was certainly not the only project for the lay apostolate planned by Claret.

In the 1973 Chapter Documents, in the Directory, and even in the General Statutes issued in 1976, one can note a certain preference for Claretian Associates who have made some sort of "consecration."

2. TWO MAIN TRAITS OF A CLARETIAN ASSOCIATE

Summing up the teaching of the 1973 Chapter Document on Associates, of the 1973 Constitutions, and of the 1975 Directory, we would say that Claretian Associates are characterized by the following traits:

a) They share the same Charism and Mission as the Congregation does

"They share its missionary charism" (Dir., n.250). "They share the same spirit and participate in the same apostolic mission"(CC 1973, n.164). Precisely because they have the same charism, spirit and mission as the Congregation does, they tend to be regarded as a prolongation of the Congregation and in some sense as members of it. According to this way of thinking, in order to perform their apostolic works, Associates would have to receive their mission from the superiors of the Congregation.

b) They live their Charism and fulfill their Mission in communion with the Congregation

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"They are committed permanently, in varying degrees, to live this charism in communion with the Congregation...to work toward common objectives" (Dir, n.250). According to this, association with the Congregation, far from being something accidental, is quite essential to this lay movement, and it must be expressed in some sort of stable and mutually acknowledged commitment.

c) Apostolic Spirit

No one can properly be termed a "Claretian" unless he or she has a missionary spirit and feels impelled, like Claret, by the love of Christ (See CC 1973, n.166; Dir., n.251; AS, n.4, 2a).

d) Life Witness "in the style of the Apostles" (Dir., n.251)

"All of which presupposes a following of Christ similar to that undertaken by the first Apostles" (AS, n.4, 2b).

e) Direct or Indirect dedication to the missionary service of the Word

In doing so, they should use all apt means, such as a keen sensitivity to what is most urgent, timely and effective (See AS 4,2c; Dir., n.251).

f) Apostolic Consecration to the Heart of Mary

The Heart of Mary is the "forge" in which a religious or lay Claretian is shaped as a missionary. She evangelizes us, and through us, she evangelizes others (See CC 1973, n. 166, Dir., n.251; AS 4,2d)

g) Living all of these traits in a lay, secular way

This is the aspect which most clearly characterizes Associates as distinct from Claretian religious.

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CONGREGATION

The relationship between Associates and the Congregation, during the period between the 1973 and 1979 General Chapters, is characterized more by a model of communion-with-dependence, rather than a model of autonomy-and-communion.

a) Communion with the Congregation

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Communion with the Congregation is strongly stressed in all official documents. The 1973 Constitutions state that Associates "are united with us in proclaiming the Good News" (n.165), and "share our spirit and participate in the same mission" (n. 164).

b) Tension between Autonomy and Dependence

The 1973 Chapter Document on Associates defends a considerable degree of autonomy for Associates, which marks a great change from earlier positions. It calls for co-responsibility of Associates with the Congregation, and teamwork in reviewing, programming and executing their work in common (AS 4.3). It goes on to state that:

"Groups of Claretian Associates will enjoy total autonomy" (5.1). "The discipline or organization needed by these groups should arise within them, and not be imposed by the Congregation" (5.2). The Congregation should not direct them, but simply help them, "so that they may arrive at their own maturity (5.1). It should offer them its services in accord with their needs for reformation and orientation (5.3).

Along these same lines, the Open Letter of the 1973 General Chapter states that:

"The Congregation should give them an efficacious testimony of fraternity in the Claretian spirit by aiding them in their spiritual formation, by encouraging them, by assisting them in the development of their apostolates, etc." (OL n.36).

In contrast, the Directory, which has more juridical weight than the document on the Associates of the Congregation at the Chapter of 1973, is clearly on the side of dependence. The same is true of the 1973 Constitutions, which make it understood that the Associates must be governed by the statutes of our "works proper," as approved by the Holy See in 1943 -- which means total dependence (See CC1973, n.168).

The Claretian Directory is even more explicit:

"Since the Associates are an embodiment of the work proper of the Claretian collaborators, approved by the Holy See, then their linkage, even on a juridical level, to the Congregation, is recognized through its major superiors" (Dir, n.253).

This would put things back to the situation of dependence of 1943, when associates were considered as "instruments of our apostolate," completely controlled by us. On this point, certainly, the Directory is far out of line with the teaching of Vatican II on the laity.

This tension between autonomy and dependence continued until the 1979 General Chapter.

4. ORGANIZATION

From 1973 to 1979, the Congregation attempted to work out a sort of organization common to all groups of Associates. The 1975 Directory mentioned the need of establishing for the Associates "fitting norms of life, worked out in dialogue with them" (n.252).

The General Prefecture of Religious Life drew up some statutes which it sent for correction to provincial delegates and to groups of Associates. These statutes came in for a good deal of criticism, for two fundamental reasons: 1) because they only referred to Associates with "evangelical commitments," as if that were the ideal type of Associate; 2) because they were rooted in the Constitutions of the Claretian Missionaries and suffered from a certain imitationism of the religious life. With these corrections to the Provisional Statutes in mind, the General Government drafted the "Fundamental General Statutes for Claretian Associates" (AN 1976, pp. 300-309). These statutes aimed at forming a common ground within which each group could shape its own statutes, "which must be approved, after respectful dialogue, by the Claretian Superior General" (n.19c). They continue to represent the Claretian Associates as a "work proper" of the Congregation:

"Nevertheless, since these 'Claretian Associates' belong to the 'work proper' of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries, according to the norms of the Holy See, they depend, in the ultimate instance, and without prejudice to the autonomy due them, to the Superior General of the aforesaid Congregation and his Delegates, as the symbol and bond of union, and as the source of their apostolate" (AN 1976, p. 304).

After this, four groups of 'evangelically committed' Associates presented their own statutes for the Superior General's approval, which he granted, with a few emendations, on the following dates: 2/2/77, Missionary Daughters of the Imm. Heart of Mary (Brazil); 3/19/78, Claretian Women Associates, Evangelically Committed to the Service of Evangelization through the Word (Colombia); 8/22/78, Claretian Missionary Laywomen (Mexico); 10/24/78, Claretian Fraternity (Italy). All of these particular statutes recognize their group as a 'work proper' of the Congregation; hence, they depend on the Superior General and his Delegates. The General Assembly of each group is presided over by the Superior General or his Delegate, with voice and vote. The Superior General confirms the election of the Coordinator (Mexico). If any internal problems arise, members always have the right of recourse to the Superior General or to the Provincial Superior (Mexico and Colombia).

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5. THE 1976 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CLARETIAN CONGREGATION

The Claretian General Assembly held in Costa Rica from November 15 to December 3, 1976, also dwelt on the theme of the Claretian Associates, especially in connection with the missions (See AN 1976, pp. 460-463).

The Assembly urged Provinces to create a program for promoting Associates, and asked that a greater effort be made to send laity to our Missions, after previously providing them with a careful preparation for their work.

Neither of these recommendations has received the immediate support that might have been expected. However, programs for Lay Missionaries have begun in several provinces and have been functioning successfully for several years (1994). Some of these programs have extensive formation and preparation before leaving for the mission to which they are assigned. Commitments differ from province to province. The Lay Missionaries are usually a part of the mission pastoral plan. The laity usually work in a collaborative participative way with the Claretians.

Chapter Five

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AT RIO DE JANEIRO

The First International Congress of Claretian Associates was held in Rio de Janeiro from April 17 to 21, 1979. Eighty Claretians attended, one-third of them religious and two-thirds laity. The laity represented groups from a dozen countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, England, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain and Venezuela.

The study areas proposed for small group and full session discussion were as follows:

- 1.- The Charism and mission of the Claretian Associates.
- 2.- New Lay Ministries.
- 3.- Personal Promises and Integration of Lay Associates into the Claretian Congregation.
- 4.- Promotion of Lay Associates through the Formation of Basic Communities and through the Exercise of "New Ministries."
- 5.- Organization and Ecclesial Interrelation Among Groups.
- 6.- Planning with a View to the Future, and to the Upcoming General Chapter.

As representative expressions of the predominant ideas at the Congress, the following remarks are limited to the inaugural address by the Claretian Superior General, and the final Conclusions of the Congress.

1. ADDRESS BY FATHER GENERAL

Father Antonio Leghisa, then Superior General of the Congregation, opened the Congress with an important address which awakened the interest and enthusiasm of all present. Father Leghisa summed up the relationships that should exist between the Associates and the Congregation, as well as some of the aspirations of both parties. I will now summarize some of the ideas expressed in this address.

a) The Associates are Necessary for the Congregation

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They are necessary for two reasons -- because they complete its very being, and because they complete its apostolic activity.

1) They are necessary because Claretian Religious are few, "and we alone can not carry out our mission. There are fewer vocations to the priesthood and brotherhood in the Church, yet there are more fronts to work on" (13).

2) They are necessary because there are places and social strata where we as religious cannot go. "There are areas which are inaccessible to us as priests and brothers... and these too must be illumined and enriched by the Claretian charism" (13).

3) The Congregation needs them in order to develop its own charism to the full. "I don't know if it is too daring to state that the Congregation cannot fulfill its evangelizing charism without your collaboration" (15). They are necessary "in order to live our charism more theologically...and because our charism is more complete because of their collaboration" (3). "It has been said that the Associates have been chosen by the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill the mission of Claret, which has been entrusted to the Congregation" (33).

b) The Associates are Part of the Congregation and Need to be Integrated

- They are born of the Congregation as the "fruit of the ecclesial feeling of the Claretian Congregation" (10).
- They are "in a sense, members of the Congregation" (11).
- They participate in our charism and "are very Claretian, some of them perhaps more so than we who have made a profession of Claretianism" (1).
- "Let us keep this idea clearly before us, Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of our charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters" (34). (Charism, mission, sons and daughter!)
- Hence their integration must be total, "Their primary integration is that which comes with participation in the same charism and mission of the Congregation, achieved by some through their religious vocation and by others as laypersons" (36).
- If we are here at all, it is because we want the Claretian Associates to have their voice and their determination in the Congregation, insofar as that is possible" (29).

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c) Aspirations of the Associates

"What they want of the Congregation, according to what they have told me, is:

- Greater recognition and interest, and for the Congregation to devote more time to these works.
- To share the Congregation's apostolic unrest.
- A better Claretian, Apostolic and Cordimarian formation.
- To be, not "alongside," but "in" the Congregation, perfectly integrated.
- That our communities open to them our doors, our fraternity, our spirit.
- To share in our missionary spirituality, centered in evangelization.
- Greater involvement in the local Church.
- To be called in on our local, provincial and general planning.
- To participate in our courses of continuing formation, in order to be, in truth, more Claretian.

2. CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AT RIO

The dominant idea behind all the conclusions worked out by the Congress at Rio is this: Religious and Lay Claretians have one and the same charism and mission to fulfill in the Church, and must hence bend their efforts toward a greater **communion, integration and co-responsibility**. These three words sum up perfectly the central theme of the Conclusions. Along with this theme, we may also point out others that were less prominent.

a) The Basic Idea

The Congress starts out from the principle that Claretian Religious and Claretian Associates have one and the same charism and mission, transmitted through one and the

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same person, St. Anthony Mary Claret. Some live this charism-mission in the context of the religious state and others live it in the context of the lay state.

"Mutual acceptance and coming together should grow out of a joint search for and accomplishment of our mission" (1.2). "In order to assure unity, Lay Claretians should depend in the last instance on the Superior General, who is the symbol of unity in our charism and mission" (6.7). "Communion in our common mission should be established on the various levels of prayer, renewal, action and government" (2.2).

b) The Dominant Idea: Communion, Integration, Co-responsibility

It came to light that relations between the Congregation and the Associates were often characterized by ignorance and lack of interest. Groups of Associates have been more closely bound to individual Claretians, than to communities, provinces or the Congregation as such. This situation must be overcome. For this reason, the Conclusions of the Congress stress taking measures to bring about a change in the relationships between the Congregation and the Associates.

1) Measures for Obtaining Greater Integration and Co-responsibility

In the first place, beginning and continuing formation:

- "Candidates for the Claretian Congregation should be formed in a spirit of co-responsibility with the laity" (3.1).
- "Joint continuing formation of religious and lay Claretians should be favored: also contact at Provincial Assemblies, short courses in formation, retreats and shared get-togethers, fraternal welcome, joint planning, mutual aid..." (3.2).
- "Lay Claretians should be informed of the dates for provincial and general visitations, sufficiently in advance to avail themselves of these opportunities for encounters between the laity and the Congregation" (2.6).
- "Claretian feasts should be celebrated in common" (2.4).
- "General and Provincial Bulletins and, in general, all Claretian publications concerning them, should reach the Associates. Publications by the Associates should likewise reach the Congregation" (8.1).

2) How Far Should This Integration Go?

- "Without prejudice to the identity and autonomy of either group, there should be joint pastoral planning" (4.2).

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- "It is suitable, when warranted, for Lay Claretians to take part in pastoral and provincial councils" (4.5).
- "Lay Claretians may be represented at Chapters of the Congregation in some manner. It is suggested that competent bodies in the Congregation study channels to enable such sharing in future Chapters, even with voice and vote, in matters pertaining to the laity" (5.2).
- "Provinces and local communities of the Congregation should be responsibly open to active mutual sharing, especially in what concerns the discernment and achieving of our common mission" (2.3).
- "Joint pastoral planning...demands full co-responsibility in activities that are jointly carried out by religious and lay Claretians" (4.3).
- Finally, there should be a certain sharing of goods. "Starting from the demands of the Gospel, we should study the feasibility of a sharing of goods between the Associates and the Congregation (9.1). "In every case, there should be an availability for mutual aid" (9.2).

Underlying these aspirations for participation and co-responsibility within the proper spheres of the Claretian Congregation, such as councils, provincial and general chapters, is the idea that Associates are part of the Congregation. The implication is, then, that they are not properly "associates" --they are not "alongside"-- but rather, "in" the Congregation.

3) Other Themes in the Conclusions

a. Interrelation and Communication

An effort should be made to interrelate the different groups of Claretian Associates by creating a minimal organization which will unite them and foster the creation of channels for encounter and communication.

- "Charismatic groups still need some sort of structuring, however minimal, in order to avoid subjective interpretations of their charism, or a dispersal of energies" (5.1).

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- "There must be some minimal structure and bonds that identify all groups. Upon this structure, the distinguishing features of each group can be added" (6.1).
- "A secretariat for matters relating to Lay Claretians should be established in the Congregation" (5.3).
- "Annual regional meetings of Lay Claretians should be fostered" (2.5). "Zonal, regional and national encounters should be programmed annually" (8.2).
- "As far as possible, Lay Claretians should have media of communication, and in each group a special delegate for communications should be designated" (8.3).

b. Formation

Some attention was paid --although not enough, considering the need for it-- to formation. Some subject matters for formation were suggested. "Every formation program should include these key points: charism, mission and Claretian spirituality"(3.5). "Meetings for lay formation should be fostered on all levels" (3.3). "Joint continuing formation between religious and lay Claretians should be favored" (3.2).

c. Name

The designation used for lay Claretians is not an arbitrary matter: names should indicate content and meaning. Mention was made of "sympathizers...collaborators... Claretian missionary fraternity...lay Claretians." The Congress manifested its preference for the designation, "Lay Claretians," although in its conclusions, it sometimes refers to "Associates."

3. ACCORDING TO RIO, WHO AND WHAT ARE THE LAY CLARETIANS?

Throughout its 50 conclusions, there is no clear description of what a Lay Claretian is. This was one of the shortcomings of the Congress. There was one presentation on this

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theme at the beginning of the Congress, but it did not have sufficient influence on the conclusions.

- *"We believe that the apostolic traits distinguishing a Lay Claretian are, among others: having a vision of the reality from within which one is starting; being creative and critical; living out one's political commitment; making one's own, Christ's option for the poor" (4.7).*

But this is a very partial list, and it lacks what one might call more specifically Claretian traits -- evangelization in the style of the Apostles, the service of the Word, apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary, etc. It is true that in speaking of the designation "Lay Claretians," it was stated in passing that "a Lay Claretian is one who is living the charism (= is involved in a Claretian work), either singly or in a group. The Lay Claretian shares in the charism and mission by working in a well defined commitment" (7.1b).

A chronicler of the Congress wrote: "The final impression, though not necessarily a unanimous one, is that there was a lack of theological light and depth. Some felt that there was not enough in-depth study of the theological identity of the Lay Claretian. Paths for missionary spirituality and action were not traced out, nor were any concrete options taken with respect to the present reality of the Church and the world. Everything focused on the clarification of nomenclature, organization, bonds and the relationship between religious and lay Claretians" (T. Cabestrero).

The short final letter from the participants to their brothers and sisters in the greater Claretian Family, provides a richer vision of what a Lay Claretian is, by summing up Fr. Viñas' contribution on the charism-mission of the Lay Claretian:

"A Lay Claretian is a baptized person in whom the Holy Spirit unfolds and intensifies the prophetic being he or she received in Baptism, through a communion of charism with St. Anthony Mary Claret. The Spirit makes such a person sensitive to the urgent needs of the Church and the world, causes him or her to search for the most opportune Gospel responses to these needs, and stirs up his or her creativity in order to transmit these responses through the most effective means. Such a person embraces Christ's option for the poor. Such a person seeks to enter, with his or her gifts, into the Claretian mission in the Church, in co-responsibility with the Congregation."

Although the Congress did not go deeply enough into some themes of great importance for Lay Claretians, it was a positive achievement and an enthusiastic encounter between brothers and sisters who had previously not known each other. The Congress of Rio gave an impulse to the Claretian lay movement and to the growth of the great Claretian Family.

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Obviously, its conclusions needed substantial qualifications, but these were accomplished in part at the 1979 General Chapter, and continued to be improved in the calm of future reflections.

Chapter Six

THE CLARETIAN GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1979:

THE LAY CLARETIANS

The topic of the Associates was something of a news item from the outset, since the General Government sent an advance notice inviting four Associates to attend the General Chapter, although it left it up to the Chapter members to actually approve their attendance after the Chapter had opened. Some Chapter members felt that this put some pressure on the Chapter's freedom, since the Associates had already been invited and were on their way to Rome. Others, on the contrary, viewed the General Government's gesture as a good response to the aspirations recently expressed by the Associates at the Congress in Rio. Still others felt that there was no reason for this privileged treatment, since the right thing to do would have been to invite the Associates to the "Claretian Family Day," just like all the other institutions related to St. Anthony Mary Claret.

Beneath this contrasting facade of opinions, there were different notions of what Lay Claretians should be and how they were connected with the Congregation. For some, they were a part of the Congregation and should therefore participate in the Chapter, even with voice and vote. For others, in contrast, the Associates were just one more institution among many in the Claretian Family.

"One Chapter member noted that the Claretian spirit is multiform, and is to be found in the Claretian Missionaries, in Cordimarian Filiation, in the Claretian Associates and in the Claretian Missionary Sisters. If we wanted to have a focus for common dialogue, the proper thing to do would be to convoke an assembly of all those who share this Claretian Spirit. We, however, are gathered here only as members of the Claretian Congregation, and it does not seem right for other groups to take part.

"Other Chapter members responded that, although other Claretian groups have their own independent and well-defined existence, the Claretian Lay Associates are, on the one hand, bound to us in a special way without their own autonomy and, on the other hand, are mentioned in our Constitutions" (Minutes, p.10).

The Associates were allowed to attend some sessions of the Chapter, but only to inform it concerning the groups they represented, and to deliver the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio de Janeiro. It was also agreed that they might participate in "the discussion of those

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aspects of our Claretian mission which directly affect them, but not in our decisions on such themes" (Minutes, p.31).

In fact, the Associates intervened only twice in the Chapter Hall. Once, to inform the Chapter about their groups (Minutes, p.77), and a second time, to present the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio (Minutes, p.93). They were also present at the "Claretian Family Day," together with the other institutions related to St. Anthony Mary Claret.

The presentation of the Conclusions of the Congress at Rio was met with a clear division of opinions. Some felt that the Conclusions were totally out of focus, since they were based on the assumption that the laypersons in question formed part of the Congregation. Others, in contrast, felt that they were precisely on target, and held that the Chapter should respond to them affirmatively. Finally, it was decided to send a message of encouragement to the Lay Claretians, a message that would also be an overall response to their aspirations. Even on this, not all the Chapter members were agreed, as we read in the Acta of the Chapter: "It was questioned whether the message should be addressed to the Lay Claretians alone, or to the whole Claretian Family, with special mention of the Lay Claretians" (Minutes, p.122).

Some Chapter members or Associates may have viewed these discussions as displaying a degree of animosity against the Lay Claretian movement. I do not believe that there was any such animosity, but simply a genuine desire to do a thorough job of clarifying the nature of the Associates and the kind of bonds that should exist between them and the Congregation. The thought of the 19th General Chapter concerning Lay Claretians is expressed in three documents:

- The Chapter's Message to Lay Claretians Throughout the World;
- The Constitutions of the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries;
- The Mission of the Claretian Today.

1. CHAPTER'S MESSAGE TO LAY CLARETIANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

This message, drawn up by a small commission, was minutely discussed on the floor of the Chapter. Its final draft was approved by a vote of 63 pro and 8 con.

The discussion began on the subject of how to designate this lay movement, keeping in mind that it was not a matter of empty names, but of content. Some wanted to abandon earlier designations and to refer to all its members in the future simply as "Lay Claretians." Others wanted to continue with the title of "Claretian Associates. In the

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voting, 39 were for "Lay Claretians," while 27 favored "Claretian Associates" (Minutes, p.124). Even so, the Lay Claretians were still referred to here and there in the document as "Associates."

This document, written in a truly encouraging and supportive style, is rich in doctrine and notably innovative in respect to previous conceptions of the Lay Claretians. In what follows, we shall attempt to focus on some of the highlights of the document.

a) A Different Way of being Claretians

We both have a common Father, but a distinct charism, a different way of being Claretians. This is perhaps the greatest change of posture. Up to the 1979 Chapter, it had generally been held that we and the Associates shared the same charism and mission, and a phrase often used was "our common mission." In this document there is an important change. The Associates are no longer considered to be a "work proper" of the Congregation:

"Something common unites us. The same person who is at the origin of our vocation is also at the origin of your vocation, and he shapes both. We have a different form of being Claretians, and yet there is a force that makes us converge, with our own special gifts, in building up the Church as Claret wished it to be done, both through his Missionaries and through laypersons, by different forms of service to the Gospel. From this convergence of different gifts, there results a true Claretian communion" (n.3).

The preceding paragraph and other passages in the document recognize that the Lay Claretians have their own being and their own charism.

"We all know that the work of Claret goes beyond our own frontiers. By the grace of God, there are other Claretian groups whose intercommunion is required by the Claretian vocation. Your riches are our riches. Your power is the expression of the sweeping vitality of Claret's spiritual being. Both of us must always respect our distinctiveness, your special charism, your own mission as laypersons in all the rigor of your secularity" (n.7).

No longer is it held, as it was before the Chapter, that the Lay Claretians are a "work proper" of the Congregation, born of the Congregation. Now it is stated that:

"We rejoice that you are a reality in the world. We extend this rejoicing even to the point of acknowledging your existence as something that is not an outgrowth of our own particular form of being Claretians, although it indeed comes from Claret the evangelizer, who chose you as servants of the Gospel, from your context in the world,

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with his apostolic spirit, with his commitment to proclaim the Word and with his love for Mary" (n.4).

Even though the expression "works proper" does occur in one paragraph (n.5), it is obviously only a convenient label for facilitating procedural steps toward the formation of groups of Lay Claretians. This was clarified in the Acta of the Chapter: "This was only an official expression used for juridical and official effects and purposes" (Minutes, p.122).

b) A New Evaluation of what being a Lay Claretian Means

The Congregation promoted Collaborators and Associates more to make up for the scarcity of religious vocations, than for the discovery of the specifically lay Claretian vocation. In the "Message," a quite different evaluation of Lay Claretians appears:

"Our Congregation values you for your vocation considered in itself... Hence, the reason for the support that we as a Congregation offer the Lay Claretian vocation, can never be our own limited numbers or the need for collaborators in our works. Above and beyond these conditions of ours, is your very own being, which does not depend on our anxieties or limitations. It transcends all of these, just as Claret's charism does" (n.10).

c) Relationship with the Claretian Family

The "Message" makes it clear that the Lay Claretians do not form part of the Claretian Family together with the Congregation of Missionaries, as a sort of lay appendage to the latter. Rather, they enter the Family in their own right, since they are an institution having Claret as their Father. Thus it is said that they come "marching into history on their own power, alongside those other Claretian groups that have already been purified, strengthened and in a sense consecrated, by history" (n.6).

The charism of Claret transcends each of the Claretian institutions, all of which today form the Great Claretian Family. "Your particular being will fill out the total being of Claret, the source and inspiration of us all" (n.12).

d) Relationships with the Congregation of Missionaries

Here, too, the "Message represents an important change of focus. The Lay Claretians no longer appear in a relation of dependence on the Congregation. Although they are once referred to as a "work proper" of the Congregation, we have already explained the quite

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different meaning that this expression had prior to the 1979 Chapter. According to the "Message," our relationships must now be characterized by:

- ! fraternity, without any note of paternalism, since Lay Claretians are not Sons of the Congregation, but sons and daughters of Claret;
- ! collaboration in evangelization, "working together, out of our respective gifts, on the great evangelizing project of Claret" (n.5).

The Congregation is happy to be associated with Lay Claretians in its works of evangelization:

"We wish to see you at our side on all evangelizing fronts to which the Church has missioned us... And with your association, our apostolic work will be fittingly complemented and strengthened" (n.12).

- ! a commitment of aid. Finally, the Congregation commits itself to aid the Lay Claretians, not as a part or extension of the Congregation, but as the most recent and least developed shoot of the Claretian Family, which needs the most help from already consolidated Claretian institutions.

"The reason for showing more interest in this group is that they are newborn and need more care" (Minutes, p.122). "It should be remembered that the Congregation has always helped other Claretian groups in their initial stages or in periods of special need. This seems to be the historical moment of the Lay Claretians" (Minutes, p.123).

For its own part, the "message" states:

"Our Congregation believes that out of fidelity to its own Founder, and within the measure of its mission in the Church, it could do no less than favor the rise of your groups" (n.6).

"We would like our voice to find an echo among all Claretians in the world, on all levels of government, so that as a general, provincial and local community, we might offer a response to the urgent needs of your beginning, formation and development" (n.13).

c) Some Wise Advice

Finally, the "Message" counsels Lay Claretian groups not to tie themselves to one member or just a few members of the Congregation, because of the obvious dangers inherent in such a course:

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"Do not cling to, or pin all your hopes on, the support of a single individual or small group, since they are necessarily subject to limitations of time and space... Always remain open to the fullness of God's plan in Claret, a plan that is fulfilled in universality" (n.14).

2. THE LAY CLARETIANS IN THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CONGREGATION

The definitive text of the Constitutions, approved by the 1979 General Chapter, also offers some important innovations with regard to Lay Claretians. The most glaring of these is that they are not mentioned as such in the text. In the new text, the chapter on "Associates of the Congregation," which was introduced after the 1967 Chapter, has disappeared. This should not be taken as a negative statement. Rather, it indicates a higher esteem for the lay vocation.

In the new Constitutions, there are two references of a general nature, applicable not only to the Lay Claretians, but also to other institutions that make up the Claretian Family. This is not intended as a detraction from the importance of the Lay Claretians, but puts them on an equal footing with the other, historically more consolidated Claretian groups. Neither is it intended to distance them from the Congregation, but simply to give them the autonomy which is their due, thus replacing any paternalistic relationships with truly fraternal ones. The following are the two references in the new Constitutions:

"Others, too, have received the same apostolic spirit, and in varying ways live in some kind of communion with our Congregation" (n.48).

"If an individual or group is so imbued with the missionary spirit that they wish to collaborate with us, then we should be glad in the Lord to make them associates in our apostolate" (n.48).

3. THE LAY CLARETIANS IN THE MISSION OF THE CLARETIAN TODAY

The General Chapter Document, The Mission of the Claretian Today (MCT), insists in several places on the need for accepting the teaching of Vatican II concerning the mission of the laity in the Church, and on the active role they should play in evangelization. In the

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MCT there are a number of references to the Lay Claretians, all of which agree, of course, with the teaching of the "Message to the Lay Claretians." Above all, we would like to point out how exactly it focuses the theme of Lay Claretians within the outstanding charismatic trait of both Claret and the Congregation -- eagerness to raise up and form new evangelizers. This is the context in which the Lay Claretians must grow.

The MCT denounces the Congregation for carelessness in letting Claret's extraordinary initiatives in the lay apostolate die out, and it feels called upon to repair this lack of fidelity to its Founder and to its own charism: "The Congregation feels responsible for activating those missionary initiatives that he (Claret) was unable to realize personally" (n.70).

The MCT recognizes that the vocation and mission of the Lay Claretians does not arise from our limitations, but from the Lay Claretians' own kind of Christian living.

Among the laity who work with us or are in contact with us, there may be some who are particularly drawn by the figure of Claret and identify with his missionary spirit. These people, with the help of a good, solid formation, can become "Lay Claretians."

The Congregation, while respecting the autonomy of Lay Claretian groups, also recognizes that, in these early moments of their development, they need special help, and so makes a social commitment to offer that help. "Hence, we should organize, foster and support the Claretian Associates movement" (MCT, n.234).

The MCT reminds us that we Claretian Religious (understanding that it is not just we alone) must commit ourselves to make Claret's great dream come true, namely, to mobilize a great evangelizing force, a great evangelizing family, made up of all those --whether religious or laity-- who have Claret as our Father.

"We believe that the present moment of the Church offers optimal conditions for shaping the project of an ample Claretian Family. This would have to be seen as the realization of Claret's own (uncompleted) project, thought out along the lines of a great movement for evangelization in our own time" (MCT, n.179).

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Chapter Seven

WHAT ARE THE LAY CLARETIANS?

1. Do Lay and Religious Claretians Have the Same Charism?

The Lay Claretians are a movement with a specific charism (a charismatic movement) for evangelization, raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, by way of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

As they are a charismatic entity, what the Lay Claretians are, is entailed in the nature of their charism. In all extant literature on this lay movement, since the Congregation in fidelity to its Founder (however belatedly) has begun to promote it under various titles (Collaborators, Associates, Lay Claretians), the predominant notion has been that Lay Claretians have no charism of their own, but share the same charism as the Congregation. It has even been said that they share in this charism through the Congregation, or that the Congregation communicates it to them.

The Constitutions of the Claretian Missionaries of 1973, in reference to Claretian Associates, states:

"There are others associated with us in serving the whole Church they share our spirit and wish to share in our apostolic mission" (CC 1973, n.164).

We find the same notion in the Directory written in connection and in keeping with the guidelines of the 1973 Chapter. It states that the Congregation welcomes the association of "clergy and laity who share its missionary charism, and are committed, in varying degrees, to live that charism in communion with the Congregation" (Dir., n.250).

In his address to the First International Congress of Lay Claretians, held in Rio de Janeiro in April 1979, The

Claretian Superior General stated that the Claretian Associates are the "fruit of the ecclesial feeling of the Claretian Congregation" and are, "in a sense, members of the Congregation... Let us keep this idea clearly before us: the Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of (this) charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters." (Note that charism, mission and even filiation are connected here.) "Their primary integration is that which comes with participation in the same mission and charism of the Congregation."

The same notion occurs in a number of the Conclusions of the Congress: "mutual acceptance and coexistence should grow out of a joint search for and accomplishment of our common mission" (1.2). "Communion in our common mission should be established on the various levels of prayer, renewal, action and government" (2.2).

The issue of whether Lay and Religious Claretians do or do not have the same charism is fraught with extremely important consequences for both them and us.

For example:

- in defining their identity, specific vocation and evangelizing work in the Church, as well as our own;
- in deciding how they are to be organized, who their superiors will be, and which mediating groups they will be subject to;
- how are they to be integrated into the Congregation (if at all), and how far will their participation and co-responsibility extend?

Some have even gone so far as to request that they enjoy by right, the ability to have voice and vote in the Congregation's assemblies, and provincial and General Chapters.

We are dealing, then with a fundamental question: Is or is not the charism of the Lay Claretians the same as that of the Congregation of Missionaries?

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My response to this question is clearly in the negative. It seems to me that it is a contradiction in terms to state that a lay group has the same charism as a Religious Institute. What really identifies and defines a charismatic group in the Church, is precisely its charism, which also includes its mission. Our being Religious is not something merely accidental and extraneous to the gift we have received. We are not Claretians by the grace of God and Religious by our own decision. Our vocation and charism includes both elements, indissolubly united. If we were to attempt to raise up a group of lay evangelizers and associate them with the Congregation, assuring them that they shared its charism and mission, wouldn't we be undermining their specifically lay vocation and mission?

A charism is a special gift of grace which God imparts through the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church. Such a gift implies:

- "a distinctive way of being utterly for God" (consecration),
- "a living out of this gift for building up the Church, in a particular way" (mission),
- "and this being-for-God, for the building up of the Church, must be expressed and lived in certain concrete forms of activity" (action).

(Cf. Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, "Teologia Sistemática de la Vida Religiosa," Madrid: 1979, p.269).

If we, lay and religious Claretians, had the same charism, then religious consecration would add nothing new or specific to our way of being-for-God, nor would we have a distinctive way of contributing to the building up of the Church. Moreover, we would be called to fulfill the same activities, with the same inherent characteristics as the laity.

"In the case of a call to the religious life, the charism consists above all in a vocation to a form of existence consecrated to the service of God through celibacy and fraternal life" (J.M.Lozano, CMF, "El Fundador y su Familia Religiosa," Madrid: 1978, p.90).

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How could it be said, then, that a lay group has the same charism as a religious Institute? Obviously, on a matter as important as that of charism, there is still a great deal of confusion among us members of the Claretian Family, since not only the Lay Claretians, but also Cordimarian Filiation both speak of having the same charism and mission as the Congregation. For example, Cordimarian Filiation, in its message to the 1979 General Chapter for the "Claretian Family Day" states:

"We start out from the same reality, a sharing in the same charism, a consciousness of having received an identical GIFT in the Church -- a gift that must be lived in different circumstances and vocations..."

There are obviously two different underlying points of view:

- a) One of them states that the Claretian Missionaries, Cordimarian Filiation and Lay Claretians all have the same charism and mission. The differences among us are not entailed in the gift of God, but derive from the distinctive form of life in each of our institutions. We all have the same, unique Claretian charism, but some of us live it as religious, others as a Secular Institute, still others after the manner of a Secular Institute, and finally, others simply as laypersons.
- b) The other point of view holds that we have different charisms for many reasons, the most important of which are, respectively, religious consecration, lay consecration, and basic Christian lay life. These are not mere circumstances of our life, but special callings from God, gifts of God for contributing in a special way to the building up of the Church. And if these are special gifts of God, then our charisms are differentiated not by our lifestyles, but by the fact that we have received distinct charisms.

2. The Claretian Charisms

Not all of us who have St. Anthony Mary Claret as our Father, and are members of the Claretian Family, have the same charism. We are a Family because the same person is at the origin of our existence as a group in the Church, and because we have many charismatic and spiritual traits that bear a family resemblance. Claret received a great diversity of gifts from God, in order to set a number of institutions in motion in the Church, for the building up of the Church. It is not correct to speak of "our common charism," since each Claretian Institution has its own distinct charism.

In preparation for the 1979 General Chapter, Fr. Lucas Gutierrez made some basic observations for the commissions preparing the MCT and the initial draft of the new Constitutions. The following are some of his references to Claretian Associates or Lay Claretians, since they shed some light on the matter at hand:

"To say that the Associates have the same CHARISM-MISSION as the CMFs, is simply false, without further qualifications.

"There is not a unity of mission in what is called the Claretian Family. The CMFs, the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate, and Cordimarian Filiation, for example, each has its own mission. Our Founder's project of Nuns in their own Homes and the Associates, if they really correspond with Claret's notion, have THEIR own mission. To reduce all this diversity to a mere difference of members, ministries and forms of carrying them out, would be a failure to understand what charism is or what mission is. It would be a failure to use theological, ecclesial or, in the long run, livable language, since it would break down the basis for our identity, making us like associates or associates like us, and so both of us would cease to exist.

"We are not Father Claret, nor do all the charisms of Father Claret pass on to us:

- not his purely personal charisms,

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- not his charism as Founder, along with Mother Antonia Paris, of the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate,
- not his charism as Founder of the Secular Priests Living in Community,
- not his charism as Founder of Nuns in their own Homes " (Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, Observations for the Position Paper, Preparatory Study, p. 6).

"The Claretian Associates or Lay Claretians should be understood within the following perspective:

- a) They have their main origin and charism in Claret.
- b) Their charism is a different gift from all others: CMFs, Teaching Sisters, CFS.
- c) They do not have that charism by participation in the CMFs, Teaching Sisters or CFS.
- d) They do have it in communion with us, and in order to form one Claretian communion, within the context of our respective differences in charism and mission.
- e) IF they are a "work proper" entrusted by the Church to the ecclesial mission of the Congregation, then they have a certain DEPENDENCE on us. But this dependence does not diminish their distinctiveness, their charism and their distinguishing mission as laypersons in the full sense of their secularity. Even if they enter as a "work proper" of the Congregation, they enter with their specialness and their identity intact.

"It is to be regretted that proper use has not been made of this reality, since it is more than a play on words or a mere juridical fiction. It is even more to be regretted that some of us have wanted to shape these Lay Claretians into a carbon copy of ourselves, as a group of semi-religious or frustrated religious. This is evidenced in the obsessive compulsion to push them into vows, consecrations and community" (Fr. Lucas Gutierrez, CMF, Observations for the CC, p.4).

3. The Charism of the Lay Claretians

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a. Layness or Secularity

In Lay Claretians, the "Claretian" and the "Lay" are not two realities set alongside each other; rather, they so compenetrates each other as to form an existential unity. The Christian vocation of someone who has been called by God to live according to the lay charism which Claret received in order to transmit it to the lay groups he raised up in the Church, is totally qualified by this charism or special gift of the Holy Spirit. One cannot think of or describe the charism of the Lay Claretians, without putting a strong stress on their lay being and mission. Their Claretian vocation is totally lay, and their Christian vocation is totally Claretian.

Many features of the charismatic profile of the Lay Claretians might seem to be simply the same as those of other branches of the Claretian Family, but in reality, they are distinctive and characteristic, inasmuch as they are stamped with the mark of layness or secularity.

Moreover, we should note that secularity is not lived in the same manner by all Claretian lay groups. In some of them, there is a consecrated secularity (with vows), while in others, there is a secularity without any further consecration than baptismal consecration.

Vatican II, which contributed so decisively to the development of the theology of the laity, chose to use the examples of the ministerial priesthood and the religious life as contrasting means for identifying the laity:

- The priesthood is characterized by a special vocation "to exercise the sacred ministry." This gift entails a special communion with Christ the Priest, as well as a specific ministry: to contribute to the building up of the Church by means of the exercise of the "sacred ministry."
- "Although those in Holy Orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities, or even practice a secular profession, yet by reason of their particular vocation, they are principally and expressly ordained to the sacred ministry" (LG 31).

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- Religious, too, are characterized by a special vocation and mission in the Church. Religious life is a charism which implies a special conformity with Christ and with his lifestyle. This gift is received by religious so that they may contribute to the building up of the Church by witnessing to and anticipating the definitive state of the Kingdom of God.
- "They give outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes" (LG 31).
- The laity are not distinguished by their lack of a specific vocation. They are not, so to speak, what is left over after subtracting those with a priestly or religious vocation. Christian secularity is also a calling from God, a gift which implies a distinctive communion with Christ, and a special mission within the Church for its building up. This conformity with Christ is achieved through the Sacraments, especially Baptism, the Eucharist and Confirmation.
- "Incorporated into the Church by Baptism, the faithful are appointed through their baptismal character to Christian worship; reborn as children of God, they must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church. By the Sacrament of Confirmation they are more perfectly bound to the Church and are endowed with the special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread the faith by word and deed" (LG 11).
- "But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business on earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitutes the very web of their existence. There they are called

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by God, so that being led by the spirit of the Gospel they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way, so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated, that these may be brought to be and grow according to Christ, and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer" (LG 31).

b. Distinctive Traits of the Lay Claretian Charism

To discover these traits, we should have recourse to:

- Claret's writings on the lay groups he founded.
- Other writings by Claret, especially his Autobiography. But in reading the Autobiography, we should bear in mind that he wrote it, under obedience, as an instructional tool for his Missionary Sons, and that for this reason not all of it can be simply applied to the laity.
- The life of Claret himself, in his work to promote the laity.

In what follows is assembled a rough sketch of the traits that make up a Lay Claretian. It will be a rather imperfect one but it will include four main features: charism, mission, spirituality and evangelizing activity. All of these elements are fundamentally connected with charism. A charism is given to us with relationship to some mission in the Church, so that mission itself is given us in our charism. A spirituality, which is also fundamentally a gift, is the way we live our charism-mission. Evangelizing activity, in turn, is the expression of our charism and the carrying out of our mission. Let us examine these features one by one.

(1) Charism

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A charism is a gift of grace, a special communion with and conformation with Christ, in the context of which we live all aspects of our relationship with God and our fellow human beings, and perform our work in building up the Church.

The charism of a Lay Claretian is a particular gift of grace, through which God confers on a layperson a special conformity with Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and under the maternal action of Mary.

- a) *A special conformity with Christ the Evangelizer, who was always concerned for "the things of his Father" and for the salvation of the human race.*

Claret had a particular enthusiasm for certain traits in the image of Christ. In stressing some of these traits more than others, he was actually giving us a self-portrait of his own charism, as he became aware of those gifts he had received from the Holy Spirit in order to follow Christ and carry out his mission. He desired to see many of these traits in those he invited to join him in the task of evangelizing, whether they were priests, religious or laity.

Claret saw Christ mainly as the Son who was concerned for the things of his Father (for the glory of God); the Son who was anointed and sent to bring the Good News to the poor (the salvation of souls).

These two characteristics --zeal for the glory of God, and for the salvation of others-- were lived by Claret in an incredibly intense manner. And they were not simply the result of his own personal effort. Rather, they were a gift of God which he began to experience when he reached the use of reason (See Aut., nn. 15,16). These were to be, so to speak, the coordinates within which his whole missionary life would develop, as we can see throughout his Autobiography:

"Whenever I went to a town, I did so without any worldly goal in mind: my only aim was to glorify God and save souls" (n.199), "My aim is to make God better known,

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loved and served by everyone" (n.202). "I tell you quite frankly that whenever I see sinners, I grow restless, I cannot quiet down, I cannot be consoled, my heart goes out to them" (211). "I can't abandon them: they are my own dear brothers and sisters" (n.208). "Charity urges and impels me; it makes me run from town to town" (n.212).

This zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, which was the result of his conformity with Christ, was held up as an objective for all the lay groups which he established or inspired.

b) *Through the Holy Spirit and Under His Continuing Action in Us*

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings about within us our conformity with Christ the Evangelizer. And Christ continues his evangelizing activity in the world by means of the Holy Spirit who, in a sort of silent Pentecost, continues acting in each and every apostle, first evangelizing the apostle, and then others, through the apostle.

"It is the Holy Spirit who, today as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who permits him or herself to be possessed and led by him... (and it is He who) places on their lips the words which they would not find by themselves... It is he who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood" (EN 75).

What Claret said of himself and of his Missionaries, is perfectly applicable to every Claretian:

"The Lord told me both for myself and for all these missionary companions of mine, 'You yourselves will not be the speakers; the Spirit of your Father (and of your Mother) will be speaking in you.' 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 bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted!'" (Aut., n.687).

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The Holy Spirit is the Gift, the fountainhead of all gifts. Each charism is a distinctive sharing in the Holy Spirit, a special presence and continuing action of the Spirit in us. He does not give a charism and then take it away; he continues to give it always; he continues being the Gift and the charism in us. He, who destines us to proclaim the Word, helps us find adequate words in which to proclaim it, and gives us the strength to back it up with personal witness.

c) Under the Maternal Influence of Mary

Mary is involved in the Mystery of Christ, in God's saving plan. Communion with Christ entails an encounter with Mary and creates a special bond of communion with her as Mother. Mary's maternal influence on a Lay Claretian draws him or her to conformity with Christ, making him or her another evangelizing Christ.

The apostolic presence of Mary in the life and evangelizing work of St. Anthony Mary Claret, is one of the most salient characteristics of his charism. Confronted by the Jansenistic pessimism of his times with regard to salvation, Claret saw in Mary, especially in the Heart of Mary, the most human and shining expression of the kindness of God our Father, "who wills that all be saved (I Tim 2:4). For Claret, the Heart of Mary is the richest" and most all-embracing perspective within which the Blessed Virgin may be seen. For him, the Heart of Mary was the great symbol of love, optimism, hope, liberation and salvation.

Claret placed all his works under the protection of the Heart of Mary. In many of the lay or religious groups he founded, admission was expressed by way of an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary. He always laid stress on the apostolic dimension, since for him, Mary was not merely an admirable "object of devotion," but rather, an evangelizer and the Mother of salvation.

- Mary made both Claret and his Sons to be evangelizers:

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"You are well aware that I am your son and minister, formed in the "forge" of your mercy and love." (Aut., n.270)

- Mary sends both him and us to evangelize:

*"I am like an arrow poised in your mighty hand. Release me, my Mother, with the full force of your arm" (n.270).
"Although I am bereft of every natural talent for this end, it matters not, mitte me (send me): thus it will be all the better seen that gratia Dei sum id quod sum (by the grace of God I am what I am)" (n.161).*

- Mary evangelizes through Claret and through us:

"It is you who are at work, not I" (n.156).

- Mary acts on the hearts of the evangelized, opening them to receive the Good News:

"Grant all men, I beseech you, the grace of conversion, for without it we can do nothing. Then send me and you will see how they will be converted" (n.160).

(2) Mission

The Lay Claretian is called to contribute to the building up of the Church by means of the proclamation of the Gospel, within the context of his or her lay existence.

The mission of the Claretian Congregation has been defined as the missionary proclamation of the Word "in the style of the Apostles" (DC 10). For Claret the expression "in the style of the Apostles" meant an itinerant apostolate and living in community. Claret did, in fact, want his Missionaries to devote themselves to the preaching of the Gospel as itinerant preachers, not tied down to ordinary pastoral offices and charges. In contrast, neither the secular priests living in community nor any lay Claretian groups were called to an itinerant mission. Both the Claretian Missionaries and the secular priests mentioned above were devoted to evangelization while living in community. In contrast, the laity were to live by

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preference in the natural communities of their families or neighborhoods.

The Lay Claretians are called to share the total Mystery of Christ with others by means of word and witness, while living immersed in the normal conditions of social life. By their life, word and work, they must be a leaven in family, social, economic, political, working, cultural, sporting and religious groups.

"Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering" (EN 70).

The very first thing Claret demanded of those entering lay groups established by him was the witness of their own lives. This witness is the most unmistakable statement of the word of evangelization. As Vatican II put it, the laity are also called to be "witnesses of Christ in all circumstances, and at the very heart of the community of mankind" (GS 43). Claret repeatedly stressed the need of witness. "Members should in all things live a good and holy life, keeping the precepts of God's holy Law and those of the Church, fulfilling the duties of their state in life and edifying others by their good example" (PA, p.39). "They shall strive by good example to edify everyone, so that they might be able to say: 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ'" (FHM, n.11).

Evangelization through the word took many forms for Claret. He gave special importance to catechesis and to the apostolate of the press. I believe that these two forms should still be priorities for today's Lay Claretians.

"It is not just priests and clerics who are to engage in this sort of teaching (catechesis), but men and women who teach children as well... This same obligation weighs even more heavily on parents, tutors and householders; they must teach Christian doctrine to their children, servants and dependents" (FCD, 98).

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The Lay Claretians, too, are called to work in various forms of catechesis and the catechumenate. In basic Christian communities, they have an extraordinary field of action in which to serve as delegates of the Word, community animators or leaders, thus taking full advantage of the manifold possibilities offered by new lay ministries (See EN 73).

Those Lay Claretians who have or can acquire the proper professional training, should strive to find a position in the media of mass communication, which are so powerful in our times. This would be very much in keeping with our Founder's view of the lay apostolate.

(3) Spirituality

Spirituality is the living of a charism, the response to the gift with which the Holy Spirit endows us for the building up of the Church. There are different spiritualities, because there are different charisms. In a spirituality there are some personal elements, and there are elements that are common to the group or institutions. Of these latter elements, our Founder is a model.

Father Viñas, who is deeply knowledgeable concerning Claret and his work, points out **the following traits of Lay Claretian spirituality:**

- a) *Union with Christ the Evangelizer, whom Claret saw mainly as*
 - the Son who is anointed to preach the Good News to the poor,
 - the Son of Man who has nowhere to lay his head, and as
 - the Sign of contradiction.

- b) *Living an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary:*

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- who evangelizes us and makes us evangelizers, by conforming us, in the "forge" of her Heart, with Christ her Son, and
- who evangelizes others through us.

c) Apostolic virtues:

- lived as a way of following Christ the Evangelizer, and
- lived as realities demanded by the proclamation of the Gospel.
- among these virtues, the most important are charity, poverty, mortification, humility and meekness.

d) The Eucharist:

- as an encounter with
- Christ, the evangelizer and redeemer.

e) Apostolic Prayer:

- of which Claret left us an extraordinary example (See Viñas, *El Apostol Claretiano Seglar*, pp.29-37).

To these traits mentioned by Father Viñas, we should add:

f) A Love for Holy Scripture:

- This was one of Claret's principle traits. He discovered his own vocation in the Scriptures, and urged the laity to read the Bible frequently: "Each member shall daily, or at least weekly, read a chapter of the Gospels" (PA, p.28).

g) Burning Apostolic Zeal:

- The most outstanding trait of Claret's missionary spirit.

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- Claret defines a missionary mainly in terms of apostolic zeal (Aut, n.494).
- The local director of the Popular Lending Libraries "must be a layperson of zeal, prudence and action" (Lib, p.17).
- A member of the Academy of St. Michael "should continually live a life consumed by holy zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls" (PA, p.42).

(4) Evangelizing Action

The kind of evangelization done by Lay Claretians would be strongly characterized by the following traits:

a) Communion, love and obedience toward the Pope and Bishops

A deep love for the Pope and the acceptance of the Church's magisterium is a very notable trait of Claret. Even when he was a simple priest, he always sought the mediation of the bishop in being sent to evangelize (Aut, nn.194, 198).

He wanted his Missionaries and everyone who belonged to his lay institutions to have this same love and fidelity:

"The Academy of St. Michael places itself under the auspices of the supreme Leader of the Church, to whose decisions it does and will submit in all things, defending his authority and that of the Church" (PA, p.14).

b) From a context of total insertion in the world

The evangelizing action of a Lay Claretian cannot be an imitation of priestly and religious action. Rather, it must be of a genuinely lay character, marked by a total immersion in the normal conditions of life in the world.

"This evangelization, that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and life-witness, acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world" (LG 35).

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"The laity, however, are given this special vocation -- to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth" (LG 33).

Our affection for our Founder should not lead us to overpraise him, or to represent him as a pioneer in everything he did. He was in many respects a man of his times, a pioneer only in certain fields. Like all evangelizers in his day, even the most advanced ones, he was still far from Vatican II's vision of the lay apostolate. His ideas about immersion in the world are somewhat pessimistic by today's standards, and a note of 'flight from the world' is not only voiced in his Nuns in their own Homes, but to a lesser degree in other groups (See NOH, 25-29). Nevertheless, he does show good insight when he observes that priests "hardly have the same opportunity to really mix with the townsfolk that laypersons do" (Lib, 18).

Although insertion in the everyday world was not a characteristic of the lay movements promoted by Claret, it should be today. The guidelines and perspectives of Vatican II would doubtless have been a joyful discovery for Claret, and one which he would have unhesitatingly brought to his lay evangelizers, so that they could act in the world "from within, like leaven" (LG 31).

It would be completely out of place to lead laypersons toward an 'imitationism' of priests or religious. Their mission and their evangelizing action has a specifically lay character in the Church.

c) Alert to whatever is most urgent, timely and effective

Claret had an extraordinarily keen perception of the most pressing needs of the People of God, and was most creative in responding to those needs immediately and effectively. He had an excellent grasp of the great appeal and influence of all forms of printing in his day -- books, reviews, leaflets, printed pictures, etc. This was one of the fields in which he personally did a great deal of work, and one to

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which he wanted nearly all of his lay evangelizing groups to be committed.

If Claret were alive today, we may be sure that he would be urging his lay people to get involved in the powerful modern means of mass communication. We, his modern day followers, must prove that his spirit is still alive, by encouraging and promoting the laity to become involved in these nerve centers.

d) A preference for the poor and the marginated

Claret had a great love for the poor and considered them to be a gift of God (See Aut., nn. 19, 20, 118, 435). He felt personally called by the Isaian text that Luke places on the lips of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry: "He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners" (Lk 4:18 -- a key text, unfortunately missing from the English version of Aut., n.118).

Claret says of those entering the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary:

"They shall visit the sick in hospitals and in private homes when they have the opportunity to do so. They shall visit those in prisons. They shall attend to the poor, especially those who are shamed by poverty, giving them alms for which they shall ask the rich. They shall take care of the elderly, widows and orphans. Insofar as they can, they should try to help fallen or scandalous women mend their ways. They should help reconcile those who are divorced" (FHM n.16).

In our times, when the whole Church feels called not only to evangelize the poor as a preferential option, but also to evangelize all social classes within the context of an option for the poor, Lay Claretians would be lacking in fidelity to the Church and to Claret himself, if they were deaf to the "cry of the poor."

This option for the poor necessarily entails a commitment to their cause, which is the cause of justice and, as John

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Paul II remarks, a commitment which cannot remain at the level of mere words:

"It is not enough for a Christian to denounce injustice: rather, one must be a true witness and agent of justice" (Puebla, n.793). "In all cases the laity must seek and promote the common good in defense of the dignity and inalienable rights of humankind, in protection of the weakest and neediest, in building for peace, liberty and justice, and in the creation of the most just and fraternal structures" (Puebla, n.792).

Commitments and actions that aim at building a more just world, are themselves a form of evangelization. They are a proclamation of the Good News that the Kingdom of God is on its way.

e) Multipliers of agents of evangelization

Another characteristic of the missionary spirit of Claret, which led him to create so many groups of lay evangelizers, was his desire to multiply the number of agents of the Good News. Pope Paul VI's words apply to Lay Claretians"

"The person who has been evangelized, goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give him or herself to the Kingdom, without becoming one who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn" (EN 24).

It was Claret's hope that those laypersons whom he had evangelized and enrolled in his lay movements would in turn bring new members into these movements:

"In their gatherings, the members of the Academy should strive to live with the simplicity and fervor that marked the first Christians, who were of one heart and mind. They should try to attract honorable, zealous and prudent persons to join their ranks, so as to continue and spread the Academy, for the good of the Church and of souls, and by counteracting prejudicial trends... (PA, p.15).

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AND WHAT IS A LAY CLARETIAN?

I wish I could say that through this description we have come up with a clear and unmistakable portrait of a Lay Claretian. But this accumulation of traits only gives us a mechanical image which could apply to many sorts of persons.

Doubtless, every lay institution has an unmistakable charismatic and missionary profile, but any description of it is deceiving, since it embodies a picture that is valid for other groups. A charism is a grace, and as such it is indescribable -- it is life, and its most specific nuances; although charisms can be lived, they cannot easily be expressed.

Nevertheless, the Lay Claretians' attunement to the grace they share with St. Anthony Mary Claret, and the intensity and manner in which they share the traits we have listed above, allow us to distinguish them both from other lay groups and other institutions founded by Claret.

Chapter Eight

THE LAY CLARETIANS AND THE CLARETIAN FAMILY

1. Do they really belong to the Claretian Family?

This is precisely where we should begin -- by asking whether or not the Lay Claretians belong to the Claretian Family and indeed, to which Claretian Family, since this can be understood in at least two senses:

a) In a restricted sense

The Claretian Family is made up of all those in the Church who regard St. Anthony Mary Claret as their Founder or their direct inspiration. In this sense, there is no doubt that the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CMF), the Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate (RMI) and the members of Cordimarian Filiation (CF), form part of the nuclear Claretian Family.

b) In a broader sense

Others may be said to belong to the Claretian Family, namely, all those persons or institutions which have a special relationship, either directly through St. Anthony Mary Claret, or indirectly through other persons or branches of the nuclear Claretian Family.

By direct binding to Claret, the Carmelites of Charity, the Adoratrices and, to some extent, those Congregations that have a fraternal charter with the Claretian Missionaries, are considered to be part of the great Claretian family.

Another group of institutions that belong to the Claretian Family in the larger sense, are those founded by Claretian Missionaries, such as the Cordimarian Missionary Sisters (Fr. Collell, CMF, Mexico), the Missionary Sisters of

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Claretian Instruction (Fr. Pujol, CMF, Spain), or the Missionary Sisters of St. Anthony Mary Claret (Bp. Fernandes, CMF, Brazil).

There is no doubt that the Lay Claretians belong to the Claretian Family. The question is, to which Claretian Family -- the nuclear or the larger Claretian Family?

If we ask this question of the current groups of Lay Claretians, it is hard to come up with an adequate answer. Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that there are groups that belong to the Claretian Family in the strict sense, and others that belong to it in the larger sense. There are some lay groups founded and directed by Claretian Missionaries almost by personal title. These do not connect directly with St. Anthony Mary Claret, but with one or another of his Sons, and are hence related in the same degree as religious Institutes founded by Claretians.

In contrast, the Lay Claretians as conceived by the 1979 General Chapter, belong to the Claretian Family in the strict sense, since they are animated by the same lay charism that the groups founded by Claret himself had.

2. What is their position in the Claretian Family?

The place they hold depends on the reason why they belong to the Claretian Family, and on how they come to be part of it, i.e., on whether they enter of their own right, or as part of the Claretian Missionary Congregation. There are two different ways of visualizing the family tree of the nuclear Claretian Family:

a) A family with three branches: CMFs, RMIs and CFs

We can say that this was the prevailing attitude prior to the 1979 General Chapter, the Collaborators, and later the Associates, entered the Claretian Family not only led into it by the Congregation, but as actually forming a part of it. The prevailing notion was that the Associates were deeply united to the Congregation, and not with the other branches of the Claretian Family.

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Recall what Fr. Nicolas Garcia had to say about the Collaborators: "They are a 'work proper' of the Congregation, united to its being as extensions of it" (AN 1945 p.64). Fr. Leghisa told the participants in the Congress of Rio, in April 1979: "Associates must be defined and find their reason for being, in the context of (the Congregation's) charism and mission. They should not be just aggregates, but sons and daughters" (34).

From this point of view, we would have to say that the Collaborators and Associates enter the heart of the Claretian Family by forming part of the Congregation of Missionaries, and not as an independent institution. However, if we did take this point of view, we would have to ask whether we should cease calling them a part of the nuclear Claretian Family, since they would be sons and daughters of the Congregation, rather than direct children of Claret.

b) A family with four branches

The other outline of the Lay Claretians does not view them as work of the Congregation, or as bound to the Congregation by their very nature, but as the work of Claret. Consequently they form part of the Claretian Family in their own right, under the same conditions as the three other institutions which have Claret as their Founder. Thus the Claretian Family in the strict sense would be made up of the CMFs, the RMIs, the CFs and the Lay Claretians. This outline squares most adequately with the project of Father Claret, and with the teaching of the 1979 General Chapter on the Lay Claretians.

In fact, St. Anthony Mary Claret did not organize a single lay group with the intention of aggregating them to the Congregation as Collaborators. Nor did he give the Congregation any authority over them, or even entrust any of them to its tutelage.

It would be false to Claret's idea, to think of the Lay Claretians as analogous to the Cooperators of the Salesian

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Congregation. Don Bosco founded the Cooperators in 1887 with the express wish that they be collaborators of the Salesian Congregation, and so he placed them under its direction.

When the Claretian General Government created the Collaborators in 1938, they seem to have been thinking more of the Salesian model than anything Claret had in mind. In fact, during the period when Lay Claretians were called and actually were Collaborators (1938-1967) or Associates (1967-1979), their role seemed clearly that of cooperators. Thus understood, their connection with the Congregation could not be accidental, but had to be essential. Since they were regarded as 'works proper' of the Congregation, the Congregation could hardly regard them otherwise than as its collaborators. Moreover, since this seemed to be the only framework available for Lay Claretians at the time, it was assumed that there was no viable way of giving them their autonomy, or of linking them to any other branch of the Claretian Family.

3. Toward an autonomous institution of Lay Claretians

a) Not just a matter of names

From its restoration in 1938, the Lay Claretian movement has had various titles: Collaborators, Associates and Lay Claretians. Has this been merely a change of names, or is it a real change of meaning? I believe that the Lay Claretian, as understood since the 1979 General Chapter, is entirely different from the earlier Collaborator or Associate, for the following reasons:

- (1) It used to be said that the Associates shared the same charism and mission as the Congregation (CC 1973, n.164; Dir, 250). In contrast, we now say that the charism and mission of the Lay Claretians is different from that of the Congregation.
- (2) The Associates were to "live their charism in communion with the Congregation and work on common objectives with it" (Dir, 250). The Lay Claretians live their charism independently, and may set their

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own objectives or, if they choose, work on common objectives with the Congregation.

- (3) In the Collaborators or Associates, there could also be clergy or even persons "who profess evangelical life" (CC 1973, n.165). In the Lay Claretians, there can only be laity. It is true that Father Claret also thought of forming groups of diocesan priests living in community, but this was a distinct institution, which does not exist, and if it did, we would have to bring it about in the heart of the Claretian Family.
- (4) Of their very nature, the Lay Claretians tend toward autonomy, although in their present state of development they need the Congregation's help. In contrast, the Collaborators or Associates did not share this future prospect of autonomy, since association with and dependence on the Congregation was something essential for them.

Nothing prevents the Congregation, like any other branch of the Claretian Family, from having:

- Benefactors, to help maintain the works of its apostolate,
- Collaborators, who contribute material and personal help,
- Associates in a particular apostolic work or project, whether these be priests or laypersons, whether they do or do not have a Claretian vocation.

But these must not be confused with the Lay Claretians, who do not have to be collaborators, associates or benefactors of the Congregation. They may indeed freely choose to associate with us in working on common plans and objectives for evangelization, but they are united with us in such cases, only out of fraternity, not dependence. Of course, when particular Lay Claretians work in some apostolic endeavor of the Congregation, they are necessarily dependent on those directing the work; but this dependence is not institutional, it is pastoral.

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Throughout these pages we have been speaking of groups of Lay Claretians. We would like to make it clear, however, that there can be Claretian laypersons outside these groups. Decidedly, any layperson who has received this call and lives attuned to the grace given St. Anthony Claret, is a Claretian layperson, even if he or she is not bound to any group or branch of the Claretian Family.

Of course, this is hardly the ideal situation. It would be far better to have some connection with the Claretian Family, including the Lay Claretians. However the lay movement raised up by Claret is sufficiently open and pluralistic that it need not be restricted to those officially recognized as Lay Claretians.

b) Is the notion of "work proper" a valid one?

The Message to the Lay Claretians, as late as 1979, occasionally refers to them as a "work proper," although in a quite different sense than that expression had in 1945. Yet we should ask whether the lay movement raised up by Claret can fit within the limits of a "work proper," or whether it goes beyond them. In my opinion, it goes beyond them, since Claret was not thinking of simple collaborators of the Congregation.

Although the policy of regarding the Associates as a "work proper" of the Congregation could have worked out otherwise, I believe that it de facto led the Congregation to adopt certain clerical and paternalistic attitudes toward the laity, and that this, in turn, led to a certain lack of maturity and co-responsibility on the part of the laity. Often, instead of collaborating with us, they were collaborating under our orders. The notion of "work proper" does not necessarily lead to this state of affairs, but it does favor it.

c) Promoting the Lay Claretians, but within the context of their autonomy

The Congregation's commitment to "organize, foster and support" the Lay Claretian movement (MCT 234), should be

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carried out with a clear view to its autonomy in the future. But this should not lead us to jump the gun: the Lay Claretians presently need to depend on the Congregation, since the very notion of their charism and mission, let alone their position in the Claretian Family, have not been sufficiently worked out. Moreover, as a movement, they lack maturity and organization, although a few groups are fairly well organized.

This dependence is of a pedagogical nature, inasmuch as it aims at leading the movement to its maturity, after which dependence will cease. During the next few years the Lay Claretians will have to rely on structures of the Congregation for support, almost as if they were a "work proper" of the Congregation. However, this should be viewed only as a stage to be overcome, and not as a permanent goal.

Relationships of dependence should gradually dissolve, until they reach the stage of relationships of fraternity. This Claretian fraternity will doubtless lead us to collaboration and association in projects and activities for evangelization. Autonomy does not entail doing away with association, it merely gives it a new meaning. In fact, the tendency to collaborate co-responsibly must be maintained, since our charisms are complementary, and because among us we must carry on in the Church the mission for which the Holy Spirit raised up St. Anthony Mary Claret.

In its most recent General Chapter, the Congregation expressed its desire for this sort of fraternal cooperation:

"We wish to see you at our side on all evangelizing fronts to which the Church has missioned us. Your particular way of being will fill out the total being of Claret, who is the fountainhead and inspiration of us all" (Message to Lay Claretians, 12).

A special kind of collaboration, which is unfortunately not widespread enough, is that offered by the Lay Claretians who work in our mission territories. With them, there is a deeper sort of integration on the levels of fraternal living, praying and working together.

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Chapter Nine

THE ORGANIZATION AND PROMOTION OF THE LAY CLARETIANS

1. A Change of Mentality and Attitudes

The General Chapter, representing the highest authority in the Congregation, committed itself to "incorporate the laity, decidedly, in our evangelizing efforts. Hence, we should organize, foster and support the Claretian Associate movement" (MCT, n.234). We will not be able to carry out this commitment, unless many members of the Congregation undergo a change of mentality regarding the role of the laity in the Church, and a change of attitude regarding the Lay Claretians.

a) First there will have to be a change of mentality regarding the role of the laity in the Church.

It would seem that there is still a considerable number of Claretian Missionaries, even some heading important works of evangelization, such as parishes, schools and missions, who have a markedly clerical mentality.

Perhaps some of them have an image of the Church as a hierarchical pyramid in which the people are no more than passive recipients of evangelization. The laity are only brought in for material or supplemental tasks which, moreover, they are asked to carry out in complete dependence on the clergy. In many of our works, even when lay groups or associations are involved, they are not seriously entrusted with the responsibility of encouraging, organizing or leading the Christian community. The worst is that they will probably never be entrusted with this responsibility, so long as their leaders do not get rid of an image of the Church where the first and foremost value is the hierarchy, and not the People of God united in communion -- a communion within which there are many charisms and ministries, hierarchical and non-hierarchical, clerical and lay, for the building up of the Church.

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b) Secondly, there will have to be a change of attitudes regarding the Lay Claretian movement.

In my rather broad tour throughout the Congregation, I came across a wide variety of negative and positive attitudes regarding the Lay Claretians:

- I believe that among the majority of our Missionaries, the prevailing attitude is one of lack of interest in the Lay Claretian movement, as well as one of general ignorance concerning its nature and how it connects with our Founder.
- Some have a poor opinion of the movement, either because of the low apostolic level of commitment in some groups, or because certain groups seemed to be a closed clique of people who seem to be the "work proper" of some particular Claretian Missionary.
- Sometimes I noted a hostility on the part of those who regard these groups as ghettos that need to be cleared, in order to open the way for other lay movements that are better organized and are more open to the Church.
- In contrast to these negative attitudes, I met other Claretians (all too few), who see the Lay Claretians as a great discovery. For them, it has been an encounter with a brilliant idea of Claret's, and one which we should give life to, for the good of the Church, in this hour of the laity.

Claret's esteem for the Christian lay vocation, as well as his own great efforts to involve the laity in a commitment to evangelization, are enough to put us to shame. This is all the more true, if we bear in mind that, in the ecclesiology of his times, the only place for the laity was one of submission and passive receptivity. He was one of the great pioneers in the promotion of the laity. Many of his Sons have missed the boat and show a very poor appreciation of the apostolate of the laity. This is why

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there is so little incorporation of the laity into our evangelizing works and projects.

Many other religious Families have well-developed and organized lay branches, while we, the sons of a pioneer, are only just beginning. Hopefully, our awareness of this contrast with our Founder will shock us out of our sleep and bring us into the front ranks once more.

Without a change of attitude, lay participation in our evangelizing efforts has no future; nor do the Lay Claretians, since they can really flourish only in the context of works that call for great lay involvement and participation.

The Congregation can aid the Lay Claretians mainly by:

- clarifying their charism and mission in the Church,
- helping promote new vocations for them,
- providing them with initial and continuing formation,
- offering them help in working out their organization.

2. Helping them clarify their charism and mission

Glancing through the brief historical survey that forms the first part of this work, anyone can see that the Lay Claretians have not worked out such important points as their special charism and mission within the Church and the Claretian Family. In this connection, the help which the Congregation can offer through its specialists, is of inestimable value. The General Secretariat for Lay Claretians, founded in connection with the 1979 General Chapter, has proposed the following:

- Asking Claretian specialists to help formulate a more precise and better founded study on these issues.
- Submitting these studies to Lay Claretian groups for their reflection and for their own input.

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- Convoing regional days for reflection, in which Lay Claretian leaders and those Claretian Missionaries interested in promoting the Lay Claretian movement can take part.
- This process has taken place with the active participation of many groups. The document drafted defines the being and mission of the Lay Claretians and has become the Sourcebook. What is now needed is continued study and reflection to absorb all the characteristics that have so far been discovered. With this there will be a strengthening of the identity of the Lay Claretians. At the same time the sharing of all this with others who may find themselves called to the same vocation to serve the people of God.

3. Helping to promote new vocations for them

a) The Proper Framework

This promotion must take place within the proper framework. And the proper And the proper framework is one of the most notable traits of the charism of Claret and his Missionaries: **multiplying agents for evangelization**. The MCT stresses this when it says that our commitment to mission demands that we make an option for evangelization that multiplies evangelizing leaders (See MCT, nn. 177-179).

All of the baptized have a vocation to evangelize, and one of the most important aims of our missionary activity is to help each Christian discover his or her vocation as a lay, religious or priestly evangelizer. And, within each of these types of vocation, we should attend to their Claretian vocation, should God have given them one.

Our immediate aim is not to increase the number of Lay Claretians by simply enrolling "nice people," or by rapidly surveying our lay leaders and sticking a Claretian label on them. Our aim is to help laypersons become aware of their unshirkable call to evangelize, to form and invite them to make an apostolic commitment inside or outside our own

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works, and to encourage them to assume responsibility for building up and leading Christian communities. Some of these laypersons will doubtless feel drawn to Claret and the Claretian missionary spirit, which we are called to witness in our lives. These are the people with whom we should begin a process of vocational discernment.

A sudden increase in the Lay Claretians, without the necessary requisites of vocation, formation, quality of life and apostolic commitment, would result in a tragic devaluation of the movement, and a progressive deterioration that would eventually end in its demise.

b) A strong sense of Church

This vocational promotion must be carried out with a strong sense of Church, which is the only way of achieving it with a genuine sense of our Congregation. This rules out any ghetto-like projects in advance. We are definitely not working for the Congregation or the Claretian Family, considered as entities apart. We are working for the Church. Our mission as evangelizers is achieved within the Church and forms part of the Church's evangelizing mission.

We are not trying to increase our ranks with personnel, whether or not they have a call from God. We are trying to help each individual discover the special services for Christian community to which God is calling him or her, services for which God has given them special gifts.

If we offer special attention to those God has called to the Claretian Family, it is not to corral them off in our own special preserve. Rather, it is because of our enthusiasm for contributing to the building up of the People of God, through gifts which God has given us.

It is God who makes Lay Claretians. Our work is limited to helping them discover whether or not they are called to our Family. The best help we can offer them is the witness of our own lives in conformity with the spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

c) Concrete activities for promoting the Lay Claretians

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1) In some parts of the Congregation, the first step must be a consciousness-raising campaign aimed at showing our Missionaries the role of the laity in the Church, the extraordinary vision of Claret regarding the involvement of the laity in evangelization, and the urgent need for greater lay participation in our apostolic endeavors if we really want to be faithful to the Church and our Founder.

2) We should take every opportunity to make the person and spirit of Claret known to all laypersons related with us or involved in our works. We should make presentations on Claret's own example, thinking and projects concerning the lay apostolate, to all groups associated with our churches and schools. Claretian celebrations or scheduled events offer a natural and unforced setting for informing people about our Founder. Retreats, cursillos or encounters, especially those involving young people, must not neglect this essential dimension of the Claretian vocation -- evangelization. This would also be a good occasion for explaining the various Claretian vocations.

3) Openness on the part of our communities and personal contact with layperson is another means of helping them get to know the Claretian spirit.

4) The next step might be to organize a shared experience for people who feel especially attracted to Claret and his missionary charism. Experiences of this kind may be organized by people of one locality, or on a province-wide level, asking our communities to invite interested laypersons to participate in these days of information, deeper appreciation and discernment.

5) Our activities in this connection should not be limited merely to the scope of our own works. Faithful to Claret, who strove to involve the most influential persons of his day in evangelization, Claretians with contacts in of the powerful mass media of communication, should make a special effort to search out potential evangelizers in these fields.

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There should really be some modern-day equivalent of Claret's Academy of St. Michael.

Our option for the poor and for social justice is sometimes less effectual, because we neglect our duty to evangelize and involve in our evangelizing work, those persons who could do the most to change structures that create situations of injustice and poverty.

6) One field for promoting the Lay Claretians has not yet been duly exploited. I refer to those who once belonged to the Claretian Congregation. A campaign directed to maintaining contact with ex-Claretians who have kept up a good relationship with the Congregation, might help us recover some excellent lay evangelizers who already have a good apostolic, religious and Claretian formation.

d) Promoters, but not leaders

The enthusiasm of some Claretians in creating and fostering Lay Claretian groups, might lead them to exercise an excessive leadership role which, in the long run, could prove very harmful. The General Chapter put the Lay Claretians on guard against this danger: "Do not cling to, or pin all your hopes on, the support of a single individual or small group" (Message, n.14).

The forming of a clique or clan around one or a few persons, even when the latter have created the group, is prejudicial to the development and maturation of that group, and especially to its insertion into the Lay Claretian movement and the Claretian Family in general. In fact, there are presently a few groups who are not accepted by provinces or communities, because they seem to be the private preserve of certain individuals.

Those Claretian Missionaries who organize a group should be masters at disappearing into the background, yet remaining available for service to the group when it is required. A wise growth-philosophy is that attributed to John the Baptizer: "He must increase, I must decrease." It is a philosophy that is by no means easy to put into practice.

4. Providing help in their formation

Before anyone is admitted as a Lay Claretian, he or she must undergo a period of formation. But who is going to rule on the admission of new candidates? In already organized groups, this is done in accordance with their statutes. In other cases, the group must first be formed on the basis of a fundamental Sourcebook for Lay Claretians. The actual rite of admission might be, as in Claret's time, an apostolic consecration to the Heart of Mary which, since it is apostolic, should include a commitment of dedication to evangelization in keeping with the missionary spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

And it is not just new candidates who need help in their formation. One of the worst defects of already existing groups is a lack of formation, especially Claretian formation -- which, ironically, is what they most expect of us and is what we are best equipped to offer them.

The integral formation of a Lay Claretian involves a number of elements, but especially the following:

- Doctrinal formation in Scripture, Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology, and Catechetics, for a deeper appreciation of the message they are to deliver.
- Awareness and analysis of the current Church-world situation.
- Formation in spirituality, as the foundation and condition for every valid apostolate (See AA 29).
- Claretian formation.

Our (i.e., the Claretian Missionaries') collaboration with the Lay Claretians will occasionally consist in urging them to attend courses which other groups have organized for the laity, or to take correspondence courses. As regards their Claretian formation, besides the help their religious facilitator might provide, it would be very helpful if some special studies were prepared --even, if need be,

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correspondence courses-- on various aspects of Claretian formation.

Another important collaborative service would be preparing some leaders who could direct formation within their own group or provide occasional services to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

5. Helping them organize, both as local groups and as a movement

Groups that come to being on the basis of a charism "still need some sort of structuring, however minimal, in order to avoid subjective interpretations of their charism and a dispersal of energies (Rio de Janeiro, Conclusion n. 5.1). The Congregation has already offered a number of services to the Lay Claretians in connection with their organization. The Claretian Collaborators came into being with a well worked out set of Rules. Forty years later, the General Government prepared a set of Statutes for the Claretian Associates (See AN 1976, pp. 300-309).

At present, groups organized in the manner of Secular Institutes have their own statutes, drawn up in keeping with the guidelines of the 1976 General Statutes approved by the Claretian Superior General. Perhaps these groups may have to adapt their statutes in keeping with the new perspectives on the Lay Claretians. Other groups lack such statutes, except for the CLAS group of Bogota, who have a set of statutes approved by their General Assembly in July, 1971.

Among the services which the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians can offer the movement, might be the preparation of a general model for statutes, which could then be adapted by each group to its own circumstances, if it feels that it needs a set of statutes.

Another important service would be helping them organize on a general level. This is what they themselves asked for at Rio: "Be it resolved that: With due respect for the autonomy of Lay Claretian groups, some type of international relationship and communion be set up" (Concl. 2.7).

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To lay a solid foundation for communion and coordination on a worldwide scale, the fundamental Sourcebook for Lay Claretians has been compiled. It summarizes basic notions of the Lay Claretians' charism, mission, spirit, and evangelizing activity in the Church. There is now the Commentary on the Sourcebook. It clarifies the notions in the Sourcebook and is a good tool for formation of those in the process of discernment or for continued formation of veterans. This work provides material for dialogue to help strengthen the movement and individual members.

These principles, are of their very nature somewhat general (so as to accommodate the great variety of lay movements begun by Claret). They have been worked out and accepted by all groups. This provides the best basis for Claretian identity, communion and coordination on the international level of the movement.

At present there is a source of communication for the Spanish speaking groups. A quarterly newsletter, Seglares Claretianos, is now published. There is need to provide a newsletter for the other language groups that now make up the movement. This should be further discussed at future international meetings. At present the Secretariat for the Lay Claretians who is a liaison with the Claretian Missionaries, is of service among the non-Spanish speaking groups. However, this is something the movement will have to eventually take as its own responsibility.

The Secretariat of the Claretian Missionaries is not a vertebral column for the organization of the whole Lay Claretian movement. It is one thing to speak of the organizational help that the Congregation might offer the Lay Claretians, and quite another to speak of organizing the movement itself. The Secretariat is an organization of the Claretian Congregation, aimed at helping the Lay Claretians in these early moments of their existence. The organization of the Lay Claretians must rest squarely on their own shoulders.

Members of other branches of the Claretian Family may also be involved, but always as persons invited to do so in a consultative capacity. Most of the involvement by the

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Claretian Congregation and other members of the Claretian family is to help with formation. They share their knowledge of St. Claret -- his life and work.

Serious thought will also have to be given to have at least one full time person who will direct the movement. The size and responsibilities are pointing in that direction.

6. An endeavor of the whole Claretian Family

The other branches of the Claretian Family are also called to promote the development of the Lay Claretians, since the Lay Claretians are not a work of the Congregation but of Claret himself, for whose survival in the Church we are all responsible. Around the communities, groups and works of the other branches of the Claretian Family, vocations to the Lay Claretians may also arise.

The "Claretian-ness" that makes us brothers and sisters, is not an abstraction, but a living reality:

- we have one and the same Father,
- we are enlivened by one and the same missionary spirit, -among us, we complementarily express the total charismatic being of Claret,
- each of our institutions, with its own special way of being Claretian, cooperates with all the rest in carrying out the ambitious evangelizing project of our Founder.

He dreamt, especially during the last years of his life, of joining all his children, to form a great front for evangelization. This was his dying wish and, so to speak, a clause in his last will and testament -- a clause that we should carry out. (See RCLC, p.4)

Within the Claretian Family, fraternity is expressed and increased through personal relationships, inter-institutional communion and communication, development of other branches, and mutual collaboration in evangelizing works, projects and activities. We must all have a special interest in promoting vocations for the different branches of our Family. If anyone feels attracted

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to the person and spirit of Claret, and comes into contact with us, we should enthusiastically and impartially help them to discover their specific Claretian vocation, whether as Claretian Missionaries, members of Cordimarian Filiation, Lay Claretians, or as diocesan priests living in community (should we manage to bring this latter project of Claret into being).

Second Printing
Edited by Richard Todd, CMF
Rome -July 16, 1994

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CC = Constitutions of the Congregation (1973 General Chapter)
DC = Declaration on our Charism (1967 General Chapter)
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MLC = Message to Lay Claretians (1979 General Chapter)
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(Note: Since some of Claret's works for the laity have rather long titles, they will be cited according to the following abbreviations)

Aut = Autobiography

LAY CLARETIANS AND THE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

Lib = Popular Parish Lending Libraries (Barcelona, 1865), 32 pp.

BNA = Brief Notice on the origin, achievements, graces and instructions of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary (Barcelona, 1855), 733 pp.

FHM = Brief Account of the Constitutions of the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (See John Lozano's Constituciones y textos sobre la Congregacion e Misioneros: Barcelona, 1972, pp.116-123).

FCD = The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine (Appendix 6 to Claret's Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of Cuba. Barcelona, 1855, pp.97-105

PAM = Plan of the Academy of St. Michael, founded by His Excellency, Abp. Anthony M. Claret y Clara (Barcelona, 1862) 45 pp.

NOH = Nuns in their own Homes, or Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Nary (Barcelona, 1850), 176 pp.

RCLC = Rules for Secular Clergy Living in Community (Barcelona, 1864), 78 pp.(For a fuller bibliography of Claret's works, see J. M. Lozano, C.M.F., Mystic and Man of Action. Chicago, 1977, pp. 117-337).