

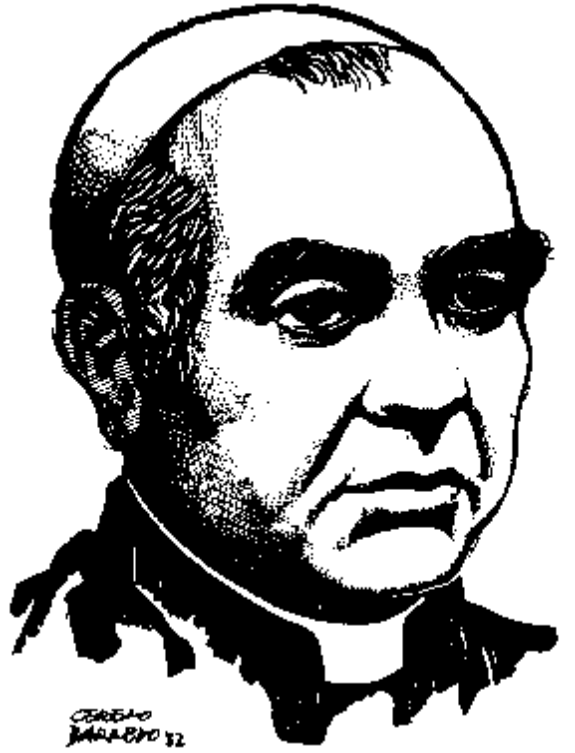
Lay Claretian Movement
Study Guide #5

CLARET: APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

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Foreword

The more the person of St. Anthony Mary Claret is studied and the deeper one delves into his vocational identity, the clearer it becomes that his very being is summed up in the phrase, 'Apostolic Missionary.' The title, which we will see, had a special meaning in the last century. It sums up all that is most authentic and deep in the personality of Anthony Mary Claret. Apostolic Missionary expresses his essential identity, who he is.

Claret always thought of himself as an Apostolic Missionary. Those who knew him personally also saw him as such. Because of this, it deserves our close study. His first biographer, Francisco Aguilar, attests to it even by the way he titled his book. On the title page of his biography 'Apostolic Missionary' is set all capitals and in larger print rather than Claret's title as Archbishop of Cuba and Trajanopolis. In the complex and multifaceted tapestry of Claret's personality, there is one golden thread from which everything else begins and toward which everything else converges, his vocation to be an Apostolic Missionary. From this essential definition everything else in his life unfolds: his spirituality, his priesthood, his episcopate, his notion of the religious life, his apostolic work and his organizational enterprises.

Since this title best defines him, it is crucial for us to grasp its meaning, both as it was generally understood in Claret's day, and as he himself understood it. This will provide us with a key to understand both his vocation and his gift as evangelizer. After reflecting on Claret as a person and as a founder, we may come to discover something about the Congregation he founded, the Claretian Missionaries, the Lay Claretians and all the other communities and groups he inspired.

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CLARET: APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

I. THE TRADITIONAL NOTION OF APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

For every vocation and mission in the Church, the figure of Jesus Christ sets the norm. But the person of Jesus is so rich and varied that no single person can imitate him adequately or exhaustively. Thus, each saint and each founder or foundress has stressed only some particular facet of the life of Christ. In keeping with the gift which each has received from the Spirit, the founder live this and proposes it to his or her followers for their imitation.

The ideal of Christ as prophet and evangelizer (bringer of good news) inspired the Apostles and has continued to inspire apostolic men and women of all ages. It is possible to trace throughout the history of the Church a tradition that stems from Christ's gospel missionary discourse. It runs parallel to the monastic tradition inspired by the community life of the primitive Church and corresponds to several of the great evangelical calls to perfection. St. Bernard, commenting on the life of the Irish apostle, St. Malachy, calls this rule of life 'the apostolic form' and the 'signs of the apostolate.' He goes on to point out its essential traits: going on foot, travelling from parish to parish, lacking money, servants and abode.

A century and a half later, St. Dominic and his first companions would adopt this same way of life. Later still, St. John of Avila and a number of the missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries would likewise take it as their model. In this same line, characterized by itinerant evangelization and apostolic poverty, we also find Saints Vincent de Paul, Alphonsus Mary Liguori, Leonard of Port Maurice and Blessed Diego of Cadiz, with all of whom Anthony Claret felt a strong affinity. This almost uninterrupted chain of Apostolic Missionaries received another great link in 19th-century Spain, in the person of St. Anthony Mary Claret.

From the 12th century onwards, missionaries enjoyed broad faculties and privileges which they received directly from the Rome, even after the institution of the Propagation of the Faith by Gregory XIV in 1622. These men were called "Apostolic Missionaries." They had received special approval from the office of the Propagation of the Faith thus enjoyed special privileges and had special duties to fulfill.

Apostolic Missionary was, then, a juridical title granted by the Holy See to particular itinerant preachers who were sent to preach to believers or non-believers in those areas where their ministry had been requested. In its original and juridical sense, an Apostolic Missionary was a priest sent by the Holy See to build up the Church where it was not yet established. It also could be a priest whom the Holy See recommended to the Bishop of an established Church, with the canonical mission to renew or re-evangelize the Church in his area." The adjective "apostolic" in this title refers precisely to the authority granting it, namely, the Holy See. Rome backed, so to speak, the bearer's mission.

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Besides giving the Missionary its considerable backing, the Holy See also granted him certain privileges of a liturgical-devotional type. For his own part, the Missionary pledged to devote himself to itinerant preaching and to lead a poor and detached life.

Later we will see how Father Claret --who was also to receive the title of Apostolic Missionary from the Holy See-- understood all this in a far more original, radical and distinctive sense.

II. THE GENESIS OF CLARET'S VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Claret's reflection on the experience of his vocation was what principally organized who he was and motivated his whole life and apostolic activity. His vocation erupted with prophetic force, amid powerful insights and impulses, from a deep experience of God in prayer. This led him to a radical commitment for God and His kingdom. His vocation also came from a special experience of the world. Claret had known since his early years its goodness and its dangers. In early childhood he had a special experience of the forceful power of God. He became so keenly aware of and experienced human weakness, infidelity and consequent unhappiness, that at times it even kept him awake at night. This experience stayed with him throughout his life. In a certain sense we could say that in him, grace anticipated nature, and zeal ran ahead of reason. Thus, his first biographer wrote: "In some way it could be said that he was an apostle before he was a man."

His compassion for sinners cannot be explained merely by the fact that he had a "tender and compassionate nature (Autobiography 10). His experience of eternity when he was five years old (Aut 8) was a special intervention of the Spirit, who had destined him from the womb to fulfill a special mission in the Church. That same idea remained engraved on his mind (Aut 9) and "has stayed with me ever since... I will never forget that it is the mainspring and motivating force of my zeal for the salvation of souls" (Aut 15). "The power of this idea," he wrote as an adult, "has made me work in the past, still makes me work, and will make me work as long as I live for the conversion of sinners" (Aut 9).

What we have here is a precocious working of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, similar to what St. Teresa of Avila experienced as a child. But whereas it led Teresa to desire to become a hermit or a martyr, it led the young Claret to react in an exclusively apostolic way. The thought of an eternity of loss made him shudder. It provoked a twofold reaction in his emotive-active nature. First, it gave him an intense feeling of compassion for sinners, and secondly, a resolve to work with all his might to prevent their damnation.

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Also, in his early childhood, he began to view the vocation to the priesthood in a strictly apostolic sense. It was a means of working for the salvation of his sisters and brothers: "God called me and I offered myself to His most holy will.... A thousand times over I would offer myself to His service. I wanted to become a priest so that I could dedicate myself to His service day and night" (Aut 40).

This vocation would be tested in more than one acute crisis. When his Latin teacher of his home town of Sallent died unexpectedly, this postponed his plans for the priesthood. He went back to full time work in his father's textile mill until he was able to continue again. Anthony went through a crucial period of his life in contact with the world in big city of Barcelona. It was quite different from living in a small town.

From the start of this new experience, his view of work, friendship, and human and technical progress was positive and optimistic. The world held out bright promises of money, honor and pleasure. But he soon came to see the limitations and dangers of these good things when they are pressed into the service of ambitious and selfish ends. He experienced the insecurity of money and friendship when a false friend swindled him (Aut 73-75) and another friend's wife tried to seduce him (Aut 72). He also discovered the evil ways of his fellow workers at the factory, who lived worldly, idle and superficial lives, and swore like demons. Above all, when he was swept out to sea by a wave and almost drowned at a beach off Barcelona, La Barceloneta, he discovered the frailty of his own hold on life and the ever-imminent danger of losing it (Aut 71).

Contact with this new world of technical progress was particularly dangerous for him. He felt very much at home in this environment. He had a natural talent for all this (cf. Aut 63). Claret became obsessed by all he experienced (Aut 66) and it started to pose a real threat to his apostolic vocation. "Homo faber" almost annulled "homo religiosus." For a time it seemed as if the thorns were going to choke the good wheat (Aut 65).

Yet this experience of the world and the things of the world were both necessary and providential in preparing Claret's apostolic heart. "God dealt me all these blows," he writes, "to wake me up and help me escape from the dangers of the world" (Aut 73), and "to uproot me" from it (Aut 76).

This deep experience of disillusion led him to make a radical decision: He would break definitively with the world and die to it in a Carthusian monastery (Aut 77). Here was a religious vocation, indeed, but one which, if followed, would have jeopardized his apostolic vocation. God used this 'temporary vocation' in a providential way to help him realize that he must 'die to the world' in the sense St. Paul spoke about it in his Epistles. God found a way for Claret to later on in his life use his technical skills which were such a temptation in his youth. These skills would serve the purposes of his future ministry of

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the press. By the use of the press he would spread God's Word and to counter the evil uses of his time in spreading falsity, obscenity and injustice.

It was precisely at this juncture of Anthony's life that his missionary vocation reappeared with great force. "Ever since I lost the desire to become a Carthusian --which God had used to uproot me from worldliness-- I not only thought about becoming holy myself, but was continually trying to imagine what I could do to save the souls of my neighbors" (Aut 113).

Once the ground had been cleared, the explicit call came. The abounding and endless power of God's Word intervened. As he read the Bible, which moved and stirred him deeply (Aut 113), he felt as if personally immersed in the mystery of Jesus' mission. "In many passages of the Bible I felt the voice of God calling me to go forth and preach" (Aut 120). He was most strongly impressed by reading certain passages from the Old Testament Prophets (Aut 114 ff.). But "in a very special way" his own prophetic vocation was revealed to him in the words of Isaiah 61:1, which Jesus had applied to himself at the beginning of his public ministry (cf. Lk 4:18-19): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore He has anointed me. He has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor" (Aut 118). For Claret it was a text with substantial meaning. Through it he understood in a definitive way the nature and scope of his vocation as he contemplated it in Christ the Evangelizer. He understood Christ as anointed and sent, born of the Virgin Mary, perfectly conformed to the will of the Father, the Servant called to proclaim the truth in his preaching, his life-witness and his sufferings. Claret saw himself as included in the long line of prophets, apostles and great missionaries. At the same time he became aware of being an instrument of salvation, an arrow poised in the hands of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary (cf. Aut 156 ff., 270), a trumpet and even the jawbone of an ass in the hands of the Lord.

However, just as the messianic vocation of Jesus was put to the test, so Claret's missionary vocation was tried by Satan in an attempt to nip it in the bud. The attempt was foiled by a supernatural intervention in a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She came to his aid when he was sick and tempted against chastity in his room at the Casa Tortades in Vic (Aut 95-98). This was a decisive moment of reinforcement for his vocation, not only because it confirmed him in chastity (cf. Aut 98), but because of its apostolic significance. It was in this vision that Claret formed his concept of Marian sonship in an apostolic form. He would view evangelization as collaborating in the Virgin's struggle against Satan and his seed.

At his ordination to the diaconate Claret began to grasp the full import of Mary's supernatural intervention in his earlier vision. "At the ordination the bishop read those words of St. Paul in the Pontifical: 'For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Principalities and Powers who originate the darkness of this

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world.' At that moment the Lord made me understand clearly the meaning of the demons I saw during the temptation I described" (Aut 101).

This was the moment of Claret's apostolic investiture. He saw it at the very moment in which he received into his hands the book of the Gospels as a weapon of spiritual combat, the very same two-edged sword that had already wounded and enlightened him. With the laying on of hands came Claret's anointing in the Spirit and his being sent into the struggle. It was likewise his incorporation into the offspring of the Virgin. The text of Genesis came alive for Claret. After the fall of Adam and Eve and God's judgement was pronounced to the serpent, "I will make you enemies, you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring..." It was the moment of his incorporation into the offspring of the Virgin to whom he entrusted himself as son and priest, so that she might send him out as her apostle (Aut 160-161) and unleash him as an arrow with the full force of her mighty hand (Aut 270).

Summing up, then, we may say that Claret's missionary vocation was:

- ! born of his contact with the word of God during his youth,
- ! strengthened by the vision of the Victorious Virgin at the Casa Tortadés in Vic;
- ! clarified and confirmed during his ordination to the diaconate.

III. CLARET'S FORMATION FOR MISSION

Paralleling Claret's vocational experience was his general and specialized formation for mission. God had begun the process by laying a good natural foundation. He had provided Claret with parents who were "upright and God-fearing" (Aut 3) and had gifted him with "a good nature and good disposition" (Aut 18). Anthony's intelligence was more practical than speculative. He was gifted with more than ordinary willpower and optimistic regarding his work. It was fairly easy for him to adjust to changing circumstances. Claret had a dogged memory, great capacity for work, robust health, and strong physical and moral resistance.

Upon this sound natural foundation of birth and good parenting, Claret's childhood education began to be built up under the guidance of his first school teacher in Sallent, Anthony Pascual, "a very active and religious man" (Aut 22) who, together with Claret's parents, "cooperated in molding my understanding in truth and nurturing my heart in the practice of religion and all the virtues" (Aut 25).

Though experience as a worker, both in Sallent and especially in Barcelona, his technical training went hand in hand with his intellectual and scientific studies. This had a positive influence on his future mission.

Later, in the Seminary of Vic (then an important cultural center) his seven years of official studies and personal readings left a deep and lasting impression on him. For Claret, this was a time of searching for and finding theological truth with a distinct orientation of that truth toward his future missionary activity (cf. Aut 113). "To this end, all my daily prayers, studies and spiritual reading were directed."

His readings in Scripture not only clarified the meaning of his vocation and drove him to the apostolate, but also nourished his mind and heart in such a way that his preaching would later be able to communicate the message of salvation with power and conviction. Much the same could be said of his reading of the lives of saints who had been distinguished by their zeal for the salvation of souls (Aut 226).

But perhaps the strongest formation influence was his voyage to Rome and his stay in the Jesuit novitiate there. Even during his journey to Rome he had a deep experience of identification with Jesus the Missionary. He felt confirmed in his idea of the need for poverty and the need to be a witness of the Gospel to others (Aut 135). His stay with the Jesuits gave him an experience of a spirituality aimed at a universal apostolate and taught him a number of effective methods for the apostolate. Moreover, it showed him the value of a consecrated life and the power community life has to make missionary work successful. "The Lord did me a great favor in bringing me to Rome and introducing me for however short a time to those virtuous fathers and brothers... It was there that I learned how to give the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and methods for preaching,

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catechizing, hearing confessions usefully and effectively, as well as many other things that have stood me in good stead" (Aut 152).

Once he had completed this initial formation, his missionary experience kept opening up new horizons and pathways for renewal and continuing formation. His hunger for continuing education and formation is manifest in the importance he always attached to personal study (cf. Aut 87-88, 633, 665, 764, 801), as well as in the quantity and quality of books he was continually adding to his library.

Claret's own contemporaries stated that he was a man who excelled in all sciences, a man of "vast and deep" knowledge, and that it was "common talk in ecclesiastical circles that his knowledge was infused and was a living miracle of God." But he himself said modestly and truthfully, "It's clear to me that the little I know, I owe to many years and nights spent in study."

Claret's philosophical and theological formation was thorough, careful and substantial. His biblical formation was even more so. This was especially due to his intense and frequent reading both of the Scriptures themselves and of the best commentaries available in his day. His patristic formation was notable for the times. He read Augustine and Chrysostom directly from their works, and studied the most important Eastern and Western Fathers in collections and anthologies. His spiritual (ascetical and mystical) formation was nourished not only by his continual reading of classic and modern Spanish authors, but also by considerable acquaintance with French, Italian, Portuguese and even German writers on spirituality.

Yet all of this, important as it was, was not the definitive element in Claret's formation. He was formed above all by his deep experience of God and the Blessed Virgin, by his imitation of and conformity with Christ, whom he met in the Eucharist, in the Word, in his neighbor, in evangelizing work and in his soul, where he intensely lived this experience and put it into practice.

Summing up: Claret's human and spiritual formation led him to attain a "vital unity of prayer and apostolic spirit, faith and charity, mission and poverty, contemplation and apostolic action, sonship and missionary service, conversion to the Gospel and evangelization."

IV. CLARET'S UNDERSTANDING OF 'APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY'

1. Dignity

Claret always considered the missionary vocation as the highest, most effective and ideal vocation. In his work Letter To The Missionary, Theophiles, he makes the following statements. The missionary vocation is higher than that of the angels, it is divine, since the missionary becomes God's co-worker, and even a co-savior of the world with Christ. Missionary work was Christ's own most acceptable and glorious work, and He, "the Head of all missionaries... has entrusted this ministry, which is so sublime, holy and divine, to the Apostles and to apostolic missionaries". "Consider," he tells Theophilus, "if there be any honor like that bestowed on us by admitting us to the apostolate and sharing with us His title of 'Savior of the World'". Collaborating in the salvation of our neighbor is "a great work of charity..., more so than if you were very rich and gave all your wealth to the poor", for a soul "is worth more than all the riches of the world".

Claret held this conviction throughout his life. In Cuba, faced by the hostility of slave traders, revolutionary separatists, and the obstacles which civil authorities set in the way of his pastoral action, he wrote, "The character of a missionary is all I need in order to be poor, to love God, to love my neighbors and gain their souls as well as save my own."

The same conviction appears repeatedly during his years in Madrid. Writing to young Father Domingo Ramonet, who was then trying to decide what kind of priestly ministry to choose, Claret states: "Being a missionary is more than being a pastor or a canon in a cathedral... The dangers involved in those positions are great and frequent. The fruit they produce is less than that produced in the missionary's life." "There can be no doubt that it will stand a priest in better stead to have been a missionary than to have been a cathedral canon. Let him choose now what he would prefer to have chosen at the hour of his death" (Aut 631).

In 1862, he wrote: "In no other state is more glory given to God, or more merit received, than in the state where one leaves all in order to follow Jesus Christ, to spread His reign and to save sinners. This is the greatest charity, and this is the life-work of the real missionary. In 1865, he returns to his earlier theme, that the "dignity" of the missionary is "divine," adding that for this reason, the missionary's "sanctity should measure up to his dignity." Later, near the end of his life, he continues praising this highest of vocations calling it "a beatitude worthy of great reward."

The tradition of Claret's Congregation, the Claretian Missionaries, has always understood the missionary vocation in the same way that Claret did. To cite but one significant but less known text from a former superior general, Fr. Alsina, "Your exalted calling is the same as that received by the Apostles: 'Go out into the whole world... Jesus

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has made us, like his Apostles, his envoys, his representatives, his ambassadors, his witnesses, his preachers and the ministers of his holy Sacraments."

2. The Specific Import of Being an Apostolic Missionary

Claret received the title of Apostolic Missionary "ad honorem" on July 9, 1841. We do not know exactly which faculties he received at that time, but they must have been similar to those he requested for his companions in 1845.

For Claret, this title was not just an 'honor' or a merely juridical distinction. It was the definition of his being, who he was. He gave it a theological and evangelical meaning singling out a special style of life, like that of Jesus with the Apostles, a life style of rigorous Gospel poverty and of sharing with one's brothers.

In the title, "Apostolic Missionary," he saw the word "missionary" as standing for his specific function, namely, evangelization, the prophetic service of the Word. It was detached as much as possible from the other two functions of the ministerial priesthood, namely, fixed sacramentalization and government (priestly and kingly). "Missionary" has a clear Christological connotation for Claret. Christ was anointed and sent, and is the "Head and Model of all missionaries". Claret understood his own missionary function in Christ and from the point of view of Christ. Anointed and sent like Christ, he was called to become conformed with Christ, to live in intimacy with Him even to death, and to proclaim His message of salvation. It was precisely from this point of view that he thought it necessary to understand the most typical of missionary traits, attitudes and virtues found in Jesus the Evangelizer.

All of this helps explain why Claret always understood his own missionary life in terms of an ingrafting into Christ or of Continuity with Christ the Missionary. It also explains his predilection for the Christ of public ministry. "Claret's preferences obviously ran in the direction of the public life of Jesus --his preaching, conversations, nightlong prayer, his sweat, hunger and thirst along the roads of Palestine-- all those acts whereby the humanity of Christ revealed the mystery of God's love for humanity."

For Claret, the adjective "apostolic" in the title contained a direct and immediate reference to the Apostles, who were called to share close friendship with Jesus and proclaim His good news to the ends of the earth. As we have already noted, for Claret this meant a lifestyle centered on poverty, itinerancy and fraternity in the service of evangelization -- the biblical and prophetic ministry of the word.

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For Father Claret, his apostolic vocation was not something episodic or passing. He was so intensely and radically an apostle that his apostolicity penetrated all levels of his personality and all phases of his life. Preaching missions and evangelizing were not external activities for St. Anthony Mary Claret, but were rather the most authentic expressions of his vocation. For him, being a missionary was something substantive, since he regarded himself as being a missionary in Christ. Referring to the biblical image, Christ as head, we as members, Claret saw himself united to Christ as his Head and conformed to the Son in his mission. This is the trait that has been most highly stressed by his biographers and by the tradition of the Claretian Congregation. It is, in fact, the trait which appears with greatest drive in his makeup. In that context the apostolate embraces everything. As parish priest, missionary, prelate, confessor, spiritual director, teacher, social reformer, writer and founder of religious orders, he directed everything to the apostolate.

Claret was an Apostolic Missionary not only during his missioning days in Catalonia and the Canary Islands, but also when he was in stable situations of government. "Obliged, for the greater service of the Church, to accept the episcopacy and later, the post of royal confessor, he lived as an apostolic missionary in these positions. Claret emphasizes the evangelizing dimension of the two ministries and he conformed to the life style of an apostolic missionary by his own poor and fraternal style of life."

In Cuba, he was "more a missionary than an archbishop," writes his secretary, Fr. Paladio Currius. Against the general tendency of the time, which sought to reduce the bishop to a mere bureaucratic functionary, he delegated the ordinary functions of government to his most faithful coworkers, reserving to himself only the higher direction of affairs. This enabled him to devote the greater part of his time and energies to missionary preaching. His pastoral visits were above all a time for familiar get-togethers with his clergy and for the direct evangelization of the people God had entrusted to his care. His idea of an apostolic missionary at this stage in his life reveals certain essential traits -- itinerancy and availability, community life, missionary preaching, and a continual need for renewal.

In Madrid, without neglecting his duties as royal confessor, he devoted a good part of his time to evangelizing all kinds and classes of people. During his obligatory travels with the royal family, he turned each stop along the way into a springboard for preaching popular missions, giving retreats to clergy, religious and laity. He also managed to preach silently by his constant example of poverty, abstemiousness, dedication and joy.

When he was appointed president of El Escorial, he dreamed of transforming it into a center for evangelization and for the formation of evangelizers, an interdiocesan seminary, a university college, a mission house and an international retreat house (cf. Aut 638-639, 702-708, 869-872). He largely succeeded in doing so, despite tremendous opposition from anti-religious politicians and disloyal clergy.

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In Paris, where he was exiled by the forces of the 1868 Revolution, and in Rome, during the First Vatican Council, he continued to be an apostolic missionary by his poor and fraternal lifestyle, by his work for Spanish refugees, by his tireless preaching and catechizing, and by his strong desires "to take off" to the "young vine" of America.

Toward the end of his life, as if summing it all up, he states that he has fulfilled his mission, because he has by God's grace remained faithful to the two main traits of an apostolic missionary -- he has preached the Gospel, he has kept poverty.

VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF CLARET'S MISSION

1. Universality

The first characteristic of mission is universality, in all its aspects, since it is a consequence of zeal --"which knows no limits." For Claret, universality meant, above all "global," in faithfulness to the mandate of Jesus, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:15). The missionary, besides the one talent of the priestly dignity, has been given four others, which are the four corners of the earth. Urged on by a universal charity, Claret began to feel that the limits of a parish were too narrow for his zeal. His motive for declining the appointment as Archbishop of Cuba was the universality of his spirit, "If I accepted, I would be tied down and limited to a single archdiocese, whereas my spirit goes out to the whole world." Only obedience led him to accept the position in the end, "but with the understanding," he wrote to the Captain General of Cuba, "that I could thus add more fuel to the charity in which I wish to burn, to the love of God and my neighbors." He was not satisfied with the limits of a single country. When he was at the hub of things in Madrid, he stated, "I have such a deep longing to leave Madrid and go out into the whole world and preach" (Aut 762). He wanted his missionaries to share this same universality, and wrote that one of the objects of the Congregation was the salvation of all the inhabitants of the world (CC 1857, n. 2).

It also meant universality with regard to time and dedication. During the period he was mission preaching in Catalonia, apostolic work so completely absorbed him that at times he didn't have time to eat. "Every day of the year I was giving missions." "His work," says a Chapter Book of the Cathedral of Tarragona, "is unfathomable. From four in the morning until he retires, he hardly has time to pray or take the necessary nourishment, since he goes from confessional to pulpit and from pulpit to confessional." The same happened in the Canary Islands. "Day and night I deprive myself of rest and sleep," he writes. "I go it alone, like a desperado, preaching and hearing confessions day and night." His life followed the same dizzying rhythm in Cuba. He writes to his friends, "We have to suffer much and work very hard." He speaks of "continual work" and "continual pastoral visits," and tells them, "Daily I'm preaching, hearing confessions and receiving people day and night, whenever they call me." A journal of the period

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describes him as follows: "The zealous shepherd, like the sun, follows the course of sacred ministry, shedding light and warmth throughout the diocese, through his word, his action and his example." In Madrid, Claret writes: "I'm preaching all day." In Paris and in Rome, he was always preaching, catechizing, hearing confessions or writing. The Congregation of Missionaries was born of Claret's universal missionary longings to transcend his own limits of space and time.

Another aspect of Claret's universality was surely that of his outreach to all people, beyond any barriers of exclusivism, discrimination or false "human respect." He wanted to convert and evangelize everyone, hierarchy and non-ordained, poor and rich, learned and unlettered, priests and laity, religious and soldiers, young and old, evangelized and evangelizers. His long series of "Advice To..." booklets was addressed to all states in life, as were some of his longer, full-scale publications.

To this we would also have to add his universality with regard to means for evangelization and human development. "There was no means that Claret let pass him by" (MCT 67), and he prescribed the same rule for his Congregation. In every situation he adopted the most effective means in order to respond to "the urgent needs and challenges he met in his evangelizing mission" (MCT 68). These means were always in keeping with the missionary service of the Word, either to plant it, consolidate it, or make it grow.

The tradition of the Claretian Congregation has always understood universality of all these kinds to be a special characteristic of its own evangelizing mission.

This universality always implies total availability for the service of evangelization: whether as to place (free from all local entanglements), as to time (free from all other occupations that might hinder it) or as to people (Christ lived, died and rose that all might be saved).

2. Evangelization

Claret's whole life revolved around evangelization. Hence he devoted all his energies to the missionary service of the Word, urged on by the charity of the Holy Spirit, deeply aware of the almost sacramental importance of the Word and of the people's need to be evangelized. Since "the ministry of the Word is at once the most exalted and invincible of ministries" (Aut 752), he gave it a privileged place, ranking it above the other priestly functions of sacramentalizing and governing. The fact is that his vocation was not to direct but to found, not to govern but to preach.

In this respect, Claret's vocation exhibits a markedly Pauline stamp. Faced by a society in an advanced stage of dechristianization, he felt an urgent need to sow the word that converts and transforms. He was a universal evangelist in the style of Jesus and the Twelve, and worked in fraternity as they did. Claret, since the first glimmerings of his

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apostolic vocation, understood evangelization as a service, in the most biblical and prophetic sense of the word, especially as formulated in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah and in Paul. Above all, he looks to Christ as the prototype of the Servant and took Him as his model in the practice of evangelization.

Claret was, above and before all else --we might even say exclusively-- an apostolic missionary, an evangelizer. This is his charism and it is also the Claretian Congregation's charism. It is the charism of all those who claim him as their inspiration. Being a missionary in the style of Claret means being directly and primarily oriented toward tasks of evangelization. Evangelization is the service of his followers-- a service to humankind, the world, the Church, and the upbuilding of God's reign. Those who follow him opt for a missionary form of evangelization, one 'in the style of the Apostles.'

VII. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

1. Zeal

Both from his theological reflection and his apostolic experience, Claret formed a strong conviction that love is the first motive a missionary needs, since the apostolic ministry is entirely a work of love. If he or she lacks this love, all talents, however fine in themselves, are for nothing. But if, together with ones natural endowments, a person has much love, that person has everything (Aut 438). "Both experience and the history of the Church teach us that the greatest preachers have always been the most fervent lovers" (Aut 440).

In a missionary, love is not contemplative and ecstatic, but dynamic. It is transformed into zeal and in this way reaches its fullness and perfection. "Love is known by zeal," says St. Augustine. "He who does not burn with zeal does not love, and he who does not love, remains in death." (LMT n.3.2) "The truly zealous person is himself a lover, but a lover of higher degree in love. The greater the ardor, by that much greater zeal is a person moved. "And thus we see this zeal in the Holy Apostles and in any man or woman who is endowed with the apostolic spirit.

The charity of Christ penetrates the missionary and transforms him into Christ. At the same time it impels that person to evangelize others. The Son, anointed by the Spirit to preach the Good News, came to bring God's love to the earth. The same Spirit made the Apostles to be men of the Good News, men of fire. Claret, who felt that he was conformed to the Son and sent as the Apostles were sent, defined himself as "a man on fire with love." (Aut 484) The missionary is given the same fire of Pentecost that strengthened and launched the Apostles on their way.

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"Zeal," according to Claret, "is an ardent and violent love" (Aut 381) that impels one to act. Thus, he understood love as "doing and suffering." In a missionary, the concrete form of loving God is working and suffering for the salvation of his brothers and sisters. Love for neighbor, which always wrings such deep expressions of longing from Claret (cf. Aut 448), is the charity of the Spirit which invades the evangelizer.

Claret spoke repeatedly to missionaries on the need for apostolic zeal which "is an ardent and effectual desire for the spiritual goodness and well-being of others." He made an apostolic spirit one of the requisites for entry into his Congregation (CC 1865, nn. 58.3, 60.3). This is the principal characteristic of a missionary (LMT, n. 3.4). "You are missionaries," he told his men, "you must be sent, pushed forth. You should be able to say, 'The love of Christ impels us.' Those of you who go out to preach should be like the Apostles leaving the Upper Room."

Zeal is a gift of the Spirit, it is a communication of the same Spirit that anointed, guided and compelled Jesus. Filled with this burning zeal, Claret could say that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him (Aut 118), and that the same Spirit was upon them, speaking through them (Aut 687).

2. Being Sent

The concept of zeal, which is charity received, already implies the concept of being sent. The spirit is bestowed on the missionary to prepare and dispose him, so that the Church can send him. Hence, obedience is the touchstone of a true missionary, since obedience rightly channels zeal. "Sometimes, what seems to be zeal is really passion, and obedience shows it to be what it really is."

Claret "was well convinced that to be effective, a missionary must be sent" (Aut 192). He had come to this conclusion as a result of a theological and historical vision of mission in which he felt personally involved. "All the Old Testament prophets were sent by God. Jesus Christ himself was sent from God, and Jesus in turn sent his Apostles" (Aut 195). Missionaries, who are called to collaborate with bishops in the salvation of the world, must also be sent. "This need for being sent to a particular place by a bishop was something that God himself helped me understand from the very beginning" (Aut 198). He interpreted the bishop's voice as "God's sending" (Aut 198), and felt he could do great things, even in the most difficult circumstances, if he had been duly sent (cf. Aut 198). Hence, he "always obeyed (his bishop) with the utmost deference" (Aut 456). This was his constant norm, both in Catalonia and the Canary Islands. From the latter, he wrote to Canon Caixal: "Blessed obedience -- I have always been led by it and I constantly give thanks to God for it." And experience confirmed his deepest conviction in the matter. Later, when he was racked with doubts as to whether he should stay on as the Archbishop of Santiago, he asked the Pope to indicate the path he should follow.

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The fact that he devotes a whole chapter of his Autobiography to this theme. It shows how important he considered it and how deeply he desired his Missionaries to follow the same procedure as he did (cf. Aut 198). In fact, the very nature of the apostolic calling demands that this should be so. The missionary's universal openness and availability must be determined at every stage of the way by the orders of his superior, since it is an ecclesial mission and, in the final analysis, a mission from God himself. Hence, Claret inculcated obedience on his Missionaries, since "through obedience, a true missionary may be distinguished from a feigned missionary" (CC 1857, n. 65, cf. nn. 62, 64).

"The life of a consecrated apostle is governed, then, by two complementary forces. One is the inner, personal impulse of zeal, which must never cease. The other is the force of subordination to those whom Christ has set up to govern his Church and, in the case of religious, to their superiors. Without this latter force, the apostolate would be neither authentic nor effective, since it would run counter to the will of God. In case of an apparent contradiction between the two forces, obedience should prevail, since God has no need of our ministry. Nevertheless, personal zeal will lead one to seek out new expressions in keeping with obedience. The example of Claret in burning the statutes of the Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (because the Archbishop of Tarragona disapproved of them), or the abandonment of his missionary journeys because obedience tied him down to the Court at Madrid, are two illustrations that clarify this point. Notwithstanding these sacrifices he made out of obedience, his zeal led him to seek out new ways of channeling his zeal within the limits marked out for him by the will of God."

Thus, an apostolic "sending" is an essential condition for being a missionary. Claret could never conceive of an evangelizing mission without an obedience rooted in the filial and apostolic obedience of Jesus. This is the foundational reason for the absolute necessity of obedience.

3. *Witness*

St. Anthony Mary Claret, as an Apostolic Missionary, always held to one bedrock principle that anyone who is dedicated to apostolic ministry must live a truly apostolic life. "Prophetism or evangelism existentially conditions the life of a prophet or evangelizer. Their very life must be a sign, a reflecting of the kingdom and the Good News of Christ, as Christ himself was the Good News of the Father. An evangelizer in this sense must lead a truly evangelical life, namely, a life of fraternity like that of the Twelve, a life of chastity, poverty and obedience, a genuinely apostolic life."

The missionary should be at one and the same time a prophet and a witness. Anointed and sent to proclaim the Word, he himself should become a word of salvation. Claret

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demanded this kind of witness of his Missionaries, "Always and everywhere, the conduct of a Son of the Holy Heart of Mary must be notable and exemplary" (CC 1857, n.112). Life witness is "a privileged means of evangelization" (MCT 152), and should shine above all, as we shall see, in apostolic poverty.

VIII. THE CLARETIAN "APOSTOLIC RULE"

The Apostolic Missionary needs a Rule of Life to equip him for evangelization, and to make his evangelization effective. The Rule of Life that Claret chose to follow, the Rule he left as a life-record in his Autobiography, was inspired by the Gospel. He handed on this same Gospel-inspired Rule to his Missionaries. The original Constitutions were simply a rule of apostolic life centered on the ministry.

The Claretian Apostolic Rule is centered on the missionary virtues that shone in Jesus the Evangelizer and should shine in every missionary. They are virtues which "dispose him to become an adequate instrument in extending the Reign of God" (MCT 56).

The first element is an upright, pure intention, which gives clarity and transparency to evangelization (cf. Aut 199-213, LMT IV, 9).

Moreover, the Claretian Apostolic Rule demands prayer. "All missionaries of renown have been men of prayer" (LMT 2.1). Prayer is "the first" and "the greatest means" for a successful missionary ministry (Aut 264). Hence, prayer must be a permanent attitude in a missionary, as it was in Christ the Evangelizer, "By day He preached and cured the sick, and by night he prayed"(Aut 434)

Another important element is mortification as witness, which makes the preached Word an effective Word (cf. Aut 384-427). This involves humility, which is the foundation for the virtues "needed in order to become a truly apostolic missionary" (Aut 341), as well as meekness, which is a "sign of a vocation to be an apostolic missionary" (Aut 374), always practiced in imitation of the gentleness and kindness of Jesus.

Moreover, the Apostolic Rule demands fortitude, the gift which characterizes apostolic holiness and martyrdom. Fortitude is needed if one is to rejoice in privations, work, persecution, slander and suffering (Aut 494). "All the Apostles were persecuted and died in fulfilling their ministry" (LMT 2.8).

But the most typical and significant elements in the Claretian Apostolic Rule are 1) itinerant evangelization, 2) apostolic poverty and 3) fraternal life.

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1. Itinerant Evangelization

As one who continues the mission of the Apostles and Claret, an Apostolic Missionary must be a person utterly possessed by the Spirit, a person uprooted and launched on proclaiming the Reign of God. The missionary proclamation of the Word is the hub of Claret's vocation for mission and indeed of all his spirituality. And so, in one way or another, he consecrated his whole life to evangelization. From 1843 to 1850, he had no fixed residence. One of his favorite verbs is correr, literally "to run." It is one of those endearing, almost embarrassing, Claretian words that is often lost in translation. His consuming passion was to "run" from place to place like Christ (Aut 221), like the Apostles (Aut 223) and especially like the great St. Paul (Aut 224). Moreover, in the line of the great apostolic missionaries, he followed the example of Blessed Diego of Cadiz, who "spent his whole life tirelessly in the apostolic ministry" (Aut 228). His request to be spared accepting an Archbishop's role was based on a desire not to be "tied down." And when he was finally released from his duties as Archbishop of Cuba, this was his motive for accepting no further residential diocese. In Madrid, too, he continually stated his longing to "run" everywhere preaching the Gospel, because of the people's need and hunger to hear the word of salvation.

2. Apostolic Poverty

Poverty played a capital role in the life and spirituality of Claret, the Apostolic Missionary. It is "another of the virtues we see shining most brilliantly in Jesus Christ" (CC 1857, n.68). Claret's 'apostolic sense' and missionary experience led him to the intuition that there is a mutual implication between poverty and the apostolic calling. He saw this in Jesus and the Apostles, and he found it in the prophetic texts that gave rise to his vocation. In Jesus he saw above all the Son of Man who had "nowhere to lay his head" (Lk 9:58), who was anointed and sent to preach the Gospel to the poor (Lk 4:18). Therefore he had to imitate the poor Christ and live in the spirit of poverty, if he was to enter into the inner spirit of Jesus. Thus, he always sums up the Lord's life in terms of poverty. "I always remembered that Jesus had become poor Himself, He chose to be born, to live and to die in the utmost poverty." (Aut 363)

A missionary's radical poverty should not be merely external, as in always travelling on foot and in submitting to similar hardships (cf. Aut 123, 132, 405, 759, etc.), but should be above all internal. It presupposes a renunciation of one's very self and of all that is not God. (cf. Aut 622) It implies the pursuit of humility, simplicity, work, mortification and patience. Poverty, which he practiced with such great radicalism and regarded as the "wall of missionaries," (CC 1857, n.68) is necessary for every missionary, since in these times "God wills that a public witness be given in favor of poverty."

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Throughout his Autobiography Claret traces his norm of conduct on the basis of literal fidelity to the Gospel -- travelling on foot, not taking money for his ministry or recompense for his books, scarcity of clothing and provisions (cf. Aut 359), total detachment, lack of self-seeking, and constant insecurity. His witness as an itinerant missionary is summed up in the sentence: "I had nothing, wanted nothing, refused everything" (Aut 359).

In Cuba he kept to the same tenor of life, becoming poor among the poor. In a letter to the Captain General of Cuba, he wrote "I have been poor, lived poorly, and remain poor."

In Madrid, too, his witness to poverty was notorious. He ate poorly, dressed very simply, lived in rooms at the Hospital of Montserrat and refused to buy a house so as to be able to imitate the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head.

We know that in Rome he had to undergo real financial hardships and that he had to rely on the charity of friends. He "always wanted to die a poor man in some hospital, or on the scaffold as a martyr" (Aut 467). The Lord granted him the grace of dying in exile, persecuted even on his deathbed, in a borrowed monastic cell.

Claret's poverty was the outcome of a heroic decision. He could have been a rich man, but chose to be poor to the end of his life. And he lived his poverty with the evangelical joy of the Beatitudes, "The joy I experience in feeling poverty was so great that the rich could never enjoy all their riches as much as I enjoyed my beloved poverty" (Aut 363).

Claret commended poverty to everyone, but especially to his Missionaries, because poverty is an essential part of the witness that should accompany evangelization. Above all the three things he demanded were detachment, generosity in the ministry, and simplicity of life. "One of the things you should deeply abhor is self-seeking. You must be a great friend of poverty. In all things, choose for yourself the poorest, the basest, the most contemptible" (LMT ch.2, n.4) This was exactly what he had proposed for himself (cf. Aut 649). "Detachment," Claret wrote in his first Constitutions, "from all worldly interests is a very essential means for the success of evangelical preaching" (CC 1857, n.71), because it has a strong salutary effect on everyone (cf Aut 362). Hence, he thought it necessary "to get rid of all attachment to material things, as befits the truly apostolic life that a good missionary should lead" (CC 1857, n.71). He strove "not to be a trouble or burden to anyone" (CC 1857, n.70), avoiding "everything that smacks of superfluity or gift-taking" (CC 1857, n.73), joyfully accepting the consequences of real poverty.

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Claretian apostolic poverty, lived and witnessed to in this manner, is a fundamental element in the life of an Apostolic Missionary. It frees him (cf Aut 371) and makes him available for mission.

3. Fraternal Life

During his years of evangelizing campaigns in Catalonia and the Canary Islands, Claret lived his mission almost as a solitary, although he did manage to preach several missions in company with others, especially with Blessed Francisco Coll and Fr. Manuel Vilaró. But little by little his reflections on the Gospels and his personal experience led him to see that fraternity is an effective sign of evangelizing witness and power.

As early as 1846, in one of his attempts at creating an "Apostolic Fraternity," he wrote that the missionaries who belonged to it should be united in Spirit. In 1847, in his plans for the "Brothers of Jesus and Mary," he calls for a regulated community life. A common apostolic vocation necessarily tends toward a life of fraternal communion of life. The Congregation, which came into being to fulfill an apostolic end, was immediately founded on close fraternity. "Thus we had begun and thus we continued, living together strictly in community" (Aut 491). In a letter to Canon Caixal, he writes, "We are engaged in practicing all the virtues, especially humility and charity, and here in this college we are living a truly poor and apostolic life in community."

In Cuba, his mixed group of missionaries led such a perfect common life that he took a certain teacherly joy in describing it (cf. Aut 606-613). "The mission community in Cuba... was practically the same as the one lived in one of the houses of the Congregation." The Founder himself stated that "I and my companions are leading the same kind of life that you are leading at La Merced." And indeed, the Archbishop's community in Cuba fully corresponded with the ideal Claret had dreamt of. It was a "beehive" where everyone was always "content and happy" (Aut 608), and where all were an "example in all virtues, especially humility, obedience, fervor, and a constant readiness to work" (Aut 607). It was a fraternal community that was both evangelical and evangelizing, one which enjoyed the presence of the spirit and the blessings of the Lord (Aut 609). It knew how to adopt the necessary means for remaining faithful both to fraternity and mission (Aut 610-613).

Although he was obliged to live apart from the Congregation during his long stay in Madrid (1857-1868), he managed to create and encourage a fraternal community that in every way resembled that of his own Missionaries.

Moreover, as often as he could, he shared the gift of fraternity among the Claretians in Segovia, Vic, Gracia and Prades, and kept in constant touch with them by writing to them and helping them financially. Toward the close of his career in Madrid he wrote

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that if he ceased to be the Queen's confessor he would retire to a house of the Congregation toward which he always had a heartfelt love.

Claretian fraternal life is characterized above all by a communion in the same evangelizing ideal and by the same charity on which that ideal was founded. Hence, Claret from the very outset charged his Missionaries to treat one another "with holy and heartfelt deference, kindness and love" (CC 1857, n.82). Later he wrote for them a wonderful chapter on fraternal charity (CC 1865, II, nn.21-26). He wanted this spiritual communion among his Missionaries and their communities to be concretely embodied in a generous sharing of goods.

It is quite probable that if Claret were alive today, he would have little trouble in seconding what his Missionaries stated at their 19th General Chapter: "A praying community of prophets and apostles" (MCT 223) "is of itself the first and most unmistakable work of evangelization" (MCT 220).

IX. CLARET'S DEVELOPMENT AS AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

Claret's missionary vocation was begotten of his deep experience of God, especially in His Word, and of a powerful experience of the world. He went through a process of discernment during which time his experience of God and the world increased and deepened. Then he came to the point when he realized that the Lord wanted to associate him in His evangelizing mission. Little by little he came to grasp the characteristics, the message and the means of this mission. This led to a broadening both of his own personal horizons and those of his Congregation.

1. Motives for Zeal

As Fr. Lozano has so well perceived, there was an initial development in the motives for Claret's zeal. From an anthropological preoccupation for human salvation, that is, from a human preoccupation for his fellow humans (cf. Aut 8-15), Claret moved on to a theological preoccupation with the glory of God, and a concern for the offenses being committed against the Father to be his fixation (cf. Aut 16, 204). In the texts relating to his vocation (cf. Aut 114-119) and in the prayers he wrote during the Jesuit novitiate (cf. Aut 154-164), both motives, human and divine, seem to be about equally balanced. Although when he wrote the Autobiography he stated that the motive of human salvation moved him more powerfully (cf. Aut 9). Nevertheless, during the last years of his life, the motive and aim of his apostolic action was his desire to please the Lord present in him (Aut 753).

2. *Claret's experience of Christ*

In Claret's life we can also see a development in his experience of Christ. Through a process of interiorization, he became ever more fully conformed to Christ -- in prophetic anointing, in the apostolic experience of being sent, in the grace of sonship, in tireless preaching and in redemptive sacrifice. "He moved from initial encounter to outward imitation; from outward imitation to a living assimilation of inward attitudes, from inward assimilation to full transformation -- to the extent that he could say, 'Christ lives in me.'"

3. *Claret's Experience of the World and the Church*

With a prophetically discerning eye, Claret realized "that I should dedicate myself to studying and gaining a thorough knowledge of the maladies of this social body" (Aut 357). And he advised anyone who wanted to engage in evangelization to do the same (cf. LMT ch.3). This led him instinctively to understand his evangelizing mission in the context of the 'signs of the times.' In his thirty years of service to the Gospel --from 1841 to 1870-- he passed through some fairly diverse historical circumstances, but he was always alert-to discern the most urgent needs of his contemporaries, and managed to bring the most opportune and effective means to bear on them.

The historical context in which Claret's mission unfolded must be understood against a very broad background of world history in his day. During the 18th and 19th centuries, great social, political and economic revolutions were causing profound repercussions in the Church. In America, independence movements were seething. In Europe, the French Revolution shook society, and Napoleon's imperial march threatened national unity everywhere. In Spain, this provoked an initially strong reaction from Bonaparte toward national unity during the war for independence. But then, mounting opposition between the new liberal ideas and the vested interests of the old regime led to a bloody power struggle between these antagonistic parties. The struggle between the supporters of Don Carlos and Queen Isabel II was not based simply on differences regarding the right of succession to the Spanish throne. On a deeper level it was a struggle between radically different principles and ideologies which divided the Spanish people psychologically and threatened to undermine their religious beliefs. Globally considered, the 19th century was characterized by a series of social, political and economic changes that launched Europe on a course of rapid dechristianization. Progress in science and technology only led more decisively toward a growing rejection of God and the Church.

Claret confronted all these challenges from a coherent missionary point of view.

A. To Save Humanity

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During the first stage of his missionary life, Claret had to deal with human beings who were deeply divided by civil war and had undergone a considerable weakening of their faith. Among the elements that played an important role in these problems, we might single out the following:

- 1) Liberalism, which persecuted the Church and suppressed the religious orders, thus reducing the number and calibre of evangelizers;
- 2) Jansenism, which terrorized people's consciences, depriving them of any real consolation in religion and leading people into a cold formalism in matters of faith;
- 3) Pantheism, which began to 'depersonalize' even God;
- 4) Mechanism, which depersonalized human beings by reducing them to their value as workers or to a nameless identity as cogs in the great machine of progress;

Human beings were losing their religious roots and, proud of their technical conquests, were also losing their sense of God and falling into various degrees of agnosticism and atheism.

The people in general continued to be believers --Claret always presupposes faith on the part of his listeners-- but it was to a large extent an ignorant faith, lived in fear. Preachers (if they bothered to preach at all) upset or even misled the people. They either preached themselves rather than the Word of God, or they were so steeped in Jansenism that they terrified some of their hearers, or led others into a sterile sentimentalism.

Faced with these disquieting prospects, Claret launched his evangelistic offensive. In this campaign, he adopted three principal tactics:

- 1) preaching, aimed at moving and converting people;
- 2) retreats, aimed at raising up evangelizers;
- 3) the press, aimed at upholding and nourishing the faith.

To evangelize people he used the language of the people, a simple and clear language, filled with comparisons and practical examples (cf. Aut 222, 297-299), and penetrated with the spirit of the Gospel. The contemporary Spanish philosopher, Jaime Balmes, jotted down his impressions of the missionary preaching style of his former fellow-seminarian, "Little resort to terror, sweetness

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in everything. Never uses examples that might give rise to ridicule. His examples, in general, taken from Scripture. Some facts are taken from secular history. Never deals in oppositions or the like. Speaks of Hell, but restricts himself to what Scripture has to say on it. Same as regards Purgatory. Doesn't want to exasperate people or drive them crazy. There is always a catechetical part." His word converted and transformed people because it was sustained by tireless zeal and by the witness of a transparently good life.

While he offered norms of holiness for people of all states of life in his publications, he also worked looking for and challenging people to be agents of evangelization.

In 1845, in a petition to the Holy See, he states that the Heavenly Father has helped him in his work by calling "other truly motivated evangelical workers, ready to follow the same tenor of life and apostolic labors," who were eager "to spread throughout the other Provinces of Spain and sow the Word of God there." Toward the end of this period (1847), he saw the need for incorporating the laity into evangelizing work, and began to sketch the outlines of his first associations for the lay apostolate. This led him to the idea for the "Fraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Lovers of Humanity," a project that was to include secular and religious clergy, and lay men and women, but did not succeed because of the opposition of the conservative Archbishop of Tarragona.

In 1849, after long missionary experience, Claret achieved the first major projection of his spirit by founding a Congregation of Apostolic Missionaries fully devoted to evangelization "so that they might be for the Church, its prelates and people, what the heart is to the body." Thus his spirit, "which went out to all the world, could be incarnated and extended throughout space and time, since he "desired to spread (the Gospel message) to the whole world," and "ardently yearned that it be preached until the end of time, and that people be catechized in it everywhere." Various motives, all of them apostolic, led him to do so:

- ! the lack of evangelical and apostolic preachers,
- ! the desire he felt to have people hear the Word of God,
- ! the many requests he received to preach the Gospel,
- ! the desire of doing through others what he himself could not do alone.

It is quite clear that the Congregation was not born of an idea that was merely that of the Founder (cf. Aut 488-489), but rather, through an inspiration from God. Thus, on July 16, 1849, "he formed his first group of missionaries who were totally free and dedicated to universal, itinerant, uninterrupted evangelization,

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following a poor and apostolic style of life in common," with the set goal of attaining "the salvation of all the inhabitants of the earth" (CC 1857, n.2).

B. To Save Society

The Cuban period was quite significant in shaping Claret's personal and apostolic experience. To begin with, it marked a sharp break in his current apostolic projects, especially his newly founded Congregation of Missionaries. His elevation to the episcopacy undermined "all his apostolic plans." It tied him down to a single, far-off diocese, whereas his spirit went out to the whole world. Being a residential bishop was quite a contrast with his ideal of being an itinerant apostle. But any deviation from his vocation proved to be more apparent than real, since he managed in this new situation to remain faithful to his essential calling as an Apostolic Missionary.

In Cuba, both his experience of God and his experience of the Church as community were heightened, and his prophetic vision of reality was sharpened, mainly through three important events that brought about a deep transformation and broadening of his apostolic perspectives. These were the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (December 8, 1854), his vision of the angel of the Apocalypse (September 2, 1855), and the savage attempt on his life at Holguín (February 1, 1856).

His apostolic vocation led him to give an eminently missionary interpretation to his role as bishop. He could not rest content with simply attending to ordinary ecclesiastical government. He had to reform, to restore and, above all, to evangelize. Besides, his new environment imposed these tasks on him by its many needs that had to be faced.

The religious and social panorama that loomed before him was by no means a consoling one. He actually experienced the social consequences of personal sins. Human beings were exploiting human beings to such an extent that they were destroying the faith. Claret summed up the situation in a letter to the Director General of the Claretians, Fr. Stephen Sala, "There are certain principal sources of destruction, corruption and provocation of divine justice... There are three classes: petty lawyers born here, slave owners, and Spaniards." Among the first class "there is not only no shadow of religion, but only hatred and scorn for it, and no effort is spared in impressing and spreading the same feelings among the people." "The slave owners...are the enemies of missions, religion and morality." And the Europeans "appreciate no other God than gain," leading lives of indifference and concubinage. "Fortunately," he writes the Queen, "I don't believe that there are many errors to combat among the generality of the people,

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but there are indeed many vices that need to be uprooted." "Morals here are very corrupt." "Immodesty is rampant on this Island." To this list one might add ignorance and indifference. "Our religion is not well understood and even less practiced," and the clergy was, "besides being very scarce, not well educated."

Faced with this situation, Claret set his mind on saving society. He went to work on two fronts: promoting religion and promoting society. His prophetic vision of reality drove him to continue his work as an Apostolic Missionary, which he did "on muleback, rather than from an office chair," so that his six years in Cuba were really one prolonged mission. As in Catalonia, his preaching stressed God's goodness and mercy. As a contemporary journalist put it: "He never comes down from the pulpit without leaving some kind sense of hope or without dwelling on the consolation of God's mercy."

Along with his evangelizing, he established parishes, worked for the promotion of the Catholic press, and concerned himself with the formation and advancement of a learned and holy clergy. His work for the human advancement of his people was always carried out in a markedly religious framework (cf. Aut 562 ff.). He wrote books on agriculture, founded licensed credit unions, fought for the advancement of youth and the family, established a model ranch at Puerto Principe, and saw to it that jails were equipped with educational and technical training centers for the rehabilitation of prisoners.

No doubt his Cuban episcopate was a "very heavy and bitter burden" for Claret. However, it was also a very fruitful experience for him and a positive experience for the people whom the Lord had entrusted to his care.

C. To Save the Church

Toward the end of his stay in Cuba and during his years in Madrid, Claret acquired a new experience of Christ and the Church. For Claret, Christ no longer appears simply as the Evangelizer, but also mainly as the Redeeming Christ who creates and saves his Church through his sacrifice on the Cross. Now he begins to understand in a much fuller way that the Church is the community of salvation and the Body of Christ.

At the same time he discovers the deeper meaning of his vision at Vic and the words he heard at his ordination to the diaconate (cf. Aut 101). He sees that the Principalities, Powers and Leaders of this darkness have become incarnate in modern ideologies --German idealism, leading up to the pantheism of Hegel; Renan's rationalism; Comte's positivism; the scientism and historical materialism

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of Marx. These are the "powers of darkness" against which the Church must fight.

As he read these signs of the times with special prophetic enlightenment, Claret proposed to save the Church, and thereby, society. In order to respond to these challenges, he thought out an apostolic strategy on the level of the universal Church, in the form of "Notes on a Plan to Preserve the Beauty of the Church," an ambitious program of reforms that envisioned the celebration of ecumenical councils and synods of bishops, advocated that secular clergy live in community, upheld the independence of the Church from political powers, and stressed the paramount witness value of poverty.

From his privileged post, he personally undertook a campaign of reforms that ranged from the election of bishops, to the formation of youth and the clergy, to the renewal of social structures (by means of the Academy of St. Michael and the Popular Parish Lending Libraries). To achieve this last mentioned goal, he made very timely use of El Escorial, which he converted into a living center of reform and Christian renewal.

Later, during the preparation for and the unfolding of the First Vatican Council, he pursued the same reforming tasks with great tenacity.

Claret's prophetic vision during this period was also anticipatory of the future. He saw that God was going to ask the Church of the future to make some important options, among them --a totally apolitical stance on the part of the clergy, the need to hold Church Councils, the creation of secular Institutes, the return of the clergy to a more evangelical and poor way of life, and the influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the life of the Church.

During this same period, as he was writing "Rules for Secular Clergy Living in Community" (1864), he felt a new openness toward the presence and activity of the laity in the apostolate. In this work he envisioned a unified force of evangelizers made up of priests and laity, united in the same gift of grace, bound together in the charity of the Heart of Mary. They would form three ranks, not juridically or hierarchically interdependent, but working together toward the same evangelizing mission through a complementary pooling of their own charisms and functions --a prophetic priesthood and religious life, a ministering and administering priesthood, and a lay apostolate in the world. The Congregation of Missionaries was to be the central, propelling nucleus of this great evangelizing movement. The Revolution of 1868 cut this movement short of its realization, but Claret's insight is still valid today, especially as concerns his conviction that "in these last times it seems that God wants the laity to work for the salvation of souls."

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During his last years, Claret grew ever more open to new channels for the apostolate. Especially while he was writing the final edition of the Claretian Constitutions, he saw the need for broadening the fields and means for mission in his Congregation. In 1864, he stated that the object of the Congregation was to preach missions throughout the world and give retreats to all classes of persons, but especially to priests, seminarians and religious women. In contrast, he states in the 1865 Constitutions that his Missionaries should avail themselves of all means possible, especially catechesis, preaching, retreats, confessions and the direction of seminaries (CC 1865, II, n.63). In 1869 he urges them to enter the field of education. Again, in a letter written in 1869 or 1870, he states, "It is also desirable that in each Mission House there should be one Missionary devoted to teaching, especially if he has a liking for it."

The press had always figured among the apostolic means used since his Catalonian period, and he remained faithful in the use of this important means up to the year of his death.

Two factors shaped Claret's attitude toward the means he used in the apostolate: (1) their universal openness and (2) a preference for those means that were of a strictly missionary character. His prophetic vision helped him strike a balance between both these factors in each and every concrete circumstance of time and place.

X. THE ORIGINALITY OF CLARET AS AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY

Claret began by modifying the traditional concept of an Apostolic Missionary, moving beyond its juridical character to confer on it a deeper, evangelical and apostolic meaning. He adopted a style of life rooted in the apostolic tradition --poverty, itinerancy, evangelization. But since he was involved in the modern world and had a strong gift for calling others together, he developed his vocation along certain new and in some ways revolutionary lines. In his apostolate he made use of the latest technical advances of his time. In travel, he not only went on foot and on horseback, but used steamships and trains (the latter of which he found fascinating enough to use in one of his book titles). In communications, he used the latest fads in writing short books, fliers, etc., and had a network of distributors, as well as a group of artists and writers who backed his apostolate of the press. He also reached out to those who could not afford books by establishing lending libraries. Along the lines of human development he established credit unions, a model ranch, etc.

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At the same time he was at work forming core groups of evangelizers, and in particular, prophetically foresaw the urgent need for involving the laity in strictly evangelizing tasks, anticipating some of the best efforts of the Church in our times. It is significant that the group of laywomen he did not manage to establish fully in his own lifetime, emerged almost 100 years later, and is today the Secular Institute of Cordimarian Filiation.

CONCLUSION

Despite the reverses and hard times he had to bear, Claret was always faithful to his original calling as an Apostolic Missionary.

"Officially," his field of action seemed to be continually narrowed down and hemmed in. He had to leave the Society of Jesus, where he was just beginning to discover universal horizons for his missionary longings. Afterwards, he had to restrict his field of work to Catalonia and the Canary Islands. When he was ready to launch into the interior of Spain, he was tied down to a single diocese in Cuba, and later to a single person in his assignment as confessor to the Queen. But his missionary zeal broke through all these barriers. God led him through obedience to discover new horizons and channels for his apostolate. His vision grew, and he grew with it. From an individual ministry he passed on to a community ministry and still further to a ministry geared to the universal Church. At times he felt as if he were "chained like a dog to a post," but the Word of God could not be chained. It had to break free and run to what was the most opportune and effective means.

At the end of his life, Claret could boast that he had completed his mission, fully faithful to the two most typical traits of an Apostolic Missionary: poverty and preaching. This remains his greatest claim to fame forever.

Edited by Rev. R. Todd, C.M.F.
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