

THE "MISSION" OF ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET

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THE "MISSION" OF ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET

I. An Extraordinary "Mission"

As the 19th century begins to fall into historical perspective, the figure of St. Anthony Mary Claret also begins to find its adequate setting within it. The personality of Claret, made up of so many contrasts, itself begot a set of the most contrasting circumstances: slandered and praised in his own day, he was discussed and praised during the process of his beatification amid the delays of the "devils advocate" and the urgings of the advocates for his defense. These contrasts of light and shadow have done little to help form an objective view of his mission and his real influence in the Church. Nevertheless, the statements of Pius XI and Pius XII in the "moment of truth" of Claret's beatification and canonization, for all the sounding rhetoric of such occasions, are being repeated by historians in the cold rigor of their discipline.

Pius XI stated that, in the line of providential persons whom God sends his Church in trying times, "among the great men of the 19th century, he raised up Anthony Mary Claret."<sup>i</sup> Pius XII proclaimed that Claret had served the Church "as one who did the utmost."<sup>ii</sup> Today, we find historians stating that "Father Claret centers the Spanish 19th century with his holy and apostolic life."<sup>iii</sup> "None was more illustrious than St. Anthony Mary Claret" among those who devoted themselves to the rude task of bettering customs and religiously instructing the people.<sup>iv</sup> The evangelizing movement to recatholicize Spanish society "is bound to Father Claret, the

apostle of Spain."<sup>v</sup>

Father Claret, who at first blush was called to be a popular mission preacher, had an extraordinary mission to fulfill in the Church, both through his great gifts in the Spirit and through his manifold activities in obedience to that same Spirit. From within his missionary being --which was consecrated to and conformed with Christ the Evangelizer-- he had a prophetic vision of the world and the Church, and of the urgent needs of his times. As a missionary he strove to give an adequate response to these needs by using the most effective means, and he begot this same vision and response in others: laity, religious and priests animated with the same apostolic spirit as he was.

## II. Claret, "Apostolic Missionary"

In the first "Life" of Anthony Mary Claret, written a year after his death Don Francisco de Asís Aguilar, who knew the Saint well both as a close friend and collaborator, assigned him as his first title, spelled out in large letters on the title page of his biography, "APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY," setting his titles of Archbishop of Cuba and Trajanopolis in smaller type.<sup>vi</sup> This is a quite significant fact, since "apostolic missionary" describes the inmost, deepest and most authentic personality of Anthony Mary Claret.

Apostolic Missionary, in its original and juridical sense, meant a priest sent by the Holy See to raise up the Church where it was not yet established. It also meant a priest whom the Holy See recommended to the Ordinary of an established Church, so that the latter could grant him a canonical mission to uplift and re-evangelize the Church in his area.<sup>vii</sup> Claret received the title of Apostolic Missionary "ad honorem" on July 9, 1841, but for him it was not just an honorary title, but rather a definition of his being, an acknowledgement of his charism and a commitment to the Church.<sup>viii</sup>

For Claret, being an apostolic missionary meant being a continuer of the mission of Jesus Christ, the Son sent by the Father, and of the mission of the Apostles, who were sent by Jesus Christ into the whole world to make God known as Father and to build up the

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Kingdom by means of the Gospel proclamation.

In the first place, it meant being sent on a universal mission. Hence, Claret found the boundaries of a parish too confining.<sup>ix</sup> The same could be said of a diocese, even one as extensive as Santiago, Cuba,<sup>x</sup> or of a whole nation, as he did in his post as confessor to Queen Isabel II.<sup>xi</sup> His mission was universal in a geographic sense: "the salvation of all the inhabitants of the world,<sup>xii</sup> but also in a personal sense, in that it was aimed at hierarchy and laity, saints and sinners, evangelizers and evangelized, poor and rich, learned and ignorant, kings and subjects.

In the second place, it was an evangelizing mission. The Word is, so to speak, the first means of salvation. Among the elements of the apostolic ministry --teaching, sanctifying and ruling-- Claret felt called to give a privileged place, by vocation and in an integrating way, to the first. But he understood this teaching, this magisterium, as evangelization and as prophetism: the teaching of the Word that converts and transforms. Hence, whenever it was up to him, he relinquished both the exercise of government and the practice of a stable ministry of sacramentalization to others. His was a missionary, and hence, itinerant, form of evangelization.<sup>xiii</sup>

In the third place, it was an evangelizing mission of witness, according to the lifestyle of Jesus and the Twelve. Itinerancy involves poverty, and Claret felt called to live poverty in a concrete way, closely hewing to the letter of the Gospel: he travelled on foot and without provisions and, in order to be totally free to evangelize and in order not to be a burden to anyone, he did not accept money for his ministry.<sup>xiv</sup> In Cuba, where the distances were too great for walking, he went on horseback, but only a small one, "that I sold as soon as I finished the missions, so as not to rob the poor for its keep."<sup>xv</sup> At the beginning, he lived this mission as a solitary pioneer. Later, the Lord granted him the grace of living it with companions, in the style of the evangelizing community of Jesus and the disciples.<sup>xvi</sup>

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This way of understanding apostolic mission was not the fruit of his studies, but of an experience of the Spirit, of a charismatic reading of the Gospel, and of personal conformity with Jesus Christ the Evangelizer. It was the result of much searching prayer, and Claret's response to it could only have come about through a great deal of prayer and docility to the Spirit.

As a missionary, he felt possessed by the Spirit, who had anointed him to evangelize the poor and heal the brokenhearted.<sup>xvii</sup> This possession was so full and intense that he felt like an instrument --an arrow, a trumpet-- in the hands of the Lord. The force, the impulse, the breath, the thunder came from Someone Else.<sup>xviii</sup> His spirit was the charity of Christ which drew him to intimacy with the Father or impelled him into the highways and byways to look for strayed sinners.<sup>xix</sup>

He knew from the Gospel, from his awareness in the Spirit and from the life he lived, that Christ the Evangelizer is a sign of contradiction, and therefore that work, slander and persecution are so to speak the coat of arms of an apostle.<sup>xx</sup> Claret was to earn his coat of arms through slanders, falsifications of his writings, caricatures, mocking songs, allusions in the theater, and also through threats and attempts to intimidate him that went as far as the spilling of his blood in a savage attack.<sup>xxi</sup>

A Chapter-book of the Cathedral of Tarragona has left us this evocative picture of the apostolic missionary in his early days: "Anthony Claret, an apostolic missionary, is giving missions from town to town wherever he is called and his prelates send him. He is thirty-eight years old, a truly apostolic man of very great zeal and fervor, tireless and extraordinary. He always travels on foot: he accepts no money or gifts under any pretext. His work is unthinkable, since from four in the morning until the time he retires,

he hardly has time to say his prayers and take some necessary nourishment, since he goes from the confessional to the pulpit and from the pulpit to the confessional."<sup>xxii</sup>

III. A "Missionary" Vision

One characteristic of Claret that has received considerable attention was his ability to capture the soul of the people, to enter into communion with them and so to speak merge into them. This ability was the result of his human kindness and his apostolic zeal.<sup>xxiii</sup> His evangelization did not have its starting point in some sort of laboratory style of self-sufficiency which dictated a method and programs; rather, it began with a vision of reality that looked at things through the eyes of the heart, set afire with apostolic zeal.

When Father Claret looked at townspeople, the first thing he saw and sensed was the hatred between brothers and sisters that had been unleashed by the question of the succession to the Spanish throne, but which also had deeper roots. The consequences, besides deaths, burning and looting, were fear, sadness, disgust, and psychological illnesses.<sup>xxiv</sup>

He saw that, despite it all, the people were keeping the faith, although it was a rather unenlightened faith, owing both to the general rate of illiteracy and to a lack of catechists and adequate catechisms.<sup>xxv</sup> These same believing people were sinning because of the "three concupiscence" that were fed by the impassioned climate of war.<sup>xxvi</sup> Besides this, the clergy, who should have been ministers of mercy and pardon, were influenced by a baroque style of oratory, and even more by Jansenist theology, which led them to terrify people without converting them.<sup>xxvii</sup> There were also social situations that had negative consequences on popular piety, among them, industrialization and urban concentrations, with all-the problems, grievances and injustices they gave rise to. He himself, who had felt such enthusiasm at manufacturing, both as a technique and as a factor in social progress during his years as a worker in Barcelona, also saw how greed could turn to oppression and separate people from Christianity.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Another technical advance --the application of steam engines to forms of locomotion-- was to influence his way of doing things. The railway made it possible to transport huge numbers of people, uprooting them from their native soil, but also from the customs

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and traditions that had been norms of life for them, so that they were now set loose in a world where they found no deep principles to live by.<sup>xxix</sup> This largely illiterate mass of people, with their catechism learned by rote, felt estranged and alienated by formulations of truth that were materially different from what they had learned.<sup>xxx</sup> Those who knew how to read no longer had time for hefty tomes.<sup>xxxi</sup> Literary forms and styles would have to change, and so would books. Claret would take part in that change, just as he would come to see that the railway could be used for evangelization, as he later did in his travels with the royal family.<sup>xxxii</sup>

But the people were not being evangelized in this critical situation, since religious orders had been suppressed. Popular preachers, when they preached at all, did not preach evangelically, since the Gospel had been replaced by other themes, or by a florid oratory that was more decorative than edifying, more baroquely terrifying than encouraging, or more romantically sentimental than moving.

### Social Sin

In Cuba and in the south of Spain,<sup>xxxiii</sup> he observed the social consequences of personal sins. "In this land (Cuba)," he writes, "there are certain principal sources of destruction, corruption and provocation of divine justice."<sup>xxxiv</sup> One of these principal sources were "the enlightened and the teachers of the country, among whom 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, who are extremely docile and humble, and easily allow themselves to be seduced by the extreme ignorance that prevails at present."<sup>xxxv</sup>

Slavery, the domination of human beings by other human beings, was the culmination of all oppressions. "The slave owners are the enemies of missions, religion and morality."<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Finally, there was "the infamous conduct of the Europeans,"<sup>xxxvii</sup> "who appreciate no other God than gain."<sup>xxxviii</sup> As a result, the family was being destroyed by divorce and concubinage, and social

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justice was being trampled by a ruthless desire to get rich.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### Ideologies

Toward the end of his stay in Cuba and during his years in Madrid, Claret came to realize that a new sign of destruction had appeared: the atheistic ideologies of the age. German idealism, culminating in Hegel's pantheism; English empiricism, Comte's positivism, encyclopedism, Renan's rationalism and Marx's dialectical materialism: these were indeed the powers of darkness that were afoot, and were going to cause far more harm in the world than the political liberalism of the age.<sup>xl</sup> It was the ultimate struggle of humanity against God the very existence of the faith was at stake. St. Anthony Mary Claret realized the gravity of this fact not only from his readings and studies, but on the level of prayer and supernatural enlightenment.<sup>xli</sup>

Moreover, the proselytizing efforts of certain Protestant sects was continually being directed at troubling the simple folk who were not prepared to defend their beliefs, and resisted this onslaught of propaganda more out of inner instinct than from doctrinal education.<sup>xlii</sup>

### IV. Evangelization as Response

Claret's vision of the evils of the world was born of a sensitive heart and of his apostolic zeal, and evoked an active reaction both on the level of his character and on the level of his vocation as an apostle. He simply could not understand how it did not produce the same effect in others, whether they be priests, religious or laity.<sup>xliii</sup>

In order to confront these evils, Father Claret the missionary could find no more effective remedy than evangelization: "The Word of God brought all things out of nothingness. The divine Word of Jesus Christ restored all things. Christ told his Apostles, 'Go out into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.'" <sup>xliv</sup> Then, making his own a statement by Donoso Cortes, he affirmed: "Society is perishing for no other reason than that it has withdrawn from the Church's Word, which is the word of life and the Word of God. Societies have become weak and are starving



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because they have ceased to receive the daily bread of God's Word. Every plan of salvation will be sterile unless there is a return to the fullness of the great, catholic word."<sup>xlv</sup>

### The Evangelization of the People

In order to evangelize the people, Father Claret, with much good sense and evangelical love, brought them the saving Word by way of the traditional and heartfelt forms of piety, above all, by way of "popular missions."<sup>xlvi</sup> These mission, which began in the Counter-reformation period and were developed and systematized during the 17th and 18th centuries, had an extraordinary influence throughout Europe.<sup>xlvii</sup> But Claret aimed at giving these missions a new orientation. "The main topics dealt with at these popular missions were the legacy of baroque piety: The Last Things (heaven, hell, death, judgment) are treated in a rather terror-inspiring way, stressing the brevity of life, the vanity of temporal things, sin and its consequences, a casuistic explanation of the Ten Commandments, and a preparation for confession and communion."<sup>xlviii</sup>

Without ceasing to be a man of his times, Claret approached his task with a new sensibility. The philosopher, Jaime Balmes, noted the difference and jotted down his impression of the preaching of his erstwhile seminary companion: "In the pulpit he never talks of theaters. Nor of heresies. Nor of philosophers or impious men. Always presupposes faith... Little resort to terror, sweetness in everything. Never uses example that might give rise to ridicule. Examples, in general, taken from Scripture. Some facts 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."<sup>xlix</sup> A journalist in Havana also noted this: "He speaks of hell and of the inconceivably great sorrow of a sinner deprived forever of the presence of God, but without the horrors of people being dipped in cauldrons of boiling lead or being harpooned with poisoned spears and all that butchery. He speaks words of reconciliation and consolation, and never abandons his hearers in a storm without showing them the rainbow of peace on the horizon. He never comes down from the pulpit without leaving some kind sense of hope or without dwelling on the consolation of God's mercy."<sup>1</sup>

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To evangelize the people, Claret appealed to the language and culture of the people: simplicity, clarity, comparisons and likenesses.<sup>li</sup> Another journalist from Madrid stated that Claret's eloquence was biblical: "Not a word falls from his lips that smacks of that sort of overblown grandiloquence that is so common in our days. He makes no pretense and being an advantaged orator, nor does he show any sign of an ostentatious display of those vaunted gifts or privileges that seem to be appreciated among people."<sup>lii</sup>

The credibility of his preaching was reinforced by the unction of the Spirit, by the zeal of his charity and by the consistency between his life and the message he proclaimed. Moreover, there was the total unselfishness and dedication of a ministry that sought neither recompense nor rest. In the seven years of his evangelization in Catalonia, he gave missions in some 150 localities, ranging from provincial capitols to the most remote mountain villages. And he did all of this on foot, always carefully watched by the Government, which feared the great crowds he attracted, lest the high esteem in which he was held might lead to a popular uprising.<sup>liii</sup> Every day of the 15 months he spent in the Canary Islands, he either preached missions or gave retreats. In Cuba, he made the rounds of his vast diocese on pastoral visitation four full

times. These visits were really missions. In Madrid, besides the journeys with the royal family during which he preached ceaselessly, he took advantage of his stay at the various royal residences to give missions in the surrounding towns. Exiled from Spain, he preached in Paris. And in Rome, as a Father of the Vatican Council, he did not dispense himself from teaching catechism to children and soldiers, and of giving conferences to seminarians and religious.

"I would venture to affirm," said Cardinal Goma, "that the preaching of Fr. Claret contributed more to the restoration of the faith and piety of the people and of the priestly virtue of the Lord's ministers, than all other ordinary means for the

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enlightenment and sanctification of souls. For nothing moves or renews people more deeply than those flashes of divinity brought to them by men who are truly possessed by the Spirit of God."<sup>liv</sup>

But besides such traditional means as popular missions, Fr. Claret made use of new forms: retreats. publications, popular parish lending libraries. Especially for his use of the press, Pius XI bestowed on Claret the title of modern apostle: "We say modern, not just as an empty tag --which often means the very opposite of what it says-- nor just because of the subjective bent or his person, but objectively, referring to his use of methods and means not used or even known in ancient times, but which represent an important and effective part of our own lives."<sup>lv</sup>

"Not everyone wishes to or is able to hear the Word-of God," he wrote, "but everyone can read or listen to the reading of a good book."<sup>lvi</sup> This moved him to write fliers, leaflets, pamphlets and books, which he managed to do by stealing time from his sleep. In order to have books that people could really afford, he founded, together with Canon Joseph Caixal, a publishing house called the Religious Library, which in its first 19 years of existence published some 9,569,800 copies.<sup>lvii</sup>

In Cuba, he distributed 200,000 books gratis.<sup>lviii</sup> In Madrid, he founded the parish lending libraries. Before his death, in Rome and even in Fontfroide, he continued with his apostolate of the written word. He strove to see to it that every household could have its Catechism Explained,<sup>lix</sup> in order to enlighten the faith of the family, a Straight Path,<sup>lx</sup> to help foster their piety, and one of the Advice to series for all,<sup>lxi</sup> to foster the holiness of each one according to their state in life.

In order to confront the new atheistic or agnostic humanism on the popular level, he published his Summer Evenings<sup>lxii</sup> and The Railway; and wrote a

number of short works spreading devotions that were most opposed to the various false ideologies: the Trisagion, in honor of the Trinity as opposed to pantheism, The Mass as apposed to the denial

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of the divinity of Christ;<sup>lxiii</sup> the Rosary, as a means of joining the changing circumstances of life with the mysteries of Jesus and Mary, as opposed to a materialistic notion of existence.<sup>lxiv</sup>

### Evangelization and Human Advancement

St. Anthony Mary Claret always did his evangelizing in close contact with the people: "Because I always went on foot, I would fall in with mule drivers and ordinary folk."<sup>lxv</sup> Neither in Cuba nor in Madrid did he allow his dignity as a bishop to isolate him. Hence, his evangelizing answered real needs with adequate means. As we mentioned above, in Cuba he perceived most clearly the social consequences of personal sins, therefore, a conversion to Christian living brought with it some positive social consequences. Paul VI stated that between evangelization and human advancement (development and liberation) there is some very strong anthropological, theological and evangelical ties.<sup>lxvi</sup> Claret saw the union between evangelization and human development from the viewpoint of apostolic charity. In his times, the sharp distinction between the poor and the rich was viewed as an act of God against which no one should struggle; one had to rest content with blunting the sharpness of the distinction.<sup>lxvii</sup> One was supposed to preach to the rich that they should be just and charitable toward the poor, and to the poor, that they should be sparing and hardworking. The evangelizers of the 19th century could not fall back on an official Church doctrine for support, nor could they rely on a scientific critique or a sense of social justice such as we have today.

Claret did not rest content with denouncing, from the pulpit and in his writings, the sins of the rich and the poor, rather, he put into practice a number of means that were quite modern at the time. He wrote a couple of books on agriculture<sup>lxviii</sup> for the advancement of field workers in both a technical and a Christian and human sense. He organized a model ranch and set up credit unions to make it easier for people to buy working equipment, "for I saw that when the poor have proper direction and are given a decent means to earn a living, they are upright citizens; it is only otherwise that they become debased."<sup>lxix</sup> In his Regulations for the credit unions, he makes clear the connection between the unions and what he has taught by word and writing, to preserve

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good customs, elevate public morality, and foster agriculture and the mechanical arts.<sup>lxx</sup> Liquid earnings would be converted into dowries for

poor single women and aid for widows. He also saw to it that the jail was provided with a school of arts and duties. "for experience had shown us that many men turn to crime because they have no trade and don't know how to make an honest living."<sup>lxxi</sup>

In Cuba, too, he launched a great battle in favor of the family, which was largely being undone by an abusive interpretation of the Laws of the Indies which was leading to divorce and concubinage.<sup>lxxii</sup>

### Evangelization and Slavery

The evangelization of the slaves was most difficult, because of the opposition put up by the great landowners and slave-traders.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Claret concentrated on an effort aimed at persons. An effective social action for emancipation was too complex for a mere archbishop to handle. England was in favor of emancipation, but not even with her great power could she bring it off in Cuba, because of interference from the United States. The Southern States wanted to annex Cuba in order to assure themselves a more prestigious place among the rest of the States, since by this means they "could reinforce the power of slavery as an element of public control."<sup>lxxiv</sup> On their part, the slave owners of Cuba favored annexation as a means of safeguarding their interests. This became clear above all when the Marques de la Pezuela published a very energetic decree against the slave trade on December 26, 1853. To prepare public opinion for the acceptance of this decree, the governor was behind a series of articles in the Diario de la Marina, in which Archbishop Claret was praised for his opposition to the slave trade.<sup>lxxv</sup> For this opposition, the slave traders and annexationists attempted to poison the Saint.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

### Evangelization and Politics

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Claret the Missionary stated a thousand and one times that he did not wish to meddle in politics. Nevertheless, his evangelization had political consequences, and opposing parties would have loved influencing him to use his power on their behalf. With regard to his preaching in Catalonia, the anarchist, Jaime Brossa stated: "Before the appearance of Fr. Claret, Catalonia was ripe for indifferentism... If Fr. Claret had not existed, Catalonia would have understood the message of the revolution."<sup>lxxvii</sup> During his stay in Cuba, the slavery-annexation coalition "said that the Archbishop of Santiago did them more harm than the whole army."<sup>lxxviii</sup> Raymond Carr states that the intensification of Spanish Catholicism, due in great part to the preaching of Fr. Claret, "although it was useful as an element of social cohesion, embarrassed and divided liberalism."<sup>lxxix</sup> Pius IX summed up Claret's conduct as follows: "I saw Mons. Claret, and recognized in him a worthy clergyman, a man totally of God, and although he was foreign to politics, he nevertheless experienced well enough the ill winds of politics and the malice of men who are Catholic in name only."<sup>lxxx</sup> "As source and head of political Catholicism, Fr. Claret became the favorite target for radical and liberal attacks."<sup>lxxxii</sup>

### V. Evangelizers

Claret discovered that the people were not being evangelized, and that the Word was not producing the marvels of social conversion that it had done in former times, because there was a lack of evangelizers who led an authentically evangelical life and were filled with truly apostolic zeal.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> He prayed to the Lord to raise up such evangelizers, and he strove to second the action of the Spirit by preaching spiritual retreats to laity and priests.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Little by little, the Holy Spirit was leading Claret to be a means of missionary grace for others, a person with a vocational identity that encompassed the needed missionary traits. In other words, God gave him the charism of a founder, not only of pious associations of prayer and apostolic action, but of true families of God in the Church, or rather, of a widespread family born of his spiritual experience and doctrine --what we might call his charismatic reading of the Gospel-- and his organizational talent.

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St. Anthony Mary Claret fostered the associate or group apostolate not only because of the effectiveness and advantages of association, but because of the witness-force of fraternal charity lived in varying degrees of communion.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

The base-organization was the Confraternity of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary for the Conversion of Sinners.<sup>lxxxv</sup> This was a popular and universal association, from it arose a number of groups that were more specialized, either because of the intensity of the evangelical life to which they were committed, or because of the nature of their apostolate. From this Confraternity came two important projects, the Apostolic Fraternity (1846-47) and the Society of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (1847). The former was an association of missionary priests and, although it did not survive in the same form, it was to be most influential on a later more important group, as we shall see. The latter was one of Claret's most genial ideas: an association made up of priests and laity. The priests mainly did mission and retreat work. The laity were to write and distribute books, work for peace among

families, reunite couples, rehabilitate prostitutes, work for the sick, the elderly, the poor, prisoners, orphans and widows. An important section of this group were the "deaconesses," women who besides fulfilling the duties of their state in life, were to devote themselves especially to catechizing, teaching and works of charity, along with the witness of an irreproachable Christian life. The idea of having women actively participate in the apostolate with laymen and priests met with the disapproval of the Archbishop of Tarragona, and Claret obediently abandoned the project.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

Claret also promoted a movement for women who wanted to lead a life of consecrated virginity in the world. He had in mind those who could not enter the cloister, either because of domestic obligations or because of severe government restrictions on cloistered convents at the time, but he also wanted to promote virginity as an evangelical vocation in secular life. Almost a hundred years later, this movement gave rise to the Secular

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Institute of Cordimarian Filiation.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

On July 16, 1849, Claret founded the Congregation of Missionaries, the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who were to continue his work of universal evangelization. Not only would they renew Christian life and faith in already established Churches, but through evangelization would raise up the Church where Christ had not yet been preached. They would be Missionaries who were sent, like the Apostles, to preach the Gospel to every creature, but they would also live together in a truly apostolic community of life.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Some priestly congregations had already been formed to make up for the absence of regular preachers, but none of these had gone so far in undertaking this form of apostolic life, which was later sanctioned by the Church with simple public vows.

This form of "itinerant" evangelization undertaken by the Sons of the Heart of Mary, needed to be supplemented by an ongoing fostering of the renewal they had begun. To carry out this ongoing process, Claret considered founding an institute of secular clergy living in community but without vows, committed to the permanent service of their particular diocese, and holding down "offices, benefices, curacies, anonries, dignities and professorships."<sup>lxxxix</sup>

The original Confraternity had made possible the Fraternity, and the Fraternity had given rise to the idea of a great family or army of the Heart of Mary, made up, so to speak, of three orders or ranks, whose functions were complementary: a prophetic priesthood and religious life, a sacramentally ministering and administering priesthood, and a lay apostolate with or without secular consecration. These orders or ranks were united in grace and charity, but were not organized in a hierarchically or juridically dependent way.<sup>xc</sup> The Spanish Revolution of 1868 interrupted the further development of these groups in the direction of their coordination or shared programming.

Around this fundamental nucleus, Claret organized other associations for evangelization, such as the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine,<sup>xcii</sup> and others of a more modern character, such as the Spiritual Fraternity for Good Books,<sup>xciii</sup> and above all, the Academy of St. Michael.<sup>xciiii</sup> The aim of this last-mentioned group was to have the laity assume responsibility for a specialized

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apostolate. The membership was divided into writers, artists and collaborators. "Mutually united, the academy members will strive to live with the simplicity of the first Christians, who were but of one heart and mind.<sup>xciv</sup>

His experience as a bishop in Cuba led Claret to live the Church as the Body of Christ and as the mystery and sacrament of salvation. Therefore he strove to use his missionary word to influence his brother bishops to adopt a joint pastoral plan.<sup>xcv</sup> He fostered the formation of good priests not only by his writings,<sup>xcvi</sup> but also by establishing the interdiocesan seminary at El Escorial.<sup>xcvii</sup> He saw that the Church could not rely on the support of civil authorities, but must depend on its own inner resources.<sup>xcviii</sup> Hence, he fostered the education of youth through his writings<sup>xcix</sup> and founded or helped found Congregations dedicated to teaching,<sup>c</sup> and even encouraged his Missionaries to broaden their catechesis by undertaking the ministry of Christian education, as one of the best ways in which they could contribute to the good of the Church.<sup>ci</sup>

### VI. "I Have Fulfilled My Mission"

A year before his death, he wrote confidentially from Rome: "It can be said that the Lord's designs concerning me have already been fulfilled."<sup>cii</sup> "It seems to me that I have already fulfilled my mission: in Paris and in Rome I have preached the Law of God. In Paris, the capital of the world, and in Rome, the capital of Catholicism. I have done so by word and by writing. I have kept holy poverty.<sup>ciii</sup> The recipients of these letters were well apprized of the meaning of what the Saint called "God's designs concerning me," and "my mission." In 1855 and 1859 there had been a new opening of his mission in the Church, under the sign of the eagle and the angel of the Apocalypse.<sup>civ</sup> The words that Claret cites in his Autobiography are taken from the biblical commentary of Cornelius a Lapide, who say that the eagle signifies a holy and heavenly prophet sent by God, to fly or run with great speed throughout the earth and announce the great catastrophes that are approaching the Church and the world.<sup>cv</sup> The angel is a similar but more explicit sign, in which Claret sees himself, followed by his Missionaries who echo his voice and are anointed by the Holy Spirit with the same prophetic anointing, to evangelize the poor

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and the brokenhearted.<sup>cvi</sup> His preaching in Paris and in Rome was a symbolic and prophetic anticipation of what he, as founder, would effect in the Church.

The voice of Claret began proclaiming the Gospel timidly in a little mountain church, but grew to a lion's roar that reached out to the whole of Catalonia, to the Canary Islands, to Cuba, to all of Spain, to Paris and Rome. His Missionary Sons continue and will continue to amplify that voice, like thunder, in Africa, Asia and America. The written word of Claret, that began with a leaflet, has grown into an avalanche of publications that reaches the smallest towns and the greatest cities.

His first humble attempts at preaching missions,<sup>cvii</sup> grew to a pastoral vision of bishops that touched the dimensions of the universal Church.<sup>cviii</sup> The little group of catechism students in Sallent has grown into an audience of thousands of children on four continents.

The five priests who in 1849 committed themselves to live an evangelical life in order to preach the Gospel in an apostolic manner, have become thousands of missionaries who continue to prolong in space and time, the closer following of Jesus through their lives consecrated to the Father in evangelization.

Good Bishop Corcuera advanced the priestly ordination of Claret because he saw something extraordinary in him.<sup>cix</sup> In fact, he was a diocesan seminarian at the time, but his heart went out to the whole world.<sup>cx</sup> The bishop's "discernment" was a sure one, for Claret was always extraordinary. He was a child who was already an apostle,<sup>cxii</sup> a precociously gifted technical worker who had exceptional talents for relating to his fellow workers,<sup>cxiii</sup> a pastor who found his parish too confining,<sup>cxiiii</sup> a missionary who was apostolic in the strictest sense of the word and in the most evangelically demanding way,<sup>cxv</sup> a missionary bishop, or rather, a bishop who was a missionary and did not wish to be a prince of the Church but a servant of all, and who chose to travel roads as impossible and impassable as the "Knives of Baracoa," in order to reach everyone in his diocese.<sup>cxvi</sup> He was as utterly uncourtly confessor to Queen Isabel II,<sup>cxvii</sup> a Father of the First Vatican Council who bore the scars of a martyr<sup>cxviii</sup> and yet managed to

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catechize children on the other side of the Tiber.<sup>cxviii</sup> He died, not in the way most bishops die, but as the poor and the missionaries die: in the borrowed cell of a monastery, where his enemies strove to reach him even on his deathbed, without the funeral of a dignitary, but rather, that of a poor exile.<sup>cxix</sup>

The Lord made him extraordinary, so that he could fulfill the extraordinary mission that the Lord had entrusted to him: to preserve and defend the beauty of the Church, so that the Church could proclaim the Gospel to all people in a convincing and credible way.

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- ii. Pius XII, decree declaring that Blessed Anthony M. Claret, Confessor and Bishop is among the number of the Saints, "Quos Spiritus Sanctus," May 7, 1950: AAS 44 (1950), p. 351.
- iii. Baldomero Jiménez Duque, Espiritualidad y apostolado, in BAC's History of the Church in Spain, vol. 5: La Iglesia en la España contemporánea 1808-1965 (Madrid, 1970), p. 468.
- iv. Francisco J. Montalbán, SJ, Historia de la Iglesia católica, vol. 4, BAC (Madrid, 1953), p. 607.
- v. Raymond Carr, España, 1808-1939 (Barcelona, 1970), p. 280.
- vi. Francisco de Asís Aguilar, Vida del Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. D. Antonio María Claret, misionero apostólico (Madrid, 1871).
- vii. Urbaniana, Sylloge (1939), 13, III.
- viii. Cristóbal Fernández, CMF, El Beato P. Antonio María Claret, Historia documentada de su vida y empresas (Madrid, 1946) v.I, pp. 271-397 (Hereinafter cited as HD I or II).
- ix. Annales CMF 35 (1939), p. 165.
- x. "But if I accepted, I would be tied down and limited to a single diocese, whereas my spirit goes out to the whole world." (Letter to the Nuncio, in Epistolario Claretiano--hereinafter cited as EC--I, p. 305).
- xi. Autobiography, n. 762 (Hereinafter cited as Aut 762, etc.).
- xii. CMF Constitutions of 1857, n.2. (Hereinafter cited as CC 1857).
- xiii. Aut 193, 460.
- xiv. Autobiographical Documents n. VII 2. (Hereinafter cited as AutDoc).

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- xv.Cf. Report of the Marqués de la Pezuela to Director General of Overseas Affairs, Havana, February 7, 1854, in AHN Ultramar leg. 1662, n. 81.
- xvi.Aut 488-491.
- xvii.Aut 685,118.
- xviii.HD II, p. 427.
- xix.Aut 439-488.
- xx.Aut 427.
- xxi.Aut 537-584, 798.
- xxii.HD I, p. 227.
- xxiii.S. de Montsonis, Un segle de vida catalana (Barcelona 1961, v.2. p. 786.
- xxiv.Aut 288, 291.
- xxv.Aut 170-171, 179.
- xxvi.Aut 285-286.
- xxvii.Letter to Bishop of Vic, Sept. 27, 1848, in EC (p. 279).
- xxviii.Aut 56-77.
- xxix.Historia generalde las civilizaciones, v. 6, 19th century (Barcelona 1958), pp. 28-48, 172-185.
- xxx.Saint Anthony Mary Claret (Hereinafter SAMC), Unidad del catecismo (Barcelona, 1867), p. 4.
- xxxi.Aut 312.
- xxxii.HD II, ch. 12.
- xxxiii.Aut 717-735; cf. HD I, pp. 614-618.

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- xxxiv. Letter to Sala, Nov. 4, 1852, In EC I, pp. 704-705.
- xxxv. Letter to Pedro Garcia, SJ, Cited in HD I, p. 616.
- xxxvi. Letter to Sala, Nov. 4, 1852, in EC I, p. 705.
- xxxvii. Letter to Pedro Garcia, SJ, cited in HD I, p. 616.
- xxxviii. Letter to Sala, in EC I, p. 705.
- xxxix. HD I, pp. 761-803.
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- xli. Aut 685; Retreat of 1865; cf. Cristóbal Fernández, CMF, La Congregación de los Misioneros Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María (1849-1912), (Madrid, 1967), p. 374.
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- xliii. Aut. 13.
- xliv. Aut 450.
- xlv. Ibid.
- xlvi. S. de Montsonsis, op. cit., I, p. 458.
- xlvii. Casiano Floristan, Teología de la acción pastoral, BAC (Madrid, 1968), p. 334.
- xlviii. Baldomero Jiménez Duque, op. cit., p. 413.
- xlix. Ignacio Casanovas, Balmes: la seva vida, el seu temps, les seves obres (Barcelona, 1932), II, p. 64.
- l. Cited in HD I, p. 341.
- li. Aut 222, 297-299.
- lii. Cf. HD I, p. 343.

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- liv.Isidre Gomá, Panegiric del Beat Pare A.M. Claret (Barcelona, 1934), p. 16.
- lv.Pius XI, in L'Osservatore Romano, Jan. 7, 1926.
- lvi.Aut 3120.
- lvii.Cf. John M. Lozano, CMF, Un granapóstol de la prensa (Madrid, 1963), p. 44.
- lviii.Tesoro de Barriosuso, n. 728, II, p. 1583.
- lix.Aut 323, 476.
- lx.Ibid.
- lxi.Aut 325.
- lxii.Aut 799.
- lxiii.SAMC, El ferrocarril, pp. 171, 179.
- lxiv.Aut 695.
- lxv.Aut 461.
- lxvi.Evangelii Nuntiandi, n. 31.
- lxvii.CC 1857, n. 93.
- lxviii.Aut 568.
- lxix.Aut 569.
- lxx.José María Ciller, CMF, El ahorro en las cajas de ahorros benéficas y en la doctrina social de la Iglesia (Madrid,1971), pp. 25-35.
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- lxxiii.Ibid., pp. 763-765.
- lxxiv.Hugh Thomas, Cuba, la lucha por la libertad (Barcelona, 1973), I, p. 295.
- lxxv.Ibid., p. 293.
- lxxvi.Aut 524.
- lxxvii.Manuel Brunet, CMF, Actualidad del P. Claret (Vic, 1953), p. 39.
- lxxviii.Aut 524.
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- lxxxii.Raymond Carr, op. cit., p. 280.
- lxxxiii.Letter to the Nuncio, Aug. 12, 1849: "Seeing that there is such a great lack of evangelical and apostolic preachers in our Spanish territory..." in EC I, p. 305.
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- lxxxvi.Pedro Bertrams, Dos cédulas históricas, in CMF Bulletin of Catalonia (special number), 1949, pp. 56-58; Jose María Canal, CMF and Joaquín María Alonso, CMF, La Archiconfradía de Nuestra Señora de las Victorias (Madrid, 1959, pp. 160-167).



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- lxxxvii. Ismael Torres, *Filiación Cordimariana* (Madrid, 1960).
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- lxxxix. SAMC, Reglas del Instituto de clérigos seculares que viven en comunidad (Barcelona, 1864), Prologue.
- xc. Ibid.
- xc. Letter to Bishop of Vic, Aug. 20, 1849, in EC I, p. 307; Aut 560.
- xcii. HD I, p. 495. It was founded in 1846.
- xciii. Aut 581, 332, 701.
- xciv. Jesus Bermejo, CMF El Apóstol claretiano seglar (Barcelona, 1979), p. 155; SAMC, Plan de la Academia de San Miguel (Barcelona, 1859).
- xcv. SAMC, Apuntes de un Plan para conservar la hermosura de la Iglesia y preservarla de errores y vicios (Madrid, 1857).
- xcvi. SAMC, El colegial o seminarista instruido (Barcelona, 1861), 2 vols.; Carta pastoral al clero (Santiago, Cuba, 1852); La vocación de los niños (Barcelona, 1864); Aut 326.
- xcvii. El seminario y colegio de San Lorenzo del Escorial (Madrid, 1863); Aut 869-872.
- xcviii. Raymond Carr, op. cit., p. 444: "The evangelical spirit revived by Fr. Claret in the last quarter of the century, was devoted to the effective organization of existing piety, in an attempt to conserve the faith -- since it could no longer be left to the State for its protection -- by means of social pressure and above all by means of Catholic education. Merely formal religion would not be strong enough when the battle

might easily be lost."

xcix.La colegiala instruida (Barcelona, 1863); La cesta de Moisés (Barcelona, 1846).

c.The Teaching Sisters of Mary Immaculate (Claretian Missionary Sisters), the Adoratrices, the Carmelite Sisters of Charity.

ci.Letter to Xifré, July 16, 1869, in EC II, p. 1406.

cii.Letter to Mother París, July 21, 1869, in EC II, p. 1411.

ciii.Letter to Curriús, Oct. 2, 1869, in EC II, p. 1423.

civ.Aut 685-86; Luces y Gracias, Sept. 23, 1859.

cv.Apoc. 8:13; Cornelius a Lapide, Commentaria in Apocalypsin (Antwerp, 1672) pp.167-168: "Fourthly...Ribera very aptly understands this eagle to mean some holy and heavenly prophet whom God will raise up at the end of the world, in order to forewarn all humans existing throughout the world, of the following plagues and of the imminence of the coming of the Antichrist.Hence, he will fly through mid-heaven, that is, he will most swiftly traverse the earth, to predict the grave torments that await the wicked if they do not change their lives... Woe to earthlings and worldlings, whose hearts are earthbound in their affections, and indeed, are totally affixed therein." (The underlined passages are to show the short citations of them found in Luces y Gracias and in Aut.).

cvi.Aut 687.

cvii.SAMC, Método de misionar en las aldeas o campos y arrabales de las ciudades (Santiago, Cuba, 1857).

cviii.Francisco de Asís Aguilar, Vida..., p. 414.

cix.SAMC, Apuntes de un Plan... (Madrid, 1857).

cx.Aut 120.

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- cxix. Aguilar, op. cit., p. 15: "He was an apostle before he was a man."
- cxii. Aut 31, 33, 34, 62, 63.
- cxiii. Aut 106-111.
- cxiv. Aut 130, 135, 192-467.
- cxv. Aut 538-544.
- cxvi. Aut 637-641.
- cxvii. Aut Dox XV: Discourse on Papal Infallibility.
- cxviii. Retreat Resolutions 1869, particular examen 3.
- cxix. Jaime Clotet, CMF, Resumen de la admirable vida del Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. Don Antonio María Claret y Clara (Barcelona, 1882), pp. 118-119.

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