



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE MISSIONARY SONS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY (CLARETIANS)**

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 11 September 2015*

[Multimedia]

Good morning and thank you very much!

I prepared an address in Castilian Spanish, which Archbishop Gänswein is going to distribute later. However, I prefer to say what comes to mind, since it is in Castilian Spanish.

I had a bad thought when the General spoke. He said that “when he read *Evangelii Gaudium*, he felt great joy”. And I thought of him in the bookstore in Buenos Aires contemplating all the books...!

Claretians are everywhere. I must acknowledge that in the field of theology — the former General, theologian of religious life, of canon law — you are truly among the best canonists here in Rome. Silent, holy work... a man who spent all his life in the Religious Congregation and in the archives. He gave us an example of life and of a missionary spirit.

I would like to say three words to you, thinking of those [Claretians] whom I know.... God blessed me by making me friends with some of you.

However, I should like to say three words that might be useful to you: to adore, to walk and to accompany.

To adore. We, in this world of efficiency, have lost the meaning of adoration, including in prayer. It is true, we pray, we praise the Lord, we ask, we thank.... However, adoration is being before the One God, the One who is above price, who does not barter, who does not exchange.... And everything that is outside of him is a “cardboard imitation”, an idol.... To adore. In this we must make an effort to grow in this way of prayer: adoration. Adore, adore God. This is lacking in the

Church at this moment, because it is not taught. This sense of adoration that we see in the Bible in the First Commandment — “Adore the one God. You will have no other God. He is the Only One you must adore...”. This “wasting time” without asking, without praising, also without giving thanks, only adoring, with the soul prostrated. I don’t know why I feel like saying this to you but I feel I must say it to you; it comes from within me.

To walk. God cannot adore himself, but God willed to walk. He did not want to stay still. He walked from the first moment with his people. Do you remember that lovely passage about Moses?

“Think, what people had God so close that he walked together with you?” Walk. To walk is to open frontiers, to go out, to open doors, to seek paths. Walk... do not stay seated, do not settle down in the negative sense of the word. It is true that things must be organized, that there is work that requires one to stay still, but with the soul, the heart, the head, walk, seek. Go to the frontiers, to all kinds of frontier, including those of thought. You intellectuals, go to the frontiers, open paths, seek, that is, do not stay still. Because the one who is still, who does not move, goes stale, like water, Stagnant water goes stale, whereas running river water does not go stale. Walk as God walked, [God] who made himself a companion on the journey. We cannot forget that the Bible can help us see how the Lord accompanied his People, including taking their sins upon himself and forgiving and accompanying.... Walk, walk with that desire to arrive one day at contemplating him and not as, — unfortunately, usually happens — people who come to ensure their life in an institute or to to have no worries, because they lack nothing.... Walk, walk.

The third: to accompany. Do not walk alone, because it’s boring.... Accompany the people, because God walked accompanying. It is so beautiful to recall what Jesus did, when he played the fool, he “played dumb” with those who were running away from Jerusalem to Emmaus: he joined them and accompanied them there; he accompanied the whole event....

Accompany moments of joy, accompany the happiness of couples, of families. Accompany them in difficult times, in moments of the Cross, moments of sin.... Jesus wasn’t afraid of sinners, he sought them out. They criticized him: “This one is too forward, this one is imprudent...”.

Accompany. Accompany the people; accompany the many desires that the Lord sows in the heart, and leave them to grow well.

This is what I wanted to say to you. Adore, walk and accompany. Then, if it’s useful to you, go forward! I leave it in your hands....

And since Mary is the Mother who looks after you, I invite you to pray together a Hail Mary.

The following is the text which the Pontiff had prepared:

Dear Claretian Missionaries,

Welcome! It is a joy for me to meet with you. I thank the Superior General, Fr Mathew Vattamattam, for his kind words, the expression of his ecclesial communion, and I wish him fruitful service in this responsibility which has been entrusted to him by his brothers.

I was told that the theme, which your Chapter is discerning, is: “Witnesses and messengers of the joy of the Gospel”. “Witnesses”, because joy cannot be communicated if it is not present and deeply rooted in one’s life and in the community. “Messengers” because what is good must be shared, and when joy is shared it is purified, it multiplies, becoming truly “evangelical”.

Was the Congregation in good shape according to this Chapter analysis? In this exercise of discernment, how has the Spirit’s voice challenged you? A very sure path to discern his call is for you to begin listening in the various peripheries of our world. There his voice resounds with great clarity. This is especially important for a missionary Congregation such as yours.

We are celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life. For the occasion, I sent a letter to all consecrated people in which I invited them *to look to the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm and embrace the future with hope*. I repeat this again to you. When Jesus is at the centre of our life, we are able to bear witness and communicate the joy of the Gospel.

To be “*grateful for the past*” is to give thanks to God for the witness of many of your brothers who, sustained by their faith, have lived their vocation with profound joy, some to martyrdom. It is also recognizing the merciful hand of the Lord who, despite our weaknesses and our inconstancy, continues to work wonders among his People.

“*To live the present with enthusiasm*” is to establish your missionary plan on the spirit of St Anthony Mary Claret who chose for his episcopal coat-of-arms the motto: *Caritas Christi urget nos*. To love as Jesus loved must call into question each of our vital and pastoral options.

“*To embrace the future with hope*” means not to let oneself be overcome by despair. Do not be afraid. It is the Lord who sends. Always turn your gaze to those who await his message, to those who are in need of his witness in order to feel the merciful presence of God in their lives.

I thank you for your lives and for your missionary work. Please pass on my greeting to everyone and to each of your brothers especially those who due to sickness or old age now collaborate through their prayer and witness to the mission of the Congregation. Take care of those who are at the beginning of their formation; help them to internalize the values which your Founder pointed to as a guarantee of fidelity to the charism with which the Lord blessed his Church through him. Also convey my greeting to all the lay people with whom you share your life and mission.

St Anthony Mary Claret, as Founder, gave you a beautiful name: “Sons of the Heart of Mary”. Let every dimension of your life be profoundly marked by this “cordiality” which inspired in Mary the

beautiful canticle of the *Magnificat*. Express the maternity of the Church, mother of mercy, who never tires of hoping, accompanying and forgiving. I entrust you to Mary and I bless you. Please do not forget to pray for me, because I need it.