



Lay Claretian Movement

General Secretary

Seville, October 24th 2008

My dear sisters and brothers:

Along the sea, when it's getting dark and the seafarers sail away from the coast, until losing sight of it, stars are the only reference. The clearer the sky is more stars can be seen and less difficult to get lost.

We're living hard times. What at the beginning was a financial crisis in the USA it's become into a colossal economical "tsunami" now, and it's shaking the pillars of the current system. The most powerful countries and companies are trembling. The economical values (that seemed unmovable) start to be questioned even by their closest defenders. Meanwhile the hunger, the war, the misery and injustice go on affecting to the weakest people.

The storm has caught us inside the sea, working as the laypersons we are. To those lay claretian people from Cuba and from Italy, from Japan and from Spain, from Niger and Bolivia. In this globalized world all of us travel in the same ship. And we look to the sky, as the sailors, looking for stars to guide our way. As Claret did, we must put attention in the signals that indicate the way, giving concrete answer to the shout of men and women of our time.

In our movement life several events merge that shine light as the stars guide the seafarers.

Saint Anthony Mary Claret's bicentennial has allowed us to rediscover him, get a bit closer to his life and perhaps rubbed on us a bit more from his evangelic ardor. We've received news from everywhere about how this "little great man" stays serving to the church and his mission, and the fire that burned the Holy Spirit in his heart goes on burning through the whole claretian family. Rereading S. Anthony Mary Claret's autobiography, or reading it as first time, "it will get us inside the spiritual experience of a man who let him be questioned and guide by the Gospel of the Lord" (Abella, 2007)

This great evangelist celebration concludes and the one of other saint starts, the gentiles' apostle: Saint Paul. There are lots of similar aspects for both. Both had a personal meeting with the Master. This experience moved the deepest of their selves and became both in other Christ. Announcing the

Good News was the target of their lives. How deep those Paul's words entered into Claret: "whatever shall I do if I do not evangelize" (1Cor 9,16). As Paul, he knew the importance of today's culture dialogue. As him, he forgot races and social classes to speak straight to men and women in his own time. He didn't mind if he were king or slave, rich or poor. Both Paul and Claret were also builders of the community, builders of the Church.

They are our lights in the sea. We must go on getting into their life. As the movement we are we must imitate them, their vivid wish of getting to everywhere, to all the situations and realities (LCS 22). We must know how to establish an open and brave dialogue with our time culture, because it also has values that come from the Spirit. Those attitudes that seem to be catastrophic, retreating, of being shut, are vain. We must also give an answer, as in Claret's time, as in Paul's time. An answer to the traditional religious value crisis, not going through defensive attitudes but showing with courage the most attracting value: Jesus' Gospel.

We've got figures of Claret and Paul as stars guiding our ship and nets. But the Lord is generous to the extreme, and as He knows how hard our ears and heart are. He gives us an ecclesial event to put attention: The Bishops' Synod. Among all the international vicissitudes the Synod is turning to the solidest value, the one that never loses value: the Word of God. "We are watching it in the great banks' fall: this money disappears, it's nothing. Then these things, that seem to be the true reality to be taken into account, and finally are second order realities" (Benedict XVI, 2008). The Gospel of the Lord goes beyond than the Holy Writ, "it's everything's fundament, the true reality". Justice and Peace Words, Hope and Love Words. As our sourcebook says "The Word of God is the primary source of our spirituality. It discloses God's saving plan to us, and fortifies and encourages us in building up the Kingdom. Accepted with docility, it demands that we constantly change our lives in order to fulfill the Father's will and Jesus Christ" (LCS. 37). Does it go on being our spirituality primary fountain for us and our communities?

And there's only one star left to complete our navigation through the risky sea. A small and young light, but very intimate and familiar: our 25th anniversary as Lay Claretian Movement. 25 years looking the pass of the Lord. A gift for the Church we cannot hide, without fear, without false humility. It doesn't belong to us. We do not announce a movement, and organization, a method. We announce the person of Jesus, way, true and life.

The Church recommends again and again all the different association ways. Claret knew it quite well, promoting all kind of lay and religious groups. Our movement is loyal to that concern in its structure and cells: the communities (LCS. 17). Small Christian communities of life, evangelizers and servers, are one of the most hopeful phenomena of the Church after the II Vatican Council. "Maybe the most natural way of living the supernatural, according with Christ's guidance" (Hortelano, 1987). Lay Claretian Movement lives that peculiarity over other movements. The people who met in Villa de Leyva and Florencio Varela (1st and 2nd General Assembly) already had the intuition which only from the community, only from the communion we can make Jesus present in reality of the current world.

Benedict XVI said to young men in Sidney that the future needs renovation. Our movement needs it too. But a deep renovation of our life and faith can only come from the personal meeting with Jesus. Pablo did. Claret also did. Our last general assembly provide us a last light. If we understand that God also speaks through the Assembly of all the laypersons all over the world, we must also understand that the priority line (the fire to feed the movement during the next years) is that spiritual renovation. It must be taken to personal, familiar, community levels. In this renovation we must put Claret as spiritual model to succeed in "what really gives us evangelist identity and energy: our own spirituality revitalization". We must review (at personal, familiar and community levels) whether our spirituality sources are really the ones our sourcebook indicates: the Word of God, liturgical praise, prayer and the sacraments, above all by the Eucharist and the sacrament of our brothers and sisters (LCS.36)

Therefore with the heart caught by the Love of Christ as Claret, renewed in the Forge of Mary's Heart, we can really be transformer prophets of the realities (LCS. 31), servers of the Word (LCS. 25), builders of community (LCS. 26), of a new Church committed to the promotion of justice (LCS. 24)

Despite the storm, the disasters, the falls, when the Lord asks us to row inside the sea, we can say with Peter: "By your Word, we will throw the nets again". (Lc 5 5)

Receive a fraternal embrace in Mary's Heart.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long horizontal line with a stylized 'CR' or similar initials in the center.

Constantino Rodríguez, lc

General Secretary