



**Lay Claretian Movement**  
**General Secretariat**

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dearest family:

Happy Easter to you all!

In a new year we celebrate with joy the reason for our faith: Jesus lives! He is risen! He has conquered death and is still with us, faithfully fulfilling his promise. Our weakness, our cowardice, our sin... seemed too strong. But we have found empty the tomb in which we had buried him empty. And our encounter with him rekindles our hope in the midst of a time of darkness, crisis, conflict, sickness and shadows of death.

These years of pandemic, together with all the crises that have ensued at a relational, social and economic level... have given rise to a general feeling of discouragement and pessimism. It is still difficult for us to return to our normal routines. Perhaps many of us still feel that our hands are too tied to carry out our missionary activity normally. The prevention of contagion has imposed many limitations on our meeting with our brothers and sisters, on our desire to embrace each other and come together to share our faith in an atmosphere of intimate trust. In the midst of sadness and pessimism, many of us have perhaps questioned whether all that we are doing makes sense or serves a purpose.

In times of crisis there is a great temptation to give up, to give it all up for lost. It is easy to give in to apathy, accommodation, or self-centredness that puts self-interest first... This temptation is even greater when we perceive around us more and more rejection, misunderstanding and prosecution of God and of all of us who declare ourselves believers, which increases our fear of manifesting our faith publicly. Jesus warned us about this on the way to the Mount of Olives, quoting the prophet Zechariah: *"I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered...."* (Mt 26:31)

But in spite of our weakness, our fear and our sadness, Jesus has won and is still alive. And even if we are bewildered and do not know how to recognise him, like Mary Magdalene at the door of the tomb, he is still alive. (Jn 20:11a.14-18), He again

approaches us, looks us in our eyes, and calls us by our name. His gaze reminds us that we are not here by our own efforts, by our own will. It is He who has come to meet us, who knows us in our depths and who loves us just as we are... It is He who has called us, who has gathered us together with our brothers and sisters, and who continues inviting us to be His witnesses to the world. *Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?* (Lk 24:32)

It is Easter time. It is time to recover our illusion. It is a time to discover that the difficulties and limitations are nothing more than a "jolt" that invites us to wake up, to uninstall ourselves, not to settle into sterile routines; to turn our gaze towards other horizons and peripheries (perhaps even within our own home), to reactivate our creativity by exploring new ways of evangelising... But above all, a "jolt" that invites us to rediscover the value of the community as a privileged place to meet the Risen Jesus.

It is Easter time. It is time to put aside regrets and sadness. It is time to let ourselves be invaded by his gaze, which makes us relive our first vocation. As he did with Peter and the apostles on the shore of the lake, the Risen Christ asks us to let down our nets again, even if our hands are empty after a night's work. (cf. Jn 21:1-19). He calls us and sends us out again. And to all of us who share the Claretian spirit, his call continues to resound insistently.

On April 20, 1988, the Holy See officially approved our first Statutes. It is a date that we can consider as the day of our "baptism", the moment in which the Church recognised that our lay Claretian charism is inspired by the Spirit. Today, 34 years after that recognition, all of us who have received this charism as a precious gift continue to feel strongly challenged by God to be his witnesses before a humanity that, with arrogance, is still determined to build its tower of Babel immersed in an existential sadness. There are many people who do not truly know God, and we, like Claret, cannot remain indifferent. Christ continues to count on us to be **messengers of the Gospel, builders of unity and seeds of hope.**

For this reason, we at the General Council would like to express our immense appreciation and gratitude for the enormous commitment of everyone to remain faithful to the vocation we have received, overcoming the obstacles. Despite the fact that in some countries the incidence of the virus seems to be decreasing, many areas of the world are still in a worrying situation. Some groups, communities and regions have managed to resume their activity at least partially. Others have not yet been able to meet face-to-face, although they are trying to hold video meetings via the internet. Some groups do not have access to the new technological means either, but at least try to

maintain frequent telephone contact. **Much encouragement to all! Let's keep on persevering without weakening!** Let us always remain in tension, seeking alternatives to accompany each other and revitalise our spirit of communion. Even in the midst of so many difficulties, the Spirit continues blessing us with new joinings that are further enriching our journey: Praise the Lord! It is a sign that He continues to accompany us on our journey and to drive our mission. (cf. Acts 2:42-47) Hopefully, with God's help, we can all get back to normal soon, and emerge strengthened to tackle deferred projects and take on new challenges.

We in the General Council are also trying to overcome the difficulties. We continue to hold virtual meetings every month to make progress on our action plan, despite the limitations that slow down our work. Little by little we are consolidating the periodical virtual meetings of coordination with the Regional Councils and the Zone Delegates, as well as the participation of the Movement in the joint work that is being carried out in the Claretian family. Our Vocational Promotion, Solidarity and Mission (JPIC) and Communication teams are taking steps, promoting initiatives that will allow us to consolidate a base on which to grow in the future. On the other hand, the recent updating of the directory of lay associations by the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life of the Holy See has favoured the fluidity of communication, which is facilitating our participation as an ecclesial Movement in the meetings and processes that are being convened, including our contribution as an international association of the faithful to the synodal process opened in the Universal Church.

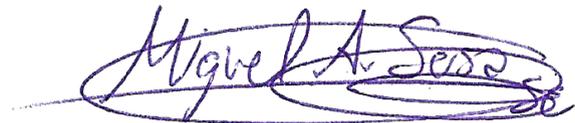
In recent weeks, we have been restructuring the economic secretariat support team to give it new functions and to develop collegial work in this area. And in parallel, as you know, we remain committed to the successful completion of our campaign to update the Movement's database and census. This is an arduous task that is proving much slower and more laborious than we had imagined. It is taking a long time to get groups to submit their updated data. But we continue persevering patiently, convinced that this is absolutely necessary in order to be able to better organise and plan our joint functioning. That is why, once again, we ask for everyone's cooperation in providing their Regional Councils and Zone Delegates with the information they request.

I would not like to end this Easter letter without dedicating an emotional remembrance to all our brothers of the Movement and of the Claretian Family, relatives, friends and loved ones who have gone to the house of the Father in these last months, and are already enjoying his eternal Glory. Celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord, we entrust them to his Divine Mercy, thanking them for the precious testimony they gave us in

their earthly life, and convinced that they continue walking together with us participating in our communion.

I would also like to invite each one of you to dedicate a little time in your personal prayer to pray for all our brothers and sisters who are going through particularly difficult moments in their lives: those who are suffering most acutely from the effects of the economic crisis, war and violence, illness, loneliness, family breakdown, doubts about their faith... For all those who are immersed in desolation and hopelessness. As a family, as a community, as a Movement and as a Church, it is up to us today, more than ever, to accompany and care for them. We know that our shared prayer is an unbeatable expression of that communion that manages to overcome any geographical distance, any physical distance, any cultural difference... For this reason, I propose that, at the end of reading this letter, you take a few seconds to say a **short personal prayer** that comes from your heart, so that the Spirit may fill with strength and serenity those who are going through a complicated stage in their lives.

Filled with the joy of Easter, and encouraged by this new anniversary of our ecclesial recognition, let us continue to walk together in communion. Entrusting our steps to the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, receive a very fraternal Easter embrace on behalf of all of us in the General Council, which remains at your service.



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