

**Claretians-Province of Chennai, India. Issue-54 December 2019**

The collage features a central black and white portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. Surrounding it are 20 smaller photographs depicting various school activities: students in uniform standing in rows, performing cultural dances in traditional attire, participating in sports, and attending school events. The school building is shown in several photos, along with a large group photo of the entire student body and staff. Other images show students engaged in community service, such as planting trees, and participating in religious or cultural festivals.



# A message from Provincial



Dear brothers,  
As we are preparing ourselves to celebrate meaningfully the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Namaste comes to our hands carrying the messages of life and mission of our Congregation and Province.

Christmas season is both spiritual and social celebration for all of us. God became man and lived among us. His life with the human beings shows his solidarity with us. He became one among us, except sin. This God of love presented by the Bible feels obliged to identify himself in all our human realities of joys and sufferings to prove his faithful love for His children. His incarnation of participation in our struggles is a call and challenge to us.

This God becoming a human being demands us to get away from ourselves, from our pride and ego and be human to understand one another, to respect each other, to recognize every one as image of God, to be in solidarity with the suffering suppressed ones, to consider everybody equal in their rights and obligations and thus working for the realization of the Kingdom of God. This invitation of the incarnation of God in the form of our Lord Jesus forces us to make a decision either to accept it or not.

Experiencing these uncompromising demands of the incarnation of God as unacceptable and hard to put into practice, we take up the easy way of converting God into an idol for our worship with folkloric celebrations and ritualistic observances to get our favours fulfilled. The God who showed His face wills to go on manifesting His face in different places and in various realities. Our God of revelation has not stopped his revelation. Revelation is meaningful only when it is answered. An adequate and meaningful response alone will make the message of manifestation



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authentic to carry out it as a mission. But remaining on the superficial level of God's encounter with us, we make use of him for our comforts of power and prestige. The powers of the world manipulate the divine presence of God and the simple faith of the people, to establish themselves in the thrones of their power. To achieve their arrogant goals they don't hesitate to take away the lives of people in God's name. We cannot forget the amount of people killed through out the history of the world as victims of the religious arrogance.

The birth of Jesus brings us the message of peace to all. He, the Prince of Peace has left His peace with us. His message is a call to commit ourselves to be the messengers of peace. Our world needs peace builders, but sadly we find our world tormented with violence and wars. In the name of national security the nations of the world invest a greater part of their budget and human energy in weapons. The leaders of the countries, who are supposed to commit themselves to strengthen the well being of the citizens, are interested in dividing the people in the name of religion, region, caste, culture to ensure their positions. The state sponsored terrorism is a crude attack on the innocent people forced to escape from their soils and roam around the world as refugees without shelter and human identity.

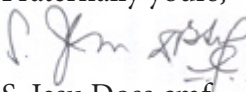
In this background of the world we celebrate the Birth of our Lord Jesus every year. The call of our God who became man like us is that we be humane, tender, compassionate and loving. This is the personal transformation demanded from everyone who celebrates Christmas. If we who celebrate our God who became a human don't live as human being; if we who proclaim this great mystery of our Christian faith hesitate to respect and treat our fellow brethren with human dignity; if we who recognize the God who became a human walks in solidarity with the marginalized hesitate to show our solidarity with the needy, then we have to seriously decide to take steps to be humane in our approaches with our sisters and brothers.

As we are celebrating Christmas, we are also reminded to be grateful to our Lord Jesus and to all persons who made our life joyful amidst the challenges. Throughout this year of 2019 we have experienced the providence of God in our province. This is the time of grace for us to count all the blessings of the Lord and thank him sincerely. Let us also ask the Lord His pardon for the moments of failure to be grateful to Jesus, our Lord. May the coming year of 2020 be blessed by Him.

**HAPPY CHRISMAS AND HIS GRACE FILLED NEW YEAR 2020 TO ALL OF YOU.**

Thanks a lot.

Fraternally yours,

  
S. Jesu Doss cmf

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**“My Spirit is for all the world”**

**Called and sent as missionaries in an intercultural world**

“There is no Gentile, no Jew, no circumcised, no uncircumcised, no barbarian, no Scythian, no slave, no free man, but Christ is everything in each of us” (Col 3:11).



Dear brothers,

1. Fraternal Greetings. In this missionary month of October, we join the whole Church to reflect on our missionary identity and affirm our very life as mission. Pope Francis reminds us, “each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God’s love.”<sup>1</sup> Mission implies a call and a sending. This letter is to reflect with you on our missionary vocation from an intercultural perspective in the context of the changing demographic face of the Congregation. We situate our intercultural reality within the vision of an integral ecology of Claretian charism<sup>2</sup> which calls for the interconnectedness of the rich diversity of our members, their cultural differences as well as our missionary presence and diversity of ministries in different parts of the world. When these elements of our life and mission are disconnected from the spirit of our Founder, we run the risk of dispersion of resources and weakening of the missionary vitality of our Congregation.

1. Pope Francis, Message for the World Mission Day 2019. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) the Pope says, “I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing” (no. 273).

2. Cf. This concept was used in the Letter of Superior General, “*Called to radiate the joy of the Gospel in the world today*”, no.22 (20 November 2016). Integral ecology, applied to the Claretian charism, imply that everything that constitute the life and mission of the Congregation need to be interconnected as well as integrated to our charism and mission in the Church. Anything that is not integrated would be a disintegrating presence in the Congregation.



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## **1.- Three beautiful calls from God**

**2. I would start with the three fundamental calls that you and I have received in our lives in unique ways.**

### **1.1.- The call to existence:**

3. Each of you is a precious gift of God to the world when you were called into existence with a divine purpose. Providence has arranged that we take flesh from the flesh of our parents and unfold as persons in a social setting in relationship with other persons by being members of a family, a neighbourhood, a town, a region, a nation and the world at large. The question of culture comes in here. We were humanized by culture which organized our human nature and continues to shape us as we move beyond our familiar environment and participate in a wider social environment.

4. In a broad sense, culture is “the lifestyle of a given society, the specific way in which its members relate to one another, to other creatures and to God. Understood in this way, culture embraces the totality of a people’s life.”<sup>3</sup> However, a person is more than his culture, and his origin and destiny go beyond his cultural identity. We grow up as members of various social groups in the same social environment based on age, gender, region, tribe, religion, spiritual movements and so on with lot of interactions between people creating a shared common ground of co-existence. Unity in diversity is the necessary lesson of life we learn in the world to live together in harmony. Through the eyes of faith, we see the interconnection of humans in the society reflecting the mystery of the triune God who is Love.

5. However, reality presents another side of the human story too. The unending history of exploitation, conflict, and wars in human society, despite great achievements, clearly indicates that human being cannot save himself. Teilhard Chardin makes it clear: “Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfil them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves.”<sup>4</sup> This love has a name: Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world. This love has a process: The economy of Christian salvation. By this love the consciousness of our identity expands from tribal identity towards Christ consciousness which broadens our circle of love to include all humans and all creation. Indeed, our faith has introduced a new dimension in our lives: the project of God’s love for humanity and the world.

### **1.2.- The call to share the life and love of Christ**

6. One of the beautiful things that happened in our lives is when we were called by name at baptism to belong to Christ sacramentally and form part of his mystical body, the Church. The new life in Baptism implies a mission as Pope Francis says “What in the Christian is a sacramental reality

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3. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 115.

4. *In Phenomenon of Man* (1955) p. 265



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– whose fulfilment is found in the Eucharist – remains the vocation and destiny of every man and woman in search of conversion and salvation. For baptism fulfils the promise of the gift of God, that makes everyone a son or daughter in the Son.... This mission is part of our identity as Christians; it makes us responsible for enabling all men and women to realize their vocation to be adoptive children of the Father, to recognize their personal dignity and to appreciate the intrinsic worth of every human life, from conception until natural death.”<sup>5</sup> In baptism and confirmation, we have received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and have become partners of the Spirit in his mission.

7. Mission takes us to the basics of Christian faith that God “in a plan of sheer goodness freely created humans to make him share in his own blessed life”, and “calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength.”<sup>6</sup> This inbuilt longing for fulness of life in man finds its fulfilment in the mystery of Christ. Thus, “those who with God’s help have welcomed Christ’s call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world.”<sup>7</sup>

### **1.3.- The call to be a Claretian missionary**

8. Again, the Lord has gazed on each of us and has called us out of our homes and cultures to follow him closely, to live a life in common with those who are similarly called and be at the service of his mission according to the charism given by the Holy Spirit to our Institute. It has been indeed a life-changing call of God to be a Claretian missionary. Our special calling in the Church is to “communicate the total mystery of Christ to humanity through the ministry of the word.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, we are in the Congregation because, enabled by the Holy Spirit, we have publicly declared our desire “to seek the glory of God earnestly, to devote ourselves more fully, and to follow Christ more closely, as the Apostles did, in the ministry of Salvation throughout the world.”<sup>9</sup> The charism that unites us is a gift of the Spirit to the universal Church through our Founder. Claret’s words, “my spirit is for the whole world” is truer today than ever before. Mission is the reason of our existence as Claretians in the Church.

## **2.- The Mission of the Congregation in the Church**

9. The three fundamental calls which we have received (human, Christian and Claretian) converge in pursuing the purpose of our lives, viz., the coming of the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached. The three calls have their corresponding community setting (human family, the Church and the Congregation) and they point to the same unifying goal: to fulfil the purpose of our life in the light of the mystery of Christ. Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God which as St. Paul

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5. Pope Francis, *Message for the World Mission Day* 2019.

6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1.

7. *Catechism of Catholic Church* 3.

8. *Constitutions* 46.

9. *Cf. Formula of Profession*.



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says, “is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).” Certainly the purpose of our life in the Congregation is not to have a comfortable life, nor enviable careers, social status or achievements. Claret discovered it in the title of apostolic missionary and expressed it in the apostolic prayer. *“O my God and my Father, may I know you and make you known; love you and make you loved; serve you and make you served; praise you and make all creatures praise you. Grant, my Father, that all sinners be converted, all the just persevere in grace, and all of us attain to eternal glory.”*<sup>10</sup> Our Constitutions state our aim thus: *“to seek in all things the glory of God, the sanctification of our members and the salvation of people throughout the world.”*<sup>11</sup>

10. These three words express the “why” of our existence as Claretians: Glory of God, sanctification of each of us and the salvation of all humans. These words may sound out of tune with our times. As they refer to the core questions of human life, it would require a holistic and mystical approach to make sense of them in different cultures and epochs. The attempts to use modern terms for them do not seem to help. God’s glory is much more than the wellbeing of humans, sanctification is not just personal fulfilment, and salvation is not the same as liberation. At the same time, we cannot build our lives on vague purposes. In the context of today, it is easy to be distracted from the fundamental questions of life, and the question of the purpose of life can get drowned in the many distractions and noises of modern life.

11. The harmony between the stated purpose of life and the lived life of Claret beautifully bespeaks his vocational integrity and holiness of life. In our case too, the integrity and harmony of life has to do with our missionary vocation becoming “the principle that organizes and articulates all our hopes, aspirations and projects,”<sup>12</sup> and for us, “being Claretians is the concrete way of being men, Christians, religious, priests and apostles.”<sup>13</sup>

12. Our missionary vocation addresses the deep questions of life (who am I? What is my mission on earth? Does what I do resonate with my purpose in life? Why should I renounce good things of life? Why bother about others?) by taking us experientially to the folly of the cross of Christ where the answer of these questions is accessible to those who follow him. The Paschal mystery of Christ affirms that “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor 1:25).

13. My mission, the mission of the Congregation and the mission of Jesus converge on making God’s love known to the world through concrete acts of loving as Christ loved. Our missionary vocation makes sense only within the mission of the Church. The love of Christ that urges us unites us in the fraternity of our communities and provokes commitment in our different ministries in the Church. Mission is defeated when sin and greed disconnect us from our true identity and

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10. *Autobiography* 233.

11. *Constitutions* 2.

12. *Mission of the Claretian Today* 126. Cf. *Men on Fire with Love* 37.

13. *Mission of the Claretian Today* 132.



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the real purpose of the short life on earth. The purpose of life is unfolded to each of us along the journey of life in our personal and unique encounter with God, others, and oneself which takes place through many mediations. The mediation of cultural factors in this process is significant. Our life and mission in the Congregation are enhanced or impeded by the richness and limitations of the cultures that raised us and our brothers, and the intercultural dynamics in our communities.

14. How would you articulate the purpose of your life? How is it related to the mission of the Congregation and the mission of the Church?

### **3.- Intercultural missionary life, a call to conversion**

15. Though we say the Lord's prayer "Our Father" regularly, it takes time to accept all the children of God as our own brothers and sisters. Calling God our Father is a revolutionary act because it declares that all of us are of the same origin and belong to the one family. Therefore, we need to conceive mission as a visible sign of the Father's love for us. Thus, Mission should not just be seen as doing something for someone, which is a very easy thing to do. Intercultural communities are a call to be sons of the Father in heaven and, therefore, brothers and sisters to one another here on earth. Our upbringing makes us to categorize others into mental boxes of different ethnic and national labels. Jesus, on the other hand, teaches us a different way of looking at people. Our own encounter with Jesus initiates the discovery of our own self as loved by God which is not conditioned by any human criteria. In turn, we too learn the art of seeing others as Jesus sees, going beyond the cultural and social labels, and at the same time without rejecting their legitimate place in human life.

16. I like to share one of my own change of attitude related to national and ethnic identity. In 1990s when HIV/AIDS was spreading in India, the Camillians opened a Care Home for the abandoned patients of the then dreaded disease in Bangalore. I used to admire an Italian brother, who used to carry ailing patients of the contagious illness in his both hands as if they were his own brothers without any fear of nursing them. Unfortunately, one day he received a notice from the police to quit the country in a couple of days because he was a foreign missionary<sup>14</sup>. A revengeful man had tipped him off to the police. I felt ashamed as an Indian for the expulsion of this man of God who loved and cared for the least of Indians which I myself would not have dared in those days. This event challenged my definition of national identity. One who loves and serves the people of India risking his own life is more eligible to be called an Indian than one who happens to be born there but abuses the people and exploits the resources of the country. I have admiration for joyful overseas missionaries of ours in many missions who have served there for decades even before the birth of most of the native missionaries. As missionaries who belongs to God, we have every human person as our own people and the planet as our common home.

17. In our Congregation there are no foreigners or outsiders, but only sons of the heart of Mary

14. In India foreigner can be deported on any accusation of proselytization. This missionary returned after a couple of years with permission for longer stay due to the mediation of some good people.



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who are, therefore, brothers to one another. As missionaries, we are called to expand our identity consciousness to embrace everybody. The XXIV General Chapter affirmed “although we live in a network of multiple belongings (family, social, ecclesial...) our belonging to Christ, expressed in the vocation we share in the Congregation, takes the first place over all.”<sup>15</sup> As we grow in our missionary vocation, we become capable of the mystical gaze that cuts through the cultural and ethnic wrappings of people and see them as the image of God shining forth.

#### **4.- Claretian missionary life, a missionary expression of unity in diversity**

18. Today our Congregation is gifted with more than three thousand members who come from over 68 countries and brought up in various cultures. In some instances, the same country has Claretians coming from different cultural groups (for example, in Congo there are Claretians from over 23 sub-tribes, in India from over 15 language groups, in Nigeria from at least 6 tribes). We have more and more intercultural communities where missionaries from different cultural backgrounds live together and do mission. In the General Curia we have Claretians from 15 countries who speak about 16 native languages. In our fragmented world, is not the witness of communion in our communities already a proclamation of the joy of the Gospel? However, Intercultural communities can become like the people building the tower of Babel if the Gospel does not rule our hearts. The civil society around us, predominantly in the west, is becoming multicultural. Against this backdrop of a multicultural composition of contemporary society, our Congregation with its own multicultural configuration is in a providential moment of unprecedented missionary opportunity. Nineteen years ago, my predecessor Cardinal Aquilino Bocos already spoke about the obligatory road of interculturality in our Congregation<sup>16</sup>.

19. I invite the whole Congregation to reflect about and advance together on this “obligatory road of Interculturality” in our Congregation. The leap from being multicultural (co-existence of members from different cultures without real integration) to intercultural (bound by charism that transcends cultural differences) is a journey of conversion. In a religious community, interculturality assumes a theological meaning as it “shares intentional commitment to the common life, motivated not by pragmatic considerations alone, but by a shared religious conviction and common purpose.”<sup>17</sup> I like to highlight some important factors about interculturality to progress in living and missioning in an intercultural context.

#### **5.- Claretian culture, culture of Claretians, and the culture of the mission**

20. In a Claretian intercultural community, we need to consider three cultural factors that constantly

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15. Cf *Men on Fire with Love* 37.

16. Talk to the Conference of European Claretians (CEC) on 11 December 2000 titled, “*La Obligada Via de la Interculturalidad*”. He said, “Our Congregation has been enriched with many and very diverse cultures in recent years and it demands that we deal with this reality which affects the life and mission of the Congregation so much”.

17. Gittins J.A, *Living mission interculturality*, (2010), p. 22.



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interact: The charismatic culture of the Congregation, the cultures of the members who form the community and the culture of the people to whom we are sent in mission. The transforming power of our charism can integrate the rich cultural diversity of our members and the culture of the mission and bring about a witnessing harmony among them. The charism of an Institute transcends all cultures, but expresses itself in and through the shared values, customs and symbols proper to our Institute. Therefore, we speak of a dynamic Claretian culture which shapes our “Claretianness” in each soil where we are sent in mission.

21. When you evaluate your Major Organism in terms of the Claretian missionary charism, what are the elements that you consider contributing to the life of the local Church from our charism? Which cultural factors enhance our form of life and which factors pose challenges? How do you go about it?

### **5.1.- I am a Claretian because I am called by the Lord**

22. An intercultural Claretian community is made possible by our Charismatic identity in the Church rather than any national, ethnic, or tribal identities. Our form of life is not guided by the norms of any culture or nation, but by the charismatic spirit of our Congregation enshrined in our Constitutions. Thus, I do not represent any country or culture in the Congregation. I am in the Congregation because God has called me and I am in this particular missionary community because God has sent me there through the mediation of my Superiors. However, I come to the Congregation with a pattern of thinking and doing as shaped by my culture which may enhance or delimit my freedom to live my consecration. The centrality of vocation and mission lived in accordance with our Constitutions is the condition for the richness of diverse cultures and languages to create a symphony of God’s love before the world.

23. When cultural or national identities of members superimpose themselves in a community or mission, the symphony turns out to be a cacophony and our testimony becomes a scandal and a counter witness to the love of Christ.

24. When first thing (the mission of Christ) is first, other realities (culture, nationality, personal character, etc.) occupy their legitimate place in our missionary life. CS Lewis beautifully explains this primacy of love of God among the many loves that are present in our lives saying, “When God arrives (and only then) the half gods can remain. Left to themselves they either vanish or become demons. Only in His name can they with beauty and security wield their little tridents.”<sup>18</sup> Applying this principle to cultural affinities we can say that when cultural identities take the place of God, they act like demons causing division, competition, and humiliation of one another. When love of Christ urges us, cultural and national identities occupy their legitimate place in our common life as an enriching factor in the community.

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18. CS Lewis (1960) p. 166.



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## 5.2.- We are enriched by the cultural diversity of our brothers in the community

25. My community is formed by members whom the Lord sends to me through the mediation of my Superiors and they add to the vitality of our Congregation and her mission. Claret did not call his companions and formed the first community to remain only in Vic within the comfort zone of the Catalan culture. If they were to remain only in Catalunya, we would have probably been at the verge of extinction like some other Institutes. Our Congregation is blessed with missionary vitality because of the wealth of diversity of our members and the consequent enrichment of the universal Congregation. However, it should not be a mere statement of cultural romance, but an honest appreciation of the work of the Spirit in our history.

26. The Claretian attitude towards cultures should be gospel-based appreciation of the richness and beauty of all cultures. Every culture has wonderful gifts to offer to others and no culture is so perfect that it has nothing to learn from others. While the positive cultural values of the members enrich the life and mission of each community, the gospel values help to purify and uplift those values and customs that are inconsistent with our form of life. Cultural values and customs are not free from the tint of human greed and sin and therefore they too, as part of the whole creation, are awaiting with eager longing to be freed from its slavery to corruption and be brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God (Cf. Rom 8:19-21). Hence, discernment is the key to distinguish the grain from the chaff in every human reality including culture. This is a difficult but necessary task in the evaluation of cultural values that guide each one's life.

27. As a congregation we need to grow further by widening the space in our hearts to hold the diversities among us in harmony and enrich each other to live our missionary charism more holistically. We have excellent missionaries who left their homes to serve people in other cultures adapting to the customs of the people and dedicating their whole life for them. I have fond memories of my novice master, Fr. Franz Dirnberger from Germany, who left a deep imprint of the Claretian spirit in me and other novices through his missionary zeal, simplicity of life and love for the people. I think of our great pioneer missionaries who went to the various countries of all continents to initiate our missionary presence. There are now many who joyfully serve in distant missions away from their native land. Some of us experience personal limitations to enter into the ethos of the people in another culture. Learning a new language is very challenging for some of us. However, a missionary knows the universal language of love which everyone understands.

## 5.3.- The missionary dimension of our Community life

28. Fraternal love lived in intercultural communities gives witness to God's love and its transforming effect on human relationships transcending the barriers of age, culture, race and nationality. There is no better credible witness to show to the world that all of us, irrespective of our differences, are



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children of God and, therefore, are brothers and sisters to one another. It is also a witness to the fact that communal harmony in a multi-cultural context is possible and necessary in a human society. The Synod on *The new evangelization for the transmission of Christian faith* told us, the consecrated persons, “The witness of a life which manifests the primacy of God and which, by means of the common life, expresses the humanizing force of the Gospel is a powerful proclamation of the Reign of God”<sup>19</sup>.

29. Intercultural communities offer a model which values diversity of views for the wider perspective it gives on various issues to help proper discernment and decision making. Healthy intercultural communities promote the personal growth of their members, enrich the community from their cultural richness, and add to their apostolic effectiveness.

#### **5.4.- Challenges that interculturality presents in communities**

30. Intercultural living and interactions are not always easy and pleasant. Cultural differences can at times cause misunderstanding and miscommunication which can at times affect one’s missionary enthusiasm. I list a few of the challenges:

##### **a.- Prejudices and stereotypes**

31. Preconceived ideas and evaluations regarding a group (country, region, race, tribe, etc.) affect the perception about the people of that group. Prejudices about a person may be associated to a previous bad experience from someone belonging to a group which is attributed to other members of the same group. Cultural prejudices and stereotypes can hurt persons and prevent them from growing and giving their best to the Congregation.

##### **b.- Cultural shield**

32. In intercultural communities, members may defend their self-interests using cultural differences as a shield. For example, a religious may use cultural difference to defend himself (for example, “in our culture we are doing like this”). One may blame the culture of another to express annoyance when corrected by a superior who comes from another culture. This is one of the most used tools to cover up actions contrary to our form of life.

##### **c.- Cultural domination**

33. In an intercultural community, the predominant cultural group tends to consider themselves superior and impose their group norms as normative for everyone else. They may compare cultures and use cultural prejudices to humiliate other group members and the wounded members become passive in community. When a predominant group in an intercultural community speaks

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<sup>19</sup>. XIII Ordinary Synod of Bishops (2012), Proposition 50.



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in vernacular language and follows their customs without any regard for others, minority group members may pretend to ignore it, but harbour rancour against the big group. This can affect the fraternal climate of the community.

#### **d.- Polarization and cultural conflict**

34. Cultural differences coupled with personal conflicts between members (for example, a quarrel between two persons belonging to different cultural groups) can lead to polarization of members based on racial, ethnic, tribal or linguistic differences and nurture covert or overt hostility among them. Often such cultural polarization underlies personal conflicts related to desire for power or economic interests. I have seen instances when the demon of division wakes up during the period of Chapters and play the cultural card to polarize members at the behest of the interests of some members and then vanish until the next Chapter. When the divisions are not dealt with properly, they may lead to vocational haemorrhage resulting in departures from the Congregation without proper discernment.

#### **e.- Self-victimization**

35. A person who suffers from low self-esteem may easily perceive discrimination and ill-treatment from persons of other cultures even when there are no objective evidences for it. He may take the “victim” role in relation to those perceived as belonging to a “superior” culture. One may even provoke in others what he expects of them or read such behaviours in neutral situations. For example, a missionary in a foreign country who has a poor self-image constantly complains of ill-treatment and partiality from others, even though others make efforts to make him happy.

#### **f.- Minority discount**

36. In a multicultural context, a member from a minority group tends to enjoy privileges and attention which the majority group may not be granted. Similarly, mistakes done by the minority member may be easily absolved by the authorities. For example, Superiors tend to ignore even serious lapses when the first member from a new culture is to be promoted for profession. Cultural discounts on religious values usually result in unfortunate negative consequences for the Congregation in course of time.

#### **g.- Communication issues from speaking a foreign language**

37. Miscommunication among members of various cultures is prone to happen due to difficulties in expressing one's thoughts and feelings in a foreign language. Besides, words and expressions which have different connotations may not easily be perceived by a non-native speaker. When a confrere attempts to speak a new language, he thinks in his native language and translates into the new language. Often it results in miscommunication. Native speakers may get annoyed about



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linguistic deficiencies of a confrere when they have already lived a few years in the new culture. Members of host culture would be more tolerant if they themselves have experienced learning a new language and had the experience of living in a foreign mission.

#### **h.- Erosion of Claretian Spirit in Provincial or Delegation cultures**

38. When Provinces/Delegations fail to inculturate the Claretian traits in their life and mission (e.g., simplicity of life, concern for the poor, word of God, personal prayer) the attitudes and values contrary to our vocational values ingrained in a culture may get installed into the ethos of the Organism and come to be considered as normal and necessary. For example, if the practice of collective discernment is not cultivated, private possessions, affective and sexual leniency, individualistic ministries or similar tendencies may get installed into the culture of a Major Organism situated in an individualistic and consumeristic society. There are cultures in which parents consider the upbringing of their children as an investment made in view of returns during their old age which can cause tremendous pressure on their missionary son in his practice of poverty and obedience. When values of missionary life are thus undermined, they cause great harm in community life and erode apostolic vitality of the respective Organism.

39. The challenges that we encounter in an intercultural setting can be overcome by giving primacy to our vocational values and needs of the mission over individual interests and cultural pressures. It is difficult to free ourselves of the prejudices and stereotypes that create bias against a brother if we do not recognize them in ourselves and make conscious effort to grow beyond, and value the dignity of each person. It is harder to let go of prejudices when they serve as a refuge to avoid facing the uncertainty and fear of what letting go may cost in our lives. Paradoxically, it is the very letting go of ourselves and our comfort zones that allow free space for the Spirit of God to do great things through us in the Church.

40. What would you consider are the blessings in your life because of the presence of your brothers from other cultures? What are the challenges that you face in your encounter with your brothers from other cultures? How do you face those challenges?

#### **6.- Forming ourselves to enrich from our intercultural richness**

41. Most of you who have lived in intercultural communities have experienced difficult moments in understanding and adapting to the personal and cultural differences of our brothers. My impression after living most part of my life in intercultural communities is that individual differences are greater than cultural differences. Hence, there can be conflicts and tensions between persons of the same culture just as there are between persons of different cultures. Serious tensions can arise between two missionaries of different cultures when their underlying cultural values conflict with one another and they are not brought to the open in any forum of dialogue (for example, difference in the concept of time or meaning of liturgical practices). Personal maturity and integrity of the



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members is the most important factor that contribute to the harmony and missionary vigour of a community especially in an intercultural setting. Many struggles in intercultural contexts are part of the necessary process of breaking and building in human growth or due to ignorance of the normal group dynamics of intercultural communities. I like to point out three important factors to be taken into consideration for community building.

### **6.1.- Cultural shock**

42. When a missionary is sent to another culture, it is normal that he experiences cultural shock because his values and customs can conflict with that of another people. It is mostly felt during the gap between separation from home culture and integration into the new culture. Adequate preparation before going to the new culture, warm reception and good accompaniment in the host culture will reduce or, at least, help to deal with the intensity of cultural shock. Social anthropologists point to four phases in any cultural shock: honeymoon, crisis, adjustment, and integration. Missionaries who return to home culture after significant years abroad may also experience similar shock on reintegration into his native culture.

### **6.2.- Cultural differences**

43. Knowledge of differences between cultures can help avoid cultural misunderstanding and miscommunication<sup>20</sup>. Some cultures value competition, action, direct communication, individual initiatives, avoidance of conflict and so on. There are other cultures that prize cooperation, community, indirect communication, conflict tolerance, relationships and similar other traits. A person from an individualistic culture may find his confrere from a collectivistic and indirect communication cultures as lacking in initiative, enthusiasm and drive. The latter may consider the former a bully, selfish and rude. Without mutual understanding of the cultural traits of each other, they would be hurting each other. There are instances when a missionary from a collectivistic culture felt ignored and rejected because the superior from an individualistic culture expected him to take initiatives and become confident. Differences in ecclesiology and liturgical practices can cause inner conflicts in many missionaries when they are in other ecclesial and cultural contexts. A missionary from a continent where hierarchical structure of the Church is held in esteem and liturgy is celebrated with decorum will have a hard time reconciling with his ministry in another continent where hierarchical distinctions are blurred and strict liturgical norms are frowned as vestiges of clericalism.

### **6.3.- Stages of intercultural growth**

44. We look at the world through our cultural glasses and judge what is good and bad accordingly. As our only reference to know the world is our native culture, all of us are ethnocentric at an earlier

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<sup>20</sup>. Geert Hofstede introduced five dimensions of culture based on his research on national cultures. Cf. Hofstede et al, *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the mind*, Mc Grow Hill (2010).



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stage of our intercultural relationships. People consider their own culture as superior and evaluate other cultures in terms of their native culture. An ethnocentric person tends to be prejudiced against people who are different and look down on their cultures and customs. As we grow further in intercultural relations, we recognize other cultures as valid, accept them for their own value and move to a stage of cultural relativism. At higher stages of our relationship with cultures including our own, we should be able to appreciate the positive values and critically look at those which are not in harmony with the values of the Gospel. As Christians we should not confuse cultural relativism with moral relativism. For example, some cultural practices like female infanticide and human sacrifice are inherently evil and are unacceptable. The progress towards healthy intercultural relationships pass through the stages of acceptance, adaptation and finally integration of the wealth of other cultures into one's own repertoire of values and skills to become an effective missionary. We come across this struggle of growth in the missionaries who are sent to a mission in a different cultural setting. We shall strive together as a congregation to create a congregational culture of joyful missionary life accepting and integrating our differences by confronting them to the values of the Gospel.

## **7.- Interculturality and Interculturation in the mission**

45. When a missionary is sent in mission to another cultural setting, his integration into that culture is important to become a catalyst of the gospel message to the people. Inculturation is the theological term for nurturing the Gospel in the soil of a culture. A missionary needs to learn the art of transcending all cultures including his own native one, and at the same time include the richness of all these cultures in such a way that he becomes a free instrument to preach the word of God and never a colonizing agent of any human group. In the hierarchy of many values and practices that embody the various cultures that one is part of (ethnic, national, tribal, religious, Christian, Claretian, etc.), the values of the Gospel enshrined in the Claretian culture should take roots in the culture of the host country.

46. However, there is the legitimate place for one's native culture in the life and mission of the community especially when it can contribute to the missionary vitality of the community and the people. This leads to a mutual fecundation in the life of the missionary and in his mission. This mutual fecundation is termed interculturation. For example, a missionary from a culture of planning and organization may contribute to bring order to a disordered apostolic programming in another mission. Another missionary may bring in the best practices he has discovered in his previous mission. The focus here is the mutual fecundation by the osmosis of positive values which may be highly developed in a culture but less cultivated in another. If the focus is to promote material goods, food habits or customs of an alien culture by the missionary, he is not an ambassador of Christ, but an agent of worldly interests.

47. How do you understand and address the cultural differences among people in your context and find the creative balance and integration in relation to our life and mission as Claretians?



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## **8.- Towards creating healthy intercultural environment in the Congregation**

48. Though we have made much progress in sending missionaries across cultures, there is much more to do in this regard. There are Major Organisms which need to move out from their cultural haven by sending as well as welcoming missionaries from other cultures and continents. We need to work together to create collective awareness of the intercultural dimension of our life and mission and create policies regarding the preparation and welcoming of missionaries sent across the Major Organisms. I like to present before you some reflections:

### **8.1.- Preparation and welcoming of missionaries sent in universal mission**

49. Universal mission is not a volunteer service to another Organism, but an authentic missionary sending as Jesus sent his disciples in mission. Availability to be sent in any mission of the Congregation is integral to our missionary vocation and it disposes each missionary to be open in his heart to any assignment within or beyond the Major Organism of his origin.

50. As living and missioning in another cultural setting requires certain personal qualities and competencies to avoid failure and burn out, selection and preparation of suitable personnel are important. We should take into account the vocational maturity, emotional balance, relational skills and apostolic zeal which are key qualities to face the challenges one will have to face in another culture. Willingness, generosity and joy are important dispositions on the part of the missionary being sent. A missionary who continuously feels a call to offer himself to universal mission deep in his heart should make it known to his superiors and discern the matter with them and remain open to what is decided by the Superiors. I am glad that some of our Major Organisms take it seriously to plan the preparation of the missionaries before sending and have a program for welcoming and integrating those sent to them.

51. The plan of preparation should include a period of developing some useful skills, programs for outgoing missionaries, intercultural seminars, and if possible at least a preliminary knowledge of the major language of the recipient mission. There should be an accompanier to the missionary on the part of the sending Organism who also contacts with the Major Superior of the receiving Organism. Similarly, the Major Superior of the receiving Organism should prepare a program of receiving the missionary to integrate him into the life and mission of the Organism. This plan should include welcoming and introducing the missionary to the Organism, good learning of the language and a program of cultural integration. There should be an accompanier to the missionary in the receiving Organism. I would recommend that the sending Organism keep in touch with the missionary and support his integration into the new Organism.

52. The E-learning section of Claret.org (<http://e-class.iclaret.org/?redirect=0>) has an online course that has been prepared on intercultural mission which will be helpful for the preparation and



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welcoming of missionaries and support the congregational reflection on interculturality. I invite our missionaries to benefit from this opportunity.

## **8.2.- Assignment and Incardination**

53. Missionaries are sent in universal mission in view of becoming part of the new Organism and share its life and mission unless they are sent in view of a specific ministry on a temporary basis such as teaching in an institution or helping to develop a mission. The process of sending begins with assignment for three years as a period of integration. If grave reasons like ill health, adaptation to climate, or other personal situations impede the continuation of the missionary in the place, he may be assigned back to the Organism of origin or be sent to another. If conditions are favourable a missionary should be incardinated to the receiving Major Organism after three years. Assignment to another Organism done by Superior General (Dir 314) is different from sending missionaries by a Major Superior to another Organism for reasons of study, missionary exposure or training.

## **8.3.- Fidelity to and perseverance in the New Mission**

54. There will be moments of excitement and joy as well as struggles and disappointments in the life of any missionary. We have hundreds of missionaries who spent their whole lives in distant missions. They have blossomed as persons and as missionaries in the new context of the mission. Their secret is the power of Paschal mystery that leads to the light and life of the Risen Lord. The capacity to lay down one's life for the people to whom he is sent, and active and full participation in the life and mission of the new Organism are beautiful witnesses of the Kingdom of God. Acceptance of the new Organism and its members and the people in the mission as one's own is crucial for his integration.

55. The receiving Organism, in its turn, embraces him into the fraternity of the Organism and help him feel at home by accompanying him in the process of adaptation and integration with joy and gratitude. A Claretian is not a hired servant in another Organism. This is why when a new Major Organism is erected, all those in the territory of the Organism become automatically part of the new Major Organism (Dir 315) without prejudice to the right of each missionary to ask the Superior General for a different assignment for a valid reason.

56. There are particularly two challenging moments that many missionaries face in the first half of their life. Those who face them courageously become resilient and the inner flame of God's love in them would shine even more brightly before the world. These challenges are common to all, though overseas missionaries may go through them with a slightly different nuance.

### **a.- Loss of enthusiasm**

57. The first challenge is the diminution of enthusiasm when the "honeymoon period" of the



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new mission wanes and the demands of the ordinary prophetism makes claims on one's time and energy. It is a critical time for growth and integration of life by going deeper into the source of their vocation through prayer and the help of spiritual guides. Unfortunately, some are tempted to avoid the silence of solitude within by taking refuge in affective entanglements, distractions or different kinds of addictions. Some may look for a change of mission. In fact, it is a privileged moment of discovering the most intimate presence of the Lord in the solitude of the heart and learn to love all others with the love of the Lord accepting the cross and the challenges.

## **b.- Joining the dioceses in developed countries**

58. The second challenging moment related to one's waning missionary enthusiasm is dealing with the desire for change and the lure of diocesan life in a developed country especially to USA, Canada or Europe. This exodus of religious priests to the dioceses of developed countries and the easy shift of vocation to secular clergy often expose one's inner inconsistencies and question the integrity of the missionary vocation lived for many years. When a missionary, after due discernment involving his Superiors, reaches the conclusion that he is not called to Claretian missionary life but rather to diocesan priesthood, he should seek incardination to a diocese of his country of origin. Responsibility, accountability and transparency before God and the Church demand that we should honestly and duly discern the will of God in such situations and rule out the temptation of "spiritual worldliness".

## **8.4.- The joy of being in the mission of the Lord**

59. I have often wondered what keeps the priests and religious going forward with joy and dedication despite the humiliation and discredit they face amidst the highly publicized scandals in the Church in our times. Why do missionaries generously offer themselves to be away from their cherished hearth and home to serve in an unfamiliar world? Each of us should know it in his heart as Blaise Pascal rightly put it, "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of". Our hearts find reason in what Jesus said, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). There is joy in the heart in offering our lives to the Lord, in sharing the pains and sorrows of others in ministry, in facing trials and tribulations for truth, in sharing love and mission with brothers of different origins, in leaving personal comfort zones to reach out to serve God's people in distant lands... This is a joy which nothing in the world can give. In short, love of Jesus and the power of his grace make all the difference in our lives.

60. I am edified and strengthened by our elderly missionaries who, in their advanced age, with their illnesses, disabilities and temperaments of old age, radiate the joy of missionary life irrespective of where they missioned. Joy and holiness of missionary life is not linked to the offices and positions that one holds, nor to any privileged places of service and prestigious ministries carried out. Our sanctification is related to the centrality of Christ in our lives that transform our entire being with all that we have and we do into missionary opportunities for the action of the Holy Spirit for the



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good of the Church and the world. For us Claretians, being Superior General in Rome or to be an itinerant missionary in the Amazonian forest of Brazil are just two ways of living the same Claretian mission in distinct responsibilities.

61. Jesus, the missionary of the Father, called and sent his disciples to go forth to all nations with a missionary mandate and assured his abiding presence with them to the very end of the age (Mt 28:19-20). Today, it is our turn to be in the line of missionaries whom the Holy Spirit has been gifting to the Church along the course of history. Our Founder, our martyrs and all who went before us have left us a testimony which can be summarized in the words of St. Paul, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ (Phil 3:8).

62. In the light of the reflections in this letter and your own experience, what would you contribute to the Congregation to enhance the quality of our intercultural reflection and praxis? How do you think we can live the missionary mandate of the Lord more effectively in our contemporary context?

## 9.- Conclusion

63. I have highlighted growing intercultural aspect of our life and mission which is becoming more challenging and relevant in our times. Joyful intercultural communities are a living witness of Gospel love. When I see how a mother takes care her children with a love that understands, forgives and corrects, I see God’s love reflecting in her eyes. I wish that together as a Congregation we cultivate the tender love of the Heart of Mary in relating with one another so that each of us will have that glance of the love of God to understand, appreciate and correct one another. Mary’s missionary “Fiat” at annunciation (Lk 1:38) was endorsed by her son when he said, “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mt 12:50). Our name as sons of the heart of Mary becomes real in doing the will of the Father with the attitudes of her heart. With the presence and guidance of our Blessed Mother, we shall transform our communities into “houses and schools of communion; that give witness to God’s primacy and, in and of themselves, will announce the Gospel.”<sup>21</sup> When God’s love rules our interconnected lives, we realize that we are the mission.

Fr. Mathew Vattamattam CMF  
Superior General  
Rome, 15th October 2019

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21. Cf. *Missionarii Sumus* 70.

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# **Letter of Superior General after Intensive General Council Meetings of October 2019**

**“Sent to set ablaze”**

## **Letter of Superior General after Intensive General council meetings of October 2019**

Dear brothers,

The Feast of our Founder on October 24 has rightly placed us in Extraordinary Missionary Month of October inviting us to deepen our missionary identity. I congratulate the initiatives of the Major Organisms for their active participation in this ecclesial event and the many initiatives to make it meaningful. It has also set the tone for the 150th anniversary of the death of our beloved Founder.

The General government reviewed the canonical visits held in America this year. There are many blessings that urge us to sing a Magnificat in gratitude and many opportunities amidst challenges that prompt us to courageously embrace and go forth in mission with hope. The Claretian presence in the “young vine” of America has come of age to a mature 150 years which we hope to commemorate in January 2020 (for a religious Congregation 150 years is only young adulthood). This should be a period of bearing mature fruits of a solid presence in the continent especially amidst many socio-political turmoils in various countries that besets this beloved continent.

We studied the semesterly report (this time regarding the way we profit from documents from the Holy See and the Congregation) received from the Major Superiors. It is a joy for us to see that we are a Congregation which feels with the Church (sentire cum Ecclesia) and walk forth with the whole Church at universal and local levels. Reports say that the Major Organisms make efforts to integrate the documents of the Church in their reflection and praxis by various creative ways. Some of you do it quiet effectively while others gloss over them superficially. Generally, the Congregational documents are copied to each member and they are studied at community level. Best practices which we have noted are deeper study or reflection of the documents through workshops, seminars, community discussions, reading in community etc. Least effective way is to merely send the information by email and let the members to benefit from them personally. I invite you all to benefit from the magisterium of the Universal Church and the Congregation and walk together with the Church on the path that Holy Spirit paves for her. This requires that we give attention and time for our own ongoing formation to know and study the Church teachings and disseminate authentic information about the Church and her teaching. It is a way to prevent the many fake news and gossips about “Church politics” circulated in the sensational media. Following



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the Spirit of our Founder, we shall be concerned about true catechesis of our people so that people know and love the Church by knowing her genuine treasures from within.

### **Weaving the Congregational fabric together**

We are celebrating different Congregational events in the coming months. There are many programs of preparation and celebration taking place at universal and local levels. When we see many upcoming programs, it is possible that one may get alarmed at seeing different initiatives and opportunities proposed at the level of the General Government and the Major Organisms. Like our Founder, we shall learn the art of weaving together the fabric of our congregational life and mission with threads of different colours and sizes. Everything falls in their place properly when each of us is committed to walk forth together in the Spirit of the Congregation and participating in those programs that each one is expected to take part and bring forth their fruits in his life and ministry. We have many events to celebrate in the year ahead. The following are some of the important congregational events in the coming months:

- The 150th anniversary of the completion of the earthly mission of Father Claret (24 October 2020). We begin the year officially in Chile on 25 January 2020 and conclude in Vic on 24 October 2020.
- Year 2020 also marks events like 150th year of the definite approval of the Constitutions (11 February 1870), intervention of Father Claret in the Vatican Council I (31 May 1870) and the Religious Profession of Father Claret (8 October 1870).
- The 150th year of the arrival of Claretian Missionaries in America (25 January 2020). It is celebrated together with the inauguration of the 150th year of the call of our Founder to the home of the Father.
- 100 years of Claretian Presence in Bolivia on 13 November 2019.
- 75 years of Claretian Presence in Philippines.
- 50 years of Claretian Presence in India to conclude on 16 July 2020.
- 125 years of Claretian Presence in Brazil on 14 November 2020.

These are important events that invite the rejuvenation of ourselves as a Congregation at the local and universal levels so that we do not get stagnated and suffer from charismatic rheumatism. We have a beautiful charism and mission in the Church. As a Congregation we shall let the



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Spirit of our charism to form us into a community of missionaries on fire with love and sent to set ablaze the flames of God's love to the people to whom we are sent to serve.

The different programs to in the Congregational journey in the coming months until December 2020:

1. Meeting of the Governments of Major Organisms of America in Medellin, Colombia, with the General Government in December 2019.
2. Official beginning of the Claretian Year project on 1 January 2020.
3. Meeting of Major Superiors in Chile (12-25 January 2020) to mark the anniversary of the arrival of Claretian Missionaries in America and the initiation of the preparation for the 26th General Chapter of 2021.
4. General Canonical Visitation to the Major Organisms of Europe from April to September 2020.
5. Conclusion of the Death Anniversary of our Founder and the Meeting of the Governments of Major Organisms of Europe with General Government in October 2020.

#### First Process of Transformation (Congregation going forth)

1. Educational Exchange in Nigeria from 2-9 November 2019. (General Prefect of Apostolate and his Team).
2. Encounter of Prefects of Apostolate in 2020. Time and place yet to be finalized.
3. Biblical Assembly of ACLA in Nigeria from 24-30 April 2020.
4. REBICLAR in Mexico from 30 August to 6 September 2020.
5. Workshop on Animation of Youth and Vocations in Africa.

#### Second Process of Transformation (Community of Witnesses and Messengers)

1. Reflection on community (MS 70.5). As mandated by the last General Chapter, we shall undertake reflection on different aspects of community life from July 2020.
2. Online course on Claretian mission and Interculturality (a pilot course in Spanish and English in 2020).
3. Online course for Formandi on Claretian economic administration organized by the General Prefecture of Economy to be arranged and accompanied by the Formation Prefectures of Major Organisms.
4. Workshop for new Major Superiors in November 2020.



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5. Workshop for new Major Organism's Economes in September (Spanish) and December (English) 2020.
  6. Encounter of Secretaries of Major Organisms of MICLA 10-18 May 2020.
  7. Encounter of Secretaries of Major Organisms of ACLA 1-9 June 2020.
  8. The promulgation of the "Manual and Protocol for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults and the prevention and intervention before a crime of sexual abuse" in December 2019.

### **Third Process of Transformation (Men who adore God in the Spirit)**

1. The Claretian Year. A daily deepening of our knowledge of our Founder and charism.
2. Encounter with Claret. One month-program in Vic and Madrid in French (May), English (June) and Spanish (September), organized by the General Prefecture of Spirituality and its Teams (CESC in Vic and Forge Center in Los Negrales). There will not be the Forge Program in 2020.
3. School of the Heart of Mary for Formators from April 12 to July 5, 2020, in Vic, Barbastro and Madrid.
4. Publication of the General Plan of Formation.

I consider the year 2020 very significant for us to deepen the spirit of our Founder, to develop the missionary spirit in us and to courageously become God's response to the cry of his people. These programs will bear fruit only when there is good collaboration and animation at three ends: the animation of the organizing team, the motivation and active participation of the missionaries and the animation role of accompaniers at the level of the Major Organisms.

### **Two special events to commemorate the life of Father Claret**

#### **A feature film on Father Claret**

It has been a long-cherished dream of many Claretian missionaries to bring the missionary spirit of our Founder to the public through visual media. In the current culture of communication through predominantly images, we hope that a good film on Father Claret would be a good initiative of the Claretian Family together with friends and well-wishers. The purpose is to reach out to the public as well as missionaries, evangelizers and youth and help them discover the mission of their own lives and to dedicate themselves to a greater cause. This is also a learning for us to use a public platform to involve all those who love and admire our Founder to participate in this



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venture through their financial contributions through crowd funding. I think that the poor response to crowd funding as I write this letter (Spanish link shows € 1285 and English link €791) speaks something about the way we go about our common concerns collectively by becoming stakeholders and welcoming others to it.

### **Project of Claret 150**

It is a project initiated by the Claretian Family especially CMF and RMI, but open to other branches of the Claretian Family. The project has two dimensions: a dimension of reflection on the life and mission of the Founder by holding a Claret Week of seminar on relevant themes related to Father Claret. The second is the pastoral dimension of venturing a joint apostolate in a periphery mission either in the Amazonia or in a new mission in Madagascar. A commission is formed by members of the two Congregations to explore the possibilities.

I believe, the Spirit of Christ is calling us to a deepened understanding of the mission of the Church in the world and our missionary charism in the Church. For us Claretian Missionaries, it is a privileged moment to live our own missionary call joyfully and deeply by resonating with the Church's own reflection on her missionary identity.

Let us learn from our Founder the art of living our missionary identity faithfully amid the many challenges and changes we encounter in the world. Like him, we shall confide in the Heart of Mary who accompanies her sons sent in mission.

Faternally,

Fr. Mathew Vattamattam CMF  
Superior General  
Rome, 1st November 2019

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# **Decree of the Canonical Erection of the Independent Delegation of Kolkata**

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

**CURIA GENERALIS**

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Prot. SG 164/19

## **DECREE OF THE CANONICAL ERECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT DELEGATION OF KOLKATA**

The General Chapter of 2009, in continuity with the preceding Chapters recommended that the General Government continue accompanying and animating the process already begun of the restructuring of Organisms (cf. MFL 64.1). The XXV General Chapter (2015), in this same line of continuity, established: “we will bring to conclusion those processes of reorganization already initiated and will consolidate those already carried out in accordance with the criteria set out in the last General Chapters” (MS 72.4).

The General Government took on this mandate in the previous sexennium 2009 – 2015 (3<sup>rd</sup> line in the area of government nn. 19-20). It has renewed this commitment in its present Plan of Action for the sexennium 2015 – 2021 (Second Process of Transformation, Area of Government, Proposal 5a).

The Superior General and his Council adopted the decision of the canonical erection of the Independent Delegation of Kolkata in the session of the General Government held on October 17, 2018. In the same session it was decided that the new Delegation became official on July 16 2019. The official information on the approval of the same was made in a letter from the Secretary General dated October 22, 2018.

After the discernment realized by the Major Superiors of the Organisms of India and communicated to the General Government, Father General and his Council decided on December 24, 2018 to approve the result of the consensus reached by the Major Superiors of the Major Organisms in India and the Delegate Superior of the Delegation of Kolkata with some specifications as regards the territorial division of the Major Organisms of India and the territory of the new Independent Delegation of Kolkata. This was communicated in a letter addressed by the Secretary General dated December 29, 2018.

In the session of March 25, 2019, and after knowing and evaluating the results of a previous sounding conducted in the Delegation of Kolkata, the Superior General and his Council appointed the Major Superior and the First Government Consultants of the Delegation of Kolkata as of July 16, 2019.




After the sounding carried out in the Delegation of Kolkata regarding the name of the Independent Delegation, the Superior General and his Council established in their session of March 28, 2019 that the designation of the same would be: Independent Delegation of Kolkata. This was communicated by the Secretary General on the same day.

In the tenor of n° 91 of the Constitutions and of nn. 289 and 496 d) of the Directory, with the approval of the General Government,

### I DECREE

That the Independent Delegation of Kolkata be canonically erected on July 16, 2019, with all their members, tangible and fixed assets. The territorial limits of the new Independent Delegation will be the States of Bihar, Jharkhand (except the Diocese of Daltonganj), West Bengal, Uttaranchal, union territory of Andaman Nicobar Islands. The mission in Bangladesh is also form part of the Independent Delegation of Kolkata. The Delegation Curia will be sited as determined by the Major Superior and his Government.

Thus, it is declared and established by this present decree, which I sign and seal in the General Curia in Rome, 13 June 2019, Anniversary of the Priestly Ordination of San Antonio María Claret. We place under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary this new Independent Delegation.



Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza CMF  
Secretary General





Mathew Vattamattam CMF  
Superior General

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## Assignment of Fr. Anuj Hemrom CMF

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

SECRETARIA GENERALIS

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Prot. 191/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. HEMROM ANUJ, C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I assign you to the Italia Delegation for three years and in view of incardination.

The assignment will be effective from August 15, 2019.

At Rome, on July 16, 2019.



*Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza*

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

*Fr. Mathew Vattamattam*

Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

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# Assignment of Fr. Joseph Xavier Jeganathan Y. CMF

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(Missionari Claretiani)

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Prot. 247/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. JOSEPH XAVIER JEGANATHAN Y., C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I assign you to the Philippines Province at the service of ICLA for three years.

At Rome, on September 28, 2019.



Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

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CONGREGATIO  
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE  
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Prot. n. 57156/2019

MOST HOLY FATHER


The Reverend Presbyter **F.A. Amaladhas**, from the Congregation of Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, requests of Your Holiness an indult to leave the Institute, for the reasons presented. The Ordinary of Kuzhithurai is ready to accept him in his Diocese "*pure et simpliciter*", according to the Code of Canon Law.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, after hearing the opinion of the Superior General and having considered the acceptance of the Ordinary of Kuzhithurai, grants the petition as requested. The petitioner is not to wear the religious habit any longer, and is separated from his Institute. He will be incardinated into the Diocese of Kuzhithurai, according to canons 265, 267, 269 and 693.

The execution of this Rescript is to be communicated to this Dicastery and to the Superior General of the above mentioned Institute.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Vatican City, 18 October 2019

  
Fr. Pier Luigi Nava, S.M.M.  
Undersecretary

  
✠ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.  
Archbishop Secretary

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# Decree of Incardination of Fr. Victor Ponnaiyan M. CMF

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

SECRETARIA GENERALIS

Via Sacro Cuore di Maria, 5  
00197 ROMA  
Tel. 06 809 100 11 – Fax 06 809 100 47  
Email: [secgen@cmfgen.org](mailto:secgen@cmfgen.org)

Prot. 296/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. VICTOR PONNIYAN M., C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I incardinate you to the St. Charles Lwanga Delegation.

At Rome, on November 22, 2019.



Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

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# Decree of Incardination of Fr. William Baskar M. CMF

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

SECRETARIA GENERALIS

Via Sacro Cuore di Maria, 5  
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Prot. 297/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. WILLIAM BASKAR M., C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I incardinate you to the St. Charles Lwanga Delegation.

At Rome, on November 22, 2019.



Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

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# Decree of Incardination of Fr. Charles Borromeo M. CMF

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

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Prot. 298/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. CHARLES BORROMEO M., C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I incardinate you to the St. Charles Lwanga Delegation.

At Rome, on November 22, 2019.



*Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza*

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

*Fr. Mathew Vattamattam*

Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

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## Assignment of Fr. Immanuel V. CMF

CONGREGATIO MISSIONARIORUM FILIORUM  
IMMACULATI CORDIS B. MARIAE VIRGINIS  
(Missionari Claretiani)

SECRETARIA GENERALIS

Via Sacro Cuore di Maria, 5  
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Prot. 299/19

**Fr. MATHEW VATTAMATTAM**  
**Superior General of the Congregation**  
**of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**to Fr. IMMANUEL VETHAMUTHU (JOSEPH), C.M.F.**

**Grace and peace be to you in the name of Jesus Christ**

Bearing in mind the good of the members of the Institute, the needs of the Congregation's mission and our own missionary availability (Constitutions 138; 32), and aware of your qualities, after pertinent consultation and dialogue, I assign you to the St. Charles Lwanga Delegation for three years.

At Rome, on November 22, 2019.



Mathew Vattamattam C.M.F.  
Superior General

Joseba Kamiruaga Mieza C.M.F.  
Secretary General

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## The Missionary Steps of Independent Delegation of Kolkata

Remembering something from the past, you are creating it right now as evidence for who you are now” said Frederick Dodson, author and founder of Quick Learning Company. Somehow, the past is integral to the present “now” and that is why it deserves a remembrance and rejoicing.

In the biblical understanding there is absolutely no timeline simply progressing on its own which we fill with events just like the filling the blank questions in our exam papers. This is the modern concept of time which is contested by some scientists today. In the Bible “time” is a vibrant reality only when one realizes that God is acting in history, otherwise, it is of no consequence, virtually a non-entity. That is why the first creature of God was “time” when he said, “Let there be light”. It was created primarily for him to be present and to work in history. That is the reason why in the historical books of the OT we have only the records of God’s saving or punishing activities. They were not interested in a history in which God is not the center. The same is true with the story of Jesus in the Gospels which avoid his childhood which was insignificant because God began to work out his redemption in him publicly only at his baptism.

With this little reflection, we are glad to look back with you the small missionary steps we have been taking in the Independent Delegation of Kolkata ever since the year 1985 and the miles we have reached so far with smiles on our faces. Our history in Kolkata began on 20th June 1985, when Rev. Fr. S. Anselmus CMF reached Barrackpore with the then students Vincent Anesthasiar



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CMF and Arokiadoss CMF. He had visited Kolkata a little earlier in an exploration mission to find a suitable place for another theology house of formation for our students because at that time there was only one theology house at Malleswaram, Bangalore. Other three priests were sent to Delhi, Pune and Poonthamallee respectively. Finally, Kolkata was chosen as the will of God. The two students began their theological studies at Morning Star College and three regents were also sent to different missions. Thereafter, every year theology students and regents were regularly sent to Kolkata mission. Meanwhile, Fr. Anselmus CMF bought a piece of land and started constructing the theology house, "Claret Nivas" at Barrackpore, while the first community stayed in the Morning Star College temporarily. Except one or two, all regents were sent to Santhal missions namely Chamrusai, Kamar Chowki, and Midnapur with the Jesuit priests, some of them were veteran Belgian missionaries.

In 1988 Rev. Fr. J. Remigius CMF, the first priest missionary was sent from Tamil Nadu to a Santhal mission called Baligheria to serve under Fr. Robert D'Souza of the Kolkata Archdiocese. In 1989 Claret Nivas, the theology study house was inaugurated and in 1990 Fr. Remigius CMF went to Jhardgram along with the late Rev. Fr. V.S. Packianathan CMF to study about the possibility of taking up that mission. But in the same year Fr. Packianathan CMF had to start the minor seminary called Claret Vidhyaniketan in Rajipur in the diocese of Raiganj and became its first superior. After a year of stay at Jhardgram and after discerning that it was not the will of God that we take up the mission, Fr. Remigius CMF became the parish priest of Kearchand in 1991 another vibrant Santhal mission. We were animating the mission till 1998 when we handed it over to the diocese back. It was the mission which gave exposure to Santhali life and culture to many of our priests, regents and theology students.

After the tragic killing of Fr. Packianathan CMF in the year 1993 we shifted the minor seminary to Claret Nivas, Barrackpre temporarily leaving Rajipur for good. In the same year the Lord opened for us the door of Orissa and we took up another Santhal mission in Amarda Road and Fr. Remigius CMF became its first parish priest but we handed it over to the diocese in 1999. In 1993 the bishop of Raiganj entrusted to us the mission of Bizrail, another big Santhal mission which has an English medium school and hostels for girls and boys now. We initially resided in Dolahar and then shifted to Bizrail. In the same year Claret Ashram the Santhal boys' home was started and its first superior was Fr. Michael Raja Pandian CMF. It was located first in Silda and later shifted to Sahadi. It is the only mission where we have no catholic families. In 1997 Claret Vidyaniketan was shifted to Lalpur Claretian house and in 1999 it was moved to Saparam, Ranchi, its present location. In the same year we started another big Santhal mission in Sahanagar in the diocese of Asansol which has now an English medium school and hostels for boys and girls. Our residence was first in Sialmara then in Barwa and finally shifted to Sahanagar in 2000.

In the year 1999, we started the community of Nirmal Sadan at Ghatsila to take care of the parish of Mohbandar in the diocese of Jamshedpur and the late Fr. Yesudoss CMF was its first parish priest. In the jubilee year of 2000 we started St. Claret English medium School at Barrackpore, the first school in the Delegation. In the year 2003 we were also entrusted with the parish of Lalpur in



the archdiocese of Ranchi, and our community there now is called Claret Deep; a small study centre cum library is also functioning in that mission for the students who write competitive exams. We were also running CIET (Claret Institute of Employment Training) in the nearby Loyola Institute from 2008 and gave it back to the Archdiocese in the year 2017. The bishop of Dumka invited us to the parish of Daldangal in 2008 from where we shifted to Basmata in 2010 and now we have a Santhal parish and a Hindi medium school there. It is while serving here as the parish priest we recently (2017) lost a veteran Santhal missionary Rev. Fr. John Bosco CMF in a road accident. In 2014 accepting the invitation of the bishop of Buxar we started the mission of Claret Manzil at Nuaon and in 2015 at the long standing invitation of the Bishop of Baruiapur we started the mission of Claret Premaloy at Nazat.

In 2018 the mission of Sahanagar was bifurcated and carved a new mission at Masagram on 22nd July and the community was called “Claret Gyanaloy”. Then in the diocese of Khunti a new mission in a place called Sarangloya was taken up and the community was named as Nishkalanga Bhavan. A mission in the diocese of Andamans in Betapur was inaugurated on 15th July and the community was called Claret Jharna.

Then the Bishop of Mymensingh diocese in Bangladesh has invited us to start a new mission in a place called Gacherbitta which has above 30000 Catholics and the vast majority of them are Gharo tribals. We have promised to send atleast a priest in 2019 and we have requested Fr. Pius Thuruthiyil CME, the Major Superior of North East Independent Delegation to give us a Gharo priest to work with him.

16th July, 2019 was one of the important milestones in the history of the Province of Chennai that Dependent Delegation of Kolkata was officially erected as the Independent Delegation of Kolkata by Most Rev Fr. Mathew Vattamattam CME, the Superior General. The Province of Chennai is happy to see the growth and development of Independent Delegation of Kolkata. We wish the new born organism all the best and pray for God’s continuous blessings.

On this graceful moment, we are indeed grateful to God for the fast growth of our branch in this Northern region of India and to all the pioneering missionaries in this area who tirelessly worked for the ministry of the Word and to all those who are actively committed now for the same task here as well as countries in abroad.



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## HEALING THROUGH FOOT THERAPY

In the year 2004, when Tsunami hit the Indian coastal area the province of Chennai really responded the calamity with great care. Kanyakumari was one of the districts which was affected heavily. Many people had lost their lives and homes. As rehabilitation venture the province of Chennai started to construct homes through the projects in many parts of Tamil Nadu coast. One among them was done in Kanyakumari parish. In course of time the Claretian Province of Chennai felt to have a community which can facilitate the pastoral need of the people and other Social emancipatory projects. So a house was constructed and opened on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2010 with the name 'Casa Claret'.

After few years of our collaboration with the pastoral care of the Kanyakumari parish, the Province decided to find new ministries to Casa Claret. One of them was foot reflexology (the alternative healing therapy), started in the year 2014. The community after the small beginning witnessed a great healing ministry through this therapy. It has now become a centre of alternative therapy (Reflexology). We are happy that 80 to 100 people are treated per week with the help of four trained staff (therapists). There is always an increase of people for treatment every time. There seem to be lots of attraction for alternative therapy and they appreciate it wholeheartedly. The community has also planned to conduct periodically a course on reflexology. Many people are interested to learn. The community looks forward hopefully for a full-fledged healing centre in the coming academic year.



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## CLARETIAN POSTULANTS ON MISSION EXPOSURE

A one-week village exposure was held from 16 to 23 November by the postulants of Claret Bhavan, Karumathur. The exposure was successfully held in five parishes of two different Dioceses of Salem and Dharmapuri and in Kavasam, the mission centre of the Province of Chennai. The exposure was focused to dig out the day-to-day strain and trauma of the people and our response to them in turn as future Claretian Missionaries.

The exposure at Hosur was crammed with meeting the people of the parish, sharing the joys, sorrows, challenges and other pastoral activities. The students were catechized and taught human morals. House visits, meeting the people, encountering the children and breaking of the Word of God deducted the intellectual equipment of the future pastors. Manual work, other cleaning labours were executed in the parish.



The exposure at Siluvaikiri was filled with lot of experiences and missions of the parish. The parish ministry with house visits, coaching the children and learning from the people their pain, suffering, and economic problems provoked the spirit of a missionary. The parish priest insisted and instructed to change the ideology of the people that is institutional to critical then mystical. People were given ample attention to have a profound faith in God.





The exposure at Kunnamalai parish posited the state of the people and their different levels of faith. The hard labour at the surroundings of the church, dialogue with families, educating ethically the children, teaching catechism and helping the parish priest were carried out. The visits to the families helped to realise the past day's problems and separation of the people from the Catholic Church and in turn the evolvement of other denominations. The dialogues with the people portrayed the disunity of the people by caste, religion etc. These taught the postulants the necessity to unite the people of God for salvation and their thirst to reach the realm of God.



The exposure at Karumandurai, Salem was marked by house visits, prayers over the families, listening more from the people and helping them to come out of their psychological depressions and suppressions and catechism to the children. People were assisted all the way through the breaking of the Word of God, sharing and interpreting the Gospel in line with the present society. The exposure deepened the faith and relationship of the people and built a strong acquaintance with the church.



The exposure at Kavasam was aimed at learning Reflexology and natural medicine. The postulants were offered some healing ministry courses which promote life. Manual works and classes with the accompaniment of missionary fathers at Kavasam were remarkably situated to cognize the reality of the world.



A soft skill course was arranged during the exposure time for some postulants. Fr. Rayappan CMF was handling the course. The course included Photoshop, Editing, Corel Draw, and film shooting skills. The course upheld the necessity of technological and mediated communication in the modern world for future Evangelization. The course produced practical experimentations and developed the skills of the learners with more features.



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## A NEW BEGINNING AT BUNAN-TEBEDU, MALAYSIA

Way back in the 1970s, when Fr. Leopold Van Rooyen, a Mill Hill missionary needed a piece of land to build a secondary school in Bunan and the people of Kampong Terbat Mawang and Terbat Leban donated 12 acres of land to St. Jude's Parish. His proposal to the Education Department, however, was not accepted. The land was then left abandoned.

It was only in 2013 that Fr. Jerome Juleng initiated talks with the elders of Kampong Terbat Mawang and Terbat Leban for their consent to give the land to the Archdiocese of Kuching for the purpose of obtaining the land title. In return, the Archdiocese compensated RM (Malaysian Ringgit) 10,000.00 which was shared among three Kampongs, Terbat Mawang, Terbat Leban and Muara Ahi.

In April 2018, upon the request of Most Rev. Simon Poh, Archbishop of Kuching to build a small hall or a hut to retain the land, St. Jude's Parish Pastoral Council with the initiatives of Claretian missionaries working in St. Jude's Parish, Bunan-Tebedu proceeded to clear up the site. After much deliberation with the various parties concerned on the possibilities of using the land for



the development of the youth apostolate, the idea of building a pilgrimage centre was mooted and named as 'Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre'. This Pilgrimage Centre is the fruit of St. Jude's Parishners, who had given their free workmanship to complete the entire project within 4 months. St. Jude's Parish, run by the Claretian Missionaries supplied the materials needed for the project and a few skillful workers did the foundations and people from 46 outstations extended their helping hand to furnish the project. Thanks to everyone, especially to all donors and well-wishers.



The blessing ceremony of Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre was done on 26th May 2019 by Most Rev. Simon Poh, Archbishop of Kuching together with Archbishop Emeritus John Ha, Archbishop Emeritus Peter Chung and Rev. Fr. Jesu Doss CMF, Provincial Superior of the Province of Chennai, India. On this auspicious occasion, Most Rev. Simon Poh declared it as pilgrimage centre in the Archdiocese of Kuching and designated it as a pilgrimage spot to be visited during the Extra-ordinary year of Missionaries 2019.



As many pilgrims desire to spend over night at Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre, Parish Pastoral Council of St. Jude together with the approval and permission of Most Rev. Simon Poh decided to build an Ashram, aiming to accommodate 300 people. The site is now ready for the construction. Most Rev. Simon Poh, Archbishop of Kuching and Archbishop Emeritus John Ha together with Rev. Fr. Jesu Doss CMF, the proposed new site was blessed on 27th Oct 2019 at 10.30 am. As we begin to construct new St. Clare's Ashram, need to look about RM 400,00.00 to complete the project. In view of this, Food Fair was organized on 26th Oct 2019 at Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre. Response was so good and involvement of all our Parishners was much appreciated. We are proud to say that the collected amount from the Food Fair is RM 1,80,000.00

We wish and pray that the Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre which is initiated by the Claretian Missionaries working in Malaysia bring real contentment in life to all pilgrims who make their pilgrimages.

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## STANDING WITH THE MARGINALISED

Kavassam, the Claretian mission in Mangalapuram, Viluppuram has been involving in the development of Irular tribal people in association with Pazhangudi Irular Padukaappu Changam (Primitive Irular Protective Front). Primitive Irular people are a small minority in Viluppuram, Cuddalore and Thiruvannamalai districts, without a strong social and political background to support itself for its survival. This necessitates our support and presence with them.

On the last week of September 2019, seven Irular men were caught by the police while they were resting and sleeping in their residents in Ulundurpet, Viluppuram District. And three more of them were also caught on the following days. All the ten of them were tortured and remanded in the judicial custody under theft cases pending in the police stations of this area.

All the ten of them are close relatives and are known to the Primitive Irular Protective Front for many years. None of them have any previous history of criminal record. The matter was reported to the higher officials and public protests were organised but nothing changed the course of action by the police. Only after a month, six of them were released on conditional bail. And four of them, up to this day (6th December) are still in the Prison.

The families and their relatives are accompanied in pursuing the court cases and getting the men on bail. Thanks to the support of some institutions that came forward to supply food materials to the families of the accused. In the last 20 years, the court had acquitted all tribal men in such false cases in Viluppuram District.



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# Obituary

## *Rev. Fr. A. Devadoss CMF*

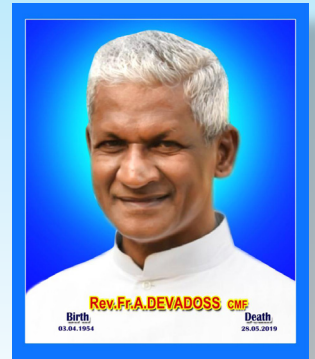
December 24th 1953: Born in Alambakkam, Tamilnadu.

May 31st 1979: First Profession.

May 31st 1983: Perpetual Profession.

May 4th 1985: Priestly Ordination.

When we received the sad news of the unexpected death of Fr. A. Devadoss CMF, on 28th May 2019, the members of the province were indeed shocked and dumbfounded. Many of them loved him so much and enjoyed his company.



His parents did not have a child for a couple of years; hence they begged God to have a son. And God was generous enough to give him as the eldest son among the five children of the family. After his college studies, his parents were thinking of getting a job and arranging the marriage for him. But the God who was instrumental in giving him generously to the family wanted him to dedicate his life for His mission. Sensing God's call, Fr. A. Devadoss expressed his desire to become priest in a Religious Congregation. But it was a real shock and astonishment especially for their parents. Although they initially could not accept his option, finally they made up their mind to support him to become a Claretian.

He joined Postulancy at Claret Bhavan, Karumathur in 1977. He completed his philosophical studies from 1979 to 1981 in Arulanandar College, Claret Bhavan, Karumathur, Tamilnadu and did his theological studies from 1981 to 1985 in St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Claretian Seminary, Bengaluru, Karnataka. When he was doing his theology he received disheartening news that his father was diagnosed with stomach cancer. In those moments as the eldest son he was expected to look after his father and above all the family. After a year he lost his father. However, as St. Claret said nothing daunts a Claretian, he was very much firm in continuing his religious and priestly vocation. In 1985 he was ordained as priest along with a Claretian (Fr. Packianathan) and a Carmelite.

When we analyze his life, we can say that he lived his life happily and joyfully. By nature he was a very humorous person and used to make others cheerful with his adult content. He was gifted with multiple talents and capabilities. He was an excellent preacher. People appreciated his Tamil homilies and talks which were transmitted in a Catholic TV. He also travelled to other countries to preach. Like St. Paul and St. Claret who were impelled by the love of God to preach the Good News, he too had a special thirst for preaching the Word of God.

He was also considered to be a very good Teacher. He went to almost all the major seminaries in Tamil Nadu to take classes on different topics. The seminarians used to appreciate his classes



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and were very much enthusiastic in attending his classes. He is very much known among the young priests of Tamil Nadu. Besides he was regularly taking classes in different religious Institutes even outside of Tamil Nadu to the postulants, novices, and those religious who were preparing for their final preparation. He had the habit of updating his insight and knowledge with regards to the subjects that he was dealing with.

He was equally busy in conducting seminars, retreats, counseling, and workshops to different categories of people like teenagers, adults, those who are preparing for their marriage, married couples, and elderly persons. He too was organizing courses on how to deal with Middle Life Crisis to both religious and married people. He was all the more interested in reflexology, Varma, Siddha medicines. He showed interest in promoting alternative medicines to the people. He is known for establishing relationship with the people. He made use of the relational names in initiating contact with them. And the people were simply taken up and fascinated by the way he was talking to them. They were feeling extremely happy to share even the confidential matters with him. Language was not at all a problem for him. He could establish contact with different categories of people. When they heard the news of his death they could not accept it and started to grumble against God. As he wished his death captured him while he was on his mission ignoring his health condition.

As priest, he was assigned with diverse responsibilities which he carried out faithfully and successfully.

1985-1986: Prefect of minor seminary, Claret Bhavan, Karumathur.

1986-1988: Prefect of Philosophy students, Parish Priest of Karumathur, Director of mercy home, Correspondent of Claret School, Claret Bhavan, Karumathur.

1988-1989: Vocation Promoter, Claret Illam, Kumbakonam.

1989-1993: Parish Priest, Holy Family Mission, Ettamadaï.

1993-1995: Studies, Claretian House, Manila.

1995-1997: Superior, Claret Nivas, Barrackpore.

1997-1999: Prefect of Apostolate, Amarda road, Orissa.

1999-2003: Superior, LIFE, Dindigul.

(June – Oct 17th 2003: Parish Priest, Holy Family Mission, Ettamadaï)

2003-(Oct18th) – 2006: Superior, Parish Priest, Lady of Snow Mission, Thadikarankonam.

2006 - 2010: Vicar, LIFE, Dindigul.

2010 – 2013: Vicar, Claret Premnivas, Yercaud.

2013 – 2016: Vicar & Preaching Mission, Yercaud.

2016 – 2019: Superior, Casa Claret, Kanyakumari.

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The Inaugural Ceremony of Golden Jubilee of Claretian presence in India was held in Claretian House, Jalahalli, Bengaluru on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

## *The Journey Continues...*

