

## CONCLUSION OF THE 23RD GENERAL CHAPTER

The course of our Chapter is drawing to a close. Once again we have experienced the truth of the Lord's words: "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst" (Mt 18:20)). The Lord has accompanied the work of our Chapter through his Word, his presence in the Eucharist and so many other signs that we were able to experience during these days. Our primary feeling as we conclude the work of the Chapter is gratitude to the Lord because he "has been good to us".

Our experience as a Chapter community has been rich. We have strongly experienced that new characteristic of the Congregation, which is the cultural diversity of our community. We have taken stock of the richness that this means and the demands that it involves. The Chapter experience has helped us perceive the diversity of situations our Congregation is living in and the need for all of us to feel corresponsable for each part of it, building a communion that is to be a sign of the newness of the Kingdom in our world, so marked by conflict and opposing interests.

We have lived the two basic aspects that characterize a Chapter: memory and prophecy. We have remembered the life of our brothers, their concerns and their missionary commitment. The Reports presented by the General Government and the fraternal sharing during these days has helped us do this. We have remembered the situation of our world, most concretely that of the men and women that we journey along with every day, trying to discern the paths that the life of our Congregation must travel in the next few years in order to be faithful to God's project at this moment in history. We have tried to offer the Congregation a prophetic word that is capable of generating new life and putting new energy into the missionary commitment of our communities.

We are the ones who had the concrete experience of living the Chapter Assembly, but the Chapter is part of a broader process within the Congregation in which many of our brothers have participated. The Reports of the Organisms and the contributions on the Chapter theme made the voice of numerous Claretians heard. The General Government and the pre-capitular commission organized these materials that have been the basis for our dialogue. I thank all the Claretian Missionaries for their active participation in the preparatory phase of the Chapter. I know that in several Organisms and communities lay people also participated in various forums organized within the preparation of the Chapter, especially in reflection on the Chapter theme. The document prepared by the pre-capitular commission served to create a consensus within the Congregation on the theme of this Chapter and to clarify the perspective within which the Congregation has to situate itself at the beginning of third millennium: Servants of the Word, in prophetic mission, at the service of life. Even though the Chapter opted for a methodology that did not depend on the text of the pre-capitular document, its content has been present in our discernment and the voice of the Congregation reflected in it has been listened to very attentively by all the Chapter delegates. Some Claretians sent in personal proposals that we have also taken into account. Starting with all of this, the Chapter has identified the priorities that should orient the life of the Congregation during the upcoming years. It is not that we are going to neglect other important aspects. We have seen, however, that these priorities bear a particular urgency. The Chapter's discernment has been rich and we have been able to treat the topics with sufficient time and depth.

When we read the Chapter document, we cannot forget the perspective in which it needs to be situated: the commitment of all Claretians to the service of life. The theme "That they may have life", by which we also want to express the integration of our mission with the mission of Jesus, is the spirit that gives meaning to each of the priorities indicated and to the proposals presented to implement them. We did not want to be "imprisoned" in internal aspects of the Congregation's life. If these have been treated, it has been to help achieve a spiritual consistency, a community cohesiveness and an organization of the Congregation that permits a greater commitment to the service of life. The reality of our world is so challenging, the cry of the poor and those that are suffering so strong, that we cannot be oblivious of them and confine ourselves to our little world of the Congregation. I am not going to repeat the priorities for the upcoming years because they are already in the Chapter document, but I want to highlight out of where they arise, the context in which they are situated and what they attempt to achieve. Only in this way will they be elements that give new energy to the life of the Congregation.

The Chapter commits the whole Congregation. Very often during the Chapter it was asked who were the subjects of each of the proposals. It seems clear to me that, in the first place, we are—all Claretians, the communities, the Provinces, the General Government. Each one of these has to be involved according to its own position within the Congregation in carrying them out. But we Chapter delegates have a very

special responsibility in this regard. We do not decide "for others". Each one of the decision we have made in this Chapter is, at the same time, a "personal commitment". This determines the credibility of what we have written. The General Government has to now program those actions and initiatives that help to give life to what we have discerned to be the Congregation's priorities for the upcoming years and to the proposals that go along with them. The Provinces, Delegations, and General Houses will have to include them in their own programming so that the new impetus arising from the Chapter truly gives new energy to the missionary life of our Congregation and makes it meaningful in the historical moment in which we are living.

The proposals for the future affect the different areas of the Congregation's life. They challenge us, especially, about our fidelity to the following of Jesus. The creation of a new prefecture of spirituality indicates the concern the Chapter feels in regard to this area. We have to take up the document of the Spirituality Congress and make it an instrument for personal and community renewal. In it we find the directives needed for growing in the different dimensions of our missionary spirituality.

It is said that the Chapter has been an experience of inter-cultural dialogue. The Congregation is a community in which God's call has gathered together individuals from different cultures, peoples and languages. Our communities will more and more be places of encounter for brothers coming from different cultural contexts. We can live the richness of the encounter but, at the same time, we have to take up the demands that come from accepting differences and which has to be a factor that increases missionary effectiveness. In today's world so marked by the phenomenon of marginalization our community has to become an expression of the communion that arises when the Kingdom is the center of life. We likewise have to insist on inculturation into the place where each community is located, demonstrating this by learning the language, by respect for its cultural traditions, by sincere love for the people of the place, so that we feel we are a part of the people to whom we have been sent. We have said that these dimensions have to be present in our formation programs.

We have dialogued about the problem of vocations. We take it on with responsibility, but also very calmly. We want the charism of Claret to give new energy to the Church and we will thus reinforce our commitment to vocation ministry. We are joyous over the many vocations that are coming to our community in some Organisms. We are going to make an effort to improve the quality of the formation programs in them. We will keep searching for ways in those regions where a number of factors make this topic difficult today. For our part, we have indicated the need to live more radically the following of Jesus in missionary community, because we are convinced that this is the primary condition for effective vocation ministry.

We have treated the topic of revision of positions and Organisms. The objective is always the same: better missionary service. In recent years important steps have been taken in regard to revision of Organisms. This is one of the topics in which it is not allowed in any way to think that it only for others. Always situating it in a missionary perspective, all Organisms have to ask themselves about the appropriateness of a possible reorganization that permits greater attention to people, fostering the life of local or provincial communities and strengthening and giving new energy to pastoral activity, encouraging more consistent and meaningful projects. This is a topic that requires serious and patient dialogue and a deep sense of the Congregation.

Rome, September 15, 2003  
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