

Called to Live the Spirit of the Founder and the Martyrs

Message for the Feast of the Founder 2017

The feast of our Founding Father this year is impregnated with special joy by the grace of the beatification of our 109 brothers, martyrs of the Spanish Civil War. The faithful surrender of this large group of missionaries, as well as that of many others - beatified or not - throughout our Congregational history are not isolated heroic deeds, but are an important part of the Claretian prophetic spirit. Our Founder lived this martyrial aspect of his spirituality with intensity, as I have expressed it recently in my letter to you on the beatification of our martyrs. The disposition to give a radical testimony of faith with the surrender of life, in the case of our Founder and our martyred brothers, was not an improvisation; on the contrary, it was the mature fruit of a process of transformation in Christ lived through his formation and his missionary journey. Fed by the Word of God, the Eucharist and the maternal love of the Heart of Mary, they experienced the strength to base their lives on God, to share fraternity in community and to spend their lives in missionary service. The fidelity of each day allowed them to live their vocation with joy and prepare themselves naturally for total and definitive dedication.

The XXV General Chapter, which we celebrated two years ago, invited us and continues to invite us to live in a constant process of personal and community transformation. It is a question of returning again and again to the root of our identity, which is our relationship with God (*Worshippers of God in the Spirit*), lived in community (*Being a community of Witnesses and Messengers*) committed to the mission (*Congregation "going-forth"*) (See MS, 64-75). Our Father Founder was a contemplative in action. His untiring apostolic activity began with a deep contemplation of God, hence all the time dedicated to personal prayer and the rich process of configuration with Christ-Eucharist. On the other hand, from the foundation of our Congregation, he never lived the mission alone; indeed, in Vic as well as in Cuba, in Madrid and in France, his house was always a missionary community. The so-called apostolic prayer of Father Claret perfectly embodies all these elements; may our life be more and more a constant process of transformation in which we seek - as persons and as missionary communities - to know, to love, to serve and to praise God, at the same time, that we make him known, loved, served and praised for the whole world (cf. Aut, 233).

May the feast of our Founding Father be a renewed stimulus to continue growing in our charismatic identification with him, following the example of our brother martyrs.