

TEXT

CHAPTER I

The Excellence of Mission and the
Great Worth of the Missionary

My Esteemed Theophilus:¹

My many heavy duties have prevented me from complying with your wishes as soon as I would have liked, or as well as you deserve. And although I am still too busy to write what you asked, I am going to make the effort, so as to take advantage of your fine qualities and dispositions, which I would like to stir up, lest they go to waste.² I would tell you, then:

1. That the greatest service you can render your Lord and God is to devote yourself to missions and to the conversion of sinners. Saint Gregory says³ that there is no honor so great as that of a man who becomes God's helper⁴ in converting souls. It is so great, adds Saint Dionysius, that his dignity is not only angelic, but divine.⁵ Yes, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of peace and of the blessings of the life to come, as Saint Paul exclaims with Isaiah!⁶

¹Cf. Lk 1:3.

²As we stated above, this letter introduced three long volumes of *Mission Sermons* (Religious Library: Barcelona, 1858). After his long missionary experience in Cuba, Abp. Claret had returned to Spain in 1857 to take up his duties as Confessor to Queen Isabella II. This office and his almost constant evangelizing activity in Madrid had kept him very busy indeed. On his occupations at this time, see C. Fernández, *El confesor de Isabel II* (Madrid 1964), pp. 123-181.

³St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, bk.1, hom. 6,9.

⁴Cf. 1 Cor 3:9.

⁵Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 1, cited by St. Alphonsus, *Selva*, ed. cit., II, p. 55.

⁶Cf. Is 52:7, Rom 10:15.

They are beautiful in the speed with which they race like heavenly spirits through whole peoples. And like angels, they are concerned for the salvation of souls, without looking to anything but the greater glory of God and the well-being of their fellow human beings. They are beautiful, too, for their strength and courage in enduring the roughness, thorns and difficulties of the ministry; beautiful for their purity, which keeps them from being sidetracked by worldly interests, applause, honors or comforts; beautiful, finally, for the winsomeness of their exemplary life and the sweet holiness of their teaching, which converts, draws and wins souls over to love.

2. In nothing else has God our Lord so shown His love for us poor exiles in this vale of tears, as in sending His only Son to redeem and save us, and in making him the head and model of all other missionaries. *Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret.*⁷ And the divine majesty of Our Lord Jesus Christ himself found no task on earth more acceptable to his Eternal Father, than that of being Savior of the world. Now this is the sublime, holy and divine ministry which Jesus Christ entrusts to the Apostles and to apostolic missionaries, when he tells them: *Sicut me misit Pater et ego mitto vos.*⁸

In so doing, says Saint Jerome, he willed that we, too, should be saviors of the world.⁹ Ask yourself, then, Theophilus, whether there can be any honor like the one Jesus Christ bestows on us by accepting us into his apostleship and sharing with us the title of savior of the world.¹⁰ We should take great heart, then, in following in his

⁷Jn 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son."

⁸Jn 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so also I send you."

⁹Cf. St. Jerome, *Commentary on Obadiah*, 21: PL 25,1115, cited by St. Alphonsus, *Selva*, ed. cit., II, pp. 81, 142.

¹⁰Saint Anthony Mary Claret was always utterly convinced that the dignity of the missionary is the greatest that can be conceived of in this world, since it is most like that of Christ. Writing to Fr. Dominic Ramonet (1833-1903), he said: "Consider that being a missionary is greater than being a pastor or a canon... In the latter states, the dangers are greater and the fruits gathered are lesser than in the missionary state" (6/26/1861: *EC* II, p. 316). "There can be no doubt that it will stand a priest in better stead to have been a missionary than to have been a canon" (*Aut.* 631). On this point, see J. Bermejo, *St. Anthony Mary Claret: Apostolic Missionary*, in *LC Study Helps* 5 (Los Angeles 1983), pp. 8-9.

footsteps, working day and night at our mission,¹¹ shedding our life-blood and spending our life in its flower, as Jesus did, should that be God's holy will for us. What I mean to say is that you must let nothing daunt you or frighten you, but you must keep pressing forward.

3. And so that you may not be dismayed at the thought of the many difficulties and obstacles you will meet in this ministry, I am going to offer you some motives to spur you on:

1) *The worth of the soul*, which is beyond all price. It is the image of the Blessed Trinity,¹² redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ.¹³ It is the child of God, destined for heaven. It is of infinite value, since Jesus Christ shed all his Blood for it. Its destiny is an eternal one: to praise God forever. And yet, this same noble and precious soul finds itself sunken in sin, enslaved to the devil and condemned to everlasting death, while with each step it draws nearer to the gallows. Suppose you had a sister, and you were told that for certain offenses she had committed she had been condemned to death and was on her way to the scaffold. Suppose, moreover, that you knew that by doing something on her behalf you might free her. Tell me: wouldn't you do it? Come, then, Theophilus! Awaken your faith, and with this holy torchlight in hand, see that I am not just talking about some hypothesis, but about a great and sobering truth. With this light you will see so very many sister-souls who are living in sin and are on their way to hell. They are walking blindfolded, so they cannot see the precipice into which they may fall or the gallows that awaits them. But since you can see this and are able to help and rescue them from such a pitiful state, then you must surely do so.¹⁴ Ah, what a grand work of charity you would be doing! A greater work than if you were a very rich man and gave all your money to the poor. *Etsi immensas pecunias pauperibus eroges, plus tamen*

¹¹Cf. 1 Thes 2:9.

¹²Cf. Gen 1:27.

¹³Cf. 1 Pet 1:18.

¹⁴Cf. *Aut.* 205-209 for similar ideas.

effeceris si unam converteris animam. This is the sure and evident teaching of Saint John Chrysostom.¹⁵

It cost God nothing at all to create all the riches of heaven and earth: with a single *fiat*,¹⁶ He made all things.¹⁷ Yet how dearly it cost Him to save souls! For their sake God became man, was born in a stable, wore himself out preaching, suffered slanders, scourges and thorns, shed his blood and died on a cross. One soul, then, is worth more than all the riches in the world, than all the crowns on earth, than all the stars in the sky. Saving one soul is therefore a thing of greater merit in God's eyes than all other sacrifices put together. I will sum it up in a word from Saint Dionysius the Areopagite: *Omnium divinorum divinissimum est cooperari Deo in salutem animarum.*¹⁸

For this reason, the Holy Spirit is not content with saying that those who teach others the way to salvation will have eternal life – *Qui elucidant me vitam aeternam habebunt*,¹⁹ but adds that they will be called great in the kingdom of heaven²⁰ and that they will shine like stars for all eternity.²¹

Saint Catherine of Siena had such a high regard for priests who were zealously devoted to saving souls, that she used to follow them and kiss their footprints.²² Saint Teresa of Jesus stated frankly that she felt more devotion and love toward saints who devoted their lives to saving souls, than she did even toward the martyrs.²³ And what shall I tell you, Theophilus, about the great Ignatius, the founder of the Company of Jesus? He was so

¹⁵"Although you gave immense riches to the poor, you would do far more if you converted but a single soul." St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 22 on 1 Cor*: PG 61, 263-275, cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva*, ed. cit., II, p. 151.

¹⁶Gen 1:3.

¹⁷Ps 33:6.

¹⁸*Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 3: "Of all things divine, the most divine is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls."

¹⁹Sir 24:31.

²⁰Mt 5:19.

²¹Dan 12:3.

²²Cf. L. Gisbert, *Vida portentosa...* (Gerona 1804), p.9. Cf. *Aut.* 235.

²³St. Teresa, *Foundations*, ch. 1, n.7.

eager to convert souls, that all life's labors, slanders, chains and persecutions seemed to him but a trifle in exchange for winning them over to Christ. His zeal led him to say that in order to convert souls, he would prefer, if it were within his grasp and will, to remain in this life unsure of his salvation, rather than to die then and there with the assurance of being saved.²⁴ And the Venerable Luis de la Puente went so far as to offer the Lord this sacrifice: "O my God, if in order to convert sinners I had to burn in the fires of hell, I would of course consign myself to them, provided it involved no sin on my part."²⁵

2) The second motive I would give you, dear Theophilus, in order to encourage you in this holy task, is that there is no better way for you to show whether or not you really love God. The love of God does not consist in words alone, but also and mainly in deed and in truth,²⁶ that is, in doing and suffering.²⁷ That is why Jesus Christ told Saint Peter: *Pasce oves meas*.²⁸ Love is known by zeal, says Saint Augustine: *Qui non zelat non amat, et qui non diligit manet in morte*.²⁹ *Non sibi soli vivere, sed aliis proficere, vult Dei zelo ductus*.³⁰

3) The third motive I would offer you is that it is a sign of predestination. Saint Augustine says: *Animam proximi salvasti? tuam praedestinasti*.³¹ The reason is, that when a missionary faces labors,

²⁴Cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva* (Bassano 1833), p. 99, in Claret's library. Claret marked this passage with a dash in the margin.

²⁵F. Cachupin, *Vita del V. Padre Luigi della Ponte* (Venice 1733), bk.2, ch.8, p. 226.

²⁶Cf. 1 Jn 3:18.

²⁷In the *Autobiography*, he sums it up tersely: "Doing and suffering are the greatest proofs of love" (n. 424); and in two loose notes he writes, "Doing and suffering are the proofs of love" (MSS Claret XIII, 519) and "To do and suffer for the Beloved" (*ibid.*, 195). In Claret's spirituality, action and passion are integral parts of the apostolic vocation and of all Christian perfection.

²⁸Jn 21:17: "Feed my sheep."

²⁹*On Ps 118*, sermon 18: "He who does not burn with zeal does not love, and he who does not love abides in death" (Cf. 1 Jn 3:14). Cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva*, ed. cit. II, p. 153.

³⁰*Ibid.*, sermon 28: "He who is led by the zeal of God desires not to live for himself alone, but to benefit others."

³¹"Have you saved your neighbor's soul? Then you have predestined your own," cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva* (Bassano 1833), p. 100, in Claret's library.

dangers and privations for the love of God, he also wins God's protection and so to speak obliges His loving Providence to defend him as He once defended Daniel from falling into the claws of the lions,³² which are the infernal spirits.

4) Moreover, the missionary is not saved alone, but enters heaven in company with those who have been saved through his zeal. As Saint Gregory tells us: *Ibi Petrus cum Iudaea conversa, quam post se traxit, apparebit; ibi Paulus conversum, ut ita dicam, mundum ducens*.³³ Moreover, what praises the missionary will merit on that final judgment day! For if the Lord shall have such high praise for the corporal works of mercy,³⁴ what will he have to say of the spiritual works of mercy performed by the missionary?

But what a great contrast there will be between a perfect missionary, one the one hand, and lazy priests without zeal, on the other. Perhaps some of the latter regard themselves as good, because their conscience does not prick them for any evil deeds; but they should bear in mind that before God's tribunal they will have to render an account not only of the evil deeds they have done, but also for the good works they have left undone. Woe to him who has buried his talent, instead of putting it to work to turn a profit!³⁵ Most priests will be condemned for sins of omission. Saint Bernard says that on judgment day there will be a great hue and cry: "Lord, we are damned and we know it, but our priests are to blame, because they did not admonish or correct us!" But the most imposing voice and the most dread words will come from Jesus Christ himself, who will rebuke them for not distributing the bread of God's word,³⁶ and for not clothing the naked³⁷

³²Cf. Dan 6:27.

³³"There Peter will appear, drawing after him converted Judea; there Paul, leading, so to speak, the converted world." (St. Gregory the Great, *Gospel homilies*, bk.1, hom.17, n.17: PL 76,1148).

³⁴Cf. Mt 25:40.

³⁵Cf. Mt 25:24-30.

³⁶Cf. Mt 14:19.

³⁷Cf. Mt 25:43.

with the wedding garment of grace through the Holy Sacraments. Finally, he will thunder forth that awful sentence: *Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum, qui paratus est diabolo et angelis eius.*³⁸

One who in time of famine hides grain and money, is guilty of those who die in want. One who sees a child fall into the fire and leaves him there to die, though he might easily draw him out, is guilty of his death. One who sees another bleeding from an open artery and fails to stanch the flow, though he might easily do so, is guilty of his death. How many priests there are who, by catechizing, preaching, hearing confessions and giving missions, could attend to the spiritual needs of their neighbors, yet fail to do so, thus leaving them to perish and be damned. Woe to them! *Tot parvuli in oppidulis petunt panem, et non est qui frangat eis.*³⁹ *Vae, vae, Praelatis dormientibus!... vae Presbyteris otiosis!*⁴⁰

You can now see, dear Theophilus, that in order to spare yourself an eternity of suffering and gain a great and never-ending glory, you should devote yourself to the holy missions, in keeping with your calling, and persevere in your sacred ministry. For your own good, listen to the words of God himself, who tells you: *Ecce venio cito: tene quod habes, ut nemo accipiat coronam tuam.*⁴¹

CHAPTER II

Important Advice for a Missionary

I have spoken to you thus far, dear Theophilus, on the excellence of missions and on the great good and singular honor

³⁸Mt 25:41: "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

³⁹Lamentations 4:4: "How many babes in villages ask for bread, but there is none to give it to them!"

⁴⁰Guillaume Vincent de Contenson (1641-74), *Theology of Mind and Heart*, bk.3, dist.6, ch.2, sp.2: "Woe, woe to those bishops who sleep... Woe to idle priests!"

⁴¹Rev 3:10-11: "Behold, I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have, lest someone rob you of your crown."

the Lord has bestowed on you by calling you to this high charge. I am now going to give you some advice based on my own experience. It will be to your great advantage, if you put it into practice.

1. You must be a great friend of prayer. In this, you will be imitating Jesus, who *erat pernoctans in oratione Dei*,⁴² and strongly urged his disciples to pray.⁴³ All missionaries of renown have been men of prayer.⁴⁴ He who seeks, finds.⁴⁵

2. You must always seek to be rather retiring, so that you are seen only at the altar, in the pulpit and in the confessional. When you enter or leave a town, you should walk in such a recollected manner that all who see you will be edified.⁴⁶

3. Keep all of your senses mortified. Speak very little, and when you must speak, let it be in a serious yet affable way. Keep careful watch over your eyes and do not allow them to wander when women are present, because this is something for which you will be carefully watched and criticized. Avoid chatting with them, and if you must sometime speak with them, I would offer you this advice: *sermo rigidus et brevis com muliere est habendus*,⁴⁷ *et oculos humi deiectos habe.*⁴⁸

You should never eat or drink outside the house where you are lodging. Let your meals be simple and sparing, and as private as possible. The Italians have a saying that "nobody trusts saints who eat."⁴⁹ Be mortified in everything, and as long as it does not greatly harm your health, the more you suffer in silence, the more edification you will give.⁵⁰

⁴²Lk 6:12: "He spent the night in prayer to God" (cf. *Aut.* 434).

⁴³Cf. Mt 5:44-45, 6:9; Lk 18:1, 21:36.

⁴⁴Cf. Mt 26:41; *Aut.* 264-273.

⁴⁵Cf. Mt 7:8.

⁴⁶Cf. *Aut.* 390.

⁴⁷St. Augustine, *De modo confitendi*, on Ps 50: "Your conversation with women should be short and to the point." Cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva*, ed. cit. II, p. 213.

⁴⁸St. Isidore of Pelusium, *Epist.* 285: "And keep your eyes cast down to the ground." Cited by St. Alphonsus in *Selva* (Bassano 1833), II, instr.3, p. 153, in Claret's library.

⁴⁹Also cited in *Aut.* 403.

⁵⁰Cf. *Aut.* 394.

4. One thing that you should deeply abhor is greedy self-interest. You must be a great friend of poverty. In all things choose for yourself whatever is poorest, vilest and most contemptible.⁵¹

5. You should be aware that the main vices you must struggle against are the love of pleasures, the love of riches and the love of honors.⁵² You must combat these vices with the opposite virtues. And remember: You will do more by example than by words.

6. You must continually look to and imitate the humility and meekness of Jesus.⁵³ Humility is the foundation of all virtues, and just as a tall building with no foundation will fall, so will you, unless you are humble. If you are not humble, you will suffer the same fate as did Lucifer,⁵⁴ Tertullian⁵⁵ and others, whose lack of humility went before a miserable fall.⁵⁶

7. While humility is the foundation of all virtues, meekness is the shield which the soldier of Jesus Christ, I mean the missionary, must always bear on his arm. For persecutions – and great ones – await him, and they can only be overcome with patience. Persecutions are so inevitable for missionaries, that they are a sure sign by which they can judge whether they are sent or not, since there has been no exception to this rule up to the present. Moses was sent, and he was opposed not only by Pharaoh and his sorcerers, but even by his own people. All the Prophets sent by God were persecuted: *Quem Prophetarum non sunt persecuti patres vestri?*⁵⁷ Saint John the Baptist *erat lucerna ardens*

⁵¹On the love of poverty and the way to practice it, see *Aut.* 357-371. After a lifetime of the most radical evangelical poverty, Claret wrote to Mother Antonia Paris: "God wants public witness to be given to poverty, seeing that today, people unhappily put more trust in money than in God" (1/30/1862: *EC* II, pp. 440-441).

⁵²Cf. 1 Jn 2:16; *Aut.* 357.

⁵³Cf. Mt 11:29.

⁵⁴Cf. Is 14:52.

⁵⁵Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (b. Carthage ca 155, d. ca 220). "About 207 he openly went over to the Montanists and became the head of a special sect within them, the so-called Tertullianists" (J. Quasten, *Patrology* [Westminster: Newman, 1953] II, p. 247).

⁵⁶On humility, see *Aut.* 340-356; on meekness, see *Aut.* 372-383.

⁵⁷Acts 7:52: "Was there ever any prophet whom your fathers did not persecute."

*et lucens.*⁵⁸ He shone with good example and burned with zealous preaching. *Fuit homo missus a Deo cui nomen erat Ioannes.*⁵⁹ At first the Jews praised him highly and admired him; but when he began to reprove their vices, uncover their hypocrisy and false righteousness, and above all when he bore witness to Jesus,⁶⁰ they began to discredit him and even to hate him. Finally, Herod took his life.⁶¹

And what shall I tell you of Jesus, our divine Master? Listen to what the Evangelist says: *Lux venit in mundum, et dilexerunt homines magis tenebras quam lucem; et non venit ad lucem, ut non arguantur opera eius.*⁶²

This light is Jesus Christ who, by his example, teaching and grace, enlightens everyone who comes into this world.⁶³ But to all this, men have closed their eyes, preferring to remain in the darkness of their passions, rather than to enjoy the benefits of this divine light. And since they do not wish to depart from their wicked ways, they do not wish to draw near to this light, which uncovers their evil inclinations and the corruption of their hearts.

The world cannot hate you as it hates me, *because you are conformed to it*, whereas I, by my teaching and by my works, show that its teaching and works are evil.⁶⁴

The chief priests and the Pharisees asked the ministers or temple guards: "Why have you not brought him in?" They

⁵⁸ Jn 5:35: "He was a lamp set aflame and burning bright."

⁵⁹ Jn 1:6: "There was a man sent by God. His name was John."

⁶⁰ Mt 3:1-2.

⁶¹ Mt 14:10.

⁶² Jn 3:19-20: "The Light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. [For everyone who does evil hates the light], and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

⁶³ Cf. Jn 1:9.

⁶⁴ Cf. Jn 7:7, which in the Fourth Gospel are addressed to Jesus' unbelieving relatives. Claret paraphrases the passage, adding the interpretive phrase, 'because you are conformed to it,' and broadens the circle of persons to which it applies. The sparing use both of quotation marks and of Latin citations from the Vulgate in this immediate section seems to indicate that Claret is aware that he is making a free gloss on the text.

answered: "Never did a man speak *so divinely* as this man." The Pharisees answered them: "What! Have you, too, been taken in? Has any one of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? Only this rabble, that know nothing of the Law, and they are accursed."⁶⁵

The missionary should in no way be dismayed,⁶⁶ then, seeing what happened to Jesus. He was set as a sign of contradiction,⁶⁷ and was in fact contradicted in his teaching, reputation and wisdom. He was treated as a false prophet,⁶⁸ a demon-possessed man,⁶⁹ a sorcerer, a madman, a drunkard, a glutton,⁷⁰ a friend of sinners⁷¹ and a seducer of the ignorant people.⁷² In a word, he was held to be such a public malefactor,⁷³ that there was no need to hold a trial to condemn him to death. And at last he did die on a shameful gibbet, between two thieves.⁷⁴

8. Don't imagine for a moment, dear Theophilus, that all persecutions ended with Jesus, as those of the Old Law did. No, the opposition is still on the attack, and contradictions and persecutions will continue. We see this in Saint Stephen, who was dragged outside the city and stoned to death.⁷⁵ As the Scriptures tell us: "That day saw the beginning of a great persecution of the Church in Jerusalem."⁷⁶ All of the Apostles were persecuted, and died in the fulfillment of their ministry.⁷⁷ The Apostle Paul in particular gives us a clear description of his own persecutions in these words: "I have seen many more labors and imprisonments, beatings beyond measure and frequent brushes with death.

⁶⁵Cf. Jn 7:45-49.

⁶⁶Cf. Rev 2:10.

⁶⁷Cf. Lk 2:34.

⁶⁸Cf. Lk 7:39; Jn 5:52.

⁶⁹Cf. Mt 12:24; Jn 8:48.

⁷⁰Cf. Mk 2:16.

⁷¹Cf. Mt 11:19.

⁷²Cf. Lk 23:5; Jn 7:12.

⁷³Cf. Jn 18:30.

⁷⁴Cf. Is 53:12; Lk 23:33; Jn 19:18.

⁷⁵Cf. Acts 7:57-58.

⁷⁶Acts 8:1.

⁷⁷Cf. Aut. 223.

Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes less one; three times I was beaten with rods; I was stoned once, shipwrecked three times; I passed a day and a night in the sea. I traveled continually, endangered by floods, robbers, my own people, Gentiles; imperiled in the city, in the desert, at sea, by false brothers; enduring labor, hardship, many sleepless nights; in hunger and thirst and frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness. Leaving other sufferings aside, there is that daily tension pressing on me, my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak that I am not afflicted by it? Who is scandalized that I am not aflame with indignation?"⁷⁸

9. Who would take note, dear Theophilus, of the persecutions, slanders and other obstacles that face a missionary, seeing how Jesus Christ himself, Saint Paul, the other Apostles and all true missionaries have had to travel this same road?⁷⁹ Therefore, you should recall what the Prophet Isaiah says: *In silentio et spe erit fortitudo vestra.*⁸⁰

Strive on in silence, then, working and waiting for the Lord to dispel the tempest.⁸¹ And if persecution grows too severe, move on to another city,⁸² but never give up or abandon your ministry or mission,⁸³ because the enemy is only trying to scare you like a frightened child. Happy are you if you suffer to the death!⁸⁴

⁷⁸2 Cor 11:22-29; cf. Aut. 224.

⁷⁹Cf. Jn 15:20; Acts 5:41; 2 Cor 11:23-29.

⁸⁰Is 30:15: "In quiet and in trust your strength lies."

⁸¹Cf. Mt 8:26.

⁸²Cf. Mt 10:23.

⁸³Cf. 1 Tim 4:5.

⁸⁴Cf. Aut. 651.

CHAPTER III

**What is Man?
Or the Knowledge of Human Nature
That a Missionary Ought to Have**

1. My very dear Theophilus: If a doctor wants to cure a sick man, he must first understand his symptoms and the nature of his illness. This is also true of a missionary, who is a physician of moral illnesses.⁸⁵ He must first of all know something about the nature of man, his moral ills and their causes, and then immediately proceed to apply the proper remedies.⁸⁶

2. God made man in His image and likeness,⁸⁷ so that he might know, love and serve Him here on earth, and afterwards be eternally happy there in heaven with the same God who created him.⁸⁸

3. Man is a composite of soul and body. Like God, the soul is an immortal spirit. Like the Blessed Trinity, whose image it is,⁸⁹ the soul is one in essence and three in faculties, called understanding, memory and will. With the understanding it knows the truth, knows God himself. With the will it loves the good, loves God. Thus God, as infallible truth and uncreated goodness, is the adequate object of man's understanding and will, which God alone can satisfy. The memory serves to recall past objects and

⁸⁵Cf. Lk 5:31.

⁸⁶A study of the life-setting and background of those he planned to evangelize was a constant in Claret's apostolic activity since his early years (cf. *Aut.* 33, 171, 191, 315, 475, 545, 717-728, 729-735).

⁸⁷Cf. Gen 1:27.

⁸⁸Cf. Claret, *Catecismo brevisimo* (Las Palmas 1848), p. 7: "For what end are we created? To know, love and serve God here on earth, and afterwards to see Him and be happy with Him for all eternity in heaven." Similar expressions are found in his *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado* (Pla: Barcelona, 1848), p. 14, and in *El ferrocarril* (Religious Library: Barcelona, 1859), p. 10.

⁸⁹Cf. Gen 1:27.

make them present. It is like the treasury of a wise man. For a man who could not remember anything he had seen, heard or read, would be a foolish man indeed.

4. God has created the soul to animate the human body, and together, soul and body form one complete and finished being.

The soul, so long as it dwells in this world, needs the body in order to function, as a steel ax-head needs a wooden ax-handle in order to cut, or as the elderly need glasses in order to see. In turn, the body needs the soul in order to live.

5. Such is man's nature. The causes of his moral ailments or sins (and of the damnation of many souls) are mainly four: original sin; the willful love of independence, leading us to rank ourselves above others; the love of the things of sense that surround us; and the far-awayness of the next life.

6. Original sin contaminated human nature, which was thereafter like a sickly person full of ill humors and sores which, when one of them heals, another opens up. He has a hard time walking, and even when he does walk, he goes only a short distance, and with a limp. This is how human nature presently is, and this is why we see things in human beings that are so monstrous that we could not explain them, were it not for the truth of faith that reveals to us the existence of original sin.

7. But original sin is not the first cause of moral illness or sin, since before we ever contracted original sin, there was already personal sin in our first parents. The primary cause of sin is the willful love of independence: the abuse of the dominion God gave man over the beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea and the birds of the air.⁹⁰ By abusing this sovereignty, man sought and still seeks to overextend his sway and to dominate other men. He does not wish to be subject to anyone, not even God, and this is pride. Pride is the principal cause of the sin of the angels, of our first parents, and of all men who, in order to foster this tendency, and as an effect of that same cause, seek after riches and prestige

⁹⁰Cf. Gen 1:28.

in order to place themselves above others. This is the root and cause of a great many sins of all sorts.

8. We said above that God created man to know Him and love Him,⁹¹ and in doing this, man finds his delight and rest, as a weight rests in its center of gravity, but is restless until it rests in it.⁹² God has made all other things as means to help man achieve his ultimate goal more easily. Hence He wants man to know and love these things as tools useful for attaining that goal, by directing them all to His greater glory and by using them all in order to know, love and serve God, who is his Creator, his Father and his only final goal.

9. To help man know and love God and the means God has given him (all other created things), God has endowed man with senses, in order that he may know things present, and with faith, in order that he might know things absent or invisible. When man knows, he loves, and when he knows and loves, he feels a special pleasure or delight. This delight is a participation in the joy we will have in heaven when we see and love God perfectly.⁹³ As the light of God's countenance is reflected in our mind and gives us understanding, so the warmth of God's love or charity is communicated to our will, giving us love and causing us pleasure. This pleasure acts on man as oil acts on the cogs of a machine, causing it to move more lightly and more gently. God has done all this so that man might fulfill the divine will, which is itself the eternal law. The eternal law may be defined as: *Ratio divina ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans.*⁹⁴

10. Now God has given man the pleasure he feels in knowing and loving not simply as a foretoken of the delight and joy he will experience in heaven when he sees God face to face and loves

⁹¹Ch.3, n.2.

⁹²An oblique allusion to St. Augustine's famous saying: "Thou has created us for Thee, and restless will our heart ever be, until it rests in Thee" (*Confessions* I, ch.1, n.1).

⁹³Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2.

⁹⁴St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, bk. 22, ch.27: PL 42,418: "The divine reason commanding the natural order to be kept and forbidding it to be upset."

Him perfectly.⁹⁵ No, he has also given it to man as an incentive and attraction to do what is good and to continue striving toward that good by availing himself of these means. If this were not so, then tell me: How could man apply himself to study the sciences, unless he found some pleasure in knowing? Why would he gather food or eat it, unless eating were pleasurable? You may be sure that if it were not pleasurable, then man would waste away and die, and the individual would be lost. Then, too, how would the species be preserved, unless man felt some pleasure in its propagation? Why would people get married and have to put up with the differences between the masculine and feminine character? How could anyone be induced to undertake the expenses, trials and work a family involves, unless there were some pleasure to counterbalance them and make them easier? Yes indeed, dear Theophilus, God has done all things well.⁹⁶ He has disposed all things according to number, weight and measure.⁹⁷ Man is the one who does evil, who upsets and abuses everything.

11. Man applies himself to the sciences and arts, derives great pleasure from his knowledge, and then, instead of referring it back to God – the author of man's intelligence, the source both of the light in which man sees and of the things he sees in it – what does man do? He turns his back on the light, as Saint Augustine says.⁹⁸ He looks upon created things and forgets their Creator,⁹⁹ turning on himself all the light of science that streams forth from the things he studies and discovers. This light dazzles him, blinds and makes him proud, like a new Lucifer.¹⁰⁰ Just as he abuses his understanding, so he abuses his food. Rather than eating to live, he lives to eat and drink, making a god of his belly¹⁰¹ and for-

⁹⁵Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2.

⁹⁶Cf. Gen 1:31.

⁹⁷Cf. Wis 11:21.

⁹⁸*On the Gospel of John*, 1, n. 19: PL 35,1388. Also cited by Claret in *El ferrocarril*, ed.cit., pp.58-59.

⁹⁹Cf. Dt 32:18; Rom 1:25.

¹⁰⁰Cf. Is 14:12.

¹⁰¹Cf. Rom 16:18; Phil 3:19.

getting the one true God. He does the same with his powers of propagation: *Sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus.*¹⁰² *Omnis quippe caro corrumpit viam suam.*¹⁰³ (This is why there is so much lewdness.) *Et animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus Dei.*¹⁰⁴ (This is why there so many impieties and heresies, for there is no heretic without his woman.)¹⁰⁵

12. Degraded by these abuses and reduced almost to the level of a brute beast, man lives more for himself than for God, as the Apostle complains bitterly.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, his life is more for his body than for God. He becomes intoxicated and is lost in fascination with the things that surround him. As I remarked above, so long as man lives in this world, his spirit is united to his body.¹⁰⁷ His body ceaselessly transmits impressions of everything around it, like a mirror that reflects everything that passes in front of it. Yet man's soul also possesses other faculties which, since they are above everything corporeal and sensible, are governed by other principles, deal with higher objects and, so to speak, dwell in a region which of itself has nothing to do with things material and earthly. Without detracting from the dignity of these faculties or their exalted sphere of action, we must nevertheless acknowledge that the lower faculties frequently force them down from their lofty place and, instead of obeying them as mistresses, they reduce them to the status of slaves. Even when matters do not come to this sorry pass, the higher faculties are often left unused and, so to speak, asleep. Thus, the understanding has only a vague and far-off awareness of the truths that form its noblest and chief object, and the will does not strain forward after its main object, but rather drifts along carelessly and lazily, if it does anything at all.

¹⁰²Ps 32:9: "Be not senseless, like horse and mule."

¹⁰³Gen 6:12: "All flesh had corrupted their way on earth."

¹⁰⁴1 Cor 2:14: "The unspiritual man does not grasp the gifts of the Spirit of God."

¹⁰⁵Cf. Claret, *Imitating the Patient Christ* (Barcelona 1846), "Mortification of the Taste," p. 124 above; _____ *Instrucción que debe tener la mujer*, in his *Colección de opusculos IV* (Rel. Library: Barcelona 1860), p. 11.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Phil 3:18-19.

¹⁰⁷Cf. ch.3, n.4 above.

13. The next cause, which goes hand in hand with the former, is the seeming distance of the next life. There is indeed a hell to fear and a heaven to hope for, but these are in the next life, reserved for some far-off period. They belong to an entirely different order, a new world, in which we firmly believe, but of which we have no direct impressions at the moment. For this reason we have to make an effort to concentrate, reflect and meditate, in order to become utterly convinced of their great importance for us, in comparison with which everything that surrounds us is as nothing. I am presupposing, of course, that a man makes such a reflection and then tells himself, with Solomon, that all the gold in the world, compared with the good things of heaven, is but a handful of dust.¹⁰⁸ I am even presupposing that a good Christian, after mental prayer, will reckon with Saint Paul that in comparison, everything in this world is but dung.¹⁰⁹ Even a good man of this sort will occasionally encounter some object in this world that wounds his imagination or stirs his feelings, either by arousing his fears or moving him to some pleasurable delight. At such times the next world tends to fade from view and, heedless of heaven or hell, he ceases to hope for the one or to fear the other, as if they had never existed for him. His understanding returns to its usual dullness and his will to its apathy for things past, so that both become absorbed in the fleeting present.

14. Experience teaches that man is nearly always led by the impression of the moment. He sacrifices the future for the present, and when he weighs the advantages or disadvantages of a course of action in the balance of his judgment, the nearness or farness of either is a circumstance that heavily affects the choice he makes. And if this is so with regard to the things of this world, how much more is it so with regard to the next? How many there are who have sacrificed riches, honors, health and life itself for a fleeting pleasure! And why? Because the attractive object is present, whereas the ills it entails are far away; and so a man tells

¹⁰⁸Cf. Wis 7:9.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Phil 3:8.

himself that he may be able to avoid the latter, or else resigns himself to suffer them when they come. Again, if this is true of bodily and temporal things, how much more is it true of spiritual and eternal things? This is what led the Prophet to complain: *Filii hominum usquequo gravi corde, ut quid diligitis vanitatem, et quaeritis mendacium?*¹¹⁰

15. This explains the enigma which Saint Augustine posed to God: "Since everyone loves the blessed life, which is nothing else than the joy we take in the truth, then why does the truth beget hatred in men, so that even your Son Jesus Christ became an enemy to them because he preached the truth? The only reason must be that man has such a love of truth that, even when he loves something that is not the truth, he would still like to believe that what he is loving is the truth. And because he hates to be proved wrong, he does not wish to be convinced that he is deceiving himself. So he loves what he chooses to think of as the truth, and for this reason hates to hear the real truth. Men love truth when it enlightens and shines upon them, but they hate it when it accuses or reproves them. They hate being deceived themselves, but enjoy deceiving others. They love the truth when it is revealed to them, but they hate it when it reveals that they are wrong. And thus they end up getting their just deserts. For those who do not wish to stand condemned by the truth are not only unmasked against their will, but are also denied the truth. This is precisely how the human mind behaves. It would love to conceal its own blindness, pretexts, shame and indecency, yet wants nothing at all to be hidden from its own prying. But what happens is just the opposite: it is discovered by the truth, while the truth lies hidden from it. Yet despite the miserable state that it is in, it would rather rejoice in solid and true goods than in apparent and false ones. It will only be truly happy when it frees itself of all that distracts it, and takes its only joy in the supreme Truth, in the sharing of which all other true things have their truth."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Ps 4:3: "Men of rank, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love what is vain and seek after falsehood?"

¹¹¹*Confessions*, bk. 10, ch. 23, n. 34.

CHAPTER IV

Topics to be Dealt with During a Mission, How They Should be Set Forth, and Maxims to be Stressed Frequently

And now, my dear Theophilus, here are the sermons you have been asking me for all this time.¹¹² As you can tell from their different styles, some have been written by me, while other have not. I have selected the latter only from authors I have read who struck me as speaking most directly to the point, either by reason of their composition or their content. On each topic, I have offered you more than one sermon, so that you may choose the one that you like best or find to be best suited to your audience.

At the beginning of each sermon you will find an outline that will help to acquaint you with its contents, so that you can decide whether you want to use it or not. It will also be handy for remembering the order and contents of the sermon, so that you will be able to improvise on it once you have mastered the subject matter. At the end of some sermons I have added a little store of topics and choice examples you can use in appropriate circumstances.

Above all, I would insist that before you ascend the pulpit, you be thoroughly conversant with what you are going to say. This thorough knowledge of your subject will help you formulate your ideas clearly and couch them in pleasing and forceful terms, along with similes and comparisons drawn from nature.

This well-thought-out and carefully expressed approach will result in that magical sort of style that awakens the senses, touches the heart and quickens the soul, by its happy combination of the moral and the natural. In fact, you may discover that

¹¹²Remember that this *Letter to Theophilus* was published as an introduction to the three volumes of *Mission Sermons* (Barcelona 1857).

you will be more persuasive by using a comparison, than by appealing to authority, even that of Scripture.¹¹³

People are more pleased by figures, allegories and comparisons to sense experience, than they are by the naked truth; for the former are charming, while the latter can be boring. Aesop would not still be delighting readers after twenty-five centuries, if he had used austere truths instead of fables. Nor would our Savior have been as effective in teaching the multitudes, if he had used formal discourses instead of parables. For this reason I have furnished you with a variety of comparisons, similes and examples, from which you may choose those that are best suited to the occasion and audience you must adapt yourself to, as water adapts to the kind of container it fills, or as the prophet Elisha adapted himself to the boy he raised from the dead.¹¹⁴

Once you have won over and convinced your audience, you should lead them on to practice, so that they will abandon their evil ways and begin to do what is good. For, as Saint Liguori

¹¹³St. Anthony Mary Claret recommends the use of similes and comparisons on the basis of his own experience. In his own preaching he aimed at simplicity and clarity, and strove to sprinkle his sermons with comparisons, so that simple folk could grasp them more easily. He believed that this was a special gift God had given him (cf. *Aut.* 297-299). Witnesses who had heard him preach testified to Claret's mastery in this. His first biographer states: "We ourselves heard him preach to clergy, seminarians, nuns, learned laity and other exclusive kinds of audiences, and we must say that one of the things we most admired in Señor Claret was the ease with which he changed styles, always adopting the one most appropriate to the condition of his listeners. Few speakers have possessed in such high degree his ability to phrase one and the same thing in different words, making himself understood by the unlettered, yet still delighting the learned. But what best characterized his preaching was the abundance of similes and comparisons with which he graced and concretized even the most abstract concepts. He drew these comparisons from animals, plants, stones, customs and household affairs, with a readiness and aptness that were utterly inimitable. He seemed to be acquainted with all things and with their most recondite properties. Even the well-educated delighted to hear him point out relationships between objects that were of themselves quite different — relationships that had never occurred to any of them, yet which, once they had heard them, they all found quite natural and lifelike" (Bp. Francisco Aguilar, *Vida* [Madrid 1871], p. 76).

¹¹⁴Cf. 2 Kgs 4:33-36.

says,¹¹⁵ the real fruit of a popular sermon is morality, and thus you must always take care to uproot vices and plant virtues, in keeping with the subject you are treating. This subject will be like the cloth on which you proceed to embroider the virtues.

1. The thing you must stress and repeat most frequently is the observance of the commandments, which you must very clearly spell out and explain one by one.

2. Then you must stress the truths that every Christian must know and believe, the things they must hope and ask for. You must teach them the way to make mental and vocal prayer. Moreover, you should explain the good works that each person must perform according to his or her state and opportunity, offering them all to God.

3. Then you should spend some time on the Sacraments they should receive, how to receive them, how to prepare for them, and how to give thanks afterwards.¹¹⁶

4. Next comes the devotion they should have for the Blessed Trinity,¹¹⁷ the Blessed Sacrament,¹¹⁸ the Passion of our Lord Jesus

¹¹⁵*Selva* (Bassano 1833), pt.3, ch.7, p. 345. *Ex libris Claret*.

¹¹⁶In his own note on this number, Claret states: "Pope Clement XI, on October 17, 1688, directed Cardinal Durazzo, then Nuncio to Spain, to ensure the following: 1) that there be an image of the crucified Lord on pulpits; 2) that the Four Last Things be preached on without fail in Lenten Sermons; 3) that in all festal and seasonal sermons, strong mention be made against those who neglect to confess their sins; 4) that the faithful be urged and moved to make an act of contrition at the end of the sermon." The Pope in question was actually Innocent XI, who reigned 1676-1689; Clement IX reigned 1700-1721.

¹¹⁷Claret was noted for his spread of the devotion of the *Trisagion*.

¹¹⁸Claret is one of the great Eucharistic Saints, and was truly in love with the Eucharist since his childhood (cf. *Aut.* 37-40). On the episcopal shield he himself designed, he placed a symbol of the Eucharist "because of the faith and devotion I desire to show toward the Blessed Sacrament" (7/25/1850: *EC* I, p. 413). His love of the Eucharist culminated in the "great grace" of conserving the sacramental species within him from one Communion to the next. He received this grace in the Church of the Rosary at La Granja on August 26, 1861 (cf. *Aut.* 694). On the meaning and scope of this grace, cf. J. M. Lozano, *Mystic and Man of Action* (Chicago 1977), pp. 289-298.

Christ¹¹⁹ and how to make the Way of the Cross.¹²⁰ Then devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary,¹²¹ how to recite the Rosary,¹²² how to wear her scapular, medals, etc.¹²³ Then devotion to their Patron Saint, their Guardian Angel and the holy souls in Purgatory.

5. You should strongly impress upon them the importance of reading good books and of avoiding bad ones.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹Claret continually meditated on the Passion of Christ. When he was a seminarian in Vic, he was caught unawares while meditating on it at night in the midst of some harsh penances (cf. C. Fernández, *El Beato Claret*, p. 77). Among his meditation topics he lists the Passion and related mysteries (cf. *Spiritual Notes* n. 7). In 1861 he wrote a leaflet, *The Clock of the Passion*, translated above, which the Lord approved in a locution (cf. *Aut.* 692). In a letter of November 19, 1861, he explained to St. Micaela of the Blessed Sacrament his method of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, which consisted in adoring the Wounds of Jesus (cf. *EC* II, pp. 396-397).

¹²⁰To teach the way to make the Stations of the Cross, he published his *Sant Exercici del Via Crucis amb una explicació* (Barcelona 1846). He later incorporated it into his highly successful *Camí dret* (Barcelona 1848), pp. 170-196, thus assuring it a wide distribution. Claret was always very fond of this devotion. In Madrid, while he was confessor of Isabella II, he made a short Way of the Cross every day (cf. *Aut.* 765).

¹²¹Cf. J. M. Lozano, *Mystic and Man of Action*, pp. 133-144, 299-300.

¹²²St. Anthony Mary Claret is considered the Dominic of modern times, as the Blessed Virgin told him on October 9, 1857 (cf. *Aut.* 677). Claret spread this devotion which, as he says, "after Holy Mass, is the most profitable" (*Aut.* 45), by his example, preaching and writings. Besides various leaflets, he wrote the following short works: *Devoción del santísimo rosario* (Madrid 1858), *El santísimo rosario explicado* (Barcelona 1864), and *Remedios contra los malos de la época actual aplicados por medio del santísimo rosario* (Barcelona 1870).

¹²³Cf. *Aut.* 337-339.

¹²⁴Cf. *Aut.* 42, 310-322. "Saint Anthony Mary Claret was a tireless and popular publicist. For many years, his multitude of simple and pious works instructed the people and maintained their piety" (C. Valverde, *Los católicos y la cultura española*, in *Historia de la Iglesia en España* [BAC: Madrid, 1979], vol. 5, p. 525; cf. J. M. Lozano, *Un gran apóstol de la prensa: SAMC* [Madrid 1963], 61 pp. In an unpublished handwritten note, Claret makes the following interesting observation on the power of the press: "The press is like a loaded firearm in the hands of a child or of a wise man. The Marquis of Vahamonde Condorcet said of Voltaire: 'He is the one who has done all that we can now see, but he did not manage to foresee all that he would do through his writings. Moral interests should be placed ahead of material interests'" (MSS Claret XIII, 327).

6. Tell them to break with bad companions, and to avoid dangers and occasions of offending God.¹²⁵ Tell them that when they find themselves in involuntary dangers, they should call upon God.

7. Strongly urge them to be patient amidst sufferings, labors and adversities, in order to conform themselves to God's will in all things. Tell them to fulfill their obligations well.

8. Tell them to practice the works of mercy¹²⁶ and to live in peace and unity, without quarrels or dissensions. Let them treat others as they themselves would wish to be treated,¹²⁷ and not do to others what they would not wish others to do to them.¹²⁸ Tell them to bear in mind that the whole Law and the Prophets are based on the two points of loving God and their neighbor,¹²⁹ which is why you must frequently inculcate this upon them.

9. Always remember: "The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating and dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart," as Saint Paul says.¹³⁰ Concerning this teaching of the Apostle, I am going to give you a comparison. In order to be able to cut, a sword must be both well honed and withdrawn from its scabbard; for even a gilt and jewelled scabbard would prevent it from cutting. Just so, the sword of God's word, in order to cut with both edges against the enemies of love of God and neighbor, must be well honed with purity of intention and withdrawn from the scabbard of human eloquence and flowery rhetoric,¹³¹ however beautiful they might be, just as I am now handing it over to you.

¹²⁵As he himself had done in his youth (cf. *Aut.* 53)

¹²⁶Cf. Mt 25:35 ff.

¹²⁷Cf. Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31.

¹²⁸Cf. Tob 4:15.

¹²⁹Cf. Mt 22:40.

¹³⁰Heb 4:12.

¹³¹On one occasion, Don Hermenegildo Coll de Valdemia, one of the Queen's supernumerary preachers, delivered a very florid sermon, but one lacking in doctrine and unction. After asking for Claret's opinion — which was rather trenchant — Fr. Coll changed his whole style of preaching (cf. C. Fernández, *El Beato*, I, p. 332 ff.).

Moreover, the eternal Word should be considered as existing in three states: *incarnate*, *consecrated* and *preached*. In order to become incarnate, the Word chose the most humble,¹³² but also the most chaste and fervent mother, Mary Most Holy. And as Mary is the mother of the *incarnate* Word, so also, says Saint Bernard, the priest is as it were the father and mother of the Word consecrated and preached.¹³³ Hence the priest must strive to be humble like Mary, chaste like Mary and fervent like Mary. The *consecrated* Word exists and remains in the Blessed Sacrament as long as the humble species of bread and wine exist and remain, so that if they disappear, the reality disappears as well. Something similar happens in the *preached* Word. As long as it maintains the humble likeness of Jesus, it produces its effect. But as soon as this likeness disappears and the preacher adopts an arrogant or noisy style, it instantly loses its power. It is no longer a divine word, but only a human word, and it is regarded as merely human. People may admire its artful arrangement, but nobody will be converted by it.

10. The Blessed Virgin Mary, says Saint Thomas of Villanova, *castitate placuit, et humilitate concepit*.¹³⁴ Through her chastity she pleased God, and through her humility she conceived Him in her virginal womb. Scarcely had she given birth to him at midnight, when she wrapped him in poor swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger,¹³⁵ near the entrance to the cave of Bethlehem, where he was adored by angels, shepherds and kings.¹³⁶

Learn from Mary, Theophilus. By your chastity you, too, must please God, and by your humility in studying the Scriptures and praying to God, you will conceive what you must say: the Word that you must preach. The Virgin wrapped the Word in poor swaddling clothes; you must wrap the Word in a simple and

¹³²Cf. Lk 1:38, 48.

¹³³Cf. Saint Bernard, *Various Sermons*, n. 51.

¹³⁴"She pleased through her chastity, but conceived through her humility."

¹³⁵Cf. Lk 2:7-12.

¹³⁶Cf. Lk 2:16; Mt 2:11.

natural style. The Virgin placed him in a manger with all reverence; you, while not neglecting the decorum befitting your sacred ministry or the reverence due the divine Word, must so place it that even the most uneducated and stupid people can grasp and understand it—even the beasts could reach the manger, since they were at home there.¹³⁷ The preached Word should be treated the same way: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio eius*.¹³⁸ *Spiritus Domini super me...evangelizare pauperibus misit me Dominus*.¹³⁹ Jesus Christ himself gave thanks to the Father because the divine Word was revealed or preached to little ones, that is, the lowly.¹⁴⁰

The manger was near the entrance of the cave, where people passed by – city and country folk, wise and ignorant, great and small, men and women. From this you should learn that the missionary is indebted to all: *Sapientibus et insipientibus*, as the Apostle says.¹⁴¹ This is why both Saint Liguori and Canon Muratori teach that your style must be popular.¹⁴² The angels and the star drew the shepherds and the kings.¹⁴³ The angels and other signs will also draw people to the holy mission. They will listen fervently and devoutly to the divine Word, for God will inspire them and teach them the same doctrine that inspired both Origen and Saint Augustine to exclaim: *Non est minus verbum Dei quam Corpus Christi*.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷Cf. Is 1:3.

¹³⁸Prov 3:32: "His communication is with the simple."

¹³⁹Lk 4:18, cf. Is 61:1: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me...He has sent me to announce glad tidings to the poor." This text was highly important for Claret, because it awakened his own missionary vocation (cf. *Aut.* 118b) and that of his Missionaries (cf. *Aut.* 687).

¹⁴⁰Cf. Mt 11:25.

¹⁴¹Rom 1:14: "To the learned and unintelligent alike." Claret's spiritual director wrote: "His zeal was beyond all fathoming. He desired to make the voice of the Gospel reach throughout the world. He vehemently yearned that in every place, until the end of time, all – whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, priests or laity – should hear it preached and catechized" (J. Xifré, *Crónica de la Congregación*: CMF Annals 15 [1915] 190).

¹⁴²St. Alphonsus, *Selva*, pt.3, ch.7; Canon L. A. Muratori, *Ventajas de la eloquencia popular*, Sp. transl. Tercilla (Madrid 1780), chs. 12 and 14.

¹⁴³Cf. Lk 2:15; Mt 2:2.

¹⁴⁴"The word of God is no less than the Body of Christ." Actually it is from St. Bernardine, cited in T. Lohner, *Auctarium amplissimum bibliothecae manualis concinatoriae* (Dillingen 1691), p. 918.

People will then listen to the sermon, go to Confession and receive Communion.

Besides this saying wherein Origin and Saint Augustine show the reverence and devotion with which the faithful should receive the word of God, I would like to share with you a quotation from Quintilian which will be most useful for your prudent conduct and discretion: *Utendum est verbo, ut nummo, cui publica forma sit.*¹⁴⁵

In like manner, dear Theophilus, you should use words as you would coins: 1) As you would use the coins of the country, you should use the language of the country, so that everyone can understand you. 2) The coins most commonly used, those which are given to the poor and to servants, are silver change, whereas gold and silver coins are used among the rich. Therefore, when you are dealing with poor or common folk, use ordinary talk that everyone can understand; but if you should sometime have to speak with learned folk, you should use words that befit their literary wealth. 3) Money also comes in paper form. You should use this form in leaflets, booklets, etc., and thus you will do great commerce for heaven.¹⁴⁶

Finally, remember that Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word, is also the Mother of Fair Love: *Ego mater pulchrae dilectionis.*¹⁴⁷

This, Theophilus, is the last and main acquisition you must make in order to be a good missionary: Be devoted to Mary and love God very much.¹⁴⁸ If you do this, you will preach well, as the

¹⁴⁵"The words we use should be like coins – public tender" (*Institut. orat. libri XII*, bk 1 (Paris 1760)).

¹⁴⁶This was the practice of Claret himself, who was one of the greatest propagandists of all times (cf. *Aut.* 310-322).

¹⁴⁷Sir 24:24 (Vulgate). A picture of the Mother of Fair Love, depicting Mary and the Child Jesus holding their hearts in their hands, presided over the founding of the Claretian Congregation.

¹⁴⁸Cf. *Aut.* 440.

Venerable Avila says.¹⁴⁹ And indeed, you will do all things well,¹⁵⁰ for, as Saint Francis de Sales teaches, all that is done out of love is love.¹⁵¹

Adieu.

¹⁴⁹Cf. Ven. Master [Saint] John of Avila, *Obras* (Madrid 1859) I, p. 45. *Ex libris Claret.* Cf. *Aut.* 440.

¹⁵⁰Cf. Mk 7:37.

¹⁵¹St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God* (Madrid 1775), bk.3, chs.2-3, pp. 109-116.