

## **Claretian August, pearls of our history**

### **IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CLARET IN CUBA**

As the Year of Saint Anthony Mary Claret progresses in our Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba, we are also getting to know its Archbishop a little better in his prodigious missionary and pastoral work.

We begin today the month of August that is dedicated entirely to knowing his life not from a well-known angle of his life, but worth knowing its significance in the Church. And it was here, in Santiago de Cuba began the foundation of a "NEW ORDER", which is present throughout the world today.

From the community of Santiago de Cuba Sr María Soledad Galerón, Claretian Missionary Sister offers us in a simple and brief way the multiple vicissitudes that Claret and Antonia París went through until beginning of this "NEW ORDER", born in the ardent eastern Cuban soil.

### **CLARET AND ANTONIA PARÍS COMMITTED IN GIVING BIRTH TO A "NEW ORDER"**

Here in Santiago de Cuba, just in St. German's street, on August 1855 the Congregation of Religious of Mary Immaculate Claretian Missionary Sisters was born, the first congregation founded in Cuba by Archbishop Claret and Ven. María Antonia París.

Every birth has a gestation period, a process, some steps to making their way...

### **FOUNDATION PREHISTORY...**

Antonia París i Riera was born on June 28, 1813, at Vallmoll, Tarragona (Spain) and was baptized on the feast of St. Peter. This date would be a symbol of her deep ecclesial vocation for her and her call to live the Gospel in imitation of the Apostles.

Although María Antonia felt "a religious vocation since her early age," she did not join the Company of Mary at Tarragona till October 23, 1841. She remained as working woman, because at that time, the anticlerical laws of Spanish state prohibited the entry of new novices.

It was the year 1842, a year after being in the convent, the Lord allowed her to live a mystical experience that marked her entire existence. «Spending one night in intensive prayer begging Crucified Christ to remedy the needs of the Holy Church, which on that occasion were many ... I offered him my life in sacrifice ... and begged him to deign to teach me what I should do to give him pleasure and glory by fulfilling his most holy will "(A. París Aut. 2). The Lord made her understand the Gospel and the way He wanted it to be lived.

She felt the call to found a "New Order", and after some time, the Lord himself made her understand that Father Claret would help her in the foundation. I had heard of him, as an itinerant missionary, but did not know him personally, however, he appeared to her as the apostolic man that the Church needed.