

LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION FROM THE ALUMNI OF FORGE 06/22



December 20, 2022

Querida Congregación:

Less than three months ago, seventeen of us, coming from some parts of the world under your ecclesial and maternal care, left our respective Organisms to participate in the 6th English Edition of *The Forge – La Fragua* - here in Colmenar Viejo, Madrid, Spain. That we hail from nine countries and belong to fourteen Major Organisms is a great testimony of your extensive growth and maternal fecundity, beloved Congregation.

That this place has become the venue of our Forge for two and a half months might be ironic, knowing that Colmenar Viejo was one of the seats of the harrowing trials Father Claret was subjected to during his time. But perhaps, it was providential that we had the Forge at Colmenar Viejo, for it reminds us of the martyrial dimension of our vocation, an essential component of our spiritual genes, of our charismatic make-up. If there is something that we learned especially from the martyrdom of our brothers in this country, it is this: That martyrdom is not a solitary act disconnected from the life that we previously lead; rather, it is a painful process of sifting the many little imperfections and misgivings in us, that taken together, make up the soiled and squalid image of *philautia* and *acedia*. That martyrdom comes in little dosages and measures, composed of little acts that bring about a gradual annihilation of the self towards the realization of a fuller, more beautiful life in God. Expressed in three distinctive phases which coincided with the three processes of transformation the Congregation has embraced, the whole Program has invited us to the *dying of ourselves* so that the Father's Dream may be accomplished in us (*Patris Mei*), so that we may be conformed to Christ (*Caritas Christi*), and so that we may genuinely become the Spirit's instruments of transformation in the world (*Spiritus Domini*).

We thank you, beloved Congregation, for bringing us to so many places of beauty, quiet and holiness during the Encounter, as we visited the resting places of Saints Peter and Paul and our countless martyrs in the Eternal City, as we retraced the steps of Claret in Rome, Madrid, Cataluña, and Fontfroide, and those of our martyrs in Barbastro. The life, words and deeds of our Father Founder reflected in his *Autobiography*, as well as the testimonies of faith and love of our martyrs, burst into life, became alive again, even for those of us who have been to these places several times. In you, we behold the veracity of Jesus' words in the gospel (cf. Mt. 19:29), as we find so many brothers and homes as promised--from our humblest Claretian communities on some hinterlands in Asia and Africa to our community in our grand General Curia in Rome.

How times flies so fast, beloved Congregation, as we get ready to return to our respective Organisms! Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, our Father Founder, and our brother-martyrs, we pray that, after 73 days of living the Forge here in Colmenar Viejo, we all go back home "by another way," like the *Magi* from the East—renewed, transformed and converted, with a profound and genuine experience of God and His primacy in our lives, as well as a deepened regard and appreciation of our Marian and Claretian vocation in the Church and in the world!

Your Grateful Sons,

Forge 06/22 Participants