

# COMMUNAL SELF-SUSTAINABILITY AS MISSION IDENTITY

## Missionary Situation for Reflection

A Claretian community has served a rural mission for many years through education, parish ministry, and social outreach. Most of its ministries depend almost entirely on financial support from external benefactors. Over time, some buildings require major repairs, formation expenses increase, and funding begins to decline. Community members express different opinions: some insist on seeking new donors, others propose reducing apostolic activities, while a few suggest developing sustainable local initiatives. Discussions become tense because financial concerns begin to influence pastoral priorities and even community relationships.

The community gradually realizes that the real challenge is not simply a lack of money. It is learning how to preserve its missionary freedom, remain faithful to evangelical poverty, exercise responsible stewardship, and ensure that the mission entrusted to them can continue serving future generations.

This situation raises important questions:

- What does communal self-sustainability mean for a missionary congregation?
- How can a community remain faithful to evangelical poverty while planning responsibly for the future?
- How can financial decisions reflect missionary priorities rather than determine them?
- What attitudes and practices enable a community to become economically responsible without becoming materially driven?
- How can sustainability strengthen fraternity, solidarity, and the credibility of our witness?

This module invites Claretians to understand communal self-sustainability not primarily as an economic strategy but as an expression of responsible discipleship, evangelical stewardship, and missionary fidelity. Sustainable communities are communities that remain free to proclaim the Gospel, wisely administer the gifts entrusted to them, and ensure that the charism received from the Founder continues to bear fruit for generations to come.

## General Introduction

The Gospel calls every Christian community to live in trusting dependence on God's providence while exercising responsible stewardship over the gifts entrusted to it. Throughout the history of salvation, God's people have been invited to receive material goods with gratitude, use them wisely, share them generously, and place them at the service of the Kingdom rather than personal security. Christian stewardship therefore unites faith in divine providence with prudent human responsibility.

For Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, communal self-sustainability is rooted in our missionary vocation. Saint Anthony Mary Claret lived profound confidence in God's providence while exercising remarkable prudence in organizing missionary initiatives, managing resources, establishing institutions, and ensuring that evangelization could continue beyond his own lifetime. His example reminds us that trust in God never excuses negligence; rather, it inspires responsible planning in service of the Gospel.

The Church likewise understands stewardship as an integral dimension of discipleship. The goods entrusted to the Church exist to sustain evangelization, promote human dignity, serve those most in need, and strengthen ecclesial communion. Religious communities are therefore called to administer their resources transparently, responsibly, and in a manner consistent with their evangelical

witness. Economic decisions become acts of discipleship when they are guided by justice, simplicity, solidarity, and concern for the common good.

Within the Claretian tradition, communal self-sustainability is much more than financial independence. It is the capacity of a missionary community to steward its human, spiritual, material, and economic resources in such a way that its apostolic mission remains faithful, credible, and sustainable over time. Such stewardship protects missionary freedom, strengthens fraternity, promotes shared responsibility, and enables communities to respond creatively to new missionary challenges in communion with the wider Congregation. This vision is fully consistent with our Constitutions, which call us to live as missionary communities united in charity, sharing responsibility for our common life and mission, and collaborating in the ministry entrusted to us.

Formation for communal self-sustainability, therefore, is not principally about acquiring financial expertise. It is about cultivating evangelical attitudes that enable missionaries to live poverty responsibly, manage common goods transparently, discern economic decisions communally, and place every available resource at the service of God's mission. A community that lives these values safeguards not only its institutions but also the missionary charism entrusted to it, ensuring that future generations may continue to proclaim the Gospel with freedom, simplicity, and apostolic zeal.

## **I. Biblical, Theological and Claretian Foundations of Communal Self-Sustainability**

Communal self-sustainability is not primarily an economic concept but a theological and missionary one. It arises from the conviction that all creation is God's gift and that human beings are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for these gifts in service of God's saving plan. For a missionary community, responsible stewardship ensures that the Gospel may continue to be proclaimed with freedom, credibility, and generosity across generations.

### **1. Stewardship in the Light of Scripture**

Sacred Scripture consistently presents material goods as gifts entrusted by God rather than possessions to be used according to personal preference. Human beings are called to exercise stewardship with wisdom, accountability, and concern for the common good.

From the beginning, God entrusts creation to humanity "to till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15), establishing stewardship as part of humanity's vocation. Throughout Israel's history, prosperity is understood not as private privilege but as a blessing to be shared, especially with the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger (Dt 15:7–11).

Jesus deepens this vision by teaching that disciples are faithful stewards rather than owners of God's gifts. The Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14–30) praises initiative, responsibility, and fruitfulness, while the Parable of the Faithful Steward (Lk 12:42–48) highlights accountability before God. Material resources are therefore entrusted not for accumulation but for service and mission.

The Acts of the Apostles presents the first Christian community as a model of shared responsibility. Believers held their possessions in common, distributed resources according to need, and ensured that no one was left without support (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). Their communion was expressed not only in prayer and faith but also in the responsible sharing of material goods.

These biblical witnesses reveal several enduring principles:

- Everything ultimately belongs to God.
- Human beings are stewards rather than owners.
- Resources exist to serve life and mission.
- Responsible administration is an expression of faithfulness.
- Generosity and solidarity are essential signs of Christian discipleship.

## **2. Stewardship in the Mission of the Church**

The Church continues this biblical understanding by recognizing that temporal goods are instruments for evangelization rather than ends in themselves. Their purpose is to support the proclamation of the Gospel, sustain communities, serve those in need, and build up the Body of Christ.

Consequently, the administration of resources is not merely a technical or financial responsibility but a pastoral and spiritual ministry. Transparency, accountability, justice, and prudent planning protect both the credibility of the Church and the integrity of her mission.

For consecrated persons, evangelical poverty does not imply neglect of material responsibilities. Rather, it calls communities to administer common goods with simplicity, responsibility, and solidarity, avoiding both consumerism and imprudent management. Authentic poverty is expressed not in disorder or insecurity but in freedom from possessiveness, confidence in God's providence, and generous service to others.

## **3. The Claretian Vision of Communal Self-Sustainability**

Saint Anthony Mary Claret united profound trust in divine providence with remarkable practical wisdom. Throughout his missionary life, he established educational institutions, publishing initiatives, charitable works, and missionary structures that could continue serving the Church beyond his own lifetime. His confidence in God never led to passivity; rather, it inspired responsible organization, careful planning, and tireless dedication to the apostolic mission.

The Congregation has inherited this same vision. Our Constitutions describe us as a missionary community united in charity, sharing one vocation, one mission, and responsibility for the common life entrusted to us. The ministry exercised by each member is always received from and carried out on behalf of the community, making stewardship a shared missionary responsibility rather than an individual concern.

The General Plan of Formation likewise emphasizes that formation prepares missionaries to integrate prayer, community life, apostolic commitment, and responsible stewardship into a lifelong process of vocational growth. Formation seeks not merely competent administrators but mature missionaries capable of placing every personal and communal gift at the service of Christ's mission.

Within this Claretian perspective, communal self-sustainability means developing communities that:

- remain free to respond to missionary needs without undue dependence;
- administer resources transparently and responsibly;
- practice evangelical simplicity and common ownership;
- foster solidarity within the Congregation and with those most in need;
- plan wisely for the continuity of formation and apostolic ministries; and
- ensure that every resource ultimately serves the proclamation of the Gospel.

Communal self-sustainability, therefore, is neither financial self-sufficiency nor institutional self-preservation. It is the responsible stewardship of all that God has entrusted to the missionary community so that the Claretian charism may continue to flourish in faithful service to the Church and the world.

## **II. Understanding Communal Self-Sustainability**

Communal self-sustainability is the capacity of a missionary community to steward its human, spiritual, material, financial, and ecological resources responsibly so that it can carry out its evangelizing mission with continuity, freedom, and fidelity to its charism. It is not an end in itself but a means of ensuring that the community remains available for God's mission, both now and in the future.

For a Claretian community, sustainability is therefore measured not simply by financial stability but by its ability to live the Gospel authentically, sustain its missionary commitment, support the formation of future generations, and share its resources in solidarity with the wider Congregation and the Church.

## **1. Self-Sustainability Is More Than Financial Independence**

The expression *self-sustainability* can easily be misunderstood as merely becoming financially independent. While sound financial management is important, genuine sustainability embraces the whole life of the missionary community.

A sustainable community is one that:

- nurtures the spiritual vitality of its members;
- promotes healthy fraternity and shared responsibility;
- forms missionaries capable of serving future generations;
- administers temporal goods wisely and transparently;
- cares for its physical resources and environment;
- develops apostolic initiatives that respond to changing pastoral realities; and
- remains faithful to its missionary identity despite changing social and economic circumstances.

Financial resources support these objectives, but they never define them. Mission remains the primary criterion for every economic decision.

## **2. The Four Dimensions of Communal Self-Sustainability**

Communal self-sustainability rests upon four interrelated dimensions.

### **a. Spiritual Sustainability**

Every missionary community draws its deepest strength from Christ. Prayer, the Eucharist, the Word of God, community discernment, and ongoing conversion continually renew the interior vitality from which all missionary activity flows. Without this spiritual foundation, even economically successful communities gradually lose their missionary identity.

Spiritual sustainability asks:

- Are we growing in communion with Christ?
- Does our prayer nourish our mission?
- Do our decisions emerge from discernment rather than anxiety?
- Is trust in God's providence shaping our planning?

### **b. Human and Community Sustainability**

Healthy relationships are indispensable for long-term missionary vitality. Communities flourish when members share responsibility, communicate openly, resolve conflicts constructively, and support one another in times of difficulty.

This dimension includes:

- fraternity;
- emotional maturity;
- collaborative leadership;
- shared responsibility;

- intercultural openness;
- mutual accountability.

Communities weakened by division, secrecy, or excessive individualism eventually struggle to sustain either their common life or their apostolic mission.

### **c. Apostolic Sustainability**

Missionary initiatives should not depend solely upon the enthusiasm or abilities of one individual. Sustainable apostolates are rooted in community discernment, realistic planning, collaboration with the local Church, and ongoing evaluation.

Apostolic sustainability encourages communities to ask:

- Does this ministry continue to respond to genuine pastoral needs?
- Can it be maintained responsibly?
- Does it strengthen our missionary identity?
- Are we preparing others to continue this mission?

The objective is not simply to preserve existing works but to ensure that apostolic activity remains fruitful, adaptable, and faithful to the Gospel.

### **d. Economic and Ecological Sustainability**

Responsible stewardship of material goods enables the community to fulfill its mission with freedom and credibility. This includes transparent financial administration, prudent budgeting, careful maintenance of community property, responsible investment, ethical use of resources, and accountability in financial decisions.

It also includes ecological responsibility. Care for creation is now recognized as an integral aspect of Christian stewardship. Missionary communities witness to the Gospel by reducing waste, conserving energy, maintaining buildings responsibly, using resources prudently, and promoting environmentally sustainable practices.

Economic stewardship and ecological stewardship are therefore complementary expressions of gratitude for God's gifts.

## **3. Sustainability as Shared Responsibility**

Communal self-sustainability is never the responsibility of the superior or the econom alone. Every member contributes through his attitudes, lifestyle, and daily choices.

Each missionary participates by:

- living evangelical simplicity;
- respecting common property;
- avoiding unnecessary expenditure;
- contributing his gifts and talents generously;
- participating responsibly in community planning;
- supporting transparent financial practices;
- caring for community facilities and resources;
- fostering a culture of gratitude rather than entitlement.

When responsibility is shared, stewardship becomes an expression of fraternity rather than administration alone.

## 4. Sustainability in Service of Mission

The ultimate purpose of communal self-sustainability is missionary availability. A community that manages its resources wisely is better able to respond to new evangelizing opportunities, support poorer communities, invest in formation, accompany those in need, and undertake prophetic initiatives without being unduly constrained by financial uncertainty.

This missionary perspective also protects the community from two opposite dangers.

The first is **dependency**, in which excessive reliance on external benefactors gradually limits initiative, weakens local responsibility, and may even compromise missionary freedom.

The second is **self-sufficiency**, where financial security becomes an end in itself, leading communities to prioritize preserving assets over serving the Gospel.

The Claretian community seeks neither dependency nor self-preservation. Rather, it cultivates responsible stewardship rooted in trust in God's providence, confident that prudent planning and evangelical faith belong together.

Communal self-sustainability, therefore, is best understood as the disciplined stewardship of God's gifts so that the missionary community remains spiritually vibrant, fraternally united, economically responsible, and permanently available for the evangelizing mission entrusted to it.

## III. Formation for Communal Self-Sustainability

Communal self-sustainability is not acquired through financial training alone. It is formed gradually through the cultivation of evangelical attitudes, responsible habits, and missionary values that shape how a Claretian understands, uses, and shares the gifts entrusted to him. Formation seeks to develop missionaries who combine trust in God's providence with prudent stewardship, simplicity of life with responsible planning, and personal detachment with commitment to the common good.

Like every dimension of missionary life, communal self-sustainability is learned progressively throughout the formative journey.

### 1. Pre-novitiate and Novitiate Formation: Learning Stewardship as a Way of Life

Formation in the initial years lay the foundations for responsible stewardship. During these years, formandi gradually discover that all goods—material, intellectual, spiritual, and personal—are gifts received for service rather than possessions to be claimed. Formation at this stage should help them:

- appreciate the value of common ownership;
- cultivate gratitude for what the community provides;
- distinguish needs from wants;
- develop habits of simplicity and moderation;
- respect community property and shared resources;
- understand basic principles of budgeting and accountability;
- recognize that responsible stewardship is part of evangelical poverty.

Equally important is forming attitudes rather than merely teaching financial procedures. The objective is to foster an interior freedom that resists consumerism, entitlement, wastefulness, and individualism.

Simple daily practices become powerful formative experiences:

- caring for community facilities;
- avoiding unnecessary expenditure;
- maintaining books, equipment, and common spaces;
- participating responsibly in household responsibilities;
- respecting community budgets;

- expressing gratitude rather than complaint.

These ordinary practices prepare future missionaries for greater responsibilities.

## **2. Temporary Profession: Growing in Shared Responsibility**

During the years of temporary profession, the missionary begins to understand sustainability from the perspective of community life and apostolic mission. Formation should enable him to:

- participate actively in community planning;
- appreciate transparency in financial administration;
- understand how apostolic works are sustained;
- collaborate in community decision-making;
- practice accountability in the use of resources;
- recognize the relationship between responsible stewardship and missionary credibility.

At this stage, stewardship becomes increasingly communal. Rather than seeing finances as the responsibility of the superior or econome alone, young missionaries learn that every member contributes to the sustainability of the community through responsible choices and generous collaboration.

Formation should also introduce them to the economic realities of the Congregation, including solidarity among Major Organisms, support for formation houses, missionary projects, and care for elderly and sick confreres. In this way, they discover that stewardship is an expression of belonging to a worldwide missionary family.

## **3. Perpetually Professed Missionaries: Stewardship in Mission**

Following perpetual profession, responsibility expands from personal discipline to missionary leadership. Missionaries are called to integrate stewardship into every aspect of apostolic life by:

- planning ministries responsibly;
- managing entrusted resources transparently;
- ensuring continuity of apostolic initiatives;
- collaborating with lay partners and local Churches;
- promoting financial accountability;
- balancing generosity with prudence.

Responsible stewardship also requires ongoing discernment. Every missionary initiative should periodically ask:

- Does this continue to serve the Gospel effectively?
- Are resources being used wisely?
- Can this ministry be sustained?
- Does it remain faithful to our missionary charism?

Such questions ensure that economic considerations support rather than replace missionary discernment.

## **4. Community Leaders: Animation Rather Than Administration Alone**

Superiors, economies, and those entrusted with leadership have a particular responsibility for cultivating a culture of communal self-sustainability. Their task extends beyond financial administration to the animation of evangelical stewardship. They are called to:

- promote transparency and accountability;
- facilitate communal participation in planning;

- ensure responsible budgeting;
- safeguard common goods;
- encourage long-term planning;
- foster solidarity within and beyond the local community;
- make financial decisions through communal discernment whenever appropriate.

Leadership in stewardship is therefore pastoral before it is administrative. It seeks to strengthen communion, protect missionary freedom, and ensure that resources remain at the service of evangelization.

## **5. Forming the Evangelical Attitudes That Sustain Communities**

Ultimately, communal self-sustainability depends less on economic systems than on the character of the missionaries who live them. A community rich in resources but poor in evangelical attitudes will eventually struggle, while a community of mature, responsible, and generous missionaries can remain remarkably fruitful even with limited means.

Formation should therefore cultivate attitudes such as:

- gratitude rather than entitlement;
- simplicity rather than consumerism;
- generosity rather than possessiveness;
- responsibility rather than dependency;
- transparency rather than secrecy;
- collaboration rather than individualism;
- foresight rather than improvisation;
- solidarity rather than self-interest;
- trust in God's providence united with prudent planning.

These attitudes transform stewardship from a financial obligation into an authentic expression of missionary discipleship.

As the *General Plan of Formation* reminds us, Claretian formation is a lifelong process of conforming ourselves to Christ through an integral and transformative journey that engages every dimension of missionary life. Responsible stewardship is therefore not an isolated competence but one expression of the mature missionary who has learned to place all his gifts at the service of God, the Church, and the Congregation.

## **IV. Mission Before Money: Principles for Discernment**

Every community must make financial decisions. Buildings require maintenance, ministries require funding, formation demands investment, and unexpected needs inevitably arise. The fundamental question, however, is not simply *Can we afford this?* but *does this serve our missionary vocation?* In the Claretian tradition, economic decisions are never purely financial; they are acts of communal discernment guided by the Gospel, the Constitutions, and the missionary charism.

Mission always governs economy. Financial resources are entrusted to the community not for their own preservation but for the proclamation of the Gospel. Consequently, every significant economic decision should be evaluated in the light of the community's apostolic mission.

### **1. Mission Is the Primary Criterion**

The purpose of every resource entrusted to the community is to support evangelization. Buildings, properties, investments, equipment, and financial reserves have value only insofar as they

contribute to the Church's mission. This principle protects the community from two opposite temptations:

- reducing missionary activity because financial security becomes the priority; and
- undertaking projects without responsible planning simply because they appear pastorally attractive.

Authentic stewardship seeks a prudent balance between apostolic generosity and responsible administration. Whenever important financial decisions are made, the community should first ask:

- How does this decision strengthen our missionary mission?
- Will it help us proclaim the Gospel more effectively?
- Does it preserve our apostolic freedom?
- Does it respond to genuine pastoral needs?

Only after these questions are honestly considered should financial feasibility become the next concern.

## **2. Evangelical Poverty Guides Financial Decisions**

Our vow of poverty gives a distinctive character to the way we administer material goods. Poverty is not merely the absence of possessions but a way of relating to them with freedom, simplicity, and generosity. Therefore, financial decisions should reflect:

- simplicity rather than prestige;
- necessity rather than luxury;
- service rather than comfort;
- common benefit rather than personal preference;
- long-term missionary value rather than immediate satisfaction.

Communities should periodically examine whether their patterns of expenditure truly reflect the evangelical lifestyle they profess.

## **3. Community Discernment Strengthens Stewardship**

Important financial decisions should never depend solely on one individual, however competent he may be. The Claretian tradition understands the community itself as a privileged place of discernment. Community dialogue helps to:

- evaluate different perspectives;
- avoid impulsive decisions;
- increase transparency;
- strengthen shared responsibility;
- foster trust among members.

Listening respectfully to one another often reveals dimensions of a situation that might otherwise remain unnoticed. Financial planning therefore becomes an exercise in synodality and fraternity rather than merely administrative management.

## **4. Stewardship Serves Future Generations**

Missionary communities are temporary custodians of resources that belong ultimately to God and are entrusted to the Congregation for the benefit of future generations.

Responsible stewardship therefore asks not only: *"What do we need today?"* but also: *"How will today's decisions affect the missionaries who come after us?"*

This perspective encourages:

- regular maintenance of community property;
- investment in the formation of young missionaries;
- responsible financial planning;
- preservation of resources necessary for future mission;
- avoidance of unnecessary debt;
- careful evaluation before undertaking major projects.

Such foresight expresses confidence that God's mission extends beyond our own lifetime.

## **5. Solidarity Is an Essential Expression of Sustainability**

Communal self-sustainability should never produce isolation or self-sufficiency. Every Claretian community belongs to a worldwide missionary family where stronger communities support weaker ones and all share responsibility for the Congregation's universal mission. Responsible stewardship therefore includes:

- contributing to Congregational solidarity;
- supporting formation houses;
- assisting communities with fewer resources;
- collaborating in common missionary projects;
- sharing personnel, expertise, and material resources whenever possible.

True sustainability enables greater generosity rather than greater self-protection.

## **A Missionary Discernment Framework**

Before making significant financial or administrative decisions, communities may find it helpful to reflect together on the following questions:

| <b>Question</b>                                                       | <b>Discernment Focus</b>               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Does this decision strengthen our missionary mission?                 | Mission before maintenance             |
| Is it consistent with evangelical poverty?                            | Simplicity before prestige             |
| Have we discerned this together as a community?                       | Communion before individual preference |
| Will it remain sustainable over time?                                 | Responsibility before improvisation    |
| Does it protect our missionary freedom?                               | Freedom before dependency              |
| Does it strengthen solidarity within the Congregation and the Church? | Communion before self-interest         |
| Does it respect creation and use resources responsibly?               | Stewardship before waste               |

This framework does not replace prudent financial analysis, but it ensures that economic decisions remain rooted in the Gospel and the Claretian charism.

Ultimately, a missionary community does not ask, "How can we preserve our resources?" but rather, "How can the resources entrusted to us best serve God's mission?" When mission remains the governing principle, stewardship becomes an act of faith, communal discernment, and apostolic charity, allowing the community to remain faithful to the vision of our Founder and to the missionary project entrusted to the Congregation.

## **V. Practical Formation Strategies**

Communal self-sustainability is cultivated through consistent habits rather than occasional financial decisions. Formation should therefore provide concrete experiences that help missionaries integrate evangelical poverty, responsible stewardship, communal discernment, and apostolic

accountability into their daily lives. These formative practices gradually shape a culture in which every member recognizes himself as a steward of God's gifts and a co-responsible participant in the mission of the community.

### **1. Cultivate a Spirituality of Stewardship**

Every practical effort toward sustainability must be rooted in a spirituality of gratitude and trust in God's providence. Missionaries should regularly reflect on the truth that all they possess, including their talents, time, health, relationships, and material resources, is received as a gift to be shared in service. Formation communities can nurture this spirituality by:

- reflecting on biblical texts concerning stewardship and providence;
- praying regularly for benefactors and collaborators;
- celebrating God's fidelity in the history of the Congregation;
- integrating thanksgiving into community prayer;
- encouraging personal examination on the use of time, talents, and resources.

When stewardship becomes a spiritual attitude, responsible administration naturally follows.

### **2. Form Missionaries in Responsible Simplicity**

Evangelical simplicity is learned through daily choices rather than extraordinary sacrifices. Formation should help missionaries distinguish authentic needs from unnecessary desires and develop habits of moderation in every aspect of life.

Practical exercises may include:

- evaluating personal consumption habits;
- reducing avoidable waste of food, water, electricity, and other resources;
- caring responsibly for books, equipment, vehicles, and community facilities;
- repairing and maintaining items whenever possible before replacing them;
- practicing moderation in the use of technology and personal purchases.

These ordinary habits foster interior freedom and respect for common goods.

### **3. Introduce Basic Financial Literacy**

Although not every missionary will become an econome, every Claretian should understand the basic principles of responsible financial stewardship.

Formation programs may include workshops on:

- preparing and understanding simple budgets;
- reading financial reports;
- accountability and transparency;
- ethical management of resources;
- planning and evaluating expenditures;
- Congregational financial policies and procedures.

Such formation helps missionaries appreciate both the opportunities and the responsibilities involved in administering common goods.

### **4. Practice Community Budgeting**

One of the most effective formative experiences is involving community members in simulated or real budget planning.

Possible activities include:

- preparing an annual community budget;
- allocating limited resources among competing pastoral priorities;
- discussing unexpected financial challenges;
- evaluating whether expenditures reflect community values and missionary priorities;
- reviewing budget outcomes at the end of the year.

These exercises help members appreciate the relationship between financial decisions and apostolic priorities.

## **5. Conduct Community Stewardship Reviews**

At regular intervals, communities should review together how they use their resources.

Questions for reflection may include:

- Are our expenditures aligned with our missionary priorities?
- Where are we wasting resources?
- What unnecessary expenses could be reduced?
- Which ministries deserve greater investment?
- Are our facilities properly maintained?
- How can we become more environmentally responsible?

These reviews promote transparency, accountability, and continual improvement.

## **6. Foster Ecological Responsibility**

Care for creation is an integral dimension of responsible stewardship. Formation should encourage practical ecological habits that express gratitude for God's gifts and solidarity with future generations. Communities can promote:

- energy conservation;
- responsible water use;
- recycling and waste reduction;
- environmentally conscious purchasing;
- sustainable maintenance of community buildings and land;
- ecological awareness in apostolic ministries.

Such practices witness to the Gospel while reducing unnecessary expenses.

## **7. Encourage Solidarity Beyond the Local Community**

Formation should broaden the missionary's understanding of stewardship beyond the local house. Every Claretian belongs to a worldwide missionary family in which resources are shared according to need. Practical experiences may include:

- learning about Congregational solidarity funds;
- supporting poorer communities or missions;
- participating in fundraising for missionary projects;
- sharing educational and pastoral resources;
- praying for and corresponding with communities facing economic hardship.

These experiences cultivate a spirit of generosity rather than self-sufficiency.

## 8. Integrate Stewardship into Apostolic Planning

Every pastoral project should include responsible planning for the resources required to sustain it. Formation teams can invite missionaries to prepare simple pastoral plans that include:

- pastoral objectives;
- human resources required;
- estimated financial costs;
- available community resources;
- possible risks;
- methods of evaluation;
- long-term sustainability.

This exercise teaches that mission and stewardship belong together.

### Practical Formation Activities

| Activity                          | Formative Purpose                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Community Budget Workshop         | Learn responsible financial planning                 |
| Needs vs. Wants Exercise          | Develop evangelical simplicity                       |
| Stewardship Audit                 | Identify waste and improve accountability            |
| Property Maintenance Day          | Foster respect for common goods                      |
| Environmental Action Project      | Integrate ecological stewardship                     |
| Mission Project Planning          | Connect stewardship with evangelization              |
| Annual Community Financial Review | Practice transparency and communal discernment       |
| Solidarity Campaign               | Develop generosity and Congregational responsibility |

### Reflection for Personal and Community Integration

At the end of each formation stage or annual community evaluation, members may reflect together on questions such as:

- How have I contributed to the responsible use of our community's resources?
- Do my daily habits reflect evangelical simplicity?
- Have I respected and cared for common property?
- Do I see stewardship as part of my missionary vocation?
- Have our community's financial decisions reflected our apostolic priorities?
- In what concrete ways have we expressed solidarity with other communities and with those most in need?
- What one practical step can we take this year to become a more sustainable missionary community?

Formation becomes transformative when these practices move beyond administrative competence to shape missionaries who understand that every gift entrusted to them, whether spiritual, human, material, or financial, is ultimately meant to serve the proclamation of the Gospel. Responsible stewardship thus becomes an everyday expression of missionary discipleship, evangelical poverty, and shared responsibility within the Claretian community.

## VI. Case Studies for Community Discernment

Formation becomes most effective when principles are applied to real-life situations. The following case studies are intended to foster communal reflection, missionary discernment, and responsible decision-making. They are not designed to produce a single correct answer but to help missionaries integrate the Gospel, the Claretian charism, the Constitutions, and practical wisdom in addressing complex situations.

Each case may be discussed individually or in groups using the questions provided.

### **Case Study 1: Mission or Maintenance?**

A local community owns several large buildings constructed many years ago. Increasing maintenance costs consume a significant portion of the community's annual budget. Consequently, pastoral initiatives among migrants and young people have been reduced because of limited financial resources.

Some members insist that preserving the buildings is essential because they represent the Congregation's heritage. Others believe that some properties should be sold or repurposed so that resources can once again be directed toward evangelization.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- What should be the primary criterion for making this decision?
- How can the community balance respect for its heritage with present missionary needs?
- What role should communal discernment play before major financial decisions are made?
- How can this situation be evaluated in the light of evangelical poverty and missionary freedom?

**Learning Point:** Buildings serve the mission; the mission does not exist to preserve buildings.

### **Case Study 2: Personal Gifts or Common Goods?**

A missionary receives generous personal gifts from benefactors who appreciate his pastoral ministry. Over time, he begins purchasing personal equipment and making independent financial decisions without informing the community because he considers the donations to be "his."

Some confreres begin questioning whether this practice is compatible with common ownership and evangelical poverty.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- How should personal gifts be understood within religious life?
- What responsibilities accompany the reception of donations?
- How can transparency strengthen fraternity?
- What dangers arise when financial matters become private rather than communal?

**Learning Point:** Evangelical poverty transforms personal generosity into communal responsibility.

### **Case Study 3: Dependency on External Funding**

A formation house depends almost entirely on donations received from foreign benefactors. When economic conditions change, funding decreases dramatically, forcing reductions in formation activities and community services.

Some members propose launching local income-generating initiatives, while others argue that missionaries should depend solely on providence.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- How should trust in divine providence be understood?
- Is developing sustainable local initiatives compatible with evangelical poverty?
- What are the risks of long-term dependency?
- How can responsible planning coexist with confidence in God's care?

**Learning Point:** Trust in God's providence inspires prudent stewardship; it does not replace it.

#### **Case Study 4: Choosing Between Good Projects**

A community receives a substantial financial donation. Several worthy proposals immediately emerge:

- renovating community facilities;
- supporting missionary formation;
- expanding youth ministry;
- assisting poorer Claretian communities;
- investing in an ecological project.

Unfortunately, the available funds are sufficient for only one or two of these initiatives.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- How should the community establish priorities?
- Which criteria best reflect the missionary charism?
- Should immediate needs always take precedence over long-term investments?
- How can communal discernment prevent individual preferences from dominating?

**Learning Point:** Missionary discernment often involves choosing among several good possibilities rather than between good and bad options.

#### **Case Study 5: The Cost of Simplicity**

The community plans to replace several functioning vehicles with newer and more comfortable models. Some members argue that better vehicles improve efficiency and safety. Others believe that the replacement is unnecessary and inconsistent with evangelical simplicity.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- How can the community distinguish genuine needs from convenience?
- What does evangelical simplicity require in this situation?
- How should long-term maintenance costs influence the decision?
- What witness does the community offer through its lifestyle?

**Learning Point:** Responsible stewardship balances functionality, simplicity, and missionary credibility.

#### **Case Study 6: Sustainability and the Future**

A long-established apostolic work has served the local Church faithfully for decades but now reaches very few people. Maintaining the institution requires significant personnel and financial resources.

Some members recommend closing the work and opening a new missionary presence in an area of greater pastoral need. Others feel emotionally attached to the institution and resist change.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

- How should missionary effectiveness be evaluated?
- When is it appropriate to conclude a long-standing ministry?
- How can attachment to institutions affect discernment?
- What would Saint Anthony Mary Claret likely ask in this situation?

**Learning Point:** Creative fidelity sometimes requires letting go of successful works of the past in order to respond to the missionary calls of the present.

## **Guidelines for Community Discernment**

Before arriving at a decision, communities are encouraged to reflect prayerfully on the following questions:

- Have we listened attentively to one another?
- Have we sought God's will through prayer and communal discernment?
- Does this decision strengthen our missionary identity?
- Does it reflect evangelical poverty and responsible stewardship?
- Does it serve both present and future generations?
- Does it promote communion within the Congregation?
- Does it preserve our missionary freedom?
- Does it contribute to the evangelizing mission of the Church?

Communal discernment does not merely seek the most economically efficient solution; it seeks the most faithful missionary response. Guided by the Holy Spirit, enlightened by the Gospel, and inspired by the charism of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, the community learns to recognize that every decision concerning material resources is ultimately a decision about the mission itself. In this way, stewardship becomes an exercise of faith, fraternity, and apostolic responsibility rather than simply financial management.

## **VII. Common Pitfalls and Distortions**

Communal self-sustainability requires continual vigilance because even good intentions can gradually be distorted by unhealthy attitudes and practices. Some communities may become financially secure while losing their missionary dynamism. Others may preserve admirable ideals but neglect responsible stewardship. Formation must therefore help missionaries recognize these distortions before they become entrenched patterns of community life.

The goal is not simply to avoid mistakes but to cultivate an evangelical style of stewardship that protects both the mission and the fraternity of the community.

### **1. Dependency Instead of Responsible Stewardship**

One of the most common distortions is excessive dependence on external benefactors. While the Congregation gratefully receives the generosity of many individuals and institutions, dependency can weaken missionary initiative and local responsibility.

Dependency may reveal itself when:

- communities expect others to solve every financial difficulty;
- little effort is made to develop local resources;
- ministries are planned solely on the assumption of external funding;
- financial support begins to determine pastoral priorities.

Such dependence may eventually compromise missionary freedom if benefactors consciously or unconsciously influence apostolic decisions.

Healthy solidarity differs from unhealthy dependency. The former strengthens communion; the latter weakens responsibility.

### **Questions for Reflection**

- Does our community actively cultivate responsible stewardship?
- Are we developing local capacities while remaining open to Congregational and ecclesial solidarity?
- Would our mission continue if external assistance decreased significantly?

## **2. Self-Sufficiency Instead of Trust**

The opposite danger is excessive self-reliance. Communities that become economically secure may gradually begin to place greater confidence in their resources than in God's providence. Financial security can subtly become a source of identity, prestige, or institutional preservation.

Warning signs include:

- excessive concern for accumulating reserves;
- reluctance to support poorer communities;
- fear of undertaking new missionary initiatives because of financial risks;
- prioritizing institutional security over evangelization.

Evangelical stewardship requires prudent planning without allowing financial considerations to become the ultimate criterion for missionary decisions.

## **3. Consumerism and Comfortable Living**

Consumer culture influences every society and inevitably affects religious communities.

Consumerism is not measured simply by expensive possessions but by an attitude that continually seeks greater comfort, convenience, and personal satisfaction.

It can appear through:

- unnecessary purchases;
- frequent replacement of functioning equipment;
- resistance to simple living;
- preference for comfort over missionary availability;
- comparison with higher standards of material living.

Such attitudes gradually weaken evangelical poverty and diminish the prophetic witness of consecrated life.

Formation should therefore cultivate gratitude, moderation, and joyful simplicity rather than deprivation for its own sake.

## **4. Lack of Transparency**

Financial secrecy damages trust more quickly than financial limitations.

When important decisions are made without adequate communication or accountability, misunderstandings and suspicions easily arise within the community.

Transparency requires:

- clear financial reporting;
- appropriate participation in major decisions;
- honest communication;
- accurate record keeping;
- accountability according to Congregational norms.

Transparency protects both the individuals entrusted with administration and the community they serve.

## **5. Individualism in the Use of Resources**

Communal life is weakened whenever personal interests gradually replace common responsibility. Examples include:

- treating community resources as personal property;
- making significant purchases without consultation;
- accepting substantial personal gifts without transparency;
- neglecting shared facilities while caring meticulously for personal belongings.

The vow of poverty invites every missionary to experience common ownership not merely as a legal requirement but as an expression of fraternity.

Responsible stewardship always strengthens communion.

## **6. Neglect of Maintenance**

Some communities postpone maintenance indefinitely in the name of poverty or because immediate pastoral needs seem more urgent. However, neglect often results in:

- greater future expenses;
- deterioration of community property;
- unsafe living conditions;
- inefficient use of resources.

Responsible stewardship includes preventive maintenance, careful planning, and regular evaluation of community facilities.

Caring for common goods is an expression of gratitude rather than attachment.

## **7. Confusing Activity with Sustainability**

A community may appear highly active while gradually exhausting its members and resources. Unsustainable ministry often manifests itself through:

- excessive dependence on one missionary;
- lack of succession planning;
- continual financial deficits;
- unrealistic expansion;
- insufficient evaluation of apostolic effectiveness.

Missionary enthusiasm must therefore be accompanied by realistic planning, collaborative leadership, and periodic discernment.

A sustainable apostolate is one that can continue serving God's people faithfully over time.

## **8. Losing the Missionary Perspective**

Perhaps the greatest distortion occurs when economic concerns become disconnected from evangelization. This happens when communities begin asking:

- "How do we preserve our institutions?"

instead of

- "How do these institutions serve the Gospel?"

The purpose of stewardship is never merely institutional survival. The purpose is missionary fruitfulness.

Whenever financial planning becomes detached from evangelization, the community risks preserving structures while gradually losing missionary vitality.

## **Characteristics of Healthy Stewardship**

Communities that are growing in communal self-sustainability typically demonstrate the following characteristics:

| <b>Distortion</b>          | <b>Healthy Alternative</b>                      |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Dependency                 | Responsible initiative with solidarity          |
| Self-sufficiency           | Trust in God's providence with prudent planning |
| Consumerism                | Evangelical simplicity                          |
| Secrecy                    | Transparency and accountability                 |
| Individualism              | Shared responsibility                           |
| Neglect                    | Responsible maintenance                         |
| Improvisation              | Long-term planning                              |
| Institutional preservation | Missionary discernment                          |

## **Reflection for Community Evaluation**

Communities may periodically examine themselves by asking:

- Which of these distortions most threatens our community?
- Are our financial practices strengthening or weakening fraternity?
- Have we become overly dependent or overly self-sufficient?
- Do our lifestyle and expenditures reflect evangelical poverty?
- Are our decisions guided primarily by mission or by institutional concerns?
- What concrete change would help us become more faithful stewards this year?

Recognizing these pitfalls is not an exercise in criticism but in ongoing conversion. Communities that honestly examine their attitudes toward material goods become increasingly free to live evangelical poverty with joy, administer resources with wisdom, and place every gift entrusted to them at the service of Christ's mission. In this way, communal self-sustainability becomes not merely an administrative objective but a visible expression of missionary discipleship, fraternal communion, and fidelity to the Claretian charism.

## **VIII. Signs of Mature Communal Self-Sustainability**

Communal self-sustainability is ultimately measured not by the number of resources a community possesses but by the quality of its missionary life. A community may have modest financial means yet display remarkable vitality because its members live with trust, responsibility, transparency, and generosity. Conversely, a financially secure community may gradually lose its missionary dynamism if stewardship is no longer guided by the Gospel.

The following indicators provide practical criteria for evaluating the maturity of a community's stewardship. They may serve as points for personal reflection, community review, or ongoing formation.

### **1. Mission Remains the Primary Priority**

A mature community consistently evaluates its resources in the light of its evangelizing mission. Such communities:

- allocate resources according to apostolic priorities;
- periodically evaluate whether ministries continue to serve present pastoral needs;
- avoid allowing financial concerns to dominate missionary discernment;
- remain available for new missionary opportunities.

### **Reflective Question**

- *Do our financial decisions consistently strengthen our evangelizing mission?*

## **2. Evangelical Simplicity Characterizes the Community**

Members demonstrate freedom from excessive attachment to material goods and embrace a simple, joyful lifestyle consistent with their consecration. This is evident when the community:

- distinguishes needs from unnecessary comforts;
- avoids waste and consumerism;
- values moderation in personal and communal expenditures;
- gives credible witness through its lifestyle.

Evangelical simplicity is not measured by deprivation but by freedom to place mission before personal comfort.

## **3. Shared Responsibility Is a Way of Life**

In a mature community, stewardship is everyone's responsibility rather than the exclusive task of the superior or econome. Members:

- participate constructively in community planning;
- respect common property;
- contribute their gifts generously;
- collaborate willingly in maintaining community resources;
- support decisions made through communal discernment.

Shared responsibility strengthens fraternity because everyone recognizes himself as a steward rather than merely a beneficiary.

## **4. Transparency Builds Mutual Trust**

Healthy communities cultivate an atmosphere of openness regarding the administration of common goods. Transparency is expressed through:

- clear financial reporting;
- honest communication;
- proper documentation;
- accountability according to Congregational norms;
- respectful dialogue regarding financial decisions.

Such transparency strengthens confidence among members and protects both persons and institutions.

## **5. Responsible Planning Supports Mission**

Communities committed to sustainability look beyond immediate needs and prepare responsibly for the future. They regularly:

- prepare realistic budgets;
- maintain community property;
- evaluate apostolic priorities;
- anticipate foreseeable challenges;
- invest in formation and future missionary initiatives.

Long-term planning reflects hope rather than anxiety because it trusts God's providence while exercising prudent stewardship.

## 6. Solidarity Extends Beyond the Local Community

A sustainable Claretian community never becomes isolated or self-contained. Instead, it willingly:

- contributes to Congregational solidarity;
- supports poorer communities;
- shares personnel and resources;
- collaborates with the local Church;
- responds generously to missionary emergencies.

Such generosity reflects the communion that characterizes the universal missionary family.

## 7. Care for Creation Is Integrated into Daily Life

Responsible stewardship naturally includes respect for God's creation. Communities demonstrate ecological responsibility by:

- reducing unnecessary waste;
- conserving energy and water;
- maintaining buildings responsibly;
- making environmentally responsible purchases;
- promoting ecological awareness in apostolic activities.

Care for creation is an expression of gratitude for God's gifts and responsibility toward future generations.

## 8. The Community Continues to Grow in Conversion

Communal self-sustainability is never a completed achievement. Mature communities continually evaluate themselves and remain open to conversion. They regularly ask:

- What attitudes need renewal?
- What practices no longer serve the mission?
- Where is the Holy Spirit inviting us to greater generosity?
- How can we become more faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us?

Such ongoing discernment keeps stewardship dynamic rather than routine.

## Community Self-Assessment Checklist

Communities may periodically review themselves using the following indicators.

| Indicator                                        | Emerging                 | Developing               | Well Established         |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mission guides financial decisions               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Members practice evangelical simplicity          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Responsibility for stewardship is shared         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Financial administration is transparent          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Budgets and planning are realistic               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Property is responsibly maintained               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The community supports Congregational solidarity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ecological responsibility is practiced           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ministries are periodically evaluated            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stewardship strengthens fraternity and mission   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Reflection for Community Integration

At the conclusion of the annual community project or community evaluation, members may reflect together:

- Which of these signs are most evident in our community?
- Which areas require greater attention?
- What concrete practices have strengthened our sustainability during the past year?
- Where have we experienced God's providence through responsible stewardship?
- What one practical commitment should we make as a community for the coming year?

A community that grows in these signs becomes increasingly capable of living the evangelical counsels with integrity, administering its resources with wisdom, and responding creatively to the changing needs of the Church. Such a community gives credible witness that stewardship is not merely the management of material goods but a concrete expression of faith, fraternity, and missionary love. In this way, communal self-sustainability becomes an enduring source of missionary vitality, enabling the Claretian charism to continue bearing fruit in every generation.

## IX. Formator's Assessment Rubric

Formation for communal self-sustainability reaches its goal when missionaries gradually internalize the values of evangelical stewardship and translate them into concrete patterns of life. Assessment should therefore move beyond evaluating financial competence to discerning the missionary attitudes that sustain healthy communities.

This rubric is intended to assist formators in accompanying the gradual growth of missionaries. It complements personal self-assessment and community evaluation by providing observable indicators of vocational maturity.

The purpose of this assessment is formative rather than evaluative. It seeks to identify strengths, encourage growth, and facilitate dialogue between the formator and the missionary.

### Assessment Scale

| Rating                | Description                                                                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 – Beginning</b>  | Demonstrates limited awareness; requires frequent guidance.                   |
| <b>2 – Developing</b> | Shows growing understanding but needs consistent support.                     |
| <b>3 – Competent</b>  | Demonstrates responsible practice in ordinary situations.                     |
| <b>4 – Mature</b>     | Consistently models responsible stewardship and positively influences others. |

### A. Evangelical Attitudes

| Indicator                                                | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Lives a simple lifestyle appropriate to religious life   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Distinguishes genuine needs from unnecessary wants       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Demonstrates gratitude for community resources           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoids consumerism and attachment to material goods      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shows trust in God's providence while acting responsibly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Formator's Observation:** Does the missionary's lifestyle reflect evangelical poverty with joy and freedom?

### B. Shared Responsibility

| Indicator                                        | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Respects community property and common resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participates responsibly in community tasks      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|                                                     |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Contributes positively to community planning        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Accepts communal decisions with maturity            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Promotes fraternity through responsible stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Formator's Observation:** Does the missionary think and act from the perspective of the community rather than individual preference?

### C. Responsibility in Stewardship

| Indicator                                    | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Uses community resources responsibly         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoids unnecessary expenditure and waste     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Demonstrates honesty and transparency        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cares for community facilities and equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Appreciates the value of long-term planning  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Formator's Observation:** Can this missionary be entrusted with increasing responsibility in community stewardship?

### D. Missionary Perspective

| Indicator                                                           | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Recognizes that resources exist for mission                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Places apostolic priorities above personal convenience              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Understands the relationship between stewardship and evangelization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Demonstrates solidarity with poorer communities                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Supports the Congregation's missionary mission with generosity      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Formator's Observation:** Does the missionary understand stewardship as an integral part of his apostolic vocation?

### E. Ecological Responsibility

| Indicator                                       | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Demonstrates care for the environment           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Uses natural resources responsibly              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Promotes sustainable community practices        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Integrates ecological awareness into daily life | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Formator's Observation:** Does the missionary recognize care for creation as part of Christian stewardship?

### Questions for Formation Dialogue

The following questions may guide the annual conversation between the formator and the missionary:

- How has your understanding of evangelical poverty matured during this year?
- What have you learned about communal responsibility?
- In what situations have you found stewardship most challenging?
- How do you personally contribute to the sustainability of your community?
- What attitudes still require greater conversion?
- How can you become a more responsible steward of the gifts entrusted to you?
- What concrete commitment will you undertake during the coming year?

## Overall Formative Evaluation

The assessment should conclude with a brief synthesis rather than merely numerical ratings. The formator may comment on:

### Strengths

- attitudes that demonstrate healthy stewardship;
- examples of generosity and responsibility;
- evidence of missionary maturity.

### Areas for Growth

- attitudes requiring further formation;
- practical habits needing improvement;
- opportunities for greater participation and responsibility.

**Formation Goals:** Together, the missionary and the formator should identify **two or three concrete objectives** to be reviewed during the following formation period. Examples include:

- practice greater simplicity in daily life;
- participate more actively in community planning;
- improve care for common property;
- deepen understanding of Congregational stewardship;
- develop greater ecological responsibility;
- strengthen transparency and accountability.

## Missionary Integration

The ultimate criterion for evaluating communal self-sustainability is not financial efficiency but missionary discipleship. A mature Claretian steward is recognized by his freedom from possessiveness, responsible care for common goods, transparent use of resources, generous solidarity, and unwavering commitment to place every gift at the service of the Gospel. When these qualities become visible in the lives of individual missionaries, the community itself becomes increasingly capable of living the evangelical counsels with credibility, sustaining its apostolic mission responsibly, and transmitting the Claretian charism faithfully to future generations. Such formation fulfils the vision of the Congregation: missionaries who are formed in the forge of the Heart of Mary to serve the Church with wisdom, simplicity, and apostolic zeal.

## X. Conclusion: Formed as Faithful Stewards for Mission

Communal self-sustainability is far more than an economic objective or an administrative concern. It is a formative journey through which missionaries learn to live the Gospel with freedom, simplicity, responsibility, and generosity. The resources entrusted to the community—material, human, spiritual, and ecological—are gifts received from God for the service of the Kingdom. Their responsible stewardship is therefore an essential expression of missionary discipleship.

For Claretian missionaries, self-sustainability is inseparable from the Congregation's missionary vocation. Following the example of St. Anthony Mary Claret, who placed all his talents, energy, and resources at the service of evangelization, missionaries are called to cultivate communities that are economically responsible, spiritually vibrant, fraternally supportive, and apostolically fruitful. Stewardship is not measured by accumulation but by the capacity to place every gift at the disposal of God's mission. This vision reflects the Congregation's understanding that missionary life integrates prayer, community, apostolate, and responsible administration into one coherent vocation.

Such communities become credible witnesses of the Gospel. Their simplicity challenges consumerism; their transparency builds trust; their solidarity reflects the communion of the Church;

and their care for creation manifests reverence for God's gifts. Financial responsibility, participatory leadership, prudent planning, and ecological commitment are not peripheral skills but concrete expressions of evangelical poverty and fraternal charity. The Constitutions likewise remind us that the missionary community shares one life and one mission, placing all gifts and ministries at the service of the common good and the evangelizing mission entrusted by the Church.

Formation for communal self-sustainability therefore extends throughout the missionary's entire life. Initial formation lays the foundations of responsible stewardship, while ongoing formation continually renews attitudes of gratitude, accountability, discernment, and missionary creativity. As the General Plan of Formation emphasizes, authentic formation is a lifelong process of progressive conformity to Christ the Missionary, integrating every dimension of life into a mature apostolic vocation.

Ultimately, the success of this formation is not determined by the size of a community's resources but by the quality of its witness. A self-sustaining Claretian community is one in which every member freely shares his gifts, lives simply, administers resources wisely, collaborates fraternally, and places the mission above personal interests. Such communities become living signs of the Kingdom and effective instruments for proclaiming the Gospel in today's world.

May every Missionary Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary continue to be formed in the forge of Mary's Heart as a faithful steward of God's gifts, one who lives with evangelical simplicity, serves with joyful generosity, builds communities of communion, and places every resource, every talent, and every moment of life at the service of the greater glory of God and the salvation of all.

## Further Reading

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