

CRITICAL AND CONTEMPLATIVE READING OF CLARETIAN SOURCES

I. Purpose of the Module

This module aims to form missionaries who engage the Claretian patrimony not as archived memory, but as living fire. The writings, experiences, struggles, and insights of the Founder and the Congregation are not museum pieces to be preserved at a distance. They are a spiritual inheritance meant to shape perception, purify motivation, and guide apostolic discernment.

Claretian sources are not merely historical documents. They are formative instruments. When read rightly, they awaken identity, correct distortions, deepen communion, and reorient mission. The purpose of this module, therefore, is to help the formandus encounter the charism as a living reality capable of forming conscience, imagination, and apostolic priorities.

The goal is not academic expertise alone. It is interior assimilation.

Academic competence is necessary. The missionary must understand historical context, theological foundations, and institutional development. But knowledge without assimilation produces distance. It creates specialists rather than sons of the charism. The deeper objective is that the missionary gradually internalizes the spirit of the Founder so that the charism becomes instinctive—informing how he prays, decides, suffers, collaborates, and leads.

The missionary must learn to read:

With the mind (critical intelligence): He must analyse context, distinguish what is essential from what is circumstantial, identify theological currents, and recognize developmental growth within the Congregation. Critical intelligence protects against naïve literalism, romanticization, and ideological manipulation of the Founder's words. It forms maturity and prevents superficial enthusiasm.

With the heart (contemplative receptivity): The text must not only be studied—it must be prayed. The missionary learns to allow Claretian sources to question him, console him, disturb him, and convert him. Contemplative receptivity transforms reading into encounter. The text becomes a mirror in which one sees both grace and resistance. Without this dimension, reading remains external.

With the Church (ecclesial communion): Claretian sources are always read within the living tradition of the Church. The missionary learns to situate the charism within ecclesial obedience, magisterial teaching, and communal discernment. This prevents isolationism and reinforces that the charism exists for the Church, not apart from it.

With the mission (apostolic orientation): Reading must ultimately lead to action. The missionary asks: What does this mean for our pastoral priorities today? How does this illuminate contemporary challenges—poverty, secularization, ecological crisis, digital culture, intercultural community life? The charism must interpret reality, not merely describe the past.

When these four dimensions are integrated, the missionary begins to read reality itself through Claretian lenses. The Founder's spirit gradually shapes his instincts. Zeal becomes purified. Discernment becomes grounded. Marian tenderness and apostolic courage become balanced. This module ensures that the missionary does not become generic—capable of serving anywhere but rooted nowhere. Instead, he becomes distinctively Claretian: ecclesial yet missionary, contemplative yet apostolic, obedient yet creative, zealous yet discerning.

Such formation produces not imitators of Claret, but living continuations of the charism in new historical circumstances.

The Journey of Reading Claretian Sources

This module proposes a gradual path of formation that moves beyond the acquisition of knowledge toward the interior assimilation of the Claretian charism. It begins by helping the missionary understand the historical, ecclesial, and charismatic context in which the principal Claretian sources emerged. Building on this foundation, the missionary gradually develops the ability to read these texts critically, faithfully, and in dialogue with the Church's living tradition. Through prayerful reading, personal reflection, and communal discernment, these sources become progressively interiorized, shaping one's mind, heart, and missionary outlook. The journey culminates in learning to interpret the realities of today's world through the lens of the Claretian charism so that reading naturally leads to discernment, apostolic creativity, and missionary action.

Reading Claretian sources is therefore far more than an academic exercise or the study of historical documents. It is a formative and missionary practice that nurtures an ever-deeper identification with Christ according to the gift of the Spirit entrusted to Saint Anthony Mary Claret and the Congregation. As missionaries enter more deeply into the Founder's spiritual experience and the Congregation's living tradition, they gradually learn to think with the Church, discern in the light of the Gospel, pray from the heart of the charism, and respond creatively to the pastoral challenges of their own time. In this way, critical and contemplative reading becomes an essential means of ongoing configuration to Christ the Missionary and of faithful participation in the Congregation's evangelizing mission.

Formation Scenario: A young missionary has completed several books on the Founder, the Constitutions, and the General Plan of Formation. He can quote them accurately during community meetings. However, his confreres notice that he is impatient, reluctant to participate in community life, and rarely relates his reading to prayer or pastoral ministry.

Reflection

- What is missing in his approach to Claretian sources?
- How can study become a path of missionary conversion?
- Which practices proposed in this module would help him integrate knowledge with life?
- How might the formation community accompany him?

Missionary Integration

Reflect personally and, where appropriate, share in community:

- Which dimension of reading do I naturally emphasize: critical study, prayerful listening, ecclesial communion, or missionary application?
- Which dimension requires greater growth?
- How can I ensure that my reading leads to conversion rather than merely greater knowledge?
- What concrete change in my missionary life is God inviting me to make through this module?

II. Core Textual Sources

1. Saint Anthony Mary Claret
2. The *Autobiography*
3. The Autobiographical writings
4. The *Constitutions* of the Congregation
5. The *Directory*
6. The Congregational history and missionary narratives
7. Key magisterial texts shaping Claretian identity
8. The General Chapter Documents

III. What “Critical and Contemplative” Means

To read Claretian sources in a formative way requires holding together two movements that are often separated: critical intelligence and contemplative receptivity. If one is emphasized without the other, distortion quickly appears. If both are integrated, the charism becomes both understood and assimilated. The missionary is then formed not only in information, but in interior configuration.

A. Critical Reading

Critical reading is not scepticism, nor is it a cold dismantling of spiritual texts. It is disciplined, contextual, intelligent engagement. It assumes reverence for the Founder and the Congregation, but it also assumes intellectual responsibility. Love for the charism does not exempt one from careful interpretation; rather, it demands it.

To read critically means first to understand historical context. The writings of the Founder emerged within 19th-century Spain, marked by political instability, anticlericalism, missionary expansion, and specific theological currents. Without contextual awareness, one risks absolutizing what was circumstantial or misreading urgency as universality. Historical intelligence allows the missionary to distinguish between what belongs to the permanent core of the charism and what belonged to a particular historical moment.

Critical reading also requires distinguishing essential elements of the charism from historical contingencies. Apostolic zeal, missionary availability, Marian configuration, and fidelity to the Word are constitutive dimensions. Certain pastoral strategies, devotional expressions, or cultural patterns may not be. This discernment prevents both rigidity and dilution. It allows the charism to remain alive rather than frozen.

Furthermore, critical reading identifies theological foundations. What vision of God animates the text? What understanding of mission, Church, grace, human freedom, suffering, or evangelization is present? Recognizing these foundations protects against superficial appropriation and invites deeper theological integration.

It also involves noticing anthropological assumptions. How does the Founder understand human weakness, affectivity, obedience, authority, sacrifice, or community life? Where do these assumptions align with contemporary psychological insights, and where might they require reinterpretation? Such reflection forms missionaries capable of intelligent fidelity rather than mechanical repetition.

Finally, critical reading detects developmental trajectories within the Congregation. The charism has matured across time through chapters, reforms, missionary expansions, and new contexts. Recognizing development prevents nostalgia and supports ongoing renewal.

When practiced well, critical reading protects maturity. It guards against romanticism that idealizes the past, fundamentalism that absolutizes every phrase, selective quoting that serves personal agendas, and ideological appropriation that distorts the Founder for contemporary factions. It forms missionaries who are thoughtful, balanced, and capable of responsible discernment.

B. Contemplative Reading

If critical reading protects maturity, contemplative reading protects depth. Contemplative reading is not emotionalism, nor is it sentimental attachment to inspiring phrases. It is prayerful assimilation. It approaches the text not only as an object of study but as a space of encounter with the Spirit who animated the Founder and continues to animate the Congregation.

Contemplative reading often takes a *lectio*-style approach. A passage is read slowly. Words are allowed to resonate. Silence follows. The missionary does not rush to analysis but lingers in interior listening. The text becomes prayer.

Silence after reading is essential. Without silence, the mind remains busy and defensive. In silence, the Word descends from cognition into affectivity and conscience. The missionary begins to

notice where he feels resistance, attraction, consolation, or discomfort. These interior movements are themselves part of formation.

Contemplative reading also invites personal application. The question is no longer only “What did this mean?” but “What does this mean for me?” The missionary asks: Where am I called to greater zeal? Where do I avoid sacrifice? Where is my Marian tenderness shallow? Where is my obedience selective? In this way, the text becomes a mirror.

A central contemplative question emerges: What is the Spirit saying now? Not only to the Congregation, but to me in this moment of formation? The text is not locked in the past. It becomes a living voice.

Most importantly, contemplative reading allows the text to question the reader. Rather than mastering the text, the missionary permits himself to be judged and reshaped by it. This requires humility. It requires vulnerability. It requires the willingness to be converted.

When contemplative reading is neglected, academic detachment easily develops. The missionary may know Claret well but remain untouched interiorly. Alternatively, activist superficiality can appear—using inspiring phrases to justify action without deep prayer. Worst of all, the charism can be reduced to language without interiority.

Contemplative reading prevents these distortions. It deepens love. It purifies intention. It integrates zeal with silence. It allows the charism to descend from concept to conscience.

When critical intelligence and contemplative receptivity are united, the missionary becomes both discerning and prayerful. He neither idolizes nor instrumentalizes the Founder. He listens, studies, prays, and integrates. In this integration, the charism becomes not merely understood—but lived.

Community Reading and Shared Discernment

While the personal reading of Claretian sources is indispensable, the Claretian charism is never received or lived in isolation. From the beginning of the Congregation, the Founder envisioned missionaries who would grow together in communion of life and mission. Consequently, reading the sources of our spiritual and charismatic tradition should also become a communal experience. Community reading enables missionaries to enrich one another through diverse perspectives, avoid purely individual interpretations, and discern together how the Spirit continues to speak through the Founder, the Constitutions, the General Chapters, and other Claretian documents. In this way, the community becomes not merely a place where texts are discussed but a living school of missionary discernment and charismatic renewal.

Regular community reflection also helps missionaries appreciate that the Claretian charism belongs to the whole Congregation. Each member receives it personally, yet understands it more deeply through listening to the experiences, insights, and missionary challenges of his confreres. Such shared reading fosters unity of spirit, strengthens apostolic communion, and encourages creative fidelity in responding to new pastoral realities.

Community Reading Circle

Formation communities are encouraged to dedicate a regular period—weekly or biweekly—to the communal reading of Claretian sources. Responsibility for leading the session may rotate among the members so that all gradually acquire confidence in reading, interpreting, and sharing the charism.

A suggested format is:

Preparation: All participants read the assigned text beforehand, noting significant ideas, questions, and missionary implications.

Opening Prayer (5 minutes): Invoke the Holy Spirit and entrust the meeting to the Heart of Mary, asking for the grace to hear God's voice through the Claretian tradition.

Presentation of the Text (10–15 minutes): One member introduces the selected passage, highlighting its principal themes and key insights.

Historical and Ecclesial Context (10 minutes): A second member explains the historical circumstances, ecclesial background, and purpose of the text, helping the community appreciate its original context.

Missionary Reflection (20–30 minutes): Together the community reflects on questions such as:

- What does this text reveal about the missionary spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret?
- Which elements remain permanently relevant for our vocation?
- What new missionary challenges call for a creative application of this insight today?
- How does this text challenge our own community life and apostolic commitments?

Shared Discernment (15 minutes): Members identify one concrete invitation that the Holy Spirit may be addressing to the community through the text.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes): The session concludes with spontaneous intercessions, a Marian prayer, or a brief period of silent prayer, asking for the grace to embody what has been discerned.

Variations

To maintain freshness and encourage active participation, different formats may occasionally be used:

- a panel discussion on a General Chapter document;
- a guided *Lectio Divina* using passages from the *Autobiography*;
- paired conversations followed by plenary sharing;
- comparing a Claretian text with a biblical passage or a recent ecclesial document;
- reflecting on a current missionary situation in the light of the Constitutions or the General Plan of Formation.

Formation Outcomes

Regular community reading helps missionaries to:

- deepen their understanding of the Claretian charism through mutual enrichment;
- cultivate attentive listening and communal discernment;
- relate the Congregation's spiritual heritage to contemporary missionary realities;
- strengthen fraternity through shared reflection and prayer;
- develop confidence in interpreting Claretian sources responsibly and creatively;
- foster a common missionary vision rooted in the Founder and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Community Practice: Throughout the duration of this module, each formation community should organize a regular Community Reading Circle. At the end of every session, the community identifies one practical resolution inspired by the text and reviews its implementation at the beginning of the next meeting. In this way, reading becomes a shared process of discernment, conversion, and missionary renewal rather than merely an academic exercise.

Formation Scenario: Reading Claret Today

A missionary discovers a passage in the *Autobiography* describing one of Claret's missionary methods. He immediately concludes that the same method should be applied exactly in today's context because "Claret did it."

Another missionary argues that such practices belong only to nineteenth-century Spain and have little relevance today.

Reflection

- Which missionary shows a more balanced approach?
- How can one distinguish between historical expressions and permanent charismatic values?
- What does "creative fidelity" mean in this situation?
- How can critical reading and contemplative reading complement one another?

IV. Formation Objectives

By the end of this module, the formandus should:

1. Read the Founder without mythologizing him.
2. Identify essential Claretian charism elements.
3. Integrate charism into personal vocational narrative.
4. Apply Claretian principles to contemporary mission.
5. Pray with Claretian texts fruitfully.
6. Engage in communal theological reflection rooted in the charism.

V. Formation Structure

Suggested 12-Week Process

This module is designed as a gradual movement from information to assimilation, and from assimilation to apostolic integration. The structure intentionally moves from historical grounding to theological clarity, from prayerful interiorization to missionary application. Each phase builds upon the previous one so that the charism is not merely understood but embodied.

Phase 1: Orientation (Weeks 1–2)

Entering the World of the Founder

The first phase situates the formandus historically and ecclesially. Before interpreting texts, one must understand the world from which they emerged. A historical introduction to **19th-century Spain** is essential: political instability, anticlerical movements, missionary expansion, popular religiosity, and the social challenges that shaped the pastoral urgency of the time. Without this background, the radical tone and apostolic dynamism of the Founder can easily be misread.

A focused overview of the **missionary life of Saint Anthony Mary Claret** follows. His itinerant preaching, episcopal service in Cuba, experiences of persecution, Marian devotion, and martyrial readiness are studied not as isolated events, but as expressions of a coherent missionary spirituality. Attention is given to his *interior motivations*: love for the Word, burning zeal, pastoral creativity, and total availability.

This phase also introduces basic *hermeneutical principles*—how to read responsibly. Formandi are trained to ask: What genre is this text? Who is the intended audience? What theological language is being used? What is descriptive, and what is prescriptive? These initial tools prevent literalism, sentimentalism, and ideological distortion from the beginning of the process.

By the end of Phase 1, the formandus should feel intellectually grounded and historically oriented. He begins to realize that he is entering a living tradition, not simply studying a spiritual hero.

Phase 2: Guided Critical Reading (Weeks 3–6)

Learning to Think with the Charism

During this phase, selected passages from the *Autobiography* are studied carefully. Particular attention is given to decisive moments: Claret's vocational awakening, his missionary hardships, his love for Scripture, his Eucharistic devotion, his Marian identity, and his readiness for martyrdom. Each session includes contextual analysis, theological reflection, and structured dialogue.

Thematic study unfolds around core dimensions of Claretian identity: zeal for evangelization, centrality of the Word, Eucharistic life, Marian-Cordi Marian spirituality, obedience to the Church, and sacrificial availability. Formandi are invited to identify theological foundations beneath the narrative—what vision of God drives this zeal? What understanding of mission shapes this radical availability? How does suffering become apostolic fruitfulness?

Group presentations are integral. Each group analyses a passage, identifies historical context, extracts core charism elements, and proposes contemporary applications. The goal is not only comprehension but discernment: What remains essential for today? What requires reinterpretation?

This phase trains intellectual maturity. The formandus learns to distinguish between enthusiasm and depth, between admiration and assimilation. He begins to think with the charism rather than merely about it.

Phase 3: Contemplative Assimilation (Weeks 7–10)

Allowing the Charism to Enter the Heart

Having engaged the texts critically, the process now deepens into contemplative assimilation. Each week, a selected Claretian passage becomes the focus of prayer. The formandus practices slow, attentive reading followed by silence. He learns to notice interior movements—consolation, resistance, attraction, discomfort.

Personal journaling becomes central. The formandus records not only insights but also affective responses: Where am I challenged? Where do I resist Claret's radicalism? Where do I feel drawn to deeper generosity? This journal becomes a spiritual mirror.

A silent half-day recollection is included during this phase. Using Claretian texts as prayer material, formandi enter extended silence to allow the charism to descend from intellect into conscience. Guided points may include zeal purified of activism, Marian tenderness purified of sentimentality, and martyrial availability purified of drama.

Special attention is given to Marian-Cordi Marian reflection exercises. Formandi explore how Claret's deep Marian identity shaped his apostolic courage and affective life. Reflection questions probe the integration of tenderness and boldness, interior devotion and missionary risk.

By the end of Phase 3, the formandus should experience the charism not as external heritage but as interior invitation. The text begins to question him.

Phase 4: Apostolic Integration (Weeks 11–12)

Living the Charism Today

The final phase moves from interior assimilation to concrete application. Real pastoral case studies are introduced: responding to secularization, managing parish conflict, discerning social justice engagement, handling burnout, navigating intercultural community tensions. Formandi analyse these situations through explicitly Claretian lenses. They are asked: What would apostolic zeal look like here? How would Marian tenderness shape the response? What would martyrial readiness mean in this context?

Each formandus then writes a personal “Claretian Identity Statement.” This document articulates how he understands the charism, how it intersects with his personality and history, and how he commits to embodying it in mission. It is not a theoretical essay but a vocational synthesis.

The module concludes with a group discernment session. Formandi share insights, challenges, and growth areas. The community reflects together: Where is the charism alive among us? Where does it need purification? How is the Spirit shaping our missionary identity today?

Overall Movement of the 12 Weeks

The progression is intentional:

- From context to comprehension
- From comprehension to prayer
- From prayer to identity
- From identity to mission

If faithfully followed, this structure ensures that reading Claretian sources becomes transformative. The missionary emerges not simply informed about the Founder, but increasingly configured to the charism—intellectually grounded, spiritually deepened, and apostolically oriented.

Missionary Integration

At the conclusion of each phase, write a brief journal entry answering:

- What have I discovered about the Claretian charism?
- What has challenged me most?
- What interior resistance have I noticed?
- Which missionary attitude is gradually becoming part of my life?

At the end of the twelve weeks, review these entries and identify the principal movements of grace throughout the journey.

VI. Practical Guidelines for Formandi

The assimilation of the charism does not happen automatically through occasional enthusiasm or sporadic reading. It requires discipline, intentionality, and interior honesty. The following practical guidelines are meant to structure the formandus’ engagement so that reading Claretian sources gradually shapes identity, discernment, and apostolic imagination.

1. Establish a Weekly Rhythm

Formation in the charism demands regularity. Identity is not formed through intensity alone, but through consistency. A suggested weekly structure includes:

- **2 hours of structured study:** This time is dedicated to careful reading, contextual analysis, theological reflection, and note-taking. It should be done attentively, without multitasking. The aim is clarity of understanding.
- **30 minutes of contemplative reading:** This is slower, prayerful engagement with a selected passage. It may follow a lectio-style pattern: read, pause, reflect, pray, and remain in silence. The objective is not information but interior resonance.
- **15 minutes of journaling:** Immediately after prayer, the formandus writes what emerged: insights, emotions, resistance, questions, and decisions. Writing consolidates interior movements and prevents them from evaporating.

This rhythm should be protected as seriously as apostolic commitments. Over time, consistency forms instinct. The charism begins to shape perception naturally. Without rhythm, reading remains fragmented and superficial.

2. Use the Four-Step Method

To avoid either sentimentalism or intellectual detachment, formandi are encouraged to use a disciplined interpretative process each time they engage a text.

Step 1 – Context: What was happening historically? Who was Claret addressing? What cultural, political, or ecclesial realities shaped this passage? Understanding context prevents absolutizing what was circumstantial and guards against anachronistic interpretation.

Step 2 – Charism: What is essential here? What permanent dimension of Claretian identity is expressed—zeal, love for the Word, Marian identity, missionary availability, martyrial readiness? This step distinguishes enduring spirit from historical expression.

Step 3 – Conversion: What challenges me personally? Where do I resist this text? Where do I feel drawn toward greater generosity or purification? This step shifts from analysis to conscience. The formandus allows the text to question his comfort, ambition, fears, or mediocrity.

Step 4 – Mission: How does this shape my apostolic action? What pastoral decision might change? How should this influence my priorities, style of leadership, or way of serving? This step ensures that reading does not end in introspection but flows outward into concrete mission.

Repeated use of this method gradually trains the mind and heart to think and discern in a Claretian way.

3. Keep a “Charism Journal”

The charism must be documented interiorly. A personal “Charism Journal” becomes a sacred space of vocational dialogue. In it, the formandus records:

- Key phrases that strike him deeply
- Personal resonances and consolations
- Points of resistance or discomfort
- Emerging theological or pastoral insights
- Questions to bring to spiritual direction or accompaniment

Over months, this journal reveals patterns. One may notice recurring themes—perhaps attraction to zeal but fear of sacrifice, or devotion to Mary but hesitation toward obedience. The journal becomes a mirror of vocational growth. It provides material for deeper accompaniment and prevents self-deception.

This practice also teaches reflective leadership. A missionary who learns to process his interior life responsibly becomes more capable of guiding others.

4. Avoid Common Distortions

Engagement with the charism requires vigilance. Certain distortions frequently appear in formation:

- **Quoting Claret to justify personal preferences:** Selecting phrases that confirm one’s temperament or agenda while ignoring challenging passages.

- **Using charism language without personal conversion:** Speaking fluently about zeal or sacrifice without allowing these realities to reshape lifestyle and priorities.
- **Reducing Claret to activism:** Emphasizing missionary dynamism while neglecting Eucharistic depth, Marian interiority, and ecclesial obedience.
- **Romanticizing suffering:** Glorifying hardship without psychological maturity or discernment, confusing drama with martyrial readiness.
- **Ignoring ecclesial obedience:** Interpreting prophetic courage as independence from authority rather than fidelity within communion.

Charism is integration, not slogan. It unites prayer and mission, tenderness and courage, obedience and creativity. Whenever one dimension dominates in isolation, imbalance emerges.

Concluding Orientation: Practical discipline safeguards interior transformation. The charism is not absorbed through admiration alone but through structured engagement, honest reflection, and persevering practice. If the formandus commits to rhythm, method, journaling, and vigilance against distortion, the Claretian spirit gradually moves from text to conscience, from conscience to mission, and from mission to lasting identity.

Formation Scenario: Reading and Mission

A missionary serving in digital evangelization wonders whether traditional Claretian writings can really help him respond to challenges such as artificial intelligence, social media, and online pastoral accompaniment.

Reflection

- Which permanent elements of the Claretian charism remain relevant?
- How might Claret have responded creatively to today's digital culture?
- Which Claretian sources would guide discernment in this context?
- What missionary attitudes remain unchanged despite changing methods?

Missionary Integration

Evaluate your weekly rhythm.

- Am I giving sufficient time to disciplined study?
- Does my reading become prayer?
- Does prayer influence my pastoral ministry?
- Which practical habit should I strengthen to make reading a regular part of my missionary life?

Develop one concrete resolution for the coming month.

VII. Self-Assessment Tool (Self-Scoring)

Charismatic formation requires periodic evaluation. Without honest self-assessment, one can easily confuse familiarity with assimilation, or enthusiasm with depth. This tool is designed to help the formandus evaluate not only knowledge, but integration.

Each statement should be rated from **1 to 5**:

- **1 = Rarely true**
- **2 = Occasionally true**
- **3 = Sometimes true**
- **4 = Often true**

- **5 = Consistently true and stable**

The evaluation should be done prayerfully and honestly, preferably in silence before the Lord, and later discussed with the formator if appropriate.

Self-Assessment Table

Statement	Score (1–5)
I understand Claret within his historical and ecclesial context.	
I can distinguish essential elements of the charism from historical expressions that may change.	
I pray regularly and fruitfully with Claretian texts.	
I consciously connect the charism to my present apostolic responsibilities.	
I feel interior identification with the Founder, not merely admiration.	
I apply Claretian discernment when making pastoral or community decisions.	
I can articulate Claretian identity clearly, coherently, and confidently.	

Missionary Discernment

- Which Claretian text has most challenged my present lifestyle?
- Which aspect of the charism still remains largely external to me?

Deepening the Criteria

To assist discernment, the formandus may reflect briefly on each statement:

- **Understanding historical context:** Can I situate Claret within 19th-century Spain and missionary realities? Do I avoid romanticizing him or abstracting him from history?
- **Distinguishing core from form:** Can I explain what is permanent in the charism (zeal, Word, Marian identity, availability) and what may be culturally conditioned?
- **Prayer with Claretian texts:** Does reading the Founder regularly nourish my spiritual life? Do I experience conversion or only intellectual interest?
- **Connection to mission:** Do I consciously interpret my pastoral work through Claretian lenses, or do I function generically?
- **Interior identification:** Do I experience a growing sense that this charism is “mine”? Does it shape my desires and imagination?
- **Application in discernment:** When making decisions, do I ask: What is the Claretian way here? Or do I rely only on efficiency or personal preference?
- **Articulation of identity:** If someone asked me, “What makes a missionary distinctively Claretian?”, could I respond clearly and convincingly?

Interpretation of Scores

28–35: Deep Assimilation: The charism is becoming interiorly integrated. The missionary is not merely informed but configured. Claretian identity shapes discernment, prayer, and mission. Continued growth should focus on deepening humility and preventing complacency.

18–27: Developing Integration: There is genuine engagement, but integration remains partial. Perhaps intellectual understanding is stronger than contemplative assimilation, or enthusiasm exceeds structured discernment. This stage calls for greater consistency, deeper prayer, and more intentional application.

Below 18: Intellectual Familiarity without Interior Rooting: Knowledge may be present, but identity remains external. The charism has not yet entered conscience and decision-making processes. This stage requires renewed discipline, more contemplative practice, and honest accompaniment to identify underlying resistances.

Accompaniment Note

This tool is not for comparison with others. It is not a grading system. It is a mirror for vocational clarity.

Self-scoring should lead to three reflective questions:

1. Where is grace already active in me?
2. Where is integration weak or inconsistent?
3. What concrete step will I take in the next month to deepen assimilation?

Used regularly—perhaps every six months—this tool helps ensure that charismatic formation moves beyond language into lived configuration.

VIII. Accompaniment Guidelines for Formators

Charismatic formation cannot be reduced to teaching content. It is a process of configuration. The role of the formator is not merely to transmit knowledge about the Founder, but to accompany the gradual interior assimilation of the charism. This requires discernment, patience, personal witness, and psychological sensitivity.

1. Model the Process

Formators must first embody what they are asking formandi to practice. They should demonstrate how they themselves read Claret critically and prayerfully—how they contextualize texts, how they allow them to question their own life, and how they apply the charism to contemporary apostolic challenges.

Occasional community sharing can be powerful: a formator explaining how a particular passage of the *Autobiography* challenged his leadership style, purified his zeal, or deepened his Marian tenderness. Such witness communicates that the charism is living and dynamic, not merely historical.

Charism cannot be delegated. It cannot be reduced to academic instruction or assigned reading. If the formator speaks about Claret without visible interior resonance, the message will lack credibility. The charism is transmitted as much through atmosphere and example as through structured sessions.

2. Distinguish Immaturity from Resistance

Formandi respond to Claretian sources differently. The formator must discern carefully what lies beneath these reactions.

Some formandi **romanticize** the Founder. They are emotionally enthusiastic, idealizing Claret without engaging critically. This often reflects affective immaturity or a need for heroic identification.

Others **intellectualize**. They analyse expertly but remain untouched interiorly. This may indicate fear of vulnerability, discomfort with affectivity, or overreliance on rational control.

Others display **indifference**. They fulfil requirements but show little interest. Indifference may mask deeper struggles: identity confusion, cultural distance from the Founder's context, unresolved authority wounds, or lack of vocational clarity.

Accompaniment must look beneath the surface. Questions to discern include:

- Is this reaction rooted in fear of radical commitment?
- Is there confusion about personal identity within the Congregation?
- Are there unprocessed wounds related to authority, sacrifice, or obedience?
- Is there a subtle anti-authority tendency being projected onto the Founder?

Correct diagnosis prevents mislabelling immaturity as rebellion or misinterpreting healthy critical thinking as resistance.

3. Ask Probing Questions

Formation deepens when the formator asks questions that move beyond content into conscience. These questions should be posed in an atmosphere of trust, not interrogation.

Examples include:

- What aspect of Claret attracts you most, and why?
- What aspect unsettles or challenges you?
- Where do you feel resistance to his radical availability?
- How do you integrate zeal without falling into activism?
- How do you understand martyrial readiness today—in daily fidelity rather than dramatic suffering?
- What does Marian-Cordi Marian identity mean concretely in your affective life?

These questions invite self-knowledge. They also reveal whether the charism is being assimilated or merely admired.

4. Watch for Warning Signs

Certain patterns suggest weak rooting in the charism and require gentle but clear intervention.

● **Selective quoting** — using isolated phrases of Claret to justify personal preferences or ideological positions.

● **Ideological rigidity** — absolutizing certain aspects of the charism while rejecting others, especially ecclesial obedience.

● **Superficial enthusiasm without discipline** — intense emotional devotion but little consistency in study or prayer.

● **Emotional devotion without structural obedience** — strong Marian or affective language without commitment to communal norms.

● **Disinterest in Claretian history** — minimal curiosity about origins, development, or ecclesial context.

These are not reasons for condemnation, but signals for deeper accompaniment. They often indicate fragmentation between intellect, affectivity, and mission.

5. Encourage Narrative Integration

Ultimately, charismatic formation succeeds when the formandus integrates the charism into his personal narrative. The formator should regularly invite reflection at this deeper level.

Questions such as:

- How does my personal history meet Claret's missionary story?
- Where does my temperament align naturally with the charism?
- Where does it conflict or require purification?

- How is the charism reshaping my imagination about leadership, suffering, obedience, and mission?

These reflections help the formandus move from external admiration to interior appropriation.

The charism must enter identity. It must influence how the formandus interprets his past, discerns his present, and imagines his future. When this integration occurs, Claret is no longer merely a founder studied in formation; he becomes a living reference point shaping conscience and mission.

Formator's Assessment Rubric

The following rubric is intended to support ongoing formative dialogue rather than serve as a grading instrument. It enables the formator to observe how the missionary progressively integrates the study of Claretian sources into his prayer, community life, discernment, and missionary practice. The assessment should be based on regular accompaniment, participation in community activities, written reflections, and observable attitudes rather than on academic performance alone.

Formation Indicator	Emerging	Developing	Integrated
Demonstrates an accurate understanding of the historical, ecclesial, and charismatic context of the principal Claretian sources.	☐	☐	☐
Reads Claretian texts prayerfully and contemplatively rather than merely as academic material.	☐	☐	☐
Participates actively in community reading, dialogue, and shared discernment.	☐	☐	☐
Integrates the insights gained from Claretian sources into community relationships and daily missionary life.	☐	☐	☐
Applies Claretian principles when discerning pastoral situations and missionary priorities.	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrates increasing affective identification with the Founder, the Congregation, and its missionary charism.	☐	☐	☐
Shows openness to accompaniment, correction, and ongoing vocational growth.	☐	☐	☐
Exercises missionary creativity that remains rooted in the Congregation's spiritual and charismatic tradition.	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrates a growing ability to relate the Claretian heritage to contemporary ecclesial and missionary challenges.	☐	☐	☐
Evidences increasing integration of study, prayer, community life, and apostolic commitment.	☐	☐	☐

Questions for Formative Dialogue

The rubric should serve as the basis for periodic conversations between the formator and the formandus. The following questions may guide this dialogue:

- Which Claretian source has most influenced your personal and missionary growth during this period?
- How has your understanding of the Claretian charism become more concrete in your daily life?
- In what ways has your reading shaped your prayer, community relationships, or pastoral ministry?
- Which aspects of the charism still require deeper interior assimilation?
- How can the formation community better support your growth in living and transmitting the Claretian spirit?

- What concrete commitment will you undertake before the next formative review?

Concluding Orientation for Formators

Accompaniment in charismatic formation requires patience. Identity unfolds gradually. The task of the formator is to safeguard balance: critical intelligence without cynicism, devotion without sentimentality, zeal without activism, obedience without rigidity.

When guided well, the formandus emerges not as a repeater of Claretian language, but as a living embodiment of the charism—thoughtful, prayerful, ecclesial, and apostolically courageous.

Missionary Integration

For formators:

Reflect regularly on the following questions:

- Am I forming readers or missionaries?
- Do my accompaniment conversations move beyond intellectual understanding toward vocational integration?
- How do I help formandi relate Claretian sources to their concrete pastoral experience?
- Which formandus requires encouragement, greater challenge, or more patient accompaniment?

IX. Signs of Healthy Integration

Healthy charismatic integration is not measured by how frequently one quotes the Founder, nor by how passionately one speaks about the Congregation. It is revealed in the quiet coherence between identity, prayer, discernment, and mission. When the charism has truly entered the interior life of the missionary, it becomes spontaneous, balanced, and steady.

A missionary rooted in Claretian sources **speaks of Claret naturally, not theatrically**. The Founder appears in his language without exaggeration or forced reference. He does not need to dramatize his identity or constantly invoke slogans. Claret is present in his perspective, tone, and discernment rather than in rhetorical display. There is serenity rather than intensity. Depth rather than performance.

He **discerns apostolic priorities through the charism**. Faced with multiple pastoral demands, he asks not only what is urgent, but what is truly missionary in a Claretian sense. He prioritizes evangelization of the Word, attends to the most neglected, and evaluates initiatives in light of zeal, communion, and ecclesial fidelity. The charism becomes a criterion of decision-making, not merely an inspiration.

He **balances zeal with obedience**. Apostolic passion does not lead him into impulsiveness or personal agendas. He understands that Claret's boldness was always lived within ecclesial communion. Therefore, his creativity remains accountable. His initiatives remain discerned. His prophetic edge remains rooted in fidelity to the Church and the Congregation. Zeal is purified of ego.

He **lives Cordi Marian tenderness with apostolic courage**. His affective life reflects Marian depth—gentleness, compassion, interiority—yet this tenderness does not weaken his missionary boldness. Instead, it softens it. He can confront injustice without harshness. He can correct without humiliation. He carries both firmness and warmth. The Heart of Mary shapes his emotional maturity and apostolic style.

He **accepts obscurity without losing fire**. Not every missionary moment is dramatic. Not every assignment is visible. A well-integrated missionary does not depend on recognition to sustain motivation. Whether preaching publicly or serving quietly, he remains interiorly available. His zeal is rooted in love, not applause. Obscurity does not extinguish mission; it purifies it.

He **reads new realities through the Founder's spirit**. Contemporary challenges—secularization, migration, ecological crisis, digital evangelization, intercultural tensions—are not

approached generically. He interprets them through Claretian lenses: missionary urgency, fidelity to the Word, Marian trust, readiness for sacrifice. The charism becomes interpretative framework. He does not replicate the 19th century, but he carries its spirit into the 21st.

Such a missionary does not imitate Claret externally. He does not attempt to reproduce historical gestures or devotional forms mechanically. Instead, he embodies the charism interiorly. The Founder's fire becomes his own. The Marian heart becomes his affective orientation. The missionary availability becomes instinctive. Discernment becomes structured by the charism.

When integration is healthy, there is coherence. Prayer fuels mission. Study shapes discernment. Obedience protects zeal. Tenderness tempers courage. The missionary becomes recognizably Claretian—not because he performs identity, but because identity has taken root within him.

Formation Scenario: Living the Charism

A missionary has faithfully completed the module. Six months later, his community notices that he has become:

- more attentive during community dialogue;
- more reflective before making pastoral decisions;
- more faithful to personal prayer;
- more open to intercultural collaboration.

He himself says that no single text changed him. Rather, the gradual practice of reading prayerfully and discussing the sources in community transformed the way he thinks and acts.

Reflection

- Which formative practices produced this change?
- Why is transformation gradual?
- How can ongoing formation continue this process?
- What concrete practices should become permanent in missionary life?

Missionary Integration

Prayerfully evaluate your own missionary life. To what extent do I:

- discern apostolic priorities through the charism?
- balance zeal with obedience?
- unite Marian tenderness with missionary courage?
- read present realities through Claret's spirit?
- live my Claretian identity naturally rather than merely speaking about it?

Identify one area that calls for deeper integration during the coming year.

X. Conclusion

The Claretian sources are far more than historical records or documents to be studied. They embody the living memory of the Spirit's action in the life of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, the Congregation, and the Church. Reading them attentively enables missionaries to encounter not only the wisdom of the past but also the enduring inspiration that continues to guide the Congregation's life and mission. Consequently, the study of these sources should always lead beyond intellectual understanding toward personal conversion, deeper communion with the Congregation, and renewed missionary commitment.

This module has proposed a way of reading that is at once critical, contemplative, communal, and missionary. Critical reading safeguards the historical integrity and theological richness of the

texts. Contemplative reading allows them to become a source of prayer, discernment, and interior transformation. Community reading situates the reception of the charism within the shared life of the missionary community, where mutual listening and discernment enrich individual insights. Missionary reading ultimately seeks to interpret the signs of the times through the light of the Gospel and the Claretian charism so that every reading experience bears fruit in evangelizing action.

The purpose of reading Claretian sources is therefore not simply to preserve a rich spiritual and charismatic heritage but to allow that heritage continually to form new missionaries for new times. Every generation is called not merely to repeat the words or external practices of the Founder but to embody the same apostolic spirit in response to the changing realities of the Church and the world. This is the path of creative fidelity: preserving the permanent values of the charism while discerning ever new ways of living and proclaiming them in today's missionary contexts.

The missionary who studies with intellectual honesty, prays with openness to the Holy Spirit, discerns in communion with his brothers, and serves with apostolic generosity gradually becomes a living continuation of the Founder. The fire that God entrusted to Saint Anthony Mary Claret does not remain confined to books, archives, or memories; it continues to burn in the lives of those who allow themselves to be formed in the forge of the Heart of Mary and sent forth in Christ's mission.

May the regular and prayerful reading of the Claretian sources deepen our love for Christ, strengthen our communion with the Congregation, sharpen our discernment of God's will, and renew our missionary zeal. In this way, each Missionary Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary becomes not merely a guardian of the Claretian heritage but a living witness to its enduring vitality, carrying the Founder's missionary spirit into the life of the Church and the service of God's people with courage, creativity, and hope.

Missionary Integration

Conclude the module by preparing a brief personal action plan. Complete the following statements:

- The Claretian source that has shaped me most is...
- The aspect of the charism I most desire to embody is...
- The missionary attitude I commit to cultivate is...
- One concrete pastoral initiative through which I will express this commitment is...

End with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit, through the Heart of Mary and the intercession of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, to continue forming you into a faithful missionary and servant of the Word.