

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 16th 2011**

## Congregation: '*Holy, Sacred, A Divine Work*'

On July 16<sup>th</sup> we are celebrating the 162<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation at Vich in Spain. St. Anthony Mary Claret writes in his Autobiography, "I talked with a number of priests whom the Lord had given the same spirit that motivated me. These were Fathers Stephen Sala, Joseph Xifre, Dominic Fabregas, Mauel Vilaro and Jaime Clotet.... Because July 16 is the Feast of the Holy Cross and of our Lady of Mount Carmel, I based my first sermon on those words of the twenty-third Psalm: 'Your rod and your staff give me courage' (v.4), alluding to the devotion and confidence we should place in the Holy Cross and the Blessed Virgin Mary and applying it also to the project we were beginning" (nn. 489 – 490). Thus they started the Congregation in the Seminary Chapel of Vich in total humility and poverty. They had no house of their own, or furniture or economic means. Their only wealth was their common spirit, fraternal life, and absolute trust in the divine providence. Father Claret with a prophetic spirit declared, "Today a great work begins."

St. Claret was sure that the Congregation was the work of Jesus and Mary, and so he said at many occasions. In the year 1865 Fr. Claret "turning to towards the image of the Heart of Mary, said: 'The Congregation is yours. You founded it. Don't you remember, Lady? Don't you remember?' ( *J. Clotet, Notas para anales, variedades, 1885, 179*). One of the deepest convictions of the first members of the Congregation was that it was the work of God and Mary. The Founder and the cofounders described the Congregation '*Holy, Sacred, a Divine Work.*'

24<sup>th</sup> General Chapter declares, "The Congregation, as our tradition says, is the 'Mother Congregation.' Towards her we bear feelings of gratitude, respect, loyalty, and dedication. It is moving to note that "mother" is the title most used by the Martyrs of Barbastro when speaking of the Congregation. In them, like in an icon, we find gathered all the basic elements which make up our identity: love for Jesus Christ, for the Heart of Mary and the Church, missionary zeal, devotion to the Word and to the Eucharist, a sense of community, a preference for the poor, etc" (No.39).

The Foundation Day of the Congregation is inviting us to marvel at the glorious ways God has been guiding the Congregation for the last 162

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