



Discernment Guide



**CLARETIAN
VOCATIONS**
USA - CANADA PROVINCE



“Love is like fire and those who truly love Jesus turn everything into love.”

- ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET



Fire in Our Hearts

Discovering a Vocation with the Claretians

Welcome to the Claretian Missionaries of the USA-Canada Province.

We are so happy you found us. In these pages, you'll discover who we are as a community and how we dedicate our lives to spreading God's love. You'll explore our Claretian spirituality and what it means to be a missionary. And you'll uncover the next steps on your journey.

Wherever your path takes you, we are here to accompany you. It brings us great joy to do so.



**Let's listen to what is stirring in your heart
—and go deeper together.**

Our Community

Seeing faith in action

You may be asking yourself: What makes Claretians different from other congregations? This is an excellent question. Let us show you who we are.

Our USA-Canada Province is part of a global Roman Catholic congregation of priests and brothers who tend to the religious and pastoral needs of vulnerable communities. Founded in 1849 in Spain, we now serve in 72 countries and on six continents.

We first came to the United States in 1902 and began ministering to Mexican immigrants in California, Texas, Arizona, and Illinois. In 1953, we established a presence in Quebec, Canada. Today, our province serves a diversity of people—Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and French-speaking communities—and promotes Catholic social teaching through advocacy for immigrants, refugees, Indigenous people, and others impacted by forced migration.



A fire with God's love, we seek to proclaim the gospel message of faith and love. We uplift the dignity of all God's people, especially those who feel overlooked or forgotten. We reach across borders to enkindle hope. Formally known as the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we cannot sit idle in the face of injustice and suffering. We are called to be the "arms of Mary" and spread God's love freely and tirelessly.

Working in partnership with the communities we serve, we care for people's spiritual and pastoral needs, and we respond to their daily struggles. In doing so, our ministries have evolved and expanded over time to address many needs, including subsidized housing for seniors, community health programs, migrant outreach and resettlement efforts, addiction recovery services, thriving youth centers, digital media that invites people to deepen their relationship with God—and so much more.

Today, our communities, parishes, and far-reaching ministries engage more than four million people. Join us as we strive for a more holy, compassionate, and just world.



For us, there is a unity of vocation and mission—and also a rich diversity and complementarity in how we live that out. As missionaries, we are filled with the same spirit: to be sent. And each of us lives out our mission in unique and vibrant ways. You will too.

When considering your vocation and how you might pursue your calling, our community honors and considers many factors: your personal gifts, your qualities for exercising a specific ministry, your ability to work in collaboration with others, your availability to embrace a new ministry, along with the needs of the congregation, the Church, and the world.

You can choose to be a Claretian brother, a deacon, or a priest. Here's what that looks like and how each role uniquely helps to evangelize and proclaim the Good News:

Brothers

Are consecrated laymen who publicly witness their baptismal call to discipleship. Brothers exercise a variety of non-ordained ministries and are uniquely aware of the cares and hopes of the secular world. For this reason, they fulfill an important role in evangelization by ensuring that the lay apostolate and pastoral ministry complement each other.

Deacons

Are ordained to serve the people of God and their community through the ministry of the Word, the liturgy, and charity.



Priests

Are ordained to be devoted to the service of the Word. The prophetic exercise of the ministry of the Word implies proclaiming the Kingdom in the concrete circumstances of our time, denouncing sin and injustice, and accepting the risks that this entails. This evangelizing and prophetic function is intimately related to pastoral and sacramental functions.



Our Founder

Discovering our roots

In a world where people long for purpose, our founder, St. Anthony Mary Claret, stands as a reminder that each of us has a calling, a fire in our hearts waiting to be ignited.

To him, prayer and faith were never passive. Faith is a force for change, a call to take bold steps to confront injustice and challenge the status quo. In 1849, he founded the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (known as Claretian Missionaries) to do just that.

More than 175 years later, we are still following in his footsteps and living out his call to action: “I can’t bear seeing misfortune or misery without doing something to help.”

Born in Spain in 1807, Claret knew social upheaval, poverty, and political tension. Yet, throughout his childhood and adolescence, his life was defined by a thirst to understand God and a desire to be of service. He became a priest but quickly grew restless with his zeal to evangelize. He envisioned a world transformed by the love and teachings of Christ, and he dedicated himself to spreading that message.

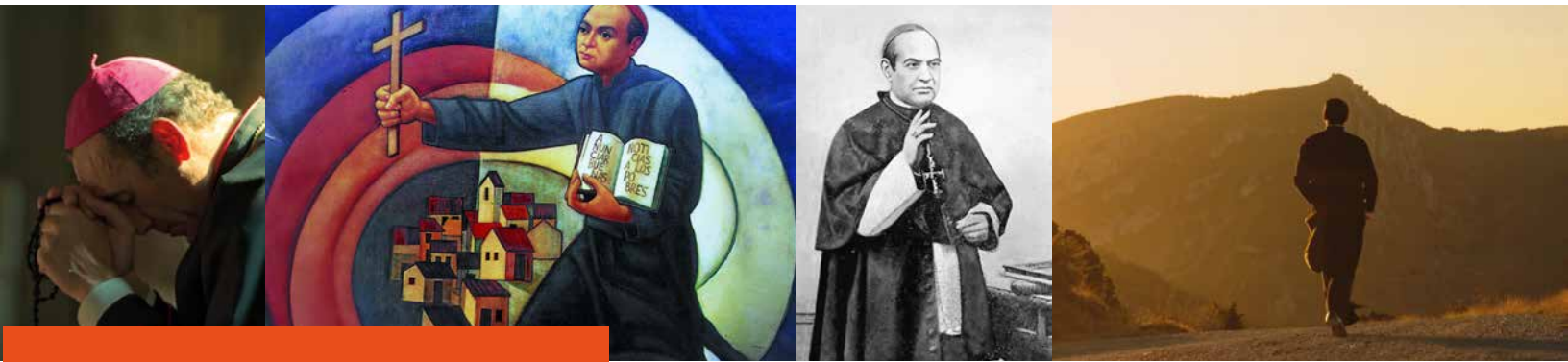


“A Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary strives by all means possible to set the whole world on fire with God’s love.”

- ST. ANTHONY MARY CLARET

In his early years, Claret traveled on foot across Spain, often facing ridicule, exhaustion, and physical danger as he preached. Later, as the Archbishop of Cuba, he fought for the rights of workers, of enslaved people to worship, and of interracial couples to wed. He converted a plantation into a school and orphanage, and he survived assassination attempts, risking his own safety for justice.

Known as the “modern apostle of the good press,” Claret was also a prolific writer. He published numerous books and pamphlets, sharing them freely wherever he went. “Since we cannot send missionaries everywhere,” Claret explained, “let us send good books, which can do as much good.”



In 1950, Pope Pius XII canonized Claret as a saint. Fueled by a deep love and devotion to the Blessed Mother, Claret’s energy and compassion were unmistakable. He worked tirelessly to ease people’s suffering and to help them realize their worth in God’s eyes.

Today, in addition to serving in 72 countries on six continents, our Claretian family includes Claretian Missionary Sisters and other communities founded by St. Claret. Our family is formed by the Institutes of Consecrated Life, the Societies of Apostolic Life, and the Associations of the Faithful, which live in the Church and share the same Claretian charism. Among them:

- Religious of Mary Immaculate Claretian Missionary Sisters**
- Instituto Secular Filiación Cordimariana**
- Movement of Lay Claretians**
- Missionaries of Mary Immaculate**
- Misioneras Cordimarianas**
- Missionaries of the Claretian Institution**
- Missionaries of San Antonio María Claret**

Learn more about the Claretian family here:
<http://www.familiacaretiana.org/en/claretian-family/>



Our Charism

Exploring our spirituality

The Claretian charism is a gift from the Spirit, conforming us to Jesus and uniting us in his apostolic mission. We are called to be servants of the Word, rooting ourselves in Scripture and proclaiming God's love—and then moving beyond words so our faith becomes action, and we build God's Kingdom here and around the world.

As missionaries, we share in the hopes and joys, the sorrows and trials of all God's people, especially those of the poor, the forgotten, and the overlooked. We readily offer to join efforts with all people—be they in our parishes, local communities, the laity—who are striving to transform the world according to God's plan.

To do that, we adhere to St. Claret's vision and example. We use all possible means and foster three central attitudes:

- A sense of alertness to whatever is most urgent, opportune, and effective, in the setting of the times, places, and people we serve.
- A sense of availability to the guidance of the Spirit, ready to leave behind comforts and spread the faith, both within and beyond our native lands.
- A sense of catholicity to collaborate with other agents of evangelization, respectful of the religious and cultural customs and values found in all parts of the world.

Before we dutifully proclaim the Word, we first listen to it in attentive meditation. We also share it with our brothers so that we ourselves may be converted to the gospel, become conformed to Christ, and set afire with his love, the force that impels us.

We wholeheartedly celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist, keeping close to Christ our Lord as he proclaims the words of life, offers himself for his brothers and sisters, honors his Father, and builds up the unity of the Church.



As loving sons, we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, who is associated with all her heart in the saving work of her Son. Mary is our teacher, our formator, and our protectress. We accompany her in love and trust, and we commit ourselves to her that we may be conformed to the mystery of Christ and may cooperate with her maternal role in our apostolic mission.

We cultivate the spirit of adoptive sonship whereby we call God Father. We search for signs of his will in what happens in our lives, thus growing more responsive to our mission.

As witnesses and messengers of the joy of the gospel, within an apostolic community, we strive to have a common vision that unites us in our missionary outreach. As Claretians, we are guided by our values:



Accompany

We listen and attend to all of God's people in their faith journeys.



Act

We do not sit idle in the face of injustice and suffering.



Advocate

We stand in solidarity with those in need, fighting for justice and change.



Dialogue

We value and explore a diversity of voices, cultures, and perspectives.



Embrace

We respond to the urgent needs of all God's people, excluding no one.



Evangelize

We preach and spread the love of God through faith and action.



Restore

We offer spiritual and pastoral care that renews and heals.



Share

We publish print and digital resources that explore and strengthen the faith.



Partner

We engage with communities to create self-sustaining solutions.



Listen

We honor and embrace all voices, especially those who feel unheard.



Our Call

Living as a missionary

Following in the footsteps of our founder, St. Claret, we strive to embody a faith that moves from ideals to impactful actions. You can see this most clearly in our Claretian ministries. From dynamic parishes to migrant outreach, chaplaincies to digital media, our ministries meet the needs of all God's people, especially those who live on the margins.

In partnership with our local communities, we strive to uncover sustainable solutions that combat injustice and transform lives. Here is a taste of some of our ministries:



Claretian parish ministries

Seek to always be welcoming parishes that honor and build inclusive intercultural communities. Through the sacraments, daily and weekly Masses, Bible formation, youth initiatives, and much more, our parish ministries continue to thrive. By nurturing a collaborative spirit, Claretian parishes help individuals and families deepen their faith and journey together in love. (claretians.org/our-parishes)



Claretian hospital chaplaincies

Are a sign of hope and compassion to those most in need of spiritual care. Skilled in the art of listening and being deeply attentive, Claretian chaplains offer pastoral guidance and support to those who are suffering from illness or journeying toward the end of life. Our chaplains also care for the elderly, homebound, imprisoned, unhoused, and those seeking refuge. No one is turned away. (claretians.org/ministries)



Claretian migrant and refugee ministries

Stretch from coast to coast and from Montreal, Quebec, to the U.S.-Mexico border. Our shelters and resettlement efforts respond to people's immediate needs, offering warm meals, clothing, and education. At the same time, our ministries and social outreach—including SOMOS: Together, We are Faith, Hope, Strength—tend to people's deeper spiritual longings for a sense of community, safety, hope, and restoration. (claretianimpact.org/forced-migration-humanitarian-aid)



Claretian youth initiatives

Include elementary and high schools, after-school programs, clubs, young adult groups, and campus ministries. Our Claretian-led schools provide access to a high-quality education that champions inquiry, inclusion, and innovation. Active listening and accompanying are integral to our youth ministries, where we offer avenues for service, discipleship, leadership development, and faith formation. (claretianimpact.org/education-youth)



Instituto Bíblico Claretiano de las Américas (IBICLA)

Empowers Spanish-speaking individuals, families, parishes, and communities to discover a deeper understanding of the holy scriptures. Through media, online courses, and formal studies, IBICLA examines and teaches the Word of God in a modern context. (ibicla.org)



The National Shrine of St. Jude

provides a peaceful place for renewal, belonging, and a deeper connection to God through devotion to St. Jude, the patron saint of hope and impossible causes. The Claretians established the Shrine in 1929 to be a source of hope. The Shrine is located within Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in South Chicago. Today, more than three million people participate in this vibrant community of prayer, both in person and online. (shrineofstjude.org)



U.S. Catholic

our award-winning magazine, puts faith in the context of everyday life, with a strong focus on social justice. A courageous and forward-thinking publication, U.S. Catholic explores the vibrancy and diversity of contemporary Catholicism. More than 1.2 million readers turn to U.S. Catholic to examine the joys and challenges of living the Catholic faith in today's world. (uscatholic.org)



In addition, over the years, three Claretian ministries have grown into separate nonprofit organizations with their own independent leadership and vision. Empowered to drive change, these nonprofits are creating lasting solutions for the communities they serve.



CLARETIAN ASSOCIATES
Building Community in South Chicago

Claretian Associates is a community development corporation that is nationally recognized as a leader in affordable housing, community services, and violence prevention.



CLARET CENTER
Resources for the Human Journey

Claret Center offers resources for the human journey, serving as a pioneer in its holistic approach to well-being, individual and organizational growth, and spiritual development.

CFHC
CHICAGO FAMILY HEALTH CENTER

Chicago Family Health Center is a federally qualified health center that provides community-based and culturally responsive healthcare in five locations across Chicago.



Our Commitment

Discerning with you

Discernment may not always be easy, but it can be a time of deep personal growth and freedom. We are here to accompany you, taking each small step together.

Even if you're unsure, that's often where the journey begins. Some men feel a strong call right away. Others begin with questions, curiosity, or even uncertainty.

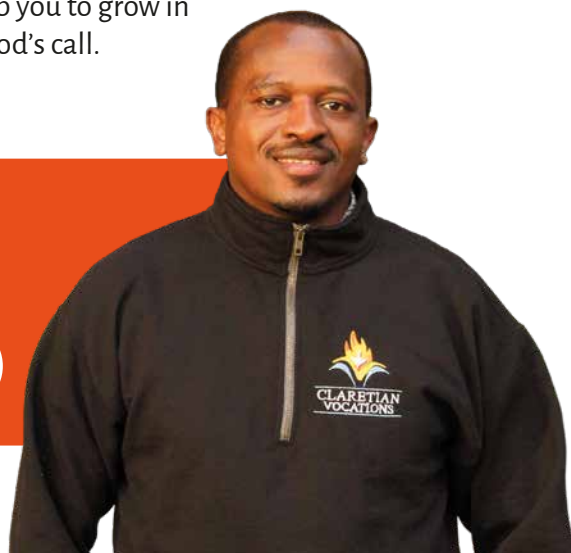
But the good news is that you do not have to figure everything out on your own. We are a community, and we are here to walk with you—listening, praying, and helping you discern your path and deepen your relationship with God. We call this accompaniment.

Think of accompaniment like walking with an older brother in faith: Someone who has already gone through the discernment process and who understands the questions, the doubts, and the excitement that can come with discovering your vocation.

Accompaniment is never about pressuring you or rushing you into a decision. Accompaniment is about helping you explore how God may be calling you to serve. We know discernment takes time, and it is different for everyone. Walking beside you, we can help you to grow in freedom, clarity, and love so you can respond fully to God's call.

How does it work?
The first step is simple:

beaclaretian.org/contact-us



Once you contact us, we can schedule a phone call or online conversation so we can get to know each other. From there, accompaniment may include:

- Regular conversations or phone calls
- Staying in touch through messages or email
- Guidance for prayer and spiritual reflection
- Book or resource recommendations
- Encouragement to get involved in your parish or ministries



Every year, we also offer Come and See retreats and mission opportunities that allow you to get to know us better and give you a window into our community and life as a missionary. We tailor them to your needs and ensure plenty of time for prayer, community, and discernment.

Take a look at the prayer suggestions below, as well as the excerpts from St. Mary Claret’s autobiography. Let them offer you nourishment on your path—and reach out to us too.

We’re here to walk beside you.

Religious Life

Acts 2:43–47: All were together.

Autobiography of Claret # 607 St. Anthony Mary Claret fulfilled his mission, as archbishop of Cuba, in community.

“I had something to learn from all of them because they gave me such a good example in all virtues, especially humility, obedience, fervor, and a constant readiness to work. They gladly set themselves to do whatever I asked, whether it was my commonest request—to go on missions—or something like taking charge of a parish or deanery.”

Reflection:

What have been your joys and difficulties of being part of a community?

Friendships

Luke 8:13: Accompanying him.

Autobiography of Claret #606 St. Anthony Mary Claret expressed gratitude for his companions in the mission.

“These were the helpers who accompanied me in my apostolic labors amid the thorns and thistles of my diocese. I owe God endless thanks for providing me such good companions.”

Reflection:

In what ways have you and your friends supported each other?

Service

Luke 10:25–37: And who is my neighbor?

Autobiography of Claret #213 St. Anthony Mary Claret constantly sought the well-being of others.

“Another force that drives me to preach and hear confessions is my desire to make my neighbor happy. If there is so much joy in healing the sick, freeing the prisoner, consoling the afflicted, and cheering the sad, then there is far greater joy in bringing one's neighbor to the glory of heaven.”

Reflection:

What insights have you gained from ministry?

Commitment

Mark 10:17–31: We have given up everything.

Autobiography of Claret # 467 St. Anthony Mary Claret wanted to risk it all for the sake of the gospel.

“I have always wanted to die a poor man in some hospital, or on the scaffold as a martyr, or to be put to death by the enemies of the holy religion we profess and preach, thus sealing the virtues and truths I have preached and taught with my blood.”

Reflection:

What have been the benefits and challenges of making a commitment?

Charism

Luke 9:1–6: Proclaiming the Good News.

Autobiography of Claret # 453 St. Anthony Mary Claret dedicated himself fully to the apostolic ministry of preaching the Word.

“O my God, I give you my word that I shall do this: I shall preach, write, and circulate good books and pamphlets in abundance, so as to drown evil in a flood of good.”

Reflection:

What impact has the Word of God had on your life?

Family

Acts 2:43–47: All were together.

Matthew 13:54–58: Is he not the carpenter's son? Autobiography of Claret #28 St. Anthony Mary Claret was shaped by his family.

“My parents and teacher not only instructed me in the truths I had to believe but also in the virtues I needed to practice.”

Reflection:

What is it like living in your family?



Discernment and Formation Stages

The formation journey will help you grow as a whole person—spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and in community. The formation process is built around you. Every formation process is unique.

Depending on your background, education, and life experience, the journey can take anywhere from five to eleven years. Along the way, you are accompanied personally, so your formation responds to your real life—and not a predetermined checklist. You'll receive support from a spiritual director, a formator, and our community.

The Claretian formation consists of three phases: Pre-Novitiate, Novitiate, and Post-Novitiate.

Pre-Novitiate:

Beginning at the Claret House in Chicago, this stage can take from one to four years, and includes two significant moments: Aspirancy is about listening, growing, and following Jesus more intentionally. Postulancy is about confirming your decision to join the Claretian community and preparing yourself spiritually, humanly, and academically.

Novitiate:

A one-year experience focused on prayer, silence, and deep discernment while you're working in service here or abroad.

Post-Novitiate:

The most formative stage, this typically lasts three to six years. Here, formation becomes more personal and mission-focused.

You will:

- Study theology and deepen your understanding of missionary identity
- Engage in regular ministry and pastoral work
- Continue growing in community life
- Discern your path as a brother, deacon, or priest

You will also:

- Renew your vows each year.
- Participate in missionary and cross-cultural experiences.
- Serve in real ministry settings.
- Fulfill your academic formation, which includes theology, scripture, Church history, spirituality, moral theology, and pastoral training.



To learn more, visit:

beaclaretian.org/formation



Rooted in Christ.
Audacious in Mission
Established in 1849



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