

Novena



In preparation for the feast of Claude-François

Poullart des Places

23rd September – 1st October 2019

**Compiled by the Scholasticate
Poullart des Places of Ngoya (UCSAC)**

Introduction

To follow Jesus Christ, the missionary *par excellence*, meditation on the life of Fr. Claude-Francois Poullart des Places, is the path we will follow in the following nine days, which express for us the total and universal gift of God. God is the author of mission and he transmits it to his son for the salvation of humanity, which in turn is handed on to us, so that we can carry to the ends of the earth the work of salvation realized in him. Mission comes to us therefore as a gift of God, which he confides to us through his son Jesus, without whom no mission is possible. For this, we need more than ever to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ gives us to serve rather than to be served by our brothers wherever we may be, in our various communities and respective missions, in imitation of Claude-Francois Poullart des Places. In these days, the authentic Spiritan is one who wants to proclaim the Gospel not only by words but also by actions, so that it can be seen that he is really sent by Christ, who journeyed on the road always doing good. What has gone before us challenges us more than ever to look again at our Spiritan authenticity, causing us to ask:

What are the missionary demands of today plunging us into the Spiritan baptismal waters which make us followers of our founding fathers in this ever-changing world?

DAY 1: FIDELITY TO THE FOUNDER

Claude-François, having gathered together some needy students studying for the priesthood, made sure they got an intellectual education of high quality and passed on to them his fervent spirituality. They will be trained not only in a spirit of poverty but also in the experience of an extreme material poverty.

Thus, in conformity with Claude Poullart's tradition, Spiritans "*will be ready for everything: to serve in hospitals, to evangelise the poor and even pagans, to prefer amongst others the most humble and demanding positions for which it is difficult to find people*", Rule of 1734 (*Regulae ch.1*)

Word of God: Luke 10:30-37

"A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said 'Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have'. Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?' He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him'. Jesus said to him, 'Go, and do the same yourself'.

Meditation:

"I wanted to make a complete sacrifice to God for the missions, and was so happy that, after having encompassed the world with God's love, I could have given the last drop of my blood for the one whose goodness I was always aware of". (ND)

Reflection:

For me, who is my neighbor? What sacrifice have I ever made to God to help my brothers? Was my sacrifice complete?

Intercessions:

1. Lord our God, who call each one of us by name for a special mission, put into our hearts the spirit of fidelity so that each one of us, in accordance with our gifts, may continue the mission of Claude Poullart des Places.
2. You have put into our hearts the desire to announce your kingdom by means of the most demanding works. Give us your Spirit to inspire us at all times.
3. We wish to be founders in imitation of Claude Poullart des Places. Through his intercession enlighten us so as to read the signs of the times.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer: In your inexhaustible love, dear God, you willed that man should continue your work of creation; may your grace inspire all our actions and sustain them to the end, so that everything we do is begun by you and by you is happily ended. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

DAY 2: COMMUNITY, PLACE OF COMMUNION

Today, we are invited to see our communities as real places of communion in imitation of the Blessed Trinity, the perfect model of communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the light of this relationship *par excellence* in the Trinity, we also are called to transform our Spiritan communities into places where each member feels at home, gives himself heart and soul, and shares who he is and what he has in a fraternal spirit.

The Word of the Lord: Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles. And all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.

Meditation: Spiritan life is a call to the apostolic life in community: *“The better to carry out this service, our communal life entails sharing our possessions and our talents, mutual support and affection, and discerning in common God’s will for the community and its mission”.* (SRL 29.1)

“Just as artists use their skills, time and dedication in order to produce a worthy artistic object, so is the building up of our community life. Artists work tirelessly, spending several hours on the same thing. They do it again and again, without counting the cost. Their intention is to produce a product which is as perfect as possible. Artists strive for perfection”. (Rogath Kimaryo ‘Our Fraternal Life in Community – a Personal Reflection’ in Spiritan Life No.8, March 1999, p.59)

In these days, community life, local and international, is a great challenge each one of us needs to face up to in all humility. So there is a continuing need to devote our time like artists, together, to transform our communities into places of fraternal communion.

Reflection: What place do we give to community life in our Spiritan vocation? Are we ready to devote our time and talents to build up a spirit of communion? What efforts are we making, individually and collectively, to pull down the walls which separate us?

Intercessions:

1. Lord Jesus, help us pull down the walls in our communities which divide us. Help us to build bridges to link us together. Hear us O Lord.
2. Eternal God, give us the grace to love and to forgive one another in our communities. We pray through the intercession of our blessed mother Mary.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Oh triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfect example of true communion, enliven our hearts and transform us into your image so that, like you, in spite of our differences in personality, we may live in communion and may be *‘One mind and one heart’* in our different communities. You who live for ever and ever. Amen!

DAY 3: COMMUNITY, A REQUIREMENT FOR MISSION

Since apostolic times, community has been a necessity for mission; mission has never been and never will be just an individual matter because it is always first and foremost God's initiative; it is he who chooses the ones he wants and confides a mission to them. The harvest is so vast that there is no way the task can be left to just one person. There is therefore the need for workers, for collaborators, for reapers. 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few..' (Lk.10:1-2)

The word of the Lord. (Lk.10:1-2)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself would be visiting. And he said to them, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to do his harvesting'.

Meditation:

"Each confrere, according to the gifts he has from the Spirit, has a role to fulfil in his community's organization, life and mission (cf 1Cor.12:4-11). What is given to each one to do is important not only for his own fulfilment, but also for the wellbeing of the community and the spread of the Gospel. The superior sees to it that each one does in fact do what has been assigned to him. This responsibility confided to each one is to receive recognition and to be respected by the other members of the community". (SRL 43, 43.1, 43.2)

Following the example of the apostolic community, we are called anew to be aware of our individual responsibility for the shared mission which the Lord confides to us. No-one has nothing to offer. We have all received gifts from God; let us put them at the service of all in the community for the good of its life and mission. In a spirit of solidarity and collaboration, we can build a more fraternal community and reap an abundant harvest in the vineyard of the Lord. Let us remember that this mission cannot be carried out without discernment. That is, there must always be someone to watch over what each member contributes for his part according to his abilities and what he contributes to the smooth functioning of the community and to its mission, which is the proclamation of the Gospel. In the community, all the members must recognize each other and accept each other as different parts belonging to the same body, and who have need of each other for the harmony of the whole.

"In virtue of our calling we are at the service of the Church, whose mission it is 'to gather together into one the scattered children of God' (Jn.11:52). Fraternal life in community builds up the body of Christ. It is living proof that a genuine fraternal unity in Christ is possible". (SRL 28.1) So, in the community, we are invited to become a sacrament and a means of encounter with each person and of each one with God. We thus realise the model of the people of God which is the whole human race called to unity in diversity.

Reflection:

In our different Spiritan communities of today, do we work together in a spirit of solidarity, of collaboration and of sharing in order to realise our mission – the evangelization of the poor? (Lk.4:18) Are we really aware of our individual responsibilities within our respective communities? Do we take part fully in the shared apostolic life in a spirit of unity at the service of the Gospel?

Intercessions:

1. Jesus Christ Son of the living God, help us to be witnesses today in this ever-changing world, that we are your disciples by our living together in unity and mutual love. Lord hear us.
2. Lord Jesus, help us with your wisdom, to understand and accept with love, the life you have called us to live – community life. Lord hear us.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Eternal and all –powerful God, you call us to follow your son Jesus Christ Our Lord, who formed around himself a community of twelve apostles to proclaim the kingdom of God; give us a spirit of unity, so that after the example of the apostles, we may proclaim the kingdom of God in a spirit of solidarity and sharing. Amen!

DAY 4: OUR MISSION

Following our founders and faithful to their insights, and according to the traditions of our Congregation, we Spiritans, more than ever, are called to bring the Gospel to the poor of our world today; this presents us with many challenges. (SRL 12)

That is why our evangelizing mission must bear witness in word and action, to a Gospel of justice, of love, of peace and reconciliation in our different societies marked by hatred, division, war; in societies where men’s hearts have become more and more individualistic; where the poor person is unjustly oppressed, where the orphan and the widow are abandoned to find their own way. Following the example of the prophet Amos, our prophetic mission consists in making the word of God ring out so that equality is re-established, that hospitality is lived as a true value and that human dignity is respected; that peace and reconciliation become the bases of a just, peaceful and fraternal society. To bring this mission to a meaningful completion, we must allow ourselves to be guided and led forward by the Holy Spirit, who is the true protagonist of mission in the Church. It is also important to renew our way of evangelizing with regard to the needs of our times, in order to respond more closely the expectations of the people to whom the Lord, by means of mother Church, sends us. (Bagamoyo GN, p.4.1.7). In accomplishing our mission, we must show particular attention to unemployed youth, and to refugees, who have become victims of various conflicts which spread death and desolation to the whole of humanity.

Word of God. Amos 1:11-12

The Lord says this: For the three crimes, the four crimes of Edom, I have made my decree and will not relent: because he has pursued his brother with the sword, because he has stifled any sense of pity, and perpetually nursed his anger and constantly cherished his rage, I shall send fire down on Teman to devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Reflection: Every Christian by virtue of his baptism is a messenger of God wherever he finds himself. He must make known God’s will to his people to put them on the path to salvation. But does our evangelizing message still retain its prophetic dimension? Do we still have the courage to denounce evils and promote justice, even at the risk of losing our own lives?

Meditation: Our globalised, multi-cultural and secularised world poses real existential challenges to the Spiritan mission of today, for we are called to respond with appropriate solutions. To realise these, and accomplish our mission, apostolic zeal, confidence in the Lord and docility to the Holy Spirit as recommended by our father founders, are indispensable.

Intercessions:

1. We pray you Lord for the Church around the world and for her evangelizing mission, that the Holy Spirit may help it to overcome all obstacles and opposition in announcing salvation to all of humanity.
2. Lord Jesus, we confide to you the Spiritan mission of today, support each confrere in his commitment for the good of the poor, so as to continue to witness to your care and concern for all people.
3. Lord, continue to raise up workers for the most difficult missions, so that all who are created in the image and likeness of God may be saved.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, who at the time of your ascension to the Father, sent the apostles out to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth for the salvation of all, support, we pray, the Spiritan mission, so that with the same enthusiasm as the apostles, it may be attentive to the integral development of all peoples.

DAY 5: EDUCATION: OUR PRIORITY (SRL 18, 18.1)

Our Spiritan mission in the Church is the evangelization of the poor. The word poverty can mean many things: the material, spiritual and psychological dimensions are the most obvious today. But there is another very subtle dimension which is killing the dignity of man in our societies: this is intellectual poverty. Men, women, young people and children who are still illiterate, cannot survive because of ignorance. They live on the margins of society, failing to measure up to the demands of our world. We are invited to support the poor who are intellectually deprived, to go and help them following the example of Claude Poullart des Places who supported the poor students.

The word of God: Mark 6:34

“So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length”.

Meditation: We meditate with Claude: *“For some time now, I give out all I have to help the poor students to follow their studies. I would like to commit myself to this and gather them into a house. It seems this is what God is asking of me”.* (Text no.27-Koren, Besnard p.282)

Claude Poullart des Places was concerned for the poor and was worried about poor students who wanted to be priests. To this end he organised their formation so that they could devote themselves to the most abandoned works. For us Spiritans of today, we need to take up the intellectual and integral formation of the poor so as to be faithful to our charism, to the spirit of our first founder, and to our Rule of Life numbers 18 and 18.1 which invite us to create *“social and educational work in line with our Spiritan calling”*. Let us work so that, after the example of Jesus, the poor may discover their true dignity in society. To be committed to the poorest means wanting to liberate them to take up their place in society, according to the will of God. To realise this, educational works are one of the privileged means to be used.

Reflection: How open are we towards the poor and above all the marginalized, regarding their intellectual formation? Do we take into consideration those who are intellectually weak? Is our attitude towards them caring or scornful?

Intercessions:

1. In our world today the education and formation of many young people is threatened because of poverty. Lord, help us to support these young people who cannot flourish because they are intellectually deprived and cannot face up to the challenges of life. We pray you O Lord.
2. Holy Spirit, enlighten the hearts of our leaders so that they can be more aware of the educational needs of young people from poor backgrounds. We pray you O Lord.
3. Give us your strength Lord, to follow with zeal in the footsteps of Claude Poullart des Places in the promotion of social and educational works for a better world. We pray you O Lord.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

All powerful God, who called Claude Poullart des Places to evangelise the poor by founding a community for poor, deprived students, help us to follow his example by proclaiming the Gospel to the marginalized people of our times, and break down the barriers caused by ignorance around the world.

May your name be blessed forever.

DAY 6: EDUCATING FOR A JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD

The promotion of justice is the expression of the Christian's faith in the love of God for every human being. Peace in the world is an integral part of the Church's mission to pursue Christ's redemptive work. The Church therefore urges individuals, peoples and states to engage actively and to be concerned with restoring and consolidating peace, emphasizing in particular the essential role of international law (cf. Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church, No. 516).

The Church teaches that true peace is only possible where there is forgiveness and reconciliation (a process that is difficult, but not impossible). Reciprocal forgiveness must not erase the demands of justice, nor block the path that leads to truth: on the contrary, justice and truth are the concrete demands of reconciliation (ibid., n°517 and 518). ***“Peace expresses itself only in peace, a peace which is not separate from the demands of justice but which is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love”*** (Paul VI, Message for the Day of Peace, 1976).

Word of God: Matthew 5:6-9

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them. Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognised as children of God.”

Meditation:

“I felt toward those who suffer, a fair amount of kindness, after all my past pride, with respect to those I dealt with, an ardent zeal to incite sinners to return to God, and this went so far that, in order to succeed with them, I would have found nothing too degrading.” (Poullart des Places, Reflections on the past)

Mr. Thomas, Claude's companion, stated: ***“Among other things, for this work of charity he used the services of a young student whose board he paid until a Jesuit house took him in.” That is why Poullart “liberally helped the self-conscious poor and had a wonderful way of sparing them all embarrassment.”*** (Koren, Thomas, p. 267)

Reflection:

How can we, following the example of our Founder, work for a just and a peaceful world?

In our different communities, are we available to follow the example of Poullart des Places in an unreserved commitment to justice and peace?

How do we practice peace and justice in our communities?

Prayer of intercession:

1. Almighty and Eternal Father, we pray for all the poor of our country and those of the whole world. Inspire in us the desire to serve you in them through our words and actions. Father, hear our prayers.
2. Lord, may the Spirit who animated your servant Claude also dwell in us so that in the midst of this world we may build just, peaceful and fraternal societies. God of goodness, we beseech you.
3. Make us attentive to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, so that our charity may be made inventive. Father of mercy, hear our prayers.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you have never passed by a poor, sick or infirm person without stopping to offer him the comfort of your solicitude; we thank you for having given birth to the same attitude in the heart of Claude Poullart and so many other of your disciples. May we live out the same love for the poor, our neighbours, in order to offer them your love and thus awaken their hearts to your voice. Amen!

DAY 7: MISSION AS A DIALOGUE

The world today, as we can see, is subject to significant changes. These require us to redouble our efforts in our places of apostolate, with an ingenuity that is constantly renewed, all in fidelity to the intuitions of our founders.

Mt 15:21-22; 26-27

“Jesus left that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then out came a Canaanite woman from that district and started shouting, “Sir, Son of David, take pity on me. My daughter is tormented by a devil.”...He replied, “It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the house dogs.” She retorted, “Ah yes, sir; but even house dogs can eat the scraps that fall from their master's table.”“

Meditation:

If there is a time when indifference should no longer be present in our minds, our thought patterns, it is now. The world and its evolution urge us to break down all forms of barriers that could keep us apart. ***“By the fact that we work in many churches, we can facilitate exchange between them and contribute to their mutual enrichment. We take up the role that belongs in the mission of these churches in dialogue and mutual respect, never imposing ourselves”*** (SRL 19).

By “dialogue” we mean here a particular attention to the other person in his different values and ways of believing. It is practiced in a context, in a very specific society that cannot be forgotten. The context of the country, but also the more global context of a world where values evolve, where cultural references are floating, and where young people often do not have ethical points of reference to situate themselves. This is also where we must find ways of dialogue.

In our communities, dialogue is perceptible when we accept each other; when we are open to learning over and over again, willing to be enriched and enlightened, when we express our opinions in a respectful way and have the humility and courage to admit that we have made mistakes. (cf. Spiritan Life N°24)

Reflection:

What effort am I making to reduce the barriers of prejudice, caricatures, intolerance, negative comparisons, attitudes of superiority and indifference within and around me?

In my daily life, am I a believer in dialogue with others who are different from me?

Prayer of intercession

1. God of infinite mercy, you who love us without distinction of race, people, nation, and culture, we pray to you: make our hearts stretch to the acceptance of others who are not us.
2. Most Holy Father, send your Spirit of strength upon us so that he may lead us to love our brothers and sisters despite their differences.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Father, whose love is immeasurable, we your children want, like you, to find in each of our brothers and sisters, features of your face, so that we may constantly show them the love we have for you. Through Jesus Christ your son our Lord.

DAY 8: THE WORK WITH THE DISINHERITED

The human being is the exact replica of God, but to a lesser degree, because he is made only in his image. God says: *“Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves”* (Gen 1:26). Every Spiritan missionary must fully understand that there is no mission without man. Like the Sacred Heart of Jesus who never ceases to bleed in the face of suffering, misery, poverty and injustice with which man is confronted on a daily basis, so too must the heart of every missionary be shaped by that of Christ, in order to work for the integral liberation of man.

Word of God: Mt 25:31-32.40.45

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.' Then it will be their turn to ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?' Then he will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.'”

Meditation:

We must become *“the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all who oppress them”* (Regulation 1849; N.D., X, 517; SRL 14).

Reflection:

What is the missionary specificity that defines me today as a Spiritan?

Am I attentive to the person to whom I am sent and who gives meaning to my mission?

What kind of Spiritan am I: the one who is at the service of man, or the one who uses his mission to be served and to serve himself?

Prayer of intercession

1. Lord our God, you have made us and we are yours. Grant that by following your work of creation, we may also shape men and women who resemble you in the light of the Gospel that we proclaim to them.
2. Lord Jesus, you who took our condition to raise up the entire humanity by giving it its full dignity, inspire missionaries to fight against everything that does not give honour to every son and daughter of God.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, King of Justice, help me to be attentive to the cries of the poor, so that they may always feel loved in the way you have loved humanity. You who live and reign with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen!

DAY NINE: WORKING IN A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Fidelity is a doorway to other experiences. During our novena, which we are concluding today, we reflected and meditated on what should be our mission today, as founders following Claude Poullart, that is, to give another dimension to our vocation by going back to the source without betraying the spirit of the founders, according to the needs of our time. Our human recovery is intended to be complete. Therefore, no aspect of life is to be neglected. We need to work in a healthy environment in common with “nature” whose respect we are called upon to promote.

Word of God: Gn. 1, 27-28.31a

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth.” And so it was. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good.

Meditation :

The texts of the Paschal vigil, during the celebration of the new creation in Christ, begin with the story of creation because it is the beginning of the history of salvation, which culminates in Christ.

Benedict XVI, in “Caritas in Veritate” (No. 50-51), invites us to be *“committed to making joint decisions (...) aimed at strengthening that covenant between human beings and the environment”*. He reminds us that:

“The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: when “human ecology” is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits.”

Reflection:

How do we promote respect for “nature”? As a promoter, what concrete action do we take as a sign of witness?

Prayer of intercession:

1. Lord our God, in your love you have created the world and all that encompasses it, and you entrust it to man whom you have *“made a little less than a god, ... have crowned ... with glory and splendour; made ... lord over the works of your hands, put all things under his feet”*, let him discover this same love in order to continue your creative work.
2. Lord Jesus, you the Saviour of humanity, teach us, as messengers of your saving love, to help our brothers and sisters to taste this happiness from here on earth.

Our Father.....Hail Mary.....Glory be.....

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you call us to be salt and light in the midst of our world. Grant us, we pray thee, the grace to remain faithful to this call by matching our words with our actions. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever.