

A PASTORAL PROPOSAL WITH CLAUDINE

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1. Introduction

My name is Silvia Rojas Santiesteban, Religious of Jesus and Mary from the Province of Bolivia

I have been a religious for the past 25 years, of which 19 dedicated to education. At present I am Coordinator and Directress of the School “San Ignacio de Loyola” of Oruro, Bolivia.

Our Center has 4 Educational Units: 2 Primary School (children who study from the age of 4 to 11 years of age), and 2 Secondary or High School (adolescents who study from the age of 12 up to 17 years old). The Secondary Section of the afternoon shift bears the name of our dear Foundress “Saint Claudine Thévenet”, and was recently founded in 2015

The city of Oruro is situated fully on a high plateau, at 3,706 meters above sea level; its predominant topography is plain even though a good part of the land is mountainous, where the majestic Sajama rises 6,542 meters. It has a population of 494,587.

The city of Oruro is considered the Capital of the Bolivian Folklore, because there, every year, is celebrated one of the most colorful Carnivals which are full of traditions of America, which are translated into a magic pagan-religious fusion and become an international touristic attraction.

In the South-Eastern zone of this city is found our Center “San Ignacio de Loyola”, where I was a student and I left in 1987. Since 1960 our Religious established themselves in the land of Oruro and that was the place where the Bolivian Jesus and Mary was founded.

The first Religious who evangelized and “*made Jesus and Mary known and loved*” were of Spanish nationality, greatly loved by the people: María del Carmen Ducet Quintana (M. San Luis)

and Madre María Esther de Paredes, who left a profound mark in the souvenir of so many persons whom they met since the School began functioning.

In the beginning our zone was very poor, which lacked even the basic needs. At present, it has improved under many aspects, but other aspects have been neglected, such as human and spiritual growth, due to the fact that with progress, the desire and anxiety for materialism has entered the lives of the people. Some parents, father and mother, with the desire to have more, have abandoned their children and have gone to foreign countries, from where they are satisfied with sending a few coins, forgetting the essential and principal: the human affection which forms the heart of persons. Others, even if they remain with their children, they give themselves to work and work, falling into the same error of the previous ones. However, our new generations are not only lacking affection, but also someone who will make them know and love God.

Therefore, this is the context in which the Religious of Jesus and Mary move, concretely in the Education Center “San Ignacio de Loyola”, among generations which are orphans of affection and of God. In this sense we can share the anguish that Claudine felt: to see that many live and die without knowing God, but also the joy of continuing her work: *to make Jesus and Mary known and loved, through Christian education*”. What a clairvoyant and discerning woman was our Foundress! Or better, How good was the Lord in giving her such a precious mission of educating and this never goes out of style or loses importance.

2. Keys of the pastoral proposal in our Center

In order to continue the work of the Lord, as He asked Claudine, in our Educational Center “San Ignacio de Loyola”, since a few years ago, we have two ways or concrete actions to carry on the Pastoral work: one that embraces all the stages of the life of our students in a continuous manner, under the name of “Pastoral Itinerary”, another one: activities according to the Liturgical Time and/or with those proper of our Region.

In order to have a better understanding in what each one of the two ways consist, I will develop them:

➤ The Pastoral Itinerary

We owe this contribution in great part to our Sister Carmen Colomer, RJM, who took time to systematize it and diffused it in all our Educational Units since a few years ago, in order

to respond to a better organized and transversal pastoral work that embraces the educational work and all the stages of the life of our pupils.

Just as she indicates in her design: “A School of the Church is not the same as a Church School. Just as it is not the same to do Pastoral work in the School as to have a School of Pastoral work. These are two completely different focuses, and if they are not well defined, one can arrive to great apostolic exhaustion and even to some misunderstandings among the Pastoral agents, with the consequent suffering and besides, apostolic sterility”.

A School of the Church is a School that belongs to the Church, is its property, she is in charge of it, there is an agreement with the Government which authorizes it ... there are religion classes.

A Church School means that in it faith is lived and celebrated. It is a living Christian community. Culture is evangelized in all fields. All the teaching is permeated by the Doctrine of the Church and every event in the life of the students is lived and celebrated in faith. It is also intended to arrive through it to the families. Some of these celebrations are sacramental, the majority not sacramental. Then the School becomes a Center of Evangelization.

A Pastoral Itinerary in a School in order that it may be apostolically fecund requires continuity and to have as its center human development and of the faith of the child and the young person. It is a question of accompanying the pupil in his/her growth as a person, as a student, as a Catholic. Just like Jesus who grew in age, wisdom and grace, as something alive, having life, it cannot be mechanic but it has to express what it lives.

In this process of preparation and celebrations the professors and the parents should be involved as much as possible.

From the Initial First to 6th of Primary School, the preparation is done in the Religion classes. In the same way from 1st to 6th of Secondary School, the Religion teacher in her classes does the same preparation, since it is during these hours when we really educate. In the other hours we teach.

I think that in this pastoral action is emphasized one of the objectives that our Foundress pursued in the formation of persons: “to form persons of faith”; that is, that our students know the content of Faith, but that this, in turn, illuminates all their life. If in this spaces or time of

formation it would be possible to create the intimate encounter with Jesus, what better thing for them!, but the grace of God does not depend on our action, but on the initiative of God. We are only mediators or facilitators to get them close to Him

Another feature or characteristic worked on in the Pastoral Itinerary or which gets us close to the person of Claudine is “simplicity and the family spirit”.

At present, even if our reality is not that of the First World, it is also affected by the lack of simplicity and the world of appearances which have entered the families, and therefore, in our students. And this is why our pastoral action also wants to stress or emphasize simplicity, a value which Claudine lived from the beginning of the foundation of our Congregation. It is not the splendid magnificent actions which touch and move the soul of our students, but rather what is done in a simple way, but with constancy and humility.

Other pastoral activities

Among the other pastoral activities that we carry out in our Educational Units are the following:

Social Pastoral work

In order that our students develop their sensitiveness and solidarity, we carry out campaigns for fundraising, with which we cover the expenses of poor people who are sick, the purchase of products to visit the Old People’s Home and the Home of Orphan Children.

Youth Pastoral work

- ✓ Live-in meetings – retreats with High School students from 1st to 6th grade
- ✓ Retreat with the graduating group from High School, outside the city
- ✓ Celebrations according to the Liturgical Times
- ✓ Periodical Eucharistic celebrations with the respective courses, integrating them in the Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary which is the Parish to which we belong as Educational Center

Celebration with all the groups of the Educational Community

- ✓ Anniversary of the School of Saint Ignacio de Loyola, July 31: get together among the pupils

- ✓ Day of Saint Claudine, October 6.; her life, work and Charism are made known
- ✓ Eucharistic Celebration with the teachers and the administrative personnel, the day before the Anniversary

Education in prayer

- ✓ Every morning the prayer is said while the students are formed in line before they enter the classrooms
- ✓ Visits of the Virgin to the School and Marian evenings
- ✓ A hymn to Mary during the month of May
- ✓ With the teachers and Administrative personnel of the Center:
 - Living together – retreat with times of silence and prayer (beginning and end of the year)
 - Paschal Supper on Maundy Thursday.
 - Exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Wednesday of Holy Week, before Maundy Thursday
 - Every meeting begins with prayer and reflection
 - Participation of national encounters, prepared by the Congregation for all the educational centers of Jesus and Mary in Cochabamba.
 - Our Center belongs to the Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary; there our pupils are taken care of, by the Jesuit Priests and the parochial community, in everything that concerns Sacramental Pastoral ministry.

3. Practical proposal: Pastoral Itinerary

In order to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the Bicentenary of our Foundation, I suggest the following practical exercise, highlighting the image of Saint Claudine Thévenet, this activity bears the name of “CLAUDINE VISITS US IN THE 200 YEARS OF JESUS AND MARY”..

The *objective* of this activity is to know Claudine and keep her present in our life, assimilating the values which she wanted to transmit to us, but above all to know and love Jesus and Mary, through her.

How will we do it? On *October 6 of this year*, to inaugurate the celebrations of the Bicentenary, we will enthrone the statue of Saint Claudine in the middle of the court yard of the

School and it will accompany us all the time of the preparation up until 2018, according to the following program:

- Inaugural Mass
- Enthronement

In these acts will participate: the students, the parents, the teachers and the Administrative personnel

The remaining of the year, the time that is left, we will work on the album of the history of the Congregation with all the students. Visits will also be made to the statue of Saint Claudine, where each group will sing hymns with messages related to Claudine or to the Congregation, the same ones that will be used in the celebration of the 200 years.

Another intense moment, so as to avoid falling into routine, will be *February 3, 2018*, beginning the school year with the Eucharistic celebration, to welcome and receive the Bicentenary, with the massive participation of the whole Educational Community. There the enthronement of the image of Claudine will be renewed