Semblance of the figure of Fr. Clotet
Claretian and pedagogue of deaf children in Vic

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The commemoration of the Bicentennial of the birth of Fr. Jaime Clotet cmf, co-founding member of the missionary Congregation to which I belong, justifies my presence among you on this day. The University of Vic has long been concerned that this anniversary, which undoubtedly constitutes an anniversary for our town, not be diluted. The material that we have at our disposal concentrates almost all of Clotet's catechetical and pedagogical practice with deaf children in the city of Vic. And it is further enhanced by the fact of being a pioneer in the study and application of an innovative sign language.

We Claretian missionaries have always admired this feature, unusual in its beginnings, of one of our first missionaries. Clotet, in addition to taking on enormous responsibilities, devoted himself continuously to the education of deaf children, with a level of specialization that made him the forerunner of an advanced pedagogy collected in his precise and luminous writings.

His singular figure has been studied in my Congregation above all from the ministerial and spiritual point of view – he was declared Venerable by Pope Saint John Paul II on May 13, 1989. His extensive positions as deputy general manager, secretary and trainer prevented him from spending most of his time alone with the deaf. For this reason, there was no lack of those who interpreted it as an exclusively personal and punctual concern in disconnection, if not contradiction, with the Claretian mission. Opinion that is not exactly confirmed by the data.

To elaborate this profile, cautious and synthetic by necessity, we have used various writings on his figure -some unpublished-, which are preserved in the General Archive of our Congregation[1] in Rome and in the Claretian Archive of Vic, in addition to the historical bibliography on Clotet within our reach.

I sincerely appreciate, in addition to the invitation, the presence of all of you in my presentation. I will have the pleasure of speaking about the human and religious profile of Clotet. I leave the presentation of his pedagogical contributions[2] to others. I will limit myself to showing the deeply evangelical root of his ministry, which evidences his apostolic projection as an excellent minister of the *sacrament of language*[3]. I will therefore offer the perspective of a Claretian missionary on the

[1] Cf. Archivo de la Postulación General de los Misioneros Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María (AG CMF/PG). Fondo Jaime Clotet (CL, 1-37)

[2] Among the published works, I refer to the one carried out by a missionary Brother of my Congregation also seduced by Clotet's work in favour of the deaf: JOSEP CODINA PLANA, Catechesis for deaf children. A special call within the church, Saint Pius X Higher Institute of Religious and Catechetical Sciences, 2011.

[3] This is the title of G. Agamben's work , *El sacramento del lenguaje. Arqueología del juramento*. Trad. Antonio Gimeno, Valencia, Pre-textos, 2011.

eminent figure who undoubtedly left deep traces in the history of my Congregation.

1. Synopsis of Clotet's stay in Vic

1843-1845	He studies Moral and Pastoral at the Vic Seminary
1849-1868	Present at the foundation of the Congregation Responsible for the missionary Brothers Subdirector of the Congregation (1858-1888) Superior of the community of Vic (1865-1868)
1878-1879	Superior of Vic
1888-1891	Superior of Vic. General Secretary
1892-1895	Superior of Vic

I found it useful to visualize Clotet's periods of stay in Vic. It was in our town where he developed his work with deaf children for the longest time, although he never abandoned it or lost interest in other places and circumstances where he necessarily had to travel, as will be said later.

Without counting the multiple and sporadic absences due to his government responsibilities of the Congregation, we reckon that he lived in Vic for approximately 28 years, most of which (26) as a priest and missionary Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

2. First of all, who was Jaime Clotet?

2.1. A Catalan in difficult times

Onofre Francisco Jaime Clotet y Fabrés, as named on his baptismal certificate, was born in Manresa on July 24, 1822 into a wealthy and moderately progressive family from a population favoured by the industrial development of the area in the 19th century. He was the last of the eight children of D. Ramón Clotet and Dña. Gertrudis Fabrés.

His early education took place in a social climate of demographic and economic growth, but also political and religious instability and constant social conflict[4]. They were caused by the civil war between liberals and traditionalists[5], the

[4] Cf. J. Vicens i Vives-M. Llorens, *Industrials i politics del segle XIX*, Barcelona, 1958, 15s. 47s.
[5] Cf. V. Cárcel Ortí, *El liberalismo en el poder (1833-1868)* in *Historia de la Iglesia en España,* dir. by R. García Villoslada, t. V, Madrid, 1979; pp. 177-187.

adherence of many ecclesiastics to the Carlist cause[6] and the anticlerical policy of the liberal governments during the first years of the reign of Isabel II. This was the social backstage at the moment in the Catalan Principality.

His family and the religious environment that surrounded it, in addition to providing him with firm and clear moral principles, favoured the attitude of rectitude, kindness and lively piety that Clotet showed from his childhood.

From his initial education and training he will learn his love of order, his sense of method, his almost meticulous sharpness, his horror of idleness and empty time, his animosity against all exaggeration, his lively sense of self-analysis. He maintained as a lifestyle, careful attention to the work carried out, perseverance, self-criticism, the value of everyday life, the method, the taste for balances, the meticulous examination of problems, the care in his duties and a discreet protective reserve, as reflected in an expression that he used to repeat:

> *"I will bear in mind this maxim which a merchant told me that was commonly received among prudent men of his profession: the soul of a business is the secret."*[7]

At the age of 9, Clotet began to study at the college that the Jesuits owned in his hometown. There he studied humanities for three years until the Society of Jesus was suppressed in 1835. He then moved to Barcelona to study rhetoric and philosophy at the secondary school attached to the University.

2.2. An early vocation

He entered the Barcelona seminary in 1839 at the age of seventeen[8] to study dogmatic theology as an external student. It was not an exception to begin ecclesiastical studies at that age, as established at that time. The priestly career required four years of dogmatic theology, two of morals, and one of canons[9].

At that time there were very few secondary schools. Humanities studies could be studied in seminaries, which caused them to be populated by numerous youths. In the Catalan seminaries, in particular, most of the seminarians were external, who attended their classes daily. It was a rare family whose children, not dedicated to agriculture, did not spend a few years in the seminary. In Vic, at that time, dozens of seminary students stayed in the houses and farmhouses that populate *La Plana, round as a coin or as a millstone*, as the poet Jacinto Verdaguer contemplated it. In the afternoon they returned to the families that hosted them to pay some compensation in money or in kind or more frequently,

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[6] Ibid., 129, 185; J. Álvarez Gómez, *El sacerdote en tiempo del Padre Claret,* en *Sacerdotes Misioneros al estilo de Claret, I. Semana Sacerdotal Claretiana*, Madrid, 1985; pp. 84, 93. "If the spiritual crisis was, indeed, an essential ingredient in Spain in the first third of the 19th century and reached higher levels than in other periods of the same century, it can well be said that in the politicization of many individual and collective actions, detects one of its fundamental motors" (J. M. Cuenca Toribio, *El Catolicismo Español en la Restauración (1875-1931),* in *Historia de la Iglesia en España,* t. V, p. 57)

[7] Mss. Clotet V, p. 793 He recalls it again ten years later in the resolutions of July 1893.: Mss. Clotet X, p. 134.

[8] M. Aguilar, *Biografía del Siervo de Dios P. Jaime Clotet y Fabrés*, Barcelona (Librería de Montserrat), 1907; pp. 20-21.

[9] J. M. Lozano, *Un hombre en la presencia de Dios. Estudio sobre la experiencia espiritual del Siervo de Dios, P. Jaime Clotet*, Roma, 1971; p. 27.

in exchange for teaching the first letters and Christian doctrine to the children. They used to lead the recitation of the rosary in the evening and, at certain times, they reviewed the catechism for everyone, without excepting the owners[10].

As from 1843, Jaime Clotet, already 21 years old, went on to study morality and pastoral care at the Vic seminary. Although a mediocre intellectual and spiritual formation predominated in the seminaries of his time, at the Vic seminary there was a statistical and spiritual flourishing in the second third of the 19th century[11], known as the *Vic vein*[12]. Around 1835, this seminary had more students enrolled than the most prestigious universities in Spain[13]. Through its classrooms passed men who would shine for their piety and apostolic spirit[14]. This boom was possible thanks to the reforms introduced by Mons. Pablo de Jesús Corcuera[15], Bishop of Vic. Among them, the frequent reading of Sacred Scripture[16] stands out, and particularly the catechetical formation of seminarians[17], which so much enriched the spirituality and apostolate of Clotet[18].

2.3. Temporary diocesan priest

Clotet had to interrupt his studies in 1845. He was 23 years old. Adverse political circumstances[19] forced him to emigrate from his homeland to successively receive minor orders and the subdiaconate in Perpignan (France). Later, and in that same

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[10] Cf. Vito T. Gómez García op*, El Padre Coll, dominico*, Edibesa, Madrid, 2009; pp. 53-54.

[11] Cf. We count among them I. Casanovas, J. Balmes, A. Claret and many others. In a letter, J. Clotet says: "It seemed to me later that the students of Vich, although with simpler manners, were better than those of Barcelona, I say of a purer piety (...). The Vich clergy, in general, are more educated and pious, observant of the Prelate's dispositions and loving to fulfil their duties. (*Clotet a I. Heredero*, 22-4-1881, en AG CMF, GC, 10,16).

[12] J. Álvarez, *Misioneros Claretianos I. Retorno a los orígenes*. Publicaciones Claretianas, 1993, p.87.

[13] V. de la Fuente, *Historia de las Universidades*, III Madrid, 1887; p. 177. Quoted by J. M. Lozano, p. 28.

[14] Cf. J. M. de Garganta, *Francisco Coll, fundador de las Dominicas de la Anunciata*, Valencia, 1976, 48-49.

[15] Pablo de Jesús Corcuera y Caserta arrived in August 1825 – a holy year in the Church decreed by Leo XII – to succeed the murdered Bishop Strauch. He was born in Cádiz in 1776 and was a trainer of seminarians in Sigüenza (Guadalajara). He dedicated himself zealously to the formation of the candidates for the priesthood. He knew them and had frequent dealings with them through talks and spiritual exercises. He made great catechists of them, because in fact this was the specialty of the new bishop. Cf. Vito T. Gómez García op*, El Padre Coll, dominico*, Edibesa, Madrid, 2009; p. 61

[16] F. M. Muñoz –P. de J. Corcuera, *Original Constitutions and Rules of the Tridentine Seminary College of the Holy Family of the city of Vich, arranged by its founder... Bishop of the same city, with the additions made to them later by his successor, the Hon. Mr.... in the visit he made to the same Seminary, year 1831, Vich*, 1832, 25. 38-39.

[17] In the Constitutions and Rules... of the Vich seminary, it is stated: "They will try to know perfectly and understand, so that they can teach, the Christian Doctrine and Mysteries of our faith" (M. MUÑOZ-P. DE J. CORCUERA, Constitutions..., in note 16) and among the additions of Bishop Corcuera, various exercises of a catechetical nature are rewritten for seminarians in higher courses as "catechetical explanations in the form of dialogue", based on the catechism of St. Pius V" (Ibídem, 29-30).

[18] The Breviary was part of the "necessary books" of Fr. Clotet, while the Bible will occupy first place among the "almost necessary" books (Cf. Fiesta de todos los Santos, 231, in AG CMF/ PG, CL, 21). In the infinity of sermons and talks found among his manuscripts, it can be said that "the source of inspiration was always Sacred Scripture, particularly what is contained in the Breviary; many of the skeletons are a collection of biblical texts" (*Escritos del S. de D. P. Jaime Clotet y Fabrés*, 38, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 37, 1).

[19] In 1845 normal relations between Spain and the Holy See were broken, without the possibility of appointing bishops or transferring assistants. For several years it was likewise prohibited to make religious profession and confer holy orders; hence Clotet -with other co-founders of the Congregation of Missionaries- had to travel to Rome to be ordained. This situation was resolved with the Concordat of 1851.

year, he was ordained a deacon in Rome. Then, on July 20, still in the same year, he was consecrated a priest in Rome by Bishop Giusseppe Canali[20]. From the Eternal City, already a priest, he will return to Vic to complete his studies in canon law.

Once completed his academic training on June 23, 1846 D. Luciano Casadevall, capitular vicar of the diocese of Vic, appointed Clotet vicar of Castellfollit del Boix (Barcelona). In this parish he would remain a little more than a year and a half. On February 3, 1848, he was appointed bursar of Santa María de Civit (Lleida, diocese of Vic)[21]. This parish with the branches of Bodell and Pavia then had 177 communion souls and a total of 37 families[22]. In that town Clotet was concerned with attending to the pastoral needs of the population as can be seen in his *Llibreta de exàmens de Doctrina, Confessió y Sagrada Comuniò, of this Parish of Civit, Rodell and Pavia per lo any of 1849*, autograph document where it is recorded an accurate listing of the condition, status and practice of all his parishioners.

There was a belief that Civit had been the cradle of deaf people[23]. If that were confirmed, it is not surprising that during his stay there, Clotet ran into a reality that was going to disrupt his plans[24]. In Civit we can locate the origin of a catechetical and promotional activity in favour of deaf people.

2.4. Claretian missionary to the end

In the second half of June 1849 Clotet, being the parish priest of Civit, had an interview with Claret. It is not known if they had ever seen each other before. With all certainty, the first had heard of the second, since he was already one of the most popular characters in Catalonia. A year and a half earlier, Clotet would have enrolled in the brotherhood of the Heart of Mary of Manresa, founded precisely by Claret. Claret knew how to bring together a very varied group for his project. The Claretian congregation was not created as a circle of friends who agreed to get together, but as a team of priests of different ages and backgrounds who became a missionary community under the charismatic leadership of Claret.

The first personal contact with Claret came through Canon Passarell, chamber secretary of the Bishop of Vic and one of the two churchmen from Vic whom the saint had just consulted about the project of founding the Congregation[25]. At that time, a letter had been received in the curia in Vic in which the parish priest of Civit expressed his desire to leave the cure of souls. A conversation preserved by Clotet recounts his first meeting with Claret. The saint explained to him straightforwardly the idea of forming a Congregation of missionaries. Such a proposal must have caused Clotet some confusion that moved him to expose his resistance: *"What will you do, I answered, from a man of weak complexion, short*

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[20] Cf. Mariano Aguilar, *o.c.*, pp.24-25

[21] Fr. Clotet was assigned as a treasurer priest from February 3, 1848 in the parish of Civit, a small town in the Segarra area, belonging civilly to the province of Lérida and ecclesiastically to the diocese of Vic. Currently it belongs to the diocese of Solsona.

[22] Cf. J. Berengueras, *Recuerdos históricos del M. R. P. Jaime Clotet y Frabrés*, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 37, 1.

[23] See the witness of H. José Soler, in J. Berengueras, *Recuerdos históricos*..., in AG CMF/PG, CL, 37,1.

[24] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista*..., Vic, 1890, 2ªed., 6-7.

[25] Cf. J. Berengueras, *Recuerdos históricos del M. R. P. Jaime Clotet y Frabrés*, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 37, 1.

stature, dull voice, without oratorical skills and of our intelligence?". Such self-presentation was not at all complimentary. But even if he wasn't tall or loud-voiced or gifted for leadership, he was a very valuable priest. Claret would have been warned of this in advance by Canon Passarell. Consequently, he asked him to leave aside qualities and answer if he liked or not the life plan that he proposed. *"Well, I say that I like the plan"* – Clotet responded. *"This being the cas*e –concluded Claret– *you arrange things in such a way that on July 15 you can be in Vic; soon they will send a substitute"*[26].

And so it was that on July 16, 1849 at three in the afternoon, Clotet took part in the founding act of the Congregation of Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He was 27 years old at the time; he was, therefore, the youngest of the co-founders.

As this was a time that required an intense evangelizing activity, Clotet gave himself to it from the beginning to the end of his new life[27]. In the early years he took part in missionary campaigns, novenas, spiritual exercises, itinerant preaching, etc. He dedicated a good part of his time to visiting prisons and hospitals and began in the spiritual accompaniment of lay people and consecrated persons[28].

On May 1, 1858, he was elected Subdirector General[29] of the Congregation, a position he held until 1888, when he became Secretary General[30]. Both positions of responsibility in the Congregation did not separate him from apostolic pursuits nor did they extinguish his missionary spirit. But, out of necessity, they did lead him to privilege other services, unrelated to external activities and compatible with his duties, such as the formation of the first coadjutor brothers or catechesis. The latter was always *"Fr. Clotet's favourite work, to which he devoted himself with more affection and for which he had better natural dispositions"*[31]

From 1869 until three years before his death, which occurred in 1898, he was successively local superior in Prades, Thuir, Vic, Gracia... that is to say, almost always of the general government house and of the central college of the Institute.

He finally issued his long-awaited religious profession on the Feast of the Heart of Mary in 1870, having received recognition from the Holy See[32]. Since he would reach the age of seventy-six, most of his life (49 years) was lived as a Claretian. If anything, his happiest period was spent living with the Founder from July 1849 until the end of December 1850, when he had to go to Santiago de Cuba[33]. Claret distinguished him with particular affection. Clotet was a biographer of the saint as well as a faithful chronicler of the beginning of the Congregation and of the death

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[26] Cf. M. Aguilar, *o.c.*, pp. 46-67.
[27]Among his numerous manuscripts are more than a thousand plans intended to be used in various forms of the ministry of the Word: doctrinal, sermons, talks, catechetical instructions, etc. (Cf. Escritos del S. de D.... in AG CMF/PG, CL, 37,1).
[28] Cf. Jesús Bermejo in the "Introducción general" to the book J. Clotet, *Vida edificante del padre Claret, misionero y fundador.* Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 2000, p. VII
[29] M. Aguilar, *o.c.,* pp. 90-91.
[30] Mss. Clotet X, pp. 87 y 130. He quitted the position of Secretary General in 1891. Cf. Mss Clotet X, p. 130
[31] M. Aguilar, *o.c.*, p. 42
[32] Cf. M. Aguilar, *o.c.*, p. 148.
[33] J. M. Lozano, *o.c.*; pp.198-199.

of the Founder, whom he assisted in his last illness. Clotet, already almost blind, died with a reputation for sanctity in Gracia (Barcelona) on February 4, 1898. He was 76 years old at the time.

Fr. José Xifré, Superior General, wrote about him in his obituary: *"He was a model of piety, zeal and exercise of all the virtues, which accompanied him to the end as testified by those who knew him and dealt with or witnessed his death, which, due to its patience, resignation and love of God, was precious and edifying (...). In addition to his apostolic works, he extended his zeal to hospitals, prisons and especially the deaf-mute (...). He distinguished himself in procuring the glory of our Founder"*[34]

2.5. Man in the presence of God

Clotet's spiritual dimension stands out, fairly remembered as *"a singular case in the Congregation to which he belonged"*[35]. His canonization process began years ago with the recognition of his virtues. His spiritual life is accessible to us thanks to the large number of personal notes and dated notes that he left before his death[36]. His methodical, thorough and orderly character made it easy. Although everything can be found in his manuscripts, it is possible to recompose his spiritual itinerary, his personal progress and difficulties and, in particular, his aspiration to sainthood, the deepest of all his aspirations. Those writings reveal with sufficient clarity his tendency towards introspection and attention to the inner action of God. With a brief and concise pen, they focus on three recurring issues: graces received, examination of faults and ascetic purposes. To orient himself and not err in the paths of the Spirit, he used his knowledge of mystical theology, contained in the manuals of the time within his reach.

We do not find in Clotet's life any typical episode of conversion that would have produced a drastic and radical change. Rather, his spiritual path was shining like the soft light of dawn, initiated in the pious environment of his family, cultivated in the seminaries where he was trained and completed with tireless determination throughout his priestly and missionary life. Above all, he shows himself to be a tireless forger of his own spiritual growth, but without rigidity or harshness. He was a family man, kind, with an affable treatment and a face usually illuminated by a smile[37]. His simplicity bordered on childish innocence, especially in his dealings with the *rude*. *"Because of his extraordinary innocence, the sagacious ones abused him"*, Fr. Xifré[38] would say of him, perhaps not understanding that no one is afraid of the meek. This justifies his preference for the uneducated, children and the deaf. He was a true prophet of mercy, prudent and thoughtful. His interior recollection and his tenacious determination to seek the presence of God and not leave it[39] especially singles him out. The cultivation of such a unique experience was for Clotet the *"most effective means to reach union with God"*[40]. From there,

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[34] M. Aguilar. *o.c.*; p. 478.
[35] J.M. Lozano, *o.c.*; p. 9.
[36] They appear scattered in his manuscripts not intended for printing. In particular in *Miscelánea* and his diaries (they appear catalogued in J.M. Lozano, *o.c.*; pp. 16-19).
[37] P. Ildefonso Ruiz in *Summarium*, p. 117
[38] Cristóbal Fernández, *o.c.*; p. 52
[39] As can be seen in the "cuaderno de propósitos", which groups at the end of its work J.M. Lozano, *o.c.*; pp. 245-313.
[40] Resolutions of the Holy Week exercises of 1877, in J. M. Lozano, *o.c.*; p. 267.

his tendency to observe and carry out his daily and domestic occupations with "liturgical attention" is explained. Some could describe as exaggerated the care that he gave to his obligations. He made them with a love that does not fit into words. Those who love know that love is always exaggerated because the gestures and *"the words of love are good for a little exaggeration"*, according to the verse attributed to Antonio Machado.

We would be wrong if from these notes we got the impression of finding ourselves before a reserved and elusive person, cautious and spiritualistic, far from reality and from its entanglements and fatigue. Absolutely not. In his biography there is no shortage of disappointments and misunderstandings – some of a certain seriousness[41] – typical of someone who has to live with very diverse people and assume government decisions. But this does not cancel the deep echo of goodness that spread the small figure f him.

His influence on the Congregation was immense, and not only during the long years in which he was part of the government of the Institute. His influence was not that of an impulsive, centrifugal force of command and expansion, but rather the moderate, centripetal one capable of conferring "a conscience and a heart"[42] on the first generation of missionaries. Saint John Paul II, who declared him Venerable on May 13, 1989, wrote in the official document: *"His mission in the Institute can be summed up as follows: a firm defender of the interior life in an intensely apostolic Institute."*[43] Clotet marked the contemplative dimension of the missionary vocation, while never ceasing to be a loyal and hard-working apostle.

2.6. a daring profile

If we were able to accurately draw a sketch of his human and spiritual profile, some of these features presented in contrast could not be missing:

- Sensitive, but not maudlin
- Methodical, but not rigid
- Kind, but not just a nice guy
- Mystical, but not spiritualistic
- Communicator, but not leader
- Pious, but very committed
- Discreet, but very talented
- Humble, but not servile
- Reserved, but not absent

3. How did his interest in catechesis for the deaf arise?

3.1. The awakening of a passion

[41] J.M. Lozano, a scholar of Claretian spirituality, confirms this: "Clotet, meek and delicate, was the only one who dared to put serious objections to some aspects of his government (of Fr. José Xifré, superior general). When he believed that his warnings were useless and that the good of the Institute demanded it, he humbly and frankly exposed his observations to the Holy See". (*Un hombre en la presencia de Dios*, pp.58-59)
[42] J. M. Lozano, *o.c.*; p. 60
[43] Annales CMF 59 (1989) p. 70.

During the time he lived in Civit, an episode of a providential nature occurred that shook Clotet's sensitivity in favour of that sector of the population that *"until then had not been the object of his attention"*[44]. He himself recounts in his own handwriting a series of factors that aroused his predilection for the deaf. Despite its simplicity[45], the initial factor was an unforeseen encounter that had the effect of a first internal jolt. He himself relates:

> *"Back in the years around 1848, when I was a priest-treasurer in a small town in this Diocese of Vic, one day an elderly man, a good Christian, appeared to me in the sacristy of the Parish Church, together with a young man of average height, peaceful appearance, keen and penetrating eye, and told me: "I bring you this deaf-mute young man so that you may hear his confession and administer the Holy Eucharist."*
> *"To which I replied smiling: -My friend, you ask me for an impossible, because I don't understand deaf-mute people. -It doesn't matter, he said, he already knows what it is to confess and take communion; other priests have confessed him and given him communion; do not have please the slightest objection. -I accepted his response and I agreed, observing the doctrine of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Ligorio, on the confession of deaf-mute. But, not satisfied with myself, I called them at my house in another hour, and I said to the father: -Are you quite sure that your deaf-dumb son understands you in everything? -Yes, sir, he answered me; and so that you be convinced, I will speak to him in his presence and I will make him speak to me. What do you want me to tell him? -Then I suggested the questions that suddenly occurred to me, and I saw that the deaf-mute answered vividly, convincing me that in reality the son understood the father and the father the son. In view of which, I said to myself: If a man of the country and without education has come to understand perfectly the art of speaking with signs, why should you not know it, receiving lessons from some competent man? But where to find him? And I was left with the desire."*[46]

That question: *"Why couldn't you...?"* changed his centre of gravity. It is true that he did not put his priestly vocation in crisis, but he did put it on track where he did not imagine. From then on, a chain of commitments will imprint a unique tint on his personality. In that transition he was convinced that his future was among deaf people and, therefore, the first thing he had to do was to know their language in order to bring them the proclamation of the Gospel.

3.2. How did he start carrying out this project?

But how to learn the art of speaking with signs? Where should he go? Providentially a second chance was offered to him on a plate. It happened in Barcelona, in May 1850, on the occasion of the prolonged convalescence imposed by a knee operation. Clotet himself tells us about it in the introduction to *The Catechist of the Ignorant Deaf-mute.*

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[44] M. R. Segura Giráldez, *Jaime Clotet, catequista de sordomudos. Drills for the degree*. Universidad Pontificia Salesiana, Roma, 1986; p. 17.
[45] This anecdote is included in his *Llibreta de exàmens de Doctrina, Confessió y Sagrada Comunió, de esta Parroquia de Civit, Rodell y Pavía per lo any de 1849*. It is an autograph document that reflects an exact knowledge of his parishioners in his pastoral ministry.
[46] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista*..., 5-7.

"After two or three years being already a Missionary, I had a problem with my knee, which (...) required a surgical operation for my immediate remedy, and my Rnd. Fr. Superior sent me to Barcelona.

Knowing that I would have to remain there three or four weeks, after my first healing, I found out who was the catechist and confessor of the deaf-mute in that populous capital. I was taken to the respectable priest of the Oratory of San Felipe Neri, who, being very kind to me, had the charity to give me daily lessons on how to speak to deaf-mutes with signs and understand them; of the way of teaching them the Catechism and of administering the Holy Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. He summoned the most educated of that city and before me spoke to them with signs and wanted them to speak to me. Noticing the difficulties that I had (which at first were many), they encouraged me, telling me in their way, that with the exercise I would overcome them all"[47].

It was then that he discovered his exceptional gifts. He learned so quickly that after he returned to Vic, a few days later, he was already giving catechism to deaf children through mimicry. This work, which he would never abandon, together with his study and his innate capacity for observation, would lead him to write several pedagogical works years later: "La Comunicación del Pensamiento por medio de Señales Naturales" (1866)[48], "El Catecismo de los Mudos"[49] (1870), "El Catequista del Sordomudo Ignorante"[50] (1890) y un "Suplemento"[51] (1892) a esta última *(The Communication of Thought through Natural Signals (1866), The Catechism of the Mute (1870), The Catechist of the Ignorant Deaf-Mute (1890) and a Supplement (1892) to the latter*). At the same time, he would be able to arouse in other Claretians an interest in this specialized ministry[52]. The Claretians themselves facilitated its dissemination throughout the peninsula, the Canary Islands, Santiago de Chile, Paris and Rome. They understood that catechesis for the deaf was a way of fulfilling the definition of the missionary: "To try by all means to light the whole world in the fire of divine love".

Clotet inflamed everyone with that fire of love, but with a preferential inclination towards those deaf children whom he called "ignorant", that is, not educated; who had not received any prior school instruction and often lacked knowledge of the written language. Clotet did not intend that his students learn to orally pronounce the written words that they would know if they knew how to read. He taught them, above all, to use natural signs and mimicry, although without disdaining those already educated deaf students. They were the least number.

Clotet's writings constitute the embryo of the first grammar of the language for deaf people in Catalonia. It was the most brilliant contribution of him. In the prologue of *La Comunicación del Pensamiento...* (The Communication of Thought...) he says: "It must be very interesting, then, to know this way of

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[47] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista*... 7-8.
[48] P. Jaime Clotet, *La Comunicación del Pensamiento por medio de Señas Naturales, o sea, Reglas para entender y hacerse entender de un sordo mudo,* Vich (L. Barjau) 1866, 64 pp.
[49] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catecismo de los Mudos.* Vich (R. Anglada), 1870, 132 pp.
[50] P. Jaime Clotet *El Catequista del Sordomudo ignorante*, Vich (R. Anglada) 1892, 216 pp. + 45 hh.
[51] P. Jaime Clotet *Suplemento de la obra El Catequista del sordomudo ignorante.* Vich, 1892, 19
[52] Cf. M. Segura, *Jaime Clotet, catequista de sordomudos*. Drillings for the degree. Universidad Pontificia Salesiana. Roma, 1986, p. 20

expressing oneself; very interesting to provide for their needs, to help them know what a Christian cannot ignore"[53] .

3.3. How did he balance this service with his missionary responsibilities?

How was it possible for a Congregation founded for the itinerant proclamation of the Word of God to admit into its ranks a catechist for the deaf who was obliged to the stability that his care required? How could be synchronized a mass missionary activity with the specialized catechesis of a small group? Curiously, we are not aware of any data that reveals reservations or opposition to this peculiar work of Clotet on the part of his brothers of the Congregation. Nor have we found disagreements, criticism or complaints from any instance.

Fortunately, there are favourable indications to the recognition of its validity in the mission as a whole. One fact, among others that could be cited, justifies the tolerance that Clotet found, rooted in the congregational option of evangelizing by all possible means and without discarding recipients. Claret, who designed a great cultural and educational project in El Escorial, wrote to Fr. Xifré on the same day that the Congregation celebrated the 20th anniversary of its foundation in these terms:

> *"You, as Superior General, when circumstances allow it and you consider it opportune, you can appoint one or two who have good handwriting, etc., to have a school for children, to do what the brothers of the Christian Doctrine practice (sic), of which there are so many in France, Italy, etc., and that do so much good; I believe that at present they are the ones that do the most good for the Church, and the ones that should be expected the most. God and the Blessed Virgin have reserved this special mission uniquely in Spain for the Congregation... I do not mean to say that everyone should take care of these schools; I only want to say that few and very few begin, that you will be careful to name, according to what you see of their zeal or that they ask for it. These schools will grow according to the fidelity with which they will correspond to grace. God and the Blessed Virgin will bring subjects on purpose; so that, without losing sight of their primary object, they dedicate themselves to this other field: haec oportet facere, et illa non omittere"[54] .*

This letter would modify the apostolic scope of the Congregation. Supporting such an initiative and out of fidelity to the Founder, Clotet himself defended taking over children schools[55]. Although catechesis and school are not identical, both are linked by being channels of education for the young generations. Clotet's adherence to both was not forced and, although they were not interchangeable, the two connected with his didactic concerns. Hence, it is logical that Fr. José Xifré himself, in the obituary he writes on the occasion of Clotet's death, specifically highlights his work in favour of the deaf, implying that it was something already integrated into the congregational apostolate[56] devoted from its beginnings to evangelize *"by all means"*[57].

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[53] P. JAIME Clotet, *La Comunicación...*, 3.
[54] Antonio Claret, *Carta al P. Xifré*, 16 julio 1869: Epistolario Claretiano II, 1406.
[55] M. Aguilar, *Historia de la Congregación*, I, p. 656. Citado en J. M. Lozano *o.c.* p. 212 en nota 58.
[56] C. Fernández, *La Congregación de Misioneros Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María. Compendio histórico de sus primeros sesenta y tres años (1849-1912)*. Madrid, 1967, I, p. 53.
[57] *Anales de la Congregación de Misioneros Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María*, en AG CMF, BH, 6,7.

3.4. Irradiation and follow-up of his catechesis for the deaf

3.4.1. In the initial moments of the Congregation

Since he joined the Institute, Clotet remained in Vic until 1868, the year in which he had to flee to France due to the revolution. From 1858 he held the position of Subdirector General of the Congregation and, from 1864, also that of local superior. During this period and to the extent that his responsibilities allowed him, he dedicated himself constantly to the education of deaf children[58], frequently being helped by a Claretian student[59]. It is known that he also had to teach his catechetical method to the teacher from Vic D. Roque Aubert[60]. The sessions were held in the convent of La Merced, where he lived. Not counting the time spent studying, preparing and rehearsing catechesis, he dedicated to this last task *"two hours a week, one on Thursdays for the girls and another on Sundays for the boys"*[61] always giving preference to the less educated, although without distinguishing sex, age or social status[62].

Although it was not Clotet's dominant activity in his missionary life, neither can it be valued as something circumstantial and temporary. He devoted as much time to it as his obligations allowed. As Fr. Mariano Aguilar indicates: *"His apostolate in favour of the deaf-mute was not for one year or two, but for a lifetime"*[63] This statement does not exactly coincide with the opinion of Juan M. Lozano, for whom Clotet's occupation was "occasional" and "periodical": *"The catechesis of the deaf-mute should not have occupied him much either, given the occasional nature of this ministry"*[64] and, in another place, *"He (Clotet) also exercised when he could, the ministry of teaching and catechizing the deaf, although, if we are not mistaken, this activity, periodical, had in him rather the character of a work of mercy"*[65]. Mariano Aguilar, who knew him well, does not agree with that opinion, as reflected above. The ministry of the deaf was as broad as he could. It was not reduced to a charitable work, but also opened an innovative gap in applied pedagogy. And this has been constantly recognized in the biographies that have been written about him, not only in the obituary of Fr. José Xifré already cited.

3.4.2. The consolidation of a pastoral care for the deaf

As the catechesis for deaf children obtained happy results from the beginning, they, he was soon asked from various instances to leave some notes in writing to continue them, among other reasons for his frequent and unavoidable absences. That was the origin of the 68 pages of his first booklet written in 1866 with the title "La Comunicación del Pensamiento por medio de Señales Naturales"[66](*The Communication of Thought through Natural Signs*), as a response to the need to

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[58] Cf. *Notas para los anales de la Congregación,* 147, en AG CMF/PG, CL, 16. Fr J. Xifré, remembering the first years of the Congregation's life, said referring to Clotet: "He had enough mimicry, with which he catechized the deaf-mute with pleasure" (J. Xifré, *Crónica de la Congregación de los Misioneros Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María*, en *Anales* 15 (1915) 194).
[59] Cf. P. Jaime Clotet, *La Comunicación*..., p. 23.
[60] Cfr. Witness of J. Aubert, in Positio s. introd., pp. 95-96
[61] M. Aguilar, *Biografía*... p. 307.
[62] P. Jaime Clotet, *La Comunicación*..., 1pp. 8, 20, 25, 36, 47, 53, 54, 59; id., *El Catecismo..., pp.* 6,8.
[63] M. Aguilar, *o.c.*, p. 308.
[64] J. M. Lozano, *o.c.*, p. 188,
[65] J. M. Lozano, *o.c.*, p. 213.
[66] Cf. M. Aguilar, *Ibidem.*

develop a catechetical method for the deaf[67]; later completed in 1870 with "El Catecismo de los Mudos" (*The Catechism of the Mute*) to fulfil the wishes of those who -following his example- began to care for deaf children[68]:

> *"In order that other priests or laymen may dedicate themselves fruitfully to the instruction of such needy individuals, and that move those who are interested in their temporal and eternal good to compassion, I wrote this Catechism which, despite my distrust, I resolve now to give birth, obeying the indications of respectable people that I must abide by"[69].*

Years later, other Claretians –and not only those from Vic- used those notes, counting on the support of the General Government. Once again, the peaceful integration of this ministry with those carried out in the Congregation becomes evident, without the slightest hint of contradiction with the Claretian charism. Another sample is collected in a letter addressed to Fr. Inocencio Heredero, superior of the community of Alfaro (La Rioja), dated November 29, 1875. In it, Clotet, endorsing the orientation of Fr. General, will remind him of the prescription to dedicate itself only to deaf boys and not to girls:

> *"Fr. General ordered me with great reason, not to allow our Missionaries to teach catechism to deaf-mute girls. The one you are talking about already has the Sisters. If they are missing the little book, you can contact the Sisters of Vic, who will know where it is"[70].*

It probably refers to the Carmelite Sisters of Charity, who - together with the Claretians of Alfaro - directed an establishment dedicated to the education of the youth and charitable assistance[71].

3.5. Forced absence of Vic (1868-1878)

The September Revolution of 1868 and its adverse political consequences forced him into exile in France. Thus, we witness a few years during which Clotet's activity with the deaf was, if not interrupted, at least restricted. Thus, it is noted that, from his installation in the south of France from the year 1868 to 1878, his manuscripts do not contain any news related to any direct work of Clotet with deaf people. Yes, there is some outside testimony in favour of such dedication[72] and of his active interest in the dissemination of his publications. It is shown by the correspondence maintained with Fr. I. Heir in 1875[73].

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[67] Cf P. JAIME CLOTET, *La Comunicación*..., pp. 63-64.
[68] Cf.P. JAIME CLOTET, *El Catecismo*..., p. 5; id. *El Catequista*..., p. 8; Clotet a Batlló, 17-8-1889, en AG CMF/PG, CL, 32.
[69] P. JAIME CLOTET. *El Catequista*..., p. 5.
[70] Clotet a I. Heredero, 29-11-1875, en AG CMF/PG, CL, 32.
[71] Cf. A. M. ALONSO FERNÁNDEZ, *Historia documental de la Congregación de las Hermanas Carmelitas de la Caridad,* t. II, Madrid, 1971, pp. 336-341; C. FERNÁNDEZ, *La Congregación de los Hijos del Inmaculado Corazón de María, compendio histórico de sus primeros sesenta y tres años de existencia* (1849-1912), t. I, Madrid, 1967, pp. 481-484.
[72] Fr. Jaime Aubert, who knew Clotet as a student in Thuir, says: "(...) amava dedicarsi alla istruzione religiosa e cristiana degli ignoranti, preferendo sopratutto quella dei poveri sordomuti, per l'insegnamento religioso dei quali compose una specie di catecismo dandosi molta pemura che tutti noialtri imparassimo i Segni adatti ad istruire quegli infelici" (test. De J. Aubert, en *Positio s. introd.*, 95). Cf. test. M. Vila, en *Ibidem*, 169; test. J. Postíus, en *Ibid*., 188; test. I. Ruiz, en *Ibid.,* 114; test. J. Oller, en *Ibid*., 291.
[73] Clotet a I. Heredero, 29-11-1875, en AG CMF/PG, CL, 32.

Furthermore, it is known that he also tried to instruct other Claretians on the matter and in Thuir he was able to carry it out. The proof that his works were known and used by various Claretians is provided by Clotet himself in his *Reserved Diary IV* where he notes that on July 31, 1887, he sent "El catecismo de los mudos" (*The Catechism of the Mute*) to the Claretian missionaries Frs. Nicomedes Blanco, Raimundo Burgués and Lorenzo Pujol who resided respectively in the communities of Córdoba, Calahorra (La Rioja) and Gracia (Barcelona)[74].

3.6. Return to Vic and resumption of his activity with the deaf

Upon his return from France, in September 1888, Clotet held the positions of Secretary General of the Institute and local superior of the community of Vic. As soon as circumstances permitted, he returned to normal his catechetical work, as he himself declares: *"Although my occupations are many, I cannot do without consecrating part of the time each week for the poor deaf-mute, who come knocking at our door, asking for the bread of the Divine Word, which I can only administer to them through signs"* [75].

Moreover, during this time he increased his knowledge and deepened it according to his wishes, which he would confess a year later, on August 17, 1889, in a letter to Fr. Jerónimo Batlló, Procurator General of the Congregation*: "On this occasion, I am going to tell you something about my writings for the religious instruction of an ignorant deaf-mute. They are short and I want to improve them, because every Sunday a portion of the poor come, who do not know how to express themselves except with signs, and the Fathers of this House-Mission asked me for permission to attend my catechetical conferences. They would like me to give birth to my "Catecismo de los mudos" (Catechism of the Mute), improving it as much as possible. With permission from Fr. General, I can do it; more before that I would like to know: 1) If there were in that Capital (Rome) a little book that dealt with mimicry or signs, even as you know I have dedicated myself a lot to it. 2) If some intelligent person of that city could censor my writings"*[76].

From then on, he began a fruitful exchange with the Attorney General, which allowed him to enrich his knowledge with the progress made in Italy[77]. In addition,

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[74] Cf. *Diario reservado...*t. IV, 99, en AG CMF/PG, CL,18; *Catalogus Individuorum Congregationis Missionariorum Immaculati Cordis Beatae Virginis Mariae, ineunte mense Decembri anni 1887,* Matriti, MDCCCLXXXVII, 5, 11.

[75] Clotet a Batlló, 9-12-1889, en *AG CMF/ PG*, CL, 32.

[76] Clotet a Batlló, 17-8-1889, en AG CMF/PG, CL, 32.

[77] Fr. Batlló sent him several existing works in Italy on the subject, such as:

- T. Pendola, *Corso di pratico insegnamento per il sordomuto italiano,* Siena, 1842 (cf. Clotet a J. Batlló, 3-11-1889, en *AG CMF*/PG, CL, 32).
- A. G. Donnino, *L'Arte di far parlare i sordomuti dalla nascita e l'abbate Tommaso Silvestri*, Roma, 1889 (cf. *Ibidem*, 9,12-1889).
- L. Bertaccini, *Istruzione catechistica religiosa ad uso dei sordomuti*, Napoli, 1889 (cf. *ibid*.).
- E, Ghislandi; *Compendio della Storia Sacra ad uso speciale dei sordomuti*, Milano, 1856 (Cf. *Ibid*. 28-2-1890)
- A.G- Donnino, *Lezioni di catecismo con note ad uso dei sordomuti*, Roma 1891 (cf. *Ibid*., 16-3-1892, en *AG CMF*/GC, 10, 21).

Batlló must have also sent him other works that we have not been able to locate, given the imprecision with which they are cited by J. Clotet: it is a "catechism" composed by E. Ghislandi (cf. Ibid. 2-28-1890, in AG CMF/ PG, CL, 32) and another "work" published by T. Pendola (cf. Ibid. 6-23-1890).

he put him in contact with the Redemptorist Fr. Alfonso G. Donnino -teacher at the "Regio Istituto dei Sordomuti" in Rome- who, although with a different pedagogical approach, would show particular interest in the engravings of the last work of Fr. Clotet[78].

Clotet filtered the contributions that came to him from Italy through his personal perspective, focused on the most deprived deaf children. With them he could only communicate through natural mimicry[79]. Therefore, the method to be followed could not be the same as that of G. Donnino, aimed at already educated children.

And he was not satisfied with catechetical instruction, but he also threw himself into their promotion and help. Eustaquio Belloso, a Claretian from the same community as him, refers to it in some facts: *"(...) when they were sick, he visited them and provided them with the good that he could when they needed it. One named José Serra, his married sister who lived in Vic, came from Barcelona, he did not want him in his house if he did not bring bed and clothes and earned to support himself. The priest provided him with bed and clothes and told me to teach him how to sew; and in a few days he already knew how to make pants; then he put him in a trusted tailor shop called the Yuixa tailor, where he learned a lot"*[80].

On another occasion he recalls the following episode: *"there were two mute siblings and their sick father: they told Fr. Clotet about it. He asked the father to let the boy come to at least be educated, since he said he needed the girl because he was a widower. This man died and the mute remained at the providence of Fr. Clotet, who soon found a decent job for them"*[81].

In 1891, Clotet left his position as General Secretary of the Congregation and went to Thuir. When he returned to Vic for the last time - in June 1892 - he published "Suplemento" (*the Supplement*)[82]. The booklet maintained his method but dispensed with mime translation and engravings. The leaflet was intended for those who already knew the sign language and wished to have the doctrinal support. Moved by his desire to involve more collaborators, he tried to start another project that could never be carried out due to lack of financial means. Indeed, at the end of 1893 he contacted the cartoonist Juan Robira in order to ask him for some drawings for a new work[83]. On December 16, 1893, he told him that he was definitively giving up the project: *"I will put some observations behind the drawings and I will return them to you. I have to suspend my work due to lack of resources, but I will pay for the commissioned work"*[84].

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[78] The correspondence with Fr. Donnino is not preserved, but what Clotet communicated to Batlló about it, is indeed preserved. (Cf. M. SEGURA, o.c. p. 93 in note).
[79] From the point of view of the contents, it refers to the ignorance of "the elementary truths of the faith" (Clotet to J. Batlló 3-11-1889, in *AG CMF*/CL, 32).
[80] E. Belloso to F.A. Cepeda, (s.f.), in *AG CMF*, GC, 15,7.
[81] E. Belloso to M. Aguilar, (s.f.), in *Ibidem*.
[82] The first news that Clotet provides us about the supplement is collected in his *Diario reservado*... dated December 8, 1892: "Fr. Casanueva. Shipment of 25 ex. of Supplement. of the Catek. of the S-M. ign. It is paid with alms" (Clotet to Fr. Casanueva, 9-12-1892, in *Diario reservado*... t. VII, 91).
[83] Cf. Clotet to J. Robira, 18-11-1893, *Ibidem*, 143. *Ibid*., 15-12-1893, 144; *Ibid*., 16-12-1893, 144; *Ibid*., 28-12-1893, 145; *Ibid.* 29-12-1893, 145; *Ibid*., 14-1-1894, 148; *Ibid*., 15-1-1894, 148; Clotet to R. Fluvias, 15-1-1894, in *Ibid*., 148.
[84] Clotet to J. Robira, 16-12-1893, in *Ibid*., 144.

These adversities did not lead him to conclude his activity in Vic and in his region[85], with such care that, according to those who knew him, his students were *"willing to do anything for their Lord Clotet"*[86]. He was a good and loyal friend.

On September 21, 1895 he definitively left the city of Vic to move to Gracia, where he would end his days. After his departure, the catechesis of deaf children was entrusted to Fr. Valentín Morlá[87]. For his part, Clotet did not stop conceiving other projects[88] that gradually faded due to the relentless passage of time and his increasingly poor health[89]. In advanced decrepitude and despite his deteriorating eyesight, shortly before he died, he made one last attempt to perfect his method to facilitate the work of those who followed his teachings[90], as he always used to do.

3.7. Clotet's legacy made a reality in Mexico[91]

From the pastoral and academic point of view, Clotet's work, for various reasons, did not consolidate into stable works. The data contrasts with a splendid exception: the beginning of care for the deaf in 1884 in Mexico continued to the present day in the famous "Clotet Centre", dedicated in a professional manner to the education of deaf people, prioritizing adolescents and young people with few financial resources. Let's take a brief look at its genesis and deployment.

There is evidence that in 1905 Fr. Camilo Torrente cmf began to gather a small group of deaf children to give them catechism in the church of San Hipólito in the Mexican capital. Later, in 1929, with Fr. Rosendo Olleta cmf, the educational offer was expanded by introducing other learning such as reading, embroidery, drawing and singing. During the years 1950 to 1953, Fr. Manuel Fierro cmf took charge of the work, who qualified it with the foundation of the "Rosendo Olleta" Academy, in memory of his predecessor and thus establishing the first school for the deaf in Mexico, which grew along with a pastoral activity for the deaf. In 1961, Fr Ángel Alegre cmf changed the name of the institution to "IRO"[92] as it is still remembered today. In 1994 the centre moved to a building near the Claretian parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, offering preschool and primary education until the year 2000. Fr. Macario Sánchez cmf took over from Fr. Ángel in the

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[85] Cf. *Diario reservado*..., t. VIII, 171; Cf. *Notas manuscritas*, en J. Clotet, *El catecismo de los mudos,* en *AG CMF/PG*, CL, 3.
[86] Test. J. Coll, en *Positio s. introd*., p. 331.
[87] In a letter dated October 15, 1895, Jaime Clotet explained to Valentín Morlá how to translate some words into mimic language (Clotet to V. Morlá, 15-10-1895, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 32).
[88]In the letter that we have just quoted, he goes on to say: "If I had here the French book that I left in that house, now I could take out many ideas and signs and put together a slightly more extensive Dictionary than the one I made in the aforementioned book (The catechist...). I don't lack time here (...). Day 16.- So far, I had not seen the little box that they sent me and I see that there is "La Religion aux sourds-muets" and the other little books that I had wanted- Thanks for everything" (*Ibidem*).
[89]On April 16, 1897, while he was doing the spiritual exercises for that year, he wrote: "I conform my will to God's in all things, particularly about the weakness of my eyesight, in the way he wants and for as long as he disposes" (Collection, 148, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 19). In fact, he suffered from cataracts (Cf. M. Aguilar, *Biografía*..., 468s).
[90] In December 1895, V. Morlá asked him for "Los Pecados Capitales de los sordomudos" (V. Morlá to Clotet, 9-12-1895, in *Diario reservado*..., t. VIII, 31): it consists of a sheet that Clotet himself must have composed; this was sent to him shortly (Cf. *Ibidem,* 22-12-1895, 31).
[91] The references indicated are collected in a recent communication of July 2022 received directly from Br. Juan Carlos Bugarín Lara cmf, current head of the Clotet Centre in Mexico.
[92]*IRO stands for Instituto "Rosendo Olleta".*

direction of the IRO. Previously, since 1987, a team of Claretian students and priests continued the work with the deaf, extending it to other Claretian communities in the country.

Given the educational delay caused by their school lag, deaf adolescents and young people in the country could not be admitted to public schools. This made the need to found a school that could receive and accompany deaf people over 15 years of age more and more pressing. Such a dream came true with the foundation of the "Clotet Centre" in 1999. The work began in the church of San Hipólito, the following year it was definitively moved to the old dependencies of the "IRO", where it currently remains, directed by missionary Brothers to whom since the beginning of the Clotet Congregation he dedicated so many efforts. The Clotet Centre continues to offer elementary, middle and high school education, along with Mexican sign language workshops.

4. His pedagogical and pastoral legacy

From his personal sensitivity, Clotet contributed to giving a comprehensive response to the educational emergency of the neediest deaf. It made them feel that they were not out of the world. If his work with the deaf was focused on teaching catechism, the consequences would go much further: to make those children who did not have a stunted capacity for wonder understand the inexplicable and perceive the non-tangible or controllable by the senses. The catechism played the role of a vehicular element through which the whole person was promoted, not only in their religious dimension. The communication of thought through natural signs goes beyond Christian instruction. And of course, far beyond useless moralism or the transmission of slogans. It allows us to notice that things are not absurd, but that they have a meaning and an explanation. It introduces, above all, the path -so little travelled- of the knowledge of the greatest love that a human being can know, whom we call God the Father. Though his writings were neither numerous nor erudite, though he himself was not enrolled in the ranks of laboratory scholars, Clotet's work was commendable as he has been fairly recognized. In his brief and clear manuals, he pursues that "the entire educational process is aimed, ultimately, at the integral development of the person."[93]

Nor did Clotet manage to promote a “specialized section” in his Congregation to help deaf people, because the founding intention was directed towards much broader goals. But, in addition to his spiritual legacy, he managed to contribute educational innovations and keys that are still valid both for the educational task and for the evangelizing ministry, which is also an educational task. Let's look at some of those keys.

4.1. Compassion as an impulse

It was the central spring of Clotet's motivation, rooted in and fuelled by his evangelical sensitivity. Compassion is not identified with that commiseration that

[93] JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* on Catholic Universities, August 15, 1990; P20.

accommodates itself to what there is, but seeks to transform it for the better. In Clotet, it was the engine that drove him and kept him permanently at the service of the deaf, as he confesses in the introduction to his "Catecismo de los Mudos" (*Catechism for the Mute*):

> *"Whenever I have seen a deaf-mute for the first time, a feeling of compassion has been excited in me, I have experienced an almost irresistible impulse to occupy myself with making him know the main truths of the faith, a difficult thing to be sure, but necessary and of the greatest consolation in his misfortune. This was the reason why from the first years of my promotion to the Priesthood, I tried to instruct myself in the art of Mimicry"*[94].

It was necessary to become a child and deaf-mute to understand what they cannot express and teach them what they ignore, as a mother does with her baby. Clotet's empathic attitude was the fruit of Christian faith and love welcomed and cultivated, not of a mere altruistic sensitivity, nor of an ethical obligation. Who believed that just by carefully following a certain pedagogical method good result would be achieved, would be mistaken. It would lack the most essential thing that is love. An effective love that spills over into a multitude of expressions: affective closeness, harmony, rapport, patience, active hope, adaptation to the conditions of the other, help, guidance... These are attitudes that Clotet possessed to a superlative degree[95]. He knew how to conjugate four verbs that made up his circuit of compassion: *approach, commit oneself, get trained and involve others*.

• Clotet was transformed by his first encounter with that deaf man in Civit. The contact with him produced something like a visceral cramp. It moved him inside. Compassion only occurs over short distances. To sympathize, one must be present, approach. What is not known does not move, what does not move never sets anything in motion. The affective is the effective.

• He was not alone in being emotionally affected. He was not satisfied with a feeling of rage, tenderness, solidarity. He had to do something. The vents or the accusations to other instances were not worth either. That would be hidden inhibition under the curtain of denunciation. Clotet was thrown into a commitment that was going to involve work, risks and sacrifices. He didn't need long to make up his mind.

• To carry out that dream, Clotet had to educate himself, study, investigate, learn sign language, connect with experts, obtain resources. The will is the most important thing, but support and help from third parties are also required. He searched hard for them knocking on the door of the generosity of many people.

• Finally, Clotet looked for task partners. He began by involving and forming other Claretians, a local teacher and several Carmelites of Charity. He mobilized himself to obtain various collaborations from others, without creating any institution. He articulated the best he knew all that gear, so that his dream would not be endangered. He always maintained his intention to involve and train others: *"My goal in writings related to the deaf-mute is to*

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[94] P. Jaime Clotet, *El catecismo...*, p. 5.
[95] As commented by Chiquirrín Aguilar R., *Dos apóstoles de las personas sordas. Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro (S.J.), Jaime Clotet Fabrés (C.M.F.)*, s.c., 2011.

help priests and parents and other people who wish to instruct an ignorant deaf-mute in the elementary truths of Faith and Religion, with the knowledge acquired by long experience"[96].

4.2. Inclusion as a goal

It is clear that Clotet was, above all, a catechist. *"In catechism he was at his centre"*[97]. From it he made it possible for his deaf disciples to contribute to the construction of a future for all in a society without exclusions. His concept of education, latent in his catechetical intention, was not reduced to the exclusively pastoral but had a broader resonance: he helped them stop seeing themselves as a minority and redundant group to feel truly inserted in society. A good catechesis for the deaf, with special educational needs, was a potential good not only for them, but also for society and the Church. With his meritorious contribution, he refuted the prejudice that deafness impeded access to equal opportunities and social participation. Starting from his own experience, he demonstrated the inconsistency of such an error with the evidence of the facts:

> *"To those who have not dealt with deaf-mutes and have not learned their way of expressing themselves, this question naturally arises: Can a deaf-mute be given knowledge of spiritual and invisible things? This doubt that I had before I understood them, I have heard from many, but I have been able to convince myself that neither muteness nor deafness deprives them of the natural capacity that those who speak have, to understand those things. which do not fall under the perception of the bodily senses"*[98].

The possibility of communicating, of understanding and being understood, generated in the deaf a potential of values such as truth, courage, trust, solidarity, justice which in turn originated positive attitudes and behaviours. These strengths not only brought the deaf closer to society, but also integrated them into it and enabled them to build a shared history from their potentialities. The deaf could have an active role in society, they could collaborate effectively in its development, from the recognition of their dignity and equality and, also, from the respect of their differences. These convictions were always latent in his educational and catechetical activity. Various witnesses, such as those already quoted above, corroborate this[99].

4.3. The question as pedagogy

Clotet's catechesis was based on the method of questions from the teacher and answers from the disciples, both formulated from mimicry and, sometimes, with the help of drawings. He tried through dialogue to avoid the temptation of insipid indoctrination or a frustrating transmission of moral norms. The pedagogy of questions and answers already existed at the time. It was valid to exercise the art

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[96] Clotet to Batlló, 3-11-1889, in *AG CMF/PG,* CL, 32.
[97] M. Aguilar, *Biografía del P. Clotet*, p. 63.
[98] P. Jaime Clotet, *La Comunicación...*, pp. 60-61.
[99] E. Belloso to M. Aguilar, (s.f.), in *Ibidem*.

of thinking, to open the sensitivity and understanding to the most noble and deepest[100] realities and to put the interlocutors in communication and link them.

It has been said that asking is the art of inviting thought. Asking and thinking are two inseparable intellectual processes that are only possible in a setting of encounter, conversation, reception and response. The well-formulated question does not force the interlocutor or silence him, but moves him to respond and implies him without nullifying him. Clotet was accompanied by the question-answer ritual when presenting drawings and illustrations in his sessions with deaf people.

The use of the question also launched many dynamisms and skills for learning such as attention, openness, reflection, reaction, curiosity, creativity, intercommunication, access to transcendent content, in addition to creating the necessary affective environment, so favourable to learning.

Teaching by asking also added the merit of helping to get out of the known and opaque, to delve further, into the impalpable and indemonstrable, into the new and unknown, into the complex and mysterious of life. Clotet was able to see fulfilled his purpose of positively settling *"the important question whether the deaf-mute from birth can understand spiritual and invisible things"*[101]. His pedagogy of questions made it easy. Learning to wonder, especially asking transcendent questions, softens and oxygenates the harshness of foreseeable reality. He draws from immobility and isolation. He creates company. It is a maturation channel. It deactivates the myopic gaze on reality, it makes nuances and colours be perceived, it opens a way in the night, it offers new horizons of meaning, it enters the territory of the non-immediate and visible, of the deepest truth.

4.4. Image and gesture as educational tools

The art of education is not only concerned with what is transmitted, but how it is communicated. Stating that images have played a decisive role throughout the history of evangelization and catechesis is nothing new. Neither is it new to unite gestures and images in pastoral praxis. Using both expressions already used, Clotet tried to understand the deaf and make himself understood by them. This is emphasized by the subtitle of his first published work and which, as a concern, appears recurrently in his writings: *"I am not surprised that Fr. Donnino is in favour of spoken teaching, because it is more appropriate for the deaf-mute of the Schools of the big cities (...); to me, however, neither time nor circumstances allow me to do good to the many but through mimicry and engravings"*[102] .

As mentioned above, since his time at Civit he himself felt the urgency to learn sign language with its grammar based on vision and movements and allows the transmission of abstract ideas since *"... little or nothing will benefit (the catechist of the deaf-mute), if he does not dedicate himself to the study of mime (...) Because, although faith usually has to enter through the ear (Fides ex auditu), in the deaf-mute it has to enter through the eye; which, being the noblest sense in man,*

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[100] Cf. José Carlos Ruiz, *El arte de pensar*, Berenice, 2018
[101] M. Aguilar, *Biografía*..., p. 318.
[102] Clotet to Batlló, 30-9-1890, in AG CMF/PG, CL, 32.

makes up for hearing in the deaf-mute, a thing evident to those who have dealt with them closely and frequently"[103]*.* The gestures were accompanied by a series of drawings that made it easier to understand and learn. Even though today this method may seem outdated by the advancement of communication technologies, it should not be forgotten that in its time these pedagogies were considered innovative and even cutting-edge.

There is a list of gestures and mime that is catalogued in "El Catequista del Sordomudo Ignorante" (*The Catechist of the Ignorant Deaf and Mute).* There we find a brief dictionary with the most used words, arranged in alphabetical order, and with the corresponding gestures and their explanatory notes[104]. The gestures that Clotet proposes do not follow the same combination of words that were used colloquially, but rather those that deaf people used in their daily lives to make themselves understood. Very sensitive to the less educated he tends to abbreviate sentences, selecting the most familiar and spontaneous gestures for them instead of the conventional which were not always coincident with those of the most enlightened deaf.

Gestures were also accompanied by images and prints. Clotet, after the index of the work to which we are referring, includes forty-five engravings[105]. They are printings drawn by Fr. Claret and published in his "Catecismo explicado" (*Catechism explained*)[106] which he considered quite adequate to his method because they were ideal for him *"to learn about Christian Doctrine and teach children and adults"*[107]*.*

Although he belonged to a culture based, above all, on the word and the concept, Clotet joined the stream of those who opened more spaces to the image as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge and faith. The drawings *"are for the deaf-mute ideas that are communicated in an intelligible way, draw his attention and effectively contribute to instructing him before he can do it by other means."*[108] The image is not a simple decoration of the word but it contains in itself a great symbolic and communicative load. We all verify daily that stories reach more than concepts, films more than speeches, photos more than texts.

By linking image and gesture, Clotet put into circulation thoughts and emotions, concepts and values, visible and invisible realities. And they were reinforced, which was his goal. Many years ago M. McLuhan stated that "the medium is the message". The medium through which information is received affects more than the information itself. The media alter the way we relate to ourselves and to society. There are means that lead the receiver to passivity, to non-interaction, to non-participation. The means used by Clotet, however, had a crucial impact on the lives of their interlocutors, affecting a part of their human psyche.

5. Grateful Conclusion

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[103] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista...*, p. 14.
[104] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista...* (2nd ed. of 1890) pp. 167-208.
[105] P. Jaime Clotet, *El Catequista...* (2nd ed. of 1890) at the end and without page numbering.
[106] Antonio Claret, *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado y adaptado a la capacidad de los niños y niñas y adornado con muchas láminas*, Barcelona, 1848, 156 pp.
[107] P. Jaime Clotet, *Resumen de la admirable vida del Excmo. e Ilmo. St. D. Antonio María Claret y Clará*, Barcelona, 1882, p. 320.
[108] P. Jaime Clotet, *Catecismo de los Mudos*... p. 8.

It's time to finish. I do it gratefully. After going around the world a few times, I came to Vic almost a year ago. I did not get here in a straight line but, like by the sea, my hands caressed before some corners of the earth. Today, on the day that we pay homage to an illustrious brother of the Congregation, I feel that I must express my gratitude to you and to this town for your invitation. If it is true that the whole world is our home, it is no less true that we need to turn this possibility of home into something concrete. Here, in this town at the foot of Montseny and bathed in fog in previous winters, the invitation to participate has helped me feel at home. Thank you very much.