

Anthony Claret was ordained a priest in 1835. In the early years of his ministry, he had a generous heart for the poor that never left him. Serving with humility, his superiors recognized his abilities and assigned him in missionary work throughout Catalonia. From 1843-47 when he wasn't busy in his home parish, he traveled on foot throughout Catalonia, preaching constantly and distributing books and leaflets he had written to explain the faith. In 1848, he was assigned to the Canary Islands off the Northwest coast of Africa. Although he was there for only 15 months, the work he did is still remembered to this day. ^{i ii}

In 1849 he returned to Catalonia and established the Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (16 July 1849). The order is often known for its founder as Claretians. These Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary are men on fire with the love of God. As missionaries, they strive by all means possible to set everyone on fire with God's love. They live an austere life, readily accepting privations, welcoming work, and embracing sacrifice. When confronted with ill will, they return smiles. When tormented they rejoice and readily accept their suffering. They strive to follow the way of Jesus in all things and imitate him in praying and working for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.ⁱⁱⁱ

Anthony Claret was appointed as Archbishop of Santiago, Cuba and arrived there in February of 1851. He worked tirelessly to reform the clergy, create new parishes, set up credit unions, and evangelize through the entire diocese. In the first two years of his ministry, 9000 couples were married in the church. Traveling on foot and by mule, he visited every corner of the diocese 3 times in 4 years.

He saw great poverty and brought the principles of the Gospel to bring about social justice. He built hospitals and schools. He provided for the Christian education of slaves. He tried to end the misery of the common man by fostering family-owned farms producing a variety of foods for the family's own needs and for the market. The rich who profited from a single cash crop of sugar were not pleased. They hired an assassin to take his life. Although seriously injured, Bishop Claret forgave the assassin and insured that he was not given the death penalty.^{iv} He escaped all 15 attempts on his life no doubt giving credit to God and Mother Mary for his constant protection.

In 1857, Queen Isabella II asked him to return to Spain and appointed him as her confessor. Traveling with the queen, he took every advantage to continue sharing the Good News through the length and breadth of Spain. He continued to write and edit books and preach missions far and wide. Although he could have lived like a king, he chose a frugal life and directed as much effort and as many resources as could to helping the poor.

"For nine years he was rector of the Escorial monastery where he established an excellent scientific laboratory, a museum of natural history, a library, college, and schools of music and languages. His further plans were frustrated by the revolution of 1868."^v At the outbreak of the revolution, he stayed close to the queen accompanying her into exile.

During 1869 and 1870, he was one of the learned men who helped with the First Vatican Council delivering a forceful argument for papal infallibility. "In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility."^{vi} Papal infallibility only pertains to matters of faith and morals when definitively declared by the pope. Infallibility has only been invoked twice. Once in the 19th century in declaring Mary as immaculately conceived and again in the 20th century declaring Mary was assumed into heaven. No doubt as the founder of the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Anthony Claret approved wholeheartedly.

Anthony died October 24th, 1870 in France surrounded by his Missionaries and the Cistercian monks. He lived a full and holy life proclaiming the Gospel to all the nations. God calls each one of us to do the same. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to live holy lives and to “Proclaim God’s marvelous deeds to all the nations” (Ps 96:3).

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/martyrology_entry.php?n=5644

ⁱⁱ claretiansusa.org/the-congregation/

ⁱⁱⁱ claret.org/en/claretians/a-claretian/

^{iv} franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-anthony-mary-claret

^v catholicnewsagency.com/martyrology_entry.php?n=5644

^{vi} Catechism of the Catholic Church # 889.