

First attempt of Fr. Aloysius to establish his semi-contemplative Claretians in Fatima through the personal help of John Haffert.

March 9, 1971

Mr. John Haffert
Ave Maria Institute
Washington, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Haffert:

I wish to thank you for publishing my article in Soul Magazine. You have helped to make Saint Anthony Mary Claret better known and loved the world over as the forerunner of Fatima and have brought more devotion to him by making him the Patron of the Blue Army. The Blue Army is your greatest apostolic work, among your many others for Our Blessed Mother, though you are so eminent as an author of spiritual books. This brings me to tell you something important which is to be done this year on the anniversary of the last apparition of the Blessed Mother on October thirteenth. Imagine, dear John, that this is coming from Saint Anthony Mary Claret, the great Patron of the Blue Army. It is coming from one of his sons, under the special inspiration of such a father as he is to me and also to you, John, since you have proclaimed him as the special patron of the greatest of your apostolic and Marian accomplishments.

In the past few years God, in His great Goodness, has been sending many vocations to me. Most of these vocations have a monastic leaning and want to serve God with much prayer and apostolic work as its product. These young men are asking for more than is given in present-day seminaries. At the same time they don't want a completely cloistered life. At present their number is growing and meanwhile I am praying that God will provide a semi-contemplative monastery where they will love and serve Him the best. When I visited Fatima last November it came to me that this might be where it could be founded. With these young men I have been discussing this great possibility, even to the minor details of it, and here I would like to present it to you.

These applicants would like to be called "Claretian Semi-Contemplatives, Clerics of the Blue Army". This could provide a choir to sing at the shrine of the Blessed Mother--sort of a replica, or reflection of the Montserrat Gregorian chant of the monks, and of the young choristers of that famous Monastery, who try to emulate

the Angelic Choirs. Fr. Tomás de Manzarraga, C.M.F., the greatest authority in Gregorian Chant in the world, is most willing to help us and even to be a member. I talked this over thoroughly with him when I was in Spain this past November. Father Manzarraga has organized his choristers in Madrid and was a special music tutor to Franco's grandchildren. The best of the clergy in Spain in Gregorian Chant are his pupils. He has a doctorate in Gregorian Chant and studied in France at the great Archabbey of Solesmes and in Paris.

The habit of the monks is to be a dark blue cassock with the same color of sash with tassels. They will wear in choir a rochette which is white and falls below the waist and over which is worn a thin cope, dark blue as the cassock. The monks should use the Chant of the Office of the Blessed Mother. They will follow the Claretian Rule and keep the "C.M.F." since Saint Anthony Mary Claret is the Patron of the Blue Army and the Forerunner of Fatima. But his Rule will be modified to fit a monastic life. Some Portuguese Claretians should be at the head of the monks in their main duties. Every nationality should have admittance to this community, but we want to have the complete trust and understanding of the Portuguese. The Bishop of Leiria and Father General in an amiable way will have perfect control of these monks. Both of them must be of one accord in regard to everyone and everything in this particular monastery that will be the soul of the Blue Army. Dear John, you are the great founder and organizer of the Blue Army. This would be the completion of it. I have been praying and will pray that this comes to a happy issue. But you are the instrument, John. With you we can; without you we cannot.

The aim is to eventually have perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament at the large Shrine. They can start with adoration on special feasts, then later on when the monastery becomes better organized, they could have it very often, and finally at all times. I can provide the best of vocations from America for this monastery. I already have several in preparation in case this is founded. The community would be composed of Fathers, Students and Lay Brothers. The Fathers would be for singing the Office at the sanctuary of the Shrine and to carry on the different duties of the Blue Army. The Students should study in one of the seminaries in Fatima. The Lay Brothers should be well-educated for domestic or farm duties. They should know the new methods of cultivation, how to improve the land and use new farm machinery. They could have a vegetable farm owned by the monastery somewhere in Fatima, with orchards and a large field for wheat or other grain. This could help them for their own needs and also they could sell some of their produce for their support, and always have some for charity for the poor. Some of the community could be secretaries to provide help in Blue

Army centers, and they could also be advertized in Soul Magazine for their needs.

But we need a monastery. And here we come to you, Mr. Haffert, humbly asking for your help--to supply one of the religious houses in Fatima that are closing down from lack of means. This would be a tremendous asset to Fatima to bring the blessings of God. In case there is no other place available, our Claretian Fathers in Fatima could dispose of their place for us. They are willing to sell, but I don't know their stipulations. I have spoken to the Father Provincial in Lisbon about this project. He likes it and so does Father General. New talks will be necessary. Here again, John, you are needed for these transactions. This is the best crown you can put on the Blessed Mother on the silver anniversary of Her Queenship in Fatima, as the Queen of the Universe.

Along with the monks, we plan to have little "Franciscos and Jacintas". These are boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 14 to sing in the choir. They will all be dressed the same way as the original Francisco and Jacinta. This would complete Fatima and make it unique in the world and most attractive and devout of all the shrines in Europe. Franciscos and Jacintas, carrying on their banners the portraits of the two little future Saints, would become a new devotional and inspirational practice to start a new legion of innocent children going on the footsteps of Francisco and Jacinta: to love the Blessed Mother, to recite ~~the~~ Rosary and to practice the virtues demonstrated by these two children to an heroic degree, particularly in their life of penance and prayer.

Our first procedure is to get permission from the Father General of the Claretians. He will be here ~~in~~ Los Angeles in May when I will speak with him. But first I would like to know your reaction, dear John, and how willing you are for this project, because without you there would be nothing. After this there must be perfect understanding between the Bishop of Leiria and Father General. Thus we should find out how the Bishop of Leiria likes the idea in general, since he is the Ordinary of Fatima and now the spiritual head of the Blue Army instead of Monsignor Colgan. If you are willing, dear John, to help us with this kind of monastery that will be the soul of the Blue Army, it would be so nice if you could introduce it to the Bishop of Leiria, and then to Father General and to the Claretian Provincial in Portugal, whose residence is: Father Alvez, C.M.F.; Colegio Universitário Pio XII; Ave. 28 de Maio; Cidade Universitaria; Lisbon; tele. 76 04 32 y 77 03 91; 76 58 94 y 76 56 51.

Dear John, this has been in my mind for a long time and I have great confidence in coming to you. Help the Blessed Mother of Fatima during this Silver Jubilee of Her Queenship. All the little pains that you might have in organizing this will be crowned by Her with much added glory. If we could start by October 13th this year, no matter how small our start is, we could have the solemn opening of it at that time. Will you request permission from Father General to have me there for the opening of it?

To found a religious community, within earshot of the bells of the Shrine of Fatima, would be the great legacy of the Blue Army to the world. It would add a permanence to the Blue Army that would insure its growth and fervor until the end of time, as the real soul of the Blue Army. The Fathers could carry on the sanctification of souls, as requested by the Blessed Mother, by preaching the message of Fatima. It would be nice too if they could have a retreat house where people from all over the world could come for a place of recollection.

Now may we go to another point that is also very important and dear to me. I have founded a congregation of Sisters called the Daughters of Saint Anthony Mary Claret, a teaching and nursing order. They dress in light blue and wear the White Scapular of the Immaculate Heart visible over their habit. Their approval has been requested since July 10th, 1970. Since there is no hospital or clinic in Fatima, what about your starting one and calling my Sisters to staff it? Do not say no, my dear John. By the way, John, we have a second Claretian Cardinal in Rome, Cardinal Arthur Tabera. He is going to be the head of a new Roman Congregation founded by the present Holy Father, Pope Paul VI. Brother M. Yaroslave Dowbush, who at present is staying at the Monastery of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity in Huntsville, Utah, has written to me and I have explained everything to him about the new Claretian Monks and have asked him to join this group. You should also encourage him to join.

With all my prayers for you to Saint Anthony Mary Claret, so that he may bless you forevermore with all the power of intercession granted to him in Heaven.

Yours in the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Father Aloysius Ellacuria, C.M.F.
Member of the Blue Army



Mr. John Haffert - Lay Founder of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima

