



Day 1 Report

Today was the first day of work for the 16th World Assembly of CLC. We began with a welcome from the Co-ordinator of CLC Libya, Michel Younan, representing the local co-ordinating team of people from Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. He emphasized how much it meant for the region for the Assembly to be here, and how much they appreciated the decision to continue with having it here despite various difficulties. Then the World President, Daniela Frank, welcomed us. She spoke of CLC still being on the journey that began in a special way with the decision of the World Assembly of 1998 to be an apostolic lay community in the Church. She also emphasized that, while we have come as delegates from different national communities, we are here, not to represent national interests, but as a community in our own right to discern the directions of the world community, and are in fact the supreme governing body of CLC.

Then the different delegations stood up, one by one, to show their flag as Daniela called out their name. These were not in alphabetical order, and she told us to guess what the order was. My guess is that the order was that in which nations formally joined CLC – I presume by having their statutes approved. This gave us a sense of the evolution of CLC as one world community, with the last ones being groups here as observers as they move towards full status as national communities.

Then we celebrated Mass, according to the Maronite rite, with the patriarch Cardinal Bechara Boutros Rahi, who is head of Maronites around the world. It was all in Arabic, with someone guiding us as to what was happening at each point, except for the homily, was in French, with a brief English summary at the end. The all-female choir was wonderful, with Middle-Eastern rhythms and tones. The fact that the Patriarch needs bodyguards, in full military uniform, and security guards in suits and ties, reminds one of the fragility of the situation here. We were told how the Patriarch has a significant role in political life, as the guarantor of the unity of the nation. The Mass was filmed by a TV crew, to be shown on Lebanese TV.

After lunch and siesta, we re-convened and each national delegation presented a symbol of their community, using it to say something about their situation and what has happened since the last World Assembly – all in 3 minutes! Needless to say, not all kept to that! Particularly moving were those from newer members or struggling countries, such as South Sudan – a new nation where CLC began just a year ago. We did not get through all the nations, and so this session will continue on Day 2.

The day's meeting ended with the Process Guide, Elaine Regan Nightingale (CLC English-speaking Canada), leading us in an Examen on the day, including some sharing in national groups.

Australia delegates