



25 MARCH 2005

CLC WORLD DAY of PRAYER

An Invitation to growth: "Do whatever he tells you." John 2:5

"...As we move forward toward becoming one apostolic body we notice, with humility, our total dependency on God and our personal and collective need for continued conversion in the Lord...."¹

In Nairobi, the CLC Assembly invited and encouraged us to recognize some seeds in National Communities that confirmed the direction that we were invited to take, namely discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating one another in mission as an apostolic community. We have no doubts that in CLC we are privileged to have an organization that forms and equips us with the necessary tools to live this challenge. But we are at the same time being continuously called and challenged to take seriously our vocation as CLC members. The three-fold aspects of CLC, that is, our *specific spirituality, community life* and *mission*, fit perfectly the orientation required for shared responsibility in the services that we may offer; always discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating. This means that more than ever we are called to be faithful to the life we have chosen to express our Christian faith. Our sense of shared responsibility will be enhanced by each one of us taking formation seriously. We understand that as a vocation, CLC prescribes a unique way of life that surpasses what is considered as nominal of a Christian life. We therefore need to remain steadfast and to embrace consistently all the three aspects of CLC. If we fail to be committed to our annual retreats, daily prayer of awareness, small groups and service to others, then fundamentally we are not being faithful to our charism.

It is for this reason that we may need to reemphasize the basics of our vocation. It is important that the membership of CLC in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America, Middle East and Latin America should understand the CLC way of life in the same way and in the same sense. Although as individual members, the specifics of our life will always be different, the basics of our vocation should not be. We have these basics clearly articulated in "The CLC Charism" (Revised edition, December 2001)². It is for this reason that the delegates gathered in Nairobi found it necessary to recommend that all of our formation programmes be informed by the revised edition of "The CLC Charism".

¹ Extract from the Recommendations from the Nairobi World Assembly to Christian Life Community

² Progressio: Supplement no. 56, December 2001

What challenges do we face as individual CLC members and as an organization on this journey, arising from our choice?

As a member of CLC the desire to remain faithful to the Ignatian spirit, will demand of me to always read the signs of the times and to discover opportunities and challenges facing me. These challenges may be huge and yes, I may fear the unknown. As an ordinary person I am often tempted to feel that my role does not matter to the wider society. After all, I seem a mere pawn in the wider scheme of things, perhaps a peasant, an ordinary worker, a student or jobless. Even if I am an influential person, where do I begin? My sense of service for others, which should radiate from within, demands that I begin from where I am. My family, friends and associates, colleagues and employers should all experience the warmth of the CLC life in me. If I bring these inner feelings to my small group in whose life I share, I shall be involved in mutual discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating and ultimately my service will have the potential of growing bigger. If I consistently do this, our visibility as a body of believers to the society will take care of itself as it manifests itself through social responsibility. I can draw inspiration from Jesus' response to the disciples of John the Baptist, "*Go and tell John what you have seen and heard, the blind can see, the sick are cured and the poor have the good news preached to them*" (Luke 7:20-22). I seek to constantly ask whether my life bears testimony to what I claim to be. The impact of my inspired service may be far beyond what I imagine.

I understand this from the experience of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady. Mary is full of grace and was chosen by God. "*Be it unto me according to thy word,*" was Mary's joyous "yes" to God's plan of redemption. Her obedience initiated the process of my salvation. She did this at great risk to her personal life. Therefore, she must appreciate my personal difficulties. In addition Mary always bids me to do whatever Jesus says (John 2:5). I take courage in her and ask for her support in the discernment of the decision that the Lord has asked of me at this time in my life. What is the Lord asking of me now? "*In this way, each one of us is invited to live in an attitude of availability, always ready to question his/her personal way of acting and thinking while trying constantly to integrate experience, reflection and action*"³.

As an organization we must ask; what is our strength? The quality of the community we build will depend on the quality of its individuals who are its building blocks. "*CLC hopes that its members are people of prayers, able to listen to the desires of the Lord, able to discern among the many calls of life what is the best suited for the building of God's Reign.*"⁴ To begin with, our CLC way of proceeding can help us successfully perform the many activities, which make up our lives. Secondly, in CLC we have a commitment to a way of life and a common heritage that we can share with others from whatever field, which will enhance the reality that they are living. Central to our common heritage are the Spiritual Exercises which prompts us to be in continuous dialogue with our Lord and our experiences. Therefore the national formation team constantly offers national CLC members the kind of formation that is enabling and which transforms CLC members to be contemplatives in action. In this way CLC members will always be triggered to consider the needs of society around them. But to be effective, we must be clear and precise in our objectives. We need to regularly evaluate our core competencies and accordingly restructure our organizations. We do this because we realize that we cannot possibly respond to all needs without spreading ourselves too thin. To be effective we make choices using Ignatian criteria.

³ *Progressio: Supplement no.56*, December 2001; *The CLC Charism* (Revised), pg 7

⁴ *Progressio: Supplement no.56*, December 2001; *The CLC Charism* (Revised), no49,

Our main challenge as an organization is to maintain the clarity of our vision as received in Nairobi, to keep focused and not to be distracted. There are several organizations that are fulfilling different needs, but what is our core competence in CLC? We are a body of lay people formed in Ignatian Spirituality. Ignatian Spirituality is an inspirational resource that is central to the CLC way of life and capable of transforming our reality. It is our core competence. It is for this reason that the *“Spiritual Exercises are not an optional experience, to be made or not, or that once made, belong to the archives of the past”*⁵. We know that with this resource we can improve relationships between people and the meaning and quality of life. We know that this spirituality purifies our inner motives, drives us to action and that its applicability is enormous. So, for a national community, a common mission becomes a natural offshoot from a deliberate formation programme. A common mission is a focal point consolidating our organizational effort even though individual members may be engaged in different activities. As an organization we are being asked to be steadfast on what we commit ourselves to but constantly evaluate our ever-changing circumstances and ask God what else we can do as a corporate apostolic body.

Questions for reflection

1. Does our formation equip me with the essentials of the CLC way of life? How does this formation trigger in me the desire to reach out and join the Lord in the construction of His reign?
2. Do I renew my Ignatian Inspiration through annual retreats as a continuous source of growth? Which challenges do I experience in my efforts? How can I be helped to overcome them?
3. Do I feel empowered and encouraged by my local community meeting and /or formation programmes sufficiently to express the love of God to others?
4. As a body of believers (CLC), how are we responding to the needs around us in an ongoing way? What else do we need in order to grow more in this way?
5. Have we discussed the experiences and shared the expectations of those we relate with as a CLC body (organization)?
6. What challenges do I face in this CLC journey?
7. What provisions exist in my national community to enhance my individual growth?
8. How do I feel about the growth of my community towards an apostolic body?

Let us all be united in Him.

Levi Matseshe
Consultor

⁵ *Progressio: Supplement no.56*, December 2001; *The CLC Charism (Revised)*, no. 50,