



Link between the Executive Council and the World Christian Life Community

World ExCo meeting 2013

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Peace of our Risen Lord! Here is a report on the annual meeting of the World Executive Council held from 17 – 25 February 2013 at Casa Manresa, Miami, Florida. The weather was generally cool and pleasant; the hospitality of CLC members in Miami was extremely warm and generous. We were happy to welcome in our midst Elaine Regan Nightingale (CLC Canada), our Process Guide for the World Assembly. It is the Assembly of course which was predominantly present in our thoughts and discussions. There were however many other points of importance as reported below.

Overview of the CLC landscape

After sharing our personal inner landscape we had a look at the CLC landscape across regions. In the *Middle East*, Lebanon continues to be peaceful and the CLC national community has synergized its efforts and resources towards the forthcoming Assembly. They see this as a time to establish links with the wider Christian and civil society as also to engage more fruitfully with the Society of Jesus. A new CLC leadership team has been nominated in Syria and formation programs continue in Damascus. Unfortunately, there are other cities where our members continue to be dispersed and unable to meet regularly. CLC Egypt is getting back to its normal activities even as its members continue to closely monitor the political situation there.

Africa recently had a Congress of the Laity on the theme “Being Witnesses of Jesus Christ in Africa today.” In addition to the official CLC delegation, other CLC members attended as part of their own national delegations; a confirmation of our positive role in the life of the local Church. The regional Coordinating Team has made efforts to promote a sense of community across the continent - an uphill task considering the inadequate infrastructure for communication. An interesting development is the emerging online network of CLC members involved in Education.

The launch of the *Asia-Pacific* website (www.clcasiapac.org) has led to a greater sharing of information among national communities. We hope this will also become a forum for the sharing of formation resources and apostolic experiences. In the recent past, pre-CLC groups have been initiated in new countries and plans are being formulated to accompany them. We are also studying the possibility of a formation program across the region, keeping in mind of course the problems arising due to language and distance.

Europe continues to be the region with the largest number of members, with strong support offered to communities outside the region as well. We were happy to note that new national communities are emerging in Eastern Europe while some established communities have begun to attract new members from among the youth. The Eurolink meeting held in Austria last November was very well attended, giving the link persons the opportunity to “taste the riches of linking beyond national boundaries”. The process of formal commitment in CLC has also picked up considerably.

A regular structure of communication exists in *Latin America* wherein members of national ExCo link up virtually four times a year. The EAs of the region had a meeting in Peru in October. They decided to establish better networks amongst themselves and also focus more intensely on work with the youth. The Magis formation program continues to train future leaders for the Church and society while creating strong bonds between CLC members across the region. The new virtual formation program on political and social commitment has already been launched.

In *North America*, CLC-USA is reorganizing its structures for a better integration of its diverse cultural groups. There is also a strong desire to connect better with the many pre-CLC groups that flourish in high schools and universities. The two national communities in Canada are working together in Haiti. In addition to the ongoing work of relief operations, they have also initiated some interested persons into the CLC way of life.

Growing as a Lay Apostolic Body

This has been the focus of our world community in the recent past, and the ExCo is putting together a framework to promote further discussion on this at the Assembly. Recent communications have expressed in some detail our self understanding as a Lay Apostolic Body. You are urged to a deeper reading of Projects 153 and 154. Some additional points are below.

National communities are still sending in feedback regarding how they live and act as an Apostolic Body implementing the dynamic of DSSE. This feedback will be collated and used in the Assembly process. In the area of Leadership, we see the need to stress leadership as part of ‘Mission’ and to foster greater availability for leadership roles. A Progressio supplement next year will be devoted to “Leading Communal Discernment”.

Regarding formation, we note that “The Process of Growth” (Progressio Suppl. 64) has been fruitfully used by some communities but is still largely unknown in others. The Assembly will

discuss how to better implement this important document. This discussion will also include the process of commitment and some much needed clarification regarding the terms ‘temporary’ and ‘permanent’ commitment.

Recent years have seen a great growth in financial co-responsibility; a sure sign that we are maturing in our collective identity. This was strikingly evident in the successful conclusion of the Apartment Project. We are grateful for the generous contributions of national communities and individual members, a generosity that far exceeded our expectations. This generosity has also resulted in the gradual reduction of our accumulated deficit. All this will enable us to dedicate more financial resources towards apostolic efforts. More details about this are being sent in the financial letter to National ExCos.

Apostolic Networking and Advocacy

The experience gained from recent advocacy initiatives has helped us refine the approach and dream big. We have arrived at a basic framework to guide our efforts, keeping a balance between the local and the international levels while building up strong regional platforms as intermediary structures. Looking at the grassroots involvement of many national communities, it appears that the areas of Ecology and Migration are emerging as priorities while we also remain open to any other area that may call our attention. To better promote apostolic networking, CLC has joined up with the Amazon Itinerant Team in a project aimed at promoting ecological harmony. We are also in touch with the Global Ignatian Networks of the Society of Jesus.

Our discussions on Advocacy also included a skype meeting with the UN Working Group based at New York. There is a possibility of upgrading our status at the UN from Roster Status to Special Consultative Status, thereby increasing the effectiveness of our interventions. It was proposed to link the efforts of the working group with that of CLC communities working in the field of HIV-Aids. We also discussed how to structure the flow of communication so that the working group could benefit from the grassroots experiences of members.

450 years of Ignatian Lay Communities

There has been an enthusiastic response towards this Jubilee celebration and many national communities have already launched special events. This celebration of our ‘Roots’ will receive special attention at the Assembly. In the meantime, a pilgrimage is going on in Europe in memory of the journey made by Jean Leunis from Liege to Rome. This pilgrimage is being carried out in four stages ending with a Eucharist in Rome celebrated by Fr. Adolfo Nicolas SJ. You are reminded that this is a graced moment to reflect on our history, to understand better our role as a lay Ignatian community and to forge links with other Ignatian groups.

Communication

The Progressio magazine and Supplement serve as a link for sharing of experiences and a forum for serious reflection. We are keen that more members avail of this resource. In order to increase

readership, an online version of Progressio will be available free of charge from 2014. Members would also have the option of continuing their subscription for printed copies. The website has been updated with a new main menu and increased capacity. We are in the final stages of a project to scan and upload past issues of Progressio and the Supplement. Once completed, this Archive will serve as a rich resource for all.

Meetings with other groups

The national ExCo of CLC-USA held their own meeting in Miami and we spent half a day together. Their sharing revealed how the diversity of the nation itself was so well mirrored within the CLC community. We also explored ways of tapping the vast potential that lies in the many pre-CLC groups in Jesuit schools and universities. Another interesting meeting was the one we had with the General Council of ACU (Agrupación Católica Universitaria)¹. A presentation on the current situation of both ACU and World CLC was followed by a discussion on our mutual relationship. We were better able to appreciate our common heritage and the unique characteristics of each other. Both groups pledged to continue our contact and explore ways for further collaboration.

World Assembly at Lebanon

Our entire meeting was permeated with an awareness of the Assembly and the graces the Lord offers us through it. A tentative Assembly program is given below (keeping in mind of course that this is still a ‘work in progress’)

World CLC General Assembly, Lebanon 30th July to 8th August 2013 “From our Roots to the Frontiers”

Objectives:

1. To gratefully remember our roots and how we have been guided over the centuries
2. To deepen our self-understanding as a Lay Apostolic Body
3. To touch the new frontiers that challenge and beckon us today
4. To enthusiastically renew our response to God’s call

Day One: 30 July. “Building the Body of the Assembly”

Convocation – Welcome – Inaugural Eucharist with the Maronite Patriarch – self presentation by national communities

Day Two: 31 July. Feast of St. Ignatius. “Remembrance of Our Roots”

¹ ACU is an Association of professional Catholic men who are animated by Ignatian Spirituality. It is focussed on the development of lay Catholic leaders who have a good balance between spiritual, professional and apostolic life.

Our history since 1563 – testimonies and reflection on our history – testimonies on the transition to CLC – incorporation of new national communities – Eucharist with Fr. Kolvenbach (to be confirmed).

Day Three: 1 August. “Our Present Reality”

Report of World ExCo – Financial report – presentation of candidates for new ExCo - proposed amendments to GPs and GNs

Day Four: 2 August. “Deepening our self-understanding”

Our current understanding of CLC as ‘Lay Apostolic Body’ (LAB) – sharing on specific aspects - presentation and reflection on dimensions of mission in CLC – CLC and SJ Collaboration

Day Five: 3 August. Visitors Day

Gathering at Jesuit College, Beirut – interaction with CLC visitors - Eucharist with World EA, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás SJ

Day Six to Eight: 4 -6 August. “Touching new frontiers”

Fr. Nicolás addresses the assembly. Based on the feedback from National Communities, the ExCo decided to focus on three frontiers: “Globalization: poverty and inequality”, “Family” and “Ecology”. Inputs and discussions will be followed by gathering together all our responses and developing steps, structures and resources to respond to new frontiers

Day Nine: 7 August. “Renewing our response to God’s call”

Further discussion on steps, structures and resources for our response, preparing the final document

Day Ten: 8 August. “Harvesting the Fruits”

Confirming the Assembly Document – Elections of new ExCo – Review of experience

Delegates to the Assembly will receive a list of candidates for the new ExCo and proposals for amendments to the General Principles and General Norms. The ExCo continues its work of developing the details of the Assembly and is in touch with the national preparation and implementation teams. At the Assembly we will have the joy of welcoming some new national communities as first-time Observers. Another exciting event is the possible incorporation of some observer communities as full members of the world body. In the meantime, have a look up the Assembly Website (<http://liban2013.cvx-liban.org>) and do continue your prayers for this important process in the life of our World Community.

Right through our ExCo meeting, we had daily contact with local CLC members in Miami. This report would be incomplete if we did not acknowledge the uplifting impact their presence had on us. Their joy and vibrancy communicated a message which in recent days has been strongly emphasized by Pope Francis, “Share with the world the joy that comes from being a disciple of Jesus Christ.” May all of us live out that message intensely!

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