

Supplement # 71

SUPPLEMENT #71

TO THE FRONTIERS



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Publication of the **World Christian Life Community**

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Contents

Editorial.....	3
<i>Sofía Montañez</i>	
In All with All	6
<i>Prof. Fernando Vidal Fernández</i>	
Family life in an african context in the 21st century	37
<i>Ms Malesabe Hannah Makgothi</i>	
Globalisation: inequality and poverty	41
<i>Léonel Matar</i>	
Ignatian Ecological Commitment.....	54
<i>Pedro Walpole SJ</i>	
Socio- Political Advocacy	76
<i>Mauricio Lopez Oropeza</i>	
Sharing of Experience by the Members of CLC Syria	82
<i>Fayez and Kawthar Mistrih, Abed Al Rayyes and Manal</i>	

Editorial

This supplement completes the previous one (No. 70) which was also dedicated to the World Assembly, Lebanon 2013. As a preparation for the Assembly and as a result of consultation, we identified three main frontiers: Globalisation and Poverty, Family, and Ecology. In this supplement we offer the presentations that helped us deepen these three frontiers during the Assembly. We also include two further presentations to complement this block.

The first article is the presentation by Fernando Vidal (CVX Spain) on the context and the current challenges for the Family. Fernando also challenges us with an action plan for the World Community. We add the testimony of Sabie Makgothi (CVX South Africa), who helped us to understand in practice the family reality. The second frontier, Globalization and Poverty, was introduced by Leonel Matar, a Lebanese economist. Leonel described the lights and shadows of globalization and its challenges. The final frontier, Ecology, was covered by Pedro Walpole, SJ, from the Jesuit Conference of Asia. Peter invited us to reconcile with creation and undergo an ecological conversion.

We offer two additional texts: firstly Mauricio Lopez (World CLC President) spoke of the impact on CLC, particularly the Amazon project. Secondly, we include testimonials Fawez Kawthar Mistrih, Abed Al Rayyes and Manal , all from CLC Syria.

We hope this material will be useful to guide the challenges and mission to the "frontiers" in the various communities and their members.

IN ALL WITH ALL

The Xaverian turn to the frontiers of the Family

1. Intro: in all with all

Family mission can hardly be better defined with these words, so dear to Ignatius of Loyola: *“in all things, to love and to serve”* A great slogan for Ignatian family: *“in all things.”* Ignatian Spirituality calls the family to be built not only in this way but also as a family of God, serving *“the things that are to last forever.”* Ignatius makes this clear in one of his letters, sent in June 1532

from Paris to Martin Garcia de Oñaz. In it, he talks about his own family and expressed a desire *“to my connections and relatives according to the flesh, to the end that we might become according to the Spirit as well, and at the same time help one another in the things that are to last forever.”*

The slogans *“In All”* and *“With all”* bring together the key to Ignatian family: deeply loving and serving in everything and with everyone, in the depth of the family and to the universality and diversity of the world. *“Depth”* and *“Universality”* are the horizon and dynamic that our Assistant Ecclesial, Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, is asking of us. The term *“Xaverian turn”* urges us to take on Francisco Xavier’s dynamics of depth, universality, frontier and creativity. Francisco Xavier expresses the call to the frontiers to us, to the great projects that deserve a life, creativity in the conditions of the elements, and the dynamism of apostolic entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly, this is a method to which CLC is called by many. The dedication to create families is the interior work of the frontier apostolate.

a. They have no more wine

“They have no more wine,” Mary keeps telling us, about young couples and families who want to share their life. There are so many families who

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have no wine! Lebanon, where we are now, is one of the oldest places in the world where wine is produced. In the eighth century before Christ, the prophet Hosea said words to Israel that could be spoken by God to all families who currently share and need help: *“I will love them freely, ... he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.”* (Hosea 14:4-7) What can we do? Well, as Mary said to the servants, *“Do whatever He tells you.”* With the families in our contexts and frontiers we do what servants and friends do:

- First, ***share friendship***. As the Father Adolfo Nicolás SJ says, *“There is no evangelization without knowing people. Friendship is the style, the way to see and experience in the world that sets up, changes and renews that same world.”*
- Second, ***share our water***. We share the water, sometimes as scarce as time.
- And third, ***look and serve together with Jesus***.

For the purpose of this passage about the Wedding at Cana, Pope Francis proposes that we let ourselves be accompanied by Mary. He does so in a phrase that is very familiar to the Ignatian. Remembering his words helps us prepare for our work:

- Mary, woman of listening, open our ears...
- Mary, woman of decision, illuminate our mind and our heart...
- Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move *“with haste toward others”*

How can Ignatian lay community share more with families, learn from their experience and be a blessing to them all? If you ever doubt the where CLC should go, let us stand at the crossroads of history to feel the wind of the people and the Spirit.

We will organize our contribution into two parts and a conclusion.

- ◆ PART I: Looking at reality (Global Trends in the boundaries of the family)

- ◆ PART II: Look for light (Ignatian spirituality and the Church's recommendations)
- ◆ CONCLUSION: Proposals

FIRST PART: global trends on the family frontier

Pope Francisco recently made us aware that “*Our human family is presently experiencing something of a turning point in its own history*”. What are these transitions in the field of family?

2. Global Sociodemographic trends of the family

We could synthesize eight overall major demographic trends of the family.

- a) The Family Life Cycle is longer and more complex because of marital restructuring, and because the growing life expectancy is creating an elderly population and opens up an even older population above 90 years of age.
- b) The double-parent family of father and mother is a majority choice but difficult to maintain.
 - 1. Double-parent families of father and mother who are present in the home are still a majority worldwide, although its share has declined. It is due to the impact of divorce, the spread of cohabitation, single parenthood, and migration (for work or forced removal).
 - 2. Births outside marriage are increasing in many regions of the world.
 - 3. The positive belief that the ideal situation is that a child lives with a mother and father is the overwhelming majority.
- c) There are smaller and older families. Extended families are decreasing, the birth rate is falling and the number of household members is shrinking.

- d) Marital unions are being de-institutionalized. Marriage is declining, cohabitation rises, single-motherhood is increasingly accepted, homosexual marriage is established and extramarital births are increasing.
- e) Growing empowerment of women in the family. The work-family balance is accepted by fathers and mothers and there is little conflict about shared domestic responsibility.
- f) There is a significant family unrest and problems communicating values with children, despite high rate of living together.
- g) More rights and new risks. Family members' rights are increasingly guaranteed, but new couple and family violence grows around the world.

Many of the above features are part of the modern demographic. This is formed by two sociological transitions:

• **First Demographic Transition:** household nuclearization, reduction in mortality (especially children and women), Increased life expectancy and birth rate (3 or 4 children). In short, healthier median nuclear households. (parents and three healthy children).

• **Second Demographic Transition:** massive entry of women into the labour market, contraception, delaying the age at which they are having their first child, declining birth rates, increased singleness, reduced institutionalization of marriage, increased marital breakdown (separation and divorce) and household diversification through homosexual couples and multicultural coexistence (Caused by migration). From a demographic standpoint, population aging, which has been called the “*demographic winter*,” is of particular concern.

Everybody is convinced that in the long-term, the whole planet will follow both demographic transitions. Perhaps when this sequence is explained it communicates too much determinism and it causes cultural pessimism. Global trends could be different. Therefore, we need a deeper level of analysis.

3. I-Mod family (Info-Modern Family)

We will try to interpret what is happening to the family more deeply. To do that, we must understand it in connection with the era in which we live. Our age is a new phase of modernity, which may already go beyond Postmodernism and which we call *Info-Modernity* or i-Modernity (i-Mod). We are in another phase of modernity, but in family matters, we keep debating with post-modernity.

3.1. Post-Modern Family

The large family socio-cultural revolution happened at the beginning of Postmodernism (the period from 1945-1989). It was a response to the great failure of Modernity in the Second World War. Postmodernism sought a re-foundation of civilization on the bases that overcame Modernity. Each order of the social system undertook a return to its origins and to liberate the true nature of things. This triggered a spring-like dynamic that affected everything from politics (May 68) to religion (Vatican II). This refounding will deeply affect the family. If we examine Postmodernism we can see:

- In Postmodernism a new anthropology begins to form for women (feminist movement), youth (spring 60), of native or indigenous populations, homosexuals, and the poor and the southern countries, of children (The Rights of the Child), the elderly, etc...
- New holistic attempts are established to explore the self awareness and expression (artistic revolution of the 60's) of people (even experimenting with drugs) and also in a comprehensive ecological vision (ecological movement).
- The whole person is rediscovered, including sex: sexual revolution will identify sex primarily as a mode of communication.
- Relationships between people are also revised, freeing them from Victorian urbanism and giving them authenticity through informality.
- At the same time any difference is discredited and absolute egalitarianism propels people. It tried to practice a certain kind of idealized Adamism or naturalism that would regenerate modern dehumanization.

- Those chains of events can only happen if the domination, exploitation, alienation and exclusion are eliminated. Patriarchalism will be the target of their criticisms.
- The impact on the form and substance of the family is clear. It was possibly the institution most affected by postmodernism. One of the precipitating factors is sexual and family libertarianism (Sexual Revolution) that experiments with new communal family forms, open couples (in which sexual exclusivity in relationships is dissolved) and cohabitation.
- The pedagogical model was also revolutionized to seek to give a greater role to the free development of the potentialities of learners. That appealed directly to the educational model of the children in the family. The authority is proscribed as a factor: not authoritarianism but the very notion of authority.
- It has also been of great importance to discredit the rise of reason and emotion as legitimizing what was good and true. A superficial emotionalism (the “*sentimentality*” in Jane Austen’s novel, “*Sense and Sensibility*” in 1811) has become the phenomenon that legitimizes any decision. That leads to a fragmented life because the emotional state is changeable and is crisscrossed with contradictory feelings. The complexity of the emotional world is reduced to the dictatorship of sensitivity.

Postmodernism created several very positive dynamics, stripped of some modern constraints. It helped free people and opened up new, more comprehensive visions. But the desire for change also pushed a fevered, rupturing, vehement, and unidirectional sociocultural revolution. The urgency of the changes caused people to lose the comprehensive viewpoint that upheld and overly idealized everything. Today, we are still debating the open tendencies of the family because of postmodernism.

3.2. The Punk Family

If the first cycle of Postmodernism was hippy; its second cycle (in the early 1970s) was punk. It was not a creative expansion, but was more pessimistic, deconstructionist and nihilistic. If the postmodernism hippy sought freedom from desire, postmodernism punk will establish that it is impossible that a sense of love, maternity, paternity and marriage exists.

Therefore, the family was not only casual but became impossible, malleable to the will and feeling of each person.

3.3. The Ideological War on Family: Relativism & Fundamentalism

The seventies were a revolution, but with deep and very divergent trends. Confusion and collapse spread. The postmodern project failed in its attempt to overcome Modernity and the tensions fractured the core of society. With regard to the family, it had suffered a deep delegitimization and manipulation, so much that the family experience of the vast majority of society was far from postmodern experimentalism and showed a deep unease.

The old and new divisions had brought the impotence of scepticism to all parties. This scepticism had two-sides. On one hand, if it was impossible to establish a truth, then everything was relative. The other side of scepticism seems contrary but follows the same logic: fundamentalism. Fundamentalism says that since it is not possible to arrive at truth, I impose it.

The family lived through the changes of the seventies shakily. On one hand, it took on some postmodern changes. On the other hand, a reconstruction of the familiar from common sense is imposed. In fact, the family's legitimacy and trust are elevated worldwide. But the family is also raised like a flag by fundamentalism. On the one hand, relativism is unsustainable, and on the other hand, fundamentalism is unbearable. Both manipulate the experience of common sense. That is why it is so difficult to publicly intervene in the context of the family, and that's why it becomes so necessary.

The family finds itself in the middle of the clash between three tectonic plates.

- ✓ First, the tectonic plate traditional sense. The family is the oldest institution of humanity, through which hominization itself was possible. That tectonic plate would be most people, who find the primary meaning of life in their family.
- ✓ Second is the postmodern tectonic plate, in which relativism and fundamentalism form scissors.

- ✓ But now a third tectonic plate makes its appearance. Postmodernism has passed and a new phase of modernity - the InfoModernity - has emerged since 1989.

Will the family remain stuck in the past of the postmodern debate? Or will it have an active role in InfoModernity? Let's see what the features of the Info-Modern family are.

3.4. Infomodern Family

Describing the family in the broad framework of our time is no simple task. We could describe our time – observing the family in it - through six dimensions: sociability (social relations), the form of social organization, subjectivity, culture, politics and social change.

The infomodern world today is a global mobile network that is organized, flexible, environmentally sustainable and mission oriented; formed by reflective individuals that create value informationally through participation and deliberation in a society of risk. And how does all this affect the family? In a crucial way, although this is because it is not possible to overlook the great value of family in today's society. Despite all the ideological struggles, the family is the most valued institution by the world's population and is the institution most trusted by people. Whatever the future of society, it will have to rely on the family, the institution of the most social value in history across the globe. We will study what this family is like in the new context of the InfoModernity.

3.4.1. global mobile network & liquid families

a. Network Families

The network is a new way of relating. What does it mean that the family is networked?

- First, you are not alone but in a network with others. The network makes us aware that the family is not confined to the home but a network of homes united by relationship.
- Second, the family is not just a network, but it also learns from networks to empower each of its members, to create synergies between everyone and convert differences into wealth.

- Third, the network shows us how the family only stays in such a volatile world if we invest time and encouragement to maintaining and growing connections. In the family network people activate each other, everyone learns and creates together. Families that are not activated run the risk of being dissolved. The family that does not grow, shrinks.

b. Global Mobile Families

- Mobility is another feature of our infomodern society: geographical mobility (migration, tourism, transnational business), educational mobility (higher education), mobile communication and media platforms (television, Internet, videogames, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) , internal, psychological, social mobility, etc.. The family is in the middle of that mobility. The family has to learn to be mobile, moving together, to interact with different contexts, knowing how to help each individual fly freely and still stay together. This modern mobility is not primarily risky but an opportunity to learn, enjoy, connect more with others, have a common life that is increasingly rich and shared.
- The invention and global expansion of social networks like Facebook or Twitter is especially a sign of these years. Social networks have been introduced in the core of sociability and are creating great opportunities for our world of connections.
- The family relates to globality and diversity from its intimate domestic life. The world is increasingly more present within families and they must learn how to be in the whole world. The entire planet is being removed from its place. And all global flows go to everywhere. Even if someone has no intention of leaving his or her neighbourhood, the world is moving there more and more. Globalization is an everyday experience. If we are scared and we lock ourselves in our little family worlds, in the end we will not train people capable of acting on the stage of globalization. If we do not educate our children for the world, we will find ourselves obligated to create artificial little worlds.

c. Liquid Families

The sociability of global mobile networks overflows with opportunities, but it also hides serious risks. The network is ambiguous. It takes work to build it and maintain it. And what happens to the person that fails to activate it? InfoModernity makes the most sociability in history possible, but it does not guarantee the least bit of community. Indeed, no one guarantees the least community. That happens in the family: the family who does not work to maintain itself and stitch up its wounds can be dissolved. The family is not active runs the risk of being carried away by the wind of globalization. As in all structures that we will meet in the InfoModernity, the Global Mobile Network is ambiguous or ambivalent: it can enhance the family or make it sink. Zygmunt Bauman says that we are in a more liquid society. Are families now more liquid?

3.4.2. Eco-Families versus Flex-Families

The way of organizing the world has changed. It has moved from corporations to ecosystems. The logic of corporations put the emphasis on the limits of belonging; it lived inwardly; the internal rules had the most weight; its concern was cohesion and collective identity. Ecosystems live more openly. They do not worry about setting limits on membership but link as many contributors as they can, seeking creativity and to reinvent themselves. Their concern and focus are the accomplishment of the mission.

Family also has an organizational dimension. It has partly participated in “*corporate paradigm*” of organization: the “*corporatist family*” was protected inwardly, it was slowed by internal structures, it was exclusive, it prioritized cohesion over creativity, etc... The family has the challenge of having a systemic viewpoint (holistic, comprehensive, universal) to fulfill its specific mission.

Globalization varies the contexts so much that those corporations that can only operate in a homogeneous context are doomed to extinction. Every organizational apparatus was placed in the service of the mission. Mission-centered organizations began to develop (or problem solving organizations, which is the same thing). That “*misionalization*” of organizations demanded extreme flexibility.

As in the case of sociability, a flexible, mission-oriented organization can be ambiguous. What if the organization—for example, a company—thinks that its sole and absolute mission is to get the maximum possible benefit? If this makes the interpretation of your mission skewed (not eco-logical), then the flexible organization becomes a public danger and unsustainable, not complex, and closed. It contains the worst of the corporation and all the advantages of hyper-flexibility. That's the key of neoliberalism: the dissolution of ties and responsibilities to fulfill a mission that is skewed by greed.

All this is brutally applicable to the family model. Honestly, I think the family's biggest problem currently is that it has become neoliberalized. Neoliberalism has not only directed some economic organizations, but has also penetrated social relations, culture and the core of communities. Before, all industries wanted to be like one big family and now all families seem like they have to be a company: marriage is thought of as a contract, relationships are increasingly judged on a balance of benefits, couples have a high rotation, couples are temporary loves and jobs...

So families often take on only a part of their mission (feeling good, enjoying life or having children), and apply maximum flexibility to everything else. That neoliberal family organization undermines the internal fabric of connections. They do not live from alliance but from a contract. They do not live from giving but from calculation. They do not live from blessing but from utility. The neoliberal family paradigm tends to educate its children from permissiveness. Neoliberalism corrodes the mission and specific family relationships from the inside, and there will come a day that it will be meaningless and collapse.

Like the family, society as well as general organization is faced with a dilemma. If it is an eco-society it will develop sustainability, justice and reconciliation. If it is understood neoliberally, society will cause broad sectors social exclusion and meaninglessness.

Neoliberalism is the greatest enemy of the family. Neoliberalism impoverishes connections, makes commitments superficial, despises foundations, discards the weak and detracts from life. Neoliberalism manufactures Flex-families.

Flex-families and liquid families are forming a very fragile type of couples and families. Their internal resources are few, and they have a low tolerance for failure, which sometimes ends up unleashing violent episodes. In the relationship with the children, they often feel powerless. The crisis of couples and families are creating enormous pain and discomfort in our world. People want to achieve eternal love; however, they are induced to be individualistic and neoliberal. Family and marital crises have always existed since Adam and Eve, but the very social, economic and cultural development had not always been the main cause.

If, on top of this, we add that the family can be functional to the neoliberal order, the cell of its social model, then the family itself would be collaborating in its own destruction. For the family to meet its mission, it does not have to be a “*functional cell*”, but rather a “*creative matrix*”. The family is not determined by society but she (the family) –with her logic of love -is the model and the construction of society. The family must learn to be a builder of society and to be countercultural.

3.4.3. Reflexive Families

Diversification of contexts makes it such that one cannot apply the same formula at each site. The plurality and number of messages requires that the individual must choose. The complexity and uncertainty of the problems needs people capable of a high level of reflection. These and other reasons lead the individual to have to be ever more responsible for what he believes and values. Not that he has to invent things or that things are relative, but he has to personally check and adapt through reflection and trust. If people do not identify the meaning of their world, it may be meaningless to them or just appear to have superficial, advertised or standardized content. As soon as one thinks or faces difficulty, he or she feels empty and uncomfortable.

The reflexivity is a central feature of this new phase of modernity, people and organizations. This affects the family. The family members and the family as a group should be reflexive. The family itself can be meaningless. The individual is bombarded with thousands of messages through the media about parenting or marriage. How will you decide which one is right? Indeed, discernment –an activity so characteristic of Ignatian spirituality- is trendy: the main resource for creating meaning in the infomodern society.

The problem of reflexivity is support, education and tolerance. Reflexivity can emphasize individualism. It is possible that reflexivity could become solipsism. It does not recognize anyone else's legitimacy to review one's own life. This is an especially influential trend in children's educational models. Parents have problems being significant to their children as a source of wisdom. It is increasingly difficult to pass on tradition. It seems that to rely on others or on the wisdom of past generations that brings us the tradition is something that threatens the authenticity of reflection. There is a neophilia (loving the new) that leads everyone to move forward. The trend is to be anti-classical. Everyone seems to want to be absolutely original. There is no trust in shared beliefs or in Faith itself. However, without the dimension of faith, man could hardly know anything. This exacerbated autonomy, far from making people more unique, creates increasingly standardized individuals.

Another problem is the abandonment of reason. Postmodern emotionalism is insufficient in a world where uncertainty and extreme diversity have intensified. The feeling of happiness, the impulse of desire and simple taste are insufficient to live in the world.

The most serious problem is that what is brought into question is not only the interpretation of things, but also the formation of character and what makes up the very individual. InfoModernity pushes a person so that discernment is not an activity but a state of being in life.

3.4.4. Informational Families

Informationalism is the most powerful current of this phase of modernity. What is informationalism? It does not mean that there is much information or that it is very important. It goes further. Informationalism argues that the largest source of development, legitimation and productivity is the way we capture, process and apply information. This means that discernment is the source of social value. This is revolutionizing all society organizations. Is it also revolutionizing your family?

The infomodern family is characterized by a new way of thinking about the world. To be a modern family today is to live in constant vigilance and a permanent attitude of discernment. That implies thinking that is unitarian yet complex, with multiple intelligences and deep insight. The person who just thinks from the perspective of inflexible rationalism or

soft emotionalism is simply outside of the realm of reality and what are all organizations and families need.

In this infomodern search for deeper and universal levels of knowledge, our time is confronted with the crossroads formed by relativism and fundamentalism. One word manages to get through it: foundationalism. Foundationalism is a philosophical current that states that things have actually nature and foundations. Being foundationalist in a family context means claim that being a parent is one thing and not another. Being a mother is not what someone wants it to be; rather, motherhood is a universal phenomenon although it has variations because of location and time.

To say that things have a nature and reality does not mean being fundamentalist. Foundationalism is: things have foundations. To be fundamentalist is to believe that foundation is concrete only in a historical version, ignoring plurality and progress. Just because something is natural does not mean that its perfect fulfilment was in the past. The best of the family is not always in the past. There is certainly part of the traditional family wisdom we have lost and we must recover. But in family matters, we must curb the temptation to be nostalgic.

In fact, the past was not the kingdom of united families. Except in the period of high institutionalization of families in the mid-twentieth century with the rise of the working class to middle class-, the situation of the family was not as homogeneous as we are sometimes led to believe. These idealizations cover up a much greater heterogeneity than it seems.

After all, as Father General Adolfo Nicolás, S.J. says, “*The family is a long search for humanity.*” With great difficulty, but also clear satisfaction, we keep finding better ways to express family institutionally. I do not doubt that there are things that we do worse today in family matters, but neither do I doubt that we have achieved some substantial improvements. Other issues are surrounded by considerable uncertainty. Others are searching.

3.4.5. Participatory & Deliberative Families

The fifth dimension of infomodernity examines citizenship, governance, politics, and public rights. The most characteristic feature of this phase of

modernity is participation and deliberation. In fact, when we speak of progress, the ideas “*participatory democracy*” and “*deliberative democracy*” are often mentioned. It means that all people demand higher levels of participation in public life and the end to exclusion. It means that Public Reason requires the full participation of citizens and increasingly better modes of deliberation. The word deliberation also is familiar to Ignatian spirituality.

Infomodern families seek to maximize the participation of its members within the family itself. Everyone must participate fully in proportion to his or her age and physical condition. I especially want to note the participation of people with disabilities. There is no doubt that in this field, the participation of women, children and elderly has improved. It is true that while we improve in some respects, new risks appear. History shows us again and again that it is not about settling into a social order but living every moment to discerning how life can be better.

Infomodern families –in line with informationalism and reflexivity- are equipped with better methods of joint deliberation. They improve their forms of dialogue and decision-making in everyday life, especially for gaining the children's participation in household governance. They look for mediators for conflicts and innovative tools to overcome their crises and grow. The families also prepare members for public deliberation in that great first school of citizenship that is, as we learn from the Second Vatican Council, is the family.

Finally, the family is not only inward, but it also calls to its members and the family as a group to participate in society. The family is increasingly called to be the first community and civil society to act responsibly, along with many other families. The statistical variable that most explains why someone participates in an association, is that their parents have done so. The family is a school and actor of citizenship. The family has to improve its group participation in volunteering, in the social fabric and in public influence. The reconstruction of the community and Public Reason begins with the family, particularly where the pain and exclusion are greatest.

3.4.6. At-Risk Families versus Hopeful Families

Our society has established a model of social change in which one must assume high levels of risk to progress. This is what led Ulrich Beck to

speak about “*risk society*”. Couples and families know they do not have the stability that they desired and could previously expect. The environment does not protect stability as much as before. Increasingly, the couple depends on itself. Everything is increasingly more open. The very structures that have been presented (network, mobility, globalization, reflexivity, flexibility, etc.) are ambivalent. If they are practiced as an opportunity Comprehensive Human Development, great potential is opened up. But if they are implemented in a distorted way, the effects can be devastating. The factor that separates one side from the other is the Human Factor: the actual people who make decisions. The formation of each person is increasingly crucial, and the governance of decision-making centers is key.

Risky Families in current times know that their odds of failure have increased. The problem is not so much that there are crises and failures, but what to do with that failure. There has always been family breakdown, with varying degrees of impact. Is not failure that a couple, by its own fault, loses their job and their home, and are expelled from the country? That's what Adam and Eve experienced. Was it failure for them that their first child killed the younger? Adam and Eve had to overcome that. Did Jacob experience failure when he deceived his father and his brother, and his uncle deceived him, his first wife and even his beloved Rachel? The issue is whether that failure becomes a path to wisdom or a path to fear and division.

But there is one last thing. That we live in a risk society does not only mean that we are facing major catastrophes. It means above all that society is becoming more open towards its future. Increasingly, anything is possible. Nothing is easy but at the same time everything is possible. The future is increasingly open and that also has to cause hope to grow in the family as they face their problems and regarding their role in the world they want to leave to their descendants. We have to go from being at-risk families to being hopeful families.

4. Global priorities of the United Nations regarding the Family

Third, and finally, United Nations' International Day of Families, every May 15th, is a relevant source for discerning global priorities. The United Nations is concerned about the fragility of the family, although “Family is the Heart of Society” (UN, 1994), especially for the poorest and weakest.

The UN encourages us to strengthen the family as place and agent of solidarity, cooperation, human rights and comprehensive human development. After studying the documentation of United Nations since 1994, we think UN's four priorities for the family are the "four P's" (4P Family Priorities): Policies, Partnership, Parenting & Participation.

- Improving the policies of family protection and participation
- Promotion of the bond, commitment and equitable cooperation of partners and families, overcoming crises and their inequalities.
- Promotion of positive parenting
- Activation of socially transformative participation of families

SECOND PART: a light on family mission

"We need a new wisdom and new horizons for understanding the family in our world," said Father General Adolfo Nicolás in the spring of 2013, at the Family Institute at the University of Comillas. How can we give words to this new wisdom, reflect on new horizons of the family and act with compassion and effectiveness in them? We will explore two *"surveys"* for inspiration.

5. The help of Ignatian spirituality in family building

*"It is now up to you, heirs ...
of an invaluable spiritual heritage,
to commit yourselves"*

Benedict XVI

5.1. The Family, a "Given" to Which the Ignatian Has Never Stopped Dedicating Him or Herself

We need to light our way by asking ourselves what the contribution of Ignatian spirituality is to families. The contribution is huge and is shown by the countless families that have taken shape, have educated their children and have served society and the Church in the light of the Spiritual Exercises. No one doubts the hard work and the fruits that Ignatian Spirituality has given to families. However, have we made a body, a wisdom and an explicit priority of all that work?

For CLC, the family was a priority early and prominently. In 1979, Father Arrupe identified it as “*the first field of your apostolic service.*” This refers not only to people, but also to the family and all the problems that it entails: culture, environment and family justice. But secondly, while we are told that it is the immediate field where our apostolic work begins, he makes it clear that “*this is not enough*” and that it is natural to Ignatian Spirituality that nourishes the CLC move “*beyond the family*”. Exactly 15 years later, the World Assembly of Hong Kong '1994 attempted to respond, almost 20 years ago, with concrete measures.

We have taken the family for granted, and it was in everything, but the thirst in the frontier asks us to make that living relationship between family and Ignatian Spirituality visible.

5.2. The Ignatian Family Windmill

How does Ignatian spirituality in the constitution, dynamics and recycling of the couple and the family? Ignatian Spirituality in families is like a windmill with four blades that never cease to move within families to convert their land into bread for the family and for the world.

- The first blade of the Ignatian family windmill moved the family to open itself to the universality of hearing the call to do things that deserve to be eternal (“... on the things that are to last forever,” Ignatius writes about his own family).
- The second blade of the Ignatian windmill moves families toward depth, communication and attention to deception. (Ignatius seeks to distinguish the spirit from the flesh of kinship: “to my connections and relatives according to the flesh, to the end that we might become according to the Spirit”).
- The third blade of the Ignatian windmill moves families, free and united, to the service of the comprehensive development of the freedom of each member (“*so that we help each other at the same time*”, is what Ignatius desires of your family, and notice he does not talk about them but includes himself).
- The fourth blade of the Ignatian windmill moves families to live in a way that embodies and delivers the phrase “*in all things, to love and to serve.*”

That windmill, whose blades are only moved by the wind of the Holy Spirit, moves the family of millers inside the mill (his family) and moves them to give their bread to others.

In summary, the Ignatian family (not so much in a sense of identity but *“that family which the Ignatian helps”*),

- walks open to calls and looking for the desire of the eternal (Magis);
- makes discernment a way of life;
- promotes unity in freedom;
- is dedicated to service and love in all and with all.

Could we try to express it in a sentence? Ignatian families live deeply free and universally dedicated in all and with all. Anyway, it is difficult to improve Arrupe’s motto *“Families for others.”* The Ignatian family loves and serves in all and with all.

There are several issues in which Ignatian spirituality can especially help families.

a. A Reconciled Family Culture

The first thing I would emphasize is that Ignatian spirituality has the position and keys to reconcile the different cultural trends in family matters. I emphasize the fruitful work that the Ignatian can do to reconcile, discern and create the public and social culture of the family. The society of risk is constantly subjected to the stresses of the extremes. The need is urgent for a viewpoint that is compassionate, hopeful and trusting in the God of history, to be able to recognize the good and work based what needs to change. Guided by discernment and not blinded by ideologies.

b. Unity and Freedom

The family unit is authentic only when it makes its members more free. The development of cooperation within the family, equitable relationships (beyond mere egalitarianism), participatory governance within the family, justice in the role of each and freedom for the maximum development of the each member’s vocation are issues for which it is still necessary to fight in today’s world. Ignatian Spirituality gives us a framework and

tools so that this paradox between communion and freedom is never a zero sum game, but that each promotes the other.

c. Diversity

One of the most popular features of Ignatian spirituality is its capacity for enculturation in the diversity of peoples and traditions. Fear and discomfort experienced by many families because of uncertainty and weakening, cause them to gamble recklessly on seeing diversity as a problem and an adversary. There is, therefore, a call to appreciate the diversity of families, to acculturate into its various forms, to work from within situations and from there move to love to the extreme.

d. Living from the Heart

The family, with its intimacy and maximum communion, is a place where things are stored in the depths of the heart. Even the UN takes up this idea of the family as the heart of the world. There is a dialogue that needs to happen between the family as the heart and the great wisdom of the heart that Ignatian Spirituality has developed. That wisdom of the Heart of Jesus is a very fruitful path, especially for the couple and the family. Ignatian Spirituality helps deepen the heart, thoroughly examine feelings, and find the deepest longings of the heart. There is a whole pedagogy of the heart of couples and families contained in the Exercises, which urgently needs to be shared and updated (made more understandable and applied) to the context.

e. Thankfulness, Hope and Joy

The discomfort of many with the condition of the family has caused some toxins of bitterness, pessimism, sadness and intransigence, hardness of heart and catastrophism to enter in, which end up dividing and driving people further away. A family who, energized by the Magis, aspires to do things that deserve to be eternal or “are to last forever” makes hope part of its daily mood. Living thankfully and joyfully forms part of that hope which becomes memory and does not fear the future. The wisdom of the Ignatian Examen gives us thankfulness at the start of our viewpoint every day. Many families would unravel the knots that distress them if they would just say “thank you” to each other every day. There is a long way to go to help families live thankfully and gratefully.

f. The Family, a School of Discernment

The family is a school of discernment, but it first must learn to do it itself. There is a pedagogy of discernment in the Exercises in which the family must be formed. It is part of our responsibility that we not only exercise them as individual persons but also as couples and families, to do the Exercises that will help them to look, listen, understand and choose together.

g. The Family, a School of Citizenship and Commitment

A third wish that the Father General expresses about the family, in addition to the call from Father Arrupe to *“The family and beyond”* invites us to be a family that *“joyfully commits to take steps forward in a world that is ready to build and needs peace, needs more equality, needs more freedom.”* This also requires a pedagogy of commitment. To encourage each member of the family to commit and for it to be something built into the heart of the family. Commitment is a common good of the whole family, which is the first community and civil society, and the heart of society.

Let me try to express those priorities in a sentence: Ignatian Spirituality can bring the wisdom of freedom, diversity and the heart to families so that with hope and joy, they will be a school of discernment and commitment for a more equitable, free and peaceful world.

6. Recommendations of our Popes about Family: Gratitude, Hospitality & Discernment

A world meeting of the Christian Life Community cannot miss listening to what the Church wants to tell us to help us to strengthen and promote family ministry. I especially want us to pay attention to what our popes Benedict XVI and Francis have recently said. We will try to summarize it in twelve points.

- 1) We do not cease thanking God, our loved ones, and all people for the daily miracle of family
 - God is leading us in the intimacy of daily life. We must give thanks and value the immense magnitude of all family life hidden

from our viewpoint, all love created in the silence of the daily life of the home.

- 2) We must be witnesses of the beauty of the family. We were created to give love, and love is the most eternal thing in our lives.
 - We must be witnesses of the beauty of the family.
 - We were created to give love, and love is the most eternal thing in our lives.
- 3) In family ministry, we must take risks and help in major difficulties without avoiding them.
 - In family ministry, we must take risks and help in major difficulties without avoiding them. Like the Good Samaritan, we take the risk of helping the person who is wounded at the roadside.
- 4) In family ministry, we must set high goals without letting our hope be stolen.
 - “We do not bury our talents; rather, we put them to the service of high ideals and big dreams. Do not be afraid to dream big things!” says Pope Francis. Christians have not been chosen by the Lord for small things.
 - In family projects, we must not be discouraged, lose heart, or let our hope be stolen.
- 5) We must be open families and go out to meet the families at the edges of the world and of existence.
 - God moves toward us. God always takes the first step, and in the same way, we should move ourselves to meet families without calculations or qualifications.
 - To go out and take the Gospel to families at the edges of the world and of existence.
 - God calls our families not to close ourselves off in “*familism*” and to open ourselves to share with and for others.
- 6) Our church communities must be homes with open doors to accept all families with closeness and love. The home is the place of acceptance, meeting, and togetherness, and it is the inspiration for what the Church should be: Church communities with open doors.

- The home is the place of reception, meeting and togetherness, and it is the inspiration for what the Church should be.
 - The Church should have open doors so all families can come in and feel accepted, loved, forgiven and supported.
 - The project is to become God's family, in which everyone feels close and loved by God's warmth.
- 7) Unconditionally accept all families.
- God's mercy welcomes unconditionally like the Good Samaritan: asking nothing, demanding nothing.
- 8) Put others at the centre of our attention with recognition, care, tenderness, embracing, lifelong heart to heart dialogue, and always hoping for others. We must not be afraid of tenderness. The Church is God's embrace. Family ministry takes care of others. The mission is to protect and care for each other, and together, for all of humanity and of Creation. We have lifelong dialogue and speak heart to heart.
- Know how to discover a viewpoint of recognition and hope about the most wounded families. God invites us to know the struggles and hopes of families with problems, and to learn from their hope with a positive outlook and recognition.
 - Our mission is to protect and care for each other, and together, for all of humanity and creation.
 - Place others at the center of our attention with tenderness. We should not be afraid of tenderness.
 - Let us establish a lifelong dialogue with families in which we speak heart to heart.
 - Again and again, God is always waiting on us from the heart, like the Good Father of the Prodigal Son, God is always thinking with mercy. We should wait patiently and tenderly for the best for each family and each person regarding their family situation.
- 9) In situations of pain and failure, we embrace the Cross together, having confidence that there are no situations that God cannot change and that God will not let human life fail. Human life is too big to fail.
- In the dark nights of pain or confusion, we must remain in the embrace of a word, which is the Cross itself.
 - There is no situation that God cannot change.
 - "Human life is too big to fail," says Pope Benedict XVI.

- 10) Help families to grow, become responsible, and make definitive commitments, in a context in which the trend is the “*disposable*,” materialism, laziness, superficiality and the philosophy of the temporary.
- The family must help to grow great ideals and assume progressive responsibilities. Help to overcome the tendencies of materialism, laziness and superficiality.
 - Help individuals to make definitive decisions, overcoming the philosophy of the temporary and passing from one thing to another without discernment.
 - The family should work for society to overcome the culture of disposal of the world’s resources and so care for the earth, and especially for the weakest, be they poor, elderly, disabled, or unborn.
- 11) Progress in discernment about the family. Discern with Faith and Reason about the different specific situations of families, and the future of the family in culture. Do it with dialogue and especially at the frontiers.
- 12) And above all, a family ministry that is happy, and that carries out big ideals in the small, daily things.
- “*Be happy and do the small things*,” says Pope Benedict XVI, recalling a phrase of St. David.

In summary

All these current recommendations of popes Benedict and Francis can be summarized into three:

- ◆ In family matters, let us put the emphasis on thankfulness, the beauty of giving, and joy.
- ◆ Let us go out to meet families at the social and existential frontiers, and accept them unconditionally with recognition and tenderness.
- ◆ Let us have heart to heart dialogue to discern and decide with freedom and commitment, especially sharing those situations that are most painful with the hope that God will not let any life fail.

What three words could we use as a slogan about these recommendations? It is difficult to choose them, as many of them inspire

us. If we had to choose the three most enlightening, they would be these: thankfulness, hospitality, and discernment.

CONCLUSIONS: I-Families plan (proposals for CLC)

“*What can we do?*” asks Benedict XVI, which we all repeat when facing the situation of families in the world. From the heart and body of the world, Ignatian Spirituality revives a creative and compassionate transformation of each person and reality. As Paul VI said, in our time, more than ever, we need imagination. “*Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of creativity,*” Father Adolfo Nicolás has recently said (2013). The Father General invites us to hope and entrepreneurship on the frontiers. The spirit of frontier requires the wisdom of roots and wings “roots with wings and wings with roots,” as the Spanish poet Juan Ramon Jimenez sang.

*“Roots and Wings,
But the wings take root
And the roots fly “*

The wings make us move to where we are needed and roots bind us to the heart of God. CLC is also called to the frontiers. From the deep roots that have deepened in recent decades, it is a call to move with more agile and effective wings. The family is a frontier that demands enough movement and strong enough wings to reach the most distant frontiers. To serve effectively in the frontier of families takes large doses of creativity and entrepreneurship. CLC must be a creative and operative force. At the suggestion of the organizers of the CLC World Assembly, I dare to put forth some possible courses of action to give the CLC this Xaverian Turn in the Mission of Family.

By i-Families or “*Ignatian Families*” we are referring to all families that can be helped by Ignatian spirituality.

I-Families (Ignatian-Families) Plan

- a. Framework. We need a reflection on the framework of Ignatian Spirituality and family in our tradition and in our current world.

What is the tradition? (Eg.: What are the lines about family that Ignatius points out in his letters?) What are the positive apostolic experiences? What are the potentials? What can family ministry of the Church contribute today?

- ♦ We propose that CLC lead international reflection in collaboration with the Society of Jesus and other Ignatian works to establish such a framework.
- ♦ We could organize an International Meeting on Family and Ignatian Spirituality (i-Family International Conference) in 2015.
- ♦ The fruit of this can be an e-book published in late 2015: i-Families e-book
- ♦ The results can be displayed and energized on a specific website about Ignatian Spirituality and family (Web @ i-Family: IgnatianFamilies), together with an account on social networks (Twitter, Facebook), in collaboration with the Jesuit Networking initiative. This content could be activated by the end of 2014.
- ♦ To carry out this work of reflection, meeting organization, editing of the book and web contents would require a small international committee of people with deep roots (Ignatian experience) and strong wings (entrepreneurship, creativity and operational agility). Let's call it World i-Family Team).

b. Participation in the Church. To enrich the family ministry of the Church, much more intense participation is required of CLC in the organizations in which these issues are addressed. The spotlight that the Roman family ministry places on the world is fundamental to the lives of hundreds of millions of Catholics and other Christians. This objective could begin to be reached in three years (2016).

- It is necessary to study the possibilities of CLC participation in such ministry spaces.
- The World i-Family Team can do that study and even participate in those spaces.

c. Public Advocacy. It is necessary to participate in the institutions that guide the culture and politics of the family. It is necessary to participate in international organizations as well as national politics. This objective could begin to be reached in three years (2016).

- ♦ We need to study the possibilities of CLC participation in international organizations, as well as those in which CLC already

has a presence. The World i-Family Team can do this study in collaboration with CLC representatives at the UN.

- ♦ We need to develop a practical guide and training for public advocacy about family matters for CLC members and other Ignatian lay people. The World i-Family Team can adapt existing guidelines and seek training in collaboration with others (eg, Fe y Alegría and Entreculturas have an excellent guide and an online course).
- ♦ We need to consider what our emphasis should be in national family policies, taking into account each regional and national context. Within the i-Family International Conference this issue could be addressed in a specific workshop.

d. Best Practices. We could make a collection of good practices in support to couples and families (or individuals with regard to their partners and families) in Ignatian communities. We could have that by 2015.

- ✓ We could make an i-Families Survey in Ignatian communities and Ignatian centers of the world working with the family.
- ✓ The World i-Family Team could do this survey and the catalog of Best Practices.
- ✓ The Best Practices content could be distributed through the @ i-Family Web.
- ✓ It could be distributed at the i-Family International Conference.
- ✓ Part of the Best Practices content could form part of the i-Family e-book.

e. Innovative Toolbox 4 Families. Specific tools should be developed to help the family from the perspective of Ignatian Spirituality. This point was already decided at the World Assembly in Hong-Kong. Specific instruments could start being available in 2015. There are at least three that are already almost available:

- CLC Chile, along with the SJ, has created a method of working on sexual diversity, which can be adapted for universalization.
- CLC Spain has created a method for creating and renewing the couple and family project (Family Clock) – together with a training course to apply it, which can be internationalized.
- There are other tools, such as the psychosocial program “First Covenant” (developed by the Family Institute of Comillas), made

for dysfunctional families with young children, that we have applied in areas of poverty, and they could be transferred to CLC.

- We should develop other tools applied to family in at least two areas: the Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Examen as a couple and family.
 - These tools have to be designed with the utmost rigor and professionalism so that they can be applied effectively and universalized.
 - The World i-Family Team could identify those areas where it is necessary to innovate tools. Then, they could seek the collaboration of the national CLC or other agencies for Ignatian development.
 - These tools could be addressed at the i-Family International Conference in 2015.
 - These tools could be included in the contents of the @ i-Family Web and i-Family e-book.
- f. Eco-Ignatian Homes 4 Water. We would have to make an Ignatian guide for ecology lived at home. To begin, we could specifically focus on one priority aspect like WATER. This could be available in 2015.
- CLC can assist Eco-Jesuit to carry out that reflection and practical guide.
 - The World i-Family Team can entrust that task to a small sub-team.
 - The result could be presented at the i-Family International Conference, 2015, included in the contents of the @ i-Family Web and published as a reference in the i-Family e-book.
- g. School for Parents in schools. There is a great need to work with parents in schools. We would have to share Best Practices and think of new, more effective practices. This is a difficult issue, with several variations depending on cultures. We should have to think about having orientations in 2017.
- Best Practices could be collected in this area through the i-Families Survey and from the Innovative Tools 4 Families Program, we could think of the possibility of developing a proposal.

- This job could be done in collaboration with Fe y Alegría, the Cristo Rey network of schools and the education sector of the curate of the Apostolic Father General.
 - This could be channeled to the i-Family International Conference, @ i-Family Web, and i-Family e-book. The World i-Family Team would drive and lead this in collaboration with others.
- h. Young Couples & Families. A segment of families that we need to especially care for is that of young couples and families (25-35 years). It is a very good service to those families and for the Church. And it is crucial for the future of CLC. We must reflect, collect Best Practices, and develop Innovative Tools. It will be addressed at the International Conference, the Web, and the e-book. The i-Family Team will encourage and lead. This is urgent, We need to have tools and plans by 2015.
- i. International Annual Fellowship about i-Family. We propose that CLC Worldwide awards an annual scholarship to an investigator so that he or she can develop work on Ignatian Spirituality, family, and ministry tools. He or she can give support for other lines of action (Framework, Best Practices, Toolbox, etc.). We believe that it could be a bi-annual scholarship (one person for a two year commitment) whose first concession would be the 2014-2015 biennium.
- j. Results of the Assembly. It is highly desirable that some lines of action involving the family come from CLC World Assembly Beirut'2013, accompanied by means and time to carry them out. It is very important that not only words come from the Assemblies, but also concrete operational plans: the world – and especially all the Ignatian fabric – is asking us, CLC, for a more effective, practical, entrepreneuring and committed Xaverian turn. Are we able to give the world an unmistakable sign of that Xaverian Turn that we are giving them?

The following table summarizes the goals and methods that we have suggested. Of course, let me express the commitment of the Family Institute of the Universidad Pontificia Comillas (Madrid) to cooperate with CLC Worldwide -as it does in CLC-Spain, in everything, that happens, to generate reflection, knowledge and practical tools.

i-FAMILY PLAN (CLC WORLDWIDE, 2014-2019)

	Date	World Team	Fellowship	World Survey	International Conference	Web Net work	e-book
Framework	2015	X	X		X	X	X
Church's Farm Pastoral	2016	X				X	
Advocacy	2016	X			X	X	
Best Practices	2015	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toolbox	2015	X	X		X	X	X
Eco-Ignatian Home	2015	X			X	X	X
Parental School	2017	X	X		X	X	
Young Couples	2015	X			X	X	X

FINAL

I'll try to summarize the whole communication in 10 points. CLC's Xaverian Turn to help families is characterized by:

- ❖ Reaching out to families at social and existential frontiers
- ❖ Unconditional acceptance and tenderness of the various family and couple situations where we find people
- ❖ Celebrating diversity
- ❖ The wisdom of the heart to discern and decide with commitment
- ❖ The drive of freedom as a source of unity
- ❖ A perspective of gratitude and joy
- ❖ Recognition of the hopes that some historical developments bring
- ❖ The empowering of family as a school and of discernment
- ❖ The commitment of the family as a community and school in commitment that transforms society, together with other people and families.

- ❖ The revitalization of a culture of creative and agile entrepreneurship throughout CLC Worldwide, to discern and act in the spirit of the frontiers.

Ignatian Families are families, and what's more, they is the most authentic way of being family: in all and with all. Hopefully CLC, so blessed, will be a blessing for thousands of families on the earth, especially on the frontiers where life is more risky. Ignatian Family, in all and with all. Thank you very much.

CLC World Assembly
Beirut, August 5, 2013

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Family life in an African context in the 21st century

Where I come from

I was born in 1966 in Soweto, South Africa, one of a growing number then of children born out of wedlock. My mother (May her soul rest in peace) was just 21 years old when I was born. My father did not believe he was ready to take responsibility for a child. So I was raised in my mother's family.

Her parents had died when she was very young and she was raised by her cousin and his wife, who did not have children of their own. By the time I was born, my uncle (read father) was on the verge of converting to Catholicism. He converted soon after his father had passed away, the whole family was Methodist. I was baptised in to catholic faith on the same day as he was. For a long time I didn't know that my uncle and aunt were not my parents. The tradition/culture tried to hide the "*scandal*" by absorbing illegitimate children into their maternal family, either to protect them or preserve the family dignity. When I was about sixteen years old one of the neighbours inadvertently let the cat out of the bag when she asked how my mother was and I told she is fine you have just seen her go to town! And he reply was I didn't mean the one you live with, I meant Mannini. All along I knew that my sister loved me beyond words. She always made sure I had all that I needed and more.

The above was the norm in the baby boom time in the African communities in South Africa. It all changed in the 1970s when too many children were born out of wedlock and the fathers almost always refused to take responsibility. I had seen my "*sister*" get married and was catechised into the knowledge that marriage was the only way to have and be family, so that was my dream and I like many girls had my dress designed and the number of children counted out before the pressures of life took over my life.

Becoming a single/unmarried mother

Briefly, I had two very disappointing relationships that became sexual and led to my pregnancies. In those years the scourge of legal abortion was reserved for the white population in South Africa and one had to risk your whole life to get rid of a baby! Not that this was an option I was looking for, it only occurred when an aunt who had just returned from exile suggested it! The first man had been married but only revealed that when I told him about the pregnancy, after my daughter was born I spent many years avoiding relationships! I was determined to give her all that I can since by then I was a qualified teacher and had also acquired a degree as a second qualification. In an effort to help, someone (I can't remember who) suggested that I go to court to claim maintenance. This turned into a serious nightmare! First Thabo (the father) refused to come to meetings, and then he claimed he wasn't the father and so we had to go through paternity tests, which proved he was the father. Then another problem developed; the case file disappeared! That was when I had to abandon this effort and focus on my child, her education and our lives. It was around this time (1995/6) I joined my very first small Christian Life Community. I had by then been exposed to the Ignatian notion of being a loved sinner. That is how I was able to stay in the church even when I felt unwelcome in some circles, especially the parish I grew up in.

Later, I met another charmer who was not ready to settle down. At age 33, one would assume that reading character would become easier, it doesn't! This man was a womaniser, alcoholic and abusive (emotionally and financially) so after my son was born his true colours came to the fore. I'm somewhat cowardly according to the standards in the African community, I would not allow myself to have a man who threatened me with physical abuse, withheld money while feeding off my hard earned salary and who was unfaithful, so that relationship was ended! That was when my family was confirmed as a single parent family. To this day none of these men have offered even a pair of shoes to their children. I am the sole provider for my family with God's protection on my, as yet unrecognised family, in the Church. By that I mean the only single parent family that seems supported is the one where the parent is widowed and marginally the one who is divorced. The never married ones stay in the church only because we have learnt to ignore the homilies that further marginalise or degrade what we have chosen to live with, the result of breaking the commandments. Throughout this period I was with a very

supportive small community and I was able to pick up the shards of my life and move forward. At this point I pretty much closed my heart off to any possibilities of love. Being in CLC kept me sane and my faith started to grow in leaps and bounds.

Single parent families in Southern Africa

My family is just one example of single parent families in many African communities, I can only speak from the South African Tswana context, where my country has made life easier for many women, who like me, are forced to choose between a life of abuse and going it alone as parents. I don't agree with the grant system because I believe it is not sustainable, it also leads to further dependency. (Historically the grants were only available to the white community in the form of foster care, adoption and orphanages. The new grant system was supposed to correct the imbalances of the past but it has led to an even greater number of teenage pregnancies). I would rather resources like education were made more accessible to the new generation of single mothers, who are largely teenagers who are barely educated enough to fend for themselves. Giving them a small amount of money without the option of getting a better education and a chance to provide fully for their children is not helping, but just perpetuating the cycle.

Forgiving myself

Having gone through the Spiritual Exercises has made it easier for me to keep on finding God in my daily life as learnt from being a CLC'er, which has made me appear to be strong! In many ways I am strong. I have had the fortune of being a teacher, meaning I am able to provide the very basics for my children. The other blessing is being able to ensure that they are well taught, I am in the process of steering my daughter (who also got caught in the teen pregnancy web) back onto the education path so she can get the necessary qualifications in order to allow her pursue her dream of a career in the hospitality sector. My son is currently in grade 9 and he will hopefully pursue a career in some sort of scientific field (typical teenage boy choice changes with every theme they work on at school!)

Then there is the fact that I have made a conscious decision to stay in the church and give them a faith base to live from. My daughter was an altar

server and my son is currently one. He is one year away from confirmation and seems to love his catechism lessons. So that is a true blessing that they are not being sidelined at church the way it used to happen in the past.

Praying as a family revolves around meals and we occasionally have moments of sharing what happened in our day. The sharing is often reluctantly joined into especially by my son! I hope that their knowledge of my chosen way of life will be a base for them to find their way into CLC in the future. At the moment they feel as though they don't belong, particularly because the majority of the young families that we had in our Gauteng region have now left. When there were other children coming along to assemblies it was easier for my family to come along. So my children are basically the only children that are still connected to CLC. The last assembly where there were children accompanying us, was in 2006. The other prayer moments are around the deaths we have had to live within the recent past, the latest of which was the murder of my beloved mother. She had been the other central figure in their lives and without her support I would not have been able to go to many international meetings on behalf of CLC South Africa. She was always happy to babysit her grandchildren for each time I had to leave the country. Today they are able to stay at home on their own because my daughter can take care of the basic needs.

Conclusion

This short family life according to Malesabe Hannah “*Sabie*” Makgothi, took the longest time because it coincided with my mother's tragic death. She was found dead in her house on Monday the 27th May, just a few days from her 68th birthday on the 1st of June 2013. I speak to you while I mourn her passing and try to move on with life knowing that the only parent I have now is not the one I can turn to when there is a spiritual crisis in my life. My father is a traditionalist who is practicing traditional medicine and believes that we can help God! Unless it is to bring souls to God, that to me is misleading them. Thank you for this challenge to talk about family life, my family. God bless!

*Ms Malesabe Hannah Makgothi
CLC South Africa*

Globalisation: inequality and poverty

Globalisation runs the risk of becoming, if it has not already done so, the cliché of our age. Everything that happens today across the world, every change in our world system, economic successes as well as failures everywhere, all is explained within the framework of globalisation.

Globalisation: a definition?

Globalisation consists of an intensification of the movements of goods, services, labour, technology and capital. Although this is not a new phenomenon, its rhythm has increased thanks to the advent of new technologies. The density of worldwide and transnational connections, the growth of links forged across complex networks of relationships among communities, States, international institutions, non-governmental and multinational organisations are such as to make our world more and more interdependent.¹

Globalisation may be interpreted as a process or a number of processes rather than an isolated or unique phenomenon. In fact, it reflects the emergence of interregional networks and systems of interactions and exchanges.²

The conjunction of social, political, ideological, economic and technological factors has speeded up world interdependence. We may list the principal characteristics of this integration:

- ◆ The spatio-temporal factor: time and space have become important elements of this world-wide integration.
- ◆ the organisational factor: globalisation is far from being 'out of control'; on the contrary, it is the object of new forms of multilateral regulations.

¹ JESSOP, Bob. *'Reflections on Globalization and its (il)logic(s)'*, from the *Logic of Globalization*. London: Routledge, 1999.

² HELD, David, McGREW, Anthony, GOLDBLATT, David & PERRATON, Jonathan. *Global Transformations*. Cambridge: 1999, p. 27

- ◆ the factor of juxtaposition: globalisation tends to touch or influence every aspect of our life (economic, political, social, etc...).
- ◆ The reflective factor: even if globalisation is liberal, there is now a certain self reflection and consciousness. We note awareness at world level of different views of globalisation.
- ◆ the dispute factor: thanks to new technologies, globalisation enables possible disputes at every level and in all domains.
- ◆ the liberal factor: globalisation is mainly characterised by an increasingly liberal outlook.

The challenges of globalisation

The collapse of communism and the fall of the Berlin wall mark the indisputable triumph of world-wide capitalism.

At first, globalisation profited the United States and Western countries, but in reality, the growing openness of every country in the world means that globalisation is becoming established everywhere.

The actors in this globalisation are the multinational businesses, no longer the States, which formerly controlled companies in the production and creation of wealth.

These multinationals try to assert themselves and dominate their market by passing on the most powerful culture, i.e. Western culture, notably American. The proliferation at worldwide level of trademarks, the simultaneous transmission of events (local, regional and world) by satellite to hundreds of millions of individuals instantaneously on every continent, is one of the most obvious forms of globalisation, one that leads to cultural globalisation. This is blamed not only for homogenising the culture but also for americanising it. There are a number of reasons for this accusation:

- ◆ The influence of U.S. multinationals on the habits and local cultures
- ◆ *The American way of life* in relation to food is increasingly obvious and provokes negative reactions.
- ◆ Well-known brands and multiple distribution outlets are regularly blamed for changing the way of life and habits of a whole generation of the population.

Contemporary globalisation has given companies the right to spy on our lives. Multinationals and to a lesser degree, the SMB/SMI,³ are the true creators of wealth, they participate in economic development that employs the workers, professionals and managers and decide the way of life that we are busy following. Companies have taken away some of the prerogatives of state power in world governance. The more a company becomes worldwide, the more powerful it becomes. In fact, today States limit themselves to going along with economic globalisation without any possibility or will to resist the growing powers of big business.

It is undeniable today that the problems that threaten our model of society are becoming global. Every country, both rich and poor, is disturbed by social, economic, moral and ethical problems. The environmental problems, sustainable development and the social responsibility of businesses and States are also part of the challenges that our societies are obliged to face.

This growing and invasive power requires businesses to take into account the preoccupations of society and communities in which they are developing. Businesses, following the example of States that were once responsible for the life of its citizens, now exercise the power that globalization allows them. They are now under the obligation of responding to the demands and distress of citizens, who fear that the direction of a system, while performing by creating wealth, becomes dangerous when it neglects the future of the most vulnerable sections of the population. In fact, this system, which is accused of favoring the rich, is likely to put in jeopardy even the future of the wealthy classes. It may endanger the whole society because of its lack of consideration for social and economic equity, which as a consequence has harmful effects on the whole human community.

It is apparent today that the reach of the world-wide media in publicising the problems of our society has become more and more visible and effective. In fact, globalisation and new technologies facilitate the spread of information. This has an important and decisive impact on businesses that now feel an obligation to remedy the dysfunctional aspects of their dealings and performance.

³ Small and Medium Businesses/Small and Medium Industries SMB/SMI

Multinationals: blamed rightly or wrongly?

The dealings and performance of multinationals are increasingly examined by public opinion now fully aware of their performance. Non-respect and neglect of simple rights of citizens and workers, especially in poor countries, are also increasingly criticised in spite of the media power of the great world-wide firms.

Many tragic events have taken place since the 1980s. These caused great human and psychological harm in different poor countries, caused by the deliberate non-respect by companies of the basic, elementary norms of the rights of the workers to a safe working environment - without even mentioning their social rights. These events are very numerous, we limit ourselves to naming those which have made the most impact on world opinion and whose consequences are dramatic.

1. Union Carbide at Bhopal

One of the most distressing catastrophes took place at Bhopal, India, in December 1984, after the explosion of a chemical pesticides factory, belonging to the American firm, Union Carbide. This caused the death of 3,500 individuals on the night of the accident, and, according to different sources, the number of deaths rose to between 25,000 and 30,000 victims since then, without counting the sicknesses brought about by this catastrophe. The media frenzy damaged Union Carbide's image, characterising it as a murderous enterprise. Almost 30 years after this event, the company remains committed to a huge programme of aid to the victims (and their descendants). Even today, the internet site of Union Carbide⁴ details the activities undertaken by the company to help the victims.

2. The collapse of a textile factory in Bangladesh

An eight-storey building, housing a textile factory working for Western multinationals, collapsed near Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh. This was caused by the owner's use of unsuitable construction materials of poor quality. This tragedy caused the death of 1,125 individuals. Bangladesh - the world's second largest exporter of textiles after China - regularly has

⁴ <http://www.bhopal.com> consulted 30 June 2013

similar tragedies. Huge demonstrations have denounced the extremely bad conditions for workers, who are sometimes paid less than 30 Euros per month.⁵ As a result of the hue and cry provoked by this catastrophe, the government closed several factories that did not respect the normal standards of security.

3. Chiquita Brand International

The reasons are different for criticising Chiquita, one of the biggest banana companies in the world, and one of the most criticised multinationals. This is notably because of its exploitation of the agricultural riches in the countries in which it operates, its domination of the banana market, the monoculture (of the banana), and the bad working conditions and treatment of its workers. The pressure campaigns and the circulation of photos have affected the company as well as public opinion. Faced with the campaigns of activists, and to look after its image, Chiquita had to revise and adjust its environmental strategy of production and human resources to become a better citizen.⁶

Can we talk of a New World consciousness?

Several trends of opinion coming not only from countries of the South, but overwhelmingly from countries of the North, are not slow in harsh criticism of the corporation as an entity and an economic structure.

A line of thought openly hostile to companies that voluntarily choose lasting development as a strategy and practice, consider the multinationals to be in pathological pursuit of profit and power. Joel Bakan, a Canadian lawyer and writer, believes that in order to win over public opinion, companies try to soften their image by appearing humane, benevolent and socially responsible.⁷ A harsh attack on multinationals by the '*another world is possible*' concept has been expressed by the economist and writer David C. Korten who likened these companies to a cancer and a

⁵<http://www.20minutes.fr/monde/1153225-20130512-bangladesh-bilan-leffrondement-lusine-textile-savar-alourditi-a-1125-morts> consulted 26 June 2013

⁶ http://aloe.socioeco.org/article855_fr.html consulted 26 June 2013

⁷ BAKAN, Joel. *The Corporation: the Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*. Free Press, 2005

tyrannical power whose aim is to destroy the life and the ecosystem of the holders of capital.⁸

Bakan's and Korten's point of view may be understood as the result of an economic system whose fall-out does not benefit all levels of the population. This alarming and pessimistic report coming from two North American personalities is witness to a weakness at the very heart of the more liberal societies. This leads to the necessity of taking into consideration the anxieties of the most vulnerable in the wealthy countries as much as in the countries of the South.

But going too far in criticising modern business, an organisation capable not only of creating wealth and employment but that also participates in technological development and innovation, runs the risk of harming the system while not advancing by one jot the human and social causes that are the responsibility of these same companies. It would be wise to note that even Adam Smith, although he may be the eulogist of economic liberalism, denounced the egoism with which capitalism is confronted. In his work, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*,⁹ he gives value to moral sense and social ties that capitalism is supposed to respect.¹⁰

The questioning of state power and its effects

If it is true that globalisation does not profit every country or society or community, it is also true that new technologies, free and rapid dissemination of information without passing through official networks or channels, give different individuals, groups, associations and organisations a power that is beginning to hamper and rein in malevolent acts of corporations. They are becoming increasingly attentive to their image, which has led to the generalisation of social responsibility being part of big businesses.

⁸ KORTEN, David C. *When Corporations Rule the World*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2001

⁹ SMITH, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Penguin Classics, Anv Edition, 2010.

¹⁰ Although less well known than *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1759, Adam Smith's work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, published in 1759, is of great moral and intellectual value. In this work the author censures the trends and egoism in the pursuit of private interests.

Some pressure groups with a world vocation are becoming more active around the planet, fighting for a more just society on economic, moral, social and environmental grounds. They want to protect hundreds of millions of people from the ravages caused by the non-respect of the elementary rights of citizens. These pressure groups whose objective is to initiate and open the way towards a new norm of company citizenship are beginning to gain international respect of governments, political parties, some opinion leaders, heads of companies, universities, philanthropists, activists and the media. Thanks to innovative techniques, new technologies and strategic partners, these organisations are extending their audience and their influence across most countries of the world and a good number of the activist sector¹¹ in several domains.

It is evident today that every fully globalised country on the planet is feeling the effects of a successful economy, but one that is far from equitable. Several European emerging countries are suffering from a rise of inequality that touches not only the disadvantaged sectors of society, but also the middle classes. These problems are expressed in demonstrations and violence, including the countries traditionally known as a haven of social peace following the example of Sweden¹² whose system is governed by equality and considered a social model for its European partners. Spain, Portugal, Greece Italy and other European countries formerly prosperous and enjoying social peace, today are experiencing social movements which disrupt and endanger the future of their countries.

Even emerging countries characterised by a high growth rate and economic vitality are not free of protests and disputes. The recent demonstrations in Istanbul in Turkey witness to the discontent of the population. These protests, at first led by ecologists against the destruction of the Taksim Gezi Park, were quickly transformed into a rejection of the politics of a government accused of despotism, of favouritism and of politically unrestrained construction. These demonstrations have attracted citizens of different social classes, young graduates as well as members of political parties from the Left and the Right.

¹¹ For more information see the site: <http://www.csrwire.com>

¹² Demonstrations have taken place at Hobsy, a suburb in northern Stockholm, largely inhabited by an immigrant population affected by insecure work, unemployment and expulsions.

In its turn, Brazil, a powerful emerging nation, has been engulfed by demonstrations that have gathered, in some towns, up to a million people who reject the spendthrift politics of government towards the organisation of the Football World Cup in 2014, while the health and public transport systems are not worthy of the second economic power on the American continent.¹³ Police violence and endemic corruption are also motives for challenging the ruling class, although politically it is on the Left. These demonstrations draw people from every part of society, especially the young largely qualified middle class.

The solution to inequalities generated by globalisation: an equitable and intelligent sharing of the fruits of globalisation

When globalisation is seen as a factor in growth and prosperity, human society will be able to profit from the fruits of wealth created by humankind. Several initiatives have been taken with the goal of making our world more humane. We limit ourselves to citing the following initiatives:

Fair Trade

Fair Trade¹⁴ is considered a more humane and less unequal alternative to traditional international trade. << *In a strict sense, (it) has two principal missions: in the short term, to improve the situation of small producers of the South; in the long term, to reorientate the functioning of international trade, by mobilising consumers of the North to put pressure on political leaders and companies, Linked to the idea of solidarity North/South, this is one means among others of remedying the injustices noted in trade*¹⁵ ...>>.

The humanisation of multinationals

In fact, today intelligent companies are aware that they cannot benefit from strong prosperity without a strong community, because they know that they find their employees and clients in the community, in other words, their very reason for existing. More and more businesses are

¹³ Brazil is the sixth-ranking economic world power, before the United Kingdom and Italy.

¹⁴ Fair trade in English

¹⁵ Solagral. *From fair trade to responsible consumption*. Paris: May, 1998, p.5.

beginning to realise that the problems of their communities affect the future of their affairs. This is where the interest in going further than a simple social peace towards a new vision resting on the wellbeing of all the parties involved. Marc R. Benniof, CEO of the American Company, *Salesforce*¹⁶ vigorously defends this idea. He has made social wellbeing and philanthropy the spearhead of his strategy. He considers that the business of the XXIst century must understand that service to the community is the foundation of its survival and its success, so the business needs to put all its energy and resources into achieving that objective.¹⁷ More and more clients are deciding to make their purchases based on the good reputation of the business and deserting those who do not respect a minimum of ethics in managing their affairs.

The innovative Small & Medium Enterprises

It is undisputed that the SMEs are not all on the same footing of equality in facing the challenges and profiting from the huge opportunities that globalisation brings them. However, globalisation can be a source of advantages for dynamic and responsive SMEs.

The strategic bases on which the SMEs are supposed to work need to reflect the logic of the globalisation of the demand¹⁸, which may be summed up as follows:

- the increasing needs in services and innovative products
- the simultaneity between homogeneity and specificity of expectations from clients and consumers at the world level
- new forms of competition

The organisation of globalisation

In order to work, globalisation needs to be organised and institutionalised socially, politically and economically by means of new structures of control and regulation. International institutions are increasingly playing a

¹⁶ www.salesforce.com

¹⁷ Marc Benniof is the pioneer and promoter of philanthropic innovation. His integrated philanthropic model 1/1/1 rests on the business paying 1% of its profits, 1% for its holdings, 1% of employees' hours devoted to the community they serve.

¹⁸ MATAR, Léonel. Globalisation and Strategies of the SMEs. Proche-Orient, Etudes en Management, Université Saint Joseph, N 20, 2008, p. 87.

more important role in the regulation of globalisation even if they are the objects of severe, mostly justified, criticism.

A new economic vision for the world?

At a time of globalisation, our planet's dependence on growth as the ultimate means of access to happiness can only accelerate a new logic of conceiving our future. A number of economists are questioning the fact that economic growth is seen as the only means of improving the human condition.¹⁹

GDP is the principal indicator used to measure the economies of developed and developing countries. In fact, this indicator is certainly going to remain the most representative of the economic state of a country, but this measurement tool can no longer be the only measure of the failures and successes of different countries and economies. Economic growth alone is no longer the measure of ensuring a lasting, balanced and above all, humane development. The taking into account and introduction of social and environmental indicators into economic analysis are becoming a necessity, even a moral obligation, at the dawn of the XXIst century.

For some years there has been a proliferation of indexes that go further than just taking into account the evaluation of the productive contribution of economic activities. We may cite a non-exhaustive²⁰ list of indexes, which enrich the analysis and understanding of development, no longer limited only to economic factors.

The main indexes are:

- The IDH. Since 1990, the UNDP has published the Index of Human Development (IDH), which is becoming more known and

¹⁹ EASTERLIN, Richard. <<Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot?>> [online]

<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/21008/04/16/businesss/Easterlin1974.pdf>
consulted 3 February 2013

²⁰ GADREY, Jean, JANY-CATRICE, Florence. The new indicators of wealth. Coll. Repères, ed. La Découverte, 12005, 123p.

circulated, and which takes into consideration economic, social, educational and environmental aspects.²¹

- The ISH. The Index of Social Health dates from the 1980s, the result of Fordham University's Institute for Innovation in Social Policy's work. The ISH acquired an enormous international reputation in 1996 on the publication of an article in the revue, *Challenge*, after the Miringoff's work appeared in 1995 [and their book in 1999]. The Index is calculated from several elementary variables, grouped into five components associated with categories of age. In fact, the *Challenge* article had a spectacular effect because it represented the variations of GDP and the ISH on the same graph by showing the uncoupling of the two indexes in 1973 (an increase in GDP and a fall in the ISH).
- The PSI. The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) developed the Personal Security Index in the 1990s. This Index's objective was the perception and measure of well being. Security includes three large dimensions: 1) economic security comprising the aspects of security of employment and financial security; 2) security of health; 3) physical security. The PSI focuses on studying the quality of life of individuals from the angle of the growing insecurities that confront them.

The present state of inequality and progress

In spite of the fact that poverty and misery are not yet overcome or eradicated in poor countries and in the poor parts of rich countries, we are witnessing real advances, not yet sufficient, but real in several areas. The World Bank through the Millennium Development Goals is witness to sure progress towards the resolution of the problems of poverty. We may cite the principal achievements:

1. Eradication of poverty and hunger: reduction by half (1990-2010).
2. Universal primary education: more than 9 million children are enrolled (2004-2009).

²¹ Miringoff, M., Miringoff, M-L., & Opdycke, S. America's social health: the nation's need to know. *Challenge*, September-October, 1995, pp. 19-24

3. Promotion of equality of the sexes: 85 000 young women enrolled in secondary education (2005-2010) and thousands saved from genital mutilation and forced marriages.
4. Infant mortality: vaccination of more than 5 million children.
5. Improvement in maternal health: 10 million surgery visits since 2004.
6. Fight against AIDS and malaria, etc: 750 000 persons have been treated (AIDS) and 7.7 million (malaria).
7. Lasting development: since 1990, more than 2 billion persons have access to clean drinking water.
8. Development of global partnerships: efforts to improve the effectiveness of aid (2 billion dollars of aid).

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is possible if the following points are taken into consideration:

- The will of governments.
- The ability of governments.
- The partnership of UN/Governments/Private sector/NGOs.
- The resolution of conflicts.

Can we talk of a crisis of capitalism?

The answer to that question leads us to another question: will current capitalism be replaced by another form of social organisation, one that imposes collective obligations in place of individual rights?

| In fact, the threats against capitalism stem rather from moral than economic reasons. To continue to make progress, capitalism requires:

- authority from the State,
- moral values,
- ethics,
- justice.

The gap between rich and poor will depend on the political will of governments and of civil society, and the moral authority and social responsibility of companies taking into account the challenges of inequality in our world.

Our responsibilities and our actions

As committed individuals, we are supposed to spread our vision of justice and equality around us. The presence of CLC members in more than 60 countries around the world gives a great advantage in influence and lobbying for the triumph of equity.

Globalisation also gives us great advantages thanks to new technologies that link individuals and communities with the click of a mouse. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc...) touch millions of people, not only around us but also throughout the world. Our opinions and messages are transmitted instantaneously and our capacity for influence is growing. But the power that globalisation gives us entails work on the ground to convince the people around us of the justness of our claims. Specialised teams could be organised for particular subjects to be treated in depth, for it is truly necessary to master the debates that we have to face. Our world is becoming more and more complex and we need good sense.

Conclusion

Globalisation is being strongly challenged today in the countries of the South and among the poor populations of the countries of the North. The essential stake is the capacity of States, companies, communities and religions to put in place new rules of the game that must give opportunities in every country to profit from the gains of globalisation. This challenge will not be easy, but if the willingness of trustworthy men and women of our planet exists, this will bring about a more just world.

Léonel Matar
Lebanese economist

Ignatian Ecological Commitment: Lightening the Carbon and Poverty Footprints of our Generation

A summary of the paper presented during the 16th World Assembly of Christian Life Community, Beirut, Lebanon, July 2013

Outline

- A. Creation and a wisdom perspective: Gratitude for Creation – Incarnation – Fire – seven guidelines for taking up the challenge
- B. Acknowledging the complex of concerns from poverty to carbon: development models, globalization, politics, impact of conflicts, climate change, trans-generational justice, global trends
- C. Experiences and Options
- D. How to engage ecologically? Lifestyle, communication, Advocacy, Ways forward

Introduction

Given the rich diversity of the Christian Life Community (CLC) in nearly 70 countries all around the world and representing various cultural, economical and political backgrounds, the best opportunity we have to present ecology as a core value for our discernment and future mission is through basic local wisdom.²² I seek to respond therefore through a spiritual rather than theological process; more as a gardener - with green fingers I hope. I feel the inspiration follows in what you decide to plant together and nurture.

Creation is the life of this planet, this universe, held in the hand of the One who created it and continues to create through us. This loving and evolutionary sense of the world is essential if we are to move beyond a simply scientific sense of ecology and go deep into the interrelations of life.

²² Nicolas, Adolfo, SJ. Addressing CLC-CVX Assembly. Beirut, “*Changing Israelite languages of history, prophets and wisdom*,” 4 August 2013.

Our global carbon footprint and our poverty footprint are one foot following another. Ecological concerns are also social justice concerns, hence the inseparability of carbon and poverty footprints.

The average age of this CLC group of over 200 is about 50 years, I am on the upper side, and so I want to see if we can learn together and listen with our hearts. Fundamental to environmental change is the human spirit, as we need to change at great depth not simply ideas but attitudes. We change our attitudes not through regulations and responsibilities but through hope and love. So when we finish discussing ecological disaster and degradation today we need to be much younger with hearts of 25 years and ready to commit with hope, deeply happy for being in this world and sharing a horizon with the next generation.

As an introduction, let me read from a recent collaborative document called “*Our Environmental Way of Proceeding*”²³ with some additional comments: “*We know there are many problems and much mismanagement in how we as human societies affect the earth’s ecology. While many experts are analyzing the causes and effects of the changing ecological patterns of the world, we as individuals, in institutions and communities know we have to transform the way we live, taking responsibility for our actions. Yet, few people are confident in where to begin to take practical steps that bring us together to make a difference.*”

We are challenged to go beyond solving “*the ecological problem.*” Combining “*ecology*” with “*problem*” shows up the language limitations, as concepts of “*nature, ecology, creation*” are paired with “*problems, arguments, concerns*” and thus inadequately describe how we see ourselves in the living world. We need to understand that creation is a gift. We need action; verbs like **reconciling and healing** as these give a deeper understanding to how we seek to relate with creation. Pope John Paul II called for “*ecological conversion.*” Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed this during the 2010 World Day of Peace by saying, “*if you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.*” And Pope Francis appealed for “*respect and protection of the entire creation which God has entrusted to man, not so that it can be indiscriminately exploited, but rather made into a garden*”. This brings us to the deeper dimension of relating in creation and not

²³ Our Environmental Way of Proceeding, (OEWPP)
http://jcap.essc.org.ph/?page_id=1803

simply with our ecological issues. In experiencing creation as the basis for supporting and celebrating all life, we realize creation as an ongoing gift in relating with God and neighbor.

We continue to evolve in Christ's ongoing redemptive act as we have evolved from fifteen billion years of Creation. Christ as the New Creation promises that he is with us, seeking to establish God's reign of peace on earth and salvation of all creation. We need to share in this continuous creative action of God. Humbly, we take up the central theme of reconciling with creation, with neighbour and with God.

- We start from a deep gratitude for the gift of all life. We acknowledge that our personal decisions, witness, and commitment to establish right relations are not simply to sustain us in our comfort zone. This gives us courage to seek partnership in caring for our earth and those who suffer due to the web of social sin that binds us.
- We revise our sense of this being "our" earth and what our attitude needs to be in this relationship with all. We have learned we do not own the earth but that we belong to it; we are in God's hands.
- This relationship of belonging is foundational and dynamic, and in calling us to care we reflect on our sense of identity and meaning drawing out our deepest humanity.
- We are set aflame by experiencing Christ's love for all of creation as we find ourselves in His New Creation and consciously seek to serve.

Amazonia and Pope Francis

The Amazon Basin as a litmus test for Church and society in Brazil." - <http://catholicceology.blogspot.com/2013/07/pope-to-brazils-bishops-protect-amazon.html>

The vocation of being a "protector," however, is not just something involving us Christians alone; it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. (3/19/13) <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/POPE-FRANCIS-Quotes-on-Creation-Environment.pdf>

To enter into a commitment of "*Reconciling with Creation*" is to experience metanoia. To be reconciled is to be transformed personally, and in relating with our neighbour and creation. Together in this world, with God we affirm the gift and unity of life caring for all in an everlasting way. Metanoia is to go from an old life to a new life; it is to

re-live – my old life transformed by gratitude, discovering new meaning of life and the conviction to act out of love for others. When I have gratitude, deep and reflective, I am born anew contemplating the Incarnation. I am on fire with passion – life long. This is not an ecological fad of greenwashing our faith, but the fire of anguish and even deeper hope knowingly to be fulfilled in the “*not yet.*” This we live toward lifelong; the Christ born of fire holds all Creation together.

We can explore the process of our response, and our basic formation in environmental concern, in four stages. First is (a) by establishing a deeper attitude beyond likes and dislikes through a creation and a wisdom perspective. Then (b) we obtain a focused set of information by which we can acknowledge the context and complexity of concerns. This leads to (c) a review of people’s experiences, connecting with the socio-political and Ignatian implications of this concern, allowing the integration of a common voice for the Christian Life Community. We continue to (d) where we discuss how to involve ourselves.

A. Creation and a wisdom perspective

The pastoral implications surface, starting with how we choose to live as people of faith in our lifestyle on a daily basis and in our life choices, as servants of the Word made flesh.

1. Gratitude for Creation

By gratitude I mean simply getting up in the morning and finding that “*I am grateful for the day*” because I have already developed the attitude where I feel blessed in being alive. Irrespective of any immediate work difficulties or lack of appreciation by others, “*I generally feel loved by God*” and experience this by “*finding God in all things,*” especially in all living things and in the landscape that surround me and in human relations. Ignatius’ response was that of the Principle and Foundation, the Ignatian creed. Gratitude transforms “*stewardship*” into a dynamic relation with life where we seek to humbly sustain living relations, rather than being a manager of things.

2. Incarnation

The Incarnation is a symbol so strong for the Christian Life Community that it easily links the theological with the contextual. Let me immediately take up the mystery and mission that the Incarnation presents to us:

“For God so loved the world he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17).

That “world” is “*CREATION*” living now, living today, evolving through Christ, evolving through genetic change and through our actions. Both Creation and the Incarnation are living out of God’s love. Both are the work of the Spirit. *“In the beginning was the Word... all things came into being through Him, and without Him not one thing came into being.”* (John 1,3) Creation is what comes out from God and reflects God; God is present in His Creation and in this sense may be seen as incarnational. Where the divine enters the physical, this is the story of the Word becoming flesh.

Has any mother or father not considered life changes in how they are going to do things with the emergence of a child? So too with Christ coming into our lives, we must more carefully consider the needs of that child, and the needs of that world that sustains that child. With gratitude we acknowledge all life, we celebrate, we deeply welcome and hopefully engage in ways by which we can live out the sense of care we desire and not simply abide by rules, responsibilities and requirements.

3. Fire

The last General Jesuit Congregation speaks of being a *“fire that lights other fires”* but we must be fully aware that in using this image Christ is the fire, burning as in living with total consciousness, sensitivity and anguish until complete. *“I came to bring fire to the earth and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is complete!”* (Luke 12:49-50). It is a fire that purifies and enflames human hearts. This fire is lit on the cross. *“And when I am lifted up from the earth I shall draw all men to myself.”* (John 12:32).

It is not simply about ‘*having a life*’ but loving the life given us. Our sins do not define us but the extent we allow God to love us. When we suffer, we need to with consciousness and love so that the world’s pain becomes a unique act of consciousness. We are part of the universal body of Christ and our suffering is now part of the suffering of Christ. Everything that is happening on Earth is happening in the universal Christ.

If we understand evolution as the central biophysical process of God's own plan, we understand more deeply our relation with creation. We understand that we continue to live with integrity for the first creation and that we are called to be part of the new creation as the cosmic Christ brings all of creation to Him.

4. Taking up the challenge to our lifestyle, daily life, mission, and discernment

We can joist at the neo-liberal model that is suffering critical setbacks today as the ruling model of development. More importantly however, this is not about fighting the “*empires*” of the world, but rather looking more deeply at how we can build more meaningful relations and deeper sense of community. As Ignatian people, there is need to share a vision and step forward as a body, and this begins with a personal and humble change in attitudes. How do I take up the challenge to act with ecological responsibility today? I am challenged in my lifestyle: my daily way, what I choose to learn and give my time to, and with whom I communicate.

Out of this emerges something deeper than a political ecology or an ideology, which can easily be frustrated or result in burn-out. In the responsible custody of creation, my life has to change in critical ways. Now I need a deeper relation with the land and with the poor, one of integrity, hope and care. Through such relating actions and consciousness comes compassion and healing for all.

What follows are guidelines that can be used in a community of life and in establishing our way of proceeding in an “*ecological conversion*.” I have drawn this again from Our Environmental Way of Proceeding with some developments.

a. We acknowledge the Creator of life and find some quiet moment each day to appreciate this with gratitude.

We begin with the attitude of finding God through creation as Ignatius did. We seek to understand, as did the Early Church Fathers, the deep relation between the Book of Revelation (the Bible) and ‘*the Book of Nature*’ (God's creation around us) where God's creative presence is felt running through all life. This experience comes from a deep personal love of Jesus Christ, the gift of which runs counter to the culture of consumerism and seeks right relations with God, neighbour and creation. We continue to be dependent on the richness and constant rebirth of the

land and seas. We find these relationships in creation through the Spirit who invigorates us in reading the Signs of the Times.

Science plays a very important role in environmental research and management, but it cannot encompass the whole human experience. We need time to experience bodily and emotionally the world around us, maybe through sports or hiking, growing something in the ground and sometimes just standing still and absorbing. We need to learn to take time to appreciate our beautiful mornings, children playing in the rain or cherry blossom, as we reconcile with creation. We need to acknowledge the uncertainty of the future and the interdependence of all systems, ecological and social. We are all called to seek a greater knowledge of nature and experience our interrelatedness and deeper gratitude for the meaning of life.

b. We as an organization (family) seek to reflect on and speak about our responsibility for the earth's natural systems.

All of us live in relation with the natural world. Many of us are prevented from receiving immediate feedback about the impact of our lifestyles. Complex systems provide for consumer needs based on resources from distant geographic areas where we may not be aware of our collective social and ecological impact. Reflecting on our personal way of doing things using the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises helps us see the conflicts between how we live—personally, in community, institutionally, and in society—and what we now know needs to be done. We come to better understand the right relations needed, how others are working for a better environment and the choices we can make together. We find the strength for what we truly feel needs to be done by working in unity of purpose to take responsibility for the world's natural resources.

c. We recognize that young people inherit this living world as we now choose to sustain it and we must actively seek to engage them.

God is working, and has always been working in creation and this sensitivity draws out a human response that goes beyond immediate interests, and relates to all humanity and all generations. As Christ labours in the world, we choose to join in that labour for others. We acknowledge that the world is not ours and that we live today not only for ourselves but for those around us and for the generations to come. We learn that anything we take must not be taken from others or from the sustainability of the land and seas.

Young people often express a freedom in asking the most truth-revealing questions and yet many are so easily captured by the things of the world and unhealthy ways of living. On the one hand there is superficiality in the world of multiple preferences while on the other is an increasing job insecurity and the difficulty of forming a healthy vision. Many are losing familiarity with working the land and experiencing nature. Today, fifty percent of the world's population is urbanized. Young people are increasingly alienated from creation. As we work to strengthen the ecological dimension in our lives, this is a key opportunity for us to accompany the youth by strengthening their sense of connectivity and conscience in the world. As we listen to them, we may be able to encourage them to seek what is life-giving and advocate for the real changes needed to sustain their generation and those to come.

d. We reach out in hope to the poor and incorporate their concerns in our care for the web of life.

The world, and especially the poor, need hope. We engage with hope and fidelity from the depth of recognizing Christ in our people and our land while listening to their story and how they seek justice and a new reconciliation. The poor bear the greater burden whether in overpopulated cities or marginal rural environments. In Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies, people clearly **choose livelihood over life security**, i.e. the immediate security of food over mid-term life security.

Urban pollution in many of our cities is something accepted as the norm. Poor air quality, urban congestion and the use of garbage dumps as locations for livelihoods of thousands of people are widespread. The quality of housing and services is not adequate to sustain dignified living for many of the urban poor. We are called to be in solidarity with those who live in this urban degradation and to the other half of the world living in rural and often marginal environments.

One of the important sources of relation with creation and recovery comes from Indigenous Peoples who are increasingly marginalized by the growing global demand for natural and mineral resources. Inadequate attention is paid to their language, culture and relation to the land. It is good to identify one indigenous culture and learn more about their struggle.

e. We support good actions in contemporary culture and explore alternatives.

This is the frontier where we seek greater engagement for ecological accountability. We are called to renew our sense of identity as we transform our relations with the environment, adjust the ecological footprint of our consumption, learn to listen to others and give deeper meaning to our daily life. Witnessing through personal choice in the public culture without imposing does help others engage in new opportunities for action, such as to reduce personal consumption or redirect it.

We seek greater collaboration and networking amongst Ignatian institutions. We encourage partnering with other organizations and social strategies to broaden our capacity to impact. We reach out to understand the lives of the poor, to listen and accompany them in capacity building. Joining one organizational network can help me be more conscious of how my attitudes form and how I might want to change.

f. We seek the greater good and share with others the fullness of life.

In our shared mission to heal relations, we use our knowledge, draw on different cultural experiences, seek God's grace and celebrate life with joy. We share a mission to search for the greater good and seek new ways of reconciliation. This is the renewed charism of seeking God in all things. It is inseparable from our charism and commitment for justice and peace. We care for the common good in the context of creation while recognizing the need for good governance and management of the earth's resources.

The mission of reconciliation with creation is present in all areas where we face change: in our social, cultural and pastoral work, in our initiatives with the youth, and the forcibly displaced, and in the educational, intellectual and organizational frontiers. We know we have to learn a new way of living and a new language of simplicity and of wisdom drawn from local circumstance. There are many people working at the frontiers in caring for creation. We need to share this with those who suffer and those who yearn for peace across the land.

g. We accept the challenge of living sustainably in the world.

We accept with hope the challenge of transforming the attitudes and actions that negatively impact on the environment. Our hope and

resilience come from understanding these impacts and how to work better in community while sharing in the spirit of life with all people. Our response is rooted in a deep desire for reconciliation with God, neighbour and creation. As a result our ecological strategy seeks expression through our lifestyles and institutions, through formation of young people and through governance of natural resources.

B. Acknowledging the complex of concerns from poverty to carbon.

The world we live in is not the paradise we would like it to be, quite the contrary.²⁴ Pope Francis has spoken that “we live in a “culture of waste,” where we consider stock markets dropping down as a *tragedy* while starving children, homeless people dying on our streets has become the norm.” This “culture of waste” tends to become the common mentality giving less value to human life and relationships. This is not to discourage us but rather to encourage us to be hopeful in responding to the call for change. We are challenged to be inconvenienced and have compassion. We need a set of values that enable sustainability for a “sustainable future and these are based on the Rio+20 outcome.”^{25 26}

- Respecting and caring for community life
- Establishing a more transparent, ethical, and cost-inclusive economic development
- Improving “*quality of life*” that has an economically-based perspective and degree of happiness and meaning
- Securing “*sustainability of the ecosystems*”
- Transforming of self that considers once-a-generation change of institutions and society
- Minimising depletion of non-renewable resources
- Keeping within the Earth’s carrying capacity
- (added by author) Developing a spirituality of life and hope, beyond human action

²⁴ *Healing a Broken World* (2011). Available at: <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/pjnew/PJ106ENG.pdf>.

²⁵ Walpole, Pedro SJ (2013). Sustainability science from the mountains: The Bendum Ecology and Culture Center in Mindanao, Philippines. Available at: <http://ecojesuit.com/sustainability-science-from-the-mountains-the-bendum-ecology-and-culture-center-in-mindanao-philippines/5073/>.

²⁶ Summary points for the Future We All Want: **Realising the Future We Want for All** http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf

Your first experience of mission is your family, so when you think about the future, you need to experience the hope for the future of your families. The children's security is not in finance but in deeply formed attitudes to life. We can reach out to the families of those marginalized by the unjust structures in which we as CLC also take part in so many ways.

1. Development models ruling our world and our cultural imagination.

Capitalism has proven itself as the only **successful model of wealth generation** of our age; we need wealth generation, therefore we need capitalism. Not so fast, we need **wealth sharing**, we need a fundamental ethical revision of capitalism. We need a process of weighing, balancing, caring with the active participation of all. **Not all is bad, it is often just mediocre**, the status quo, *'what can I do anyway,' 'don't bother me, I am too old to make a difference.'* Remember this is a time when people have lost faith, prophets are silent, as Fr. Nicolas says and there are only murmurings of wisdom drawn from the local context.²⁷ We have to go through this – trusting – in God and neighbor and in all of creation given to us.

At the same time there are multiple independent organizations that speak the truth without power. There is no shared doctrine or formed flow, but there is commitment to speak out in the face of oppression and violence, displacement and degradation, consumption and obesity. Many young people want to be part of a transformative change.

2. Globalization of a market-centered life perspective centered on consumption, Voluntary simplicity and frugality of choice.

Economic growth is resulting in an expanding middle class. This means that there is an increase in the number of people who can afford a new lifestyle and pattern of consumption. Estimates say that each year there are at least 70 million more people entering the middle class income bracket. If the pace of economic growth continues, two billion more people will have joined the global middle class population by 2030.²⁸

If everyone were to adopt the lifestyle of the average North American, we would need five planet Earths to support the world's population. We cannot continue at this rate. Instead of simply encouraging reduction of

²⁷ Nicolas, Adolfo, SJ. Ibid.

²⁸ World Economic Forum (2009). Sustainability for Tomorrow's Consumer: *The Business Case for Sustainability*. January 2009, Geneva.

consumption, the focus should be on promoting more sustainable consumption patterns. Some have termed this move towards more sustainable consumption as “*voluntary simplicity*”.²⁹ Simplicity does not imply no growth or no development; instead simplification introduces a new path of growth. Simplicity requires living with balance, to find the difference between “*needs*”—things that are essential to survival and growth—and “*wants*”—those things that are extra.

The Simple Living Collective of San Francisco suggests four consumption criteria that tackle the core issues of balanced consumption:

1. Does what I own or buy promote activity, self-reliance, and involvement, or does it induce passivity and dependence?
2. Are my consumption patterns basically satisfying, or do I buy much that serves no real need?
3. How tied is my present job and lifestyle to installment payments, maintenance and repair costs and the expectations of others?
4. Do I consider the impact of my consumption patterns on other people and on the earth?
5. (added by author) Have I a spiritual conversation of life, of gratitude and hope that is going deeper than human action and nurtures it?

3. Politics related to extraction models serving the consumption already mentioned.

Aside from the economic and financial considerations, there is an increasing awareness of the political and social questions that need to be addressed in relation to the environment and more specifically, water, the extractive industries and indigenous cultures. There are always resource tradeoffs, and the politics of resource extraction has significant negative impact. Mining often takes place in developing countries. Aside from the technical challenges of ensuring disaster prevention, there are numerous problems associated with labour and resource contracts. It is not unusual to have countries with abundant natural resources feeding extractive industries yet still registering lower economic growth than countries with fewer natural resources, a condition known as the “*resource curse*” or

²⁹ Elgin, Duane. (2010). *Voluntary simplicity: toward a way of life that is outwardly simple, inwardly rich*. Harper, New York.

“the paradox of plenty.” This imbalance is often due to poor governance, corruption, and volatile markets.

Social conflicts often stem from concerns around land acquisition disputes and environmental impacts of large-scale oil and mining projects. Increasingly, community participation in decision-making process is encouraged to protect and promote human rights. If you feel deeply on these matters, connect and communicate with others. Remember, engage humbly as the church is only learning what transparency is; Catholic Social teaching is not complete.

4. Impact of the environmental conflicts on the most vulnerable, displacement, refugees or migration due to these issues.

Migration, whether internal or international, has long been understood as a coping strategy. For many, the drivers are economic, with people seeking the proverbial greener pastures in urban centres that promise employment and a better future. But these are not the only reasons behind migration. People do not always move simply for greater economic opportunity, there are push factors.

Displacement resulting from natural disasters must be understood in the wider context of environmentally forced migration, including pressures arising from climate change or from the implementation of large-scale development projects. Hydro-meteorological disasters can destroy livelihoods and infrastructure of a community. It can often lead to short or long term displacement. Human and material losses combined with the experience of a life-threatening disaster leave members of communities in shock.

The visit of Pope Francis to migrant island of Lampedusa has been powerfully symbolic as his first official trip outside Rome. He wanted to pray for migrants who died trying to reach Italy for a better life.³⁰ Since 1999, Lampedusa is *“Africa’s gateway to Europe”*; it has been the entry point of more than 200,000 refugees and migrants seeking to escape war and poverty in North Africa, most of them Muslims. Today, God asks

³⁰ Edwards, Anna (2013). “Pope makes historic visit to Lampedusa - Africa's gateway to Europe - and says 'we have forgotten how to cry' for the migrants lost at sea trying to reach Italy”, 8 July 2013. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2358132/Pope-Francis-makes-historic-visit-Lampedusa--Africas-gateway-Europe.html>.

each one of us: “where is the blood of your brother that cries out to me?” “No one in the world feels responsible for this; many have lost the sense of fraternal responsibility; we have fallen into the hypocritical attitude of the priest and of the servant of the altar that Jesus speaks about in the parable of the Good Samaritan: We look upon the brother half dead by the roadside, perhaps we think, “poor guy,” and we continue on our way, it is none of our business; and we feel fine with this.”³¹

5. Climate change is a reference point to confirm this lifestyle can no longer continue, and the urgency for our commitment with future generations.

“A 4°C world is likely to be one in which communities would experience severe damage and dislocation, with many of these risks spread unequally. It is likely that the poor will suffer most and the global community could become more fractured and unequal than today.”³² Although some still contest the validity of human-induced climate change, it is difficult to ignore the impact of change in climate in today’s world.

The rich tradition of *cura personalis* and our mission to educate men and women for others has well positioned Jesuit schools of business to teach business ethics. Teaching business ethics has never been an “easy job”; the technique used is an extension of Ignatian spirituality “*finding God (good) in all things*”, “*inculturation*” and at the same time teaching business ethics.

6. Trans-generational justice perspective, “the shared good we seek”.

Trans-generational justice is about having the conscious awareness and attitude to care about the future generations. “There is a general understanding that we cannot leave tremendous economic or environmental burdens on future generations. We must preserve what we consider to be good for the future members of our family, community, nation, or world.”³³

³¹ Carroll, John J. SJ (2013). “Lampedusa, island and symbol”, 23 July 2013. Available at: <http://opinion.inquirer.net/57217/lampedusa-island-and-symbol>.

³² Turn Down the Heat: Why a 4°C warmer world must be avoided, The World Bank

³³ Bauer, Alyssa (nd). The shared good we seek: the communitarian perspective of intergenerational justice. Available at: <http://www.stthomas.edu/politicalscience/tcreview/files/Bauer.pdf>.

But where does this feeling of duty come from? Simply, it is in gratitude for all life and creation where a person acknowledges the ongoing relations where they are going wrong. It is in setting aside time to be thankful for our ecosystem and see how our communications and actions relate with others. The point is that with gratitude we can seek to reconcile with creation and nurture our sense of mission.

7. Impacts of global trends on countries, communities, cultures, etc.

a. Indigenous Peoples

Globally there seems to be no process by which the rights of a people can be protected in the face of a second period of re-colonization by the dominant political culture of a nation. We are fortunate that now in the Philippines there is recognition of the Indigenous Peoples and granting of land titles, yet much more is needed to sustain a future. I hope as we seek globally a greater awareness and consciousness of Indigenous Peoples, their rights and their contribution to humanity is recognized. there will be greater transparency and if nothing else companies will be shamed into supporting a greater justice.

b. Ecosystems and their breakdown

Given our increasing knowledge of hydro-climatic-geo events that change our landscape and create social disasters, we may ask how do we understand God's presence and action as part of the context? We need to raise questions of our faith that lurch behind our daily interaction with disaster management. If the problems of disasters feel too big to act then all the more God is "unmanageable". Yet both come upon us unsuspectingly and challenge us to the depth of our being.³⁴ These disasters are not part of God's plan but can call us to deepen our faith.

We speak of environmental disasters here rather than "*natural*" emphasizing that the human plays a role, not only through climate change but in the location of people in known areas of vulnerability. In a globalized world, how are disasters defined and impacts weighed? In the 21st century – with the exception of the poor of New Orleans and holidaying throngs on the beaches of Thailand - devastating disasters only occur in areas where the poor live in the Third World – but then Sandy hit New York and the 'world' feels insecure!

³⁴ Walpole, Pedro (in press). "*Flooding and God*", chapter 3 in *Flooding: Understanding the Real Causes that Put Lives at Risk*. ESSC, Philippines.

c. Basic needs of water, air

We live in a world that is increasingly concerned with issues of security – be it national or personal. Resource security is also a concern, especially since the world’s population is dependent on natural resources. Today, much of the focus is on water. About 1.2 billion people or one-fifth of the entire world, live in areas of physical water scarcity. Projections say that by 2025, almost 1.8 billion people will be living in regions of absolute water scarcity. The private sector will need to develop socialized water access if they are to be considered as genuinely greening the economy. All stakeholders must be involved in working towards a common goal: water security.³⁵

If we seek to understand the Reign of God, the call to join in the love of God (it is not about saving myself, I cannot do that) is about joining with the Holy Spirit in “*renewing the face of the earth.*” If we as Christians want to strive for Sustainable Development – human and nature, then this defines it - “*renewing the face of the earth,*” - a deep source of reflection.

C. Experiences, impacts and options: frontiers and emergence of Ignatian strategy

Despite the many ecological challenges and difficulties we face today, many Ignatian-Jesuit people are driven and committed to find ways to sustain ecological programs. Many are working ecologically through eco-networking and collaboration. At the global level, we have the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN)³⁶ (<http://www.ignatianadvocacy.org/>) that deals with five priority themes: (1) right to education, (2) peace and human rights, (3) migration, (4) ecology, and (5) governance of natural and mineral resources. The themes are diverse yet crosscutting and overlapping across regions. In Asia Pacific, Jesuit people have adopted migration and ecology as priority themes for action and engagement, with the concern on governance of natural and mineral resources and peace and human rights and education, in relation to indigenous peoples are integrated with ecology (<http://jcap.essc.org.ph/>).

Some of our ecological responses:

³⁵ De Jesus, Mariel (2013). “The business of water is for all”, 15 March 2013. Available at: <http://ecojesuit.com/the-business-of-water-is-for-all/4962/>.

³⁶ CLC participates formally in some of these.

1. Farming as part of spiritual portfolio, Ignatius Jesuit Centre of Guelph, Canada: <http://ecojesuit.com/farming-as-part-of-spiritual-portfolio-ignatius-jesuit-centre-of-guelph-canada/2143/>
2. Bendum Ecology and Culture Centre, Mindanao-Philippines: <http://ecojesuit.com/sustainability-science-from-the-mountains-the-bendum-ecology-and-culture-center-in-mindanao-philippines/5073/> ; <http://ecojesuit.com/reflections-in-bendum-on-environment-culture-based-education-self-awareness/5364/>
3. Those who catch the rain: The Tribal Watershed Programme in India: <http://ecojesuit.com/those-who-catch-the-rain-the-tribal-watershed-programme-in-india/2052/>
4. Linking ecological passion and technology in Jesús Obrero, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain: <http://ecojesuit.com/linking-ecological-passion-and-technology-in-jesus-obrero-vitoria-gasteiz-spain/1903/>
5. Identity and belonging at Apu Palamguwan Center, Philippines; indigenous people, their culture and ecological identity: <http://ecojesuit.com/culture-and-ecology-at-apc-philippines/1781/>
6. International Jesuit Ecology Project (IJEP): <http://ecojesuit.com/international-jesuit-ecology-project-now-online/4629/>
7. Turning sewage into fresh water: Eco-ponds at Ocer Campion Jesuit College, Uganda: <http://ecojesuit.com/turning-sewage-into-fresh-water-eco-ponds-at-ocer-campion-jesuit-college-uganda/1775/>
8. Car fasting: Austria's Green Lent campaign points the way ahead: <http://ecojesuit.com/car-fasting-austrias-green-lent-campaign-points-the-way-ahead/852/>
9. Fasting from plastic: <http://ecojesuit.com/fasting-from-plastic/4835/>
10. Come Sano Come Justo (Eat Healthy, Eat Fair): <http://ecojesuit.com/come-sano-come-justo-eat-healthy-eat-fair/604/>
11. Students in Hong Kong show that food waste is not rubbish: <http://ecojesuit.com/students-in-hong-kong-show-that-food-waste-is-not-rubbish/5436/>

12. Global Ignatian advocacy networking on governance of natural and mineral resources: <http://ecojesuit.com/global-ignatian-advocacy-networking-on-governance-of-natural-and-mineral-resources/4622/>

D. How to engage ecologically?

There should not be any difficulty in getting involved if the commitment is clear and the context is practical. It is good to be involved as a volunteer in any CLC or Ignatian network. Three levels of action can be spoken of: cleaning up our own lifestyle, occasions of learning and public environmental advocacy. A couple of more examples are given here:

1. Lifestyle

- a. Cleaning up our own act at home and in the institutions we work in makes our arguments more credible and more reflective. Committing to change our own lifestyle in our own home or institution we can contribute much to our global initiative on ecology. In Asia Pacific, many Jesuits are starting to be sensitive to the wastes they generate. Many are setting up levels of segregation schemes where students, staff, faculty, personnel and partners may adapt. Other institutions are also doing their energy and water audit. A basic checklist for parish, office and schools is shared to all to gain better understanding of levels of awareness and commitment of people. Also there are checklists if you want to run an ecologically sensitive workshop: <http://jcap.essc.org.ph/?s=checklist>.
- b. Contributing to Flights for Forests: http://jcap.essc.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Flights-for-Forests_Brochure-Short_v2.pdf
Ignatian advocates in Asia Pacific have set up their own system for compensating for their carbon footprint. The intention of this program is to initiate a more conscious effort of carbon impact of travel and develop the capacity to understand carbon trading, and commit with communities on the ground for greater sustainability. The effort is that for every (international and national) flight taken, a 5US\$ is contributed to the Flights for Forests (F3) fund. The contribution is voluntary. The contributions are used primarily for forest renewal activities undertaken by pre-identified indigenous community groups.

2. Learning and communication

1. Course on resource management and human development: <http://essc.org.ph/content/view/803/44/>

For the past three years, Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC), a Jesuit research institute based in the Philippines engaged with about 30 Asian students every summer to learn, discuss, share stories, and briefly engage with a local community on topics of peace, environment, conflict management, and human development. The aim is to provide an opportunity to explore different development challenges that occur in the Asian region, particularly in relation to natural resource use and management.

2. Engaging transformative communications through Ecojesuit <http://ecojesuit.com/>

In engaging ecologically, it is important that we are able to touch the fundamental question each individual asked, “who am I”? This basic question on identity relates much on the personal quest for meaning and sense of being. We seek to accompany and engage with our youth through the Global Youth Accompanying Communities web portal (<http://ecojesuit.com/category/global-youth-accompanying-communities/>). Through this, youth are able to share their thoughts and reflections on the environment, human development and broader questions on life and discernment.

3. Advocacy

1. Water and ethics GIAN (<http://ecojesuit.com/water-and-ethics/4985/>)

At our last meeting of the Ignatian Advocacy Network on Ecology in November 2012, we decided to focus the next two or three years on the issue of water. GIAN is exploring the responses from the different conferences:

- a. Commodification and privatization of water (especially US and Europe)
- b. Desertification and lack of basic water needs (notably in Africa)
- c. Flooding, extreme rainfall events (and climate change, Asia Pacific)
- d. Arsenic poisoning (South Asia)
- e. Transboundary issues, rights and access, water pollution and contamination, (Latin America and elsewhere)

2. Amazonia under threat <http://ecojesuit.com/amazonia-under-threat/267/>

The Amazonia is still thought by interests from “*outside*” and not by interests from “*inside*”, that’s for the wellbeing of the Amazonia peoples.

As result of this external view and all this “foreign development”. The pan-Amazonia region is devoured by timber and paper industries, oil and mining companies, pharmaceutical and agro-business enterprises, hydropower plants, and it’s physically divided by waterways and large roads that cut up the forest and the traditional territories where indigenous peoples live. Drug mafias took over the region imposing the rule of violence. Unfortunately, the immediate response of the states has been the militarization of the Amazonia region.

4. Ways forward

Your ways forward are clear: you have researched an issue, you have composed an open-ended question about how you want to engage, you are agreeing on a specific answer, you are forming consensus with a free and effective process. You have shared the sense of wonder and being loved; now you freely chose to act in a coherent and collaborative manner developing a strategy for the focus chosen.

Hopefully with the thoughts that have emerged and the actions you are already sharing along with these stories you have the inspiration and sensitivity that helps you find grounded ways to carry out through your mission in this field as CLC. The Amazon project is an important input at this point. Let us be inspired by the words of Pope Francis to the bishops of Brazil, requesting them to protect the Amazon – *“the Amazon Basin as a litmus test for Church and society in Brazil, where results of our pastoral work do not depend on a wealth of resources but on the creativity of love.”*³⁷ *“The church’s presence in the Amazon basin is not that of someone with bags packed and ready to leave after having exploited everything possible.”* The church has been present in the Amazon basin from the beginning ... and is still present and critical to the area’s future.”³⁸

³⁷ Vatican radio: Pope Francis to Brazilian Bishops: Are we still a Church capable of warming hearts?, 27 July 2013. Available at: <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-to-brazilian-bishops-are-we-still-a-c>.

³⁸ “In Brazil, Pope Francis speaks out on the Amazon, environment and indigenous people”, 30 July 2013. Available at: http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/07/27/in_brazil_pope_francis_speaks_out_on_the_amazon_environment_and_indigenous_people.html.

There are many other actions we can take at home and in our daily life, nationally and regionally. The choice is ours, but remember we do it because we want to we see the good in it even if others can't be bothered.

a. Sense of advocacy for a more just world

The poor, as Fr. General Adolfo Nicolas has reminded us are not a sector of society, a percentage; we need primarily to be friends. Ignatian advocacy is rooted in a vision of the world – a just, sustainable, dignified, inclusive, vision of the world that points to life together. Advocacy works must work toward transforming the unjust laws, policies, practices, ideas and attitudes and the power relations that maintain a system which are oppressive or unequal.³⁹

b. Witnessing and incarnating to our way of life

We are challenged to participate and strengthen environmental responsibility. Efforts to manage our own institutes' environment and waste are working examples of what can be done in terms of transformative actions that promote right relations with all. As personal and public attitudes change and given the witness and credibility of individual and institutional action, the impact of lifestyle changes, training and programs are more likely to increase.

c. Standing as “gardeners” in the garden of life

Care for creation is not about winning or about losing, but learning to be steadfast in a relationship and sharing with others, many of whom may be uncertain to begin with. It is not a war against the empire but about living a relationship in community, perhaps in different senses of community over a lifetime.

d. Formation through experience and action

Call to mind the beatitudes. This is the standard that Jesus calls us to, no illusions, no comfort zones, just the unceasing love of God, sometimes celebrating sometimes suffering with us – but always with us. Jesus was a failure - remember? Jesus the Christ was only successful in the Resurrection, and if we believe that then, rain or snow, drought or flood as we reflect on the Gospels, we know the sun rises, our hope is in God and we can see further than any global disaster

³⁹ Social Justice Secretariat of the Society of Jesus (2010). Introducing Ignatian Advocacy Network, January 2010. Available at: http://ignatianadvocacy.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/ian_eng_online.pdf.

e. Networking and collaborating

“Our greater strength lies in collaborating”, we cannot do all the work; we need to work with others. Teilhard de Chardin says “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” Christ’s cosmic baptism is still happening in and amongst us, we are being transformed, it is a process still within evolution.

Hope allows us to live beyond our failure and defeat in the faith of Jesus Christ. We are a people of the resurrection of Jesus who walked the land and now the risen Christ of which we are part in the “not yet” as we live in Christ risen and cosmic. Christ in you, the hope of glory Col 1:27-29.

Pedro Walpole SJ
Jesuit Conference of Asia

Socio- Political Advocacy

The international CLC apostolic networks and the Amazon project

I hold no fear of the new emerging world. I fear rather that ... (CLC) has little or nothing to offer this world , little or nothing to say or do that can justify our existence ... We do not aim to defend our mistakes , but we do not want to commit the greatest of all: to wait with arms crossed and do nothing for fear of getting it wrong.

Pedro Arrupe, SJ (adapted from the original)

SEE: Support for this option of the socio- political action and apostolic networks: CLC as a Worldwide Apostolic Body

In a world like the one we have created with a huge experience of non - fraternity, a separation from each other, an absence of mystery and the greatest sin of our times (both on a personal and structural level): to think of ourselves as self- created (believing in self - sufficiency, self-reference, self- reverence, therefore also self- salvation) . In this context we need to recover the founding act of the fraternity that emerges in a place and encounter between neighbours and which can be described, in Ignatian spirituality, with reference to the emerging diversity of the multiplicity of "*times, places and people*" and especially by reference to the "*Contemplation of the Incarnation*" (Spiritual Exercises 106-108). Where and how Christ is incarnate among us? What type of concrete options does this Incarnational option offers us? This is the starting point of our GP (General principles).

Our CLC seeks to live an '*incarnated*' spirituality following Jesus formulating answers to these questions: What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What can I do for Christ? Our GP defines our community as an expression of diverse people "*(who) with particular urgency feel the need to work for justice in the context of a preferential option for the poor*" (GP No. 4).

In this we recognize the need to look for specific ways to accomplish our mission, while all the time respecting the diversity of an apostolic body

that is in the process of growing closer together. To do this, we assume that a visible and meaningful expression of our task as CLC is of paramount importance to realize our call to a common mission⁴⁰. We recognize the clear voice of the Spirit along our way as a community, especially since our Assembly in Itaicí in 1998 which elaborated Christ's invitation to take up a "*common mission*" located at the heart of the world. It is at the heart of social reality where Jesus shows his liberating power, and especially by seeking to become, as CLC, a more effective instrument of service on the side of the impoverished poor⁴¹, and fully aware of our identity that transcend borders build a more just world . We have taken up the challenge to be "*prophets of hope and social entrepreneurs*" giving witness through our way of life, discovering the basic conviction: "*CLC needs to act*" (Itaicí No. 4).

We are in the process of building a more unified community (a process that is always constant and without limits):

Graphically, recent times for CLC seen through a time and process perspective:

IDENTITY	VOCATION	MISSION
First Week	Second Week	Third Week
Self-knowledge / Acceptance	Discernment	Following
General Principles 1967-1990	Apostolic Body / DSSE 1994-2003	Prophetic at the Frontiers 2000-2013

JUDGE: Building our image as a Social-Political role for a worldwide CLC

We believe that important steps have been made to define the parameters for the mission of the international community in this field (especially

⁴⁰ Fatima Mandate, 2008, No. 3.5 a)

⁴¹ It is important to use the term "impoverished" as this has the effect of referring to specific individuals who actual suffer the consequences of living structures of inequality and injustice, and is a term that helps us look at the actual faces. This is more so because the word "poverty" often seems to be so subjective, so general, so intangible, while in this expression of "impoverished subjects" we can focus more closely on the "contemplation of the Incarnation" of the Sp. Ex.

taking into account the scope of our institutional presence and international action, starting from ordinary activities):

1. The meaning and principle of advocacy is in the process of being developed with full regard to the various cultural, social and political perspectives. Therefore, we assert that our own CLC perspective must make use of our communal apostolic discernment, especially that emerging from the World Assemblies.

Two essential points that we should keep in mind are:

- a. all advocacy must seek to change unjust conditions affecting the most vulnerable, looking to reform the structures that create these situations;
 - b. as CLC we have recognized that our advocacy option must be founded on the practical expressions emerging from our existence as community. It is a perspective developed from the bottom up.
2. In any case, the foundation for an image of a committed CLC to have an impact it must emerge from an existing and discerned personal and communal option. CLC must begin to engage in actions of this nature where we recognize the fulfilment of our mission as a community. We are a community that wants to practice DSSE in this field.

One possible route for our participation in the advocacy process should consider the following aspects: (more details are available in the document "*Guidelines for a socio- political CLC international advocacy*"):

1. ***Face to face experiences; basis of our CLC apostolate, the essential importance of communal discernment, and the origin of an international socio-political perspective built from the bottom up.*** For our international apostolic experience to be genuine to CLC identity it must be born of familiarity, i.e. through direct work and relationship with real faces in concrete situations where we discovered the face of the suffering Christ. A proposal for international advocacy must emerge from concrete encounters of actual members of local or national communities with people in conditions of exclusion on behalf of whom we want to say something and act at international level.

2. ***Apostolic guidelines and priorities arising from communal discernment, the experience of our founding documents and that of World Assemblies.*** This component is the essence of who we are as CLC, and the sine qua non of all our communal action. It is our roadmap, key to our discernment in defining the horizons of CLC, for example, among others, mandates from World Assemblies, apostolic priorities developed for working groups at the United Nations, GIAN - Global Ignatian Advocacy Network- with the Jesuits, networking with international NGOs.
3. ***Regional Platforms, the key to make CLC's socio- political international action successful.*** Fr Nicolás, SJ, our World Ecclesiastical Assistant, highlighted the key importance of working on regional platforms and networks as the real secret to promoting apostolic and collaboration in mission that will enable us, eventually, to instigate a global action⁴². If we want our local and / or national apostolic initiatives to be converted into international initiatives, we to give our support regional intermediate platforms. For example, actions like or support to the Latin America platform campaigning for '4% in Dominican Republic', or the think tanks that have driven forward Amazon Project, Migrations working party in CLC Europe, etc. .

Key considerations:

- Emphasize that this is a work in progress, and will depend on the degree of priority given to it by national communities, regional networks, and global EXCO for its realization.
- The rate, characteristics, and specific scope depend on time, place and people, however, the world EXCO through regional links and teams could promote this process, thereby driving forward the recommendations of the last Assembly.
- We invite all CLC to reflect on the recommendation of our Ecclesiastical Assistant to look at the importance and viability of regional apostolic discernment processes as part of our way of

⁴² Recommendation made at the meeting with CLC World EXCO in February 2012, based mainly on his own experience as Superior General of the Society of Jesus, with respect to the restructuring of the Company, and the role of regional conferences. In Latin America CLC is actively participating in the sector for the collaboration in mission within the Jesuit Conference of Provincials-CPAL, and as regards the social sector of the same Conference in advocacy networks, and migration.

proceeding, and to engage more deeply within regional networks with the Society of Jesus.

- This perspective of apostolic initiatives and international advocacy does not replace the readiness and availability of CLC to address urgent situations, emergencies, or other.

ACT. Some inspiring experiences of CLC in this regard:

The experience of the 4% for education in Dominican Republic has allowed us to understand the meaning of a bottom-up effect that guarantees direct action, the key role of regional platform to connect the local with an international perspective, and the huge potential of worldwide CLC to respond to issues that unite us in our work for justice.

The Amazon project assimilates this community learning process to adopt a model of CLC coordinated action for a fundamental issue like the environment and our way of life. This is a fruit of a reflected experience, which in no way seeks to impose on others in other regions, but proposing a process with great potential for international work.

Bottom-up: We have chosen the Amazonian territory as a place that presents an reflection of life where we see a God who that shows us his incarnation, and is a space vital for all the world as it contains and produces 20 % of the unfrozen freshwater on the planet. It is an essential ecological, genetic and cultural reserve. The Amazon has gone from being the backyard of the planet, to become a city centre. Moreover, life in this region reminds us that we can experiment with other systems less focused on consumption, as referred to in our GP a style of life more simple. Here we have a close and constant link into the initiatives of the Jesuits and the Church, and a plan for long-term work sending CLC volunteers.

Regionally: CLC in Latin America has a team of reflection, which has the task of accompanying the volunteers so that their experiences can be transformed into reflective and educative papers for the benefit of international CLC. These contributions will invite us to consider other ways of life that are more respectful of the environment, and that promote the protection of the territory. We have a strong relationship with the Jesuit Conference of CPAL - Latin America, and the Amazon region for the Jesuits in Brazil.

Internationally: from this local experience via the regional mediacy, we hope to encourage the world community to review our CLC lifestyles, consumption and impact on the environment by contrasting them with the richness and vulnerability of the horizons of ecology, in this case, in the Amazon region, and beyond. We plan an international action, together with international networks of the Society of Jesus and other areas of Church, calling on all of us to reflect, in light of the General Principles, on our lifestyles and commitment to care for the environment.

Ecology is one of our apostolic priorities internationally, and today it is at the frontiers of our mission. Because of that it is possible to think of the Pan- Amazon region as an ideal lynchpin for an initiative that seeks environmental impact targets to defend life, as expressed in the final document of Lebanon 2013. The challenge of ecology and the Amazon project invite us to think from the following perspectives:

1. Our criteria seek the highest good, the most universal, and get involved in places where others will not, as confirmed by projects like this in the Amazon, especially because of the complexity of human, social, cultural, political, and ecological situation, and crucial importance that this territory has for the future.
2. The experience confirms the suggestions planted in by our membership of the Church, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francisco, our Jesuit partners' work in the field for over 15 years and their launching in a few months' time of a formal Pan -Amazon inter - provincial project.
3. The project will strengthen our collaboration in the mission, offering an inter-institutional space for an experience of working together, shared management, and where the contribution of CLC with other organizations, would be important.
4. The themes of ecology and care of the environment affect us all, especially in our CLC aim to help build the kingdom. So, this experience of action in the international community will raise an awareness of our lifestyle, our vision of development and consumption and its own environmental impact, and hopefully, even provide a lead to a global advocacy action for the environment.

Mauricio Lopez Oropeza
World CLC President

Sharing of Experience by the Members of CLC Syria

Testimony given by Fayeze and Kawthar Mistrih (CLC Aleppo)

We, Fayeze and Kawthar, members of CLC Aleppo since 1990, form part of a community of couples called “*Al Zawiyah*”, and Kawthar was a member of the regional team. We have been through a long spiritual process of formation which resulted in our marriage, built on the conviction that Christ is the corner-stone, and that we act through God who is present in our lives.

We have reaped the fruits of the spiritual journey we have been through, thanks to CLC, in the trials we have met in our lives. I, Fayeze, work in the production of olives and olive oil in my village (Al Yacoubiyya) in the north of Syria in the Jisr Al Shu’ur area. And my family, Kawthar and our children, live in Aleppo because of the need for schools and other basic needs not found in our village. We lived through the crisis in our village and the battles were practically daily and endless, making us feel in real danger, being submitted to all sorts of fear and tension. We suffered power cuts and shortage of bread for long periods, yet the community spirit among us helped compensate for these shortages and gave us strength to support each other.

We used to gather together in candle-light, when there were power cuts, and prepare our meals together and bake bread, and share everything as one big family. This went on for a long time, with the aim of resisting and staying on, hoping the end of the crisis would come soon. We resisted till the difficulties became hard to endure (in fact till we found ourselves surrounded by the regular army on the West and the armed rebels on the East, and bombs started falling on us). We then felt the necessity to move to a safer place for the sake of our children, especially when the village schools were closed, so that they would not miss their school year.

Thus, as soon as the roads were open, we decided to leave and undertook an extremely risky journey because of the large number of check-points

where people were often kidnapped and sometimes even killed (if they were suspected of being supporters of the regime). Thank God, we were able to cross all the check-points without the least incident and felt God's presence with us in this difficult journey. This wonderful presence was incarnated when we arrived in Homs, at the home of Kawthar's family, where we felt all the warmth and love which was lavished on us. We felt that this welcome was God's joy for our safe arrival. Shortly after our arrival in Homs, we started feeling homesick and longed to return home, for we had left everything there. We had left our dreams and our memories, we had left the tree we had planted, home and factory we had built, and all the relationship of love and friendship we had lived with our families and friends... More difficult still, we had left our hearts, our spirits there...

All this put great pressure on us... and things became worse when we learnt that Jabhat Al Nosra (a fundamentalist rebel group) and the Free Syrian Army had entered the village after the Syrian Army had left. We also learnt that our house had been occupied by one of the officers of the Free Syrian Army, and that the machines of our factory had been stolen and sold to Turks. Now there were kidnappings and robberies, and this meant that situation had really become very bad and that our dream of returning had become very very distant. So, our plans were changed. Before, we lived with the returning, but now we started thinking about how we could settle in Homs... What shall we do? And where shall we find the money necessary to survive?

We had no choice... All this made us feel that our lives were meaningless since all we had built and produced had been lost and disappeared. We felt we no longer had any role in life.

At this stage, we felt we were in darkness and we knew we were entombed... And our prayer was, *"Lord help us see the light of Resurrection..."* But we did not know when or how, since all around us spoke of darkness and of the tomb... But we believe in the truth of the Resurrection and our hope is great, and we believe that God is incarnated and works through the other who is present in our lives. And the light of the Resurrection shone when the Jesuits called me in the Residence of the Saviour (Al Mukhallis) to work with them, and in fact I accept their call and I started my journey with them in two domains:

1. Work with the members of the community in serving the displaced persons.
2. Work with the associations present in the centre run by the Fathers (catechism, university students' group, etc...).

My wife too was asked by the Good Shepherd Sisters to help them in the same fields. All this helped us see life and the situation in a different light. We felt that we have an active and important role and that we share in God's work and in helping those in need and the displaced.

The Lord's voice in us called us to "*Rise and work*"... for the harvest is great and the workers are few. So here we are now in the Lord's hands and we say, "*I am the servant of the Lord, be it done to me according to your will*"... We do not know what will happen tomorrow, but we are confident that tomorrow will find who will take care of it...

The hope still remains that we shall return, whatever happens, we shall return, God willing.

Testimony given by Abed Al Rayyes

I wanted this sharing of my lived experience to be about where I felt God's presence in choice concerning the crisis in Syria. My family and I did not suffer any bodily or material harm, except in a very small way. My house has not been destroyed or occupied, and I have not lost a brother or a father. And even more, my wife and I have continued going to our work, even though our work-places are close to an area of intense conflict. And this, in a period where one is exposed to the danger of being kidnapped or killed at any moment, and without previous notice, because of the civil war.

Thus I consider myself to be one of those Syrians who have suffered less damage than others, and yet I do not consider that a grace from God or his work, because I cannot believe that God discriminates between people in His care and love for his people.

My country is going through a terrible tragedy. It is a country that has a rich, fertile and pluralistic population. And this pluralism has become a source of fear and of hatred. Syrians have inherited a history that is rich in culture and civilization, rich in depth and in meaning. But today they are witnessing a lot of meaningless killing. My people have a great sense of

dignity and self-respect, but today they are afraid that they will not see their dignity respected by those they turn to. People are displaced, massacred, imprisoned, and find themselves in a dark tunnel without seeing any ray of light at the end of it.

I do not find God in that either, seeing in it his punishment, for our loving God does not punish with disasters and tragedies nor does he tempt us with the immensity of suffering and the number of victims is too big a price to be paid for it to be simply a lesson by God to teach humanity some wisdom.

In brief, I do not seek God in these events as the power responsible for its beginning or its end. The Jesuit author, François Varillon says: *“We believe that God can do all things. No God cannot do all things, God cannot do that which is not within the power of love”*. And when this love is not the foundation stone sought for by the builders, it is normal that God is absent and is not to be blamed for what happens. It is the builders who are to be blamed.

I have found God in my life first of all in silence and in listening, and secondly in contemplating the people who incarnate God’s image as it is found in the Gospel. As regards silence and listening, we are now, on the contrary, deafened by the loud noise of hatred, pride, envy and violence; by the loud noise of fear and insecurity, and the loud noise of the media who rejoice in all that and instigate people to all that, and the evil spirit of this loud noise does all it can to prevent God’s Spirit, who is in the silent breeze, and listens and heals, from finding a place to breathe.

As for the people who incarnate God’s image, notwithstanding the darkness, they are present, offering their service to all without distinction, looking for the human person even in the killer, and there some heroic examples among the volunteers working to bring aid, examples of people who make enormous efforts to fill, even if in a small way, the great lack of basic human needs. Among these, and in the forefront, the Jesuits and those who work with them whether CLC members or others, carrying out their mission putting their own lives at risk.

I also see God in those who live this crisis in humility, and do not let the tragedy lead them to the spirit of revenge, or to wish destruction and death to others. They are living a cross they have not chosen with a simple, pure spirit, even if with sadness.

Love does not take up arms, that is why it is not dominant in war, but love wins in the end, when all violence fails in replacing it. Then love proves that it is the only means for us human beings to be born anew and to grow.

Look ahead

Testimony given by Manal – CLC coordinator for Damascus

“Go ahead!” is Fr. Frans van der Lugt’s famous expression, the expression we are now living in its full meaning, as there is no time to look back.

There is no sense in stopping to think about what happened. Why? It is not necessary to understand and analyze the events. What is necessary is to look ahead, to go forward.

There is no time for sadness.

And the painful and sad events stop you from living joy for a long time. The periods of consolation and desolation are rapid and full of tension.

There is no future in the long term, just the near foreseeable future, with rapid forced band-aid decisions to face the present situation. We must respond to the present events and rapidly (no discernment).

When my husband Abboud was the victim of a kidnapping attempt, his car was stolen, and our workshop was burnt down by a stray bomb (a small carpenter’s workshop for furniture), our workplace and source of income gone, we had to make a rapid and difficult decision to leave the country to find work and security. Thus each one of us was in a different country: I remained in Syria and my husband went to Lebanon, and we meet from time to time, either in one country or in the other.

But even this is not secure, for the roads are not secure. On our way to the Assembly, we were exposed to stray bullets, or bullets shot by snipers (we do not know which exactly!). The bullets entered through

the roof of the car and pierced the back of the seat I was sitting on. (God protected me!)

When I realized what had happened I had a strange and painful feeling: you leave home with the hope of returning and meeting family, dear ones, friends and neighbours, and you do not return and you leave this life without a chance to say goodbye or to be reconciled (I thought about my mother whom I have not seen for 6 months because of the insecurity on the roads).

This was the second incident after an explosion close to my workplace. God, I shall never forget the fear and terror in everybody's eyes, as we waited to see what would happen in the next few minutes (waiting for the next explosion on the same spot).

And this is not just our situation; it is that of all Syrians who have lost their family, their loved ones, their homes, their possessions, their souvenirs, their past and even their future.

And because of the international economical sanctions, the great increase in prices, the merchant's greed and the lack of food-stuffs and pharmaceutical products, the poor become poorer and ever more in need.

Look ahead, go forward is the expression that accompanies our journey at present and it calls us to look around us and ask ourselves what we can do to make our lives and those of others less difficult.

What can we do? How can we help? These are the questions we ask ourselves most frequently these days. There is goodness in the hearts of many and we CLC members in Damascus all asked ourselves what we can do in these hard times. What we could do to alleviate the social and psychological burden and give witness to Christ in this pluralistic society distinguished by its various components.

- The "*Friends in the Lord*" group thought of and published an Islamo-Christian prayer leaflet (Our Prayer Unites Us) and shared this daily prayer concerning human values with quotations from the sacred books. It also called for a common day of fasting for peace in Syria. It called for a common prayer vigil on the occasion of the Feast of the

Assumption which fell on the same day as the Muslim feast of Laylat el Qadr

- The “*Apostles*” group was helping in the social services office at St. Joseph’s church, and directed by CLC members from Damascus. They also made home visits distributing foodstuffs and medicine, and organized garage sales to collect money notwithstanding its shortage. It tried to organize help to poor and displaced families in collaboration with some charitable organizations in the area.
- CLC members also organized meals for Christmas and Easter.
- And work as volunteers with JRS.
 - Preparing and distributing food-baskets
 - Daily social work with the displaced families (leisure, conferences, breakfast and lunch in common)
 - Distribution of summer and winter clothes on the occasion of the main festivities
 - Participation in formation sessions (first aid and emergency training)

We can say that, thank God, we have volunteers, but the needs are enormous and varied and the means we have are very small in comparison.

In the end all we can say is “*God’s will be done, and may it all be to God’s greater glory*”. And let us look ahead and go forward.

Fr. Frans, we do not forget you!

The Death of Fr. FRANS VAN DER LUGT SJ (1938-2014)

“Blessed are the peacemakers...” Father Frans was abducted by masked gunmen from the Jesuit residence at Homs, in Syria, where he used to live, and was executed by gun shots. Despite the dangers, he had voluntarily decided to remain in the city of Homs in solidarity

