

SUPPLEMENT TO PROGRESSIO

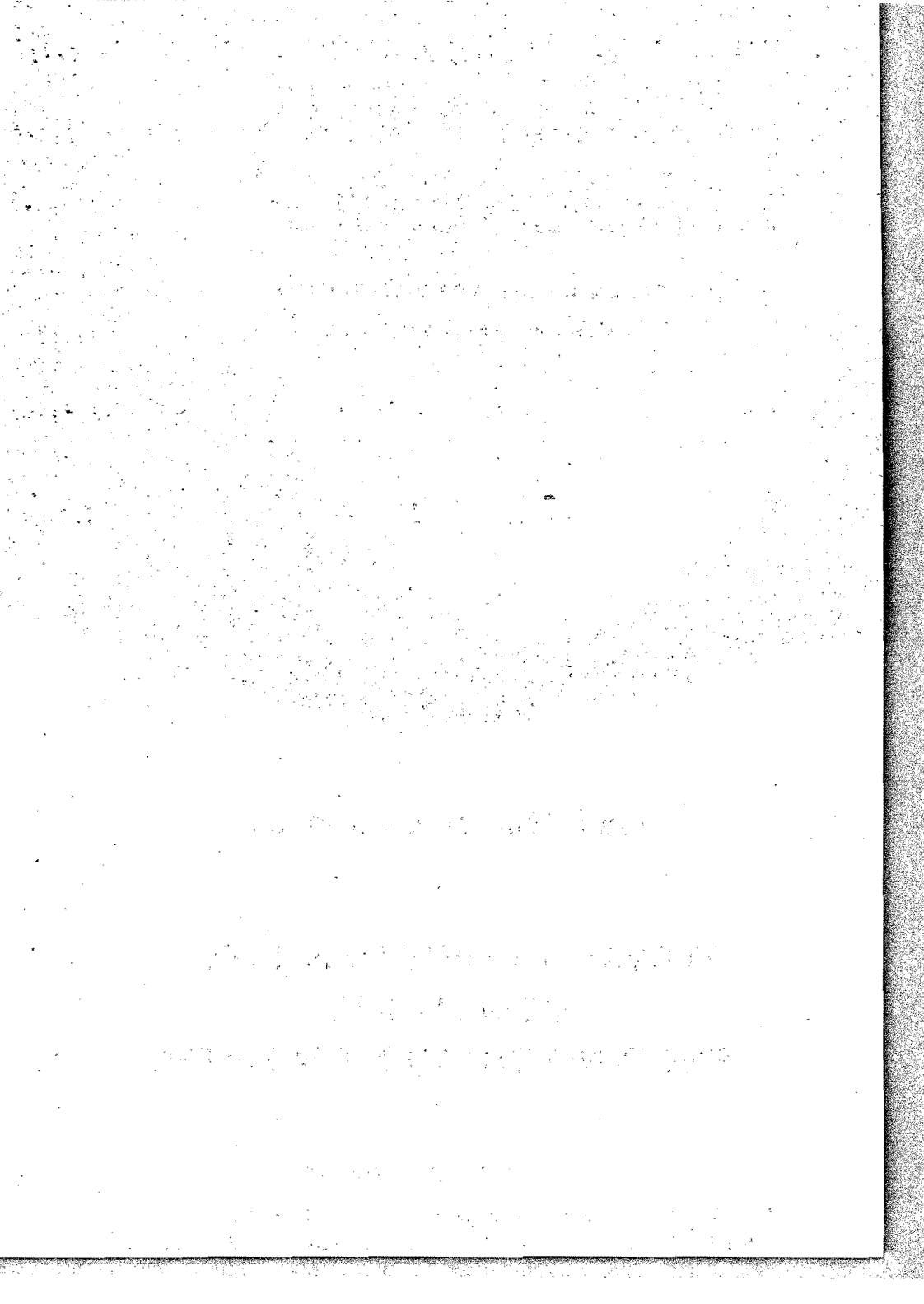
**PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES**

Juan Miguel Leturia s.j.

TOWARD CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

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Juan Miguel LETURIA s.j.

TOWARD CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

BEGINNINGS AND GROWTH

To Fr. PEDRO ARRUPE S.J.
example of evangelical commitment
in the ignatian spirit
during 50 years of religious life

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FOREWORD

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A Christian Life Community does not happen overnight. It is the result of a process, a lengthy one, normally stretching over some years. How does such a process begin? What is the goal aimed at, and what means are offered to reach that goal? What helps the process? What hinders it? What are the stages of its evolution, the landmarks along the path of its growth? And, even if Christian Life Communities differ in all sorts of ways, what broad guidelines can be given to aid and to guide the process as it develops? Such is the topic of this SUPPLEMENT to Progreso, and it is one we feel will be of real interest to all our readers and of great utility to all among them who are involved, in one way or other, in CLC formation.

Author of the SUPPLEMENT is Juan Miguel Leturia Mermod, S.J. Father Leturia is 30 years of age and of Chilean nationality. In his days at secondary school, he was active in the then Sodality of Our Lady. He entered the Jesuits in 1965 and his work with Christian Life Communities began in 1970. From then till last year he worked closely with several youth groups as their assistant or mediator, groups which began in secondary school and are now at the end of their university studies. He has watched them and aided them to grow from amorphous groups into communities, gradually into communities of faith, and, some of them, into Christian Life Communities. An interesting feature of the process has been that some of the university members have themselves become in turn assistants or "animators" for other high school groups. The social involvement of the groups too, and the integration of mission and service into their formation, has been noteworthy.

Father Leturia was ordained a priest in '73. Before and since then he has taught ethics and theology, and in 1973 was director of the Pastoral Department at Colegio

San Ignacio in Santiago. At present he is doing special studies in Ignatian spirituality at Gregorian University, Rome. This coming summer he will help conduct one or more CLC formation courses in Europe.

In his work as guide in CLC, Father Leturia has worked closely with a group of Jesuits in Chile who in fact have functioned as a team. Besides their direct assistance to CLC communities, they have thus far published a series of 8 booklets touching on various aspects of CLC life - formation weekends, the community dimension, etc.-which together form a little library serving as a "Guia Para Asesores" (Guide for Assistants). The present Supplement draws especially on the first two booklets, written by Father Leturia, though with some modifications or additions. It reflects, of course, the context of a particular continent and country, but our World Federation believes that the approach it presents is, in its essentials, universal.

* * *

I - INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND LIMITS OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines aim at being of help for ecclesiastical assistants of communities, in particular for such as are acting as guides of a community for the first time. A help, not a set of rules nor something imposed. Not everything said here will hold for all communities, and there may be much of value that is not included. The key thing about an assistant is his (or her) own Christian living: his experience of God, of prayer, of community, of service; his apostolic enthusiasm, his charism, his pastoral imagination, his dedication. And, in a special way, the affection he has for the young people whom he guides. To the degree that he is able to love and respect these youths, to that degree he will communicate his experience and his spirituality. And to the degree that he, in turn, lets himself be guided and led by the Holy Spirit--and so, open to the action of God--he will be able to make progress in this work of the Church, that of assisting youth communities to grow in the gospel spirit. That is what above all will help the guide as guide.

Only in second place will these guidelines be of help a methodological help in his work as assistant. They contain some contributions that will throw light on the approach to take, some suggestions for the progressive development of the community. The assistant should not hope to find everything in these guidelines. More important for him will be working together in a team, the help of more experienced assistants, above all when he meets situations not foreseen here. But we hope he will find here the help and the orientations he needs to work with at least a minimum of autonomy.

We present here the development of a "typical" community, from its beginning till it becomes in reality a Christian Life Community. These guidelines reflect particularly the experience of masculine groups that, begun in secondary school, have managed to continue on in the university. So it will be most suitable for this type of community. With some adaptations it can serve too for other communities--those of women, mixed groups, those begun in the university or in a working-class milieu or a neighborhood or a parish--since many elements are common to all communities. But the psychological descriptions, for example, correspond above all to the period of adolescence. We have not been able to reflect on the actual living of adult communities, since they are not as yet fully developed in our Federation. We hope these guidelines will be a contribution to their future...

B. CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES : THE STAGES...

"Christian Life Communities" is a designation that applies to very specific communities. We therefore distinguish three types of communities according to their stage of development :

1 - Pre-Communities. Any community would have to be called such during the first six months or first year of its existence. (1) In addition all groups in the earlier years of secondary school would be such, because of their age and the level of maturity of members. Many pre-communities break up after a short time or never come to be communities: they transform themselves, for example, into study groups or simply groups of friends. So the name "community" should be reserved to a more-developed group. In the pre-community the main work of the assistant is that of pre-evangelization and of the development of human relations. The group's main energies are directed toward within (cohesion).

2 - Christian communities. Once the stage of pre-community has been gone through, we have rather well-defined Christian communities, which are not however Christian Life Communities in the proper sense. Here the assistant's princi-

(1) If someone prefers another name for this stage, less specific, it can be called the Preparatory Stage, "Alpha" Stage, Aspirants' Group, etc.

pal work is that of evangelization, of formation in prayer and in the apostolate. The group searches for a balance between directing its energies "to within"(conservation) and "toward the outside" (action). Groups at this level can be long to the CLC Federation.

3 - Christian Life Communities, properly so called. These are communities that already bear the mark of Ignatian spirituality. Here the chief work of the assistant is that of forming the members in spirituality. The outward thrust (apostolate) now dominates the group's energies. Groups of this type normally form part of the CLC Federation.

C. HOW COMMUNITIES ARISE

1 - Origin. The most usual beginning is a NATURAL GROUPING made up of friends. Or again, a group that has shared together a strong "founding" experience (summer or winter projects, a retreat, camping...)

There are also more heterogeneous communities--whose members do not know each other at the start, or when they join the group--and who form themselves around a common accepted belief or outlook("mystique") or a common approach. Thus for example in our country the communities of "Pioneros", (2) in which the whole community has not been taking the same steps together, but rather in the one community are persons at different stages. These are "open" communities, into which new persons are coming constantly, and from which those with a certain formation are continually leaving to form new communities on another level. So that with in a couple of years almost the entire membership might have been changed. In this type of "open" community the methodology will be quite different and individual progress more rapid, since the "mystique" of the group is already present and there is a certain witness given by those already involved.

2 - The Occasion. The most frequent situation is that a natural grouping--already constituted in a certain sense

(2) A type of community developed in Chile, as a section of the CLC Federation, and which includes elements of Scouting. See Jose Juan Vergara S.J. : Pioneros, una metodología para adolescentes, Ediciones Paulinas, Santiago de Chile, 1976, Colección CVX, No. 8

--decides to enter into a more formal relationship, to be a community (without being very clear about what that may mean). For this it asks the help of an assistant whom members already are acquainted with. If he cannot act as guide for them, he should help them find another assistant.

At other times it will be the assistant himself who invites an informal group, either all together or individually, to try to come to be a community.

Often the immediate occasion will be the witness of or contact with other more advanced communities (older brothers, or friends, or boy and girl friends who form part of a community). Or it may be stimulated by some organized activity planned and carried out by communities (an apostolic mission, a project, a sports camp, a song festival). On other occasions communities will take their start from a "founding" experience, especially if other communities have taken part in this (for example, summer projects...). A rather important motivation is often the desire to be like some other group nearby which has already become a community.

When it is the guide himself who invites them, he needs for this to make use of the right psychological moment--for example, after having helped them in some other type of activity, or having held classes for them over a period of time, or when they come back from a retreat.

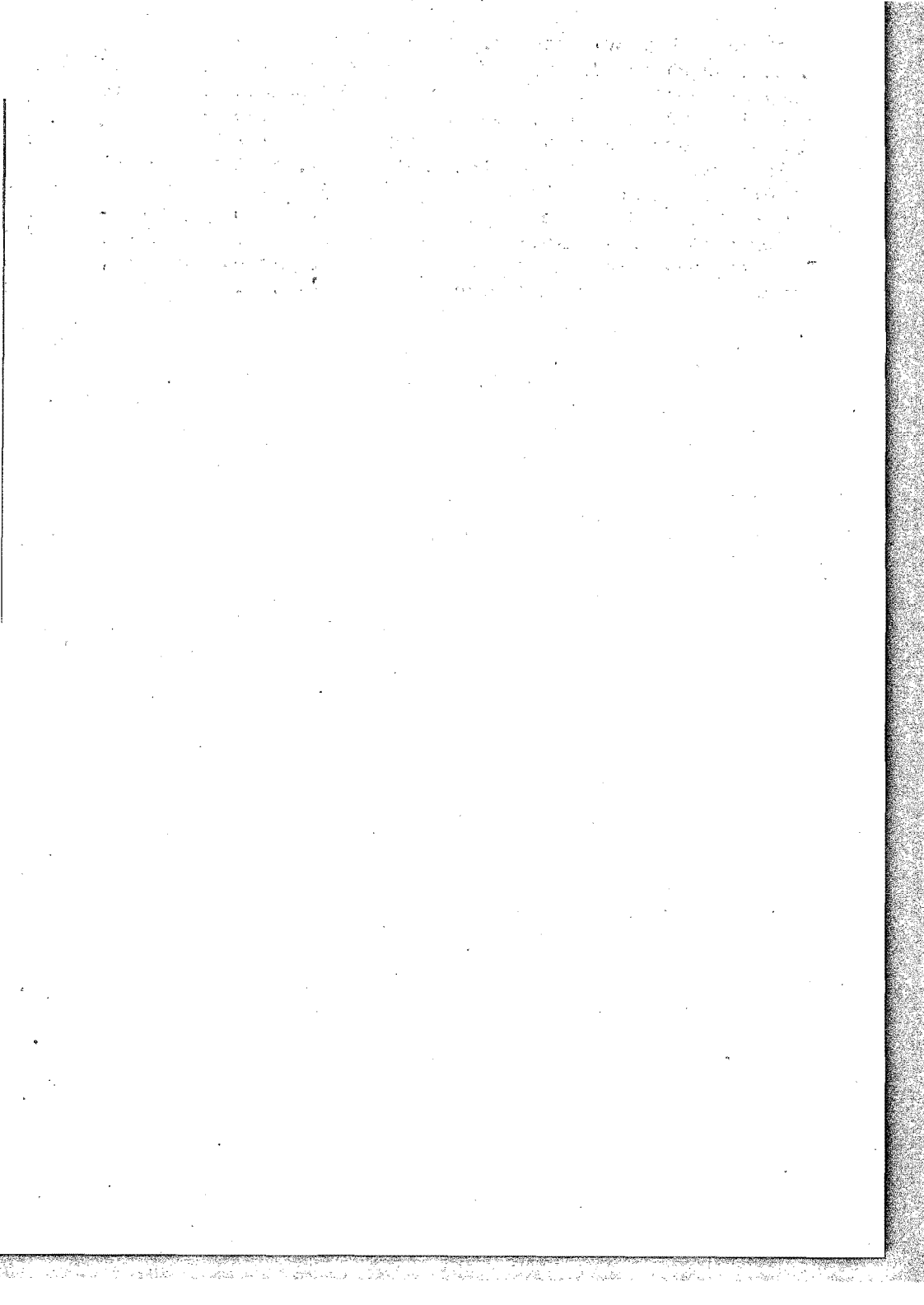
In any case, what is necessary is a BECOMING AWARE that it is possible to be, and is good to be, a community. An awareness that comes about as a result of what they see in other communities, or by the invitation of the guide. When this awareness is an individual thing, it can be the individual who decides to join an already existing community, or who tries with some friends to form a new community. The decision to admit a new member to a community does not pertain to the guide, but to the whole community. While such a decision need not be unanimous, it is fitting that there be a large majority in favor.

It is desirable that the NUMBER OF PERSONS desiring to form a community be not less than 6 (since often some will leave) and not more than 12 (since then it is impossible to communicate in a personal way in the community).

It is not essential that at this point of starting, those who want to become a community have a very clear

idea what they are seeking. It is important that the assistant know what a CLC is. For the members it is enough if they are aware that there is question of something that is positive and helpful for them, that they desire or are ready to improve themselves, and that this desire has a certain Christian flavor to it (if not in all, at least in the majority). Some may be motivated simply by the desire of friendship, and some of these may abandon the pre-community when it really starts to take shape. Others of them, however, may go on to become the most committed members, by means of an authentic process of conversion.

* * *



II - DEVELOPMENT OF A PRE-COMMUNITY

Starting from the beginning, moving towards community..

A. AIMS

Basically, the aim is that persons come to be a community to know each other, to acquire a minimum of mutual trust and cohesion (identification with the group), to develop a spirit of service, to pinpoint their objectives and reach a common denominator... This is the stage of formation in which the group is "constituting itself". It is a pre-community that wishes to be a community.

Every community is characterized by a common HISTORY, a common MYSTIQUE (belief or outlook) and a common ACTIVITY (which does not necessarily mean the same work being done by all). Obviously to be able to speak of "community", there must be in their personal relationships a minimum degree of intimacy. This last will vary according to the psychological and spiritual needs of the members. It will depend to a large extent on the experiences they have had together. And these experiences are what are constituting step by step the HISTORY of the group.

For the assistant or guide, who, being new, may not have clear the objectives, we hope the following pages will clarify what a Christian Life Community should ideally be in its different periods of development.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRE-COMMUNITY

We will focus above all on those characteristics that involve problems the guide will need to face. Our description will be general. It will not necessarily give all the marks that such a group has or can have :

1) The trust between those making up the group is not yet very great, although it will usually be greater between some of them. There are present sub-groups and polarizations, antagonisms even, within the pre-community.

2) There are notable differences of maturity in the group. Mainly these are due to the psychophysical development of each one, especially in the earlier years of secondary school. In university groups the difference will rather be one of spiritual maturity. Each member arrives with a different "baggage" of formation and of experiences. For example, some will be students recently come to this school, others were Scouts or belonged to other pre-community groupings. They come with different religious formations, different problems, different positive and negative experiences--whether these be sexual, religious, political or relate to drugs or service or friendship...Here the family factor plays an important part. All these differences generate tensions in their expectations and needs, in their participation and degree of responsibility, in their interpersonal relationships.

3) Among adolescents there are frequent changes of attitude. For example, the one who "cemented" the group may after two months lose interest in it. The one who declares himself an atheist may the next month be the most fervent Christian. Or the most serious and responsible one can suddenly "take a vacation" and then a short time later resume his responsible attitude. Within the same meeting there are sudden changes of attitude, from gaiety to seriousness, from prayer to "horseplay". An adolescent can pass in a few minutes from attitudes the most childish to those of an astounding maturity.

These changes of attitude take place not only in the individuals but at the level of the pre-community as such. It can move from a period of feverish activity to one of simply "fooling around". Or from a lively interest in intellectual discussions it may shift to a criticism of the intellectual, and defense of the need for what is existential and affective. These changes are disconcerting for the guide and for the pre-community members themselves. As a result, reliability, especially as regards the commitments undertaken, is rather limited. Such changes in attitude are caused by the individual crises of growth of the members, by the lack of self-identity, by disturbances in the

interpersonal relationships (it can be simply a matter of "being against" another member, or the guide), by situations outside the group (political or national difficulties, examination time, even the weather). They should not be interpreted in absolute terms, but rather IN THE LIGHT OF THE ENTIRE EVOLUTION of an individual and of the group as such.

4) Closely linked with the features just mentioned is that of the divergences in opinions and in options taken, even in regard to the faith. This is quite understandable, since the group does not yet have a common outlook. Here too the influence of interpersonal relations and what might be called the "identity crisis" of the various members plays its part. These differences between members can at times create rather violent situations--though temporary--which the guide must know how to handle. Along the same line, it is common at the beginning for all to try to impress the guide, even at the expense of the others. So the guide must make special efforts to treat all equally, at least in the meetings.

5) The group identity is still somewhat vague. This is reflected in such simple matters as that the group does not up to now even have a name. Equally vague is the sense of belonging to the group. People easily enter or leave the group. The "clowns", those who have less interest, those who find it a problem to take part, tend to depart to the degree that the demands mount. They are replaced by others who were not there at first but who are interested or concerned. They may be friends of some of those already belonging, or invited by the guide with the accord of the group, or may have taken part along with the pre-community in some "founding experience".

It can happen too that a group divides in two, in which case frequently only one of the two new pre-communities survives. Or again, two groups that are rather small, either to start with or because some have left, may decide to merge into one because of their friendship, or common interests, or because they have the same guide, or in order to form a mixed community.

6) The leaders or coordinators in these pre-communities are usually the natural leaders: the most likeable, the biggest, the least inhibited, the one most successful in social life or in studies or in sports, etc. This does

not always coincide with those who are most Christian or most mature. The influence of the natural leader is considerable and can even constitute a hindrance to the growth of the pre-community if the dependence of the others on him is too great, or if he limits his role to "lording it over" others, without leading the group to anything. When the pre-community becomes capable of choosing for its leader or chairman someone who is not a natural leader, it is one of the signs that the pre-community is beginning to become a community.

7) The relationship to the guide is, in the pre-community, normally one of dependence. At the start this is inevitable. In the measure that the pre-community progresses, the assistant will see to it that it acquires greater independence, that the members do not look to him for things but to themselves and to the community itself. We meet at least two kinds of dependence. One is that of the individual person with regard to the guide, and this is more typical of adolescents (see below, under Methodology). Another is of the entire group with regard to the guide, to whom it looks for its group identity, its forward movement, and all that initiative which will bring it to be a community. On the other hand, it should be noted that in any relationship of dependence, there are also moments in which the contrary attitude of independence surfaces.

If the assistant compares this description with that in the following stages, he will easily notice the evolution that the group still needs to make. This allows him to insist more on those features in which the group is as yet rather immature.

C. METHODOLOGY

This is the part of most interest to the guide. In it we suggest some means that allow him to fulfill his function in the pre-community. The concrete examples given apply rather to adolescents, but the general lines of what is said apply to any pre-community.

1 - Basic Norms. The basic thing is that the assistant have clear the goals, the mystique, the potentiality of the group in development. This is just what the pre-community does NOT have clear. It is not necessary that the guide attempt to clarify this for those he is guiding. Nor is it

desirable for him to do so unless he does so by very gradual steps. It can be that the group through its gatherings is making progress, but is not yet able to understand this or to assimilate it. And what is repeated often without finding an echo in those who hear it is cheapened, loses its value. The guide should little by little throw light on the journey the group is making, and do this in the course of the forward movement itself. It is important that the group feel that the goals and objectives are coming out of the group itself through successive steps taken. It is these which the guide will refer to, calling for their implementation and projecting them into the future. Long periods may pass in which apparently "nothing is happening". The guide should not be discouraged. It may be that what is really happening is that the group is assimilating experiences it has had, or gathering its forces for a further step. Nor should he be disheartened by what seem to be the backward steps of the pre-community or some of its members, nor by the opposing demands that present themselves to him.

The assistant needs to communicate the spirit of the group less by his words than by the witness of his own life: his faith, prayer, service, insertion in the world, his life in community in a group that has already attained what the pre-community is seeking. Or again, by small signs of generosity and respect and interest in individuals, such as offering them cigarettes, or calling them by their name rather than by a nickname that they dislike. By showing his interest in what is happening in the Church or in the world. By being open to the needs of those he is working with. And so on.

Having a clear vision of the road to be traveled in no way implies imposing it. Even the guide must be ready to give up his own aspirations or projects with regard to the group. Rather he must wait for the pre-community, that is, propose means by which they may attain their objectives, clarify at opportune moments the path they are taking, suggest or invite the pre-community to something it has not yet attained, but is now ready or able to assume. Sometimes he will need to make these suggestions directly to the group, sometimes indirectly through a conversation with some of the more advanced members who may then make the suggestion to the group.

ALL THAT IS IMPOSED, OR ARISES FROM THE DEMANDS OF THE GUIDE, WILL IN THE LONG RUN FAIL, SINCE IT IS NOT SOME THING PROPER TO THE COMMUNITY. ON THE CONTRARY, ALL THAT ARISES FROM THE GROUP AND RESPONDS TO ITS NEEDS AND CAPACITIES, THAT WILL ENDURE.

On the other hand, the assistant should be aware that he carries enormous weight in the pre-community, even though he apparently says nothing. Silence on his part, or a glance, his suggestions even when they are rejected--all these weigh heavily. In the long run the community ends by taking the lines--not that he imposes--but that he suggests. He should not be surprised that more than once someone will repeat things he has said as if they were the persons's own. In some cases, within the framework of the crisis of adolescence, the assistant may come to substitute, as father-figure, for the youth in rebellion. If there is not present this type of transference, there will in any case be other forms of dependence and strong emotional ties, even if these do not manifest themselves very openly. The guide will not prevent this dependence, which in many cases is a necessary period in the dialectic of growth. But he will take care to be aware of it himself when such dependence is produced, and to make aware of it the one who has developed this dependence. When possible he will try gradually to withdraw from it, so that the youth himself, or the group, now in the process of becoming a community, will assume their responsibilities. The assistant is, in any case, an "ideal", the older person whom members try to imitate, even in his gestures and words. The effort of the guide will be to assure that at the end of the process his "disciples" no longer need him, and even may have surpassed him.

2 - Means. Taking for granted the attitudes just described, we will now suggest some MEANS or TOOLS that will be of service to the guide for the growth of the pre-community :

a) Common Experiences. These shape the history of a group. Often the pre-community is born from one of them. If it arises in some other way, it is important to hold as soon as possible a weekend or outing that starts the group on its way (a "founding experience"). Such an experience in some sense "constitutes" the group, and people will continually be referring back to it. Such experiences are tools that generate identity with the group and a common mys-

tique. They need to be well-adapted to the period that the group is then living through, and within the capacity of the members. For example: outings, study days, a common effort--whether such a project is done during vacation, or on Saturdays, or in the daily environment they live in. It is important that such experiences do not surpass the interest or the strength of the pre-community, lest they come to be a burden and "undigested".

b) Short-term Commitments. The pre-community concentrates on some problem, internal or external, analyzes it and plans a common effort. For example, to organize an outing in the country to promote class unity, to take part in some campaign, to raise the level of study, to help a specific person, to put out a bulletin or review... It is something to be completed within a short period and evaluated as soon as it is done. This type of joint commitment--without prejudice to other personal forms of service--allows the pre-community to take decisions, see concrete achievements, "take the pulse" of its progress, test its members through joint activity. And, above all, allows it to escape from mere verbalism or "meetingitis". To be effective, such actions should be short-term, easy to implement and to evaluate, and really allow a common effort, with the participation of all. It is best not to repeat them too often, and that they be of different kinds. In this way use is made of the distinctive qualities of each one, in such a way that the different members grow in assuming responsibility.

c) Personal Contact. There is need to "follow up" on the members, without intruding and without forcing contacts or confidences. This is done by personal conversations with each of the members, presenting them with challenges according to the needs and problems of each, interesting oneself in the individual as such, advising him or simply listening to his problems. At this stage, because of the shyness or lack of trust of those who have but recently begun the community experience, the guide should take the initiative, but without imposing himself. It is urgent above all that he "follow up on" those members who are less attached to the pre-community, so that they will support the assistant in the direction he is giving the community and support their companions who need backing. There is need too to give attention to those who are unsure of themselves or are on the fringes of the group, so as

to integrate them into the group, bring them up to the level of the others, help to situate them with regard to the aims and problems of the group. It is desirable that the guide become gradually acquainted with the families of those he is guiding. On the personal level, the assistant will encourage and underline the benefit for the community of some kind of personal service or commitment by the members. For example, to act as president of a class or fulfill the role of secretary for a study group or sports, or some social action, be head of a Scout patrol, be active in the student council, work in a parish...When there is question not of secondary school students but of older persons, activity like the following might be suitable: involvement in a student or professional organization, community service work, assisting in maternal centers or libraries, a campaign for literacy or public health, helping with the university pastoral effort, etc.

d) Meetings. In this first stage meetings can be held weekly; though, if the community is not sufficiently developed, this may be a bit heavy for some, who are just beginning to "get in the swing" of things. They can also be every two weeks, or even every three; but with this last there is the risk that the contact will be so sporadic that nothing will go forward. They should be on fixed days and at fixed hours, so that other commitments or excuses for missing will not arise. If on a particular day the meeting cannot be held, it is good to substitute for it as soon as can be, so that there will not be a long period without a meeting. Attendance at meetings should be required. A person who often misses a pre-community meeting shows a lack of interest. It is better not to count on such a person, and ask him to withdraw from the group so as not to be dead weight. It is best if someone--other than the chairman or coordinator--takes note of the attendance and of decisions taken or important things that happen in the group, so that these are clear and remain incorporated into the history of the group in the notebook kept for this purpose.

Although the leader should conduct the meetings, the guide needs to maintain control. Ideally he does this by his presence, but at times he will need to intervene to end a sterile discussion, or to give support to someone being attacked by all, or to keep the group from avoiding a difficulty by having them stick to the discussion until

the conflict has been resolved. In the discussions and evaluations (revisions of life), it is best if he reserves his opinion till the end, so as not to constrain or limit too much the others, and so that he may keep a view of the whole, something not possible if he participates in the same way as any other. Although he does not conduct the meetings, the assistant is the one who is responsible for what takes place in them. The main activities in the meetings--though not the only ones--are the following :

- Revision of Life (Evaluation): This is essential in a pre-community in order to promote mutual understanding and personal and group progress. At the beginning evaluations will be superficial. But the analysis should become deeper as it goes on, passing from merely exterior observations to the more internal elements, and from actions to attitudes. It should take account too of earlier revisions and add new elements in the measure that mutual understanding and confidence grow and that the members themselves advance. The revision of life is directed by the leader, although the first one may be led by the guide, who should instruct the leader in how to lead those that follow. The leader can begin by reading a passage from the Gospel or elsewhere in the New Testament suggested by the assistant, and somehow related to the judging of others, the Word, awareness, relations between brothers... Then the revision begins, with each member of the community passing in review, including the guide. Members can be evaluated in the order they choose, or alphabetically, or in turn according to where they sit.

Two or three rounds of comments are made, with each one saying or adding something about the person in question, who should be silent until the end (except to ask about something he didn't understand), so as to keep the evaluation from becoming a game of ping-pong, with attacks and defenses. At the end the person in question can explain some of the attitudes that have been criticized in him, or ask for more details, or ask advice, or share something personal with the others. The "feedback" people contribute as regards all they have themselves noticed, whether these be positive aspects or negative; if they are negative, the aim should be constructive criticism. When the one in question has explained his point of view, the others can ask him questions. Then the leader asks him if he is satisfied or if he wants a further exchange. If he does, he

can in turn ask questions of the others on the aspects mentioned that he is interested in. When he is satisfied, the group passes on to another, until the circle is completed. If not finished in one meeting it can be continued in the next until all have been considered in turn. Later on, in a future meeting, another revision of life can be done, using the same order, but reviewing only the period since the last one. This form of the revision of life -- which is really a type of fraternal help and correction -- presupposes, for its success, an atmosphere of true openness, with the members really seeking in the exercise to come to know themselves better so as to grow in the Lord.

It is also useful to make, from time to time, evaluations of the pre-community as such: of its path, its progress, its relations internally and with its milieu, its apostolate, and, above all, its short-term commitments. This kind of revision will sometimes lead to a reformulation of objectives and to new demands and aspirations. It pertains to the guide to be pointing out the goals that have been achieved and the steps still in process.

- Personality Development. This tool is important in pre-communities of adolescents. It answers their need to come to know themselves and their potential. Young people like themselves to be "the topic", for this helps them to discover themselves and to glimpse their future. It is at the same time important for improving their relations with others and to become acquainted with new kinds of relationships. In the meetings, then, the assistant can offer them some exercise or test easy to evaluate, or can make use of some group dynamics exercises. Along the same line, either in the meetings or in his personal contacts with them, the guide can ask them for an autobiography, or to take part in some simple tests. Here, just as for the problems that he uncovers in personal contact, he needs to be prudent enough to direct the young person to a guidance expert or psychologist or priest for those problems of psychology or of conscience that he feels unsure about or for which he is not qualified (one clear instance: confession, if the guide is not a priest).

- Topics for Discussion. So as not to be confined to the interpersonal (revision of life and psychological orientation), the guide will prepare some themes to alternate, in the meetings, with those on revision of life or

on group dynamics. These topics can constitute one of the most effective elements of formation for giving a direction and a mystique to a pre-community, for orienting it in a Christian way toward the future, toward the Christian community that it should become.

In the concrete, there is a first topic to be taken up in the opening meeting of the pre-community, since it is deciding to aim at becoming a community. "What is a Christian Life Community?" First of all, each one is asked what he believes a community is and why he has decided to join one (that is, what are his expectations of the pre-community). Here it will be good if the guide draws up a list or chart of the desires of the group at this point. Then he will explain in its main lines what a CLC consists in, the existence of a National Federation and a World Federation of CLC (the meaning of the movement), to which the pre-community can affiliate itself once it has reached a certain level of maturity (this should be set forth as a challenge, not as an obligation). Further, he should explain as clearly as he can the differences between a pre-community and a community, letting them see how the group as of now finds itself in the situation of a pre-community, and how it will be possible for it to come to be a community. This subject would be brought up again every so often in the light of the progress made by the pre-community and of new aspirations and demands on the members. And these latter will be the result of what the guide himself has been able to show or to communicate, of what the members more advanced in a Christian sense have discovered, and of contact with other communities.

Then other topics can be taken up for discussion, ones that respond to the concerns of the group. Through these the assistant can gradually transmit a certain moral and Christian formation. Examples would be the social attitude of a Christian, the liturgy--especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation,--relations with their parents, attitude about drugs, the Christian and the hierarchy, the Christian vision of society, prayer, the latest statement of the bishops, the Gospel in our lives, responsibility in our commitments, youth-and-love. Other topics will be rather personal testimonies: my commitments, my attitude toward the faith, etc. In line with the themes mentioned it will sometimes be a good thing, too, to in-

vite some person of special interest to talk to the pre-community: a leader of the CLC Federation, a married deacon, a priest, a labor union official, a sincere non-believer...

- Gospel and Prayer. The assistant can try out in one of the meetings doing a commentary on the Gospel. If it succeeds, it is good to keep on doing it. If not, he should try it again on a later occasion. The same is true of shared prayer, although perhaps here it is best to wait till the pre-community itself or some of its members ask for this (which they may never do if no one ever mentions it to them). Above all if it is question of youths in the earlier years of secondary school, the guide will need considerable patience so as not to "pressure" the experience of prayer. The moment to try it is at a special community day of exchange or at an outing or around a campfire.

- Liturgy. If the pre-community is religiously mature enough, there can be celebrated in some meeting the Eucharist or a penitential liturgy. In less mature pre-communities, which have not yet arrived at unanimity in the faith, a para-liturgy can help.

- Relaxation. In the meetings themselves there will sometimes be periods of relaxation and simply enjoying themselves. A meeting could even on occasion consist of a short commentary on the Gospel and afterwards nothing but relaxation or recreation. One should remember that often the community is the only place where persons feel themselves at home, thought well of, understood, in peace.

To sum up, a typical meeting at this stage might be : beginning with an evaluation of the last short-term commitment, and planning the next one; discussing some other specific points that are urgent (date for an outing, change of leader, etc.) Then some basic topic : revision of life or a discussion on a theme, or a group dynamics exercise. The guide can close with a brief prayer; then, time for relaxing. If the meeting-time is shorter, some of these elements can be taken in one meeting, some in another.

D. PROBLEMS AND CRISES

Moments of crisis are key points in the growth of a human being, and therefore of human groups too. We will indicate first some of the problems that can cause a crisis.

Then we will give some time to the crises themselves, and to the role the guide plays in these.

1) Problems :

a) From Outside. Rooted in the very development of the pre-community there can be problems related to its milieu:

- Classmates or companions at work can, because of lack of information, interpret the group as being closed, semi-secret, self-sufficient, its members as "not mixing with the others"(which, at times, certainly happens). This can lower the prestige of the pre-community. But if it is well-handled and clarified and if the pre-community in fact is not closed to others, it can result, through rivalry, in the formation of another pre-community or pre-communities.

- Again, if it is the only organized group in its milieu, it can happen that it takes on too many services. So it begins to have no time left for its own community life, and also to be seen as a "pressure group" with hidden designs. The attitude of service is essential for the community, but it should not in this fall into excesses which will cause its self-destruction, nor into the temptation of using its power as a means of influence. Here the best counsel is prudence.

- Another similar problem is that, enthusiastic with their new activities, the members of the new pre-community neglect other obligations, such as study, work, or family life. As a result (and sometimes without this happening) there will arise on the part of the family of members a strong opposition to their belonging to the pre-community. In some cases this opposition will be insuperable, in others it can be lessened or ended through the assistant talking with the family.

b) From Within. From inside the community itself too, the first two problems mentioned can arise, in these forms :

- "Narcissism". The community achieves great cohesion and begins to live for itself, for its meetings and its common activities, without "mixing" with anyone and without any sense of service. This, if it is not avoided, can produce an unhealthy atmosphere and a withdrawal in some of the more apostolically concerned members, who may decide to withdraw.

- "Activism". This is too much activity without an interior life. Often it is done in order to avoid confronting certain problems. It ends by destroying the pre-community, which is not as yet well-based, or by wearying some of the members and disinteresting them.

It is up to the guide to search for the right balance.

c) Interpersonal. Other kinds of problems are those of an affective character.

- As the members of a pre-community get to know each other better, changes are produced in their interpersonal relationships, especially in those members who are naturally more the leaders. Resentments and tensions occur--and even jealousies, among younger members or in mixed communities--and they can upset understanding within the group. Problems of this kind must be faced honestly, both individually and in the community; in most cases, with sincerity, they will disappear. At times it will be good to let in "fresh air", adding new members or seeing to it that the pre-community has wider relations with persons outside it. Sometimes, however, jealousy may arise precisely because some members are not as yet fully part of the pre-community.... In any case, for problems of this type considerable delicacy and emotional stability is required on the part of the guide.

- In the same vein, a problem that could arise is the "crisis of friendship". That is, those who when the pre-community began understood each other well and felt themselves to be friends, suddenly discover that they are no longer so close as they were, and this produces a certain depression or disenchantment. In reality, what has happened is that they have matured somewhat and now expect more of friendship. They are passing from the stage of being "buddies" to that of being really friends. One should make them see the usefulness of the "crisis", and point out the path toward a solution, so that the pre-community moves on to become a true community. It can happen that some member of the group does not succeed in taking this step--for lack of maturity, and that, remaining sidetracked, he ends by withdrawing to the fringe of the pre-community. This happens too at times to those who for whatever reason have not taken part in some of the "founding experiences", in which something changed, and the entire group together grew, but they did not. With the help of the assistant it is relatively easy to overcome this problem.

- There is another important problem related to the affective ones mentioned, and it can arise at this point or even earlier : that of the possibility of changing into a mixed group. In some circumstances it is advisable, in others not at all. Obviously this is more likely to happen in the university, or in a mixed secondary school. The great danger is that the pre-community will be transformed into a mere social group. In any case it would seem more advisable that if the group did not begin as a mixed group, it remain as it is. The entrance of persons of the other sex can retard appreciably the mutual confidence between members, but it can also be an enrichment for the group. It is relatively easy to make such a change when the group has been functioning only a short time. If it has been in existence a longer time, the possibilities for doing this effectively are less. An exception to this would be if it were question of merging masculine and feminine groups with more or less the same characteristics, or if the persons of the other sex who are entering are of unusual quality, or are above the average level of the group they are entering. If a group decides to become mixed, the persons who are joining should be of the same age or level of maturity. It does not work, for example, for the boys to be university students and the girls of secondary school, since their interests are very different. In any case, one should avoid having young people who are "going steady" with each other enter the same group, since in this case their reason for entering is not the spirit of the group, nor the group itself, but one of the persons in the group. And since "going steady" is by definition a short-term arrangement--although at the moment those involved pretend otherwise--those who enter for such reasons will leave as soon as they stop "going steady"--which usually happens quite soon. This means members will be continually coming and going and so the whole development of the group will be impeded.

2) Crises :

Some problems are simply the normal "high-low" group fluctuations, similar to the "high-lows" in personal life. Others are real crises of growth. These crises are crucial, and are the periods when the presence of the guide is the most necessary. They can come about simply through "inertia", when "no one does anything", when they do not carry out their commitments, do not attend meetings... and so

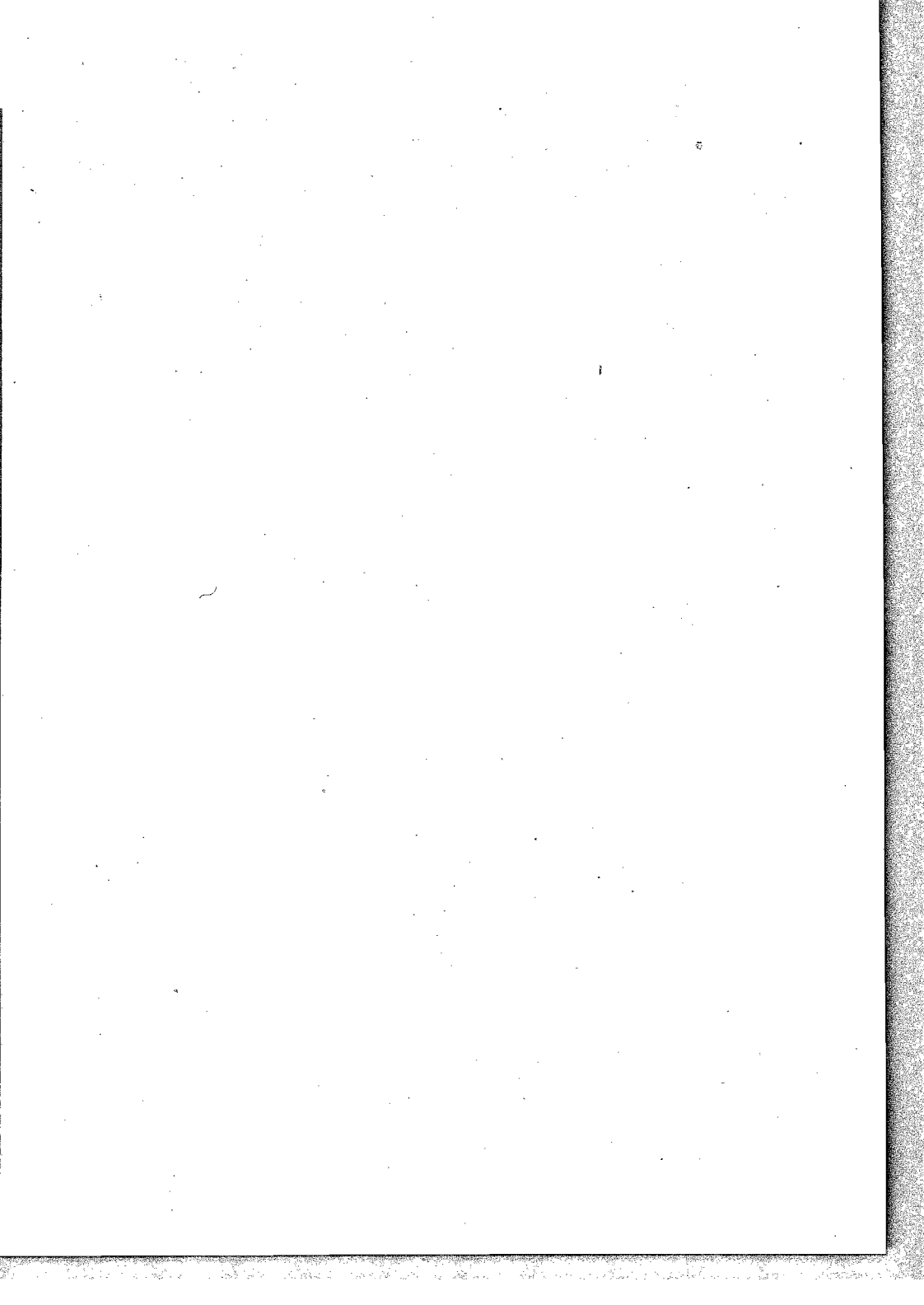
the moment arrives when the assistant must declare a "state of crisis". Or it is the pre-community itself that, on the occasion for example of a weekend together or a good meeting, becomes aware that it is in crisis and realizes that it cannot go on like that. This awareness generates a certain discouragement, but also expectations. The guide should demonstrate that it is question of a challenge, and that what is in appearance negative--as for example the crisis of friendship--simply reflects a positive CHANGE that is occurring (and which, like every change, is disconcerting). Or that it reflects the desire of the group to advance more swiftly, and its impatience and discontent at not being able to move ahead as rapidly as it would like.

These crises are a call for help from the assistant, an acknowledgement that the group cannot go forward without his help and guidance. This is the moment that the assistant should make use of to make the members aware of certain things, to sow in their minds new goals or objectives, to underline the need for some essential change. This might be, for example, in the type of commitment, in the frequency or format of the meetings, in their interpersonal relations or their relations with others. Or again, it might be about the need to begin to utilize prayer, or to make a retreat, or to begin to become better acquainted with Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Crises are privileged moments, in which the community puts itself on trial. For this reason it is at such times better disposed to accept changes. The ideal is that the changes be suggested, requested or demanded by the pre-community itself, after the idea has been planted by the guide to bring it to attention. But they can also be placed by the assistant as a condition for his continuing with the group (this is THE moment in which he can do this). From one of these crises can come the passage from pre-community to community. The guide will judge when this change has taken place, or when the conditions for producing it are present. But he must not be in a hurry to declare that it has happened, for he may only be projecting his impatience or his own desires. Or there may arise a collective option for the Christian way, or for obtaining a chaplain (if the guide is not a priest), or for joining the Federation of Communities at the school (if there is one), or for affiliating with the National Federation (if the group has definitely passed beyond the stage of pre-community).

But it can also happen that the pre-community decides to dissolve. Or it may decide to continue as a pre-community but with some new conditions: for example, changing the requirements so as to take the step toward a community more quickly, or changing its guide. Or again, it may accept the fact that it will not succeed in becoming a community because what the members really want is to be a group of friends, or a discussion group, or something else --for which, perhaps, no guide is now necessary.

These are very delicate moments. At bottom it is the assistant who will judge whether the group continues, comes to an end, or changes. But if the members of the pre-community do not wish to continue, it would be absurd for the guide to impose this on them.

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III - DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Toward the Christian life...

A. ATMS

In this second stage, the group has gone beyond the pre-community stage. What we have is a true "Christian community", with the desire to become later on a Christian Life Community (CLC).

The group needs to come to acquire a true sense of the Church, an apostolic attitude of commitment in the world, an adequate doctrinal formation. It moves beyond this stage when the Christian community, or the majority of its members, make choice of Ignatian spirituality, or gradually come to assimilate it.

B. CHARACTERISTICS

A community already has its history--from this comes its identity and the members' sense of belonging. It has its mystique--in this case, Christianity. And its members are committed--ideally in a common effort, although this is not always possible.

- All the members now feel they are friends and have trust in each other. They feel responsible each for the other. The community as such is "aggressive", that is, enthusiastic. When one of the members has a crisis, they feel strongly drawn to use their resources to help him, even feel obliged to do so. What concerns one, concerns all. Now many of the demands come no longer from the assistant, but from the group itself, spontaneously.

- There is considerable homogeneity and somewhat the same level now of interests and experiences. There will always be some who are more outstanding but all will have at least a certain minimum involvement in the work, knowledge of the Gospel, prayer experience, etc.

- A greater stability has now been reached in the commitments, attitudes and opinions of members, although they are still searching. There is a general enthusiasm for their Christianity and a desire to shape their lives to the demands of the Gospel, an effort pursued with sometimes more difficulty, sometimes less. There can still be, in exceptional cases, someone who does not yet call himself Christian, provided that such a person is seriously seeking Christ (desires to have faith and to be a Christian) and that this situation does not prolong itself over a long period.

- There is a common mystique or spirit, centered on Jesus Christ. It is presumed that the main contribution of the assistant goes along this line and not that of group dynamics, affective formation, or character training.

- The solidarity and cohesion of the group and the distance already traveled together make more difficult the addition of new members at this stage. An exception would be if they are friends of some who are already in the group and are deeply Christian (more committed in this regard than the average person already in the group). In this sense the community "tightens its bonds". Also it is less likely that any who have already succeeded in arriving at this stage will withdraw. But there can be some who fail more often than others, due to character deficiencies or family problems or simply through negligence. There is an atmosphere of challenge and of optimism, as well as a greater understanding of the problems of others. For example, they begin to realize that not all feel the same demands on themselves, and that they can fulfill different roles in the community. So they are more tolerant toward one who is not more committed because as yet he is unable to be so.

- Now, anyone can act as "coordinator" or leader of the group, and not only a natural leader. Members all take turns in acting as leader. The coordinator conducts the meeting and if possible, the prayer. He announces or recalls efforts undertaken. Either he or another member represents the community in the different organisms, for example in the Federation.

- The relationship of the community to the assistant ceases to be one of dependence and is changed to one of inter-

dependence. Often the guide now comes to be regarded as "one more member of the group", although his role continues to be fundamental.

C. METHODOLOGY

In this stage, the work of the guide may appear to be easier. But in reality it is much more demanding, and requires more resources. A change of guide may even be necessary; in this case, such a change should be done as a "substitution", until the new guide is really accepted. Some of the methodological elements of the previous stage continue to be valid. Others lose the importance they had and are replaced by new tools :

1) Common Experiences

- Spiritual Exercises. In beginning this stage, it would be good to have with the community, as soon as possible, an experience of three days of the Exercises (with the assistant of the group, or another Exercises guide). (3) It is desirable that these be individually directed, especially if the group is not very numerous and are already university students. Starting from this experience, the community will periodically (once a year, more or less) experience the Ignatian Exercises.

- It continues to be helpful to have, besides the retreat, times devoted mainly to relaxation--outings, celebrations, sports... But they no longer are as central in shaping the history of the group. Now this function is fulfilled by those moments that reflect the interior life of the group: the time when they made a special commitment, a crisis, a penitential liturgy, the retreat, the entrance of new members, prayer, the times when they carry out an "apostolic mission". Now these are the "points" to which members make reference. The times of recreation will be rather times of exchanges, of rest, of relaxation in community.

2) Common Apostolic Activity

- In the pre-community each one likely had his own small commitment, and the community assumed besides some short-term commitments. Now it is fitting that the commun-

(3) When we speak of "Exercises" of less than 8 days, it is an adaptation of some of the Exercises of St. Ignatius.

ity take up some more stable common work, with an apostolic or social thrust. Examples would be catechetics, social work in a public housing project or asylum or hospital, activity in the social action division of a college or university, some service for the Federation (liturgy or news bulletin or acting as guide for younger groups), Scout activity, working with youth in a parish... We are thinking here particularly of communities in the final years of secondary school.

- Besides this, it helps to arrange a more intense experience of working together, during summer or winter vacations, times when activity can embrace more facets of a community's life. These might be volunteer work of some kind, teaching people to read and write, a rural mission previously worked out with the bishop... In any case what is important is that the community be learning to meet the Lord not only in its prayer and its interpersonal relations, but also in the accomplishment of its mission as a community of Christians: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD in all its dimensions by communicating to others the faith through words and deeds.

3) Personal Contact

The intensity of the group life now permits the guide to follow rather closely the situation of each one, especially through the revisions of life, which now are deeper and more personal. The challenges the assistant puts are directed above all to the community. But in any event, it continues to be advisable that from time to time he converses more personally with each one, giving support to those who at the moment may be having problems, helping them in their growth, or presenting them with new challenges. Thus he may challenge them with the need for daily personal prayer, spiritual reading, on occasion an individual retreat, greater social awareness, fidelity in their commitments and to the moral and social demands of Christianity. In particular, when there has been some failure, he can use the occasion to further their self-awareness and assist their growth. He continues too at the same time to be of assistance for their personal difficulties or problems they may have in the areas of maturity, character, family, vocation, etc. There will be need too to help them find the right balance between the various demands made on them by study, apostolate, affective life, etc., which often seem to them to be contradictory.

4) Meetings

To make the best use of the impetus and cohesion that the community enjoys at this period, meetings should be held every week. For this is the stage of greatest intensity (though not yet of greatest depth) in community relationships. As we noted earlier in the section on "characteristics", the assistant is no longer an "outsider" to the group, but rather appears, in the meetings, as one more member of the group. The meetings continue to be led by the coordinator or leader. At this point the main activities in the meetings will be :

- Revision of Life. These continue to be effective, but no longer occupy as central a spot as in the previous stage. This exercise has become deeper and will here be centered on the Gospel. What is reviewed here above all is the CHRISTIAN life of the persons, their commitments, their life of prayer, their deeper personal relationships. And all this, as a contribution to discerning the will of God concretely in their lives. The method of doing this exercise can now be different, thanks to the group's maturity and the climate of trust that prevails. For example, each one can set forth his problems, or what he has lived since the last revision, and the others help him to evaluate his life, in this way "objectifying" his revision.

- Topics for Sharing. These are now less necessary for the internal cohesion of the group, but are needed so that the group does not lose its contact with and "feel of" the outer world. It continues to be fitting to comment on a declaration of the bishops, some Federation document, social or international problems.... But now these topics are more often replaced by a commentary on the Gospel and shared prayer.

- Commentary on the Gospel. Depending on the maturity of the community, there should be either commentary done on individual passages of the Gospel, or "continuous reading" of a part of it. In the first instance, some Gospel text is chosen that fits the life of the community at the moment, or some need it has. All give their reflections on it and then, based on that text, a round of shared prayer. Something of this sort was done already in the pre-community.

If the community is mature and stable enough, it is more effective to maintain a "continuous reading" of a gos

pel. In principle one can use any book of the New Testament, but it is recommended to start with St. Mark because of the special advantages this presents. First, it is a Gospel, and so directly presents to us the person of Jesus Christ, his Message and his Life. And it is the simplest, shortest and oldest of the Gospels, the one on which the others are based. Its structure is progressive. It first presents to us Jesus of Nazareth as Man, raising a series of questions about his person, up till the "confession of Cesarea", in which it shows us Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then it shows us Christ surrounded by the Community of the Apostles, in a situation very similar to that of our community at the moment, and progressing in his understanding of his mission of salvation. He arrives at his Passion, Death and Resurrection, and sends out his disciples. The commentary on this Gospel (not more than one or two paragraphs in each meeting) can continue for a whole year. During that time it will be giving the community a gradually deepening awareness of "being Christian" and will tend to strengthen and solidify the personal faith-commitment of each one and his adhesion to Jesus Christ. After each such commentary--in which the role of the assistant in basic--it is good to have prayer on the same text(see "Prayer", below).

This kind of commentary demands considerable preparation from the assistant (knowledge of biblical exegesis, for example). The Federation will organize some means of preparing the guides who need it for this role. Recourse can also be had to theology courses in the Catholic university.

After St. Mark, the most natural is to continue on with the Acts of the Apostles : after Christ, his Church. Then, depending on the community in question, one can follow with the Letters of St. Paul, or one of the Prophets, or St. John.

- Prayer. Ideally the pre-community will have already begun shared prayer; but if so, this is in any case one of the signs that the pre-community is beginning to be a community. Shared prayer can take various forms, of which we will mention some. Perhaps most suitable for beginners is a spiritual commentary on a passage of the Gospel; this is prayer that has in it a large measure of reflection. In any event, it will be important to avoid fal-

ling into mere theory or into debate, lest it cease to be prayer. Prayer can also be stimulated by a reading of the Bible after which, in place of a commentary, each one expresses himself in the form of a prayer, which reflects his thanksgiving to the Father, his praise, his petitions. All this should be interspersed with moments of silence and of silent personal prayer. At other times a form of community prayer can be used in which only the guide speaks, simply citing words of Jesus about himself.

In these forms of prayer one can begin and end with songs, especially psalms or biblical chants, which can also be incorporated into the prayer itself. In such prayer, more important than anything else is the experience of the assistant (or of the one who guides the prayer, which can be the coordinator or any member of the community). Here a theoretical initiation will not do; it must be a sharing of lived experiences.

It is important that there be prayer in all the meetings. This so as to become aware of the work of the Spirit in ourselves, so that prayer continues to accompany our action, and so that we remember that however much we may do, it is of no worth if we do not do it in Christ.

In this stage, it is, besides, supposed that the members of the community frequently practice personal prayer. The assistant will suggest that they spontaneously commit themselves, when they feel ready, in accord with him or with their spiritual guide, to a daily period of personal prayer (15 or 30 minutes), or of spiritual reading, or of discerning their actions in the light of the Gospel.

- Liturgy and Sacramental Life. If it was not done in the previous stage, the community life ought now to begin to express itself in the liturgy. If the assistant is not a priest, the group can besides obtain a fixed chaplain, or it can have recourse to different priests. From time to time a Eucharist can be celebrated, especially at important moments for the community. There can be held sometime too, or periodically, a penitential liturgy, after one or two meetings in which there has been an exchange on the meaning of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Finally, when a commitment to the community has been made, or in connection with it, the community or some of its members can (if they have not yet done so) be CONFIRMED,

following a certain period of preparation. Confirmation can also coincide with some important common experience (a "mission" activity, a retreat). There are also para-liturgies which can be useful at certain times.

The communities of some areas have, too, the opportunity to take part in the Sunday mass of the communities in the Federation center.

To sum up, a typical meeting of this stage might be as follows. It begins with a commentary on the Gospel and with prayer. A revision of life of one or more of the members might follow, with time at the end for taking up some practical matters. In some meetings, in place of the revision of life a topic or a document will be discussed, or exchanges dealing with liturgical formation, or preparation for Confirmation will take place.

5) Commitment of the Community

The Exercises, the experience of prayer, becoming acquainted with Christ in the Gospel--these should be gradually leading toward a faith-commitment, which will in each community exhibit its own special features. It is fitting to give one meeting to "expressing" this commitment in a formula which interprets well its meaning for all the members. This can include specific elements, but there are certain common elements that should appear in the commitment of all communities: adherence to Christ, to his Church, the ideal of service, community life... On a certain date a mass can be held in which all formally express their commitment. Probably one or other member will prefer not to do it as yet. But here too, if this situation goes on for very long, such a person will begin to withdraw himself from the community, since the commitment is an expression of the common spirit or mystique.

D. CRISES

Now the danger of "narcissism"--that the community will become wrapped up in itself--is greater than ever. The guide must constantly insist on personal and community openness to persons and situations. The social or apostolic commitment--service directed "toward the outside"--is a help, but is not enough. An aid too will be activities done jointly with other communities (in the Federation) and with other movements in the Church.

There is also the danger of stagnation, since the community may come to feel complacent in seeing how it has advanced or in observing the breakup of other pre-communities. In such cases, the role of the guide becomes difficult, since the community is not receptive. It is the moment to declare a "state of crisis" in a meeting or at some special weekend. The more likely result will be that the community will become aware that it is stagnating, and will again begin to move. If not, if the community contents itself with its internal affective ties, making clear it does not intend to go forward, the response of the assistant can be to withdraw, asking the community not to go on calling itself a community since it has come to be simply a group of friends. The community that does not grow, ends by dying. But before taking a too hasty action, it would be good--as in the case of the unproductive fig tree in the Gospel--to give the community a last chance. This he could do by devoting himself specially to it for a certain period, making it see that there are many other communities that need a guide, or that have not been able to develop for lack of a guide. Probably the members will react favorably. If the assistant does decide to withdraw, it may be that after a time the community will ask that he return. If so, he will be able to impose certain demands as a condition of his acceptance.

Presumably, in this stage, the periods of crisis of the community will relate much less to problems of psychophysical and affective growth, and more to the basic options the participants are taking or to the intensity and the requirements of their Christian commitment.

In some communities, they will gradually arrive at the following stage--that of Christian Life Communities properly so called--almost without being aware of it, as a result of the experiences they go through together. In this case the assistant will only need to make explicit at an opportune moment the spiritual categories of Ignatian spirituality implicit in what they have been expressing by what they are living.

In other communities, the growth toward "CIC" will be much more of a conscious effort and an upward search. This will necessitate that the ecclesiastical assistant constantly recall for the community its desire to go on advancing more and more, and that he support it in its periods of fa

COMPARATIVE CHART: CHARACTERISTICS OF A COMMUNITY

<u>Community Characteristics</u>	<u>Pre-Community</u>
I. <u>Communication</u>	- Little mutual confidence - Sub-groups and polarities
II. <u>Formation</u>	- Differences in maturity, in formation, in religious experience, in spiritual concerns
III. <u>Commitment</u>	- Frequent changes of attitudes and degree of commitment - Searching
IV. <u>Mystique</u> (Common Outlook and Vision)	- Discrepancies in their opinions and options
V. <u>Identity</u>	- The community "is in process of coming to be"; people enter and leave with ease
VI. <u>Leadership</u>	- Leaders are "natural" or based on affectivity and have great influence
VII. <u>Role of Guide or Assistant</u>	- Community depends on the guide, with moments of counterdependence. - Guide helps in personal problems, in common search is often the *Center of the group.

* Center: main element in group cohesion

IN ITS THREE LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT

"Christian Community"

C.L.C.

- Great trust and friendship
(*Center of group life)
- All responsible for all
- Enthusiasm-spontaneity
- Homogeneity in formation
(shared interests and experiences)
- More stability in commitments
- Unity in adhesion to Jesus Christ and in search to conform their lives to Gospel
- A common mystique : the Christian faith, lived within the Church
- Cohesion : the community "becomes tighter", its members feel strongly identified with it
- Leadership is functional; anyone can be the "chair-person" or in charge
- Guide is "one more member" of community.
- Helps in Christian formation, prayer, knowledge of Scripture, doctrine, sense of Church
- Mature friendship
- True communication
(not now the key element)
- Maturity and formation are homogeneous, and continually deepening
- Moving from homogeneity to differentiation
- Personal group stability
- Stable areas of service
- Search for concrete will of God in lives, by spiritual discernment
- A common spirituality
* (Center of the group's life)
- The community "opens": the cohesion and identity now come from the spiritual experience more than the interpersonal "history"
- Rather than leaders, some are more advanced or committed. Usually one of these is the leader, but anyone could be
- Guide is properly guided. (His role now not so important in relationships.)
- Aids in spiritual formation and personal and community discernment.

tigue. If it continues on, - sooner or later--depending on the maturity of the community and the spiritual qualities of its members--it will come to be a Christian Life Community.

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II

IV - ORIGIN AND FINALITY OF CLC

A. BIRTH OF A CLC

Let us look at two ways in which a Christian Life Community originates :

1). A Youth Community :

A "Christian community" of youth may, at a given moment of its evolution, become a CLC. This will be the normal thing when the community was started with that goal, and has now passed through all the necessary steps of its evolution. This step to CLC may occur rather easily at a moment of "crisis", when the "Christian community", which has now been going on for a couple of years in that form, stops to reflect and pray so as to discern its future as a group. This discernment brings the members to the point of taking a decision, which will be one of the four concrete options that we present below :

* The community feels that it should not continue, perhaps because its members are now dispersing to different cities and activities, or entering new interpersonal relationships. Or they may feel that the community has now fulfilled its function, an educative role for rather mature Christians who now should insert themselves into other milieus (for example, live their Christian commitment in the parish to which each one belongs). They decide, therefore, to DISSOLVE, to disappear as a community.

* The common feeling is that they do not feel called to--or are not capable of--further growth as a community, nor do they feel called to respond to new demands or challenges. On the other hand, they are not inclined to give up the community atmosphere of faith that they have experienced up to now. They feel that the community will contin

ue to be for them a help, as a place for meeting each other, friendship, prayer and objectifying their Christian life and their commitments. They decide therefore to CONTINUE just as they are, as a CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, rejecting any further evolution in a specific spirituality. They will no longer have need, in the future, of an assistant or guide, since they have decided to remain where they are, nor will they retain much of a bond with the CLC Federation or with another spiritual movement. Such a community may in the end transform itself into a group of Christian friends. Or again, it may later on face a new crisis requiring it to discern again its future, for which it will need the help of a guide who has some experience in community discernment.

* All the members of the community decide to go a step further and to COMMIT THEMSELVES as a CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY properly so called. This supposes that their previous evolution has completed a series of requisites: all, or practically all, have made the Exercises of St. Ignatius, have been deepening their living of Ignatian spirituality, and now choose it as the expression of their Christian life. They have attained the stage that they set as their goal when the group began, and they show this by their CLC commitment (as yet tentative, rather than definite) and by closer ties with the Federation.

Perhaps one or two of the community members decide to leave, not feeling called to live the spirituality of St. Ignatius, or deciding not to make commitment as yet.

This path, in which all the members decide to take a further step, is an ideal situation, but does not happen very often. Due to its origin (a natural grouping of friends, classmates or neighbors), there are in it persons with different characteristics, different capacities for responding, different evolutions--different 'subjects', to use the language of St. Ignatius. Not all will be ready to take the same step at the same time.

* The last possibility regards a more likely situation: through a personal discernment, some feel themselves called to take the step to CLC, others no. Some even will not see clearly, and the community will need to help them to discern. It will be a sign of maturity that each one, before making a definite option, submits his case to the judgment of the community, which after some years of in-

tensive community living and of revision of life done together knows him well enough. The community decides to continue, but ON TWO LEVELS. One is a core group or small community, made up of those who pass on to CLC--and this nucleus already constitutes a CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY. The other is the larger group, made up of all the members, both those who have now taken the step toward a fuller commitment, and those who remain on the level of the commitment they had maintained as a 'CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY'. We might say that the old community has been transformed into a CLC made up of 'militants' or committed members, and 'sympathizers' or associates. Although this solution may be the most realistic, there will be great resistance to adopting this option and this arrangement. It will be a resistance to recognizing and accepting that not all are equal and that those who have for long years walked together now in a certain sense separate, since by expressing in a different way their Christian commitment there is established a difference between them. But this difference is not a 'segregation'. It is simply recognizing the fact that, within the one same community, some have progressed and others have progressed more, some have committed themselves and others have reached a further commitment. (One should avoid speaking of the 'committed' or the 'non-committed' members, since all are committed, though some more than others. Nor should people speak of 'the one community' and 'the other', since it has not separated in two. Rather, it continues to be one community, in which are distinguished a nucleus or core and a wider circle of the periphery). The most likely result will be that slowly, one after the other, all will come to take the step to CLC (if after a long period some member has not done so, he will end by withdrawing from the community as such, keeping only his ties of friendship), in such a way that all will again be at the same level. But in the meantime, the differentiation on two levels will clarify the situation, allowing some to advance more rapidly, without feeling themselves held back by the group, while allowing their former companions to continue to feel supported, and to be respected in the rhythm of their personal evolution.

2) A Community of Adults :

* Here, a first possibility is that some adults who have made the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, desire

to form a Christian Life Community. In this case they will inevitably during some months pass through the stage of a 'pre-community'.(4) Such a pre-community--presuming the option for a vital Christianity has already been made--will take on many of the characteristics of a 'Christian community': prayer, Eucharist, apostolate, etc. This step of pre community is indispensable as a period of opening up to community bonds (mutual trust, acquaintance with the others, first experiences together as 'constitutive' of the history of the group). It is needed too as an opportunity for the members to acquire a solid commitment to pastoral or social service for those who do not yet have this. It is the period also for establishing links with the CLC Federation, to which the group hopes to belong.

After a reasonable time (six months--a year), if the community experience has been satisfactory, with each one already exercising an apostolic commitment and all having a common history (acquired in the experience of pre-community) and a common mystique or outlook (stemming from the Exercises), the community can take the step to CLC directly, without passing through the stage of 'Christian community', which can be passed over at this time. The step to CLC can be made explicit by means of a 'commitment' (one at least of a temporary nature), pronounced by each of the members of the community in a Eucharist celebrated with other communities of the CLC Federation.

* The other possibility is that a pre-community or Christian community of adults which is interested in Ignatian spirituality (whatever might have been the origin of the group in question), prepares itself over a period so that its members may make a personal experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.(5) Once the majority

(4) See chapter II on Development of a Pre-Community. By modifying the things that are proper to adolescence, what is there said can be of great help for any pre-community.

(5) See Booklet No. 9, Comunidades de Adultos : Proceso de Formación, Ediciones Paulinas, Santiago de Chile, 1976. It presents a methodology for the formation of adult CLCs, with a program for this first stage of a group.

of its members have made the Exercises and have decided to grow in their Christianity by means of Ignatian spirituality, such a community would become then a CLC.

B. AIMS

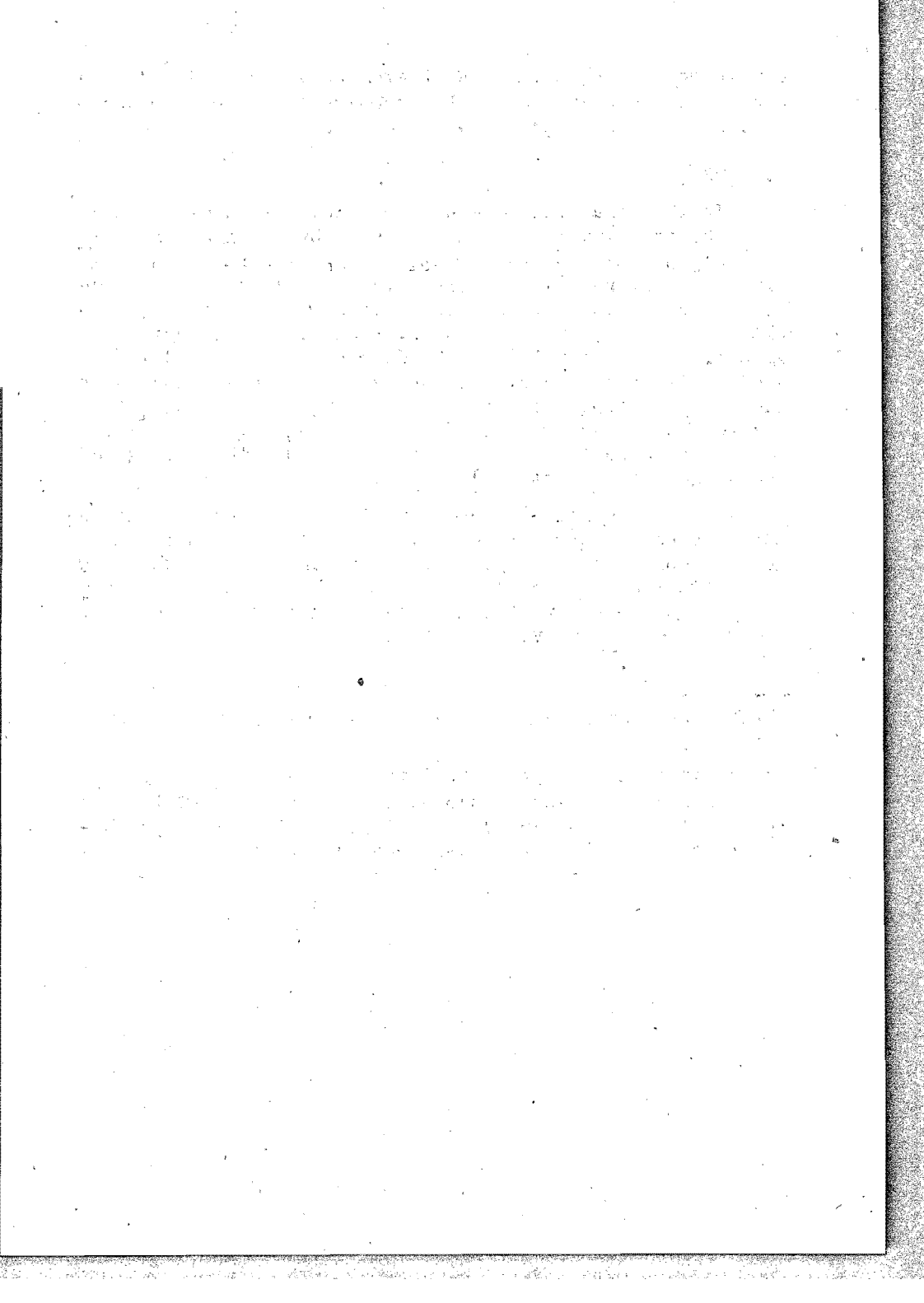
In Christian Life Communities, what is involved is to live Christianity in a community way, by means of the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola. (6) In other words, to live out that path of the Christian Life which is Ignatian spirituality, in fraternal communities of Christians, adults and youth, men and women; committed, in spiritual growth, to the service of the Church and the World in any area of life; responding to the challenge presented us by the human disciplines for the building of a better world, and to the unceasing challenge of God's love, which calls each one to collaborate in bringing about the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. (7)

This presumes that each community assembles persons in some way homogeneous, who organize themselves to suit their needs, around a common mystique or vision (dealt with below under "Characteristics") and through the acceptance of common means (see below, "Methodology") that help them achieve their common objective.

(6) Ignatian spirituality is treated further on in this booklet.

(7) GENERAL PRINCIPLES of CLC(GP), 3. The General Principles were approved by the World Assembly of CLC in 1967 and then confirmed by Paul VI. The definitive approbation of the Holy See was given May 31, 1971

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V - CHARACTERISTICS OF CLC

Having gone through the stages of 'pre-community' and 'Christian community', the CLC now certainly has a common history, is committed together in various services, and has acquired a common vision. It is a community of life, of action, of faith. (8)

The history, an expression of what the community has lived, will be something proper to each community.

The work is common, not necessarily because all are offering the same service, but because the service of each one is a projection of the whole community toward the outside. This is true because the work of all is reviewed, evaluated and supported by the others, and because all feel they are united with the service of the others. It is one service of the whole community, expressed and concretized by its different members in different situations.

The common vision now is Ignatian spirituality, seen as a way of Christian life. This is the main characteristic of a CLC. So we will consider it more at length, after first having seen other community characteristics that allow us to make a comparison with the preceding stages.

A. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS OF A CLC

1) The group has attained a mature friendship and a deep level of mutual confidence. This makes possible real COMMUNICATION without it being necessary to see each other constantly (aside from meetings). The solidarity has become stronger, since now it depends not only on the interpersonal relationships, but on the common commitment to the same spirituality.

2) The religious maturity has reached a certain homogeneity, thanks to the common FORMATION and the experiences of the earlier stages. But the identity of concerns and of ex

pressions begins to be reflected in an enriching differentiation of interests, formation (for example, professional, theological, etc.) and apostolic service, according to the capacities of each. This has as a result that the competences and commitments of each community member complement those of other members.

3) A strong personal and community stability has been attained. There are definitive COMMITMENTS (marriage, professional orientation...) and stable apostolic services. These last, however--just like prayer and other spiritual dimensions such as sacramental practice, study of doctrine, socio-political commitments, practice of the evangelical counsels--are continually submitted to discernment, to a permanent search for the Will of God in the concrete lives of each one.

4) The common spirituality--rooted in the religious experience of the Exercises of St. Ignatius--has come to be the central reference point, the keystone or MYSTIQUE of the community. This allows a profound unity, which ought to be enriched by a sane pluralism in secondary matters (differences or diverse options in the political, economic, scientific, cultural domains, etc.).

5) The community, up to now strongly conditioned by its common history, 'opens up' again, having reached a clear spiritual IDENTITY. It becomes again relatively easy to admit new members, on condition that they too are living Ignatian spirituality, and that regard is had for a minimum of homogeneity in their culture, age and lived experiences. For the same reason, the bond with other groups and persons who have chosen this same path of CLC becomes now much deeper and even necessary. To guarantee the authenticity of its experience, the Christian-Life Community should incorporate itself into the national or regional CLC federation, if it has not yet done so.

6) Now there are no longer "leaders" of the community in the proper sense, and any member might be the chairperson or one in charge. Normally, however, it will be one of those who is more committed in the CLC Federation, or one who is 'more solidly spiritual'.

(8) See Booklet No. 6, Dimensiones Comunitarias, by E. Mercieca, S.J. pp.7-14, Ediciones Paulinas, Santiago de Chile.

7) THE ASSISTANT or guide is now truly an assistant. He (or she) does not now play an important role because of his personal relationship with the members of the community, nor because of his insertion in the history of the group, but rather because of his role of spiritual teacher or master. This may be because he has had longer experience in traveling the road of Ignatian spirituality. Or it may be because he has a fuller and deeper knowledge of that spirituality (but in no case, a merely intellectual one). As a result, changing the person of the assistant or guide would at this point be easier, and in some cases even advisable. At the same time it is now more important that the guide be either a member of the Society of Jesus, or another priest or brother or sister or lay person who has oriented his or her life on the basis of the Exercises of St. Ignatius.

B. SPIRITUALITY CHARACTERISTIC OF CLC

The vocation of every Christian is to live the Gospel. This, in its fullness, is always being discovered by the Church which, as it makes its pilgrim way thru History, continually enriches its understanding and living of the Gospel. Each spirituality brings new riches to the total Christian life of the Church from the moment that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a Christian or a group of Christians begin to formulate it and to live it.

A spirituality is an approach to the Gospel from a specific point of view: it is a way of living the Gospel, in which nothing essential may be omitted, but in which certain characteristics may be accented more than others. A spirituality is ONE way (not the only way) to understand and live the total Gospel (without exhausting its possibilities). Basically, every Christian has his own spirituality, since no one can prescind from a specific point of view in approaching the Gospel. All in one way or other accent or give priority to, some aspects more than others, although for many this spirituality is not consciously made explicit, or may be a 'spirituality' that is primitive and incomplete.

The primary function of a spirituality is to bring me close to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, make me discover it and afford me a concrete way of LIVING IT TODAY. Since the Gospel is infinitely rich in possibilities, there are

numerous spiritualities in the Church. Each of these furnishes dimensions that are complementary in their arrangement of the whole Gospel, giving as they do priority to certain elements in such a way that, taken together, they reflect it in its totality. What all spiritualities have in common, what unites them--faith in Jesus Christ and in his Gospel--is far more important than the nuances that differentiate them. The choice of a specific spirituality is basically determined by the history and the PERSONAL VOCATION of each one. It makes possible an organic spiritual growth by fostering the incarnating of the Gospel in one's own life. The Christian Life Communities are open to and receive those who have opted for Ignatian spirituality.

The spirituality of CLC is inspired by the spiritual experience of Ignatius of Loyola and his community of 'friends in the Lord' or 'companions of Jesus'. In other words, by the personal experience of the SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS.

From this lived experience of conversion and of intimacy with the Lord, of encounter with the saving design that He has for each one in particular, arises the possibility of a continuing spiritual growth, evangelical and human. This is why Paul VI says,

Yes, we encourage you with all our heart to keep on with what is, in our eyes, a top-priority goal in the Church of today: the forming of solid Christian personalities, who integrate the fullness of their human life and their varied responsibilities with a CONTINUALLY DEEPENING SPIRITUAL LIFE. The means you see to do this seem so simple, sure and effective, like the SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS, FROM WHICH YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION....(9)

The Ignatian Exercises aim at the encounter of a mature, free and responsible Christian with the mystery of the liberating Love of God : the Triune God, who communicates himself to us in the eternal salvific plan of the Father, in the Incarnation and Resurrection of the Son, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church. For this

(9) Discourse of January 15, 1972 to the Executive Council of the World Federation of CLC.

reason, Ignatian spirituality has as sources : Revelation (Holy Scripture and the doctrinal development of the Church), and the Liturgy (participation in the mysteries of salvation). This, by means of personal and community spiritual experiences, such as reflection, prayer, discernment and spiritual guidance, which make it possible for us to recognize and receive the revelation of God's concrete will in the events and the needs of our times. (10)

Ignatian spirituality stems from the Exercises as a fundamental salvation experience. It is an experience that needs to continue to be lived and deepened daily, within the framework of ecclesial living.

The spirituality of CLC is basically a mystique of SERVICE. He who has lived through the experience of the Exercises understands that now his life must be transformed into a SERVICE OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH OUT OF PURE LOVE (see Spir. Exercises 370: Rule 18 of the "Guidelines for a Sense of the Church"). According to Father de Guibert, S.J., this is the 'substance of Ignatian spirituality'. According to Father Hugo Rahner, S.J., in the Society of Jesus for religious, and in CLC for lay persons, 'all is subject to change, except the rigorous clarity of the readiness to be of SERVICE'.

Let us try now to systematize the essential characteristics of this approach or mystique of action, very aware as we do so that any systematic description of a spiritual experience impoverishes it., aware too that the various elements of a spirituality can be arranged in different ways. We should keep in mind that the various elements, rather than being subordinate one to another, mutually imply each other, since all make explicit one central and coherent intuition. There will inevitably, as a result, be some repetitions. Keeping this in mind, let us look at the principal marks of our spirituality : (11)

(10) See GP 4 : "Sources of our Spirituality".

(11) The content of this section can help assistants (guides) to present Ignatian spirituality already in the preparatory stages of a CLC. In a CLC properly so called, this should be complemented by more detailed presentations.

1) Christocentric Spirituality

The member of a CLC should have his life centered on Jesus Christ. This implies :

* Personal Following of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth who died and rose, the Christ, the Son of God at the service of the total liberation of man, invites us in the Exercises to follow him personally : 'Whoever wishes to come WITH ME in this enterprise, must be willing to labor WITH ME, that by FOLLOWING ME in suffering, he may FOLLOW ME too in glory' (Spir. Exercises 95: call of the King). And Jesus Christ reveals himself to us 'as he who SERVES' : "I have not come to be served but to SERVE". He is the servant par excellence, the 'Servant of Yahweh'. To follow Jesus Christ means to share his lot, to be treated as He was treated. He who, out of love, wishes to imitate Jesus Christ, no longer asks himself whether or not he is obliged to do something, nor even precisely whether what he does is good or bad. He only wants to share the lot of Christ, the LIBERATING SERVICE, to its final consequences, desiring to follow him too in the mystery of his death and resurrection, accompanying him in his wondrous mission of the salvation and sanctification of the world. His love for Jesus Christ goes so far that, in concrete situations in which he would have the freedom of choice, he would be inclined always to choose that involving the greatest abnegation, so as to be more like to his Lord. It is a vital decision for Jesus Christ, a PERSO
NAL FOLLOWING, that determines all the specific choices of his life. St. Ignatius, in the Exercises, invites us to seek an 'interior knowledge of the Lord, who for me has be come man, that I may love him more and follow him more closely', and to ask ourselves, 'What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What am I going to do for Christ'?

The member of a CLC wants to be a servant of Christ, but even more wants to be a servant WITH CHRIST, a 'companion' of Jesus'.

* Trinitarian Dimension : Love, Incarnation and Mission. In identifying himself with Christ, the exercitant unites himself profoundly with the Trinity that saves us, the Trinity that says, 'Let us work the redemption of the human race' (Spir. Exercises 107), then 'look down upon the whole expanse or circuit of all the earth, filled with

human beings..., decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become man to save the human race' (Spir. Exercises 102, contemplation of the Incarnation). With a boundless gratitude, the retreatant experiences with Jesus that the Father loves him and is pleased with him, and gives him the gift of the Spirit to send him on a liberating mission. He knows that this is done in order to seek and to love and to serve God and that all creation has been made in order to help him attain this end (see Spir. Exercises 23, Principle and Foundation). He knows that he, with Christ, must help his brothers and sisters to attain this same end, and that his whole life can be a 'contemplation to gain Love' (Spir. Exercises 230). In discovering the meaning of the Incarnation of the Son of God, he discovers the Son as SENT to THE HEART OF THE WORLD to transform it into the Kingdom of the Father. He discovers the Spirit as the Spirit of the Mission. He discovers himself, with Christ, as SENT, as an apostle of a Father who loves him.

* Marian Dimension. The CLC member lifts his eyes toward Mary as the prototype of Christian Life. She defined herself as: 'behold the SERVANT of the Lord'. Mary, mother of Jesus, mother of the Incarnation, mother of the Church, is our model of 'disponibility', of being ready and available, in the interior life, in the community, and in cooperation in the work of the Saviour. Mary reminds us that our mission comes from above, and must be born of the 'yes' that springs from the most intimate core of our personality. She reminds us that the Spirit must take flesh, must take on concrete shape in the world of space and time. She reminds us that true service is that which hides itself in the cause it serves. For though she was the center of the Pentecost community, she did not assume prerogatives for herself before the apostles, but inserted herself quietly and unpretentiously in the daily life of her people. She reminds us that true service is that of FAITHFULNESS to the end, that of the Cross, that of the pierced heart.

'Since the spirituality of our groups is centered on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ... This inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary... We venerate the Mother of God in a special manner and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation' (GP 8).

2) A Spirituality Ecclesial and Eucharistic

If the following of Christ does not take place within the bosom of the people of God, it would not be faithful to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, whose presence is prolonged in the world by his Spouse, the Church, with the Eucharist as its source. Ignatian spirituality puts special stress on the ecclesial dimension. A CLC must be within the heart of the Church, not on its fringes or its periphery. Its members must understand that they are WITHIN the Church militant. This implies :

* Fidelity to the Visible Church. At the end of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius places some 'Rules to Foster the True Attitude of Mind We Ought to Have in the Church Militant'. However, it is not only these rules but the whole of the Spiritual Exercises that are made for developing a 'sense of the Church'. The service of Jesus Christ expresses itself by service of the concrete Church his Spouse, of which CLCs are an active part. The CLC member places himself at the disposition of the hierarchical Church, which will concretize his mission. His service is not that of a 'freelancer'. It is a collaboration in solidarity with the shepherds, a proclaiming of the Gospel 'from within' (see GP 5). It is the love for Christ incarnate, for his humanity and for his earthly life, that leads St. Ignatius and those who follow his spirituality to an unconditioned love of the Church, of the bishops, of the pope. It is the humility of a creature who accepts even the very limitations of the realities that God has established for the salvation of the world. It is a love that is concrete, based on humility, the obedience of sons and daughters, and a spirit of service.

* Sacramental Dimension. CLCs wish to be communities of the Church. And the heart of every ecclesial community is the Eucharist. It is in the sacramental celebrating of the Paschal Mystery of Christ that a community becomes truly a community in the Lord. CLC members have a high regard for liturgical celebrations, since the liturgy is the center of the Church's life. Faithful to the principle of the Incarnation, they exercise an active sacramental life, because in the sacraments is incarnated the saving grace of Jesus Christ, the grace that will nourish Christian living (see GP 4 and 6). In Baptism and Confirmation they have been consecrated for the Christian life and the apostolate. By Matrimony they consecrate their family life. By

Anointing of the Sick they prepare for the definitive consecration of their life to the Lord. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) they are rejoined to the life of the Church--if they have been separated from it by sin--and receive new strength for undertaking again the Christian life. And above all, in the Eucharist they give thanks to God for their vocation to the Church and to the Christian Life Communities, celebrate as a community their faith, and unite themselves intimately with the Lord Jesus.

* Community Dimension. It is hardly necessary to say that a spirituality of communion with Christ and his Church, such as is Ignatian spirituality, is lived IN COMMUNITY. For "Every authentically human life is essentially a communal life. Every Christian life is--with much more reason--a communal life. Because CHRISTIAN LIFE means communion with Christ, which is life in communion with the Father in the Spirit and communion with all humanity in the same Spirit" (L. Paulussen, S.J., formerly ecclesiastical assistant of World CLC Federation, in his commentary on the General Principles). Already Ignatius Loyola and his first companions, students at the University of Paris, expressed their spiritual experience in the formation of a community of 'friends in the Lord'. which could be considered in a certain sense as the first CLC. The personal gift of self finds its expression in the commitment to a particular community, freely chosen. Each of the Christian Life Communities is a community in the Lord, a cell of his Mystical Body, whose vocation has been recognized by the Church, and whose members are united among themselves by their common ideals and by their commitment in action and in love. It is a living cell, that feels itself responsible not only for itself, but for the whole CLC movement, for the ecclesial communities (parishes, dioceses...) of which its members form part, for the whole Church, and for the whole human community in its searchings, for love of which the Son of God became man (see GP 6).

3) A Spirituality of Discernment, of the Absolute

The Spiritual Exercises aim at an encounter between the freedom of the individual person and the freedom of God who calls him, remove the barriers to such an encounter, and ready one for a constant search of the concrete will of God in each moment of life. Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of discernment. This implies :

* A Growing "Disponibility". The spirituality of St. Ignatius--according to Karl Rahner--is a "transcendental" rather than a "categorical" spirituality. That is, in its following and service of Christ it constantly transcends and goes beyond all the specific forms of commitment, not clinging to formulas or concrete modes, but only to the Will of God that is constantly calling us to grow. This supposes as a primary spiritual attitude a growing "disponibility" or availability to the Lord's call. It is what St. Ignatius calls "indifference" (see Spir. Exercises 23, 157, 170, 179). In other words, an extremely vivid sense of the relativity of all that is not God himself. This applies even to certain religious structures. All that is not God is provisional. That is the reason why in this booklet we have presented crises always as opportunities. They are opportunities to divest oneself of something that is transitory and to welcome the new challenge to which God's love invites us. This "indifference" cannot be relativism nor coldness nor stoic apathy. Ignatian indifference must be LOVE. It is as the Love one finds in the look that Jesus casts on the little things of life, as the Love that unceasingly streams from his pierced heart, a Love that, in directing itself to a specific object, opens itself to that "All" which is the Creator.

* A Search for the Will of God. From the foregoing it is clear that one living the Ignatian spirit must be continually discerning the call of God in the world today. He must be continually, at each moment, choosing what will be a greater service in love, a greater realization of his personal Christian vocation. Therefore a CLC will basically be a COMMUNITY OF DISCERNMENT. It will help each member to withdraw from egoistic attitudes that enslaves him, to confront crises, to go on each day discovering, along with the others--listening to them and letting himself be challenged by them--what it means to travel in the footsteps of Christ.

On the other hand, the support of the community in discernment does not dispense one from--on the contrary it demands--a constant personal search in union with God, by means of personal PRAYER, meditation of the Word of God and of the doctrine of the Church. The Spirit asks of us without ceasing an openness of heart before a God always greater than all that up to now we have known from exper-

ience. He asks of us an openness in the face of particular situations that are ever new, with the as-yet-hidden call they contain. This constant personal search allows one to see every new reality, not as riches to appropriate for ourselves but as a possibility of service, as a RESPONSIBILITY that one cannot evade. In this is rooted the originality of St. Ignatius: in his acute sense of the responsibility and the value of the person, who knows that he is the object of a call and of a direct will on the part of God.

* An Unshakeable Confidence. Ignatian spirituality, with disponibility, existential responsibility and a continuing search for the will of God through discernment as its presuppositions, translates itself in an active perseverance in service, even in the most difficult moments. For, knowing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God", the One whom we seek, serve and praise, everything else can darken or fall to pieces without for that reason causing us to flag in the following of Christ. We saw already that eruption of something new, rather than constituting a threat, is precisely an opportunity to meet again the will of God. Ignatian indifference has been called "the passionless passion". This because it signifies a passionate love that never despairs, but is always ready to begin again, in the burning conviction that one is loved by Someone. It is the hope against all hope of one who, with eyes fixed on the silent and unshakeable faithfulness of Mary, puts all his trust in Him who has promised us the victory.

4) Spirituality of the Concrete: Freedom for Service

Precisely because Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of discernment, of a constant seeking for the Absolute and for the Glory of God, it is also a spirituality that allows and demands a great freedom in seeking a service always more concrete and more realistic for the benefit of people. God himself has, by his incarnation, willed that his glory be rooted in the life of man. And Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of the Incarnation. This implies :

* The More. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ causes to blossom the best man is capable of. God assumes human nature in order to lift it up, for he wills the full unfolding of man. So St. Ignatius is not satisfied with medi

ocre service. Rather, he wants us to know Jesus MORE, so that, "knowing him MORE, I may love and serve him MORE". It was Father Hurtado (12), who made the comment that our spirituality does not necessarily demand brilliant persons, but rather ordinary persons fully put to use. One of the most typical expression of St. Ignatius is: "...for the GREATER glory of God and the GREATER good of men".

Discernment will be just the tool that will help us to find "the GREATER service", "the MORE universal good", "the GREATER need" of the Church. Love for Jesus Christ is, for one who lives Ignatian spirituality, so absolute that it converts itself into a dynamic experience that seeks more and more. Jesus invites us "to conquer the whole world". And, with a view to achieving this apostolic end, he calls us too to a full and harmonious development of all our human powers and capacities and to a search for the most effective means. This stress on "the more" implies continual options--which involve a real asceticism--since the possibilities and demands of service by Love are almost infinite.

* A "Common" Life. St. Ignatius wishes that the life of "companions of Jesus" be a "common" or ordinary life. This means that his spirituality does not imply a "separation from the world" involving special customs and penances (and for some commentators, this would be one of the most novel contributions of Ignatius when compared with medieval spiritualities). Rather it should be the ordinary, current life of Christians: the CHRISTIAN LIFE. But a Christian life that really tries to incarnate in the world of today the values of the Gospel. And this by means of discernment and the search for the most faithful carrying out of the will of the Lord. This is true precisely because it is a matter of trying to imitate the life of Jesus himself--and that of the first Christians--which was in distinguishable from the life of people of their time except in its filial obedience to the Father who sends him to bring salvation. This gospel way of living certainly poses its demands: frugality or simplicity, openness to the

(12) Chilean Jesuit who died in 1952 and whose cause for beatification was introduced in 1972. He was especially outstanding in guiding lay movements and in the social apostolate.

community by a universal love, renouncing the quest for power, identification with the life of the great majority of people (who are, for us, the dispossessed of the world today). The search for a true gospel poverty does not imply a disdain for the good things of life nor a disdain for efficacious means, but their subordination to the one Absolute. Thus Gospel living and gospel preaching (the greater apostolic service) condition and imply each other.

* Contemplation in Action. Tradition distinguishes between active and contemplative spiritualities. St. Ignatius managed to arrive at an original synthesis of contemplation and action: in a service done out of love, prayer should lead to action and action to prayer, in such a way that each is continually making itself present. St. Ignatius insists at the same time on union with God and openness to his grace, and on the other hand to union with men and the utilizing of effective means to achieve this. He asks us at one and the same time to trust in God as if nothing depended on us, and in ourselves as if no help were to be hoped for from God. For a person who deeply lives Ignatian spirituality, action itself should be carried on in prayer, so that one comes to be, according to the traditional expression, "contemplative in action"; or, if one prefers, "united to God in action". Let us repeat: Ignatian spirituality takes the Incarnation seriously.

To sum up; then, we can say that Ignatian spirituality aims at:

SERVING, WITH CHRIST,
IN THE CHURCH,
FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD,
AND FOR THE GOOD OF MEN.

C. WAY OF LIFE CHARACTERISTIC OF CLC

If we have said that Ignatian spirituality is lived by an "ordinary life", we stressed too that this "ordinary life" has characteristics based on the demands of the Gospel as lived in the tradition of Ignatian spirituality. Therefore that spirituality is translated into a "life-style" that is proper to Christian Life Communities. In other words, it is the concrete way of putting Ignatian spirituality into practice in daily life. Although each Christian Life Community has the freedom (GP 12) to seek out its own

concrete forms(if it did not do this, it would not be practicing discernment), we will present some elements common to this way of life.

1) Incorporation

Ignatian spirituality cannot be lived superficially. Nor can one take only some aspects of it, isolated from the rest. According to Karl Rahner, S.J., nothing is more dangerous in a spirituality than to take one specific element separately, in its "chemically pure" state. The essential elements of Ignatian spirituality, taken separately, could degenerate into a rationalism that would be glacial, sceptical, relativistic, inhumanly functional. It is indispensable that they be lived INTEGRATED INTO A LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST.

For this, a spiritual apprenticeship, personal and communitarian, is absolutely necessary. When it is a Christian community "with a history" that is incorporated into CLC, it is presumed that this apprenticeship, the gradual deepening of Ignatian spirituality, has already been accomplished in the steps of pre-community and of Christian community; and very specially, that there has been a personal experience of the Exercise of St. Ignatius by each one of the members. When it is question of an individual person who is incorporated into an already existing CLC, he should, in order to verify his vocation to Ignatian spirituality, undergo a period of more or less two years (in the course of which he ought to make the Spiritual Exercises) before making his initial CLC commitment. For a member of a community to be considered as fully integrated into the CLC, he must besides have received Confirmation, be involved in a stable way in some apostolic or social service, have taken part for at least two more years in a specific community, and have undergone a serious experience of the individually-guided Exercises.

The public incorporation into CLC does not mean that "now one has arrived", or that he has completed his initiation into the spiritual life. Growth and deepening in the Christian Life is a lifetime affair.

2) Spiritual Life

One who forms part of a CLC needs to lead an intense spiritual life. Paul VI reminds us of the minimal requirements for members of CLC : personal and community prayer,

meditation on Scripture and Catholic doctrine, searching to discern the will of God in events with the help of spiritual guidance and community dialogue, an organic bond with the ecclesiastical assistants, frequent participation in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and the continuing inspiration of Mary, our example of disponibility (13).

The General Principles insist that the spirituality of CLC commits its members "with the help of the group, to strive for a continual development which is spiritual, apostolic and human. In practice this involves: frequent and even daily participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, an intense sacramental life, daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture, discernment by means of a daily review of one's life(14) and regular spiritual direction, an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality, a love for the Mother of God" (GP 11).

3) Community Life

While informal contacts in ordinary life are not now as important as in the earlier stages (when the history of the group was being built up), still faithfulness in attendance at meetings and other common activities are indispensable, along with a profound readiness to share the life of the community. A CLC includes the element of friendship, above all as a gift of the Lord, one that springs more from the communion in Christ of those who share the same call of the Lord to them--than from mere human affinities. A CLC member allows himself to be educated by the community, realizing that openness to the community is vitally linked with his vocation, and is very necessary to free him from egoism and from a deceitful self-sufficiency. He understands too that the progress of the community depends as much on his participation as on that of the others(GP 11), and that if he fails often to take part, he will inevitably fail to go on belonging to the CLC(GP 15).

(13) Discourse of January 12, 1972.

(14) This is the Ignatian examen of conscience. See Guía 9, where a method is given of doing this personal daily evaluation. Ediciones Paulinas, Santiago de Chile.

Each community, though closely bound to the Federation, is free to determine its norms for admission, its leaders and representatives, its program of formation, its apostolate and the content of its meetings (GP 12). This, of course, within the overall guidelines that may be set by the World CLC Federation (15) and the National Federations which form part of it.

4) Insertion in the World

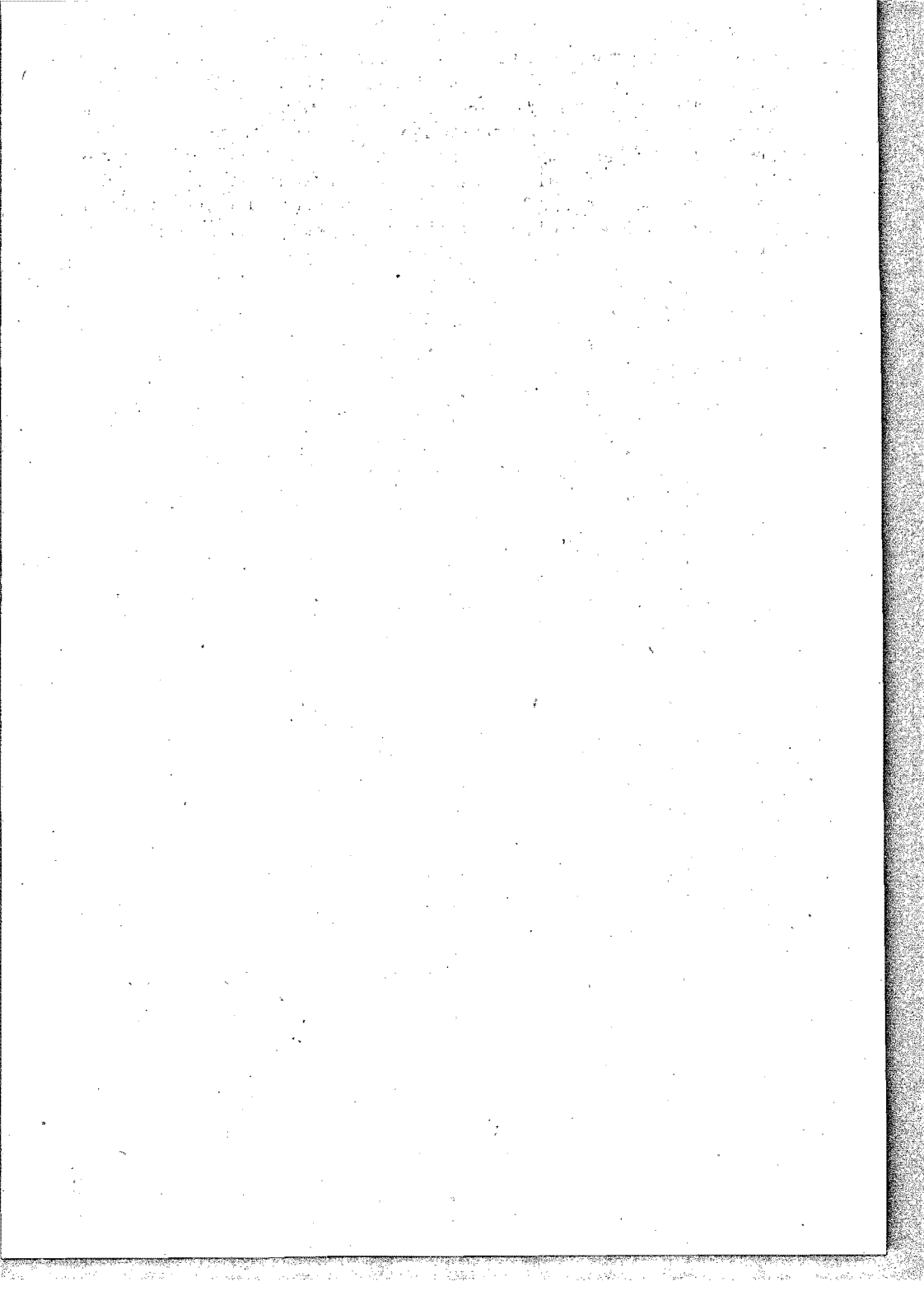
The CLC member, in order to be truly a spiritual and communitarian person, must be profoundly rooted in the world. To fulfill his mission as a baptized person he must be not only at the heart of the Church but also at the heart of the world, since it is to the world that the Church, in its saving mission, is sent. To remain on the fringes of the world, as a mere spectator, would be as serious as to abandon the Spouse of Christ. For it would be a betrayal of the Incarnation and of the apostolate, it would be to fail to follow Christ, "who for us became man". The CLC way of life demands that each one be apostolically committed--as one sent by Christ and by his Church--in renewing the structures of society, striving to develop their human qualities and professional skills so as to become ever more competent and convincing in their apostolic witness (GP 11).

The Exercises of St. Ignatius propose for us a type of person who is poor in a gospel sense, patient, capable of submitting to humiliation in order to be inserted into the collective action of the People of God; capable of helping persons to discern at each moment their hopes, enthusiasms, fears, discouragements, desires, apathies, what consoles them and what saddens them and why; capable of helping his brothers and sisters to discern how to be ready for whatever the consequences may be. The CLC way of life "requires of each member simplicity in all aspects of living in order to follow more closely Christ in his poverty and to preserve interior liberty in the midst of the world" (GP 11). The aim is "freedom for service". "As members of the People of God, we have received the mission to be by our words and actions witnesses to Christ before men.

(15) See Statutes of the World CLC Federation, Articles 1, 2, 4, 11.

We are aware that we must consecrate ourselves first of all to the renewal and sanctification of the temporal order... The group teaches us to discern what is most urgent and universal; it prods us to work for the reform of the structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims of all forms of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor within the Church..to establish justice and peace among all men." (GP 7).

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VI - METHODOLOGY IN CLC

A. COMMON EXPERIENCES

Since the identity of the Christian Life Community now rests not so much on friendship--although this is supposed--as on a common search to live the gospel ideal by means of Ignatian Spirituality, common experiences (projects, outings, seminars...) are now less necessary. On the other hand, participation in common experiences with members of other CLCs is becoming continually easier, now that understanding is facilitated by their sharing in the same spirituality. These inter-community links (study or work groups, formation days,...) are developing the sense of "the larger community", the movement that goes beyond individual communities.

The basic experience together now--without excluding other possibilities--will often be the annual community retreat. Apart from these retreats together, each one, in line with his concerns and needs--can also make the individually-guided Exercises, making use of the opportunities for this (from a week up to a month, or again the Exercises in daily life) suggested or organized by the Federation.

B. APOSTOLIC SERVICE

Apostolic commitments at this point will be generally individual ones, although in many cases members will be collaborating in them with other community members or with some from other CLCs. Always, however, the work will be encouraged by, and have the backing of, the whole community. In any case, it continues to be useful for the community as such every now and then to carry out some pastoral or social service together. This might be rural or urban missions (taking part, for example, in a general mission with other communities of the Church), organizing some formation day or work camp. Again, such efforts might include a campaign to teach reading and writing to illiterates, a health project, organizing a cooperative, legal as

sistance to the poor, etc. In such efforts, the professional competences of different members should be made use of.

In any case, the ordinary type of apostolic activity by members will be that undertaken by each one--or by couples--according to the situation and talents of each one. This might be something directly pastoral or an activity aimed at incarnating the Gospel in the family, professional, scientific, political or cultural fields. In all cases its goal will be the transformation and sanctification of the world, the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, the liberating redemption of all the earth.

As time goes on, the ecclesial assistant or guide will find himself less and less competent in the various professional areas that members may be involved in, when compared with some among the community. His role, then, comes to limit itself to what is more specific to him: aid in discerning the greater service, and spiritual support or encouragement in moments of crisis or in times of slackness in service. In the same way, the entire community contributes to evaluating the work of each one. This prevents the work of each from becoming dehumanized through overspecialization. It makes it possible too for the service given by different persons to be complementary, so that one may even speak of a COMMON SERVICE, although expressed in different and complementary ways.

C. SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

In the earlier stages, the guide maintained personal contact with, and "followed up on" the different community members. Now this is replaced, in CLC, by spiritual direction. For this reason it is desirable that the assistant be at this time a priest, or another person with experience in discernment and in matters of conscience: a spiritual "master." All the members of a CLC will normally have a spiritual guide, but this need not be the assistant of the community. The spiritual guide helps each one to grow spiritually through discernment, the constant search for the will of God by means of daily prayer, the sacramental life, and other needs ascetical or human; and the community too collaborates in this. If the spiritual guide is the ecclesial assistant, growth will usually be easier because the assistant will hear too what the community has to say to each one, and so he will be better aware of the actual situation and progress of each of the members.

When a change of ecclesiastical assistant is necessary--because the present one is transferred to another locality, or because he judges that he has now given all that he can to the community, and that it would be enriched by the presence of a new assistant--the community makes known its desire for a new assistant to the Federation, and chooses from among those proposed. Thus such a decision should be arrived at by common agreement, since the group's guide(ecclesial assistant), who is generally a priest, takes part in some sense in the life of the group and assures in it the authenticity of those elements that touch on the teaching authority or the pastoral guidelines of the Church (GP 21; see also 13).

The basic concern of the assistant at this point is the formation of each of the members in the spiritual life. This is accomplished both through the Exercises and spiritual guidance, and through the study and use of spirituality and the evaluation of spiritual experiences in the meetings.

D. MEETINGS

Given the maturity of the group, and that the interpersonal relations between members are now deeper, it is not essential that the contact be as intense or continuous as earlier. So the meetings could be spaced a little further apart. Also it is now more understandable that at meetings one or other member may be absent, due to the various commitments(family, work,...) of adult life. But, all in all, the ideal continues to be the weekly meeting in which all take part. The main activities in these meetings at this time are :

1) Revision of Life : Since each of the community members reviews each day his life(by means of the Ignatian "examen"), the community revision of life now takes on a different function(an added reason for this is that the vital needs of community members have changed: they have ceased to be adolescents who are discovering themselves, and for whom the opinion that others have of them is so important.) Although this can be done in different ways(16), we suggest the following as typical: Once every month or every two

(16) See Guía, Dimensiones Comunitarias, Ediciones Paulinas, Santiago de Chile.

months, each of the members shares with the others in the meeting what he has lived since the last time, particularly with regard to his apostolic commitment, his spiritual life, or some important problem that he is attempting to discern. After each one has spoken, the others in "round table" fashion each give feedback or make some personal contribution. If some problems arises that calls for a community discernment, the group can dedicate a part of each meeting over several sessions until it is resolved. It will be helpful too, about once amouth, to review some concrete aspect of the Christian life of the community : how each has lived gospel poverty, their experience of prayer their commitment to and solidarity with the poor, their family or married life, etc. In this way, more or less each year, the main aspects of the group's life will be evaluated. Finally, once or twice a year, in some longer meeting (for example, during a day of renewal or weekend of renewal or some community gathering or outing) there could be a global revision of life of each of the members, of the type that was done in the earlier stage.

2) Themes Based on the Spirituality. A part of some meetings needs to be given to the study or deepening of different facets of the spirituality of CLC. This would be led by the ecclesiastical assistant or by some other invited specialist. For example: Ignatian forms of prayer, discernment in the life of the Church. Or again, reading with commentary of certain revealing documents: Autobiography of St. Ignatius, Conclusions of the last World or National CLC Congress, working papers prepared by the Federation, etc. Obviously, along the same line, there will be need to read and comment on the different documents of the teaching Church (decrees of ecumenical Councils or of the Synods of Bishops, encyclicals or messages of the Pope...) or the pastoral letters of the bishops. It is essential that members be aware of the guidelines of the bishops.

3) Commentary on the Word of God. It is obvious that the important source of inspiration of the Christian life that is Holy Scripture cannot be neglected. At the start of each meeting there can be read a passage of the Bible, meditated on in silence. Then there can be a brief spiritual commentary on it, followed by a prayer together. A commentary of a more exegetical type would best be left for longer sessions (for example, in place of a study of the spirituality or of the guidelines of the Church). The ideal, supposing

that the group during its stage as a "Christian community" has already gone through and commented on the Gospel of St. Mark and the Acts of the Apostles or some other New Testament book, is the continuous reading of different books of the Bible. This could be done by alternating the Gospels and Epistles with the Prophets and other books of the Old Testament. In this way the community will gradually go through the whole of Scripture, leaving aside certain passages, such as geographical descriptions or genealogies in the historical books that would be less profitable. And after some years, it will be of great benefit to reread some of the books already seen.

4) Prayer. Even if in some meetings there is no Scriptural reading or commentary, in every meeting there will be a moment given to prayer together, even if this is quite brief. In this shared prayer, besides the usual prayers of petition or praise or thanksgiving, there will often be "prayer of discernment", when the community or one of its members is seeking for a clearer manifestation of the will of God, or is facing an important decision. The depth and intensity of the personal spiritual life of each of the community members will largely determine the forms of prayer. At times, to vary things, other types of community prayer can be used. Liturgical hymns or the recitation of psalms, of course, continue to be an aid to shared prayer.

5) Liturgy. Each CLC member pursues an active liturgical and sacramental life. So it is not necessary that in addition a special time be regularly assigned in the meetings for liturgical celebrations. In any case, according to the needs of the community, there will be times--anniversaries, some significant occasions in the life of one of the members, or in the liturgical year--when it will be fitting for each CLC as a cell of the Church to celebrate its faith or express its continuing conversion and thanksgiving by means of Eucharistic or penitential services. It is also fitting that periodically all the members of a community take part in liturgical celebrations along with other CLCs, or other communities of the Church.

6) Relaxing Together. Although the interpersonal relationships now are, viewed from outside, less intense (but tend to be deeper) than in earlier stages, it continues to be important that some meetings be given mainly to relaxing together. This is as a human expression of friendship and of a profound spiritual communion that spring from common

ideals. When the majority of the members of a CLC are married, if their spouses are not part of the community, it will be essential to hold more often such friendly gatherings, with the partners who are not members taking part too, and even the children (for example, an outing in the country). There will be need too to foster such social gatherings with members of other CLCs and their families. In any case, even on such occasions, when the aim is relaxing together, there should be some moments given to prayer.

To sum up, although each CLC arranges its meetings as it sees fit, we can say that a typical meeting includes a period of prayer and a period of formation. This latter portion may consist of treatment of topics drawn from CLC spirituality, documents of Church authorities, commentary or exegesis of Scripture, subjects related to the apostolic involvement of members or to the call of Christ from within the world and its situations and events. Each community sees how to carry on its continuing search for the will of God through discernment and revision (evaluation) of the Christian Life and the apostolic service of each member.

E. CLC COMMITMENT

In the stage of "Christian community", each group had composed a formula expressing their common commitment as Christians and, using this formula, each member had committed himself in this within and before the community.

When a "Christian community" moves on to become a Christian Life Community (CLC), its members publicly commit themselves by a CLC commitment. That is, in a Eucharist perhaps celebrated jointly with other CLCs, either after the Gospel or before the Communion, each one pronounces aloud the formula of CLC commitment. The concrete formulation of this is different in each Federation, although the essential elements are the same.

It is important to distinguish between this first public CLC commitment, which is temporary and may be renewed after a certain period, and the permanent commitment which is made later on when there is greater maturity. (17).

(17) See General Principles 10.

VII - PROBLEMS AND CRISES

Once a CLC has defined itself as such, it is presumed that it will go on indefinitely growing in its living out of Christianity. But there may be--it is even normal that there will be--some problems that threaten its existence and growth.

A. PROBLEMS ARISING FROM OUTSIDE FACTORS

Let us consider first of all the problems that can arise from outside, that is, from factors external to the life of the group itself, but which nonetheless inevitably affect its members.

We saw already that for a pre-community or a Christian community that has originated in a secondary school, the passage to the university of members, if this takes place, constitutes a time of testing. If the community survives through the first year of the university, and becomes in time a Christian Life Community, the most likely result will be that it will not face major problems of this type again for the next three to six years, until it is confronted with a similar crisis when its members finish their lives as students and leave the university.

Here again, the community will need to discern if it should continue as a CLC, or if its members should join other CLCs already existing or now being formed, for example of professional people. Among the factors that favor such a course are the new responsibilities of members and the possible scattering of members for reasons of work. Obviously problems of the same sort may arise when members leave secondary school to begin work.

Even if this problem is resolved, similar situations can arise again when one or more CLC members have to travel or to locate in other provinces or even other coun-

tries. Those who thus depart can join a CLC in their new place of residence. There have been instances where, in cities where no CLC previously existed, communities have been begun that are made up entirely of CLC members who have moved there, or again, if there is no community where a member moves and it does not appear feasible to begin one, such a person may continue to form part of his original community as a "corresponding member". As such he keeps up communication by letter with the members of his community until such time as he returns to his earlier location or can himself begin a community in the place where he now resides.

Along with completing one's university work, another matter often comes up: the marriage of members of the CLC, with all the changes that the new style of living involves. The basic question is: should the new partner join the CLC? This situation is simplified if both partners were already members during their period of engagement, and so it is question of two CLC members marrying. In this case, if they should belong to two different communities, the question arises if each should remain in his or her original community, or if one should pass over to the community of the other. In any case, it is not enough that one be married to (or engaged to) a CLC member to presume that one should also join a CLC. On the other hand, and given that in a Christian Life Community life really must be shared—including, concretely, family life—it is very likely that a CLC member whose partner is interested neither in CLC nor in its spirituality will in the end withdraw from it. In other words, the most frequent outcome is that, over a period of time, either both end up within the community or both outside it.

In a situation where a community of seven or eight members admits over a rather brief span of time five or so new members, married partners of the original members, it is clear that the "rules of the game" have now changed, and that the community will need to rethink its methods and objectives. And if several members of the community are now married without their spouses joining the community, the changed situation of the majority will again require discernment regarding new commitments and modifying the mode of functioning of the community. One possibility is to intensify the informal social gatherings (see "Relaxing Together", above). Another is the partial incorpora-

tion of the married partners as associate members of the community, with a less complete commitment (see GP 28 and its references to "larger associations").

Lastly, there are communities that go into crisis due to the tension caused by the divergent political commitments of its members. These divergences, like any crisis, can lead to the destruction of the community, or again to its enrichment and growth. It is essential that the community finds in the Gospel and in its own Christian living a place of encounter that is more radical and basic than political life, a place of encounter that makes it possible to discern what should be the political commitment of each member. If things come to an open break, or if the issue is not really faced, this would be evidence certainly of a poorly-made discernment, or that the community had not really assimilated Ignatian spirituality.

Nor is the ideal a community completely homogeneous in its political orientation, since it will be difficult for such a group to broaden its point of view, to incorporate certain valid elements for a discerning judgment, and to allow itself to be challenged by the possibility of truth in other options. Such a group easily falls into the vicious circle of mutual stimulus in an ever more restricted orientation. It is certain that a minimum of homogeneity is demanded--for extreme positions can be reconciled only with great difficulty--but that does not mean uniformity. The important thing is that, rather than basing itself on an ideological faith and fabricating a god in the image of the group so as to sanction its own tendencies and bless the established order or disorder, the community be sincerely disposed to seek the God who is "ever greater", and to discern the truth of his Presence in historical events. The result will be a healthy relativizing, in the light of the faith, of any contingent commitments.

B. PROBLEMS ARISING FROM WITHIN THE GROUP

This brings us to those problems that are of internal origin, that is, those that originate from the very life and development of the community. This kind of problem is, in a Christian Life Community, the most important, and it relates to the attitude of discernment. The constant discerning of the will of God in our lives, using as a starting point both the gospel and the world in which we live,

and without sidetracking either of these two poles, is not an easy task. The conditions and the spiritual maturity required for a good spiritual discernment are not always present. Such a difficulty is inherent in our condition as pilgrims as we search and grope for the God who has revealed himself through Love but whom we do not see face to face.

The fact that discernment is difficult will lead rather often to mistaken conclusions. That is why the validity of a discernment ought always to be tested by the subsequent history. An erroneous conclusion will of necessity result in critical situations for the community. It will be the constant task of the assistant (guide) and of all the community members to detect the cause of the crisis and to proceed to a revision of the decisions taken. And this will easily meet resistances, whether explicit or unconscious, in the community as a whole or in some of its members. For example, in a moment of enthusiasm or "collective consolation", the community may have taken on commitments that are above its forces. The result will be that the community will not function well. And the required modification of the decision taken will disillusion some as they come to realize that things are not going ahead as quickly as they had believed. On the other hand, the community as such or some of its members may not be responding enough to the challenges of the Lord, and this too will be reflected in a collective malaise: "something is not going well"; yet there may be some who, because they are passing through a difficult moment themselves, will resist the idea of reviewing things. In any case, when a discernment has been well made and takes full account of the realities and of what God desires of the group, this will be evident in the spiritual well-being that the community experiences.

The biggest danger, and the only really negative crisis, is for the community to become stagnant. With time, a community that has been very active can be lulled into security, and stop searching. The big danger is that a community may become transformed into a group of good "bourgeois" people who meet periodically to have a bit of social life, padded over with some prayer and one or other liturgical celebration. Such a group is no longer a Christian Life Community, though it may still be possible to snatch it out of its stagnant state. The best way is to turn to the experi-

ence of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Afterwards, it will be necessary to maintain the same attitude recaptured in the Exercises in daily life, keeping on the alert. One might say that to avoid slipping into this situation of lethargy, or to escape from it, the community should be considered, and declared to be, in a state of "permanent crisis", continually allowing itself to be questioned and judged by the Word of God. In this way, in a climate of dynamism and hope, crises can be looked on as recurring opportunities for growth.

Finally I would like to say that, although a community can last for many years, it is not essential that it continue indefinitely with the same members, nor even that it continue itself as a community. The important thing is that the members go on deepening their Gospel experience and living in the path of CLC that they have chosen as their means.

In the preparatory stages of "pre-community" and "Christian community", interpersonal relations were very important, and it was not easy to admit new members. It is, however, supposed that as a CLC member advances in the spiritual life, he is at each step better prepared to share his Christian life with others, and that, depending on the circumstances, he can change the community to which he belongs with a certain ease. To the degree that a community goes on growing in depth, under the inspiration of its commitment to CLC, its members will feel themselves more and more part of the GREAT COMMUNITY of those who share the same gospel ideal. At the beginning, although the pre-communities might be linked with a Federation, their bonds were predominantly within the initial small group. When members go on to make their commitment in CLC, what begins to be most important is the larger or universal community of which the small communities form part, in such a way that the members come to pass from one group to another within the large community. Thus a member of CLC may change his or her community for professional motives, or because of residence, or marriage, or other reasons.

On the other hand, from the moment when a community begins to designate and commit itself as a CLC, some of its members may prefer not to incorporate themselves completely, but to belong only to the wider circle ("larger associations"). We mentioned too that such groupings of associate

members may be a way for married partners of CLC members to take part to a degree. Again, as a community goes forward, some of its members will gradually leave, and it is possible that after some years only a nucleus of 2 or 3 of the original group will remain. These can join together with others who may be in the same situation. Or, if this is not practical, they may take part actively in the larger National and World Community. This is made up of the different Christian Life Communities and their assistants, as well as persons who have made the CLC commitment but are now temporarily without a local community. In a certain sense it includes too those associates who made up the "wider groupings", whether these are linked with an individual community or directly to the National or World Community. For, just as the CLC mission is universal, and the vocation is common to all, so the Christian Life Community is above all world wide and universal.

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