



AT THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

World Community and Mission
(by an international reflection team)

Evangelical Visibility
(Fr. Juan Ochagavía s.j)

With Jesus for the service of the Kingdom
(from FORPYL)

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SYNOPSIS

CLC AT THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM is the theme of the forthcoming World Assembly of the Christian Life Community. While the present supplement to PROGRESSIO will be helpful in preparing the Community for that event, it offers some material which can be valuable independently from that particular occasion. The whole supplement is focused on the theme of mission, on the call to be at the service of the Kingdom. Its purpose is to help CLC to better pursue its apostolic vocation.

In the first part, an International Team of reflexion deepens the apostolic identity of CLC and tries to express some of its distinctive notes and practical implications in a systematic way. The team members were Jack Milan (Canada), José Gsell (France, former editor of PROGRESSIO) and Tim Quinlan s.j. (World CLC Secretariat, Rome). Our thanks are due to Jack Milan for the final work of writing up this reflexion and incorporating into it some comments from members of the World ExCo.

In the second part, Fr. Juan Ochagavía s.j., as a theologian and well versed in CLC, reflects on the theme of "apostolic visibility". Our desire to bear fruit that will last is an expression of our being a living cell of the missionary Church, sacrament of salvation, which wants to attract all people to Jesus Christ. In this way we want to be that evangelical "lamp on a lampstand" or "city built on a hilltop".

The third part is an article published already by ourselves in volume 7 of our "Formation Program for Youth Leaders" (FORPYL), to which we have introduced some adaptations. Its purpose is to guide us towards a reflexion on some attitudes that Jesus expressed while striving to accomplish His Father's work. It is a brief reflexion, a hint for our examination of consciousness, which we can bring to our prayer while preparing ourselves for the coming World Assembly by entering into the dynamic of the Reign of God at a more profound level.

"I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last" (John 15:16).

WORLD COMMUNITY AND MISSION

1. Introduction

A grace
received

Perhaps the most significant grace we have received in our recent history is the grace of World Community for Service (Rome '79 & Providence '82). Since 1979, the implications of this grace have been slowly unfolding. At Loyola '86, we discovered in the Spiritual Exercises, source of our particular christian identity, that our mission is also communal.

Desire to be
faithful

To be faithful to the grace given requires of us a constant effort to examine ourselves in reflection and dialogue, allowing the grace to seep into the deepest levels of the heart in order to discern what responses are required. In that way we dispose ourselves for the further calls of the Lord and discover the way to be followed.

An invitation

This paper is an invitation to National Teams and others to reflect further on the grace of World Community and Mission to see more clearly its practical application in the day to day life of the Community. The Reflection Team mandated at Loyola is happy to initiate such a process of reflection with this paper. We are aware that its treatment of the subject is partial and does not say all that could be said. We have identified some aspects which seemed to us to need reflection at this time. We leave it up to you to modify, add or embellish it in ways which are faithful to the one Spirit which animates us all.

2. What is mission?

Our vocation
is missionary

When we address the issue of mission, we are addressing the very core of CLC identity and life. Our vocation is to be missionary. It derives both its purpose and style from the missionary ideal of Ignatius Loyola. For us, vocation and mission are identical. And this missionary vocation defines our identity (cf. Christifideles Laici 17 & 58).

The complex
experience of
mission

We are aware that mission is first given to the whole people of God through the mediation of the Church and rooted in a divine call. It is a sharing in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Jesus Christ (CL14). Yet, at the level of experience, mission refers to a complex reality which is reflected in the many different senses we give to the word "mission". We use this word to refer to, at least, four experiences: mission as a basic disposition of heart (vocation); mission as a way of life (integration); mission as a more specific orientation for choices (priorities); and a mission as concrete choices and tasks (service).

Mission:
an affair of
the heart

Mission as a disposition of the heart is born in the personal experience of the redeeming love of God in Christ. This experience of redemption (First Week) moves us to a grace-ful and grateful response of desiring a fuller companionship with Christ poor and humble in His enterprise in the world (Second, Third and Fourth Weeks), which is the Reign of God. Mission is a permanent and growing desire to be an instrument of the love of God in the world which moves us toward the unity of all the human race (cf. CL 32).

Mission:
a way of life

Mission as a way of life refers to our desire to be God's instrument in all things. This means that no dimension of our lives is withheld from the instrumentality of the Lord. We seek to develop an apostolic sense even in the most humble daily realities and be open to the call of God in every circumstance. Hence a missionary life transforms the totality of our style of life as lay women and men. It fosters a personal and familial lifestyle of simplicity and freedom of heart which allows us to be responsive to the inspirations of Love. Our desire for God's Reign also influences our more public life of work, political, economic, and ecclesial activity. This is what we mean by "integration of life" (cf. CL 34 - 59).

Mission:
orientation
for choice

We also use the word mission to describe broad orientations or priorities. They are usually expressed in terms of ideal values which are never fully achieved. Their function is to focus energies in a particular direction, without dictating specific actions. An awareness of mission, in this sense is the result of a deepening understanding of the concrete needs of the human family to which the Gospel invites response. Such awareness is developed through continual efforts to integrate our understanding of real human needs with the living Gospel.

Our General Assemblies have been occasions on which our CLC mission has been articulated in this third sense. "Liberation" (Augsburg), "Option for the Poor" (Manila), "The Service of Unity in the CLC and the World" (Rome & Providence), and "The Work of Justice and the Defence of Life" (Loyola), give us our CLC missionary

priorities at the world level (cf. CL 35-44).

Mission:
choices and
tasks

Finally, we use the term mission to refer to concrete choices and tasks. Here we are using the term in its most concrete form, i.e., a specific action or project we undertake in response to needs around us. In order for these actions or projects to be an authentic mission, they must have an evangelical motivation and address real needs. Furthermore, in order for our response to be communal, it must be in tune with the missionary priorities of the Community. More on this later. In this paper, we will refer to missionary actions, tasks, or projects as "service" (i.e. missionary service).

3. Characteristics of CLC service

In order for our service to be a CLC service it should have some distinguishing marks. There are at least seven: it should be incarnated, Christ-centered, greater (magis), Paschal, discerned, Marian, and communal.

Incarnated

Our service should be incarnated or secular, that is, it is oriented to the concrete world of historical events in the areas of family, work or profession, civic, and ecclesial life. It will affirm the sanctity of the world and everyday activities and look for the Reign of God there. It will take seriously the mystery of the Incarnation (cf. CL 15).

Christ-centered

Our service will be Christ-centered. It will be an expression of our companionship with Christ, poor and humble. It will be a surrender to His Person and a participation in His mission in our world.

- Greater Our service will be guided by the "magis" of the Spiritual Exercises. It will keep drawing us to discover and live out the promises given us in Baptism. It is the "greater glory of God" to which our vocation calls us.
- Paschal The Paschal mystery will mark our service. It is a service which will be more and more open to the Spirit poor and humble and characterized by great simplicity. It will have the courage to face what is real and to respond in concrete ways. It will also invite us to risk possible hardship.
- Discerned Our service will be discerned. It will not be imposed from without or trendy. It will be the fruit of constant effort to "read the signs of the times" in the light of the Gospel. It will look for a call from within, realizing that because the proposed service is a good thing to do, it is not necessarily me/us who are called to do it. We will seek the will of God in the matter.
- Marian Our service will be Marian. Mary will be the Mother and Model of our missionary service. She heard the Word of God and did it. She will be our special patroness and teacher.
- Communal Our service will be communal, i.e., it will be in tune with the missionary priorities of the Church and the CLC. Our service will not be a free-lance activity, but a real participation in the mission given by Christ to His Church.

4. The communal nature of mission and service

- Loyola'86 We became aware at Loyola that our communal charism even extends to mission

and service. "We discover (in our source, the Spiritual Exercises) that we are sent on mission by the Lord and His Church. We have also recognized that we are not able to be faithful to our mission without situating it in the context of our community, feeling that it is the entire community which is sent, united in heart and mind". It is on this communal dimension of our mission that we would like to reflect further.

Mission given
to the Church

We live our missionary lives in the context of the universal community of the Church, the people of God, which is sent on mission by the Lord. We have a responsibility for this mission through baptism. We, therefore, participate seriously in the efforts of the people of God, pastors and faithful, to recognize the activity of the Spirit in the world. In mutual prayer and dialogue we contribute to the ongoing articulation of the Church's missionary priorities. We do this more concretely through mutual guidance and collaboration with the bishop's conference or the local bishop and through a readiness to be sent by them after mature deliberation and discernment (cf. CL 25).

To make our contributions to the deepening understanding of priorities of the Church today, and to integrate into our concrete responses a guidance from the Church, is a mark of "sensing" with her. It is the fruit of a growing maturity in Christ and interior liberty which allows us to be sent by Another.

Mediated
by the World
Community

We are also freely bound to a specific cell of the universal community of the Church, the World Christian Life Community. Through the World Community,

the universal priorities of the Church are mediated to the national communities and local groups. By sharing our realities and prayerfully reading the movement of God's Spirit among us, we clarify and re-express for one another in more concrete terms the priorities of the Church, and discover what is more urgent and universal. Our World Assemblies, the sharing of experience through PROGRESSIO and various international work groups, all assist us to "bring home" the priorities of the Church, interiorize them, and give them a sharper focus.

Reflecting
national/local
needs

In order for the World Community to mediate effectively the missionary priorities of the Church, there is an indispensable role for the national communities and their local groups. As we move closer to the lived experience of the members of the community, the priorities for mission become even more concrete, reflecting national and local needs. National communities, in dialogue with each other as a World Community, contribute to the development of the World Community priorities and further clarify, their own national mission.

We already have some examples of national communal missions. They are expressed through priorities which orient the discernment and options of the individual members and of the local communities. Here are some of the priorities which have been expressed, during the last few years by some countries:

- "National reconciliation in a divided society"
- "Helped by the Gospel and Social Analysis, we want to work together with the poor and

- against their impoverishment".
- "Work with youth in a creative way".
- "Cooperation with our local Church for a new evangelization".

Is it not possible for each national community to undertake the task of articulating its own mission priorities in the light of the Gospel and the national needs, in dialogue with the missionary priorities of the Church and the more focused priorities of the World Community? Cannot national teams provide a more universal service of guiding and verifying the implementation of the communal mission?

Individuals
and local
groups
contribute to
the common
mission

Finally, at the level of the local group and individual response, our life in community calls us to a responsible participation in the mission of the community. While our concrete missionary service is taken on our own initiative, it will reflect and be in tune with the mission priorities of the community. In this way, individual and local group responses respect the uniqueness of persons and situations while contributing to the common mission.

The role
of the
local group

The local group is the presence of the World community in its locality. It is also the practical means for an on-going process of growth toward our missionary vocation. Through our CLC process of confronting every dimension of life with the Gospel, we experience the conversion necessary for the mission of Jesus to become a disposition of Heart. Through mutual help we assist each other to a continual integration of a missionary style of life.

The local group meeting also provides the occasion for the ongoing process of deliberation and discernment of our missionary service. This process involves a deliberate choice to seek out guidance from the Church (e.g. the social teaching of the Church), to identify causes through analysis, to read "the signs of the times" hidden in human events, and to consult the missionary priorities of the community. It also involves a discernment of interior realities to hear the concrete call of the Lord to us personally or as a group.

With the help of one another in the local group we ask such questions as: Is what I am doing or proposing to do linked with faith? Is it free? Is it a service which is in harmony with the mission of the community? How will it extend the reign of God? Does it correspond to a deeper perception of reality achieved through "analysis"? Does it "fit" the concrete circumstances of my/our life? Am I willing to accept any hardships involved?

The missionary response: At its most concrete level, a missionary service might be any or a combination of some examples the following:

- * Influencing the values of those around us through dialogue, education, the witness of a Christian life.
- * Direct action in a public way
 - Social/Political action
 - Undertaking civic responsibilities
 - Caring for the victims of socio-politico-economic life
- * Concrete tasks to further the mission
 - in our work of profession
 - in our neighborhoods
 - in our homes
 - in our parishes

5. Supporting structures for missionary service

The Need

In recent years, there have been questions raised about structures for service. Many groups experience such a diversity of interests and gifts that it often seems impossible for the members to focus on a single field of missionary interests. Under these circumstances, a common apostolic thrust is frustrated in spite of a deep desire to respond communally to need. In such groups there is often confusion about the necessity for a "group apostolate". Consequently much energy is expended in the struggles toward some common response. In addition, the lack of a common response often raises questions about the apostolic visibility of the CLC.

Some Questions

One might ask whether the local group is always the structure for supporting missionary service. Would not some different structures in addition to the local group and internal to the CLC, be more appropriate for some missionary tasks, and which would allow members of the CLC to make their contribution together as CLC? If so, what kinds of structures would galvanize and support apostolic energies without undermining the local group? Who would be in charge of these structures, animating them, verifying their expression of the common mission? Would such supporting structures be appropriate only for those in later stages of formation, or could they be part of the earlier formation process, e.g. as Ignatian "experiments?"

Possible Answers from our History

Perhaps our four hundred year old history which is rich in the experience of effective apostolic action through effective structures might provide some direction. The older ones among us will

remember the days of the "Apostolic Section". While individuals belonged to a single Marian Congregation, they also participated in a specialized group according to apostolic needs and interests. Thus there were "sections" of those concerned with the needs of the poor, those concerned with professional life, or parish life, etc.

A modern form of the section might be an organizational form referred to as "networks". Networks connect persons on the basis of interest and need without forming an ongoing organizational life. They are fluid and take whatever form is needed at moment to meet and/or satisfy the need. Modern communications and computer technology make such networking easy and efficient in places where it is available.

Are there other examples from our history and tradition which might spark our creative imagination in fashioning more flexible supporting structures for missionary service, and which will support the local group, expand opportunities for missionary response, and make more visible apostolic action possible?

The Paschal nature of our mission and service

Finally, a word about the Paschal characteristic of our CLC missionary service. The grace of Loyola confirmed our identity in the Spiritual Exercises which "send us to walk with Christ poor and humble". Indeed, the image of the poor Christ surfaced frequently at the Assembly. Again and again, delegates shared the hardship and suffering they were experiencing while carrying out their service in their local realities.

For all of us, a missionary life calls us to be faithful to the humble and simple realities of daily life to which we respond with a spirit of generous service. For some, a missionary involvement in human affairs is a pioneer work which involves considerable risk to security and personal reputation. We are aware that mission includes the willingness to risk for the reign of God. Few pursuits in human affairs are free of ambiguity, especially in the political arena. Attention to divine action in the world does not always protect us from controversy, misunderstanding, threats to personal safety or success. In other cases, our desire for the mission of Jesus may plunge us deeply into the pain of the world - physical, psychological, and spiritual.

We are reminded that the call to participate with Jesus in His "enterprise" in the world is also a call to compassion and suffering with Him. In all of this, as a World Community we must be mindful of each other close at hand and far away in other parts of the world, and be prepared to provide support, sustenance, and guidance for one another.

Conclusion

A daily growth in interior liberty, simplicity of life, and solidarity with each other is required to be faithful to our missionary vocation. This is first and always a challenge to our continued spiritual growth in the path marked by the Spiritual Exercises. Choices which proceed from hearts surrendered to Christ and His mission is our goal. Assisting each other and our community toward that goal is our challenge. Both the goal and the challenge requires of us a continuing reflection and mutual dialogue.

"Let your light shine in the sight of all people, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven" (Mt 5, 16)

EVANGELICAL VISIBILITY

1. Presentation of the problem:

Many observers of the life of the Church discern a move in the direction of affirming her visible identity. There is a pendular motion in progress. The dynamic, expansive spirit engendered by the Council and its immediate effects in so many different spheres, has been followed during the last decade by a process of reaffirming the identity of the Church as an essential step towards a new evangelization.

It is in such a context that the reflection on the necessity for a greater visibility, which has occupied the attention of many episcopal conferences, lay movements and religious orders, has its place.

Nor is it a coincidence that the Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici, in considering the "Criteria of ecclesiality" for lay groups should abound in a phraseology that explicitly or by implication calls these associations to a strong visibility. The Pope speaks of "The primacy given to the call of every christian to holiness"; "the responsibility of professing the Catholic faith"; "The witness to a strong and authentic communion in filial relationship to the Pope... perpetual and visible center of unity of the Universal Church, and with the local bishop 'the visible principle and foundation of unity' in the particular Church"; "a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelization" and of the need of "a commitment to a presence in human society". (CL 30).

This striving of the Church for a greater visibility and for a reaffirmation of her own identity is to be seen within the framework of a more widely-embracing process of development in the world of politics,

economics, social organizations and, why not?, even the world of fashion. If we have to find a label for this development, we could say it is "neo-conservative" in the sense that it seeks to hold on to the patterns and the values of a not-so-distant past.

The journeyings of the Pope have done much to ensure the visibility of the Universal Church. Other factors, too, have been at work. For example, the development of lay movements such as Opus Dei, Focolari, Communion and Liberation, to mention only three. Who shall say they have not caught people's attention, fostering a greater visibility of the Church?

And yet the CLC, for all their presence in over 50 countries, are not very visible.

A well-known US theologian noted recently how many catholics, who had been educated at schools run by the Society, had asked him "why don't the jesuits do what the Opus Dei has done and set up a lay movement on Ignatian principles?".

And, like the Church at large, the CLCs have for some time now been exercised with this call to be a visible presence. What follows, then, in some ways continues this effort of reflexion - reflexion in the light of theology.

2) Visibility as a theological concept

Being visible and being invisible are more than sociological categories. They are also profoundly theological.

Our unseen Father (cf Col 1,15; 1 Tim 1,17; Dei Verbum 2) reveals Himself and manifests His love and creative power in Jesus Christ, His Word made flesh - visible flesh. To have seen Him is to have seen the Father (Jn 14,9). His presence and His operating amongst us, His words, His signs and miracles, and above all His death and resurrection, with the sending of the Spirit, are what have made God visible and known to us (Jn 1,18; 1 Jn 1,2).

The Church is called to carry on this work of making God visible in Jesus the Christ. She proclaims to all peoples the Reign of God that, like the seed, is sprouting and growing until the harvest (Mk 4,26-29). As the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, operating through the Word of God and the sacraments, transmits the life of Jesus and shows Him to the world when she affirms His presence in the communities of believers. Being at one and the same time both visible and spiritual - a "mystery" in a profound sense - is of the very nature of the Church.

3) The call of Christ to be the Light of the World

Jesus is the "Light of the world" (Jn 8,12). Whosoever believes in Him enters into the light and need not stay in the dark any more (Jn 12,46). He is the true light, the real light that is already shining (1 Jn 2,8).

Jesus calls upon His followers to be light, to manifest God in the eyes of the world: "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop, ... a lamp put on a lampstand. Let your light shine in the sight of all people, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven" (Mt 5,14-16).

Paul wanted his Philippians who live "among a deceitful and underhand brood", to "shine in the world like bright stars" (Phil 2,15) and it is Christ, it is God, that enlightens them (Eph 1,18; 5,14; Phil 3,15).

4) Visibility in the Service of the Kingdom

Christ's call to us to be light and that our light should enlighten, and become a "city built on a hilltop" and a "lamp put on a lampstand" needs to be understood in the context of drawing to the Kingdom of God the lost ones and those that walk in darkness.

And it is a missionary context, one of service for the Kingdom, that gives meaning to the call to become visible, to be a light that must "shine in the sight of all, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven" (Mt.5,16).

Of old, Israel hoped that God Himself might for the sake of His holy name gather together the house of Israel that was scattered, and renew it and convert it into a holy people (Ez. 36, 19-32). This renewal of Israel will have a direct influence on the coming of the Kingdom. When God "sanctifies His name" in Israel, the light of God begins to shine upon it, and the gentiles, attracted and fascinated by the splendour, of their own accord set out towards the chosen people. "Arise, shine out, for your light has come!... Lift up your eyes and look round: all are assembling and coming toward you!" (Is 60, 1-4).

It is no mystery that this missionary implication of the light that radiates, the light that sets in motion the pilgrimage of the gentiles, is implicit in the passages about the city built on a hilltop and the lamp placed on the lampstand.

The Christian communities of the Acts and the new missionary communities among the gentiles looked upon themselves as one with the true Israel and saw themselves as called to shine out, to be light. It is this that endowed them with missionary strength - "... they were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved" (Acts 2, 47).

This "being light" was manifested in the outpouring of the Spirit on these communities (cf Acts 2, 17-18), and was accompanied by "many miracles and signs" (Acts 2, 43). As well it was manifested by their unity, by the sharing of their goods, by common action, by their joy and simplicity, by their celebration of the Eucharist (Acts 2, 44-46). Social barriers too, disappeared (Acts 2, 17) - another gift of the Spirit. Other gifts were fraternal love, hospitality (cf Acts 2, 46), their courage to proclaim Jesus Christ (Acts 4, 33; 5, 29), their missionary zeal (cf Acts 6, 7; 8, 4; ...).

5) Pitfalls to be wary of

Even the noblest religious strivings can sometimes be deflected from their purpose. This is particularly true in the search for a greater visibility.

The Gospels bear witness to Jesus' inveighing against outward yet empty religious practices - against zeal devoid of love. "When you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites. They love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have received their reward" (Mt 6,5).

Jesus asks his disciples that they pray "in secret", that they give alms "in secret" without their left hand knowing what their right hand is doing, that they do not practice justice before others so as to be seen by them. Then, and only then, "Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you". (Mt. 6, 1-6).

Jesus condemns the sort of missionary zeal of the scribes and pharisees, "who travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte" (Mt 23,15), whom they then enslave with their innumerable rules.

This driving force - this leaven - of the pharisees is their hypocrisy: Everything they do is done to attract attention" (Mt 23, 5). They have conjured up a whole series of rules whereby others may fall into sin yet where they themselves may be seen observing them. The disciples must be on their guard against the leaven of the pharisees (Lk 12, 1).

Visibility for the sake of the Kingdom is constantly in danger of being merely a desire of ours to be seen, and no more. And this is no mean danger. St Ignatius in his meditation on "Two Standards" warns against the empty honours of the world, and of overweening pride (Sp. Ex.142). The compulsion for apostolic power and religious influence can be more insidious and the more to be guarded against than any quest after material possessions.

At the opposite pole from Lucifer, Christ sends his disciples out into the world to teach people the way of spiritual and actual poverty; the way of contempt leading to humility, for from these springs a greater apostolic effectiveness (Sp.Ex.145-6).

This is the way, too, of kenosis, that freely chosen emptying of Himself by which Jesus showed His fidelity to the Father, counterbalancing at the same time our desire, whether as individuals or as a community, to appear great in the eyes of people. But there is no escaping the duty to be a city built on a hilltop and the lamp placed on a lampstand. A preference for passing unobserved, and hiding behind anonymity, is not the way of the disciple. Visibility is always necessary. But it is important that this be an "evangelical visibility" which reflects the characteristics of the Paschal Christ.

The desire of our CLCs is to be centred in Christ and participation in His paschal mystery (GP 4). It is here that our response to the call to let our light shine before all finds its driving force - a response under the impulse of the Spirit that will find expression not simply in one way only, but in any infinite number of ways.

6) Visibility in the history of the Marian Congregations

The call to let our light shine before others so that people will be attracted to the Gospel was ever a dynamic principle at work throughout the history of the Marian Congregations.

In the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, their members collaborated intensely in the evangelization of Africa, America and Asia. Congregations of native members were conspicuous in extending the work of the missionaries and ensuring that the results took root.

In Europe, they made it their task to spread the faith and engage in social work among the poor. From one single congregation -in Paris- there was to come into being the Association of St Joseph, the first attempt at a Catholic Workers Association in the 19th century, the Society of Good Studies, which was the origin of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; the Catholic Society of Good Books; the Catholic Library, the Society of Good Works with 3 sections: hospitals, care of Savoyard immigrants and prison visitation; and the St. Francis Régis Work for Rural Missions.

In his recent (1987) book L'Europe des dévots, Louis Chatellier traces the influence of the Marian Congregations in moulding society and the patterns of religious, political and social behaviour in Europe from the XVth to the XIXth centuries. The author concludes that, at least to some extent, modern Europe was shaped by the pious people of those centuries. The thesis is no new one, though the form of presenting it certainly is.

The members of a Congregation strive after holiness through their total dedication to the Kingdom. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius enable them to make a radical commitment according to the graces that each person has received. The Congregations helped Christians in every walk of life to attain a high level of holiness. While their place is not to be canonizing saints, but to help their members along the path of holiness, the Marian Congregations can point to an impressive list of saints and blessed among their ranks. Nor are these only members of the Society of Jesus but include men and women of the stature of Francis de Sales, Alphonsus Liguori, Camillus de Lellis, John Eudes, Grignon de Montfort, Victoire Rasoamanarivo, Philippine Duchesne and Giuseppe Moscati. To these we might add many a martyr, whose witness would have us remember that an evangelical visibility in the world is a crucified visibility.

7) Discernment

This brief historical outline and the theological reflexion that precedes it, together raise one or two weighty matters for consideration by the CLCs, who are the legitimate bearers of the Marian Congregation tradition today.

- a. First, then, What is happening in the CLCs when, with two decades of renewal behind them, they have not yet achieved their being "a city built in the hilltop" and a "lamp set on a lampstand"?

- b. Secondly: Have our CLCs lost something that endowed the Marian Congregations, especially in the XVith, XVIth and XVIIth centuries, with their remarkable apostolic dynamism?

It is perhaps unfair to be asking ourselves these questions, when neither the situations nor the times are comparable. Moreover, it is obviously open to objection if we are comparing a mere two decades with the best of a selection from four centuries.

And yet, not to ask ourselves these questions is to fail to give a direction to our lives. And in any case, to be asking these questions is in no sense to sit in judgment but suggests an approach for a discernment.

1. What about the visibility of the CLC?

Even if we grant, without going into too fine a detail, that the diagnosis implicit in the two questions we have asked is largely correct, the following points may help to place that diagnosis in context and suggest remedies.

- 1.1. It is important to remember that, for all their centuries of "antecedent history" in the Marian Congregations, the actual history of the CLC is a short one, in most instances amounting to barely 20 years or, where many countries are concerned, not even half that time. This is far too short a period to form and project an image.
- 1.2. The fact of being a "new movement and yet at the same time not being one" explains to some extent how it is that the CLCs have no messianic approach to action and do not undertake very visible and excessive actions typical of groups that are just beginning. It has allowed the CLC, by

keeping in touch with its rich past, to benefit from an incorporation of the more valid elements of the Marian Congregations, which generally were the initial core of the renewed groups.

1.3 Continuity with the Marian Congregations has not been without its problems, however. While no attempt was made to force anybody, members were invited to changes over to the CLCs. In some countries what took place were "mass transfers", which did little to clarify identities.

1.4. After the collapse of Catholic Action and other major lay associations in the 50s and the 60s, a loss of confidence in the lay apostolate took hold throughout the Church. In their place there flourished small, for the most part uncoordinated, groups giving more to providing support for their own members (Christian Family Movement, prayer groups, etc.) The CLC family developed during this period (1968), and within the social milieu where the difficulty of creating associative forms of apostolate was most keenly felt.

1.5 Secularism, an "ideology" encountered to a certain extent even among Christians has certainly been one inhibiting factor on the radiation of the CLCs' apostolate. We should remember that there were times when Rudolf Bultmann was able for so long to instil doubt in the minds of the professors of Sacred Scripture as to the possibility of affirming anything regarding the historical Jesus.

1.6. In the Church of this century, there has been a rather restricted concept of the role of the lay christian which probably has also made for a less active apostolate within CLC. This took its origin in the "theologies of the realities of

this world" from 1945 on, and found expression in the Council statement that "the secular quality is proper and special to lay people" (LG 31). A rigid interpretation of this statement (which Vatican II did not make) would imply that the lay people are not invited to make themselves responsible for evangelization in all its dimensions. They are left within the confines of their homes, their places of work, their political parties, their social and economic circles. Well, then, since there is no attempt to stimulate the formation of fresh structures parallel to those already to hand but rather to act as a leaven within existing ones, one can understand how the work done by lay people goes largely unseen. And there are echoes of this attitude in certain of the CLC General Principles (cf. 2, 3, 7, 11).

Post-Conciliar developments favour a far more integrated role for the lay faithful. Canon 225 of the Code of Canon Law well reflects these. Even Christifideles Laici, despite its persisting with the attribution of a "secular character" to the laity, does interpret and broaden its connotation (15) by its reference to their mission to communion (32), to the duty to proclaim the Gospel (33), to live the Gospel serving the person and society (36-37) and respect the inviolable right to life (38); to pursue religious freedom (39); to serving the family (40); to responding to calls upon their charity (41); to public life (42); to the need for placing the individual at the centre of socio-economic life (43) and for evangelizing culture (44).

When all is said and done, then, and without any pre-established limits being invoked, the mission of the lay faithful is determined by their specific vocation, involving "a receptive listening to the Word of God and the Church, fervent and constant prayer, recourse to a wise

and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as the diverse social and historic situations in which one lives". (CL 58). All these references are familiar to our CLCs, and are at the heart of General Principle 11 and of the Ignatian discernment.

2) Characteristics of the Marian Congregations
that are good to value again
in order to serve the Kingdom most effectively

There is no space to develop this subject at length here; so I shall limit myself simply to stating the following points:

- 2.1 In our CLCs there is a need to turn our sense of history to good account. By this I mean that we need to be aware of and appreciate the CLC antecedent existence in the Marian Congregations. Let us feel in communion with and inspired by the great figures that have arisen within their ranks, always open to learn from their many and varied experiences.
- 2.2 In a more direct connection with the call for a greater visibility in the service of the Kingdom, CLCs will have much to gain by way of effectiveness in their apostolate if they take over, in a renewed form, the "sections" and "academies" that characterized the Congregations. GP n. 26 has something to say here, though it does not propose specific models. Examples of "sections" would be those "works" or "sociétés" of which we spoke while referring to the famous Paris Congregation. Other examples are the "committees" of the "sodalities" in the United States, or those specialized apostolic teams of other countries. The name is not important. The truly important thing is that they facilitate the realization of effective and lasting service by means of appropriate sharing by community members in the work, according to the diversity of gifts and availability of their time.

Conclusion

Visibility is an inescapable dimension of our being christians and acting as such. It springs from the Trinitarian economy of salvation announced by Jesus and proclaimed by the Church. It cannot be reduced to a mere sociological impact or to a political game of power. Its objective is the advancement of God's Reign.

Christian visibility -as everything that is Christian- will be always threatened. There is the temptation to discouragement and lack of zeal, of phariseism, and the danger of becoming paralysed by an unreachable perfectionism which forgets that in this life we must learn to live with a certain degree of ambiguity.

Visibility of the CLC will necessarily reflect some of the distinctive notes that flow from an ignatian approach to the apostolate, which is not the monastic or the conventual one. Some of these distinctive notes are expressed in the General Principles or have been developed by the World Assemblies of the CLC.

In practice, the visibility of CLC will be strongly apostolic. It will be as effective as its options are turned towards the more universal good, urgent needs and unattended arenas of life. It will be manifested in the freedom of its members to move from well provided works to undertake new initiatives in other less provided areas of the apostolate. It will be a visibility "on the frontier", among the marginalized from faith, from freedom, from access to education, from health care, from economic basic welfare, from political power.

An important characteristic will be the courage to undertake actions and to express words which bear light, hope and consolation. CLC will not avoid taking action because there is some risk or actual danger in the way, but it will struggle with evangelical determination. CLC will always trust that God is present where human fears make us tend to think that God is absent.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things will be given to you" (Mt 6:33).

WITH JESUS FOR THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

To be a christian is to be part of a people who have been, and know themselves to be, called by God the Father to follow Jesus Christ in his work, which is to announce and make present in history the Kingdom of God.

Behind being a christian there lies the gratuitous initiative of God who has loved us, who has offered us pardon in Jesus Christ and who has chosen us to be His friends and continue the work of His Son, under the impulse of the holy Spirit. Faith is our response to this call and is expressed through entering into the community of those who follow Jesus. This is precisely what Baptism is: it is passing from a life centred on ourselves, with our own criteria and plans, to a life in community with those who know they have been pardoned by God, who want to follow Jesus Christ and collaborate in His work in history - which consists in announcing and making present the Kingdom of God as a gift of God Himself.

During His ministry, Jesus demanded two fundamental attitudes from those who received His message - to welcome the good news of the Kingdom and to follow Him in His work of announcing this good news. To each person He offered the good news of the Kingdom of God already at hand; but even more it was present in Jesus Himself as love, pardon, and deliverance for the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed, the humble of heart. But from those who welcomed this good news of the Kingdom and were converted to it through opening themselves to the new reality that Jesus offered, He demanded that they follow Him and work like Him, in the sense of announcing to others, through deeds and words, the coming of the Kingdom of God.

To be a christian, then, presupposes a moment of conversion, of accepting the love and pardon of God, which are manifested in the deeds and words of Jesus. But this also presupposes an attitude of service, of following

Jesus Christ in the mission He has received from the Father - an attitude of imitating His style, of adopting His fundamental options.

Jesus lives
the mission
He has
received from
His Father

The first trait of Jesus is to live for the mission He has received from His Father and that He fulfils it with a filial attitude. Jesus declares very often that He does not carry out His own work, but that of the Father; that His food is to do the will of the Father. Jesus is the complete opposite of a person who lives his own life, goes his own way, does whatever he wants, has his own ideas of what is good and evil, responds only to his own whims and fancies. To be a christian is to live as children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, receiving from the Father a call to follow Jesus and to work with Him. From here comes the meaning of prayer which opens us up to the Father, of the attitude of discernment, of the radical availability to whatever the Father asks of us.

Jesus
announces
the work of
the Father

The second trait of Jesus is that He announces the work that the Father accomplishes and will accomplish in History. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is coming, that it has already arrived; but He announces it as a gift, as due to the initiative of God and not as the mere work of men and women. To be a christian is to hope for the fullness of the Kingdom of God as a gift, and not as the result of our activity. Hence the christian is always critical of whatever tends to consider that the fullness of the Kingdom of God has already arrived in history and that we should hope for nothing more or nothing better. But at the same time, and for the same reason, the

christian is a person of unquenchable hope, who always hopes for something more, something better than what we now have, and struggles for the coming of this new world.

Jesus accepts the limitations of the Incarnation

The third trait of Jesus is that, to fulfill the mission entrusted to Him by the Father, He takes flesh in a concrete situation and accepts the limitations that this implies. To announce and to bring about the liberation of all people, Jesus accepts the limitations that this implies. To be christians, then, is to be called to be people of our time, our culture, to know profoundly the problems of our country, to accept the limitations of our history. To try to live in such an openness to the whole world that we do not become involved in our own specific reality would be quite foreign to the following of Christ. To be a christian is to be called to become deeply involved in our world and its tensions.

Jesus announces the Father's preference for the poor

A fourth fundamental trait of Jesus is that He announces the Father's preference for the poor, the marginalised and the despised people of this world, and that His work reflects this. Jesus puts Himself clearly on their side and He announces that they are the first to be called into the Kingdom. To accomplish this, Jesus had to know and analyse the situation of His time and discover who were the poor and marginalised. In fact, He Himself shared their life and their lot as He came from Nazareth and grew up as the son of a small

tradesman. To be a christian is also to make a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised of our time, which is different from the time of Jesus. If we want to be faithful to the option of Jesus, we have to analyse our society and discover who are the poor and forgotten people today, and what are the structures of society that lead to people being marginalised and forgotten.

Jesus
announces
deliverance
with words and
deeds which
are freeing

A fifth trait of Jesus is that He announces the deliverance which the Kingdom of God brings, through truly effective words and deeds. Jesus was most acute in discovering what were the factors that were really oppressing the people of His time, and in performing striking deeds which signified deliverance and made it actual - healing the sick, breaking down religious barriers, welcoming sinners and living with them, pardoning sins. To be a christian today demands of us that we discover and actually perform gestures and deeds of deliverance/liberation which show that the Kingdom of God is already at work in our history, and that our announcing this is not a question of empty words. The radical confidence in the living presence of God in history should constantly push us to be imaginative, creative, courageous in searching for and performing signs which will show our brothers and sisters that God wants to liberate them and is actually delivering them from everything that holds them back and makes them slaves. We should try to be as effective as possible, and so we should be continually asking ourselves - what are the most effective things we can do to make the Kingdom of God present today?

Jesus accepts
the opposition
to His mission

A sixth trait of Jesus is that He is faithful to the mission that the Father has entrusted to Him, that He is passionately involved in the Father's work and is not afraid of the conflicts which come from carrying it out. Jesus is aware that working for the liberation of those who are oppressed will affect the people who are doing the oppressing, in one way or another. In fact, in the course of Jesus' life, the conflict with the powerful people of His time quickly appeared (cf. Mk 3:1-6); He did not run away from it, but neither did He seek it explicitly. Just as Jesus did not look for death, but neither did He abandon His mission through fear of dying, so Christians should strive for a profound freedom which helps them offer their lives in the following of Christ.

Jesus offers
but does not
impose His
freedom

A seventh trait of Jesus is that He does not impose the option for the Kingdom of God, nor for the liberation He brings, through means of religious or political power, but rather He offers these in a way that respects the freedom of people and helps them to grow. Instead of transforming Himself into a man of power who imposes Himself on others, Jesus chose to be a servant who loves and puts Himself at the service of others. To be a Christian today means to be clear-sighted and to discern constantly in what way we should announce the Kingdom and make it present, and what our relationship with power really is, and how we are using it. If we want to be fruitful in the work of liberation, we should use our power, while always preserving the fundamental option of Jesus, which is to be servants of others and not making use of them (cf. Mk. 10:41-45).

Conclusion

How can we do today what Jesus did in His time, that is, how can we enter profoundly into history and transform it? It is certainly not a question of doing exactly what Jesus has done - that would be to put ourselves in a situation that was His, not ours, and to betray the movement of the Incarnation. Neither is it a question of assuming His vision of the world and history that corresponded to a definite epoch. What we have to do is to take up His single-mindedness in the work of His Father, His style of doing things, His fundamental options and translate these into our situation.

In the light of all we have said, we can understand the words of the Lord - "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things will be given to you". Do we feel a compelling call to announce, in words and deeds, the Kingdom of God and His justice to our people today?

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