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NEWS FROM LATIN AMERICA

A combination of reasons have persuaded me to suggested to the Executive Council of the World Federation that Fr. Louis Paulussen and I should go on an information-gathering tour to Latin America. First, the post of ecclesiastical assistant for Latin America was vacant. Next, there was the supposed withdrawal from the World Federation of Peru, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Also, the Equatorian promoter had disavowed in Madrid certain uncontrolled information which reached us in Santo Domingo last year.

The mission had two objectives -- the situation of the Christian Life Communities (Solidalities) in Latin American countries and their relation with the World Federation.

The trip lasted the whole month of March and we were able to visit twelve countries: Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. We will visit the others later, especially the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Guyana, etc.

(continued on page 11)

UNION AND DIVISION

by Louis PAULUSSEN S.J.

In a letter, dated March 25, 1971, a Brazilian friend in São Paulo writes me that he does not agree with the Editorial published in Progressio 1970 n. 4. Particularly he cannot see that the division which appeared in Santo Domingo "carries in itself the promise of a stronger union".

I am surprised that a man like him, engaged daily in the practical work of our movement, opposes a simple application which tries to integrate the events of life in the reality of our redemption.

We are living in Easter time. Our Brazilian friend declares in that same letter that he likes the General Principles. He certainly therefore admits that our spirituality "is centered on Christ and participation in the Paschal Mystery" (GP 4). But this has nothing to do with a beautiful theory or with abstractions. We are invited to live this Mystery "continually", to "seek constantly" whatever God wishes from us "in each concrete situation of our daily existence". This existential approach, this attention to the concrete reality here and now, is characteristic of the General Principles.

In the Editorial I just confessed my faith in the Paschal Mystery. Not in an abstract way, but practically and concretely. We easily believe that Jesus has "saved the world". But what does this mean if I do not believe very concretely that he has saved all situations and all ordinary events of every day? And I repeat: "Jesus has done all that was necessary. On his part nothing more is needed. But everything remains to be done on our part". We have to continue the redemption. Here and now everything depends upon us. It depends on our responsibility, our disponibility, our creativity, our openness, our sensibility to the motions of the Spirit.

The division of Santo Domingo means for us - notwithstanding all the good intentions of those who have separated themselves from the World Federation - a break of our union. A division which is unacceptable and demands necessarily a reparation. It is our

task to realize here and now what Jesus has done in his life, death and resurrection. Through his Spirit he communicates to us today his unifying action.

When I wrote - last October - the contested Editorial, I did not yet know exactly what the Spirit wanted. A reparation, certainly; a stronger union, yes. But: how, when, where, with whom?

Now - April 1971 - I know what the Spirit wants. After having received directives from the Executive Council ("first of all contact with the Federations in Latin America, then foresee further steps of cooperation with those who have separated themselves"), and especially after the journey in Latin America, which we just finished and which is reported in this issue, I know much more. And not only this. "The stronger union" is already in the making. All those who have assisted with us at the meetings in Mexico, in Managua, in Caracas, in Bogota, in Medellin, in Quito, in Lima, in La Paz, in Santiago de Chile, in Buenos Aires, in Rosario, in Asuncion and in Rio de Janeiro, know that a stronger union is in full realization. The tour during the month of March has been a first step towards this union, an important step and most positive.

The person, principally responsible for this journey, the one who has heard, immediately after Santo Domingo, an interior voice pushing to action, is our president Roland Calcat. He has accepted the invitation of the Spirit without counting the sacrifices. He has asked me to accompany him. Firstly I had difficulties. Indeed, the question was very delicate. I wanted by all means to avoid rigidity of positions and the creation of new misunderstandings. But it became soon clear that the plan of the president was good.

Yes, the division of Santo Domingo carries in itself the promise of a stronger union. I have believed it always. Now I have seen it.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY and THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS COMMUNITY

by José Luis VELASCO

In this issue I would just like to share a few simple thoughts with you on community. At times I may seem a bit on the argumentative side but it's only to provide a start for our shared reflection.

I would like to begin with the fact that the present interest in community and the Christian life style it implies are a sign of the times in the Church. I mean that it is one of those strong currents which both put us into real contact with the hopes and needs of men and also with the movement of history (1). As with every sign of the times, we Christians must discover the action of the Holy Spirit and open our lives to it. On this point there is a first thought I would like to share about the concrete attitude of the CLC, of each and every one of us, with respect to community our call to confidence and optimism. It is obvious that the Church is living a period of confusion that is quite uncomfortable for us psychologically speaking. This comes home most clearly in the "objections" over "basic communities" (2). But this confusion which often gets us up in arms is in a large measure a purification of the faith; there's no doubt that this uncomfortable period of history is grace-filled. And this is my starting point. I realize you cannot force confidence on people but prayer can lead us to a deep love of necessary change.

We also have to take into account that this action of the Spirit realizes itself through concrete people and that we can nullify its effects. Sin and egotism and irresponsibility are still alive among us -- and it is also for this reason that we must be discerning and alert, trying for personal conversion in this present resurgence of the community.

(1) Cf. "The Church in the Present-day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council", Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Vol. 1, Position Papers, on "The Signs of the Times in Latin America Today" (in Spanish). Cf. also: M.D. CHENU, "Les signes des temps", NRT, January 1965 (in French).

(2) The idea of the basic community contains many characteristics which cannot be clearly applied to the CLC. Still, it is perhaps the clearest manifestation of the community upsurge in today's Church -- and this is why it is a point of reference.

What is a Basic Community ? -- Sociological Characteristics

"A basic Christian Community is a group of people who believe in Jesus Christ. It is constituted for the most part by the basic element of the Church -- Laymen. To respond to the demands of the faith they come together in a regular way to live intensely the life of the Church:

- by deepening their faith through contact with the word of God;
- by the community celebration of the Sacraments with the Eucharist as the peak point;
- by a certain community sharing of material goods, of life and action;
- by involvement in prophetic witness and missionary activity in a concrete situation" (3).

In a rather disorderly and incomplete way we can add to our definition a series of characteristics which do not always exist but which open avenues of understanding to those who want to know the position of these groups.

A community carries out a simultaneous triple action: 1) pre-evangelization -- human promotion and involvement with concrete people; 2) evangelization -- witnessing to Christ, more by deed than by word; 3) catechizing -- the vital and intellectual deepening of our contact with Christ. Even though we evidently cannot generalize, this approach is contrary to the habitual method of spreading the faith. After a first very superficial contact with the Christian message, baptism then took place. After this the baptized took part in the other sacraments. Finally the salvific fact of Christ was explained to them in depth. The circles where this could be realized, practically speaking, were very small.

The community likewise insists on the necessity of poverty and of a specific and total service. To evangelize, one has to live with the poor and struggle along with them to change the conditions which impede the development of the vast majority of mankind. This community with the poor (which is not only theoretical but which has at least some basis in fact) is even demanded in many cases as the condition for entry into the community. Its roots are found in the imitation of Christ. A Christian is a person who imitates Christ who first became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1,14). He stripped Himself of all privileges and was exposed to sorrow, death and the weight of sin (Phil 2,7-8; 2 Cor 5,21). On the other hand this attitude provided real answers to concrete

- (3) A working hypothesis proposed to the members of a congress on the "Theology of Basic Communities" which took place in Segovia, Spain, August 18-29, 1970.

problems, answers which appear linked to evangelization (Mt 4, 23-24; 11,5, etc.) (4).

Here are some other important traits of community: group reflection on the Word of God to offset preaching without dialogue; deep mutual understanding among members to offset the anonymous quality of traditional structures; the search for a new identity for the priest -- linked to the community and on an equal footing with the laymen; ethics for personal renewal and for moments of difficult searching to offset "moral rules"; a profound and personal catechumenate, etc.

Sociologically, communities are opposed to organizations or associations which are characterized by 1) the fact that they are secondary groups where there is no personal contact among the members; 2) the fact that communication among members depends on individual and rigidly organized functions; 3) the fact that the goals of the group are specific and their rules detailed; 4) finally, the fact that the leaders or directors are very clearly defined, being responsible for the group and governing the activity of the other members. In communities we find personal relationships and direct spontaneous communication among the members. The goals of the group are diffuse and rules are not detailed. The functioning of the group depends on the members' consciences which are founded on common convictions. All are responsible and the decisions are made by the group itself, not by leaders.

The Basis and Christian Meaning of these Communities

In essence the Church has always been a community. It's enough to consult the witness of the primitive Church. It is interesting to point out that the Primacy of Peter was not accompanied by a myth build around his person. Paul speaks quite naturally of public reproaches made against Cephas (Gal 2, 11-14). Perhaps at times we are a bit too scandalized by similar attitudes. This type of community life has never been lost in the Church but in recent centuries it had been forgotten, dissimulated, at times suffocated because of a juridical approach. The Council started a thawing out process but it was the work of the Church "nobility" -- the

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- (4) J.M.GONZALEZ RUIZ, "Marxism and Christianity Confront the New Man" (in Spanish), Ed. Marova, 1969. We read on page 164: "Salvation is a term used by the Synoptics first of all according to its most simple meaning which was current in classical Greek: 'Sodseir' comes from 'soos' which means 'healthy'. It means to give health to someone who has lost it, to give security to a person threatened with danger, to tear a dying person from death (Mt 8,25; 14,30; Mk 3,4; Lk 6,9)."

world-wide Episcopate. Christian groups hindered by the traditional structures "took over" the spirit of the Council doctrine and developed the present thrust of "basic communities." This is particularly true of the working class and of intellectuals (I don't care for this term but we have to use it one way or the other). This is a Church renewal which is not free from errors, deviations and dangers. It springs up within a certain tension caused by contact with the "official renewal"; it provides considerable dynamism.

This phenomenon undoubtedly takes deep root in the need to discover the full force of the faith within a new type of society which is deeply threatened by depersonalization. This faith is a gift of God and becomes present in our lives when we come into contact with Him, when we hear Him call us and when we answer Him. But this lively faith is found in a community which "celebrates" (that is, actualizes, makes present) the Word of God and the liturgical action. This is why the concrete community is a realization of the Church as the radical sacrament, the efficacious and mysterious sign of Christ's presence. Concrete liturgical acts take place within and by the ecclesial community (5). Let us make the distinction between a "principle" (or an accepted truth which does not set men in motion) and an "imperative" (or a truth which sets in motion and makes the whole of life dynamic). If we accept this distinction we would say that Christianity was running the risk of limiting itself to setting up a pile of "principles." Communities try to restore the original character of a radical "imperative". This is done first in the private lives of its members so as to subsequently manifest itself to others. Thus communities accentuate the double dimension of personal renewal and evangelizing action -- in this way trying to answer two of perhaps the most profound needs of today's Church.

Undoubtedly the community movement carries serious dangers with it, but they can be avoided if we who are Christians profoundly love that which is positive and forget about our man-made wisdom. To do this is to radically live in function of the faith, something which no doubt constitutes an important dimension of God's presence today.

(Next installment: The concrete mission of the Movement towards Community in a CLC. - The Characteristics of this Community of Christian Reference)

(5) Cf. SEMMELROTH, "Die Kirche als Ursakrament", Spanish edition "La Iglesia como Sacramento Original", I Part, Ch.3,1, Dinor, San Sebastian.

THE IGNATIAN PERSPECTIVE *

by J.C. FUTRELL S.J.

The Ignatian Perspective

St. Ignatius of Loyola, who lived over four hundred years ago, faced the problem of creating a unified Company of Jesus made up of men from very different cultural backgrounds. In the Deliberation of the First Fathers of 1539, which resulted in the decision to found the Company of Jesus, it is noted that after several discussions, the companions found themselves divided.

"Some of our group were French, others Spaniards, still others Savoyards or Portuguese; our views and opinions were diversified. We were in perfect accord in singleness of purpose and intent; namely, to discover the gracious design of God's will within the scope of our vocation. But when it came to the question of which means would be more efficacious and more fruitful, both for ourselves and for our neighbor, there was a plurality of views."

Noting that the Apostles themselves (Gal. 2:11) and many other holy men of the Church had experienced diversity of opinion and even open conflict, the companions pursued their communal discernment. One of the chief reasons they saw for their final decision that it was the will of God that they remain together and found the Company was that:

"Since our most merciful and loving Lord had seen fit to assemble and bind us to one another -- we who are so frail and from such diverse national and cultural backgrounds -- we ought not to sever what God has united and bound together. Rather, with each passing day we ought to confirm and strengthen the bond of union, forming ourselves into a single body".

Ignatius saw that the being of the Company of Jesus consists precisely in the actual union of all the living companions, union realized through the living principle of this union who is the Ignatian superior. The very being of the Company, then, has its source in the profound interior union of companions who are identified in spirit through personal commitment to the same common

* Second part of the article which appeared in Christus 18 (1971) n.69, cf. Progressio, March 1971 n.2, The Ignatian Perspective, The Problem Today.

vocation. Ignatius wrote that there could be no real separation of those whom the Lord "has joined together into one", and that the foundation of this union was that "all of us share one and the same spirit in our Lord".

Since the vocation of the companions in the Company of Jesus is precisely to be dispersed throughout the whole world on apostolic missions, the essential union which is the very existence of the Company could not be the physical union of members of a community living together, although such community living is of the first importance in the genesis of this interior union of Spirit. Ignatius explains in the Eighth Part of the CONSTITUTIONS the nature of the deep communion that will "unite the dispersed companions with their head and with one another."

In a key text of this Eighth Part he points out that the foundation of the mutual love of the companions is their personal love of God, which is the source of the individual vocation of each member to join himself to the Company for the apostolic service of Christ in companionship.

"For the union of the members with one another and with their head, the principal bond is the love of God our Lord, since, being united with the divine and highest goodness, the superior and the companions will very easily be united with one another by the same love, which will reach out to all men, especially to the body of the Company. So that charity, and in general all goodness, will help the union of the one with the other and to complete freedom from the worship of temporal values, wherein self-love, which is the principal enemy of this union, leads to deordination."

The communion of the Company of Jesus, then, is love. The mutual union and love of the companions, which is the being of the Company, results from the personal love of God of each of the companions, which is concretized for them in space and time in a common vocation -- the apostolic service of Christ in companionship. That which is the effective bond of union of all the members of the Company with one another and with their head is the profound commitment of each man to this common vocation which is the existential realization of his own love of God. Their mutual union of love for one another issues from the conscious sharing of the same life-ideal which is their communion embodied in community. Each member discovers his own life-response to God, his own vocation, in the common vocation of all.

(Continued on page 16)

(Roland Calcat's article : News from Latin America : continued)

Even before the publication in September of a special issue of "Progressio" on Latin America, we can say very briefly that none of the countries visited ever left the World Federation (contrary to what we had believed) nor had they had the intention of doing so. They all stated their adherence to the General Principles of the CLC World Federation. There was one exception -- the CLC youth group of Chile which is going to specify the nature of the structural ties they mean to have with the World Federation.

Moreover, in the last two years the youth CLCs especially have enjoyed an absolutely extraordinary development. This is particularly true in Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Argentina and most recently in Nicaragua. In Paraguay, even if the number of youth communities is smaller, we still have to point out that the rather remarkable viewpoints we found there show that quantity is compensated for by the quality of their work.

More on the adult level, we saw a real mushrooming of activity in the area of development for the more under-privileged -- especially in Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Argentina (in Rosario) -- and this is only a list of the countries where activity is especially spectacular. However, this action still should depend on more prior studies and should be fit into a total plan.

In Ecuador the promoter's return is expected after a year's absence; it is a situation that is very clearly hopeful.

We found the three overlapping bases of our concern to be at various stages of development:

- . the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the indispensable means for nourishing personal prayer;
- . community Deliberation as the privileged instrument for communal thought and decision;
- . the "Populorum Progressio" version of development as the touchstone of our apostolic life and of the projects selected.

To avoid cooling of enthusiasm it is above all essential to get to work immediately on a more stringent formation, one that is more systematic and in harmony with the demands of the continuous and progressive development of our young communities. But we are all too aware of the difficulties this presents to uselessly underline a point that we know the promoters consider to be the task of major importance.

There are three concrete points that come to the fore:

- . the setting up of a Latin American liaison committee with the appointment of an ecclesiastical assistant for Latin America;
- . the organization of a meeting for young people from all countries, with the idea of providing information and mutual sharing;
- . a continent-wide study of means of adequate formation, aimed at maximum help of the Christian Life Communities (Sodalities) of the different countries.

In these few lines we can neither condense the situation, life and accomplishments of the CLCs of Latin America -- nor our own remarks on them.

This is why we are preparing, with the participation of all the countries concerned, a special September issue entitled "Realities and Hopes in Latin America."

The strengthened contacts with the Latin American countries will greatly increase the World Federation's vitality and potential for service.

We must also say that each of our stops on the trip occasioned profitable dialogue with the leaders of national federations. They also provided very warm contacts with young people and adults, with laymen, priests and religious. And they included work sessions where we shared together our worries, experiences and plans for the future.

Father Paulussen and I returned home from the trip reassured and full of enthusiasm.

As for the countries we believed had withdrawn from the World Federation, we want to tell them how very sorry we are that such misunderstandings could come about. But we all know it is useless to look back -- except to learn the lesson of experience.

Roland CALCAT

Let's get acquainted...

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRIA

by Walter OBERMAIER

Austria is a small country situated more or less in the centre of Europe. It was, until the end of the first world war (1918) the centre of a great monarchy which was made up of what to-day is Hungary, Czechoslovakia, certain parts of Italy, Yugoslavia, Roumania, Poland and the Soviet Union; at present it is a republic of about 84,000 km² with 7,370,000 inhabitants. Of these more than 50% live in the cities (Vienna, the capital, has 1,640,000) and German is the mother-tongue of 98%. Austria is a "traditionally Catholic" country: 89% of the population belong, according to their baptism certificate at least, to the Roman Catholic Church. Our country is not the best off in Western Europe, but we have a relative prosperity, and extreme poverty -- compared with certain Latin-American and Asiatic countries -- does not exist. However, in spite of this, there is much to be done in our country to bring about a more just distribution of goods. What is especially necessary (but also very difficult) in a well-off society, is to lead all men to a more socially-conscious attitude and to make them more sensitive to the problems which we face to-day, both inside and outside our country.

Historical survey.

Such, briefly, is the background to the work of our Christian Life Communities. The Sodality of Our Lady in our country has a long history, having existed here since the 1570s. For a long time it was given much support from the ruling Hapsburg family as being groups devoted to the restoration of the Catholic Faith after the rapid strides made by Martin Luther's Reformation ("Counter-Reformation"). In the 16th and 17th centuries they were genuinely apostolic groups of astonishing vigour and total involvement. But this drive began to slow down in the 18th century and the Sodalities -- sharing the lot of the Jesuit Order -- were suppressed at the end of the century. Set up again in the middle of the last century, they became, as was the case in most other countries, a mass-movement with feminine and school-going predominance. This situation lasted, more or less, until the middle of this century, and, in some instances, until to-day. In order to be able to understand and pass just judgment on the present-day position of the Austrian Sodalities one must take into consideration this historical evolution.

An Austrian is generally not much inclined towards favouring upheaval and revolutionary transformations, but is rather seen as having conservative tendencies which are both positive and negative. This is particularly true of the members of the Sodalities. But one must also stress that the old-style Sodalities have succeeded, right up to our own days, in marking men in a decisive way and in forming Christians who show in their lives a real conviction and a great openness to the demands of the faith in the world.

Present position.

There are to-day 224 Sodalities which total 10,000 members, of whom about 50% are active. The Sodalities, almost without exception, are divided according to sex and profession; about 75% are for women -- schoolgirls, young women-workers, teachers, and women in liberal careers, etc. There is also a large number of school-groups, especially in boarding-schools which are grouped in diocesan associations (corresponding to the 9 Bundesländer of Austria) and are united in a national federation. A similar federation exists on the national level for students and young professionals and another one for the groups called "Cana Sodalities". These consist of groups of 6 to 8 couples and a priest, and have been in existence for some time. They meet in the house of one of the couples and are very active, having as their special objective service to the household and the family. All the other Sodalities (the majority) are organized according to the different dioceses. At the top of this structural system for the whole of Austria is the National Federation of the CLC/CM, which has its headquarters in Vienna. It was constituted, under its new form, in 1969, and functions to-day under the presidency of Dr. Günter BALLI and its promotor, Fr. John NEUREITER, S.J., with the aim of carrying out the renewal of our Sodalities according to the directives of the General Principles.

We have been able to achieve good results in this work by our efforts to set up what we call "CLC weekends", which aim at a slow transformation of conscience. Beginning from experience -- from the "how" of living Christian Life to-day -- which we were able to achieve in the European Deliberation at Chantilly and which is continuing still with us, in some groups, we have tried to bring home to the Sodalities the essentials of the General Principles. While it is clear that the General Principles have been well received everywhere, it does not follow automatically that a profound change takes place. One cannot branch out on a new life merely by Principles, by reports or by traditional-style meetings, but only by providing the possibility of participating in them and in realizing this life. Fr. Dischinger helped us to launch the first "CLC weekend" at the start of 1969 and its success was largely due to his presence. Since then we have continued to invite

to these weekends members of our Sodalities, men and women, married couples, priests and young people. With the help of a questionnaire sent to them in advance we have been able to study the main themes of the Principles in work-groups: spirituality, vocation, community, formation-programming. In all this we did not just merely ask the question: what does all that mean for us?, but also how do we live it out in practice? In this way we discovered together that the Principles are not just simple words, that they can become integrated into the reality of our daily lives when they are discovered and well understood in community: only then will they bear fruit. The experience of spiritual exchanges and meditation is also placed in evidence during these weekends; but these two days can only offer a first stimulus, as it were. For each participant must continue to live and to spread in his own Sodality what he has just been able to live during the weekend, i.e. the possibility of a genuine living in community on a continual opening-out towards others, first within his own group and then outside it. But this can only be accomplished slowly. There are also some attempts being made to set up a Christian Life Community within some Sodalities. Beginning from the needs of their lives and community, these attempt to live out the General Principles. It will be an essential task in our country thus to create authentic models, to form new groups, to offer them help and to set up the infrastructures necessary to permit a deep exchange of new experiences. Here we are thinking especially of those groups which will be able later on to function effectively on a regional level.

Next stage.

The next stage in this progression will be the Austrian Deliberation scheduled for 1972. This will permit a greater number of Sodality-members to experience, in a more profound manner, the method of communitarian life as Christians, of communitarian decision-making for our daily lives based on our faith, and of a lived-out brotherly love. The Deliberation will also take up the important theme of "Men on the fringe of society", which has been studied in Europe (Manresa 1970). Thus do we hope to take a great step forward.

One of the most important questions which presents itself to us is to find a method which will help us to interest more men to seek with us "to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith" (PG 3). At the moment we are reflecting very seriously on the means to be taken to free us from the traditional social strata which affect our Sodalities in order to enable us to reach all men of good will, for this is what to-day is most important and is what God asks of us. We do not yet know how the formation of these new groups will take place, nor what will be the decisions of the 1972 Deliberation, nor

even if the renewal of our communities will continue to grow in depth and extent. But after the work of the past two years we can have reason to be confident. The exchanges at the European level, especially the meetings at Chantilly (1969) and Manresa (1970), have been of great help. We also hope that "Progressio" will become an instrument which will allow for a fruitful worldwide exchange, and, we ask our friends throughout the world to share with us their experiences (experiments, successes, failures) as we, for our part, are ready to do with them. Perhaps will we thus succeed in discovering together what will bring us closer to our goal and what is preventing us from reaching it.

(The Ignatian Perspective: continued)

In the second part of the text, Ignatius explains that the mutual love which is grounded in each one's love of God, "the highest goodness", will be expressed through "charity and in general all goodness", which will help the "union of the one with the other". The dynamic mental structure of Ignatius is evident in this conception of the mutual union of the companions as constantly increasing through charity and goodness, rather than as an abstract union established once and for all by incorporation into the Company. The continuing being of the community which is the Company depends upon the ever deeper communion of mutual love of the companions uniting them in ever greater apostolic service of Christ in companionship, a mutual love grounded in a personal love of God so intense in each man that it would purify his soul of self-seeking and of self-love, and remove the greatest obstacle to the union which continually brings the Company to be.

It's a report, dry, it is true, but none-
theless exact. Behind the words try to
perceive the spirit and dynamism which
inspires

THE LAUNCHING of a CONTINENTAL EXPERIENCE

"Should we unite in order to help the maximum number of people to live a more apostolic life in the spirit of the Exercises? If so, under what form and by what means?" Such was the question submitted for the Deliberation of 44 members, coming from 10 European countries, meeting at Chantilly, France, in August, 1969.

This Deliberation is a follow-up of a relationship already existing for many years in Europe, especially on the level of promoters. From these 5 days of personal and common prayer, from reflection, listening, and exchanging ideas, there evolved the formation of a European Christian Life Community (12 members from 6 countries), called "European Equipe". They constitute a visible sign of a union universally acknowledged and desired. As a center for new creativity at the service of all European communities, their work for the next two years was to extend to these 3 fields:

- the renewal and practice of communal Deliberation. That at Manresa, 1970, founded on the idea of "the poor in our rich society, forced the participants to self examination and emphasized our responsibility as CLC in "the development of the whole man and of all men";
- the creation of a commission to delineate the essential elements in the formation of a Christian, living in today's secularized society;
- the issuing of a common message every 3 months appearing in the national bulletins, in order to develop a common spirit.

Did these first endeavors answer the actual needs of our communities? Did the national leaders find them helpful for the progress of their members? What were the difficulties which could be uncovered in a group discussion? Only an exchange of views in depth with presidents and promoters from different countries could give answers to these questions. So, the European Equipe took the initiative to invite them to a weekend workshop and 31 members from 9 countries met in

BRUSSELS, March 27 and 28.

At the last moment Italy and Switzerland were unable to attend, although they had contributed greatly to the preparation of this convention.

A Common Preparation

The presidents and promoters, in announcing their participation, had sent to the European Equipe some topics for discussion. These topics, proposed as questions or suggestions, corresponded to the pressing problems in the various countries. They can be listed under two types of problems which are enumerated below in an order of decreasing importance:

- 1) problems of service and action
 - the Spiritual Exercises
 - the vocation of CLC, their promotion and witness
 - the development, the progress of nations;
- 2) problems of organization
 - the "Chantilly" style of meetings (communal Deliberation)
 - the World Federation
 - the European Equipe
 - the work of the CLC among the youth
 - communications and exchanges
 - the relationship of the CLC with the Society of Jesus
 - the identity of the CLC within Church groups
 - the ecclesiastical assistant
 - the life of the groups
 - the Secretariates.

As soon as they were received, these topics in their original wording were put together in a document published one month prior to the meeting. This was to allow the participants to perceive the converging trends and to share their concerns.

Finally, the report from each country on the state of their groups helped in the drafting of a second document. This one sketched the European scene and pointed out the actual state and the evolution of the CLC in each country.

Two Days' Work.

The warm hospitality and the organization of our Belgian friends, surely put the participants in ideal working conditions and contributed greatly to the fraternal spirit of the weekend.

On the first morning, the general assembly determined the point of departure for all the work, according to the wishes expressed by the presidents and promoters. A period of meditation on the meeting of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10), a biblical scene which traces the fundamental attitudes of an apostle, disposed us to recognize our vocation and to act accordingly. Then, comments on the suggestions sent by various countries, followed by a presentation of the European activities already launched, introduced an exchange of ideas in which each delegation stated what it con-

sidered most important with regard to the CIC in its country. This very positive exchange of ideas revealed common points of interest, outlined solutions to problems and revealed very interesting points of view. The work was cut out for us. Upon the president's motion, the assembly decided to devote the afternoon to workshops on four areas which had frequently come to the fore during the preceding discussions:

- . the Spiritual Exercises,
- . formation in our Communities,
- . the "follow-up on Manresa", i.e. our work on the development of the whole man and of all men,
- . the role of the European Equipe.

The synthesis of the conclusions of the workshops prepared the conclusions of the following day and at the same time they outlined the objectives of our work in the future. Before adjourning with the liturgical celebration, Father FERARD in a doctrinal presentation invited the assembly to reflect upon the criteria of true prayer in the spirit of the Exercises.

The following morning specific steps to be taken were considered, the topics proposed were summarized and the outlines for the next steps were presented.

Looking forward to the Future

The need for sharing of ideas with foreign groups has been suggested many times. The desire to be in touch with them, to benefit from their experience, and to place the European contribution at their service in order to build together this Ecclesial community, all this led the assembly to stress the role and the mission of the World Federation. At the same time our sense of responsibility towards it was strengthened.

The European Equipe was accepted and confirmed in its mission. It is an informal group, European Christian Life Community, whose activities should be inspired by the desire to serve all the European groups. The Equipe received very specific requests from the presidents and promoters dealing with the following points:

- 1) Recognizing that the Spiritual Exercises are a personal experience determining the life of each member and serving as a foundation for the CIC, the presidents and promoters gave to the European Equipe the tasks:
 - . of providing the means necessary to insure their authentic propagation;
 - . of studying the possibilities of training retreat guides and spiritual counsellors, able to prepare and stimulate all the preparatory means for forming CIC members.

- 2) The need of a deeper study on the vocation, the nature, and the goal of the CLC led the assembly to make two decisions:
 - . to organize a meeting of the Chantilly type, having as its topic "the Christian Life Community";
 - . to publish a pamphlet presenting modern and complete notions about Christian Life Communities.
- 3) A proposal on further steps in our program for development, worked out by one of the workshops, was adopted. However, it was also pointed out that time was needed to put this decision into practice in different countries. The results of the Deliberation at Manresa must be studied by national committees, and, after preliminary investigation, there should be meetings according to linguistic regions (German, English, French) to exchange their results. Then, as a second step, a new Deliberation was foreseen on the European scene in order to obtain concrete and firm decisions.
- 4) Concerning communications between federations, it was pointed out that the exchange of documents was insufficient. Many ideas were also accepted:
 - . a new meeting of presidents and promoters April 30 and May 1, 1972 in London on a concrete program, which could be the study of common activities;
 - . invitations to members of other countries for participation in national initiatives;
 - . a visit to the national federations by members of the European Equipe.
- 5) The European Equipe was asked to prepare a financial program to cover the costs of various activities. The decision of requiring contributions from the different countries was accepted in principle.
- 6) Finally, each delegation present at the Brussels Convention was to submit its report before Pentecost. This document should report the discussions held, the decisions taken, and the structure of the convention.

These are the direct lines of action determined by the European presidents and promoters. They are to serve as a basis for all countries in their efforts to obtain a spirit of union and common achievement. Another result of these meetings, and not the least, is an identity of views and a unanimity of decisions, true signs of brotherly love.

José GSELL