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REALITIES AND HOPES

in

LATIN AMERICA

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EDITORIAL

This issue --the first of a series devoted to a single topic-- deals entirely with Latin America. Our readers might with justice think this an ambitious project, unless we limit its horizons, and also, at the very start, state precisely what its aim and its content will be.

Last May, PROGRESSIO gave a brief sketch of the trip undertaken by Roland CALCAT and Father PAULUSSEN to Latin America. During an entire month, they made contact with the Federations and the Christian Life Communities of twelve countries of that continent. Our readers recall that the trip had as its goal to let us know the true situation in Latin America following the Santo Domingo meeting. It aimed as well at tightening the bonds between the World Federation and all its members, for by the challenge of the last Assembly the Federation was made more aware of the need for this if it is to provide more effective service.

The trip was, for those who made it, a revelation, let us not hesitate to say it. All through these thirty days of welcomes, of meetings, of gatherings, was traced the profile of a more than ordinary apostolic action forged by the CLCs (Marian Congregations) of Latin America. The warm and friendly attitude everywhere allowed to surface in complete frankness the activities being achieved and the difficulties encountered, the problems of formation as well as the very concrete expectations in different countries. And, if there was need to strengthen the ties between the different Communities, the present contacts and the projects already in progress were proof of how strong are the bonds already existing.

This issue follows the path of the journey, its step-by-step itinerary. At every step, it presents the facts. They speak for themselves. There is no need to comment on them. They sketch for us an image admittedly incomplete, for the living reality of a community cannot be translated in a few lines. But still, these flashes tell us much of the work undertaken, of the questions it

raises, of the renewal that is taking place. Above all, they speak to us of the indefatigable zeal of communities truly involved in the changes taking place in their countries. One will not be surprised that this issue ends with a meditation on Our Lady, marking in this way the deep attachment to Mary that is a specific note of our Communities.

In the face of these facts, and to sustain the prodigious effort involved, a close cooperation between the Federations is much desired by them. It is this which will support the steps to be taken to develop or to reinforce the needed means of formation which are everywhere recognized and wanted by our Latin-American communities:

- a more intensive formation of the leaders of CLC in the school of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,
- beginning and developing the use of communal deliberation as the means par excellence to make possible the growth of the community in an attentive disponibility to the Spirit,
- coordinating and supporting mutual commitments, so that these respond evermore fully to the requirements for the development of the whole man and of all men, in the perspectives traced in 1968 by the Conference of Medellin and, just recently, in the congress of the laity at Caracas.

It is regrettable, of course, that this issue, following faithfully the stages of the journey, does not take account of what is happening in the countries which could not be visited in the course of the month of March. May we count on completing for our readers in the near future this first account? The prospect of contact before long with the other countries stirs us to make such a promise.

Whatever may be the imperfections and the gaps of this issue, it offers, we think, a panoramic view of a group of Communities at work. But, more than that, the witness that emerges from it cannot fail to cause the reader -- member of a Community -- to question himself about the quality of his personal adhesion to the Christian Life Communities. Is not such rivalry one of the best services that we can render? For their specific contribution to the common patrimony, we cannot thank enough our friends of Latin America.

José GSELL

MEXICO : Groups Most Active and With Closest Ties

March 1-4

The evening of March 1, Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN set foot on Mexican soil. There, waiting for them at the airport, is a delegation from the National Federation, along with many friends. Among them--Antonio SANTACRUZ, former president of the World Federation, founder and moving spirit in many apostolic achievements in Mexico. From their arrival till the moment they leave on March 4, they are the object of the most cordial and brotherly affection, of which there are many proofs. It is the prelude to the same warm reception in all the other countries.

It is obvious that the aim of the journey was not just to visit the groups and their achievements. What could one see in two or three days? Still our Mexican friends were intent on exhibiting some of their centers of activity in the capital. From the afternoon of March 2, our two visitors could recognize that the apostolate of the laity, developed above all at the time of the Calles persecution, still continued. If Fr. Paulussen knew already of the work of the Mexican Sodality, Roland Calcat was, on his part, particularly impressed by his visits to the schools, the clinic, the dispensaries, the centers of technical training for workers, all with lay members of our Communities as the core of their inspiration and leadership. "A true work of development in the sense of The Development of Peoples, looking to the integral formation of each man."

In the evening takes place the first encounter with the leaders of the groups. A very mixed gathering: adults and youth, workers and owners, men and women, but all of them really interested and committed. A very friendly meeting of welcome and of getting to know each other. There is a general exchange, in the course of which Ignacio ORENDAIN, Fr. VALLE, delegate of Fr. Provincial who was away, Fr. ALTAMIRANO, ecclesiastical assistant of the National Federation, Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN all speak. Afterwards, a reception would give plenty of opportunity for personal contacts with the young and the adults.

On March 3, a similar program groups the members of a Sodality of women around a Eucharistic celebration. These women are especially active in a great number of activities directed to both human and religious growth. The next visit gives an opportunity to

become acquainted with the achievements of a Sodality of workingmen: a retreat house (1650 retreats of 5 days' length in the course of the last 6 years; the workers come in the evening when they leave the factory and leave the following morning), schools, centers of technical training for the young workers. During a second meeting with the leaders, the discussion concentrates on the General Principles, the Spiritual Exercises, the young, the larger groupings. As on the night before, it is followed by a period of informal exchanges which is extremely fruitful. A final meeting would leave room for dialogue on the question of communications between the National Federation and local communities.

Three salient characteristics, common to all the groups met here, particularly struck our visitors:

- an energetic spirit, which knows how to translate ideas into results,
- a very brotherly spirit, with a preference for the very poor,
- a spirit open to accept any new ideas capable of giving life and effectiveness to Sodalities.

But, before leaving Mexico, let us allow to speak for themselves some figures which illustrate this "energetic spirit" of the Mexican groups. We give here only some of them, omitting the work of many other sections involved with charity, the missions, the seminaries....

Numbers of Sodalities.....	100
Catechetical centers.....	850
Catechists.....	4 300
Children catechized.....	95 000
Adults catechized.....	10 000
Schools and other centers of formation....	73
Dispensaries and medical teams.....	34
Recreation centers.....	6

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NICARAGUA : Two Generations

March 4-7

At Managua there exists since long ago a Sodality of Men, extremely active. This periodical has spoken of it on many occasions. At the First Congress of the World Federation held at Rome in 1954, 32 delegates from Nicaragua were present, the majority being members of this group. In 1959, while attending the Second Congress of the World Federation in the United States, they made contact with the leaders of the American organization of Caritas, and on returning to their country, established the national Caritas of Nicaragua, still directed today by members of this Sodality.

Their program of activities is impressive. Let us mention first of all "La Vivienda de Mi Hermano", elaborated by the technique of specialists in human development. One of its achievements: a program of 2500 housing units with running water, baths and sewage disposal, and with community facilities managed by the people themselves.

The same Sodality of Managua also manages the first retreat house in Central America. During their stay, Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN were able to visit the retreat house while a retreat was going on, the place where new houses were under construction, a sample of modern urbanization, the Bureau of Caritas, and the principal leaders of the Sodality, among whom were Fr. Fernandez de PINEDO and Mr. STEINER.

The evening of March 5, a meeting brings together the leaders of all the groups of Managua. Among them are Fr. Valentin MARTINEZ, national ecclesiastical assistant and Julio Cisneros SOLORZANO, president of the youth groups. At this meeting there is a strong representation of youth. There are, in fact, quite a number of CLCs here which have taken the General Principles as the basis of their activity. The meeting goes on for many hours, with the youth insisting on the need for political involvement and regretting the lack of real information on what CLCs are in the world. Many hands go up, people interrupt. Two generations, inspired by the same spirit, but with totally different expressions. Two ways of living, which seek to mutually complete each other. Fr. Paulussen explains the main lines of the General Principles, and the dialogue which follows is so passionate that the youth demand to have another meeting the next day. Need we add that this unscheduled meeting was even more positive and more fruitful?

VENEZUELA : The Country That Gave Birth to "Fe y Alegría"

March 7 - 10

One day in 1955, Fr. Jose Maria VELAZ is visiting with Socialists the slum section of Caracas. It is a "historic" visit. They feel that something more must be done to assure effective help. And this idea translates itself into the movement "Fe y Alegría", which continues today, but now as an international work.

"Fe y Alegría" (Faith and Joy) believes that education is the best tool for the social and economic development of the nations of Latin America. Since 1955, this organization has built more than one hundred training schools--primary, secondary, teacher-training, agricultural, technical. One finds them in Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Bolivia, El Salvador and Nicaragua. One can envision that, in a few years, "Fe y Alegría" will be established throughout the continent. Its schools are always built in the poor sections and the local populace is involved in erecting them. One finds oneself in the face of true urban planning, designed in a way well adapted to family life in this area.

The spirit of this pilot organization animates the meeting of March 9, held at San Ignacio High School with the group of ecclesiastical assistants, among them Fr. Jose Maria SALAVERRIA, the national assistant. Roland CALCAT gives a report on the last meeting of the World Federation at Santo Domingo, explaining the source of the confusion that followed the meeting. All here present accept the General Principles and all want definitely to be affiliated with the World Federation. The groups of university students and of young workers existing here use the name CLC and strongly desire to make contact with the national organizations in other countries of the continent. They also desire the early establishment of a Latin-American secretariat. There is a strong demand too for a version of the General Principles geared to the young. An excellent meeting in which those present have understood remarkably well the importance of action directed towards the development of the whole man and of all men, in the sense of the document of Medellin.

But let our visitors speak for themselves, by excerpting from the periodical "Noticias" a portion of the interview that Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN gave to Fr. Jose Manuel RIOS. "It is well to state that we are not a third-order of the Society of Jesus,

neither do we limit ourselves to the Exercises. We hold fast to other elements in the spirituality of Ignatius, as for example, the letters he wrote to lay people of his time. We relate always to Ignatian spirituality, but as lay people, and this takes account of a mutual autonomy with the Society of Jesus as a religious order. The Jesuits remain the persons best qualified to transmit to us the core of this spirituality."

"We leave with real appreciation, impressed with the very positive welcome given to our ideas and orientation. Personally", added Roland Calcat, "I had the feeling that those who took part in the meeting at San Ignacio High School were people who were achieving the synthesis of personal prayer, community living and apostolic action."

COLOMBIA : A Magic Word, "Medellin"

March 10-13

It is Father Dario ARANGO, ecclesiastical assistant of the National Federation of Colombia, who meets Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN at the Bogota Airport. They will visit, starting next day, the Sodality of Medellin, known for its extraordinary activity. Who has not heard of Medellin, the city where the bishops of Latin America drew up in 1968 the celebrated document on development? But before going there, a first contact with Fr. VELA allows them to become acquainted with the Latin-American Pastoral Center, attached to CELAM. The young people there get the benefit of a double training at the same time in both catechetics and development.

At Medellin, the energy of just one Sodality has given birth to:

- a cardio-vascular surgical clinic of high technical quality, open to all, rich and poor. Managed by the Sodality, one also finds there many Sodalist surgeons and physicians.

- a surgical dental clinic at the service of the poor, where about ten dentists are on the permanent staff.
- finally, the Sodality Center itself.

A retreat house for the Spiritual Exercises is to be established soon. Finally, our two visitors will also see a shop for apprentices in sewing, where young native women are trained in dressmaking and where the apprentices receive remuneration from the sale of the products made.

A meeting with sixty or so of the Sodality leaders will let the question be raised of the Exercises and the difficulties met with in them. It will allow also a very free discussion on the General Principles, which receive the full adherence of all the officers present. Once more is expressed the deep desire for a closer cooperation with the World Federation. The idea of a congress for youth and of the establishment of a Latin-American committee receive the approval of a large part of the audience.

ECUADOR : "At Any Cost We Want the World Federation"

March 13-15

The ecclesiastical assistant of the National Federation, Fr. Juan CABALLERO, was in Europe.. It is the president of a CLC of professional men and Fr. Jaime ACOSTA who greet Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN at the Quito Airport. Fr. Acosta knows the CLCs perfectly and is very involved in giving the Exercises to youth.

It should be said that the General Principles had already, over a period of time, been welcomed very favorably by some 30 groups in Ecuador, for they opened the path to a renewal in the spirit of Vatican II and in the wider perspectives of the universal Church. This international, this world character of the Christian Life Communities had found there a strong echo, which the gatherings and meetings in the course of this day would confirm.

A first meeting with the leaders of the Community of men, whose assistant, Auxiliary Bishop CHIRIBOGA, is known for his dynamic attitude. One finds oneself here in the presence of members very involved in secular responsibilities, who accept fully the lines of renewal expressed in the General Principles. They are strong in declaring repeatedly their absolute determination to remain united to the World Federation.

Sunday, March 14, a meeting takes place at the close of Mass with a Community of workingmen. The 80 participants, youth and adults, greet with emotion the president of "their organization", their French friend who knows from his own experience the workingman's life. The discussion centers on labor union questions. This meeting certainly stands among the most profound exchanges that our visitors experienced in the course of their travels.

A visit to St. Augustine Retreat House is another unforgettable experience. Everything is practical and spotless. "Here one would like to begin his retreat at once." The dialogue with the director of the retreat house confirms the fact that here a real effort is made to assure the true Exercises to the greatest possible degree.

At the University Center of Quito, numerous conversations with Jesuits working in the student milieu focus on the difficult situation under different aspects--religious, cultural, social and political. If the General Principles are here accepted too, still there is insistence on a version adapted to the young.

PERU : A New Formula for the Ecclesiastical Assistant

March 15-17.

Three young laymen and two priests were waiting patiently at the Lima Airport, where unforeseen formalities delayed the arrival of the European visitors. Everywhere the same cordial welcome, the same warm greetings, the same affection. The Christian Life Community--it is not a slogan, it is a living reality.

The first meeting with the ecclesiastical assistants of Lima takes place in the parish of San Pedro. There a Community of 70 adults is involved in liturgical renewal and is active in the functioning of the parish. Roland Calcat presents the principles at the base of the World Federation, insisting on the essential points which continue a tradition of several centuries in a way that meets the needs of men today.

In the afternoon, a very worthwhile meeting with fifty young people and several assistants. A discussion clarifies the problems arising from the Santo Domingo Convention. The comments and the questions about communal deliberation are particularly interesting. All are in agreement that the practice of such deliberation requires a certain maturity and the personal experience of the authentic Spiritual Exercises.

The visit to the parish of Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados lets them meet Carlos LECAROS ZAVALA, president of the youth CLCs, and a Community of young engaged in numerous educational and social-action efforts--a pilot CLC for the integral formation of the young members. Fr. Edouardo BENITO is ecclesiastical assistant of this group.

Two other visits give an opportunity to gauge the thrust of CLC, one to Immaculate Conception High School, where there is a very active group; the other to the Teachers' College. The formation of future teachers includes an introduction to the pedagogy of development and the planning of a program of fundamental reform of education.

Fr. NORIEGA-ARCE, national ecclesiastical assistant, is also a pastor. So his desire to discharge more effectively "the responsibility for the Christian formation of groups" has led him to seek the establishment of a team of national assistants. This has just been done. Its members have divided the work, one being charged especially with high schools, another with university students, the third with the Communities in parishes. A distribution of work, there is a new formula which should further the progress already made by the CLCs of Peru.

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BOLIVIA: Witness of Youth

March 17-19

La Paz, of which the airport is situated at an altitude of 12,000 feet, is the capital of the poorest country in Latin America. The statistics are definite on this point.

Is it this almost total destitution that has moulded the Bolivian communities into cells each with a definite influence? At La Paz, the Indian population represents about 85% of the total number of inhabitants. The proportion is just about the same in the CLCs. All of the groups in this country have begun the renewal proposed by the General Principles.

How explain that the Bolivian delegation waiting at midnight at the airport to greet the two representatives of the World Federation includes three members who have arrived from Sucre after a journey of 16 hours by train? The only answer is the extraordinary brotherhood which knows no difficulties and is unsparing of self.

In the same way, a meeting manages to bring together thirty or so leaders from La Paz, Sucre and Santacruz--all young, boys and girls of the secondary schools and of the university. The information they furnish is quite precise: all of them have a Community meeting every week, all have a common bond and are active in the poorer sectors. The weekly meeting lasts 3 hours. It includes the Eucharistic celebration, a discussion, and an exchange of information, and is the "high point" of community life.

Another gathering of the CLC preparatory teams brings together about a hundred youth of 13 to 17 years of age. They represent 13 groups and each of the 13 reads a report of their activities. These groups too have a weekly training session. There are students from all the schools in the city among them. One cannot help being impressed by the seriousness and the energy of this witness of youth.

Discussion in depth with Fr. Camillo CABANACH, the national ecclesiastical assistant, with Ariel TANGO ALVAREZ, the president, and with other leaders help fill out the picture. From these exchanges it becomes clear that the work achieved by our Communities grows out of a profound sense of the Church and a real spirit of sacrifice, and that it is carried on in humility, in poverty and in hope.

CHILE : The Problem of Structures

March 20 - 22

During the two days spent in Chile, the dialogue continues to be with the young Communities, and with Fr. Gustavo ARTEAGA, national ecclesiastical assistant.

The first encounter gives evidence of a very deep commitment and a grasp of the meaning of the faith, traits that are both characteristic of the new generation, notably in Latin America. The exchange focuses chiefly in social and political involvement. A discussion ensues on Marxism, on Maoism. In the face of the striking inequalities, how can one be surprised at the revolt that is rumbling in the hearts of the young, how can one not feel challenged by the stagnation of development? In this profound crisis, what is our Christian witness? How do we translate our solidarity and our commitment into the integral development of all men? The questions are deep, the views various as to what action ought to be taken. The discussion goes on for many hours.

A second meeting will center on questions about the World Federation. While the General Principles are recognized and well thought of in their new form, the group shows reservations about any structures, including those of the Federation. A discussion follows. Doubtless structures can sometimes prevent spontaneity in initiatives and creativity in persons or in groups. And with reason one ought to criticize mistakes. But, if the "structures" intended and arranged are really channels of communication making possible mutual aid, discernment and concerted activity, then the action of some will be reinforced by the support and encouragement of others. The interesting discussion continues.

The idea of a Congress of Youth in Latin America meets a very favorable hearing from the group and they declare themselves ready to support the organization of such a gathering.

ARGENTINA : The Oldest National Federation

March 22 - 26

The desire to coordinate efforts and to further mutual aid between the Marian Congregations had led Argentina to establish,

already in 1924, a national federation. This step was soon followed by other countries. All the same, as the World Federation representatives got off the plane at Buenos Aires, it was the delegation from the first federation that they were privileged to meet and to greet.

The trip in from the airport to University College of San Salvador gives an opportunity for the first contact with the national leaders, in particular with Jose Luis TESTA, the president and Fr. Luxorio RUIZ BILBAO, the assistant.

The program for their stay in Argentina looks to contacts with the Communities in two important centers--Buenos Aires and Rosario, which lies about 250 miles to the north of the Capital.

In the first of these meetings, held in a parish hall in Buenos Aires, they meet about twenty CLC leaders. These Communities are very involved in pastoral work. Among the members present, one finds the "old faithful" of the earliest days, in particular the former president of the national federation and former member of the Executive Council of the World Federation, Federico VIDELO ES CALADA, Dean of the Faculty of Law. The discussion is lively, concerned with the concept of the apostolate, missionary activity, community, communal discernment-- all questions very basic in the CLC way of life.

The next morning, a warm welcome at the railroad station of Rosario by the chief leaders of the diocesan federation. There are meetings in turn with the diocesan assistant, with the archbishop of the place, with the auxiliary bishop, and with those in charge of various diocesan works. Following this, a general meeting of all the CLC members. The officers of the different Communities give their reports. Here as in other countries one feels the influence of the document of Medellin on development. The discussion bears on the importance of the Exercises and the formation of those who direct them. A concelebration in honor of the Annunciation marks the end of this stage. Then all of them, commemorating World CLC Day, gather around in joyful agapes.

On their return from Buenos Aires, another celebration of the "world day" unites the leaders from the city at a feast typically Argentinian. Here in joy and friendship are sealed the ties between the World Federation and "the first National Federation in the world".

PARAGUAY : Country of the Guarani Reductions

March 26 - 28

The experience of the Guarani Reductions, an original creation of the Jesuits in the 17th and 18th centuries, is proof that social and even political involvement of priests is not an invention of our time. "During a century and a half, from 1610 to 1768, through out immense sections of South America, embracing most of present-day Paraguay and a part of Uruguay, thousands of Indians lived happily according to the spirit and the morals of the gospel, in a republic, under a regime authentically communistic." (1)

It is not surprising that Fr. Miguel SANMARTI, national assistant of CLC, is at the same time professor of sociology and member of the Center for Social Research and Action in Asunción, the Paraguay capital.

The CLCs of Paraguay have studied and mastered the document of Medellin. From it, they have understood and remembered that "this gathering of Latin-American bishops recommends the creation of groups of young people, who involve themselves in all sorts of activity, in accord with their own interests, assuring a gradual and ever-growing direction of these activities by the young themselves, and developing among themselves the qualities necessary for the formation of leaders." That is certainly the line that the youth CLCs of Paraguay have taken. It is the constant preoccupation that stems from their meetings and gatherings.

Problems in formation are here a priority. The young are introduced to problems of development both by courses in theory and by practical action. A great concern for the right method and approach inspires the movement as a whole.

The meeting with some of the young leaders and with Edouardo FRANCO and Fr. SANMARTI dwells on the relations between the National Federation and the World Federation, and on the organization of a future congress of young Latin-Americans. Here as elsewhere, this latter proposal seems to respond to the need for better mutual understanding, and to give promise of greater collaboration, seen more and more as indispensable.

The preamble of the General Principles is well grasped. It has been summed up wonderfully by the CLC youth of Paraguay when they say, "a response to the call of Christ, a total commitment lived in community, as a sign of the presence of love--that is the idea that inspires us." And, in fact, that is the road which we are invited to travel.

(1) Clovis Lugon, La Republique des Guaranis, Coll. Foi Vivante, Ed. Economie et Humanisme et Editions Ouvrieres, 1970

BRAZIL: Strong and Popular Marian Movement

March 28 - 30

Under a torrential rain that inundated the streets and squares of Rio de Janeiro, Roland CALCAT and Fr. PAULUSSEN were greeted in brotherly fashion by Moacyr VELLOSO, president of the National Confederation of Marian Congregations, and by Fr. Jose COELHO DE SOUZA, the assistant.

Forming part of the national organization are about 80 diocesan federations, comprising some 1200 local groups and a national federation of students. This says clearly the reach the movement has had in the course of its history. The Sodalists have to their credit many initiatives in all sections of the country, having as their goal social and cultural development (reading courses, libraries,...), medical and social assistance (both for those in hospitals and those at home), religious formation (catechetics, use of audio-visual means,...). Let us notice too some characteristics of the Brazilian movement: a very large majority of the members are men, all of them active, and proud to use the name "Os Marianos". This tells us of the deep attachment to Our Lady which is an essential element in the spirituality of our Brazilian friends.

The first exchange takes place in the course of a meeting that lasts from morning till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Taking part in it are many of the national leaders, and it offers the opportunity to explain and to clarify the new version of the General Principles. These are the basis of our Communities as a whole--their foundation. No doubt the way in which they are expressed can vary in different countries, depending on the milieu of a country or its past experiences. The diversity that results should even be something that enriches the union that we are aiming to effect.

The Brazilian way of expressing our spirit would become very clear in the course of the evening meeting, which brought together 300 members of the Diocesan Federation of Rio. Among them are representatives of the new generation, boys and girls, enthusiastic and aware. It is the monthly meeting, a bit more solemn this time because of several speeches. But all the same, what a climate of dedication, of friendship, of unity.

How could one fail to be impressed by the "declaration" of the youth who state: "Youth in our days stirs with profound preoccupations and nourishes within itself bright hopes. Preoccupations, because it holds within itself extraordinary courage, not always well directed or put to good use. Hopes, because youth represents,

at this moment of history in which we live, something quite extraordinary: a high degree of heroism, a hunger for truth, an effort to acquire moral values, an integration into the life of the community, a willingness to shoulder responsibility, a decision to take part in the building of a future filled with love. (...) We are aware of our mission and of our responsibilities." Vision such as this, does it not give us reason to hope? If to this we add the countless other examples of vision and dedication revealed in this journey through Latin America, do we not have good reason to hope that our Communities will carry out effectively their mission in the world of today, faithful to the spirit of their beginnings?

P R O G R E S S I O

- offers a "charger" for reflection on real life subjects to stimulate our personal study and group exchange
- publishes articles or documents essential for the comprehension and deepening of the spirituality of the CLC
- sets forth the significant experiences of the life and activity of our communities
- draws together diverse people by presentation of a country and its communities
- aims at reflecting accurately the forward march of a lay movement at the service of the world of today

THAT IS WHY

confident of the loyalty and the support of its readers

P R O G R E S S I O

earnestly urges every reader to make it his concern to secure a new subscriber for the periodical by March, 1972.

"MARY OF NAZARETH OF THE THIRD WORLD"

by José Antonio Esquivel, s.j.

Along the mountains, the roads and the footpaths of my continent of Latin America trudge our country women carrying on their heads jars and containers filled with water. Their faces marked by the sun and by toil. Women who know nothing of luxuries like a refrigerator or television, or even a movie theatre.

Their houses have earthen floors or perhaps some poorly placed boards. One or two chairs woven of willows and with four short poles. A bare table which knows nothing of varnish and is certainly not at all "in style".

Women of my continent who smell of the earth. Who know no other spices or liquids than the water that falls, running down upon and washing their undernourished bodies, and the few rags that cover them.

Their time is today, their life one of constant sacrifice and of trust in God.

Young faces aged by the sun and by labor. Like land that has been worked over. Veiny hands that know neither creams nor cosmetics. Deep eyes, serene, which know tears and know hope.

They say, "we know nothing of letters nor of figures", but, yes, they know God. Out of a faith and a humility that would touch even the most learned of theologians.

Knowing these women with faces blackened by the hearth, with brawny muscles and with hoping eyes, I discovered Mary of Nazareth. Today it is said that devotion to the Virgin Mary is dying. They say, "we are preoccupied with the Third World, with its men, its women..." And it is in that preoccupation, there exactly, that I discovered a world which shouts and clamors for a dawn where we meet the person, without creams or cosmetics or artistic idealizations, of Mary.

There is no need to repeat what the Holy Scriptures say to us. Mary is that woman of the fields, with the calloused feet, with the forlorn eyes, but with hope, who knows the burden of the jar of water on her head, who "knows nothing of letters nor of figures", but, yes, of God.

Mary is the model of a mother, the model of the woman of the Third World.

The more we set about involving ourselves in the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of our continent, the more will we discover the Christ of today through Mary of the Third World.

If as Christians we are really anxious and desirous of involving ourselves with the poor of the earth, this involvement furthers our identification with Mary.

Our devotion to Mary, Virgin and Mother of Christ Jesus, will not diminish if in the Virgin, stripped of all external trimmings, we discover Mary of Nazareth of the Third World. The Mother who suffers, who cries, who works, who hopes and who trusts, the handmaid of the Lord.

Hail, Mary, of the Third World,
full of grace, you who know pain, know the anxieties and the sub-human conditions of your people, the Lord is with you, with all who suffer, who hunger and thirst for justice, who know neither letters nor figures.

Blessed are you among all the women of our roads and pueblos. Of furrowed faces, of brawny muscles, of calloused hands, of forlorn eyes, but with hope.

Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Because without Him, our life and the struggle for human dignity has no meaning.

Holy Mary, holy, a thousand times holy, by your life, by the times that you carry water, that you smudge your face at the hearth, trusting and hoping in God. He has made you Mother of God.

Pray for us sinners, for it is our fault, in one way or another, by our egoism and our envy, that you, joined with the rest of the women and men of the Third World, suffer subhuman conditions, totalitarian governments, wars and blood and hatred.

Now, so that we change, so that there be a conversion of man toward your Son.

And at the hour of our death, so that the Lord have mercy on all who have offended you, you and Him, in our brothers, in the men and women of a world which is struggling desperately for Life. Amen.

"The new image of Latin-American man demands a creative effort in all sectors: public authorities willing to promote with energy that which responds to the most important needs of the common good; technicians who plan in terms of the concrete means available; families and educators who awaken and give direction to responsibilities; integration of all individual efforts in the accomplishment of a common task; and finally, the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit that gives life out of the dynamism of a love which transforms and personalizes."

(Excerpt from the Document of Medellin, August-September, 1968)

MEDELLIN

LIMA

"The Gospel preached in an authentic fashion to an oppressed man necessarily fulfills the function of communicating an awareness, helps him to realize his dignity as a person and his situation, which is that of spoliation and injustice. For there is no way to evangelize without engaging in the struggle against the unjust situation."

(Excerpt from the Declaration of the Peruvian Bishops, August, 1971)

"We ask of the Church (...) a teaching which is really liberating (...) and which contributes efficaciously to the change that our nations are calling for. (...) We propose giving a new scope to education and to evangelization."

(Excerpt from the Declaration of the Laity, gathered at Caracas August 22 - 28, 1971)

CARACAS

RECIFE

"Whether one knows it or not, whether one wants it or not, those who join together in the cause of justice and of love, building the road to peace, are, by that very fact, Christians, and Christ marches with them."

(D. Helder Camara, Archbishop of Olinda and Recife)