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our authors today

Father Jean Claude DHOTEL sj, born in 1926, assistant chaplain of Association Vie Chrétienne in France since 1963, has been both editor-in-chief and then director of the review VIE CHRETIENNE. He is known especially for the publications that have appeared in the Vie Chrétienne Series, such as his "The Whole Man, All Men", and very recently "Ignatius Loyola, Who Are You?", of which we make mention in the present issue. Let us call attention too to his thesis on "The Origins of the Modern Catechism", published by Aubier, Paris, in the collection, Théologie. He is the ecclesiastical assistant for the European CLC Team, and has been of great help to communities of lay people in their research, by his translation and adaptation for practical use of writings on discernment and decision-making.

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Father Luis GONZALEZ sj, formerly Jesuit Provincial in Toledo, Spain, is now Director of the Center for Ignatian Spirituality in Rome. Born in 1916, he exudes energy, optimism and openness. The courses, lectures and publications of the Center have done much to develop and spread Ignatian spirituality in modern form. He is a member of the Work Group on the Spiritual Exercises of the European CLC Team, and helped prepare and conduct "Chantilly II", the Community Deliberation held by CLCs of Europe in 1972.

ON RETURNING FROM AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR (1)

The itinerary was inviting. Did it not envision a series of steps that would allow us to meet Christian Life Communities with which, up till now, the World Federation had had but little contact? A first stop in Ethiopia arranged for us meetings in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Harar. Four hundred miles of winding roads of the high Madagascar plateau took us from Tananarive to Fianarantsoa with stops at Antsirabe and Ambositra. Nine days passed in South Africa saw our gatherings grouped around three centers: Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. A first stop at Bulawayo followed by two days in Salisbury offered us our first view of the CLC in Rhodesia. Then Zambia with various meetings at Lusaka and Kabwe, from where we passed into Tanzania. There all our meetings were in the Diocese of Moshi, at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, highest peak of Africa, which with its 19,000 feet dominates a landscape of banana and coffee trees. A meeting at Mombasa and several at Nairobi familiarized with life and activity in Kenya. Restrictions now in effect prevented us from going to Uganda. Some excellent contacts in Zaire and a visit to INADES (Institute for the Economic and Social Development of Africa) (2), launched by the Jesuits at Abidjan in Ivory Coast, completed a trip that lasted

(1) As announced in our last issue, the Executive Council authorized three of its members, Father Rieman, Nicholas Roorda Van Eysinga and José Gsell to visit the CLCs of Africa and Madagascar. They return just as this issue is going to press and here convey sketchily their first impressions, while awaiting a detailed account which will give a fuller picture.

six weeks.

This rapid listing of places is enough to show that the impressions gathered and the discoveries made were many, but that they remain partial. The personal contacts with CLC leaders were fruitful, focusing essentially on the pedagogy and the formation specific to the way of life and of service of the Christian Life Communities. They need of course to be pursued if this first mutual exchange is to flower and bear fruit both in the growth of the local and national communities and in the African and Malagasy contribution to the world community of CLC. But it remains true that the ties established are solid and that it is much desired that they be strengthened. The expected participation this summer of many African and Malagasy delegates in the International Leaders' Course and in the General Assembly is a first step in this direction.

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Though rapid, this trip through the different countries allows one to experience flash impressions, which however do not really do justice to the many-faceted reality. All the same, let us mention some predominant impressions that will help us grasp better the reality of our Communities as they are inserted and rooted in a given local situation and cultural context. The situation taken as a whole is complex and varied. The social, economic and political data differ according to country. But a common characteristic in the majority of countries visited seems to be the surge of young nations towards the attainment of their development by methods which reflect their own personality. One senses in and through many different expressions and gatherings the dawning of a legitimate national pride, which gives the right to be oneself; Malagasy in Madagascar, Zambian in Zambia. At the same time, one feels the inevitable growing pains of a world in change, in search of a fusing of the modern world with traditional culture. One must mention too the sadness that seizes one there where racial segregation or the domination of one group over others still holds sway. It is a reality that weighs very heavily.

(2) We will have the occasion to present INADES in one of our future issues.

The faith and the Catholic Church seem on the whole to be making progress. Many meetings in seminaries impressed us by the number and quality of the African clergy. Still, we were always told that the number was less than that needed. They kept looking forward to and insisting on the contribution that the laity could make to the work of evangelization. Finally, we were often moved in seeing the work done by the missionaries, real pioneers of the faith, knowing how to efface themselves and to put their competence at the service of a young Church intent on basing itself on African and Malagasy values and on the patrimony proper to each country.

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The contacts, exchanges and encounters that we had in the different countries put us in the presence of diverse CLC realities. Let us try to sketch the main lines.

First of all the experience of three countries in which CLC was launched four or five years ago. A recent experience, certainly, but dynamic and oriented according to the characteristics proper to our way of life. An advance, taking account of the milieu, of the country in which they were developing, and translating itself often by clear and courageous apostolic options. Beginnings truly promising. We were struck, for example, in a meeting of thirty or so leaders of CLC, by the quality and the depth of the exchange between members of different races. Community life and community sharing were a reality which showed well how long the path they had already travelled. In another place, we took part at a World CLC Day: 400 African (that is, black) members, half men, half women, without counting the babies who "followed" the discussions, securely installed on the backs of their mothers. They had centered their day on the family, the promotion of the family cell, the development of their community, their ties with the world movement. The international leaders' course which will take place in Rome this coming July has, even before being implemented, stirred up the desire to multiply it: thus one of the countries is planning a similar experience for the leaders of its Communities next December. In a black African seminary, we met

a CLC composed of seminarians. Eight of them were giving each day two hours of their time (between noon and two o'clock) to teaching reading, writing and all subjects to 200 children of the surrounding territory. These are but some examples among many...

There are also--we encountered them here or there--former Sodalties of Our Lady which have entered or are trying to enter on a process of renewal. If this process is still only at its beginning--there are many reasons to explain this--the chances of an evolution seem good, considering the concern and the quality of the leaders. Their members generally pursue an intense activity in the parishes. We were able to see once more how important are the international exchanges, the relations that they bring about, the whole reality and life of our world Community, for they advance the collective growth of the CLCs. They break the isolation of groups, put at the disposition of all the sum of CLC experience, make possible a true sharing, confirm or correct the experience both of one and of the other, and stimulate our sense of responsibility.

Finally, we must add that we were able to make very interesting contacts in three countries where CLC does not yet exist and interest there a certain number of persons. The presentation of the General Principles and of their concrete expression in the life of different countries often corrected an image based on certain misconceptions or past experiences.

These exchanges in so many meetings of communities, of leaders, of ecclesiastical assistants--on what subjects did they focus? What were the questions that, in line with the level of development of the groups, came up for discussion? Let us mention those occurring most often, while stressing how the sharing in the course of such a trip is mutually enriching.

The initiation into the way of life of CLC made up the core of most of the meetings. Together we sought the important steps of formation involved in the growth and experience of a Christian Life Community. An experience that is personal, leading to the gift of self of the apostle formed in the school of the Spiritual Exercises. A community experience which follows, which supports the

personal evolution of the members and prepares them for communal discernment. A global experience which takes hold of a person in all the dimensions of his life, helping him to unify them. To the exchanges bearing on precise points of formation were often added discussions on the Africanization of CLC, the expression of their own African or Malagasy identity. With the help of interpreters we followed and participated in meetings in Zulu, Shona, Swahili... Everywhere the same concern: to rethink one's Christianity and to express it by means of one's way of life.

There is much that would merit being mentioned here if we were not limited by having to write this at the last minute. But that cannot prevent us from highlighting once more the warmth and hospitality of the welcome we received both in Africa and Madagascar. It touched our hearts. And as we close, we see again those smiling faces, yesterday unknown, that we left behind, with what regret...

José GSELL

PERSONAL CONVERSION, COMMUNITY LIFE
AND APOSTOLIC COMMITMENT

by Jean Claude DHOTEL s.j.

To prepare ourselves for community discernment, let us begin by calling to mind the link that exists between personal conversion, community life and apostolic effectiveness, whether personal or communitarian.

One question to settle at the start: is this link necessary, that is, does personal conversion necessarily give birth to a community and apostolic approach of a certain style? A simple look at the ensemble of spiritualities inspired by the Gospel obliges us to answer no: the Gospel has been the inspiration of both solitary hermits and of contemplative and active communities, of apostles working together and of free-lancers... Every spirituality takes its rise from the contemplation of Christ, but while Christ is one, the eyes that look at him are different according to temperaments.

Another example is still more striking: one knows how much St. Ignatius owes to the Benedictines of Montserrat. Yet the spirituality of St. Ignatius is far removed from the Benedictine spirituality. St. Benedict has "seen" Christ "come to live among us", literally "he has pitched his tent among us". The Benedictine order rests then on implantation; his apostolate is one of radiation, like a lighthouse planted on a rock: that is what the abbeys wish to be. Saint Ignatius, he, has "seen" Christ as "he who is sent and who sends". The Society of Jesus rests then on "mission", which supposes mobility; its apostolate is that of contact, like that of Saint Paul.

On the other hand, every spirituality is coherent. If a link between its diverse elements appears in the experience of the founder, it becomes necessary for all those

who wish in their turn to make the experience of the founder. This is the case for the Ignatian experience, communicated in the Exercises, lived today in the Society of Jesus and, in a distinct way, in the Christian Life Communities.

Is there need to recall that the conversion of Ignatius at Manresa made of him a servant of the Church, prodding him, from the beginning, to "help souls", and very soon, to recruit companions? To help and be helped, to be helped in order to help more, there is the link, a necessary one, that he perceived between community life and apostolic efficiency. This life-view appeared clearly in the statement of the main reason for the decision of the Companions in 1539: "A mutual responsibility and a full accord of each one with the others would assure a more abundant fruit for souls: forces united have more resistance and more energy for accomplishing great and difficult enterprises than when they are divided and dispersed" (Deliberation, n. 3).

Personal Responsibility

Still, many think that this link is not evident in the Exercises, which they reproach for being "individualistic". The remark appears to have a basis if one considers the text itself. There is question of "ridding oneself of all disordered attachments, and then, when one is rid of them, to seek and find the divine will in the disposition of one's life for the good of one's soul". It has a basis also if one considers the manner in which the Exercises ought to be undertaken: in solitude in personal prayer, in the role even of the instructor, who is to leave "the Creator and Lord communicate himself to the faithful soul" (Cf. Annotations).

But is it not time to draw on our own experience? Every free effort, every decision, including those that concern the community, does it not hark back first of all to an experience the most personal? Is there not a moment, at the heart of even the most communitarian deliberation, where it is I who says "yes" or "no"?

Some days ago, on a French television program, Father General Arrupe was asked:

- Do you feel yourself to be alone?
- Oh no, no, he replied; only, I am alone when I take the big decisions.... Responsibility is something personal.

One can even say that an apostolic community cannot exist unless it is made up of men capable of making personal decisions. The Exercises form men of that sort.

First of all, by personal conversion: "by ridding oneself of all disordered attachments" so as to be able to follow Christ "poor and humiliated". The language may be old, but its meaning is strikingly modern. At the birth of capitalism, Ignatius perceived the twofold human energy unleashed by the capitalistic movement: the appetite for pleasure and the will for power; the exploitation of man by man; economic power leading to political power, exercised for personal ends. His intuitive analysis is it not one with the most systematic analysis of today? If in the meditation of the Two Standards, one translates "riches" by "economic power" and "honors" by "political power", one will be struck by the harmony...

Nevertheless this personal conversion, translated negatively by the renunciation of money and power, positively by adhesion to Jesus Christ poor and humiliated, does not seem to involve necessarily an apostolic community life. At the time of his convalescence at Loyola, Ignatius was still hesitating between the Carthusians and Jerusalem: hermitage or pilgrimage, forms of life very distant from that which we envision. It was because at this period Ignatius still thought of sanctity in terms of heroism—we would say today, a moralistic approach: one must be poor, one must be humble. A vision still static, even egocentric. True conversion demands a more total forgetfulness of self...

The Dynamism of Love

At Manresa, Ignatius let go of himself and let himself be led by God, who instructed him, says he, "like a teacher in school". He enters then into a dynamism that leads him on. For he "sees" the Holy Trinity, he "sees" how God has created the world, he "sees" the humanity of Jesus Christ and, in all three cases, always as something which acts, which emits, which radiates....

Let those who criticize the Exercises as being "individualistic" make the same experience, and let themselves be instructed. The community, it is true, is not present in them under its psychological and sociological aspects, but in its very source and in the movement which makes it go beyond itself and draws with it all those who throw themselves in its wake. To go out of itself is, in the Ignatian perspective, the unique *raison d'être* of the community. From the opening meditation to the "contemplation to obtain love", there is question only of following the dynamism of love, "to which it belongs to communicate itself". At the center of this cycle which goes from God to creation and from creation to God there is the Incarnation of the Son of God. If one rereads, or better, if one makes this contemplation of the Incarnation as it is described in the Exercises (nos. 101-109), one will find as one does also in the Gospel of Luke, the process of community discernment: the three Persons of the Holy Trinity see the world situation--we would say today that they analyze it together--from the more universal ("the surface of the earth") to the more particular (men in "all their variety of dress and attitudes"); they deliberate on what is to be done; they decide and they execute their decision.

Going Out of Oneself

It is a community decision then, and for an apostolic end, since after this "deliberation" the Son of the Father is "sent". Let us recall that the word "apostle" means "sent": Christ is the "Apostle" of the Trinity, as the Twelve are "Apostles" of Christ. From this it is clear that the community, according to Saint Ignatius, is not completely autonomous any more than is the individual, in what concerns its apostolic mission.

In the same way that Jesus is related to the Father who has sent him, the community receives its "missionary orders" and gives account of their execution to the one who sent it. This can be seen in the great meditations of the Kingdom and the Two Standards, where Jesus assembles his disciples in order to send them "into the whole world... to help men by attracting them". This is even more noticeable in the decision of the first Jesuits to place themselves at the disposition of the Pope "so that

he may send them there where he judges their ministry will be most fruitful" (Deliberation n. 3). Did not Ignatius put as the first point of the election that matters about which we wish to decide must be "lawful within our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church, and not opposed to her" (Exercises n. 170)? All communities founded on the spirit of the Exercises then cannot but be linked together "in one sole body", whose finality is apostolic and whose style of life will be determined by the need for mobility.

Here we are at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. In his vision of Trinitarian love, "of which it is characteristic to communicate itself", Ignatius perceived the dynamism of the "going out" of all things from God and of their return to God. He felt himself caught up in a movement which is at the same time personal conversion and community apostolic commitment. Let us not talk then only of a "link" but of identity. It is precisely this which is expressed at the end of the rules for election: "Let him desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God our Lord as the aim of all he does. For everyone must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests" (Exercises n. 189).

The conversion of the person is a going out of himself to go to God by means of the route of men. The conversion in the community is to go out of the community, which sends each of its members. The conversion of the community is the community going out of itself to go to answer the call of the Church and of men.

BEFORE IMPORTANT DECISIONS IN LIFE

by Luis GONZALEZ s.j.

Becoming conscious

Each one of us must become aware of the fact that in life we make decisions which involve us deeply, more often than we think.

For example:

Margaret must ask herself seriously if she should continue her relationship with Charles; if she doesn't take the beginning of the relationship seriously, tomorrow may be too late.

Daniel has to concern himself, already now, with the date of his marriage to Ann: is it better for the two of them to wait until they are well settled in their professions, or should they experience the first years of their professional lives together?

Vincent and Angela are well settled after three years of marriage. They have no children yet. Their household needs, however, increase every day. Should they raise their standard of living, or would it be better for them to maintain their present austere way of life which they thought about while still engaged?

John and Frederica, on the contrary, have two children after three years of marriage. Should they prepare for a third one?

George and Paula, however, have lost the hope of having children. Does God want them to adopt the child of an unknown mother? This would mean a radical change in their lives.

Alfred works and is satisfied in his profession. Suddenly something happens for which he was not prepared: the offer of a job from another company. This would mean a

change of city, a change of profession, together with a considerable increase in pay. What should he do?

Thomas has four hours available each week for "apostolic" work. What kind of work should he devote himself to?

Why should we continue? The list of options which might be gone through repeats itself in our own lives. We must be attentive to be able to respond to these demands.

The Will of God

We are too used to saying that what we must look for is "the will of God". What does "the will of God" mean? Some think that the "will of God" is like a card which God hides and which we must discover only by being astute; or at least, which we have to wrench from His hands by our constant supplication. This view of things is wrong.

How can we imagine that God enjoys systematically withdrawing from us something which we need? How can we think that God does not take us seriously, that He plays with us, that in the end He lets us overcome Him by our insistence? The will of God is not something different from the plan which He has for us (1 Tim. 2,4). God's will is love, for love is itself God (1 John 4,16). If we look for the will of God in order to fulfill it on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6,10), we are asking for a realization of the mysterious design of His will (Eph. 1,9) For this reason, He has sent His Son (John 4,34; 6,38 ff), and His Spirit (Gal. 4,6) to all men.

For this reason, acting through the impulse of this love, I will be able to act reasonably before the concrete circumstances in which I find myself. What we must do is react, with ever new creativity, according to God's image in ourselves (2 Cor. 3,18; Rom. 8,29).

This is the will of God, for which I am searching. This is the "glory of God", "the living man" (Ireneas).

How to discover the will of God

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius were formulated for this reason: "To seek and find the will of God" (Ex. 1). We cannot make the Exercises, however, whenever

we have to ask ourselves "what do You want me to do" ? (Acts 9,6). Whenever this comes up, however, we can profit from the pedagogy learned in the Exercises. We can apply the rules for discernment of spirits (Ex. 313-336) and for election (Ex. 170-189). This concerns knowing what I must do "here" and "now". Or, that is to say, what does God want from me? This consists of two things: creating the necessary preliminary conditions, and then following through with the search-process.

These necessary preliminary conditions refer, first of all, to the elimination of those internal dispositions which would make us unable to recognize what we "have to do": lack of attention and reflection; egoism which kills love; conscious and unconscious polarization of my will in a fixed direction.

Other positive conditions are necessary to discover the will of God, in the sense which we talked about before: internal freedom to do what must be done, whatever it is; an awareness of what God is, for which my reasoning is not enough, but rather His revelation through His Word. My faith will be the free answer to this Word, from which love will be born; this increases from constant contact with Christ and His Spirit.

St. Ignatius introduces "election", which is the word he uses for "choice" in the Exercises, when in the second week, the exercitant is familiar with "a knowledge of the true life exemplified in Christ our Lord" (Ex. 139) and when the figure of Jesus Christ appears serenely every day before his eyes (Ex. 128-129). He is the living image of the unseen Father (Col. 1,15). He who came not to do His own will, but that of the One who sent Him (John 6,38), He who has taught us to do the will of the Father on earth as in heaven (Matt. 6,10). He who does not content Himself with the Law, but who gives grace and truth at the same time (John 1,16-17). for which reason we not only call ourselves children of God, but we really are children of God (1 John 3,1).

The Search-Process

We have as yet spoken only about the necessary preliminary conditions for finding the will of God. If these

exist, at least to a sufficient degree, then we can set out. But on which path?

It is not enough to know where we should end up, but where is our starting-point? The same route is not good for everybody.

What is important is choosing the right path for ourselves, among all that are given.

I may find my soul so moved and attracted by God that I can follow without hesitation (Ex. 175).

Or, I may find myself confused by alternating feelings of optimism and pessimism, consolation and desolation (Ex. 176).

Thirdly, I may discover in myself a tranquillity and sufficient light to use my natural powers with freedom and peace (Ex. 177-188).

1. Even if we find ourselves moved by the irresistible "clearness and attraction", we cannot surrender ourselves completely to following this path without further thought.

The first question is whether this option is "permissible" for me; without this condition, neither the clearness nor the violence of the impulse would be worth anything (Ex. 170).

The light and the attraction, which come from God, make clear His attention and love (Ex. 169-172). For this reason, the light and attraction can eliminate many causes of deception. The soul, illumined and strengthened by faith, hope and love, directs itself spontaneously towards truth and love: this is the will of God! (Ex. 316, 330).

2. The second path should be taken when we are confused by alternating consolations and desolations. This path is long; but it, also, leads to the end for which we are looking. If I find myself in such a situation, there is no other choice. If I want to try another way, I must go back by ways already covered.

The consolations and desolations will help us to refine our eyes and hearts, just as our eyes adjust to darkness, and just as love is perfected through pain.

Our perseverance along the way, by day and night, will help us to forget everything else and to search and find Him alone.

In addition, we will succeed in "interpreting" His

mysterious language: the language of love, in which these consolations and desolations talk to us of His presence with an unmistakable accent.

It is a path of bitter stages, but it matures the inner man profoundly. For, man is gradually becoming like the Father, who has loved the world so much... (John 3,16).

3. If we do not "feel" anything, if we simply remain tranquil, we must undertake the third path.

We must patiently consider the consequences which will result from taking one or the other option. Just as a tree is known by its fruits, the path is known by the end to which it leads us, not by its comforts or hardships.

The number of reasons which add up for both alternatives is not important; rather, the real value of these reasons in the eyes of man (Ex. 185-187) and above all in the eyes of God (Ex. 198).

Usually, abstract reasoning is not enough. We must wait for the moment when the election is confirmed by peace and clearness. When the "truth" settles down in the soul, it brings repose; like a piece fitted into its place, and like the restless heart which has found God (Ex. 183).

Woe to the lonely traveler!

Generally, there are these three paths; but woe to the person alone in his travels!

We need God's help to follow the path.

He is always with us; it is good that we should try to be attentive to Him. To be "with Him" means to talk with Him, listen to Him, simply look at Him, go after Him, or to be sure that He follows us; to be satisfied with knowing that He is looking at us. The consciousness of His nearness and the experience of His presence in us do not "miraculously" serve to reveal His will. They will give us, however, the strength to go on without rest towards meeting Him. What it is all about, more than anything, is trying to be like Him.

It is not enough, however, to walk with God.

Man is the image of God and therefore, poor men,

we need our brothers, so long as we cannot contemplate God face to face.

A man can teach us through his example, so close to home, when he errs, when he is in the right; he always teaches me in a language I can understand. If in addition I meet a man who is the image of God in his justice, in his faithfulness, his good will and his constancy, I have found a treasure (Sirach 6,14). Such a man would be a spiritual guide for me.

If he is worthy of such a name, he will not try to pass me on the way; however, neither will he shield me from fatigue; he will not force me to quicken my pace, he will not leave me in my deception, neither will he abandon me by the wayside (Luke 3,31 ff).

It is a great grace to be able to confront him with my alternatives, as a friend who cannot be influenced by my preferences. He will make me live in wakefulness; he will open my eyes when I am dreaming like a child; he will comfort me when I lose courage; he will help me to recover optimism when I am about to become bitter.

It is not good for man to be alone; and it is also a precious help to find a group of real friends. This does not mean one single friend, but a group of "friends in the Lord", which should faithfully help me to find the will of God.

This would not be a time for communal discernment, for then the group thinks as a group. What it is about is something more simple, but no less precious. The group unites around me: the group, in all its richness, helps me if I am able to open myself to it. Each one reflects over me the light which he receives from God. All of them together help me to discern my problems.

The group, if it is mature, helps me to recover my lost serenity, to evaluate my reasons, to revive love in me, to accept my own responsibilities with courage.

It is not easy to find such a group of friends. At least, however, I should do my best to give this kind of aid to others.

THE FAITH EXPERIENCE

by Marie A. SCHIMELFENING

The Faith Experience is a faith and community-building experience of the Christian Life Community movement in the United States; it was designed by José A. Esquivel, S.J. to create and deepen communities. A community is created and deepened by the growth of the individual members. The real result of the Faith Experience has been a growing awareness in each person of God's presence in his own life and this is strengthened by the witness of others.

The Faith Experience is used in conjunction with the General Principles as a way of getting a profound knowledge of the operating tools of this way of life. It is open-ended, unaggressive, and a freeing-experience of faith-life; it helps each one to see the hand of God in the happenings of life, to recall and recognize his workings and to be prayerfully aware of God, others and self. By making one's faith explicit and sharing it with others, faith community is formed.

There is little structure to the week-end other than one basic rule: this is a process of recounting experiences, not intellectualizing about them. The leader or "tuner", as we refer to the person who facilitates, would interrupt this kind of deviation, nothing else. The tuner launches the exercises but is one of the participants, not a specialist.

The mood set is a peaceful one--each exercise usually begins with some shared prayer, then, the group sits in meditative silence each person calling to mind his own salvation history. When one feels he is ready to recount his experiences of faith to the group, he does so. No one has to speak unless he wants to but seldom does anyone remain silent. There are a number of questions which serve as a focus for the reflection on one's life:

- What is my genealogy: description of home and family life?
- What was my first experience of God?
- What have been the turning points of my faith life?
- What is my faith life today?
- What is Christ for me?

This forms the basis for the contemporary testament which is being written in the lives of each person every day. Unity through diversity is the lesson of this process--to see how differently God works in each soul is the grace to be had in the gift of sharing.

Liturgy is included at some time on all three days of the Faith Experience. On the second evening a reconciliation liturgy is held. This may last two or three hours and offers an opportunity for face-to-face confession. Those not at confession sing hymns, share favorite scripture passages, etc. When the liturgy ends a reconciliation celebration is held in whatever manner the group desires.

The final exercise of the Faith Experience is called the "Christ-seal". Each member of the group tells the others how he sees Christ in each of them, in response to the question from Luke 9:20 "Who do you say that I am?" This Christ-seal binds the community together in a very real way.

The concluding liturgy is always a highlight of the week-end and it usually is the creative sacramental expression of the sense of community which has been lived during the three days.

The Faith Experience has truly been a gift to those so fortunate to have witnessed it. It is a gift to have the opportunity to hear about so many different manifestations of God in the lives of men, leading them to diverse states of life: married, religious life, single, the priesthood. In this setting the young benefit from the older and generation gaps disappear. The essence of the Faith Experience is such that it does not end when the participants leave. It is only the beginning for many of a growing spiritual life. It creates a desire in the individual for ever greater awareness of Christ in his life and closeness to Him.

José A. Esquivel, s.j. developed the Faith Experience while working with students in the Dominican Republic. It has been his gift to the formation program of Christian Life Communities in the United States. The process has been used in order to acquaint prospective members with the movement as well as to form CLC members more deeply in their on-going spiritual development.

It is somewhat like a pebble cast into a body of water--the recurrent ripples emanate far beyond the original thought or hope. Everywhere that the Faith Experience goes--whether to microcosms of Church in the person of mixed groups (students, religious, single persons or married couples), already formed Christian Life Communities, students, groups of religious, or just interested persons--the Christian Life Community movement is explained and promoted. It is an instrument offered to God for His work.

The influence of the Faith Experience is difficult to keep track of but in so far as we have been able to record its history, the Christian Life Community movement in the United States has felt its impact in all spheres. On the national level, the Board of Directors shared this experience together in an effort to cement the national community. As many as ten local Christian Life Communities have participated in the Faith Experience in order to grow more deeply in their own sense of community and to deepen their personal spiritual life. In November, six Faith Experiences were held in four parts of the country: New Orleans, Chicago, New Jersey and St. Louis. These were all in process at the same time and there was a real sense of common sharing in the knowledge that as many as eighty fellow CLCers across the country were participating in this in-depth encounter with one another and that the salvation history of the People of God was once more being made manifest in today's world.

WHO ARE YOU, IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA?

by Jean Claude DHOTEL s.j.

(Supplement to Vie Chrétienne, n. 155, March 1973, 80 pages; at present available only in French, under title: Qui est-tu Ignace de Loyola?, from Vie Chrétienne, 14 rue de la Tombe-Issoire, Paris XIV, France, at 5 Francs or approximately \$1 per copy.)

One never exhausts the mystery of a human being, says the author in this preface. So he does not claim to answer in 80 pages the question posed in the title of this booklet. Just as the Spiritual Exercises do not release their secret to one except gradually, over a period of time, so a personal knowledge of Ignatius their author demands patience and familiarity.

It is precisely the close link between the Exercises and the life of Ignatius that is purposely highlighted in this work. Many people make and remake the Exercises, especially among members of the Christian Life Communities, while they know nothing, or think they know nothing, of the personality of the author--and yet, that personality is so transparent in the experience he has handed down to us. That experience was first lived by him at Manresa. But each moment, each turning point, each decision in his life illustrates this or that moment, turning point, or decision expressed or suggested in the Exercises. Nothing surprising in that on the part of a man who was accustomed to repeat till the end of his life, "I appeal to Manresa".

In this booklet then, each chapter is presented in a way that makes this constant reference clear: first a precise event, dated, "like a page torn out of an agenda", marks this or that characteristic shift in the life of

"the Pilgrim"; then a quotation from the Exercises gives the spiritual significance of the event; finally, the content of the chapter furnishes a commentary, not doctrinal but living, not like a course in spirituality but like a vibrant and sometimes breathless account. One sees in it Ignatius "make" his own Exercises from the days of the fortress of Pamplona where his life is turned upside down and reoriented in its "principle and foundation", all the way to his ultimate offering "to obtain love" as his life ended early July 31, 1556.

It was a life completely mobilized for service. "A man at the service of Christ" is the title of the first part of the booklet, which takes us from the castle of Loyola to the room of the College of Saint Barbara, at Paris, where Ignatius meets Francis Xavier and Peter Faber. The second section, "Companions at the service of the Church", might be called the life of Ignatius "told in the plural": a group of men who begin by forging bonds of human and spiritual friendship to become, some years later, the Society of Jesus, a cell of the Church at the service of men, a community whose members united themselves in order to be scattered "everywhere in the world".

A world expanding as men discover new lands. A world bursting with ideas and new projects. A world like ours, in which the experience of Ignatius and his Companions is still capable, it would seem, of shedding new light on our discoveries, our ideas, our projects of today

