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PRAYER FOR THE HOLY YEAR

O Lord our God, Father and Friend of men,
you willed to reconcile all humanity
in your Son, Jesus Christ, who has died and risen,
and in this way reconciled all men among themselves.
Hear the prayer of your people in this year
of grace and salvation.

May your Spirit of life and of holiness
renew us in the very depths of our heart
by uniting us, in the whole of our lives,
with the Risen Christ, our Saviour and our Brother.

On march with all Christians
on the road of the Gospel,
may we, faithful to the teaching of the Church,
and attentive to the needs of our brothers,
become agents of reconciliation,
unity and peace.

Make fruitful the efforts of all those
who work for the service of men.
Be the hope and the light
of all who seek you without knowing you,
and of those who, knowing you,
seek you more and more.

Forgive our sins, strengthen our faith,
stir our hope, increase our love.
Grant that we may live, in the steps of Jesus,
as your dearly loved children.

May your Church, with the motherly help of Mary,
be the sign and sacrament of salvation for all men,
so that the world may believe
in your love and your truth.

Father all-good,
hear the prayer that you Spirit inspires within us
for your glory and the salvation of all,
through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord,
who is the way, the truth and the life,
forever and ever. Amen.

A FRATERNAL EXCHANGE

The "Liberation" series for this year, as you know, alternates between an account of an action for liberation, and a critical analysis of that account by another CLC team. Today then, we give our reactions to the article, "Liberation Effort In a Rural Milieu" in the May PROGRES-SIO. Of course you will want first to reread that article before going on to our critique of it. Four points in the account especially impressed us.

First, the fact that it is an experience in a rural setting, since in many parts of the world a large part of the population lives and labors - often within a structure riddled with injustice - on the land. Our efforts for liberation sometimes take too little account of this fact.

The experience is one, too, of efforts at reform with in an ecclesial structure. It highlights a truth stressed by the last World Synod of Bishops: that efforts for justice must begin with assuring justice within the Church it self. Nor is it smug or "holier-than-thou" to speak of and to work for the reform of the Church, as long as we keep in mind the dictum of Karl Rahner: Let the critic always remember that he is part of what's wrong with the Church. And wisely, the Margosatubig effort drew on recent outstanding Church documents to help orient its activity.

The account is surely an excellent example of the kind of collaboration needed in efforts for justice, and that in several ways. A lay-priestly team worked together in spearheading the action, and that is in the best CLC tradition. Again, the approach used was not one of doing things for the poor, but from the start aimed rather at collaborating with the poor and involving them in efforts to free themselves. It is the only valid and effective method. Lastly, the abolition of discrimination referred to was in the same spirit, aimed at furthering a Church not of rich only or poor only, but of all—a universal Church.

The wise use of introductory forms of the Spiritual Exercises in gradually more intense forms was surely a master stroke. On the one hand, it gave a certain stability, balance and depth to the efforts for greater justice and truer community. On the other, it undoubtedly was the ideal step toward eventual formation of a CLC, since Christian Life Communities so clearly draw their inspiration and dynamism from Ignatian spirituality.

CLC members and readers probably would have found the account even more helpful if more had been said of the methods used to achieve the results. Especially it would have been useful to have more information on how the two initiators, and later the larger group, used discernment to decide among the various options at different stages.

One question that came to us was what efforts had been made to induce the wealthier parishioners and the "status-seekers" to take part in the developing Christian community and its deepening spirit and commitment, and with what success. Perhaps some of these people stayed away because the community was becoming too Christian for their tastes. But were there others who, like Zacheus, were able to be attracted by a truly Christlike approach? It would be good to know.

Finally, we would have liked to learn more about just how the gradually developing "core group" eventually led to the launching of a CLC. Perhaps no more was said because this process had only just begun. At any rate, the last sentence of the article, with its reference to this, tantalized us, and left us with a desire and need to know more of what took place later.

In sum, we find the article truly helpful in many ways as an experience of efforts at liberation. It alerts us to the need for efforts in sectors we sometimes neglect, and shows how a true team effort of committed members of the Church can, while achieving greater justice and truer Christian community, stimulate at the same time the growth of a Christian Life Community.

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COMMUNITY EVALUATION

by Ingeborg von GRAFENSTEIN

Not a Trick of Technique, but Serious Business

Articles on evaluation in the two last issues of PROGRESSIO—both that on its theoretical basis (January, 1974) and that giving a personal witness (March, 1974)—made clear that in achieving a growing unity between faith life and human life (General Principles, 3), the practice of a permanent watchfulness plays a key role.

In meditation, I turn consciously to the call and the action of God as I already know him, thanks to the discovery of him made earlier in the Word and in Scripture. My aim in doing this is to welcome him with all my being, and to let myself be laid hold of and transformed by him. But in order to find God not only in prayer as such and in the revealed word but "in all things", I must learn to meet him in the entire, many-faceted reality of my life. This watchful turning to him as he confronts me in the events and situations of life in ever-new and ever-fresh ways, is achieved directly and above all through the practice of daily evaluation. This exercise tends to open us up to all the happenings of the day, and to become a sort of continuing alertness that accompanies the actions themselves. In the time of the evaluation itself this then is simply deepened and renewed, under the eyes of God and the influence of his call.

But God calls us not only as isolated individuals. It is also as a community that he calls us and sets us on his path. And so that he can lead us along this path, we must learn to hear his new invitation to the next step and "promptly and readily" take it. Moreover, linked to God's call there is always a mission or "sending", but one that—just as in the life of individuals—becomes concrete only step by step as revealed through circumstances. Therefore this mission must not only be carried out faithfully, but also listened to as something always new and rediscovered in its present form.

It is a prerequisite, then, if a community of service in the Church is to fulfill its task, that of "bringing

forth fruit" "in the world, but not of the world", that it be able to read and to decipher the "signs of the times". Community evaluation is not just a form that the community goes through, pertaining only to it, but a continual help, as a community in the midst of the many facets of existence "to remain in him". Its purpose is to aid us, in the face of the demands of time, of situations, of needs, of difficulties, and often even of total impasses, to hear his call and to answer it. Only through such a continuing effort of discernment will one arrive, not just at "doing some good" according to one's own ideas, but to discover continually "what is more urgent and universal", and to employ in it all one's strength, while never ceasing to ask what God wishes in the moment ahead. It is only in this way that a Christian Life Community can live to the full, as a community, the dynamic of the Exercises—only if in its mutual relations, its reflection and its action it places itself before God, who "leads us out into the deep"; if it allows itself to be called by him continually and anew; and if it is willing to let itself be led toward men, in the different situations and tasks that he assigns.

Different Forms of Evaluation

A first method of community evaluation is the sharing with each other of the evaluations made by each one. Without being a community evaluation (examination) in the strict sense, it is still something important for the future of the group. Depending on how frequently it is done, it can cover a certain part of the time that has elapsed, or all of it. Examples would be on the occasion of a monthly reflection in common, or as a "listening group" at the beginning of a Eucharistic celebration. It can also be linked with a specific theme, as for example that of "reconciliation" in connection with World CIO Day of this year, with an exchange on the evaluation that each one has made of how he has contributed to reconciliation in his activities, his attitude and his conduct during this year. Again, it can serve as an introduction to a discussion on urgent problems, as for example those of social structures or of tensions in the Church. Discussions of this type easily lead either to hopeless resignation, or to putting the blame for the evil on others. A mutual exchange, then, of the positive and negative experiences of each one can afford a fine basis for objective dialogue. It keeps one from transferring

the blame to others or shielding oneself (through arguments that one urges with oneself or with others) from a co-responsibility that is real even if not admitted. In a more general way, this kind of evaluation is already a first basis for mutual trust, encouragement and appreciation: each one can be witness of how others are aware of their weaknesses and their faults, and how they show their faith and their hope in the Mercy of God.

Along the same line, but focused on the existence of the group as a community, is the evaluation of the regular gatherings of the members, especially the evaluation of a long series of meetings. In order to profit as much as possible from each meeting, and not to drag along a whole chain of problems, misunderstandings and even stagnation, it is important that each member of the group in his own personal examinations of conscience go over too the meetings spent together. He should then ask himself questions such as these about his own way of acting and reacting :

- How did I prepare for the meeting, and how was my participation in it?
- During the meeting what influenced me or struck me ?
- To what degree did I succeed in taking part in it ?
- What role did I play in it? Why? What influence did that have on the others?...

In the same way, questions like these about the group as a whole:

- Who are the ones that participated most fully in the meeting? That participated the least? Was there anyone who during the meeting "copped out" and didn't really take part? And why? Or anyone who was only "marginal"? Or whose attitude was not really serious?
- Were there conflicts that arose? Or other conflicts that were there below the surface though they didn't break out?
- Were we ready to listen to each other, to reflect and to decide together?...

A second step would be to put to use the results garnered from such a reflection. That is, to dialogue with one or other of those with whom I had conflicts, or whose attitude or thought was not clear to me. To bring up in the next meeting a precise point in reference to one of these matters. Or again, to communicate to the leader of the group how this or that method worked for me—and, as far as I could judge—for the others.

It is a matter, then, by means of the evaluation made by each one of the group in general, of living together in a more conscious way the development of the community as such. The purpose of this is to overcome difficulties as quickly as possible. Or, if it is a question of problems that are related to a longer and deeper crisis in the group, to learn to live with them, and to pray about them, more consciously.

In this latter situation, it is particularly helpful, in certain circumstances, to examine together a longer portion of the group's existence, covering a definite period of its life. This could be done on an evening set aside for this, or in a weekend of reflection. This looking back on the ensemble is indispensable when the composition of a group has changed, in order to recognize tendencies and developments. It is essential at such a point that the group rediscover itself, and this is achieved better and more rapidly by an evaluation.

The best method to use for such a communal looking-back depends on the concrete situation. In any event, it ought to be possible, after a time for personal reflection, to have a listening group in which each one expresses his own reflections; and then, after questions of clarification, a dialogue on the main problems that have been raised. Another way would be this: if a member of the group sees a specific problem with regard to the group's life and activity at the present time and wishes to bring it up, he could first, quite simply, present it. This would be followed by a time for reflection where, in quiet and in prayer, each one would examine and ponder what he had just heard; and at the end, each would give his impression or his view of the point in question. Then would follow a longer pause, during which each would ponder the different aspects (or the surprising similarities) that surfaced among the impressions and points of view set forth; and then a free exchange would follow. This method, however, should be used only on condition that the one who raises the problem feels free as regards himself and the group, so that he can in all honesty expose his difficulties and take the risk that opposition might develop. In the same way, the members of the group ought, for this method, to have attained already a certain "disponibility" or readiness to listen to each other, to consider calmly specific proposals and to allow themselves to be called in question by them.

If it is not a matter of dealing with a specific problem, but of appreciating better together the mutual relationships within the community, one could arrange a kind of discussion or "feed-back" on attitudes and conduct in the group. After a pause, perhaps of prayer, each one presents in turn what occurs to him as regards his own conduct in the group, and perhaps as regards that of the group in general. This technique stimulates a concrete exchange on different topics, and each one can draw much profit from it. The facility of individual members to enter into relation with the community, and so the possibilities of collaboration within it, are heightened. In addition, this result tends to have an influence on all one's human relations, even outside the group--on one's attitude in one's profession or elsewhere. It is possible too that this method may cause to surface problems and tensions of a deep sort that up to now were repressed. In this way an important step is taken towards good understanding within the community.

The question might be asked: does such an evaluation of community living lead directly to clearing obstacles away and to a better service, or does it on the contrary seem to increase the obstacles by causing or accentuating a crisis? In any case, this viewing in retrospect the path that a group has traveled is much more than a group-dynamics analysis of a situation, even if, at the beginning, this can lend to it a certain attractiveness. It is a matter, rather, of a community understanding better the journey that it has taken, the obstacles encountered, the mistakes made on the way, as well as the next step to take in order to find again the right direction. That direction leads towards God and towards the "multitude", that is, toward the tasks for which God wishes to make use of our community.

This relationship of the community evaluation to service becomes still more direct and more evident in the forms of it that highlight the commitment of the community. Here it is question, to start with, of an evaluation, done by the community, of an action of a member who asks the others to examine with him both the facts and his response to them, so as to perceive more clearly their consequences, and to profit in future undertakings by the experiences of the past. To do this in a methodical way, one could follow here the three steps of the "revision of life": listen, discern, respond.

But it can also involve weighing together a situation lived by all. For example, one community may have undertaken a project to sensitize public opinion with regard to the problem of abortion, or may have participated in a demonstration with regard to it. In another group, as a result of its reflection together, some families have taken charge, during their vacations, of children in institutions and without parental care. What questions arise now as regards the individuals involved as a result of their experiences? What questions now pose themselves to the community as such? It would be useful if each one, after having in a listening group given his positive and negative experiences, tried to set forth the problems and questions that he had to pose to the group. There could be an opportunity for questions of clarification. Then time would be given for reflection on what had been presented. Through dialogue the group would determine which questions should be taken up by the group as such. Then the community would try to see where decisions ought to be taken, and what action would be most useful in the long run. Finally an effort would be made to decide how best to go into the other questions; usually the best way for this is by a free exchange of the whole group, perhaps too in part in sub-groups. For example, the use of books or articles on the subject could be looked into, or whether on a specific topic a specialist should be invited to talk to the group. Or whether a community decision on it ought to be done in a deliberation as such, and preparation for this be initiated... An evaluation of the type here described is surely needed when a specific commitment of the group has achieved a certain result, and the question now arises as to whether it ought to be continued or, because of a new obligation or some new urgency, discontinued.

This then gives a brief glance at different forms of community evaluation. One might here well ask himself this question: what is the relation between the specific forms of evaluation mentioned, and the stages of formation of a community, or the situation it is in. This important topic was already touched on in the preparatory materials for the General Assembly of Augsburg '73. It is being pursued in the work of the Formation Commission, and no doubt echoes of that effort will before long find their way into PROGRESSIO.

Let's get acquainted ...

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES OF SRI LANKA (CEYLON)

by Patrick PERERA, S.J.

Background

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean of South Asia. It is 270 miles in length - north to south - and 140 miles in width. It is separated from India only by a narrow, shallow strait, 22 miles wide. The population stands at 12 1/2 millions and increases at an annual rate of 2.4%. Of this total population, about 66.5% are Buddhists, 18% Hindus, 7% Muslims and 8.5% Christians. It is significant to note that nearly 60% of the population is under the age of 24.

Sinhalese is the language spoken by the majority of the people of Ceylon. English though still widely spoken is gradually being pushed out with the introduction of the national languages. Tamil is the language of the largest minority in Ceylon.

Sri Lanka was declared a republic in 1972 and the ruling political power, made up of the three political parties so as to form a United Front, has committed itself to a policy of building a democratic socialist society in which it is hoped the people will enjoy a greater sense of equality and the dignity of economic freedom. The means to bring this about were drawn up in the form of a Five-Year Plan. But so far due to various problems within and without progress in achieving this has been retarded. As a result, tensions have built up in the various levels of society. Youth are divided. Unemployment, especially among the youth has increased. The growth of new families has raised problems in housing and a rise in the cost of living. All around, in the Church of Sri Lanka and in secular institutions, there is much unrest and uncertainty with regard to the future. In this situation and context, the Church here, and therefore all Christian action groups, have a vital role to play in infusing human - Christian values into all

areas of people's lives: spiritual, political, economic and social. Thus they could be a leaven in this new, growing, socialist society which is taking a new direction and therefore will definitely commit its people to a new pattern of living.

Our Christian Life Communities: Then

Our Christian Life Movement in Sri Lanka, as a Christian action group, striving to translate the mission of the Church into concrete terms of development of the whole man and of all men, has come a long way from what the Sodality of Our Lady, as they were called then, were ten years ago. At that time Fr. R. Chiriatti, S.J. had the pioneering task of structuring a National Federation. With the approval of the hierarchy, Diocesan Federations were established too, first in Colombo, then in other dioceses, and priests named to promote them.

With the Common Rules and Bis Seculari to give guidance, several groups with a large membership sprang up. But perhaps due to the stress on forms of devotion to Our Lady and the emphasis on personal sanctification given in the Common Rules, our groups for the most part turned out to be pious associations without sufficient dynamism or influence in the milieu in which they flourished. Besides, these groups tended to attract more girls and women than boys and men. Today the situation is much better. This is especially due to the efforts of the then National Assistant as well as to the change of the name of our movement to C.L.C. and the new orientation our groups have received from the living out of the General Principles.

Our C.L.C. Today

At our Annual C.L.C. Convention in 1969, the National Federation decided to follow the World Federation of GLC in adopting the new name for its Federation. Almost all the groups, with rare exceptions, have now accepted the new name. Also, many groups are finding the new name more meaningful and easier to relate to their lives. And we are finding that our Movement now is beginning to attract more youth than before, as the apostolic aims are now more stressed.

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YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

ZAMBIA REPORTS

Composition of Our Groups: 21 out of 22 are teenager groups based in schools. At the moment there is only one older group, at the University of Zambia. But we have great hopes of extending the movement to adults since the formation of a Moderators' Council and a National Executive, for this shares the work of administration.

Average Age Range: 16 - 20 years.

Historical Background: Our C.L.G. (Christian Life Groups) go back many years and owe their presence largely to the Jesuit Fathers and Dominican Sisters who set them up in their schools. More recently though, 3 groups were set up largely due to the initiative of the young people themselves - 1 at the University and 2 others in Kalulushi, a town in the Copperbelt.

Programmes: We have made a very good start in 1974 with :

- a) A Formation Weekend in January. This was held at Kalundu Study Centre, Lusaka, and almost all the Group took part.
- b) This was followed up by a 1-Day Retreat for almost all the Groups, especially in Lusaka and Kabwe. We now intend having a Weekend Retreat for Groups before August, and possibly a 3-Day Retreat before the end of the year.
- c) We will hold our 4th Leadership Course in August. This is a 3-day affair.
- d) We produce our own discussion magazine - GUIDELINES - 3 times a year. The material is written by the young people themselves. We also put out an annual REPORTS FROM CENTRES.
- e) Now that we have a Moderators' Council we hope to spread out the work of administration and make our training more solid.
- f) At our Course in January and again during the Retreats we have been introducing our members to mental prayer and now we are looking around for scriptural booklets for members. We intend giving them a Gospel for daily prayer.

- g) We also intend simplifying articles from magazines, for example, from PROGRESSIO.
- h) We have duplicated the GENERAL PRINCIPLES and also brought out our own SIMPLIFIED PRINCIPLES as the English in the GPs is a little too difficult.
- i) From overseas we have purchased 2 short but very good commentaries on the Principles, both from Ireland.

Formation: We still have not evolved a satisfactory training programme, though we have one that we are experimenting with. It is vital for us here to consolidate our work in Zambia in C.L.G. by stressing much more formation. Our young people are ready for a deeper appreciation of spiritual values and this we will achieve especially through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius — through longer guided Retreats.

Contact: It is also very important that the National Assistant moves about to visit the Groups either by himself or with some members of the Moderators' Council or the National Executive. Then seminars, workshops and guided Exercises can be conducted in the various regions where we have Centres. But this, of course, demands time. And, more basic still, a choice of priorities on our part.

Our National Secretariate would like to receive from other Secretariates copies of publications or articles relating to our Christian Life Communities movement. We, in turn, are quite ready to exchange our publications and our experiences with others.

Sean O'CONNOR, S.J.

YOUTH COMMISSION ACTIVITY

World Federation Youth Commission members Angela Clarke (England) and Helene Muller (Germany) took part by invitation in the annual session of European CLC Leaders at Assisi, Italy, over Pentecost. And Italian CLC youth from Naples, Chieri and Palermo lightened the heavy but interesting schedule with incomparable Italian music. See article in this issue.

SAY IT WITH MUSIC

By now Followers of the Way, a stereo record, has not only been enjoyed by many CLC groups (young and otherwise) in English-speaking countries, but has spilled off into a German version (title: Wir Suchen den Weg). What's the disk about? All about CLC, and it doesn't hide the real challenge of "the CLC way" either. Who made the record? American CLC youth - Peggie Telscher, Jim Ford and Don Boucher, along with about 10 other members. And in the German version, Karl-Bertram Brantzen plays a key role too. Peggie, by the way, is now chairman of WFCLC's Youth Commission and introduced our first PROGRESSIO Youth Section last month. And Jim Ford, among other things, has been editing the Christian Life Communicator, which is the American CLC review. Here are two of the record's songs:

Wake! This is a Praise-God Day

Wake! this is a praise-God day!

Wake! this is a praise-God day!

See the sun through the trees
See the leaves flow with the breeze
Hear the birds all singing praise
Let your hearts and voices raise

Wake! this is a praise-God day.

Smell the grass still wet with dew
Come to know your God anew
Feel the hope of joy to come
As He lights your day with sun

Wake! this is a praise-God day.

Hear the children while they play
Now awake and gently pray
Thanks, this is a praise-God day
Thanks, this is a praise-God day.

Wake!

- Diane Detonnancourt

Creator Blues

I've got the creator blues, I'm down on the news
I'm far from my home and I feel so alone
Have you seen my man in the sky?
If I don't find Him I'll surely die
I've got the creator blues and I may be a fool
But won't you show me now here He's at?

I checked up and down all over the town
And in my search I even went into church
It's no use, all I get is abuse
And my biggest rage is, He's not in the yellow pages

I've got the creator blues....

I talked to my mom and she did me no harm so
I talked to my dad and I was sad
He said that he'd read that God was dead
I want you to know it really messed up my head

I've got the creator blues....

So I stand here today and this is what I pray
Lord, that with Your grace I'll finally see Your face
Send me a sign, anything will do
A burning bush or a star, just let me know it's You
I've got the creator blues....

- Jim Ford

Peggie Telscher

[For information on the English-language record, write
Christian Life Communities, 3109 S. Grand Blvd., St. Louis,
Missouri 63118 USA]

Youth on the Move

"In Japan we are setting up a special group on Liberation. We have a meeting 2 or 3 times a month to discuss our social problems. We search for the path of Japanese liberation, especially the relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia. We study the theology of liberation.

With our National Convention things deepened and entered a new stage. We are becoming a creative and convinced community, with active movement toward others - committing ourselves to social problems. "Liberation from the Present Value-System of Japan" is our main thrust now.

Fortunately God is giving me a big opportunity. I will attend the International Session of the University of Peace in Belgium August 1-14, and the worldwide Council of Youth at Taizé in France as a Japanese delegate and on my own. For a whole year I have been working on a part-time job to get money for the trip.

I read PROGRESSIO, of course, and so I knew about the CLC Session on Liberation at Toulouse August 18-25. I am eager to attend the session. Can I take part in it? If I can, needless to say, it will help me and help the CLCs of Japan too."

- Tomo (Tomoki Egashira)

Today there are 124 groups with an average membership of about 15 persons per unit serving five dioceses. Of this number over 60% are youth groups. The transition from the Common Rules to the General Principles has been slow. There are still groups that find it difficult to adapt themselves to the new orientation of Vatican II as envisaged in the General Principles. The growing consciousness of the inadequacy of our groups in understanding the full implications of the G.P., has led to a greater desire to go deeper into the G.P. and to see how these can be applied to the local needs of each group and milieu. As a result of this need, the National Federation was able to organize for the first time an intense course of two days on the study of the General Principles. The results were satisfactory. It is hoped that the leaders who attended this seminar will organize for their local groups similar seminars and foster a desire in their members to study more intensely the Principles, and so motivate them in their daily lives to a better service to the larger community.

Problems

One of our difficulties has been how to help our groups be "communitarian" in their outlook and attitude. I suppose this will be a task continually to be aimed at by emphasising this sense of community through our spiritual and apostolic programmes. This will encourage and create opportunities for personal contacts of members, friendships among them, more collaboration in their work and common apostolates. We still find this isolation of our groups, a sort of "live-and-let-live" attitude, concerned more about the sense of "association" and adherence to juridical structures than a flexible community sense where the spirit of unity in diversity stands out in a community of persons. With the stress now being given to this aspect in formation, there is a gradual awakening to the meaning of community, moving away from a too self-centred, narrow outlook in our spirituality.

Another serious difficulty, due I think in large measure to our grave economic situation plus the indifference of certain groups, has been the poor response of our groups to support the National Federation financially. Though an annual subscription of Rs. 25/= per group (for adults) and

Rs. 20/= (for youth) groups is levied, we have found it extremely difficult to get our groups to be financially committed. Due to this we have been compelled to appeal to the Bishops' conference for an annual subsidy to help our movement in its commitments. I think that with a proper motivation and a sense of community, we shall be able to overcome this problem.

Our CLC: The Future

Our country, being in the Third World, is in a continual state of crisis, especially in its economic needs. Our CLC's, living in the midst of poverty, mass unemployment, bribery and corruption, and being continually challenged by disunity caused by caste, communal and political differences, have a tremendous opportunity to give a real witness to the spirit of poverty by simplicity of life, to a deep community sense by a greater sharing of material goods and involvement in projects for the economic and social development of our people. We need to stress with greater insistence and force the value of the Spiritual Exercises in the lives of our members in order to motivate them to enter in to a very deep involvement in political and social efforts in our country. I feel very optimistic for the future of our CLCs and for the impact they can exert in the country and in all other Christian action groups. There is real dynamism in the General Principles and they can do much for a person if he is ready like Mary to make the response of a total gift of self. God calls us in the events and daily situations of our lives, and discerning and answering involves a total commitment to the CLC way of life for the greater good of society and the greater glory of God.

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ECHOES...

From AFRICA

Ethiopia: "Let me tell you that a first group of 5 teachers has just been formed. We meet weekly, pray together, exchange, etc. For example, during our last meeting we tried to search out together what the Christian attitude should be in the face of the social and political convulsions that seem to be occurring in our country."

Madagascar: "Our leaders at various levels are soaking themselves in the Spiritual Exercises and trying to renew meeting methods and style of living according to the CLC way of life. From April 2nd to 7th it was the turn of the National Bureau, with 9 other leaders, to make the Spiritual Exercises."

Father Jean-Marie Rakotondraso, former national assistant of Madagascar, has just been consecrated bishop of the diocese of Antsirabé. The World CLC Federation is happy to join with its Malagasy friends in offering Bishop Rakotondraso its respectful greetings and assures him of its prayers.

Rhodesia: "Many thanks for the periodicals and documents that you sent me. I use them a great deal to be of help to our groups in both the urban and rural sector. I am assisting some diocesan priests too in the work of promotion. Soon I will have more time to give the Spiritual Exercises and hope in this way to be able to help to deepen the faith of our members and encourage them to live more fully the way of life of CLC."

Zambia: "We have begun this year with a short formation session which brought together more than 40 representatives of our 22 groups. The assistants and lay delegates took part in the presentations, exchanges, activities, liturgy. It was truly a "Mini-Course" of Cavalletti and Augsburg. At this gathering we decided to plan a series of recollections and retreats - of 1 day, 1 weekend, 3 days - and in 1975 we hope to have longer retreats based on the Spiritual Exercises."

ECHOES...

From LATIN AMERICA

Chile: "We are working at the renewal of the Federation so that the Spirit will be the inspiration of our CLCs. We are now expanding our communities, which up to now were mainly made up of university students, to adults. We are trying to make sure that the Chilean CLCs are closely linked with the World Federation."

Mexico: The National Federation of Mexico is preparing a two-week formation course for some 40 leaders of its communities. Based on the Rome Course, it will consist of 8 days of the individually-guided Spiritual Exercises, followed by a community experience to discover and deepen the CLC way of living. It will take place September 14 - October 2.

Peru: "Last March 24 we celebrated World CLC Day with great success, bringing together the 5 Communities of Lima. The day had been prepared by the 3 delegates to the Augsburg General Assembly. We have big plans too in our Federation to promote our commitment in the sense of the message of "Augsburg '73"."

Some Very Good News!

Following the requests voiced by many national federations of Latin America, and at the instance of the Executive Council of the World Federation, Father Arrupe, General of the Society of Jesus, has given his accord that Father Justo González-Tarrío sj devote himself full-time to the work of promoting CLC in Latin America. He will be at the service of the different national federations and, with their collaboration, will further and coordinate their work at the continental level. His base of operations will be Cordoba (Argentina), very probably at Caseros 141. Both many national leaders as well as the readers of this review have already had occasion to appreciate the quality of his contributions to the work of CLC.

ECHOES...

From ASIA

India: The National Federation has set up an intensive program of formation sessions. The calendar of these for the first semester is:

January 20-26: 36 participants from 10 Indian federations
March 7-10: Seminar for leaders from Bombay
March 30-31: Adult members, 2 from each group
April 4- 7: Introductory live-in for young working members
April 17-28: Live-in Course for 30 priests and sisters
May 3-10: CLC Leadership Camp for Bombay working youth
May 11-20: CLC Leadership Camp for Mahableshwar working youth.

Japan: "We are in the process of translating the main conferences of the Formation Course and of the General Assembly and are preparing a series of week-end seminars for priests and lay members. Our Federation, although young compared to others, is growing in different sectors. The climax of the last few weeks has been the act of consecration (commitment) of 27 members. Many of them prepared for this by a retreat."

Philippines: "Christian Life", the National Federation's review, has, beginning in January '74, been publishing a series of articles on the formation program drawn up over the last few years. It envisages a succession of progressive steps which challenge the whole person and take account of the stage he is at.

On the Continental Level

The first regular bulletin of "ASIAN LINK" has come to us. It invites the reactions of members regarding the desire for and possibility of an Asiatic gathering in 1975. It includes news from CLC across the world. It prods its readers to reflect on their experience of the Exercises and their thoughts and feelings in the face of the energy crisis. Finally, it invites its readers for criticisms that might improve its service. It is a very interesting step and has the value of establishing a regular dialogue, lessening in this way the problem involved in the enormous distances between Asiatic countries.

Problems of Today in the Light of Faith

STATEMENT OF THE FEDERATION OF CLC OF THE UNITED STATES IN RESPONSE TO POPE PAUL VI'S APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION ON DEVOTION TO MARY.

The "new woman" and the development of the unique and vital contribution she can make within the ranks of a concerned Christian laity was a topic of discussion and action at the semi-annual meeting of the executive leadership of the National Federation of Christian Life Communities.

Meeting in St. Louis, March 22-24, the NFCLC -- the post Vatican II development of the 400 year old Sodality movement -- gave its full endorsement to the recent papal exhortation entitled "Marian Devotion", with its strong sense of, and emphasis on, the women's rights movement and the authentic search for Christian unity.

Although the spiritual and apostolic thrust of the CLC movement is centered solidly on the person and mission of Jesus Christ, the federation clearly reaffirmed Mary, the Mother of Christ, as a woman of deep faith immersed in the struggle to form the first Christian community with her son, Jesus Christ.

In response to the papal challenge to Catholic groups to develop modern forms of Marian piety which emphasize women's rights and ecumenical unity, the NFCLC determined to develop for its member communities;

- 1) Programs which interpret anew to Christians of today the authentic role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church, -- and forms of piety which authentically mirror this modern interpretation;

- 2) Programs that see in Mary the exemplar of modern women in all that would liberate them from ecclesiastical and cultural forms of oppression which make them less than the equals of men;
- 3) Programs which undertake to awaken a sensitive awareness of areas of anti-feminine injustice, and to follow such programs with remedial social action.

The National Federation of Christian Life Communities wholeheartedly endorsed the papal view of Mary as the "new woman", and urged its membership to spread the authentic message of Mary, not as a passive spectator on the life of Christ, but as a woman who, in the words of Pope Paul VI, "did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions."

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER
OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF GERMANY
TO ITS LEADERS

Discussion concerning the modification of Paragraph 218 St GB of the German Civil Code has long made clear that it is a question not only of the so-called interruption of pregnancy, but of a basic position with regard to the human person and his fundamental right to life.

The protection of the life of the unborn is only one of the many sectors in which this right to protection needs to be maintained. Some others, which appear on the horizon and may soon be the object of violent controversy are the right to life of handicapped persons, and the right and duty not to rid oneself of the burden of old age but rather to be taken care of by society.

It is in this context that the German bishops are appealing for a day of prayer "for life". The full value of life can only be seen in reference to its source, the God-Crea-

tor. That is why it is only in the light of this link with God that we can arrive at the right approach to life.

For this reason we are sending you today several copies of the letter of April 4 to the Work Group of Catholic Organizations of Germany, so that you may communicate them as quickly as possible to your affiliated groups. It is not so much question of undertaking some action by CLC as such, but rather that each of us take seriously the call to personal and community prayer, and invite and motivate others to it in our family, among our friends, at school, etc.

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IN THE LIGHT OF ASSISI

At the end of the Pentecost, 1973 meeting at the Escorial in Spain, the National CIO Federation of Italy had invited the presidents and ecclesiastical assistants of the European Federations to hold their next meeting at Assisi.

The offer was accepted, to our great profit and joy... From May 31 to June 3, the leaders and assistants of ten countries of Europe, along with the members of the European CIO Team and those of the Rome Secretariat found themselves together once more. By now these gatherings have become family reunions. Everyone knows everyone else. Introductions have become unnecessary, except for the new faces...

What was really new was Assisi. Assisi, that gave the gathering a special theme and style.

1) In Search of a Style of Life

Assisi is the town of the "Poverello", Saint Francis. A too easy poverty his, one might say. In any case, one that was young, enthusiastic, gay, rash. The poverty of the flowers of the fields and the birds of heaven, in a countryside where the stones harmonize with the indefinable tint of the olive tress. Perhaps we have need of Francis' Canticle of the Creatures to feel the allure of "Lady Poverty", and to unearth deep within ourselves that little grain of madness that will allow us to make, in our society of today, those prophetic gestures of Francis and Ignatius.

In this almost mystical atmosphere, our temptation was to forget the world from which we were coming, this Europe sick with its riches, this club of wealthy countries that trembles at the thought that its growth might be arrested, and, to the degree that an economic crisis looms as a menace, turns in upon itself, while the poor are left aside even more. But before Assisi there had been Augsburg. We could not forget its thrust of world solidarity. Thus our meeting was definitely set within the framework of Augsburg: not poverty for itself, but the poverty that Christ chose, in solidarity with the poor. Poverty at the service of liberation. Poverty that will make us free to identify with the aspirations of men, and help them to find again meaning in life.

Together then we searched out what style of life was suited to the CLCs of Europe at this time in which we live. First of all, by giving a large place to prayer and personal reflection, so as to challenge ourselves and to remake for ourselves the decisive choice that would set us on the road: "I desire and I choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches; contempt with Christ despised rather than honors; and I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ who was thus treated before me, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world."

At the same time we reinforced our resolve to live out this option for poverty and for service in the community of the Church. During three days we lived this ecclesial community, but it was doubtless during our final Eucharist that we understood it. As we met there together in the Basilica of St. Clare, before the crucifix which had spoken to St. Francis, was it not still to us that his words were addressed: "Don't you see, Francis, that my Church is in ruins? I want you to rebuild it." Why should we be afraid today to be reformers of the Church, on the condition that we think first of all of reforming ourselves, and discover in ourselves the same ills that exists in the Church at large? And, following Francis and Ignatius, how else can we do it than with other brothers and companions, in communion with the universal Church?

The three dimensions of this theme - poverty, service, community - we pursued in different ways.

A meeting of this kind, of course, includes technical aspects: exchange of information and future planning. But these facets were more easily integrated into the theme than at previous meetings. The reports of national federations as well as the activities report of the European Team were seen better as a common search to identify with the hopes of men: greater justice, greater sharing of responsibilities, better communication.

In the same way, the meetings of interest-groups converged toward this search for a style of living: in formation programs, among youth, in the confrontation of CLC with the world of today, in the relations between national federations and the world community. Within the walls of Assisi, the world was more than ever with us. And besides, Asia was there in the person of Father Tchou, and Latin America in that of Father González-Tarrío. But the world

too of the men who live around us, thanks to the document presented by the European Team's Study and Research Commission on "Modern Man: His Needs and His Hopes", which can now provide a basis for our efforts.

2) A New Style

The Assisi gathering had too a new style. I might characterize it as a pilgrimage, in the true sense of the term. Our picture of a meeting is usually that of a large room, a big table, papers, and persons round about who speak or who listen. There was that, of course. But something else, which played a large role in the meeting: a session in which our feet took part as well as our heads. We did not always stay in one place, and yet we were not tourists. Rather we were, as St. Ignatius loved to call himself, pilgrims.

Each day the Eucharist brought us together in a different place. The first night, at St. Mary Major Church, on the theme of poverty and liberation. Next day, at the tomb of St. Francis, learning to follow Jesus Christ poor and humble. On Pentecost morning, in the poor but beautiful Church of St. Damian, to be prodded in our efforts to be one with the aspirations of men. The last day, finally, at St. Clare's, at the foot of the St. Damian crucifix, to be sent, like Francis, toward the continual reform of the Church, in communion with her.

We were still more truly pilgrims when we climbed to the Hermitage of the Cells, five kilometers from Assisi, where Francis used to retire. First a good part of the journey in silence, listening to the Spirit on this morning of Pentecost. A prayer in poverty, our eyes open to creation around us, and quite specially to "Our Brother the Sun", who, that morning, was singing in full voice the Canticle of the Creatures. Then our tongues were unloosed to speak in our turn of the "marvels of God", and this truly fraternal exchange with our two or three companions of the road was understood by each one in his own language!

No pilgrimage lacks its shouts of joy and its songs. And we were in Italy! From Pentecost eve we saw arriving young CIC members from Turin, from Naples, from Rome. And the next evening, after that long walk in the sun, we sat and made a long trip through the different regions of It-

aly, from Trent to Sicily, in the songs of our hosts, sometimes gay, sometimes sad, but always warm and friendly. In presenting us with this fiesta, our Italian friends revealed themselves to us as they are, in all their feeling, warmth and friendliness. It is to them in a special way that we owe the unusual style of our gathering.

I would like to say, finally, that this style was not simply the sauce accompanying the main dish. It was the expression itself of what we were seeking, the way of living that we were talking about.

Should we mention practical conclusions and decisions? On some points, yes, although this gathering took place at a moment when concrete activities already decided upon were about to take place: for example, the coming session on liberation at Toulouse, and the three formation courses which will reproduce the Rome Course this coming summer for three linguistic regions: English, French and German.

For the rest, the questions remained questions, we can only offer them to our readers as they were posed to us at the start. We tried on our part to probe them, but it is up to all the members of CLC to re-translate them into their own life context, and to deepen with us our understanding of them, so that the great light of Assisi, in these days of Pentecost, may shine from East to West. These are the questions:

- 1) How can we, who are rich, follow Jesus Christ poor and humble, as true sons? What prophetic gestures in our present society can we pose and propose to CLC?
- 2) How can we, who are in positions of leadership and sometimes hemmed in by the narrow circle of our responsibilities and our background, identify with the hopes and aspirations of the men of our time, in a spirit of service and not of domination?
- 3) How can we, who are individualistic as a result of our middle-class education, work, within the Church and outside the Church, to abolish the barriers that our society has structured?

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