

PROGRESSIO

PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF
CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES

SEPTEMBER 1974
43rd Year
Nº 5

S U M M A R Y

- =====
- HARVEST TIME
by Ramón Aguiló s.j. 2
 - AN EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNITY
EVALUATION
by Nicholas Rieman s.j. 5
 - RECONCILIATION: THE WAY TO
PEACE 10

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

- WHERE WE'VE COME AND WHERE WE ARE
NOW
by Kim (Joaquin Olitoquit) 13
- RICH COUNTRIES NEED LIBERATION
TOO
by Betty Leone 17
- MEETING OF A C.L.C.
by José Gsell 24

by Ramón AGUILLO, S.J.

HARVEST TIME

"The harvest is great and the laborers are few." (Jesus)

- May I begin by telling you, Lord, that I understand almost nothing about you.

How can you expect modern man to understand you, if he has never seen a harvest.

To comprehend you I have to try some scenes from movies, filled with color, which were shown at the neighborhood theater, or recall some television shots which are in the ads for jam.

Men living in the city do not go to farms. We go to the beach or to the mountains for vacation. There we see only the warm sand, the colorful beach umbrellas fading in the sun, rows of human bodies; or in the mountains we enjoy the cool shade of the pines and the firs. If we should go to the country, we do not see beyond the fences and walls that enclose the "sacred" private estates of the wealthy.

Perhaps I can understand you through the products which daily appear on the table for breakfast or for lunch. This white bread, toasted, smothered each morning with butter, ought to be some of the produce of the field's harvest, - for the wheat grew in the field, there it was sown, cultivated, and harvested and is now changed into flour by those you call the laborers of the harvest.

I have never seen a peach tree; yet I relish its fruit, filled with color and tasting so fresh, when it comes un-failingly at the end of lunch, a delicious dessert.

You certainly have seen the harvest and the laborers tanned by the Mediterranean sun in the fields around Nazareth.

You have also loved the fruits of the field, and above all, you loved those men, who in your time were many, but today, in our industrial and urban society, they have abandoned the symmetrical squares of cultivated land, and have gone to work and to live in the teeming apartments of big cities, where the sun, the fresh air, and peace never enter .

• I may not know about harvest behind the windbreaks and the walls of the fields, but I know well the men whom you wished to signify by these harvests, perhaps I know them better than your chosen seventy-two. For I see them each day and everywhere, they are of every color and their eyes have many shapes, they speak every language and dress in the most varied styles from the almost naked of tropical countries to those bundled in fur coats for they live in polar regions. I see them at the red stop light accelerating for a quick start, and I see them, nervous pedestrians hurrying in the cross walks lest they be run over. I see them in the television reports on the starving people in what is called the "Third" World, I see them become cadavers in the accidents of each day and the conflicts of fighting. These men of my time are surely the "harvest" of which you speak. They are those who live on my floor and take the same elevator up and down - alone - so many times each day. They are those included among the cold numbers and percentages of the statistics that make up my daily work. These men and women - my brothers on earth - are for me people without names, but whose suffering, joys, disillusion, fears and hopes, I know perfectly well.

• Even in the moments of sincerity and openness when I feel myself their "brother" I would like to do something for them, yet I find myself checked by the wall of a closed door, or as some farmer who would like to harvest but has no sickle.

Nevertheless, you speak about the need of "laborers".

Clearly you are an idealist.

What can I do for them, if I can do nothing for myself? How can I assist them so that they discover you and discover your Father, if I walk in darkness and the shadow of death, if I puzzle out in the night an unseen road? My interest in them, will it not be more of an obstacle?

• You ask me "to work" and to do as a "laborer" does, what in particular can these workers do, in the fields of your Palestine, only with their arms and sweaty brows, without machines and without tractors, they may bring about a miracle with each year's harvest, bringing it forth from the dry earth, undertaking the difficult planting, and finally coming back joyful with the harvest in their hands.

If I would work, perhaps the world will be a little better, and some person at my side would receive a drop of happi-

ness. I willingly give this drop, simple and fresh, as a raindrop in spring time.

- You seek "laborers" for the "harvest".

Evidently you desire that apostles and prophets spring up, as those whom Jahweh sent before your coming, and as those you chose - apostles and disciples - during your earthly life. All were sacrificed, by the very same men whom they wished to serve. They did not achieve their goal.

Always there sounds in my ears and in my soul - within its depths - the words of that prophet, very much a man, who rebelled against the mission Jahweh had entrusted him: "You have chosen me, Jahweh, and I gave myself. You were the stronger and I was conquered.... Ever I speak, I must shout: 'Ruin and destruction' and though I said: 'I will not remember Him, I will not speak again in his name', your word is in me as a burning fire." (Jeremiah)

In our modern world they also speak of prophets. Many even have long hair and thick beards, as did the prophets of the Old Testament or the apostles of the New. They would be excellent models for Michelangelo.

But, my brothers, these men, they continue to grope along their way.

Perhaps, it happens that in this world of noise and clamor, of supersonic flight and spectaculars from the Moon, there is no place now for prophets, or the prophets must stay hidden, or those not hidden and speaking out, do not have voice enough to be heard.

- I tell you, Lord, that I would surely like to find myself with one of them, with a prophet who would tell me simply that God exists, Creator of Heaven and Earth, a Father who loves us and gave us His Son Jesus Christ to save us, that Jesus Christ established a Church to serve men lovingly, and to assist them along the paths of this world - to their end and to their happiness - to find themselves in you, and to die very simply with this hope. And then, if you wish, I would be able to try to be a small prophet to my neighbors in the apartment, without a beard and without any strange dress, but with an open hand of brotherhood and with a heart full of understanding.

AN EXPERIENCE IN COMMUNITY EVALUATION

by Nicholas RIEMAN sj

Many CLC groups have come to adopt the practice of a community evaluation at the close of their gatherings or sessions. In this context it was thought the experience of the World Federation's Executive Council might be of interest. Hence this article. In it I describe briefly and in its main lines the evaluation the Council made at the close of its meeting of January 3-6, 1974.

First, though, I will situate this in the context of the Council's growing sense of community, and afterwards I will try to draw from the Council's experience of such evaluations some useful tips.

A Developing Community Sense

Over several years the Council has been aware that to serve as it should the world community that is CLC, it needed itself to become more truly a Christian community. More truly a community, with its members sharing at a deeper level each other's hopes and concerns about CLC. And more of a Christian Life community, with CLC attitudes and approaches built into its gatherings.

Always in our sessions the CLC way of life had been presumed. Gradually, however, it began to enter into the fabric of our twice-yearly meetings, each of 3 days or more. So, sometimes there would be time given to an individual evaluation (examination of conscience). Or again, an evaluation of the meeting as such, done perhaps in the framework of shared prayer. Then, drawing on the rich experience of some Council members in their national or local meetings or work groups, we began to make more regular use of meeting evaluations, and in so doing to learn their great worth.

This trend formed part of a certain overall advance we managed to achieve in better integrating "the spiritual" and "business" or the work to be done. This was shown in our adopting the custom of a "meditation exchange" before breakfast, in which we shared with each other the fruit of our morning prayer (for which very brief points--which were sometimes simply the liturgy readings of the previous night--had been given earlier). It appeared too in our liturgies, whose themes, setting and intentions became more closely linked with the content and concerns of the meeting.

Without a doubt, this trend was also aided by the individually-guided Spiritual Exercises that the Council made together for an entire week just before our January 1973 meeting. The clearer common vision, deeper sense of solidarity, and greater appreciation of discernment that resulted surely were a stimulus to a larger use of community evaluations in our gatherings. And the Rome Formation Course and Augsburg Assembly reinforced this direction. By now, each of our Executive Council meetings concludes with an evaluation in common of the session.

Evaluating Our January '74 Meeting

This was true too of our January '74 meeting, in which eight of us took part. The last half-hour or so of the 3-day session was reserved for an evaluation of the content and method of our work during those days. We were all tired, but we knew from past experience that the right kind of evaluation not only gives precious insights for improving future work, but can be a very deep experience in community sharing. First we all took about 10 minutes to reflect prayerfully on the meeting, some meanwhile making a few jottings. Then each in turn shared his reflections, stating what things in the session he felt were quite good and helpful, and what things seemed to him less good and in need of improvement.

One member saw the hard work, patience and selflessness of the group as a very positive factor, but felt that certain topics on the agenda could have been better prepared beforehand--and named one or two of them. Another was much pleased by the climate of earnest search in the Spirit that was operative, and felt too that an atmosphere

of true Christian joy prevailed; it seemed though to him that certain topics could have been handled with more dispatch. To a third it seemed that the Council had succeeded in taking some courageous and far-sighted decisions; on the negative side, however, he felt that the "chairing" of the different sessions (done, at the president's invitation, by various Council members), varied in quality and in style, and that too much time had been spent on the first agenda topic. A couple of members remarked (and we all felt) that the fact that one member, though suffering at the time from a back ailment that required lying down, had nonetheless taken part in the whole meeting, had been a source of inspiration to us. One or two felt that on occasion decisions had been taken a little too hastily, without sufficient pondering of the matters. And so on.... These few examples are enough to convey the climate of exchange.

As frequently happens, certain points were mentioned by several persons. All felt that the spirit operative in this Council session had been excellent, and that, while the work had been very demanding, a certain lightheartedness had obtained even when the questions were difficult and the schedule taxing. Many saw as positive that the meeting, more than previous ones, focused on the apostolic service and mission of CLC, and almost all seemed to think that the frank exchange one evening on recent important world events had been a step forward. On the other hand, three or four persons suggested two specific improvements. One was that the Eucharist be integrated still better into the meeting, and its scheduling better foreseen. A second expressed the desire for inclusion in future meetings of a period where members could share with each other about their personal preoccupations and concerns. We concluded with a short prayer. In this case, it was a song, the Salve Regina, as I remember.

Useful Pedagogical Tips

From our use of community evaluations such as the above, both in Executive Council meetings and other CLC gatherings, we have of course learned something of the pedagogy involved. It would seem that important points to note in this pedagogy are the following:

1) Any meeting or session lasting some hours will profit by concluding with an evaluation, especially if other meetings of the same type or by the same group are planned.

2) If the participants in a meeting number at least 3 or 4 and not over about 15, the ideal way to evaluate it is by an oral "listening group". Here, after a period of reflection, each person in turn states briefly and simply what elements in the meeting he found especially good, and which elements he judges need improvement. Evaluations done only in writing (such may be necessary or advisable especially when the session being reviewed is a long one or the evaluators are many), do not create the deep sense of unity that an oral evaluation can.

3) The evaluation should be a scheduled part of the meeting, with enough time allowed for it. If the group is small (4 or 5) and the meeting being evaluated is of a half-day or at most a full day, 15 minutes might suffice for it. If the session is of several days' length a half-hour will probably be needed, or, if the number of persons is larger (for example, 10 or 12), perhaps a little more. In any case, it is time well spent.

4) An essential part of the evaluation is a time of silence—a minimum of 10 minutes, at least for longer meetings—for personal reflection before comments are exchanged. To omit this easily results in a superficial and too "cerebral" assessment, too little reflecting evangelical discernment. In a good evaluation I should share not only what my head tells me, but what light I receive from the spiritual movements taking place in me during the meeting, or now as I reflect on it.

5) While charity and delicacy are in order, the evaluation needs to be honest, reflecting what each one thinks, or better, feels. Such honesty is much easier in a prayerful, reflective atmosphere. In a group that has made some progress toward becoming a true community, the degree of frankness (in perfect charity) achieved in the evaluation comments is sometimes astounding.

6) The evaluation concludes with a short prayer, preferably somewhat informal. An example might be the Our Father recited together by all, with hands joined in sign of common brotherhood.

7) The evaluation works best when the whole meeting has taken place in a prayerful climate. Some aids to achieve this are meaningful liturgies, orienting the sessions with apt Scripture readings or a bit of shared prayer, and a schedule that is not too hectic. A certain atmosphere of openness, with the participants willing and accustomed to express to each other their true spiritual impressions or feelings, is distinctly helpful.

Our Executive Council has learned, then, that concluding our meetings with a shared evaluation is a precious help both for making future meetings more effective and for forging a deeper bond between the members. And that bond is an important, perhaps an essential factor if we are to perform our service as we should. Is that surprising? After all, it was Ignatius Loyola who used to say that to plan beforehand and to review or evaluate afterwards, are two of the surest rules for success in any human endeavor. They are, in fact, expressions of that Ignatian discernment that continually seeks, in every event, the greater glory of God, which, in the concrete, is identical with the greater service of others.

*

RECONCILIATION : THE WAY TO PEACE

January 1 of each year is World Peace Day, so designated since some years ago by Paul VI. The theme he proposes for the 1975 Day you see in our title. The official commentary on it follows. [Editor's Note]

Two main reasons have inspired the Holy Father in the choice of this theme for the World Day of Peace, 1975.

The first reason is its connection with the Holy Year. The latter puts forward two inseparable aims: Christian renewal and reconciliation.

The second reason is its connection with peace. In the first place, "vertical peace": the return to God, or conversion, that each individual is called upon to accomplish within himself on the occasion of this great jubilee. In the second place there is "horizontal peace": peace among men. This peace between individuals, social groups and nations cannot be reduced to mere coexistence. It goes beyond conciliation. It presupposes reconciliation. In other words, after one or more breaks (wars, or social, civil or ideological confrontations), it means a voluntary return to dialogue, to good understanding and to cooperation. The very object of the Holy Year is to inspire this form or repentance and this interiorization of peace with a view to a fraternal commitment at the service of all.

Becoming reconciled on the individual level is certainly a difficult thing and an act of high virtue. At this personal level the problem involves a difficulty, but the principle is clear: the forgiveness of offences is asked for and lived every day in the Our Father.

But when one comes to other types of conflict, collective ones, the problem of reconciliation seems to change character. It poses a problem of conscience. Do people have the right to be reconciled?

Do not social, civil or international conflicts mostly appear to be conflicts of loyalty, and therefore conflicts of duty? In order that I may remain loyal to the various groups to which I belong (my family, milieu, work, social class, religion, party, race, country, colour), am I not perhaps often obliged, unwittingly and unwillingly, to fight other groups - groups to which I feel loyalty for other reasons and in which I sometimes count just as many friends, but which constitute a hindrance, through their action or their very existence, sometimes to the most fundamental rights of my own community?

The answers given today to these questions can be put into three categories.

For some people, peace is defined as a conflict-free interval between wars, conflicts being regarded as evils in themselves, or, at the very least, as abnormal incidents to be regarded as coming into the sphere of error or sin.

On the other hand, many of our contemporaries, including a certain number of Christians, give an absolute value to conflicts and violence, seeing them as the only cause of historical progress and therefore as good things in themselves; and they consider reconciliation as a utopian form of disarmament or as an immoral and injurious drug.

Finally, there are many others who have a wider and more realistic view of the problem. The following are some indications of this view.

1) Conflict exists. Within society we find a mass of struggles and oppositions, everywhere and at all levels. It is only through surmounting ever recurring confrontations that peace can exist and be perpetually created. It is for Christian discernment to recognize, in each case, what springs from adjustments of social life and what on the contrary springs from sin: hate, pride, and selfishness.

2) Recognition of conflict as a fact does not entail the necessary transition from the fact to the right - and still less to the duty - to uphold and radicalize struggles already taking place or systematically to create fresh ones.

For conflict is not an end but a means. It has limits and criteria of lawfulness.

3) The first task of reconciliation is to try to solve the problems posed by these confrontations, by dealing less with their effects than their causes, whether immediate and well-defined or remote and general.

4) For this very reason, reconciliation finds its own limits in its counterfeits, which we can only briefly touch on here and which explain the fact that a certain number of conflicts escape it, partially or for a time.

The first counterfeit: injustice. Here is how Paul VI, among many other interventions, denounces injustice: "Peace will never be without a hunger and thirst for justice... Peace will never betray the higher values of life in order to survive."

The second counterfeit: reconciliation without truth or against truth. In order to be reconciled, one does not have the right to lose one's consistency, if reconciliation prevents one from remaining oneself, if it causes one to diminish one's personality in the social group, to be lost in that group, and at the same time to lose one's freedom, fidelity and faith. In this regard, Paul VI reminds us of Saint Paul's admonition: "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). Reconciliation is not the same as indifferentism, either moral or religious.

Society is not only bound up with conflict; it is also and primarily a communion. That which unites men, by nature and grace, is stronger than that which divides them. The community instinct is universal. It is the builder of peace and civilization. Mutual aid, solidarity, friendship and love make up society, the "human family".

The solution therefore is not to shut oneself up in tolerance and isolationism, but, in the very heart of the conflicts, to rise above them and to seek solutions along new paths. Reconciliation is neither a standstill nor a retreat: it is a march towards the future, the way to peace.

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

WHERE WE 'VE COME AND WHERE WE ARE NOW

Renewal in a Philippines Student CLC

The Ateneo de Naga (AdelN) College unit, renewed through recent CLC orientations, has existed now for more than 3 years. In general, our community has the assets and the liabilities that go with the phenomenon of change. It is thus characterized by enthusiasm, vitality, hope and excitement on the one hand, and by confusion, ambiguity, instability and frustration on the other. But we believe we have made and are making real progress.

Up till 1970

The community and its predecessors, the two exclusive Sodalities (St. Francis Xavier for men, 1950; St. Therese Sodality for women, 1955) were at this time typical of those during the second period described by Fr. Paulussen in his PROGRESSIO article, "Apropos of an Anniversary: a Bit of History": "These Sodalities were primarily for individualistic piety, self-sanctification and devotion to the Mother of God".

Renewal Comes

1970 witnessed the first ripple of renewal in CLC objectives and methods when some of the male Sodalists and their friends made a 2-day retreat. Looking for a spirit to bind them together, they ingeniously adapted the new and unfamiliar General Principles. Numbering 21 in all, they called themselves Black Jacks, BJ for short - the initials doubling in meaning for Brother Jesus. They existed alongside the Sodality, but with a distinctive line. This group was responsible for ushering in a revision of the traditional approach and stressing anew a socially-oriented apostolate. Triggered by its new-found dynamism, the new group aimed at the renewal of the male Sodality and its flowering into a true Christian Life Community.

On July 17-19, 1971, Sister Soledad Perpiñan, RGS, gave the first CIC live-in seminar to the two Sodalities. The mixing, facilitated through group dynamics, suggested the fusion of the two into one community. Here the CIC General Principles were formally introduced. After the seminar, the name CIC was adopted, yet the two groups remained separate. By December of 1971, 3 delegates from each community attended the Third General Council meeting held in Zamboanga City. The meeting there communally discerned and then took a stand on national tasks and responsibilities in the religious, social, economic, cultural and political spheres. The stand outlined the thrust of the movement in favor of justice and liberation, and marked a historic event in the life of the Philippine CICs. To make sure that the new direction was implemented, a follow-up seminar was given in June 1972 by Fr. Ben Sim SJ, the national vice-assistant. The task proved too challenging to tackle alone and so the two groups merged into one unit. The reorganization caused many difficulties. Sex differences complicated out, the priority for apostolate determined, and the organizational set-up formulated. The conflicts reached a climax in July 1972 when the president of the male group, after being elected head of the newly-fused unit, resigned his post, because the members were not yet ready to respond to his insistence on following the thrust toward social involvement.

Conscientization

Reorganizing itself, the new executive council guided the unstable community, formulated new procedures, formed committees and recruited members. A new sense of hope and a closer bond developed with the passing of months. Regular contact with the National Federation started. Soon time and the social ills around awakened their conscience. Though still in what might be called the "humanization stage", the community bravely undertook social projects for the farmers in the region who were harrassed by hacienda owners, and joined other civic organizations in their relief program for the poor of the barrios, who suffered as a result of fighting between the rebels and the government troops. It conducted surveys on industries that might furnish employment to people. Side by side with this went formation activities for the CIC members themselves.

Spiritual Deepening

Martial law (September 1972) put an end to this social involvement. But the community refused to die. It now focused its attention on the school campus and the students. This shift resulted in a deeper formation for the members through live-ins, regular bi-monthly meetings, occasional share-a-days, a series of morning-prayer sessions and liturgical celebrations. It helped to make the Mass more meaningful and appealing to the students. It started to translate the General Principles into the Bicol dialect. It tried to interest other schools in forming similar communities.

Contacts with the national office increased during this period. This was made possible and strengthened by the many visits of national staffers, regular reports of activities and the presence of a full-time national promoter. The sending of delegates to the Fourth General Council meeting in Angono, Rizal in April 1973 also furthered communication and the bond of community between the local unit and the National Federation. The delegates, too, contributed much to the growth of the unit when they attended the National CIC Training Institute right after the Council.

Ignatian Spirituality

With the opening of the school year 73-74, only 21 members out of the original 60 were left, due to graduation and resignations. The number did not matter anymore. Actually it provided both a fuller humanization and a deeper spirituality. In October 1973, Fr. Bob Hogan SJ, the assistant of the group, guided the members through a 5-day Ignatian Retreat. This step towards an intense Ignatian spirituality filled in whatever pieces were lacking to complete the image of an authentic CIC. The members became prayerful and their commitment urged them to reach out. The bond of community became very strong and the spirit of service grew:

Apostolic Commitment

Service characterized the group at this stage. It co-sponsored a school play for the renovation of one of the

oldest churches of the region. It tried to foster openness and communication among parents, students, administration and faculty members through a school "dialogue". Another apostolate - Tabang (Help) '73 - aimed at awakening the social consciousness of the students for the poor, mobilized many to solicit relief goods for the refugees in Mindanao and the inmates of the regional mental hospital. Many other projects were undertaken as individual apostolates by the members. By the start of the second semester, the group launched its recruitment. More than 40 students applied because they could "see and feel" (their own words) the brotherhood and social concern of the members. And something occurred to confirm the image of OLC as a balanced and well-rounded group: the Christian Life Community, in alliance with another campus group which decided to join it, emerged as the general champion in the school intramural games, gathering 3 trophies and 5 gold medals!

Towards Integration

In April 1974, the community sent 3 delegates to the Fifth General Council meeting held at the Ateneo de Manila. The Council referred to the 1971 Zamboanga stand as an imperative, and centered its thrust on witnessing to justice and service of the poor. Such emphasis was supported by the trainees of the 1974 Training Institute (now called Formation Institute) who deliberated on and accepted a personal life-style patterned after the poor and humble Christ and identification with the poor. This pivotal decision on the national level led the local community to re-examine its nature and direction. It started a community deliberation, the first in years, to integrate itself as a school-based OLC. Living and working now on a more serious level, the group realizes that it has to live out more fully the OLC essentials in order to discern and respond to the vision and mission of the movement, and to be in harmony with them. The community now is united in saying, in the words of its former Assistant, Fr. Hogan, "It is our hope that we will soon begin to develop the kind of men and women without which the (Philippine) New Society will never come to be, since we are convinced that such a society is ultimately the work of Christ and His Spirit. We further believe that such a society already exists in miniature in the Aden OLC".

- Kim (Joaquin Olitoquit)

RICH COUNTRIES NEED LIBERATION TOO

by Betty LEONE

As chairwoman of the United States CIO Committee on Social Justice, I have been asked to describe an experience of liberation in the context of a First World country. I must say that I have experienced great frustration in getting my fellow-Americans and fellow-CIO'ers to listen and to understand what liberation is all about. What is keeping us from responding? We don't lack good-will. Could it be in our free country that we are not as free as we believe ourselves to be? Let me begin.

When I was a child I thought as a child and believed as a child. With my whole heart I sang our national anthem about our "sweet land of liberty" with freedom ringing from every mountain-side. I pledged allegiance to the Stars and Stripes - concluding with the words "one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all". My childhood Christian faith was similarly idealistic and uncomplicated. God was all-powerful and loving; Jesus was my friend - somewhat like Superman. He could and would solve my problems for me.

As I grew to adulthood I became aware that freedom in the USA existed in a very uneven way. My religious faith has also grown and changed and deepened. This article is a brief attempt to describe my changing perceptions of my secular and religious faiths.

As a girl growing up in the USA I early realized that men had much more freedom than women, most of whose lives were narrowly defined in terms of wife, mother and consumer. I had three brothers whose expectations were very different from mine. In those days motherhood and a professional career were mutually exclusive; fatherhood and a career were completely compatible. The women's movement has made me aware that my perceptions were real and widely

shared. Through the eyes of black friends I learned that black-Americans were also very unequal and unfree. I developed a real sensitivity to their lack of equal access to the American dream in civil rights, social acceptance and equal opportunities. There was little that I could do until the Civil Rights Movement formed a community of concern and involvement. Education was another area where freedom was ambiguous. Religious authority figures had all the answers and my alternative viewpoint was denied. Thinking was sometimes a subversive and dangerous act. It seemed to me that education for living in a democracy was very undemocratic.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time when I began to integrate my secular and religious life. My brief professional life as a socialworker, prior to my marriage, had sensitized me to wide-spread social problems. Somehow during my super-busy, narrowly restricted years as wife and mother I began to realize that modest social changes - welfare, even legal reforms were very inadequate. Problems were growing much faster than solutions. What was the Christian response?

As my seven children grew up and as the United States became involved in a growing, incomprehensible military conflict in S.E. Asia, I began to see enforced military service for young men as another infringement of freedom. For whom and for what was I raising five healthy boys? How did other parents feel? I was beginning to hear what the young people were saying. For years I had internalized the religious belief that the voice of legitimate authority was the voice of God. I began to have doubts. I reflected on the Nuremburg Trials after World War II which revealed deep conflicts between secular authority and individual conscience. My three oldest boys struggled with and obtained the status of Conscientious Objectors. I was proud of them and joined women's groups that were opposing the war. I was learning from my children.

I had always been a religious person and my involvement in Sodality and later Christian Life Communities has had a growing but not clearly-defined relationship to my social awareness. The social encyclicals of Pope John - Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris were turning points as was Populorum Progressio of Paul VI. My social concerns

were also religious concerns. Religion was more than just "pie in the sky when you die" and intellectual assent to carefully defined traditional doctrines. It was more than faithful liturgical observance and "charitable" band-aids for gaping and ulcerating social sores. Religious faith dealt with more than tradition and promises of immortality. For me God was continuing His revelation through human history and current events. I consider the American civil-rights movement of the 1960's and Vatican II as two recent examples of God's concern and continuing revelation in our times. As Christians we need to become more sensitive and more responsive.

A major turning point in the integration of my social and religious concerns was the year I spent in Brazil when my husband accepted an appointment as an exchange professor at the University of São Paulo. Little did I realize that my experience as an affluent American in a developing country would educate me in the way it did. I loved Brazil. Never had I met such warm and hospitable people. But the social contrasts were enormous and disturbing. I refused to have a live-in maid and we did not own a car. We did our own marketing. We saw hungry people scavenging for food at the local markets and in garbage-cans. Going to a movie on a damp winter day necessitated stepping over whole families who had taken refuge in the theatre lobby. We saw migrant individuals and families wearing and carrying all their possessions because there was no low cost housing and no secure housing. In the company of public health workers I visited some favelas. I began to perceive the economic miracle of Brazil as a bonanza for American business-men and well-to-do Brazilians but as a disaster for the majority who had substandard wages, no decent housing, no right to form unions or to bargain for better conditions. I began to evaluate the mounting evidence that the capitalistic system was morally bankrupt and un-Christian. It seemed to be using people as easily replaceable parts of the economic machine. The enormous gap between rich and poor was a large-scale reproduction of American social problems. There was no imaginable way that the poor could better themselves. Economically they were slaves of the System.

While we were there, the military government tightened its grasp . . . closing Universities, "retiring" competent

professors, imprisoning students without trial. The Church, except for Dom Helder Camara - Bishop of Recife and a few other voices, was largely silent. It presided at many government functions and seemed by its silence to reinforce the unjust status-quo. I longed for religious leaders to declare Capitalism, as they had with Communism, an unjust system violating human rights and destroying religious values.

It is difficult to describe all of the influences that have changed me. The social encyclicals took on increased meaning. My spiritual reading and prayer became a daily reflection on current events. I was absorbing contemporary history in the light of my Christian faith and also as an American with a growing dedication to "Liberty and justice for all" including the oppressed minorities in my own country as well as worldwide. My country and my country-men both at home and abroad were supporting and expanding a global capitalistic system based on "beggar-thy-neighbor" principles which I increasingly perceived as exploitative and denying of basic economic and human rights. We have been doing this as a "so-called" Christian nation without any self-awareness or reflection on Christian values.

My biggest frustration has been with religious people who could not share my changing perspectives. My religious values were shifting from institutionally decreed and reinforced values to personal, gospel-oriented beliefs. God is still transcendent, but He is also very present in contemporary history and is calling me to take sides with His Poor and Oppressed.

I have been describing my growing perception of the gap between the myth, or more charitably the ideal of freedom in my country and the reality of unfreedom as I have experienced it. I believe that there is unconscious slavery in America and that many of us Americans are its victims. We have a one-sided view of our social, political, economic and religious history. Our Constitution was signed by white, male slave-holders and their influence still persists. It has taken time and agonizing efforts for slaves to be freed, for blacks and women to obtain political rights, for blacks, women and other minorities to secure the beginning of full human and economic rights. This narrow view of freedom

- paternalistic, "father knows best" - still persists and is an article of faith in our Civil Religion which still exports this narrow view, especially in our foreign economic polity.

Domestic economic policy is no better. There is a growing awareness that Americans are trapped in an economic system which is almost totally manipulated by the mass-media and advertizing. Many, perhaps most Americans including Catholic Christians, are slaves of artificially created needs. The prison is luxurious and the bars are hidden. Inmates are increasingly drugged with alcohol, endless entertainment, and never-ending new consumer "needs". There seems to be a parallel between the Russian version of Society in which people exist for the State and the American version in which people exist to serve the Economic System. Alas, we are aware of the Russians' lack of freedom, but not our own!

I have sketched briefly my perceptions of the myths and realities of human and religious freedom in the USA. I doubt that my perceptions are widely shared. Our enslavement to our myths and to our consumer society are so total that we believe the myths and feel that our enmeshment in our wasteful, overconsumptive culture is some-how blessed by God because we are so hard-working.

As for myself, I am slowly breaking-through and creating my own future in terms of more authentic family and human relationships, better race-relations, diminishing participation in the consumer "rat-race", non-exploitative economic relationships, and attempting to challenge and influence unjust social and political structures wherever possible. I am actively looking for alternatives and I believe that my secular and religious insights are converging. I am also looking for a community in search of liberation.

I am becoming free in one sense, personally free with in the larger prison of our American consumer society. I am also finding other "prisoners" who are taking off their chains and who are choosing a simpler, less consumptive life-style for human and Christian reasons. As of now, most of those who share with me these ideas of liberation are not members of CLC's. They are anonymous Christians within

and without the established Churches who share a newly-found sense of mission to America. Some are returned missionaries; all have had at some point the experience of oppression from insensitive ecclesial, social, economic or personal relationships. For affluent societies this becoming free "within the prison" might be considered a first step. The discovery and formation of communities who share this concept of liberation and who can exert joint pressures for attitudinal and structural change - this is a second step.

I often reflect upon the Exodus experience. Sometimes I feel as though affluent American Christians are all members of Pharaoh's court and are incapable of hearing, seeing and doing anything about their own enslavement and that of minorities at home and of people in developing countries around the world. We will do anything to help them except get off their backs. I have also been reflecting more deeply on Christ's mission to the people of His day. His concerns were with the humble and the downtrodden. His healing presence and message were a sign of hope to the oppressed. Are Christians of the First World a sacrament or sign of Christ's continuing presence in the world today?

Let me conclude with a personal credo on liberation which reflects my maturing secular and religious beliefs on liberation.

I believe in Christ as Saviour and Liberator,
He came to prepare a place for us in heaven,
but He also cares about our human existence
and He urges His followers to share this concern.
I believe that He is calling us
to be co-creators of His kingdom on earth.
He has given us free will
and He does not interfere with our freedom -
even our bad and blind choices.
He lets us take the consequences of our actions
yet welcomes us with open arms when we turn to Him
asking Him to replace our hearts of stone with truly
human hearts.

I believe that as Christians we are called to be
co-laborers and co-liberators with Christ

I believe that the Christian presence in the United States calls us to be a sign of contradiction to our materialistic, manipulative society. Our mission is to create a Christian counter-culture with alternative personal attitudes, alternative institutional models which reflect more clearly our secular and religious ideals of human freedom.

*

MEETING OF A C.L.C.

by José GSELL

The style and content of a meeting of CLC certainly figure among the most frequent questions that reach us. It seems also profitable to us to reflect on this matter together. In this first article we would like to pose the question while supplying some elements of response, fully realizing that these only partially answer the questions received. But we would like thus to invite our readers to a dialogue--especially those among you who have or have had concern about the progress of a CLC.

Let us consider first of all this submitted question: how and under what conditions does a CLC meeting contribute to the all-round formation and growth of its members and to the development of an apostolic community? Which are the key elements that introduce, deepen and help the CLC's way of life? How does the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, through meetings, remain the profound force that forms and fashions members and communities with a view to mission? These are different ways of formulating the same basic concern: how to live every moment of the meeting in the harmonious perspective of an authentic CLC.

Now that the question has been posed, we must surely admit that the type of meeting is not identical in different stages of growth of a CLC. On the contrary, it varies. Between one group of beginners and a community that several years of existence have advanced towards its goal, we shall find a gamut of meetings whose profile might indicate a misplacement of accent and emphasis, as they responded to the precise needs of a stage through which they passed. This leads us to recognize, at the same time, a certain number of permanent key elements, introduced and practiced from the birth of a group, lived through different stages, acquired and always respected by the experienced CLC.

Certain of these elements are blurred [toned down] at times (while still remaining present) for the sake of one thing that's insisted upon over others; in which case the adaptation of a pedagogy of formation is needed corresponding to the successive stages of progress. We shall not stop here to consider the different stages and their content; we shall publish in this regard the result of the work of the Formation Commission, as soon as this group finishes its study.

Our present desire is to return to these permanent key elements, so as to understand more fully what they are all about. First of all, let us say that the meeting usually has two sections: one of prayer and one of exchange of ideas. Other elements could be added occasionally: information on a situation, the study of a text or document, etc.; but the two periods indicated above form the basic structure, from which a process of growth can be developed, for both the individual and the group. It is self-evident that it is always necessary to have in mind the different mentalities and cultures in order to find the right and natural way which permits this growth. Note that we are dealing with the level of a CLC that is ordinarily made up of 8 to 12 people, and that where a group is larger it can be subdivided into smaller cells.

Prayer period. The most usual form of prayer is probably meditation on a passage of Scripture, previously made known to the members of the group. It is profitable to begin by re-reading it, then to leave some time for silent personal meditation, after which each one in turn can simply state the fruit he obtained from his meditation. This sharing, in the atmosphere of peaceful contemplation, is an experiment in listening profoundly to what goes on within oneself and around himself so as to recognize the working of the Spirit in oneself and in others.

It is sometimes helpful, especially at the beginning of a group, to introduce the period of personal meditation with a few points that make reflection and prayer easier. Likewise, if at the start of a group some people have not yet had the experience of the Exercises, the chaplain (or, if there is none, another experienced member) should help them by giving them some idea of the method to be followed, according to what the Exercises have to say in this regard.

This prayer time, as it has just been briefly described, is most natural and normal, indeed most specific to a CIG, for it is directly rooted in our experience of the Spiritual Exercises and, in that sense, supports each one's effort at fidelity to meditation, in the first place; and then, the sharing among the members of the group constitutes an exercise of fraternal mutual help towards a discernment that is more just and enlightened, while at the same time being a sign and gauge of mutual confidence.

Business period. Before beginning this consideration, let us think for a moment about the necessary conditions and the manner of proceeding, so that this period may be truly a means of growth for the individuals and for the community. The time allotted to business is for the sake of communication: each member communicates his own experience, his reflections, in the same way that he communicated the fruit of his prayer. We are not speaking, then, of an exchange of ideas or points of view, but a willingness to give something of oneself and to accept what others give him. It is by means of this communication that, little by little, each one will be known just as he is, with his strengths and his weaknesses, and that he will be liked [loved] for what he is. Such an exchange cannot take place unless there really exists a climate of mutual confidence and acceptance of one another. Likewise, this cannot develop unless all practice listening to each other respectfully. My listening, is it of the same quality for all? Or rather am I more distracted, perhaps negative, with regard to this or that one that I have pre-judged? The repeated exercise of listening, of acceptance, of trust towards all, practiced with honesty, leads on the path of fraternal love.

Here again, the simplest way to go about this exchange will be to introduce it in turn, letting each one take his turn at expressing his experience on the theme that is the object of exchange. Thus each one will find his place spontaneously in the community. He will discover that he has something to say, that the others accept his experience, and in the work of the others he will recognize the deep echo of his own experience. This way of introducing the exchange avoids the polarization around one or two people. It will be easier, after this round table, to follow this exchange with a general plan: some clarification questions could help for a better comprehension; the experiences ex-

pressed will permit a more complete and enlightened execution; and finally and especially, by means of the exchanges there will appear, little by little, the way that "Jesus personally came closer and walked along the way with them" (Lk. 24, 15). For, the goal of these exchanges, which are exactly the opposite of a discussion, is precisely to deepen within us, by means of respectful listening and absolute disponibility, the sensitivity to movements in the life of the Spirit, so as to discern His presence and His call and to accept them. This regular, personal and communitarian discernment is a goal of the CLC, and the meeting time should, by its style and content, not only permit it but also introduce it, practice it, rest in it. Personal growth and the development of the community will soon permit one to distinguish the various functions of the community, showing its members the path of service, helping them and guaranteeing their mission, refining their sense of the Church, etc. But all these functions have as foundation the aptitude for true discernment that the Exercises precisely give us. Not everything in us and around us comes from God. There are different spirits, and one must know Christ in order to stick close to Him and to His work.

What do the exchanges deal with? We can give here only some very general outlines, which thereby will not be satisfying. But let us simply introduce a reflection, and it will be completed by your contributions and by further work documents. Let us say, then, in a general way, that the exchanges of a beginning group will deal essentially with the way of life of the CLC's and their integration in the life of their members. In other words, what are the proposed itinerary and the principal characteristics? A person who enters a CLC must recognize and experience this itinerary so as to be able to opt for this way or, on the contrary, to leave it freely if it does not seem to be his vocation. It is the moment to exchange ideas on the direction of our life, to discover what obstacle exists in us to a full life, to root ourselves in prayer, to recognize the call of Christ, to experience the support of the fraternal community, to learn to discern and to recognize the conditions required for a true decision, amid the multiple daily choices or where there is a more important option that can be placed before one or other member of the group. Finally, to advance towards the responsible decision regarding the mission in the world. Each of these characteristic points

will be accompanied by different means at the start and in the exercise: the daily meditation on Scripture, the examen at the end of the day, the sacramental life, the evaluation of our relations with others, the union between our prayer and our life.....

Once rooted in its specific way of life, the CIC will try to find out how it should serve. Its exchanges will deal with the concrete local situations, the discernment of the action to be taken or promoted, the mutual help and support that will make the best possible response to the mission recognized.

Perhaps we should recall, as we come to the end of this first outline that other articles and work documents will complete, that no matter what the stage of growth of a person or community, the content of the formation (and thus of the meeting as a means of formation) is always to be found at the interior of the global project of the CIC's. In each of the stages the itinerary is entirely present, even if certain aspects are toned down in order to give more weight to others, which correspond to the needs of the group at its level of development. The insistence on a given point is not realized by excluding the others. Those in charge will have, on the contrary, the duty to place and order each stage always towards the goal sought: the formation of apostolic men and communities, animated by the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, answering the call of Christ and the Church, in the midst of the world in which they live.

*