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E D I T O R I A L

As we complete this issue, the last of 1974, we feel welling up within us a spontaneous sentiment of appreciation and thanksgiving for the work that has been achieved, thanks to the collaboration of so many members of CLC and to the support of our readers generally.

For PROGRESSIO is nothing else but that: the fruit of the continuing and authentic experiences made by the Christian Life Communities and then ripened through exchanges and communication. And this exchange of experiences, whatever its form or style, has attracted a circle of readers who are friendly, interested, but also demanding, if we may judge by the reactions received during the year.

The addition of two Supplements has been widely appreciated, since the vast majority of our readers have opted for the complete subscription, and there have been many orders for additional copies of the brochure on the Exercises published last April. So we extend our warm gratitude to all the authors and, through them, to all the CLCs whose experiences they have transmitted. Our heartfelt thanks go too to all our readers, who have so often expressed their encouragement during the year.

It is to this confidence and support, so vigorously shown, that we wish to make appeal at this moment when it becomes necessary to augment the subscription price. The year 1974 has been very difficult: the increase in the price of paper, of printing and above all of postage has stretched to the limit revenues that were already rather meager. In addition, the financial assistance that the review could furnish to the efforts of the World Federation in its work of promoting CLC throughout the world could no longer be counted on. And this, precisely at the moment when, following the 1973 Formation Course of Rome and the General Assembly of Augsburg, efforts to develop authentic CLCs were being multiplied everywhere. Communication was being intensified and demands made on us also on the part

of the poorer countries, before which we were in danger of finding ourselves paralyzed. And this would blunt too the dynamism of the youthful national communities, which can only develop thanks to the solidarity of all.

In the face of this situation, the Executive Council of the World Federation, counting on the fund of good will that surrounds the review, had faith that its members and friends would understand. It has fixed a new subscription price (see below) which takes account of the price increases already in effect or foreseeable in 1975, assuring also a contribution to the work of promotion that is achieved thanks to mutual aid on the international level.

We were all convinced, in taking this decision, that it would in some instances be felt as a real sacrifice. And yet we have taken it with confidence, for we are sure that we can count on your faithfulness as a subscriber. We are sure that your help will be forthcoming and will allow us to solve this difficult situation. We are sure, finally, that together we will continue this work of the Church which is the development of the Christian Life Communities and in this way take part in announcing Jesus Christ to the world of today.

José GSELL

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SIMPLICITY OF LIFE AND POVERTY

Some Reflections of Father Pedro ARRUIPE s.j.

When he presents the mystery of the Nativity of Jesus in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius invites us to see, to look at, to consider, to observe, to contemplate the Lord born "in extreme poverty. And after many labors, after hunger, thirst, heat and cold, after insults and outrages, He is going to die on the cross." (Sp.Ex.116). CHRISTMAS, contrary to what our consumer society thinks, is a mystery of poverty, and already symbolizes the cross. To help us in our meditation, we publish here some reflections of Father Arrupe, extracts of an address of his of December, 1973.

The simplicity that belongs to our way of life is today menaced not by a single but by a double danger. It is menaced not only by our built-in egoism, but by the consumer society that provides with such facility almost everything our egoism craves. In a society characterized by penury, our egoism cannot have such spectacular success; we are compelled to live simply. And so, those of us who live in societies of affluence must be very conscious of the enslaving effects of an economy of abundance and its high-pressure salesmanship. If we really want to live the life of austerity to which we are called, we must be able to respond to its propaganda: "How many things there are I do not need! How many things there are I do not want!" To modify a little bit one of the four freedoms of President Roosevelt, we must cultivate freedom from "want".

If we look more closely into the matter, we find that simplicity of life is rooted in, and is a manifestation of, a basic spiritual attitude. This attitude can be cultivated - or, on the other hand, opposed - in diverse ways, in our personal lives as well as in our apostolic work. It is not merely a problem of poverty. In our personal lives, for instance, we can fall short of simplicity for many reasons: because of sensuality, or vanity, or an unacknowledged pride of social class.

Sensuality - if you will allow me to use that old-fashioned but still valid expression - makes us adept in avoiding whatever is inconvenient, and in taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by a consumer society to enjoy ourselves in comfort.

Vanity - again an old-fashioned but by no means outdated term - inclines us not only to provide ourselves with superfluities, but even, in what we need for our maintenance, to choose only "the best that the market offers", thus joining, whether we realize it or not, the number of those who have become enslaved to prevailing fashion.

And thirdly - whether we realize it or not - we all come under the influence of what have been called "collective passions" - of nation, or race, or social class. The trouble is that we fail to realize that we share these "passions", precisely because they are "collective"; they find their unexamined justification in everything that surrounds us; and thus, without our full advertence, they condition our attitudes, our choices, our way of life.

Poverty : Mystery of Faith

Poverty is a Gospel mystery, and one must love Christ to comprehend it. The mystery of poverty springs from the mystery of the kenosis of Christ: Christ's emptying of himself. It is a mystery, something that human reason cannot fully understand, something we can approach only in the measure that we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The problematic of religious poverty is neither sociological nor financial. It is not even merely theological. It is a problematic of faith: of love for Christ poor, poor in the human life he chose for himself, poor in the life of his Mystical Body.

And so, to arrive at a measure of understanding of what poverty means, a double experience is necessary. A faith experience, first of all, of Christ's emptying of himself; but also a lived experience of being really poor. If either of these two experiences is lacking, one cannot really know what Christian poverty is. If the mystical experience of Christ's kenosis is lacking, one can possibly know what human poverty and misery are, that poverty and misery which we are called upon to fight in themselves and in their effects; but one cannot know what poverty for a

Christian is and means. If the personal, lived experience of real poverty is lacking, one may possibly arrive at some knowledge of what the poverty of the historical Christ was and its characteristic traits; but one cannot know what the poverty of poor men is in actuality.

Hence, if we are to know Christian poverty in its fullness, in the round, we must strive for an inward knowledge, an epignosis reached through prayer of Christ poor, Christ on the cross; this epignosis leading us in virtue of the Ignatian charism to that third mode of humility whereby we choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches. At the same time, and by the same token, we must strive to live this poverty we have chosen, and thus experience what poverty really means for the indigent poor. Faith impels us to the imitation of Christ poor, and this in turn impels us to actual poverty: such is the upward spiral generated by the interaction of faith experience and lived experience which is the basic pattern in this order of being. interaction: for the lived experience of poverty impels us to the love of Christ, a love which purifies and liberates. As Saint Ignatius puts it, "It is no small grace that the Divine Goodness gives us when it gives us the opportunity of actually tasting what we should always desire if we are to be conformed to our model, Jesus Christ."

Poverty : Basis of Life in the Spirit

We all know how much Saint Ignatius loved poverty. He looked on it as one of the basic virtues of the apostle. Deriving this insight from interior illuminations of the Holy Spirit regarding the standard of the Cross, he lost no time in translating it into practice: we are to love poverty as a mother and defend it as the rampart of religion.

Let us spell this out, using the same terminology that Ignatius does. What does poverty do? It disposes the human instrument to union with God, and endows him with apostolic mobility. Union with God, effected by the theological virtues, is nourished by evangelical poverty, which is both founded in faith and increases faith, since Christ known by faith is the key to an understanding of what poverty really means, and poverty, in turn, is the supremely

credible witness of what faith is: "faith without works is dead." (James 2:17).

Poverty means total detachment, at least in attitude; it means withdrawing trust from all things created and placing all our trust and all our hope in God, in the faith-certainty that our help can only come from him. It is to this total trust in the providence of God that poverty leads us by dispossessing us of everything and thus liberating us from attachment to anything. "The surest as well as the most needed contribution we can give to the reform of the universal Church," says Saint Ignatius, "is to go about it as lightly burdened with things as possible, as Our Lord himself has shown us." The experience of human insecurity leads us to find shelter in the unfailing security of God.

Poverty prepares us not only to profess but to practice charity; for true poverty makes a man capable of giving for his neighbor's sake not only what he has but what he is. "All for others" becomes his rule of life. All: possessions, talents, time, labors, joys, griefs; saying with Saint Paul, "I am perfectly willing to spend what I have, and to be spent, in the interests of your souls." (2 Cor. 12:15).

Advantages of Poverty and Simplicity of Living

The advantages of that perfect detachment on which Christian poverty and simplicity of life is based are many.

Perfect detachment confers an inner freedom which is unique: the freedom to respond to the Spirit's call as soon as we hear it, whether in our own hearts, or in the voice of authority, or in the signs of the times. This inner "readiness for anything" is what gives us mobility; it disposes us to go at a moment's notice wherever God, obedience or the need of souls demand.

How far removed such an attitude is from that of one who has "found his niche" and made himself thoroughly comfortable in it! He surrounds himself with an assortment of conveniences that for him have become necessities, cultivates powerful friends attentive to his slightest wish, and thus gives himself a sort of tenure, a permanent post

from which, as Saint Ignatius remarks, "many men cannot move him."

True poverty develops a spirituality that is joyful, vigorous and virile, as the Roman poet Lucan observed long ago: "poverty, fruitful mother of men." Poverty does away with softness and with our natural tendency to loaf, to the dolce far niente. It generates spiritual vigor and an extraordinary endurance in apostolic enterprises and, on top of that, confers an inward joy and gladness in the midst of labors which one who has not experienced it finds hard to imagine.

Another characteristic of the life of simplicity and poverty is apostolic efficacy. For clearly, if one is united with God and relies on him alone, one is more open to receive the graces that render the pastoral ministry fruitful, since "neither the planter nor the waterer matters; only God, who makes things grow." Moreover, such a way of life has the impact of irrefutable witness, especially today when the value of poverty and simplicity of living as a "sign" has risen so dramatically.

NORTH AMERICAN TRIP

by José Gsell

Since our Executive Council meeting of last September was being held in Canada, it seemed the right time to make this the stepping-stone for another continental trip. After South America, Asia and Africa, was this not the moment to become better acquainted with the face of CLC in North America and to intensify the already existing links? So, at the end of our Council meeting we said goodbye to the pleasant country place at Mascouche, so generously furnished us by the Leunis Society, to go back to Montreal.

Many of the Council members had to go back at once to their tasks, usual or "exceptional", the latter being the case of José Antonio Esquivel who was to receive, the next day, his ordination to the priesthood. It was sure that as we saw the car bringing him to the airport disappear in the distance, we sensed something of what it means to be a community "in dispersion" in which, their work together completed, the members separate, each one to take up again the demands on him and his own responsibilities, and yet close to José as he left accompanied by our prayer and our friendship.

Roland Calcat prolonged his stay to take part in the meetings in French-speaking Canada. Hildegard Ehardt went with us for the whole of the Canadian trip (and we met her again at our stop in Cleveland, USA). Josette Beau bien, of course, as president of the National Federation of Canada and member of the World Council, accompanied us in Canada as well. That left three permanent staff members of the World Federation: Justo Gonzalez-Tarrio left directly for Mexico to help the national leaders in their final preparations for the formation course, while Nick Rieman and I began a trip that was to extend over five weeks.

Three countries: Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Three CLC realities, each one expressing a rich historical past, an effort at adaptation to new situations, a different context demanding of their leaders a creative and generous commitment, in which most of them are vigorously engaged. To start with, this means that here as elsewhere, we discovered living realities, each with its own shape and its own problems, but also each with tremendous possibilities for development in the near future through leadership, both national and regional, offering a formation clear in its directions and fully open to the modern mentality.

CANADA

Though our stay in Canada was short, it was filled with activity. It included, first of all, friendly contacts and meetings with the CLCs of Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and the Leunis Center; an excellent day of exchanges with a large group of Montreal Jesuits, interested in CLC experiences taking place today around the world; finally, a long and extremely profitable session with the team of Jesuits guiding the Center for Ignatian Spirituality of Guelph.

The all-day session with the 27 Jesuits of Montreal, and the meeting with the Guelph team surely were among the high points of the trip. For they were above all the sharing of a common vision, and an exchange of experiences. We were happy to find in them the dialogue and mutual help that are so necessary for us in order to strengthen CLC promotion in its fidelity to the Ignatian charism.

The meetings with the CLCs of Quebec Province were organized on a tight schedule, which allowed us to meet the largest possible number of members, but sometimes shortened the time available for deeper exchanges. The personal testimonies given by the Canadian members, and the international experience furnished by Executive Council members provided matter for some very good exchanges, both at Quebec and at Montreal. And we will long remember the Eucharistic celebration that closed the very fine meeting with some sixty members of the Regina Mundi Community. Our stay here closed with helpful contacts and discussions with leaders of the National Federation and of Leunis Center - who were our kind hosts - about formation programs, new efforts in progress, apostolic orientations and evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, all in a mutual search for better service.

At Toronto our "base" was the big, friendly rectory of the community of priests grouped around Father Joseph Johnson. Rather new yet in the city, he had succeeded in arranging the maximum number of contacts with interested and "interesting" persons. So we had an evening with fifteen or so priests, mainly Jesuits. The night before, a delightful meeting with two groups of youth (high school and university). While in English Canada there are not as yet many CLCs, still it is true to say that the factors are present there which make possible and likely that Communities will soon begin, and develop in very favorable conditions.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The route we took on our trip in the States was determined by the schedule of the different sessions and meetings. This allowed us to traverse the country going from West to East and from South to North. San Francisco,

Portland and Salem gave us contact with the groups of the West. In the Southwest, these are rather new, and mainly of youth, and so our first regional gathering, under the blue skies of Santa Clara, near San Francisco, reflected the dynamism of its participants and the stir of new beginnings. In the Northwest, at Portland and Salem, several groups of couples with a solid formation and whose witness was quite convincing, were posing for themselves the question of responsibility for the growth of the groups in their region.

Then it was the turn of Cleveland, Toledo and Detroit, in the region of the Great Lakes. There were various meetings and gatherings with mixed groups, mainly couples, some of them lively and quite committed. Father Rieman, who had been priest-assistant with them, met them again with joy and emotion. There were some deep and fruitful exchanges, with the confrontation furnished by the varied experiences helping to point out better their common way of life. A very good session with Father Farrell, Director of the Center for the Spiritual Exercises at Colombiere near Detroit, on the program there for the preparation of Exercises guides.

From there we left for Mexico, to return ten days later to St. Louis (Missouri) and make contact with the team at the National Secretariat. Marie Schimelfening, the national executive secretary, had taken the trouble to accompany us on various parts of our American trip, and this allowed us to situate better in their context the current needs and the efforts undertaken.

Finally, it was the East Coast, - Washington. Philadelphia, New York. We had an excellent meeting with a group of ACU (Agrupación Católica Universitaria, of Cuban origin), resulting in an exchange in some depth on the more important questions facing CLC today. Several friendly gatherings with various parish sodalities of women, focusing on some of the questions these wider groups face in pursuing their own approach. A two-day session with Jesuits from high schools of the area on the approach to youth communities: a brother of another order and several CLC lay people gave their input too for the session, and all in all it was a quite positive experience. Finally, a meeting near New York with a group of couples who posed, to themselves and to us, the question of definitive adhesion to CLC; it was a session showing clearly the quality of the formation they had been pursuing.

The last stage : New England, which, in these autumn days, received us with its forests in all the glory of their changing colors. Lively youth communities, receiving a strong stimulus from a regional community of assistants, mainly made up of religious. These priests, brothers and sisters had made the decision to attempt to live

out together in this community of moderators what they were trying to promote. And another sign of vitality here: the first groups of adult couples had recently begun

This stage ended with the meeting of the national Executive Council, or, as they term it, the National Community. It included in its program a day's workshop sensitizing members to problems of oppression and liberation, and this had been carefully prepared. A noon meal took us by surprise: some tables received complete dinners, while others were served almost nothing; it was interesting to note the reactions of both groups, and afterwards in evaluating it to apply it to the world situation and seek out the causes.

In the course of this weekend we were able to share our impressions with the national Executive Council. The exchanges focused on two things: the encouraging trends in the American CLCs in recent years, and how to further develop these; and the priorities needed in order to strengthen the movement in the directions that it seems, more and more clearly, to be taking. There are inevitably wide differences in the levels of formation. We had met some extremely committed CLCs, which had led the movement of renewal through the Exercises; others were still on the early stage of the road, others still searching to find their path. Giving impetus to the movement in such a large country can only be effective if to some degree it operates on a regional basis. This is what the present national leadership is attempting to do, at the same time giving increasing attention to the need for thorough formation in the CLC way of life. In all this, there is much to rejoice about and to say, in American style, O.K. A thank you to our friends who had given us such a warm and such a simple welcome, and already our plane was taking us towards other skies.

MEXICO

In Mexico the thing that struck us at once, as soon as we arrived, was the warmth of the welcome. The six leaders waiting for us at the Guadalajara airport gave us a first taste of Mexican hospitality. And this impression did not prove wrong; in fact, it was reinforced at each new step and meeting.

It was Puente Grande, a house way out in the country, that opened itself to receive the 98 participants that took part in the two-week formation session. While Justo Gonzalez-Tarrio took part in it from the start, we only arrived on the first day of the second part, making our first attempts to handle the language of Cervantes...! There were adults and youth - young men and women both - coming from 18 different cities. One should say that the Mexican delegation to Augsburg, on its return, took care to see

(continuation p. 27)

And

the Word of the Lord...

was a man

like unto

you and myself.

For we

could not hear

the song of the bodiless wind

nor see

our greater self

walking in the mist.

- JESUS, THE SON OF MAN

Kahlil Gibran

A SMALL, LIVELY COMMUNITY

by Hélène CAMPEAU

I see myself again in the general assembly hall of the World CLC Council at Augsburg. I listen to our president, just re-elected, giving the conclusions of the congress. Among the many resolutions adopted, I feel myself deeply challenged by one that is urgent: to become involved with youth. As a teacher of catechetics, I am each year in contact with some two hundred students of 15 or 16 years of age. The current situation in Québec, where the crisis of faith is so strong, will it be an obstacle to

my hope of bringing together some of the young people so as to introduce them bit by bit to the CLC way of life? Already some months ago nine of the youth had asked me to live together a first experience of silence and reflection at Leunis Center. Then, in the days following, they had concretized it by mutually supporting each other in a kind of group life.

From September, 1973 on, six of them showed an interest in pursuing together a path to help them be faithful to the light they had seen in the retreat. And they had already found three other girls ready to join them. On my side, I had, among my new students for that year, found ten or so who were interested in deepening their faith and in living a more committed Christian life.

MISERLOU is born

Towards mid-October, we found ourselves in the country for a weekend of formation. The main goal of this

session, in which sixteen students took part, was discovery of self, of one's personal history, of one's growth in the faith.

Youth are much attracted to seek to probe their own depths, to discover their most intimate selves. And this reveals itself little by little in and through the various milestones in their lives. They become aware in this way of God's action at the core of their being. After a lengthy period of reflection, each presents herself to the others by means of a poster she has made, and which is her way of sharing with others her own personal salvation history. This exercise quickly forges links between the young people and helps them discover and appreciate the riches within their friends.

Since youth admire easily those who present them with a challenging ideal, the person of Christ exercises an irresistible attraction for them. An exercise done at camp of placing oneself in the Lord's presence or sharing reflections on the gospel, or a review of the day made together as a community, or a well-prepared Eucharistic celebration that was preceded by a slide presentation on Jesus Christ - these are ways that give youth a chance to see Jesus as a living Person. Such a meeting with Him has been the essential element used in building a really dynamic community.

Speaking of a social evening in which songs, games and dances showed how lively the group was, their newsletter said:

"In a circle, hand in hand, we learned together the first steps of a Greek dance: MISERLOU. If we chose this name as the title of our little paper, it is because for us it represents more than just a dance. It is the symbol of the atmosphere in our camp, of the friendship and warmth that was to characterize it. Those steps of Friday evening were our first steps on the road to Discovery: discovery of ourselves, of others and of God."

This name of MISERLOU became the name of the group and of its bulletin, which, in its five issues during the year as they appeared, became the reflector of the evolution of this small community.

At the end of this session, all decided to commit

themselves to a bimonthly meeting and to some moments of prayer each day. The Miserlou Community was born! It would assure that the effects of the camping session would be prolonged into daily life.

After the camp, two of the participants published a "Letter to Christ" which bore witness to their discovery:

"Do you remember our first meeting? It was so overwhelming that we will never forget it. Little by little, you led us to discover yourself. The word that you threw our way became in us Light. But it is more than a word, more than a call, it is a "Revelation". You reveal yourself, you the Christ, as being source of life. And it was during that Eucharist that one became aware of your Existence, of your Truth. You penetrate to our very depths, you make us ache, in order to wake us up, to open us to You. We feel Your Gaze reach down into our heart. You empty us of evil so as to fill us with Your Love. And it hurts to feel oneself so empty and so filled at the very same time. We whose hearts are so small that your love overflows them, we would like to say, "I love You", but an "I love You" that is immense, beautiful,

grand, strong and true..." (Danielle and Michelle).

I believe then that the first step to take in our apostolate to youth is to put them in contact, as soon as possible, with Jesus Christ.

MISERLOU grows

In the fall, the students decided to make a retreat experience at Leunis Center as a personal encounter with the Lord. To get ready for it, they included in the program of their bimonthly meetings an initiation into personal prayer, a more practical grasp of the gospel, shared prayer on the Word of God, and an evaluation of the day. The "written meditation" on metaphors as done at Rome is one much appreciated by youth. On several occasions we have used it with profit: I think especially of the one we tried using the terms "light-darkness", which led us to grasp much better the sense of sin and of hope.

The liturgical season of Advent gave me the idea of inviting them to live a "celebration of silence", recalling Our Lady as she waited quietly for the Infant-God.

This community experience let us sense better the Christian meaning of the feast of Christmas.

The MISERLOU Community wants to follow the star that leads to Jesus:

"...three kings ready to follow a star to go and adore the world's Saviour. To follow a star along roads and through towns, to follow a star with the sure trust that it will lead us to our goal. What vivid faith it took! Think of it: to follow a star in spite of false lures. Before this gesture we of MISERLOU, we want to follow the star too, we want to follow it to find our Saviour" (Carole). "The birth of Jesus is not just an account from the past. It is the source of our hope now and for the future. It would be too bad if it were just an event of that night." (Johanne)

Is it utopian in our day to invite adolescents to live together forty-eight hours of silence without conversation? They took this spiritual adventure as a challenge. Twenty students came to Leunis Center to spend the time in prayer, reflection and silence. For six of them, it was their second such experience, and a real introduction into the Spiritual Exercises: meditations on initial openness, on the sense of sin and the mercy of the Lord, on the call of God... Here is what Johanne wrote:

"This intimate knowledge of Jesus, it's more than just asking Him where he lives or what he's doing. It's more meeting Him interiorly in prayer, giving Him the freedom to take from us what He likes. It's being penetrated with Jesus so as to grasp better the tenderness of the Father and to make our meetings with Him deep and lasting. When we pray starting from creation, we can uncover the whole symphony involved: the song of the birds, the harmony of the colors, the different kinds of personalities. It's really a work of art to create, starting from nothing, an entire world, reflecting such variety, such diversity..."

The witness of Johanne and others reveals how deep was the experience lived. Personal contact with the Lord opens the eyes of the heart, awakens to love and stimulates to commitment.

In next issue: "MISERLOU In Action"

POPULATION AND POLITICS

by Francis IVERN s.j.

The World Population Conference held at Bucharest from August 19 to 30, together with the other meetings and events connected with it - the Youth Population Conference, the Encounter with Journalists, and the Tribune for Non-governmental Organisations - was an enriching and unforgettable experience. It was the first world-wide political conference on the vital and delicate topic of population. But anyone who went to Bucharest to get a clear, objective and balanced idea of the nature and gravity of the population problem, and of the different factors responsible for it, would have been disappointed.

The Bucharest meetings were dominated to a great extent by the discussions on the draft of the World Population Plan of Action. These generated much ideological and political heat, but few new insights about the nature of the population problem, its causes and possible approaches to solve it. The Plan of Action as approved by the Conference reflects, not so much the present state of the population problem, as how governments see the problem today, the aspects they think should be emphasised, and the measures they are willing to adopt for its solution.

As the Conference itself, the World Population Plan of Action was essentially political: a set of governmental policy guidelines, the fruit of a compromise among divergent political views and tendencies and not of any ideological or doctrinal consensus. It would be a mistake to look in the Plan of Action for that objectivity, internal logic and coherence which usually characterize scientific or doctrinal documents.

However, the fact that the World Population Conference and its Plan of Action were of a political nature does not deprive them of significance and value. But we should keep that in mind if we are to understand the message of Bucharest correctly and not to draw from it the wrong conclusions.

It is evident that demographic statistics alone do

not constitute a problem, unless they are related to available resources and services to meet the needs of present and foreseeable future populations. To solve the population problem we cannot simply act on demographic variables alone, such as population growth and geographic distribution. We have also to take into account the factors that condition today the production and availability of resources and their equitable distribution: socio-economic development and trade, social justice at the national and international level.

Human reproduction itself is not simply a mechanical act. People have children because of psychological, economic and socio-cultural reasons. Besides, we cannot expect people to act responsibly in their reproductive behaviour, if economic, social and political structures do not allow and encourage people's responsible participation in other vital decisions affecting their lives.

The solution of the population problem requires concerted action on all the different factors that are responsible for it. Bucharest focused its attention mainly on the demographic aspects of the problem. Other United Nations conferences were supposed to have dealt, or are going to deal with, the other factors: trade and development (Santiago, April-June 1972), human environment (Stockholm, July 1972), raw materials (New York, April-May 1974), food (Rome, November 1974), human settlements (Vancouver, 1976), etc. Even during the preparatory stages, the organizers of the Conference had emphasized its limited scope. The Plan of Action should be considered an essential, but only one component of the international community's overall strategy for the promotion of economic development and the quality of life.

The efforts to confine the discussions of the World Population Conference more closely to the demographic variables or, in other words, to the responsibilities of the poor, proved vain. The nature of the population problem itself is such that it is difficult to focus on one set of factors only, with abstraction from the others. And what would have been perhaps possible in an academic and detached discussion, became impossible in the political climate at Bucharest. After the meagre results produced by the conferences dealing more directly with responsibilities

of the rich countries in fields like development, trade and raw materials, the poor countries, which now in all world conferences constitute the vast majority, were not in a mood to limit their discussions to family planning alone.

At Bucharest, a group of Latin-American and African countries, supported by China and other socialist countries, led the attack against what they considered an excessively negative approach and a too exclusive emphasis on demographic factors in the preparatory Conference documents. They were joined by others in stressing the need for increased socio-economic development as the main factor, and for a more just international social order as the necessary condition for the solution of the population problem. As the delegation of the Holy See pointed out, to day's deep and growing inequalities are caused more by the selfishness of the rich than by the fertility of the poor.

In the course of the discussions it was also emphasized that population policies need to be more closely integrated with socio-economic development policies. Rich nations were reminded of the consequences that their style of life and their superfluous and wasteful consumption had for a more equitable distribution of the world's resources.

All these were questions about which the Church had often expressed its concern in such documents as The Church in the Modern World (1965), The Development of Peoples (1967), Justice in the World (1971), and more recently, during the current year, the messages of the Holy Father to the United Nations Secretary-General and to the World Population Conference's organizers. The Holy See also could not but agree with the greater emphasis given in the final text of the Plan to the status and role of women, to the rights of individuals and minorities, and to the socio-cultural dimensions of the population problem.

In spite of this, however, at the end of the Conference, the Holy See, alone among the official delegations, felt that it had to dissociate itself from a text which it had been, together with the others, actively engaged in producing, through a long and laborious voting process over dozens of amendments and sub-amendments. There were in the final text ambiguous expressions, statements regarding human life and particularly abortion, the concept of the

family and the means of population control which the Holy See could not accept. Nor could it support what it still considered a disproportionate emphasis on demographic variables.

This raises the question of the kind of presence and of the specific role of the official Church in political conferences like that of Bucharest. Should the Church, given its religious nature, involve itself in what is essentially a political process? If so, how and at what level? Should the Church give its support, not simply morally, but through its vote, on the conference floor, side by side with other states, to affirmations which though verbally in agreement with the Church's positions, were sometimes motivated by arguments or based on assumptions, if not doctrinally unacceptable, at least of doubtful objectivity? How to ensure then the active presence of the Church in international discussions on such vital human problems like population, while safeguarding the Church's specific religious and ethical role and its moral authority?

These questions become more relevant when we analyze how some conclusions were reached, and with what arguments and votes some amendments were adopted.

No doubt in some countries there is need for a more positive approach to population problems. There should be greater trust in man's creativity and resourcefulness and a more optimistic and hopeful view of mankind's future. In trying to find a solution, the emphasis should be more on development and social justice, at the national and international level, than simply on population control.

But development and social justice are no substitutes for direct fertility control where and when required. In spite of an accelerated development, it is still far from adequate in those developing countries where the majority of the world's population lives and where densities and growth rates are high. Unjust socio-economic and political structures cannot be changed overnight, nor can we change in a short time the mind-sets and value systems of the people that support these structures.

At Bucharest the most vocal optimists, the countries that downplayed the need for population control, and proposed development and international social justice as the

solution, in general had low densities and relatively small populations. It is true that Brazil was also among the optimists, in spite of having today a population of over 100 million. But it is also true that Brazil's population density is still among the lowest, that the country has vast and still unexploited territories and a flourishing economy. Besides, Brazil was only "partly" among the optimists. While speaking in populationist terms, Brazil also openly stated, for the first time in an international conference, that it would provide couples with the necessary information and means to determine the number and spacing of their children.

Of course, the unqualified optimist was China. With a population estimated at over 800 million, with large grain imports from the U.S.A. and other developed countries, and with a massive and extremely effective population control system in which artificial means are widely used, China denounced the "absurd theory" of a population explosion "insidiously concocted" by the superpowers to maintain their hegemony. The Chinese repeatedly stated that of all things in the world people are the most precious, that population growth in the Third World was a very good thing, and that the future of mankind can be made "infinitely bright".

In such a political climate, countries like India with 600 million people, Indonesia with 132 million, Pakistan with 68 million and Bangladesh with 83 million, with per capita incomes oscillating between \$80 and \$110, and with as much need for population control as for development and social justice, were bound to play a rather secondary role. Only towards the end of the Conference, when political arguments were running short, did they rally and muster enough voting support to maintain in the Plan of Action the recognition that rapid population growth can indeed seriously thwart a country's efforts to develop, and that suitable means have to be found which, while fully respecting man's freedom and dignity, can effectively limit that growth.

Most of the other countries, the developed countries from the West, and Russia with some of its satellites, tried to steer a middle-of-the-road course, with Russia leaning more on the side of the advocates of development and social justice, and the West on the population control side. Though in the course of the debates, the United

States delegation often found itself defending the demographic input which according to them the Conference was supposed to give, it was wrong to label its position "malthusian" as some did.

In spite of all the heated debates and political skirmishes, the final text of the Plan of Action was on the whole better than the draft and, leaving aside the aspects which were unacceptable from the Church's point of view, it was a good text. The changes introduced concerned more the analysis of the population problem and of its causes, and even if some might have found them out of place, they certainly helped to put the population problem in a broader and better perspective.

What concerned me most at Bucharest was not so much all the politicking that went on - after all, this was to be expected - but what I thought was a serious and widespread lack of international solidarity, of true concern for each other's problems; unless, of course, the problems of the other happened also to be one's own. From this point of view, developing countries were certainly not better than the others. One could, if not justify, at least understand that poor countries might not be too preoccupied for the welfare of the rich and find it hard to sympathise with the latter's problems. But the selfish pursuit of one's own interests was rather general and cut across geographic and poverty lines.

I think this partly explains why, given the turn that the Conference took, such important topics as food and energy, which are so closely related to population and present today extremely urgent and serious problems to so many countries, were hardly mentioned. The reason could not simply be the proximity of the World Food Conference, to be held in November in Rome, seeing how other topics which did not fall exactly under the "population" heading, and which had been or were going to be the subject of other conferences, were freely discussed.

At Bucharest there was much insistence on the fact that population policies are the primary responsibility of national governments. This can be understood in the context of unwarranted generalizations and of attempts to establish universal policies for all countries, without

taking into account the existing diversity of needs and situations. However, this insistence should not be interpreted in any way as a return to the concept of "unlimited" national sovereignties. It should not lead to a diminished sense of international solidarity and responsibility. Solidarity should operate not only in the economic, social and political fields, but also in the population field.

In this context I prefer to speak of a population "problem", rather than of "problems". No doubt that situations differ from country to country. But if we look at the world as a whole, there is such a widespread imbalance between the distribution of population and resources, be tween the rate of growth of some of the most populated areas and their present capacity to meet the human needs that this growth implies, that the problem is truly a world problem and concerns all of us. It concerns all of us because of its extent, gravity and universal impact, and because all of us are in a way responsible, if not al ways for its existence, at least for its solution.

SACRAMENT OF PERSONAL CONVERSION

Nicholas RIEMAN sj

Several articles in PROGRESSIO this year dealt with the theory and practice of evaluation, both individual and communitarian. It seems then the logical time to speak of the sacrament of evaluation - the sacrament of Penance. It can also be called the sacrament of reconciliation, the sacrament of personal conversion.

Conversion, most of us have discovered, is a continuing process. If we ask why this should be necessary, these words of the French CLC Dossier on Formation may shed some light: "We live in a world turned upside down, shaped and fashioned to the core by mentalities, reflexes and attitudes that focus all our energies on the amassing of property, knowledge and power, sometimes to the point of organized oblivion of God. To live as Christians, we must somehow manage to escape all that... And there is more! Deep within us we sense, in spite of ourselves, a secret complicity with this world that we condemn. The evil is contagious." Our nightly "examinations of consciousness" too often reveal to us "our hearts and hands all busy in our private little wars" (from the song, "Lord, Teach Us To Pray"). We are alienated from others, sometimes alienated from God. We need to be reconciled, to be converted. We need the sacrament of personal conversion, Penance.

Or sometimes we have best understood how much we need this sacrament from its after-effects: the deep peace, the friendship with Christ and the elan for every facet of our lives that was ours when in honesty we had admitted our guilt, put our hand in the Lord's and set out anew to live life His way.

The spirituality of the Christian Life Communities has always viewed the use of this sacrament as a key means to live our way of life: the "intense sacramental life" to which our General Principles commit us obviously includes the use of Penance. And the Spiritual Exercises, source of CLC spirituality, assign an important role to this sacrament both in and outside retreat.

Yet we are all aware that, among our CLC members as in the Church generally, "Confession" is practiced far

less than it used to be. There are many reasons for this, some valid, some not. The revision of the rite for Penance, decreed by Vatican Council II, was finally completed and became official early this year. The changes in the new rite are less radical than some had hoped, but they do point clearly in new directions, and give official encouragement to trends that were already developing. The new Rite of Penance envisions four different forms of penance or - to use the term the Rite prefers - "reconciliation":

- 1) Individual confession remains as before, but with optional biblical readings and new absolution formula.
- 2) Community celebration of the sacrament, with individual confession and absolution inserted within a framework of community readings, prayers and songs.
- 3) Community celebration of Penance with collective expression of guilt and general absolution - this last limited to situations of grave necessity such as a lack of enough priests to hear confessions of individuals. Decisions about where this form may be used depend on the local bishop and bishops' conferences.
- 4) Non-sacramental Penance Services, of which the Rite gives eight samples. Seen as helpful in furthering conversion, they can be conducted also by lay people.

The new rite stresses "the social aspect of grace and sin, whereby the acts of individual members somehow affect the whole body of the Church". This too is why reconciliation is effected through the community's minister, the priest, and why community celebrations of the sacrament are encouraged. Use of Scripture is strongly urged in the rite itself ("then the priest, or the penitent, reads an appropriate Scripture text"); it is even suggested that the one confessing make his act of contrition beforehand, and his thanksgiving and praise afterward, a prayer based on, or drawn from, Scripture. The peace and joy of the sacrament are stressed, and its inseparable link with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit appears clearly. The new rite everywhere reflects a real concern that the sacrament be for those who receive it truly meaningful and fruitful, resulting in new life. It highlights at one and the same time both the communitarian aspects of Penance and the very special values to be found in individual confession.

To come now to more practical questions. How often

should we make use of this sacrament? Not, of course, out of mere routine, simply because it's a week or a month since last time. Penance must always involve a decision to change, a step forward. But since it is the sacrament of repentance, of reconciliation, of new beginnings, it would seem that as often as I truly want to make a new start, desire to become a more authentic Christian, am ready to change, even a little, the sacrament of Penance can be of profit. A certain rhythm in our use of it is desirable; and dialogue with one's spiritual guide on the subject could be helpful in finding that rhythm.

When we do receive the sacrament, how make it most effective, truly a grace experience? Preparing well is essential. It might help to make our evaluation the night before cover the whole period since our last confession, or to meditate the morning of the sacrament on an apt Scripture text such as Ezekiel 37:1-14 or 1 John 1:5-2:2 or the account of the Prodigal Son. Where we can do so, it helps to confess to a priest alert to make the encounter of true spiritual benefit for the recipient. For most people, it helps too to have the place and the setting for the sacrament be one that makes it a human as well as a spiritual experience. In confessing, language that, rather than being stylized, states in an informal way what really happened, is a distinct aid. Even more important is that the confessions center not on sinful actions as such, but on the fundamental attitudes that underlie them. The new Rite says: "In confessions of this kind, which concern venial sin, penitents should focus their attention especially on becoming more deeply conformed to Christ and listening more attentively to the voice of the Spirit". A climate of prayer and listening to God's word - both in Scripture and in the advice of the priest - ought to permeate the encounter. And of course, thanksgiving and praise conclude it.

CLC groups can also help their members in the use of the sacrament by arranging, at appropriate times, community celebrations of Penance that include the opportunity for individual confession. Such services could include a litany mentioning community faults, readings, a collective examination of conscience (but always allowing time too for an individual one), and hymns. For it is a fact of experience that our continuing personal conversion and our growth in CLC living will be aided much by a discerning use of this sacrament of reconciliation.

NORTH AMERICAN TRIP (Continuation)

that the message of the World Assembly became known. Father Gallegos, Magdalena Palencia and Isabel Salas undertook to spend a weekend in the main towns, explaining what had taken place at the international gatherings of Rome and Augsburg, and the orientations of CLC around the world today. They spent in this way 27 weekends in 27 different cities stretching from the far north to the south of Mexico, actively preparing people for this session of formation.

In this course there mingled youth, members of small communities, and adults, coming from Marian Congregations, all, in small groups, entering into a deeper discovery of this way of life. It is clear that for many it was something new, and that this course constituted an important step. It opened new perspectives, particularly for the youth groups, and brought to all, in and through the experience, new hopes for tomorrow.

The Course was followed by the General Assembly, which brought together some 250 persons. And at the close of this day, an exchange with about fifteen priest-assistants of communities about the experience of Puente Grande and future possibilities. We still had three more days in Mexico, conducted by the indefatigable Juan Murguía, president of the National Federation, who foresaw everything. We deeply appreciated our visit of pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and there entrusted to the Blessed Virgin the CLCs and their mission in the world of today. A final stay at Guadalajara to visit some of the efforts launched and led by the Marian Congregations (a primary school, a village center, a housing project) and then we left behind the Mexican sun, our heads full of memories and our hearts touched by the warm friendliness.

The national leaders of the Mexican Federation have, in preparing and staging the Formation Course of Puente Grande, achieved a work of depth, and with promise for the future. The seed sown will mature, judging by their sense of priorities and by the reactions to this session.

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Our account of this trip is of course incomplete. It does not present all the meetings, gatherings and contacts, all most interesting, that such a journey affords. And it but weakly reflects the dynamism felt in so many national, regional and local efforts. But if it confirms the reader in the conviction that, in North America as elsewhere, the CLCs are really alive and "on the way" toward greater authenticity for a better apostolic service, then it bears witness to what we have seen, and has served its purpose.

