

PROGRESSIO

PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF
CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES

NOVEMBER 1975
44rd Year
N° 6

S U M M A R Y

- A WORLD COMMUNITY
LIVING, PRAYING, ACTING.....3
- THE CRISIS OF RAW MATERIALS
by Aude RAIGA.....11
- REPORT FROM U.S.A.....18
- CLC FORMATION IN A RURAL AREA
by Hermie ESPERO.....19
- EVALUATION OF OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH
THE LORD
by Magdalena PALENCIA.....23

In our issue of last July we informed our readers that the World CIC Federation had received consultative status with the United Nations as a Non - Governmental Organization (NGO).

Today we would like to mention some further details, as well as correct an inexactitude that slipped into our July announcement.

Our Federation has been granted consultative status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), as of April 24, 1975. The Economic and Social Council is an institution of the United Nations which groups various of the specialized agencies, including UNESCO.

The Executive Council of our World Federation has charged Fred Leone with responsibility for this liaison, since his wife, Betty Leone, will be our representative at the United Nations.

A flood of letters ...
news of every sort ...
expectations, concerns, desires ...
are voiced and converge.

A WORLD COMMUNITY
- LIVING, PRAYING, ACTING

"We write to tell you about ourselves ..."

* * "We had our annual leadership conference from Sep-
* tember 5-9, just before the final school term be-
gan on the 15th. For the conference Father Jansens had
worked out a comprehensive program of 4 days.... Every 2
months we have our bimonthly moderators' meeting...."(from
Zambia)

* * "Up until September 1974 I was very interested in CLC
* - but since that time I've found myself increasingly
committed to the movement in a very active way! I continue
to act as assistant for both an adult and a college CLC
group. I came to CLC via the Spiritual Exercises, which I
have been directing on an individual and group basis since
1971... This spring I was part of a team-taught course on
"Latin America: Development and Liberation"; I was the in-
structor in Political Science, together with another in-
structor in Theology. We hope to offer this course each
spring, and to update ourselves as we go along... As you
can see, I keep busy - but in a very integrated way, or so
it seems to me. I really believe in Divine Providence very
much (in the Ignatian spirit!) and it seems to me that my
whole life experience points to CLC involvement. I know I
have much to learn, and am looking forward to the summer -
both the CLC Formation Course and the Convention.... You
and all the concerns of the World Community are in my
prayers daily." (from U.S.A.)

* * "Three groups more have been established. And soon
* Sister Tecla Yu will transfer from her present
post as assistant to the College Federation to the Taipei
Archdiocesan Adult Federation (mostly young professionals).
The new National Federation president, Bernard Li, and the
staff, are organizing seminars and retreats for the Hsin-

chu Diocesan Federation too, hoping to renew the CLC movement there.... Some 40 college CLC students have now registered for the 4-week theology course this summer, among them 12 unit chairmen, 6 boys and 6 girls." (from China: Taiwan)

* * "We have just finished three days of formation for 140
* leaders! That's a big number - but all the same it was a great success. We will send you an account for PROGRESSIO. These days were preceded by two 5-day retreats and an 8-day one." (from Flemish Belgium)

"A good start, we're happy..."

* * "We had our first national meeting recently. I would
* like to tell you what happened at it. We came together in Semarang to spend 3 nights in a small retreat house. From Bandung came 6 students; Frans Bonang had to leave his dear Linda, who was eager to take part also, so he came alone; from Yogya there were 2 students, Father Dep and myself; from Kediri, 2 activists, one of them a brother; from Surabaya 11 participants; and from Semarang 2. It was a combination of retreat and an organizational meeting. First, points of meditation and examples of how to share; by the last day the lay people were animating the meeting by themselves. We closed our meeting by offering the Mass together with songs and sharing of our experiences. The young people started to sing and the atmosphere became really fraternal. Considering that our situation is still very preparatory, we unanimously started with a national coordination team, with Frans as the head of it; the National Federation can come later on, when we are ready. Our first project is to have a national formation course, in December of January. We hope that by starting with a national coordinating team, in which each city has its delegate, and a formation course, in which we will know and experience CLC together, our external expression will not be so far from our inner content." (from Indonesia)

* * "As far as we know, our CLC group is the only English
* speaking one in this country. We are a very disparate

group in talents, vocations and personalities but one in our commitment to Christ and his Mother. We are fortunate in having an excellent moderator. This year's membership stands at sixteen. Thanks to prayer, hard work and good publicity, several candidates were attracted to our formation program this year. Our general study program has been based on several articles in PROGRESSIO, in particular those on revision of life, community evaluation and CLC meetings. We studied too our Bishops' Statement on Social Justice and contributed several positive ideas for parish and diocesan involvement in social action... Our own CLC retreat was a gain a personally-guided one. An eight-day retreat still seems an unattainable dream for most of us, although two of our members made one in Montreal. One member is making her Spiritual Exercises according to the 19th annotation under the guidance of a sister, and two others are to begin soon theirs... Always, our members direct some of their efforts towards the larger community in which we live: leadership in other organizations, parish council membership, Birthright activity, catechetical work, liturgical music workshops. One of our members coordinated the special Third World drive and all of us helped with it. May we all grow constantly in grace and love so that we reflect him who is Way, Truth and Life." (from English Canada)

* * "The work of our Christian Life Groups is an important commitment. I am trying to fulfill it the best I can with the Lord's help. I began introducing CLG in August '73. I am now working full time in 6 high schools (mostly in the upper classes, where the students range in age from 16 to 25 years) and 1 seminary. Sister Agnes is working in 3 schools. I have 35 youth groups and she has 15. I appreciate the fact that you emphasize slow and solid work; I have felt that from the beginning. Please tell me where to subscribe for Progressio in English, which I have never seen. How grateful I will be to receive any or all material concerning CLG." (from Lesotho)

* * "It's been a long time since I had a chance to share with you; my many activities have kept me from doing it, in spite of my great desire. With this letter I bring you greetings from a small community that I have been working with now about a year and three months. Our group entirely accepts the General Principles, which constitute a

part of our formation program. For that, Progressio, which we receive regularly, is one of our main tools, along with the Formation Document N° 1 (CLC - Rome '73), as well as the Fundamental Themes. But what really forms the basis of our Community is the guided Spiritual Exercises, given by our ecclesiastical assistant... To get better acquainted, may I now share with you the life of our little community and the steps we have taken so far, as well as some of the problems...." (from Madagascar)

* * "Vacation is almost over and the work for CLC begins again... And happily, with a new perspective. Two new groups at Nijmegen. The sisters who helped us translate the French CLC documents "L'Année D'Accueil" and now "Jalons pour un Groupe" found the content of these documents inspiring and would like to begin along with lay people in such communities." (from Holland)

"What do you think? Give us an answer..."

* * "We are sending you the first results of our work.
* This material is divided into several parts, so we do not need to treat it all at each meeting. Each group uses as many sessions for it as judged needed. We are sending you too a guide for coordinating study groups, as we find it useful. We would like the opinion of the World Federation on it. We continue to remember you with real affection." (from Mexico)

* * "I was very interested in all the information on Manila '76. I was thinking of going, but now I wonder - would it be too advanced for me? I might be ready for something more than the basic course, but the advanced course would probably be beyond me, since it seems to be heavily oriented towards social involvement in a specific area, i. e., the materially underprivileged, and I have no experience at all in that area." (from Ireland)

* * "Peace be with you! I am a member belonging to the CLC unit of the University of Hong Kong, Group 1. I am interested in the formation programme of the CLC movement. I realize the World Federation is preparing various documents

on formation and formation courses. I hope you will be so kind as to send me one copy of each of the documents as I intend to introduce them into our CLC. Thank you. May we labour together for the extension of Christ's Kingdom on earth." (from Hong Kong)

"Different horizons..."

* * "I myself am preparing for a World Course of Christian Leaders from all the continents, to be held in India in January 1976. Organised by the World Council of Churches, the aim of this course of two months' duration is to prepare dynamic agents of Social Change: everything will center on "Liberation". I have been selected as one of the Asian delegates. I am looking forward to this course and I am sure that I will be greatly enriched myself and learn much to share with CLC in India and perhaps in a small way with the International Community too." (from India)

* * "It is my desire, and that of the other members of my CLC, to involve the members of the World Federation in our activities. So now we are plunged into the preparation of a formation course adapted to our milieu. We count on making use of worthwhile materials detailing experiences made in different countries, for example, France, Germany and Peru. In the same vein Father Luxorio took part last year, with Father Gonzalez-Tarrio, in a session in Mexico. We see a chance to organize in February next a course in the interior of our country, in the province of Mendoza, beginning with a week of the Exercises, and possibly with the participation of members of the groups from the province of Cordoba and from Santiago del Estero... There are, in addition, other groups in Buenos Aires interested in the Exercises and in the formation course. Expectations are very high. So is our desire to work for the service of those who feel challenged by the demands of a fully Christian existence and are looking for the way or the form to make concrete in a community way their personal vocation." (from Argentina)

* * "No doubt you already know that I entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus on the 15th of last month.

I have just finished my first month and so far things are going well, with much joy and interior peace. I need to take seriously my whole formation in the Jesuit order, or else not take it. For this reason I have decided to suspend all my activities not directly linked with my Jesuit formation; and I include here my responsibilities in two of the commissions of the World Federation. But I want to be clear that if I am withdrawing from these two charges, I could never give up my link with CLC. I owe much to CLC, it was a very important factor in my religious vocation; it was there that I rediscovered Mary as the woman who is open and available, free, always searching out the will of God; it is thanks to CLC that I made headway in my prayer, and that I got to know the courageous witness of so many lay people and Jesuits. All that cannot be forgotten - or laid aside. My vocation to the Society of Jesus and my CLC commitment are closely linked." (from Argentina)

"and difficulties too..."

* * "I could not write to you immediately after my return
* from Augsburg '73 for the following reason. On my return my papers were all taken away from me by the governmental authorities. I was detained and questioned for an entire afternoon on my movements in Europe and so forth... The papers from Augsburg and Rome having been taken from me, it was virtually impossible for me to write you and my other continental friends. My mail was opened by the authorities, my movements checked every day, and with this control around your neck you can hardly do anything lest you get detained without trial. I am very happy to tell you that these controls have now been lifted."

* * "While we live here under increasingly strong pressure
* exercised by atheism against the faith, it turns out that this is stirring up greater interest in spiritual vocations. It is now then too the right moment to commit one self all the way. I would like to dedicate myself more to the promotion here of CLC."

* * "Last week I made a trip to Vigan (up north) for a 2 -
* day seminar. I was on the road (by bus) for 12 hours. I came to the town at 10 P.M. People were already asleep. I had no supper yet. No one knew the place where I was go-

ing. And when I finally arrived at the place, which was out of town, the electricity already had been shut off. It was quite an experience. Coming back to Manila it was a good 8-9 hour ride. I took the bus at 4:30 P.M., but we had to stop by a roadside cafe to sit out the curfew 11 P.M. to 4 A.M. It was a rough and sleepless night." (Philippines)

"United in prayer..."

* * "Anne had to return to the hospital. That implies she
* will not now be able to go to the Philippines in November to help out there. During our Hawkestone Course we visited her each evening - a different carload each night. She is very cheerful. Give her a special place in your prayers, that, in the words of the Sacrament of the sick, she may be restored to her place in the Church'." (from England)

* * "It was a joy for me to receive your letter, and all
* the more so at this time when, with my three companions, we are making the month of the Exercises. For in these days one thinks of and remembers in a special way all those one loves and who have helped one to find one's vocation. Thanks for your understanding, your witness, your prayers." (from Argentina)

* * "We here in this part of the world reciprocate your
* continuing inclusion of us in your prayers and your warm friendship." (from Sri Lanka)

* * "We were very happy that you thought of us at the
* time of our annual assembly. Thank you. We very willingly continue to aid and sustain the ensemble of the CLCs around the world by our prayer and our sufferings. We are united in joy!! (International Group of the Sick)

"We think of you all..."

* * "I am making use of this opportunity to tell you that
* recently our Federation established a commission for our relations with other countries. I am part of it, and its aim is to maintain and to strengthen our relations with the Federations of other countries, and with the or-

gans of the World Federation. We will send you soon a list of the activities of this commission and a roster of the members who make it up." (Chile)

* * "In the name of the CLCs of Luxemburg, I give you our
* most sincere greetings for the Holy Year. May 1975 be for you a year of graces and of profound joy. May the Spirit of God guide us all and give us the strength and courage to advance together on the road we have chosen." (from Luxemburg)

* * "I would like to present to you as well as to the entire World Federation the feelings of deep affection that all the CLC members of Peru feel toward you. We think this is not just a simple formality, since the very fact of feeling ourselves members of CLC unites us and makes us a universal brotherhood." (from Peru)

THE CRISIS OF RAW MATERIALS⁽¹⁾

by Aude RAIGA

II - THE STAKE FOR THE THIRD WORLD

Now that we have seen how the cost of raw materials cannot explain all our difficulties, and plays only a limited role in aggravating them, let us see the question from the point of view of the Third World, for whom the stake seems much more important.

Wages in the Third World

The countries in the process of development find themselves confronted with certain essential requirements, among which are

- a high level of investments
- the importation of food products, equipment and consumer goods, in growing quantity
- the necessity of not going beyond a certain level of indebtedness.

In all these problems the income from exports, and more basically the price paid for raw materials, plays a strategic role:

- 1) It is the main means of financing investments and basic equipment for collective use.

In poor countries, where savings and fiscal resources are inadequate, the taxes on exports often constitute the principal income of the state, which is, often and by far, the principal investor of the country.

- 2) Exports also constitute the main source of cash currency and so the means to meet the rapid growth of imports on which hinges the living standard, and sometimes even (in the case of basic food products) the survival of the population; and, on the other hand, the development of the country.

(1) Continuation of the article published in PROGRESSIO No. 5, September, 1975.

- 3) They constitute moreover a national resource and to this extent limit recourse to borrowing. The already excessive level of indebtedness of the Third World is known; it surpasses even now 100 billion dollars. Recent examples showed how the brutal fall in price of a product has required a massive recourse to international "aid" and has dangerously limited the independence of a country.
- 4) Finally, the value of a product that is exported directly influences the level of income of the producer, above all when it is question of an agricultural product, of which the sale constitutes the principal income of the small farmers in many European countries. This is true of products like peanuts, coffee, cocoa, cotton, etc. This income, an important element in the domestic market, closely governs the growth of local industries and is an indispensable condition of their development. The narrowness of the domestic market is one of the main "obstacles to development".

According to the expression popularized by the Chileans, the price of raw materials is really the "Third World wages", the price of its work.

Elements That Affect This Income

The "buying power" of this "wages" depends on 4 main factors:

- 1) The world price of the basic products. We know how the true value of the prices paid for raw materials has for a long time been decreasing, and what fluctuations they undergo due to, among other things, the highly speculative character of the operations of the world stock exchanges.
- 2) The average price of imported products. The relation between the two price evolutions (that of raw materials and that of imported products) constitutes what is called the "terms of exchange", and this had undergone a marked deterioration in the last 20 years. This is shown concretely in the case of Ivory Coast (even though it is thought of as one of the relatively "richer" countries):
 - To buy 10 litres (about 2½ gallons) of gasoline (petrol), there was needed:

- in 1960 -- 3.7 kg(kilograms) of coffee, or 9.6 kg of cotton (1 kg = 2.2 pounds)
- in 1973 -- 4.6 kg(kilograms) of coffee, or 13.7 kg of cotton.

- To buy 100 kg of cement, there was needed:
 - in 1960 -- 8 kg of coffee or 20 kg of cotton
 - in 1973 -- 11 kg of coffee or 30 kg of cotton.

3) The value of the money used to calculate prices. Prices are generally calculated in dollars. Now the devaluations of this currency - whether official or practically operative - since 1971, with regard to other currencies, have been dramatic for many Third World countries.

4) The quantities exported. Since 20 years ago, the average buying power of the Third World increased (between 1954 and 1970):

- +48 per cent for Latin America.
- +82 per cent for Africa
- + 1 per cent for Asia.

(Source 3 CNUCED, Vol. IV)

but this was possible only thanks to a considerable increase in the quantities exported. One can translate this in a concrete way by saying that:

- either the Third World cannot make up for the market rises except by working more;
- or, that an important part of the results of its efforts is, each time, taken by the consumer countries.

III - SOME QUESTIONS TO POSE

The juxtaposition of all these facts is, in the end, shocking, and obliges us to pose for ourselves a certain number of questions.

The Extent of the Injustice

Limiting ourselves simply to the sector of raw materials, three facts seem difficult to accept in the perspective of the "new international order" being officially promoted:

- The pillage of raw materials

The industrial countries now absorb 75 percent of the raw materials exported by the Third World and consume 87 percent of the world's energy resources. Their kind of growth cannot then be extended to the rest of the world. And to continue it would result in exhausting more or less rapidly the resources of the poor countries. One would understand perhaps more easily the bitterness of the struggle of certain producing countries, if one were more aware that, for many among them, their "riches" cannot last more than 20 or 30 years.

- the theft, the plunder

* This is constituted by the deterioration of the buying power. If one estimates this at about 15 % between 1958 and 1972, this represents an annual loss of more than 10 billion dollars, that is, more than half the international "aid". This seriously handicaps the possibilities of domestic investment of the Third World.

- The domination

This is exercised by the industrialized countries and the multinational firms. OPEP (Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries) is the exception which confirms the general rule of the dependence of the Third World in economic areas: prices, transportation, technology, sometimes direct cultivation or management... All of this, or almost all of it, is still often in the hands of western companies. This allows for profitable transfers of capital, which ends by surpassing, for numerous countries, the annual amount of aid.

All this one risks covering up if one stays in ignorance or has no interest in the matter, or is locked up within the prison of one's daily concerns.

The Struggle That Is Going On

One can be baffled or shocked if one limits one's considerations only to the events in the oil sector in 1973. Maybe these words sound too strong, but that is surely the tone of a certain number of official declarations of economic and political leaders of the industrialized countries, which speak of "aggression", of blackmail, of abuse of one's dominant position, of a desire to strangle the in-

dustrial economies, etc. This takes on quite a different meaning when one compares it with the official declarations and decisions of the principal leaders of the Third World countries, which reflect the evolution of the poor countries since the last war:

- the Bandung Conference, and the long and painful current of decolonization
- the continual repeating of the demand for a more just system of international trade, both on the bilateral level, the regional (e.g., European Economic Community and the African countries) and world levels (the United Nations Conferences on trade and development, etc.)
- the string of collective demands, after the first successes of OPEP, expressed at the international level in the last Assembly of the United Nations (April, 1974). But how many have read the discourse of President Boumediene?

Whatever form the demands have taken, we must try to see in exactly what they consist:

- a defense of "buying power", that is, an increase in value after the long period of deteriorating buying power, compensation for the effects of inflation in the west, compensation for the recent devaluations of the dollar.
- the organizing of solidarity within the Third World as a whole, that is, the refusal to separate the problem of oil, for the moment of strategic importance for the west, from the rest of the raw materials, proclaimed particularly at Dakar. The refusal to separate the situation of the poorest countries from that of the producer countries.
- the transformation of international relations and in particular finding again the means to control the production of raw materials and their value, that is to say:
 - effective participation in the reform of the international monetary system
 - participation in the mechanisms that govern the fixing of prices in place of leaving them in the hands of the speculators of the London Metal Exchange or elsewhere, in function solely of the needs of the industrial economies and of the multinational firms
 - assuming control of natural resources, if necessary by nationalization (with indemnification)
 - control of investments so as to orient them in function

of the development objectives of the country, and not of the needs of the west.

Now, the reaction of the industrialized countries has not, on the whole, been very understanding. While it has not been unanimous, nor always negative, it has been too often marked by:

- refusal, putting obstacles in the way, slowing down the process; the industrialized countries have too often given the impression of yielding only to force or constraint.
- "recovering" what was lost in the same way the neo-colonialism has often replaced classic colonization.
- "deafness", "declarations of good intentions", which one sees multiplied, as at the last United Nations CED session (March 1975) without anything more concrete resulting than 3 more meetings.

It was not to defensiveness or aggressiveness that the Pope several times in 1974 called the privileged countries, but to "openness", to honest negotiation, even to "conversion", that is to say, to a reconsideration of certain situations and to the working out together of a new world order.

Type of Economy and Society

It is evident that if the confrontation is so fierce, it is because one is aware that it calls in question not only the relations between industrialized countries and poor countries, but also a certain type of economy and a certain type of society.

- A type of international relations, that is, that there is need to modify:
 - the present international division of labor between producing and consuming countries with regard to raw materials. This explains why it would be helpful to foresee the changes this would involve in the economic and social aspects of the matter.
 - the present relation of domination, replacing it by ties of cooperation
 - the present conception of development in which the poor countries are to be "pulled along" by the rich nations, to one using a joint strategy based on cooperation, seeing that the former has pretty much completely failed, and inevitably so.

- A type of production and consumption. It is clear that the system of production based on the intensive consumption of raw materials and of energy, along with the style of living that this implies, cannot last without undergoing profound changes. We are invited to a vast and imaginative effort. Blueprints exist of what the result of such changes might be. Do we have ours?
- Economic and social system. We believe that, if we are to be entirely sincere, we must go further and have a certain scepticism about these good intentions. One must inquire then too as to what social forces are organizing this change and will make it come into effect. A recent declaration of the French Section of the Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace goes so far as to ask whether, in this regard, one can have confidence in an economic and social system which, on the one hand, was in great part at the origin of the injustices described above and, on the other, "one doesn't see how it will be able to resolve the problems involved".

CONCLUSION

This series of articles did not aim at giving information, nor at furnishing solutions. Neither did they pretend to be either "objective" or exhaustive. No. Rather our aim was simply to recall several points that to us appear basic:

- There are a certain number of problems that we do not have the right to ignore. One can no longer close one's eyes to them under pain of being an accomplice in the evil.
- Neither have we the right to hid behind the argument that all these problems are far too "technical". Are not we capable of the same effort that we have made on the theological or professional level? Experts exist and one can question them in a precise fashion.
- We have the duty to go beyond the appearances in order to grasp the real causes, beyond accepted ideas and evidence, even if that calls in question some of the things we have felt certain about. We have the duty to act in truth. These articles had as their goal to present what might perhaps be a method of doing this. But they also represent an approach that has actually been taken.

REPORT FROM USA

Participation and Program. Of the 575 persons (from 80 Communities) who took part in the biennial convention of the National CIC Federation of the USA on the University of Massachusetts campus, about 200 were youth aged 16-25, and 40 were children (baby-sitting was provided). About 20 of the total were from Canada. The style was simple: lodging was in student dormitories and a hunger meal was part of the program. The theme, drawn from the Spiritual Exercises, was our CIC vocation:

- the call to be
- the call to be at peace (reconciliation)
- the call to the Church
- the call to enter into the mystery of Christ
- the call to be liberators in the world.

The theme was explored in small faith-communities, which also offered guided experiences in personal prayer. Workshop topics included women in the Church, liberation, ministry.

Awards. The development of Peoples Award (for efforts for justice and liberation) went to Betty Leone, and the CIC Service Award (for outstanding efforts in developing CIC) to Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Zambito. For both award presentations, the entire families took part, since it was felt all of them had helped make possible the activity involved.

Decisions made by the Federation:

- 1) The National Council will be smaller in size.
- 2) Within the country, 7 regions were established, each with an elected representative on the Council. These regions will assume a certain responsibility for the life and growth of CIC within their areas.
- 3) Each Community will report periodically on how well it is implementing the General Principles in its life and work.

Formation. Just before the Convention, 35 persons took part in a 16 - day Formation Course led by an international team and closely patterned on the Rome '73 Course. The Federation's Formation Commission now is planning a wider formation effort, in which CIC training programs spread over 3 weekends will be offered in various regions.

CLC FORMATION IN A RURAL AREA

by Hermie ESPERO

In her article "The Goal of our Formation" Hildegard Ehardt wrote : "...perhaps we share too the painful inability to demonstrate or describe to others how much it has been worth all it cost to take the plunge". When I read José's letter requesting me to write an article on Formation describing my rural involvement and experience, I felt wholehearted agreement with Hildegard. It took me a long period of reflection and several painful attempts to put into words "my experience in formation". In reading the various articles already published in PROGRESSIO, I could only admire and envy the competence of the writers and their ability to express themselves accurately and vividly.

I finally buckled down to writing this article on my birthday. This is significant for me because it gave me an opportunity to recall my life history and how CLC changed the course of my existence - my temperament, outlook, and style of life. The basic and crucial change happened when I experienced the Spiritual Exercises for the first time five months before the Filipino declaration of material law. The intense process of the Exercises created a new man within me. The reality of the emptiness of my past life, despite my over-active involvement in different movements that claimed to serve the people, was critically questioned during that intense encounter with the true liberating Lord. I experienced the initial ordering of the complexities of my life into a life-process of struggle for liberation. My outlook in life began to be directed from myself towards others. The growing awareness of the miserable plight of our people and the oppression of the poor made me restless and discontented and desirous of a more meaningful life. The gradual understanding of the values accepted by contemporary man and society thus moved me towards the choice of a commitment and responsibility on behalf of our people and of the Church in the struggle

for liberation.

I then decided to work in Bukidnon, a rugged mountain province in Mindanao. At first, I did not have a team to work with in my efforts to promote the CLC. All I had was the assurance of support from other fellow CLC promoters with whom I share being a "community in dispersion". As far as my continuing personal formation was concerned I felt that much depended on my own initiative resourcefulness and perseverance, and of course on Someone whom I trusted was leading me.

In the first parish where I was invited to introduce the CLC. I established contact with a group of parishioners who were already working as a team even before the coming of CLC. As an initial step on my part, I saw the need first to integrate myself with them in the context of their own culture and day - to - day life situations. I tried to be just one of them in order to get a feel of their temperament, their aspirations, their consciousness, and even their conflicts. For six months I did nothing but to try to be an active and sensitive listener to them - to the events happening to them in the town and in the parish - to what the people said and most important, to their "silence" - to what they could not articulate.

By the seventh month, we had an evaluation meeting. The meeting brought to surface their expectation, their discovery, and their demand. Their expectation of me was that I was supposed to be a man with "technical know-how" who would directly and authoritatively tell them what to do and what not to do. Their discovery was the realization that their parish group was purely task or project-oriented; they were just functionaries. Their demand was for a deeper and more person-oriented formation.

We then decided to have a seminar which helped them towards a deeper awareness of themselves. They realized that they want to develop into better persons, and to form not just a functional group but an apostolic community. They felt the need for a deeper spiritual formation that would help them integrate the Gospel not just in their social apostolate but in every aspect of their lives. As a follow-up to this seminar, they plunged into a long painful period of building their community. However, they got

stuck in the process. There was a "missing link" in the formation - no competent and convinced ecclesiastical assistant who could integrate himself with the life of the group. The problem disturbed the harmony of the group. A fraction of the original group of eight persons went on to resolve the conflict with the priest who was assisting them. But the difficult experience of the others became a positive help in their formation when they realized their great responsibility as an apostolic community in general. Somehow the group was helped by the visit of three CLC members from Zamboanga del Sur, another province in Mindanao. At that time and even up to the present, it was a critical area, always being threatened by armed clashes between the "rebels" and government forces. But the three CLC women took the risk involved in traveling through the area just to be with the group in Bukidnon. This visit helped them all to realize even more deeply what it means to be "men for others" and to live out this commitment in the spirit of the Exercises.

Another experience of what I could call "situational formation" happened in another parish in the boundary of the Muslim province of Lanao del Sur. The parish priest of the area invited me, after my tenth months in Bukidnon, to explore possibilities of forming a CLC there. He asked me to help in the formation of a parish community with the use of CLC approach. Here I saw a great potential because here was a priest who was convinced of the CLC and there were people who were longing for authentic participation in parish life. I knew that formation would start from the basic needs of the people and within an atmosphere of freedom and partnership between the parish priest and the people.

It was only five months ago that I started working in this parish. And yet much has already happened to the people and even to myself by way of deepening formation. My work of CLC promotion has not been confined to this parish. Working as a team, the parish priest and I offer our formation services to three other neighboring parishes. We have conducted several formation seminars and more and more the neighbor parishes have begun to share and exchange resources in order to help one another foster this experience of unity and community.

At this point I cannot help but ask myself: What has happened to me with all these ups and downs in forming Christian Life Communities? I have experienced what it means to be misunderstood and I have known desolation and loneliness in working in remote mission areas. Yet all in all, I would say that all these have helped deepen my understanding of the goal of our formation. My different experiences have paved the way for a constant practice of discernment - of listening to myself and to events in order to better dispose myself to the call of the Lord, what ever, whenever, wherever it may be. Practically, I am alone in my work in this area of the country. It would really be much better if there were two of us at last to constantly work as a team. However, it is a great source of encouragement and hope to believe that all over the world there are CLC friends who share the same struggle of building up authentic CLCs. I know we are all united in the Lord

Lastly, I would like to mention here my hope to see many of you in 1976. For the General assembly of the World Federation. Perhaps then, we would be able to share more deeply and exhaustively our life and work in the Philippines. Until then, for God and the people with whom we work let us all keep the faith...

EVALUATION OF OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LORD

by Magdalena PALENCIA

In the world in which we move, we meet up often with the technique of "evaluation". In all methods, at all levels, in every kind of work, in studies, etc., we see that man pauses, stops on his path and "evaluates". He looks to see if his work is being well done, if his studies are being useful, if the means that he is using are proving apt for the end he is pursuing, if his response is satisfactory for the commitment he has made. He asks himself, in a word, whether the process that he is living is fulfilling the objective he has set himself.

Why this necessity of evaluating a process?

- For effectiveness: one can only speak of a plan being effective if one verifies its execution. Now evaluation allows us to notice whether our conduct has been appreciably modified during a process. Evaluation gathers together the evidence both of the good results as well as of the deficiencies of the process.
- For utility: evaluation permits us to renew our efforts and to overcome our mistakes. It prods us to learn more and better during the process. It allows us to correct or to improve the procedures and approaches employed up till that moment.
- For "greater depth and a more total abandonment": evaluation leads us toward a continual conversion to an openness to change in search of "the better and the deeper". It lifts us up to a level of constant effort in the pursuit of our commitment.

Evaluation fulfills the function of providing new fuel for the process by affording us information as to how well it is being realized: it makes it possible for us to better proportion the means to the goal.

Evaluation helps us be more aware of and more master of our acts. It confronts our experiences with a critical look that seeks above all a purification and a greater liberty in our carrying out of them.

But we do not forget that to assure that a process results in satisfactory and effective achievements evaluation has to be something permanent. It must be, therefore, a continuous and systematic procedure, consisting essentially in determining by what means the objectives are being achieved.

Evaluation is applicable to all dimensions of life and by consequence also to our encounters with the Lord, especially to those very personal encounters that are our prayer.

In the Exercises process, St. Ignatius invites us to examine, recommends to us to evaluate constantly, this activity. He asks us to pause on our journey and, "after an exercise is finished, I will consider for the space of a quarter of an hour, either sitting or walking, how I succeeded in the meditation or contemplation. If poorly, I will seek the cause of the failure; and after I have found it, I will be sorry, so that I may do better in the future. If I have succeeded, I will give thanks to God our Lord, and the next time try to follow the same method. "These words speak of the evaluation of our prayer within the Exercises themselves; and so for applying this to our daily life a certain flexibility is necessary. But without doubt we should evaluate in this way our encounters with God in order to carry them out better.

It must be stressed that evaluation is done in order to determine by what means we are attaining the objectives. As a result, it is very important not to lose sight of the fact that each contemplation and each meditation are (within the Exercises, as well as in our ordinary life) means towards a goal, and so the evaluation, the examination of each of these steps, must be in reference to its part within the overall objective.

The Spiritual Exercises are not lessons about prayer, but the pedagogy of prayer. They suppose that one submits himself to the necessity of praying. Once an exercise in prayer has been done, they place us before the evidence of our personal reaction in it.

Prayer is not a discourse with ourselves about a religious theme; it is the mobilization of one's entire being (that is, of man in all his dimensions - spiritual, physical, psychic, social, cultural, political...) to receive the gifts of God. It supposes then, a profound unity of being and a harmony and integration of the external conditions of life

What is needed here is not the spinning out of ideas or the experiencing of feelings but fidelity to prayer. In reality it is a way of making an objective judgment about oneself, and one does not judge oneself from the outside but from the concrete experience one has had. At the end of some days, one may be able to discover a certain liking for prayer and one may notice the fruit that one obtains from it. And if it seems to us that we receive nothing from it, we ought to search out the reason why.

In addition, if we make the decision to pray and to put up with the apparent emptiness that it sometimes brings, then we are obliged to look at things on a new plane. We come with "the problems of my life" and with "my personal difficulties", we always feel tempted to try to resolve them on our own ground, reflecting on them, perhaps asking some advice. In prayer, as in the Exercises, we leave aside for the moment what most preoccupies us, not because we are indifferent to it or from a desire to evade it, but from the certainty that prayer, by purifying and illuminating our heart, will give us a higher point of view from which we can more easily judge things and sense toward which side the Lord inclines us. We do not look for light from ourselves, but from the operation of the Lord within us. We live a true "experience", in which we must take account of what we are, of the measure of grace God gives us and of what is the sign of His Will. We no longer conduct ourselves according to our own natural principles, it is "Another" who leads us and to whom we submit. For our commitment, although it includes many other commitments, is at bottom a commitment to the Lord.

Convinced of the necessity of prayer, we need to take notice of our reactions in it. Starting from there, a direction that is truly "spiritual" is possible. We do not ask the spiritual guide or director what we should do, it is we ourselves who see it, and, having seen it, who must seek it. The role of the guide is to teach us to interpret all the different movements that we feel in prayer and how they can indicate for us the will of God. Spiritual guidance is then a work of discernment and of formation in docility to the Holy Spirit within the context of a freedom which seeks to open itself to grace in an atmosphere of mutual trust, as well as of confidence in God, secure that God takes us as we are and asks only that we try.

The hope is not that we, by ourselves, will attain results, and still less the results that we look for. What it supposes on our part is this: an attempt. The outcome must be expected from God. If not we run the risk of becoming impatient, weary, frustrated. It is necessary therefore that we renew ourselves constantly in the gift of self to God, for it is through this gift that we come to be men and women who are liberators and ready to work for a true liberation of others.

We cannot speak of a method of evaluation to be used generally, because the important thing is that each one finds the way that is more effective for him and, in place of enclosing himself within a preconceived outer form, finds for himself the road that leads to his own achievement and liberation, and that continually fits him to choose the means that help him approach ever more his goal.

One needs to know how to combat distractions, which will not be lacking: not brusquely, but quietly objectifying them and placing them before the Lord so as to again make contact with his presence. Making of an obstacle an aid.

Often we examine rather the difficulties and problems that we bring rather than our attitude in prayer, and its quality. What counts is to change the level or the viewpoint, and it is prayer that effects this change. It is question then in the first place of the prayer itself, and what we should ask ourselves is not whether it was without

faults but "how it went", "how I conducted myself". One makes headway by facing the difficulties and seeing how I reacted to them.

In reviewing how the exercise went, we do it not to discourage ourselves, but to learn by experience. It is experience that will improve our prayer.

What is important in this examination is that each one discover the way in which the Lord gives himself to that person, and the response he makes in love.

* *
*

When he humbled himself
to come among us
as a man,
he fulfilled the plan
you formed long ago
and opened for us the way to salvation

Now we watch for that day,
hoping the salvation promised us
will be ours
when Christ our Lord
will come again
in his glory.

Preface of Advent