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Exposure to and experience of poverty

LETTER FROM CAMBODIA (1)

Dear friends,

You ask me to say a few words on returning home from my beautiful Cambodian people. How difficult it was then and now to grasp, comprehend, in an hour, a day, let alone 13 weeks!

It is essentially a story of people - of a warm, affectionate, smiling, courageous people who know what it is to pain, yet to suffer with dignity, then to rise again with new hope.

There are some faces that have flashed through my mind and heart so often since my return. The young anaemic man hardly able to stand at the door of our hut one day and tears rolled down his face as he was told by one of our helpers that he must go and build a hut for himself. (Don't worry he didn't!).

I think of the little 17 year old girl who wouldn't show her grossly disfigured, tuberculous breast to one of the Doctors, so "ashamed" that it was like that, and after revealing it to me, cried and cried. And then the little 19 year old pregnant girl who used to come often and talk to me in Khmer, and hug me and talk intently to me all the while, and then would say nothing very much to my interpreter - and I couldn't ever recall the quote I knew once, all the time I was there, but since returning I remembered, "I did not hear the words you said, instead I heard the love".

(Cont. on page 32)

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- (1) We received a copy of this letter from a Mercy nun, who reported to her Province after 13 weeks in a Cambodian refugee camp.

THE WORLD OF CHILDREN

1979 was named the International Year of the Child, and any number of events that took place to mark this Year of the Child have revealed some startling realities. Squalor and sadness are rife in our world, and these burdens fall particularly heavily on the children of to-day, in their varied and complex circumstances. International organisations have brought to light the situation of these young citizens, who often find themselves in an environment that may be unwelcoming, indifferent or even hostile. The information from some reports is quite overwhelming:

- We see the estimates of the FAO on hunger in the world and its terrifying effects on the lives of millions of children. So many sights of the famished bodies of children, broken bodies that will never grow, become a haunting vision.
- The ILO (International Labour Organisation) has drawn attention to a phenomenon that is extremely widespread, that of minors who are forced to work. It estimates that in 1977 there were 54.5 million minors working. Though especially common in 3rd world countries, this phenomenon has by no means disappeared in advanced countries, notably in southern Europe and even in the United States.
- Amnesty International, in a documented report, denounces the growing tendency to use children as a weapon against their parents. In recent years, some thousands of boys and girls (children and adolescents) have been killed, beaten, tortured, arrested, imprisoned or separated from their parents.

These disturbing facts, these appalling realities, leave one shaken. And beyond the dramatic character of extreme cases, the situation of the Child in the world today has been posed as a matter of concern to the international conscience. But the International Year of the Child is now past history, we might think. True, but the reality of the situation remains with us... It could be well worth-

mission territory

while to ask ourselves: what have we been able to do by way of response?

* * *

The weakness of children, their vulnerability, their inability to defend themselves seem to make them a special target for the selfishness, exploitation and greed of man and society. The child, full of potential and destined to bear the world's future, too often finds itself to-day among the most impoverished in the world. From the rejection of children, to their exploitation and corruption, we see, in every country, an endless range of problems, physical suffering and emotional deprivation. Nutrition, health, family, schooling, proper relationships with adults which permit harmonious and full personal development - these are the true needs of the child, these are its fundamental rights.

* * *

The mission territory is vast - as vast as the world itself; it embraces all "the zones of humanity", every category of persons. And the children are there, in the middle of it all, calling to us. Does our vision of the world take into account the reality of the young? Does our preference for the poor welcome and lovingly respond to the appeal of the child - the child who may look to us with hesitant, anxious or rebellious eyes?

Along these lines, then - which will also be one way of associating ourselves with the coming Synod - we will be publishing some articles in the forthcoming issues of Progressio which will inform us of urgent contemporary problems, (e.g. the family, divorce, abortion, pornography, etc.) Our goal remains the same: to furnish material, reports, which may provoke reflection among our readers, or exchanges among groups, or even initiate discernment on the part of some. The world of the child is one of the privileged areas that has been commended to us: "Whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes Me. If anyone should cause one of these little ones to lose faith in me, it would be better for that person to have a large millstone tied round his neck and be drowned in the deep sea". (Mtt. 18/5-6) To help you enter into this reflection, we would propose that you read the different "witnesses" from children themselves which follow. And may all of us

hear what the children say, not only with our minds, but also with our hearts - to discover there the call of Him who dwells in His children.

(J.G.)

* * *

I am looking through all this rubbish every day. It is my work. I am 9 years old. I look for glass, paper, old iron things, plastic sandals. My brothers showed me how. They have done it for long time. They know what is good for selling. I sell to man who comes. I give money to my father and keep 3 paise (4 cents) for myself.

I don't like this work. You work in sun all day. You get dirty. You get sick easy. There is no other work to get money for family. I have four brothers, all sorting through this rubbish. (Note that Keshar is a girl - Ed.)

I eat twice. Chapatis and potatoes in morning. Chapatis and cereal at night.

My mother died two months ago. She was sick. She had T.B. She had no sisters. My father was with her. She had no doctor. No medicine at all. She died at home.

We sleep outside. If it rains we sleep inside hut. Roof leaks onto sacking. We put tins to collect water.

I would like to go to school. I like to see small girls going to school with books and slate. I don't know why I want to go with them.

We get water from tap. There is queue every morning. We have to wait one hour. We get one pitcher of water. We carry it home and we bathe. When I finish working at night there is only water left for hands and face. So we stay dirty from rubbish at night. These are only clothes I wear.

Life will be better when I am older. I will work on building site and earn money. I would like to have a house and two sets of clothes.

mission territory

Now we stay in room which will be for night watchman when building is finished. My father works on building site. When work is finished we will move. We make house where my father works. We make house from things we find around. We have many houses. Changing water make you sick. I would like to have proper house so we can always stay there. I do not like keep moving.

KESGAR - NAGPUR, INDIA (9 yrs)

* *
*

When I used to bring money home - and you know how poor we are - my father used to accept it because he thought I got it by begging. When he knew (it was through prostitution) he said he wanted me to stop, but how could he stop me? There are moments when I feel disgusted with myself, and then I feel shame, shame throughout my body.

(Girl, age 13) FRANCE

* *
*

I live in King Street, Kingston. My father is over foreign island.

I stopped school for some fighting thing. I sittin' in a class and somebody come and box me, box me up. Every day them they do that. A bigger boy than me taking advantage. So one day I go up my yard after twelve and put a knife in my back pocket. And he come and I juk one his hand and I run. Then I got back to school and they suspend me till September. I didn't hurt him. I only juk him on the hand and they suspend me. One bigger boy come to try to hold little one, tried to take away dollar, say. So he stab him and kill him. You must try defend yourself.

If I have a friend I will beg of him, you know. If I have something he will beg me one, if he has something I will beg him. But I can't go on the road and say 'beggas this begga that'. They say 'for shame'. They make you small. I can't do that. Not like some boys on the road who see

somebody and just get up and beg, beg, beg. They don't try to see if them can't work somewhere to earn some money. Everybody the same, just walk around and beg, beg, beg.

There are ships that bring corn from foreign. Some of the corn overflow the truckies so we could take it and bag up. We can use it to maintain some sense. Sometimes some special man comes and say he don't want you to pick it up. Sometimes police run after and try to hold we. But we run off.

In Jamaica now, only certain man pick up money. That's man it work. So I try to do all jobs for them I can. When the rain are falling and somebody's cart is stuck we give it good push and we get paid.

I want to go back to school and get myself a trade. I learn welding, woodwork, and learn to fix electric. You have some boys and they get trade, but they follow their friends. They go robbin' and the police kill them. Them idiots. If I get a trade, I cool.

My mother and grannie and brothers and sisters live in my yard with me. I like what my mother treat me. She make feel happy. My mother love me and I love my mother.

Everybody must have a children but some people not ready yet. When I reach twenties I have children. When you are old your children can come and help you after. When you old and you don't have a children to help you, you reach poor house and sufferation and those things.

Right now I don't have no shoes and we go hungry. I feel better must come one day. I just have a mind that better will come one day. I must look forward. In four years or five years I would try to make myself more happier. In twenty years time I wish I'm in nice job with my wife and children and house, you know. You have the mind to go up further ahead you must go further ahead, but if you have mind to go down, if you don't think of future time to come, you will never have no better to come.

You know that Africa people suffer more than Jamaicans.

mission territory

Don't have pants to wear, clothes to wear. Children in Africa have worse time. I'm suffering right now but I am still trying to put out my best. To make people see me out clean.

Me not a politician. Me a revolutionist. I fight for my rights. Politicians fight for money.

VINTON FALKENER - JAMAICA (14 yrs)

* * *

TV is something that I'll always have in my house for ever. I would have to. I think I am addicted to television. You sit down in front of the TV and turn it on and you just get mesmerised. TV is half America's life.

If ever I go over to my friends and say, "Hey, let's do this", they say, "Stop bugging me, I want to finish watching my soap opera".

TV is an easy way out. People don't want to think about their problems so they turn on the TV.

I think it is a waste that many people like me sit down and watch TV all the time and just munch, eat constantly and get fat. Sometimes I'll see something on TV like the candy commercials, and think, "Ah, I want that". I'll go into the kitchen and pick up a Snickers candy bar, go back to the TV room and eat. So I put on all this weight, I don't think it's fair. I'll be sitting there all calm and relaxed and a commercial will come on and make me hungry when I shouldn't be.

DOING WHAT TV TELLS US

But like I say, TV mesmerises people. We do what TV tells us to do. There was a movie on one time called "Smokie and the Bandit" and the characters were raising Cain. My friends and I said, "Why don't we go and try to do that and see what happens?" We got into a lot of trouble for it. TV is already changing.

Violence is bad. Violence, boo, hiss, hiss, boo. But

lately I haven't seen so much of it on TV.

In the future we might not even have TV. I think people will start to understand themselves a lot better and then maybe they will say, "Hey, we don't need TV, there are better things to do", and away it will go. People could become less interested in just buying more products.

But I guess it is just wishful thinking that TV would be done away with.

TV could be used to benefit people more. It should rise to a more intelligent level. I hope they take off the soap operas because it's a waste of time to listen to stuff like, "Oh, God! Vera's in the hospital", "Chuck's been shot", "Ah, Tim's in jail, you know", and "All the babies are in there croaking".

TV has to cater to what people want to see. If our tastes change, if they degenerate, or whatever, then television is going to have to go along with it. I don't think the sponsors are really interested in people at all. It's making money that counts to them.

Then again, I don't know. I think people would watch TV regardless of what was on, just turn it on and sit there.

(Sissy McCARTY, age 15) Florida, UNITED STATES

THE NINETEENTH ANNOTATION RETREAT: retreat of the future?
=====

We give here a slightly abbreviated version (for reasons of space) of an article from "Review for Religious", Vol. 36, 1977/2. The article tells of the experience - and insights - of Sr. Mary Sullivan, R.C. and Mrs. Horstman, who have been involved in "At Home" retreats for a number of years. They may be contacted at: At Home Retreats; 310 Cenacle Rd.; Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y. 11779, U.S.A. (Editor's note)

Beginnings

The hunger to experience Jesus Christ in a retreat has been very evident in our area for some time.

In order for their children to receive religious training, our Catholic parents have had to become involved in the teaching of religion. The parents who wish to teach - most often the mothers - are required to take an updated doctrine course given by the diocese. Many continue in this program for advanced study.

As these women learn, they find themselves wanting to know God, not just to know about him. They are ripe for growing in prayer, ready to make retreats.

The desire for a retreat is present in these women. They lack free time to make a traditional retreat. How were these women to be served? Obviously, the retreat would come to them.

We began with ten women. They instantly recruited ten more, who instantly recruited ten more. The nineteenth annotation retreat in the home environment was responded to, was needed, was effective.

Our rules are simple. We keep the groups small - no more than a dozen. We limit the time commitment each retreatant makes to two hours once a week and fifteen minutes once a day - we must be mindful that these retreatants must attend to "necessary business". Each team of directresses

19th Annotation Retreat

spends time together in prayer and preparation, and they make themselves available to the retreatants for consultation in addition to the formal meeting times. We base our retreat on the Ignatian *Exercises*, and give it over an extended period. And, as we'll explain later, we insist that each retreat team include both a lay person and a religious.

Expectations

We are continually reminded of the effectiveness of "At Home Retreats". As the retreat begins, each person shares her expectations with the team and with the other retreatants. Each week, as the retreat unfolds, we see something happening with these expectations.

Each woman may come with a different set of expectations, motivated by a different set of felt needs. But underlying all of these there is a basic desire for God, a trust that he can come, and a belief in him.

Prerequisites

We feel very deeply that unless there is this basic desire, trust and faith in God on the part of the retreatant, the person should not make the retreat. We have learned this from experience. The retreat cannot be a time of Scripture study, or a doctrinal refutation, or theological discussion.

When we began giving retreats in the home, we felt that anyone who wished to come and make one should do so. We soon learned that those who thought a retreat was to solve problems, or *discuss* God, or to nitpick Scripture points was not looking for a retreat experience. We then discovered that such women hinder the retreat experience of the others in the group.

We now ask that each prospective retreatant believe in her God, desire him, trust him. She is asked to pray daily over material presented to her. She knows that she will share with the whole group just what is happening within her prayer and how it is overflowing into her family and other concerns. She makes a three and one-half month commitment to meet weekly with the team and the other retreatants. We also ask that the sharing in each of the sessions be kept within the group. This principle of confidentiality, beautifully adhered to by all the retreatants, enables the whole group to relax and be themselves.

19th Annotation Retreat

An "At Home Retreat" has thirteen sessions. The structure of the first twelve is the same. One of the team members opens with a prayer. She then asks the women to share what has happened in their periods of prayer during the previous week. Then the team, through talks, a film, a record or slides, presents the material to be reflected on during the week. The two-hour session concludes with shared prayer.

Each retreatant leaves for home with Scripture passages for daily prayer and some tangible object that is the outgrowth of the session's consideration of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. The principle of the "Application of the Senses" comes alive for them in this way.

The time for the weekly session depends upon the team's scheduling and the best time spot for the retreatants. Some women find it convenient to meet one morning a week when their children have all gone to school and they can be free for two hours. Others with very young children rejoice in spending a retreat evening together while their husbands can be home to baby-sit.

Patterns

As each retreatant begins to ponder the "Principle and Foundation" of Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, she seems to enter what might be called a honeymoon stage of her relationship with God. He becomes so tangible, so evident, so necessary in everything - nature, her husband, her children, her own uniqueness. She can't wait for the fifteen minutes of daily personal prayer. It is too short a time to spend with him. She knows with certainty that she has been created uniquely by God for himself. She is happy.

The session after the women have prayed on the "Principle and Foundation" is their first opportunity to share with each other about their prayer. They are excited, realistic, and truly spontaneous. As they share their lived moments of personal realization in their prayer, they begin to notice how alike they are. A bond begins to form, and the bond is that God is present in the life of every woman in that room.

We have discovered that as the retreatant continues in this prayer she begins to find that the time for prayer drags. Suddenly fifteen minutes is much too long to pray.

(continued on p.21)

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

This issue of Youth Progressio presents a report about formation in Lesotho. I was surprised by the atmosphere of freshness that this article inspires. I admire the profound faith which - I think - is similar to that of the first Christians. I want to thank our African sisters and brothers for their precious contribution. At the same time, I want to invite the other countries, the other continents to write about their formation courses, about their programmes, etc.

The second article was written by Paul van Royen, member of the Youth Commission. His article is a profound witness to what young adult CLCers live in Flemish Belgium.

The rest of this issue is composed of prayer orientations. I think that prayer life is the turning point of our spirituality. Without prayer, and the transformation gotten from prayer, our spiritual vocabulary (words like discernment, finding God in every thing) remains rather empty. Therefore, I would like to reserve in each issue of Progressio some space for prayer, for meditation, for the witnesses of those who have made the Spiritual Exercises. Everybody who wants to share an experience is therefore cordially invited to write to us.

THANK YOU.

Your brother,

Jean-Claude HOLLERICH

FORMATION IN LESOTHO

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Peace of the CLC be with you!!! We, the Lesotho CLCers are very glad, for the first time, to communicate thus with you, CLC brothers and sisters in other countries, and to share some of the steps we have taken in the mission of service, which Christ has requested of us. Immediately after the Lesotho délégation, which consisted of Father Ntlôu and Sister Theresa Noosi, had given us the 1979 Rome-Assisi Assembly Report, we felt bound to respond - to live the Christian Life Community. And this is what we did.

Between 8 - 15th of Demember 1979, we chose a centre in one of the most remote towns. We spent the whole week living as a Christian Community. Sharing prayer, food, work, sleep and entertainments. And like the twelve Apostles (Acts 2:43-47), we visited in groups the most needy and old people in the village, talked to them, helped them in their immediate needs. We asked them why they looked happy in spite of having nobody to care for them. We were amazed by the answer which was: *"Because we know that Christ is with us, we are not alone"*.

What surprised us most was to see the faith they have in Christ. One of them even went to the extent of telling us that at times, when she has nothing to eat, she just shouts: "Hail Mary". Quite often, surprisingly, she usually had somebody to bring their food. And believe us or not, she in turn shares the very same food with the other needy. Remember these people are protestants. But they have a feeling that Mary is their mother too, from whom they can get consolations of all sorts. Jesus set us a good example in Cana (John 2:1.12).

We really enjoyed living together. We were open in our sharing the word of God, which was based on CLC community. We looked into the method Jesus applied while training his disciples. We studied the following points as well:

- a) The situation out of which the Apostles emerged: from different families, various aspects of life, their difference in age (Philip 2:1.11).
- b) The time at which the Apostles emerged: It was the time of deep crisis: guerilla warfares, wars between nations etc.

Now in situations like this we too must act. But, before acting, let us ask ourselves the following questions:

1. What do we want?
2. Why do we want it?
3. How are we going to get it?

Studying Jesus' means and ways of dealing with people, we found he used the strategy of building a community out of a group of men. He allowed them to experience the love of God for them through His deeds. He convinced them of the idea of God who accepted and wanted people to change the society in which they were living. He convinced them that the will of God does not accept useless suffering, e.g. the Essens who prayed and fasted, thought they were perfect, while they avoided the cripple, prostitutes and the poor - religious hypocrites! But, God wants useful suffering, suffering as a means to be good.

The aims of building a community

- 1) To develop CARING. When you care for people you automatically deny yourself. You concentrate on the needs of others. You'll remember the occasion when Jesus and His disciples were very tired, after Jesus had preached a lot and needed a good rest. Then came a group of children and the disciples wanted to chase them away. Jesus pleaded with the disciples not to, because He said the kingdom of Heaven is for those like children. Jesus sacrificed His rest in order to talk with the children. He cared for them. He felt they needed Him.
- 2) SHARING - abilities, talents and goals. By sharing we build ourselves, because we do away with selfishness and arrogance, which are a barrier to community building.
- 3) TOLERANCE. Bearing with one another's faults, to better handle conflicts. Accepting the person's good qualities and helping him get rid of the bad ones.
- 4) to TRANSFORM people out of fearful situations. Jesus used community to develop leaders; then, he sent them out to build other communities. We are Apostles. We are sent to help others to know who they are. Jesus developed

leaders by asking His disciples the same question: "Who am I?" Transformation is essential in a community.

This is in short what we talked about and lived at our conference. We went back to our homes changed!

Clara SUPING
(Lesotho - Africa)

WHAT CLC MEANS TO YOUNG ADULTS

=====

As we are young people, on the threshold of real life - married or not, belonging to or having a family, with problems of life - we want to find out how living as a Christian can be deepened and made more genuine.

Our affective life, at this stage of our existence, is steadily growing and we are very much occupied in preparing our future. The same evolution also takes place in our Christian life.

We want to nourish this Christian experience. We constantly wish to confront our new human contacts with the Good News and the life of our Lord Jesus.

In CLC we hope to find some sort of education in this Christian experience, which should grow in accordance with our whole development as human beings.

We want to discover with others what being a real Christian means to us. It is for this reason that we are in Christian Life Communities. Becoming a Christian is a lifelong process. It can only be achieved by living with others in the same spirit, by testifying this to each other and by confirming each other in this respect.

Living as a Christian is both finding a way into our deepest selves (by means of prayer, introspection, the way to inner life) and going to the outside world (love, conflict, action). In CLC we wish to discover how we can go on growing in both ways. Doing so, we gradually find out

that there is no real, genuine road to the others (the way out of ourselves) unless we also go the way into ourselves. Learning to go both ways and being aware of their interconnection is in fact the Christian art of living, which requires a lot of patience, obedience and readiness to listen.

In CLC, finally, we hope to become more and more mature Christians. We will have learned, through ups and downs, and in the spirit of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, how to listen and how to interpret our inner emotions. Thus we will more and more be able, in a personal way, to make choices and take decisions which determine the Christian sense of our lives.

Paul van ROYEN
(Flemish Belgium)

CARE FOR YOUR BROTHERS =====

In India lived the young Raj. His father was a rich industrialist and his mother was one of the greatest film-stars of Indian films. Raj had a special beauty. But you never saw him laugh. Naturally our hero had plenty of money. He could realise all his desires. He seemed to be spoilt by destiny. There was only one thing he couldn't have: love. His parents were never at home; and even when they were there and presented some gifts to him, they didn't really love Raj. They only loved themselves in their son.

Raj knew and felt this. He also was sorry not to have any playmate, not to have any friend. He was very different from the others. He didn't speak their language, he didn't know them. And often he was very lonely, he walked through the great park of their villa. He had the age of a young adult. But in fact he only was a child: he had no relations with the outer world; he only lived his life.

But he was haunted by a thirst for love. And one day he actually fell in love. And probably you would not guess

to whom! He fell in love with a little flower. It was a very beautiful dark-red flower with delicate leaves. He thought he had discovered a treasure. With great caution he took it and planted it on his balcony. So, he never needed to leave his friend. And soon he discovered other flowers ... and a whole line of flowers decorated his balcony.

He spent entire days before his flowers. He observed them, looked with great joy at the bees who seemed also to appreciate his companions. The flowers had become his friends. He would have done everything for them, he cared for them. Now, his life had a meaning.

One night Raj suddenly woke up. All the elements of nature seemed to be unchained. The rain fell down like a torrent and a heavy storm blew over the town; heaven was illuminated by lightning. Raj trembled. He didn't know what to do. He was 'paralyzed'. But soon he recovered from this stupor, ran to the balcony and came just in time ... to see his friends falling down. It pained his heart, he wanted to save them, he jumped down.

The next day only the corpse of Raj was found. His bones were broken. But he smiled and in his hand was a little flower. It was a very beautiful, dark-red flower with delicate leaves.

And we very often live as isolated as did the young Raj. Sometimes we lack love, care. But more often we are so busy that we have no time to care for the others. Very often also we love things more than human beings.

Questions:

- Do I feel a lack of love, of care?
- Does someone feel a lack of love, of care because of me? Where are the "Raj" in my neighbourhood?
- What gives meaning to my life, persons or things?
- Can I become a fountain of love, a fountain of life? What are the conditions for this?

* * *

THE EMPTY CHAIR

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This exercise was developed as a result of hearing the story of a priest, who went to visit a patient at home. He noticed an empty chair at the patient's bedside and asked what it was doing there. The patient said, "I had placed Jesus on that chair and was talking to him before you arrived... For years I found it extremely difficult to pray, until a friend explained to me that prayer was a matter of talking to Jesus. He told me to place an empty chair nearby, to imagine Jesus sitting on that chair and to speak with him and listen to what he says to me in reply. I've had no difficulty praying ever since."

Some days later, so the story goes, the daughter of the patient came to the rectory to inform the priest that her father had died. She said: "I left him alone for a couple of hours. He seemed so peaceful. When I got back to the room I found him dead. I noticed a strange thing: his head was resting not on the bed but on a chair that was beside his bed".

Try this exercise yourself, even though it might seem childish to you!

Imagine you see Jesus sitting close to you. In doing this you are putting your imagination at the service of your faith: Jesus isn't here in the way you are imagining him. But he certainly is here and your imagination helps to make you aware of this.

Now speak to Jesus... If no one is around, speak out in a soft voice...

Listen to what Jesus says to you in reply... or what you imagine him to say...

If you do not know what exactly to say to Jesus, narrate to him all the events of the past day and give him your comment on each of them. That is the difference between thinking and praying. When we think we generally talk to ourselves! When we pray we talk to God. Do not bother to

imagine the details of his face and clothing, etc. This might only prove distracting. St. Theresa of Avila, who frequently prayed like this, says she could never imagine the face of Jesus ... She only sensed his nearness as you sense the nearness of someone you cannot see in a dark room, but whose presence there is clear to you.

This method of praying is one of the quickest means of experiencing the presence of Christ that I know of. Imagine him frequently in the midst of your occupations. Sometimes all you will be able to do is to glance at him, to communicate with him without words... St. Theresa, who was a great advocate of this form of prayer, promises that it will not be long before the person who prays in this way will experience intense union with the Lord.

from:
"Sadhana, A Way to God"
by Antonio de Mello, S.J.

(continued from p.12)

Maybe, she suggests to the group the following week, it would be better to pray for five minutes three times daily. There are simply too many distractions at home to pray there. There is always the telephone, the children asking questions, things to do. Maybe, just maybe, she should make the retreat at another time.

At this stage of the retreat we have begun to notice a variety of responses within the group. Those who are praying deeply begin to feel discouraged in their prayer. Those who are not being faithful to their times of daily prayer find that everything's going "great", "beautiful", "wonderful". The victory bulletins tend to be false at this point. Why is this so? What's begun to happen here? The group explores obstacles to prayer, fears, struggles. The lay member of the team tells how she has had to find a place at home for prayer, a definite time that was best for her to pray, and ways of letting in-between periods of prayer prepare her for her time of daily reflection. The retreatants are able to grasp so much from her honest sharing that they feel renewed.

We then ask the retreatant to trust God, to pray faithfully, to wait upon him. As she does so, she begins to realize deep within herself that she has been unfaithful to this God who has given her so much. She experiences again, very tangibly, that her God loves her and is with her. No matter how much she has turned from him, he is still there calling her back to himself. She is happy that she never left the retreat.

First Fruits

She has arrived at what we feel is the most necessary, most important, most crucial "moment" of the whole retreat. God is faithful. He asks that she be generous, open, and responsible to him. At this time of retreat she feels, she knows, she experiences herself as loved by God. She loves and accepts all others as loved by God. It's a time of acceptance, of peace, of relief, of joy, of love. It spills out everywhere. Because she is changed, she views her husband, her children, the other retreatants, her neighbors, as God would view them: lovable! The retreat experience integrates very nicely with life experience.

19th Annotation Retreat

Hearing of reconciliations, of the lightness, the joy, the peace that each of the retreatants are experiencing at this moment in the *Exercises*, another bond forms to bring the retreatants closer to each other. The bond is the knowledge that each one is a sinner but a loved sinner. They accept each woman in that room as who she is.

The "Call of the King" is felt as surrender in very practical terms. We have found that at the end of this session the group is extremely quiet, pensive, thoughtful. The joy, the laughter, the lightness of the previous prayer is still there, but now it is a basis for something new. All during the week that follows the presentation on the kingdom, the team is busy with outside consultations. Each retreatant has need to share how she hears the call, how she hopes to respond, how she needs help to respond.

The awareness of a common struggle to respond, a common desire to be of service, a common fear of giving themselves to God draw the group out of themselves. The team members spend individual time listening to the retreatants. The latter spend more time daily in prayer and begin to seek out the others in their group and share prayer with them in between the weekly sessions.

Midpoint

The retreat group has now been meeting for about one and one-half months. Much has drawn them together - their daily prayer, their sharing of struggles and joys in prayer and life, their acceptance of themselves and each other, their awareness of who they really are. And so the contemplation on the Incarnation is easy to understand. The Word has become flesh for them in this very group, in their own families, in themselves. They are filled with a keen hunger to know Christ intimately, to love him ardently, and to serve him. And so for the next month they ponder him growing within Mary's flesh (as their own children grew within them), growing in Nazareth's family, reaching adulthood and the time for service. They simply walk with him, marvel at his words and deeds, and ultimately face Jerusalem with him.

More than one month is spent praying over the life of Jesus. Scripture comes alive for them as it never did before. The realization that Jesus dwells within each other is newly evident to them. But somewhere during the contemplations on the life of Christ, it seems that struggle seems

to set in again. And it does so for the whole group, though not at the same time for each of them. They begin to seek excuses not to pray; they would prefer more discussion than prayer at the weekly sessions. At this point the team purposely makes the sessions shorter. They wish the retreatants to be face-to-face with God and to experience him, not them.

Each retreatant ultimately has to say, "But, for me, who is Jesus?" As she ponders this question, as she faces who he is and what he has done, she finds herself telling the group that he is continually calling to her in her life. They all experience this and marvel at his way with each of them.

The time to enter Jerusalem has come. The time of his passion has arrived. The time of compassion with him is now. We have found this to be one of the most supportive, encouraging times of the retreat. Each realizes that Jesus has died for her. Each realizes that she is able to participate in his passion. Each realizes how each of the others is participating or has participated in Jesus' passion. They are compassionate toward one another through their sharing, their prayers, and their deeds for others during the week. This time of compassion for others' passions is new for many of them. For the first time they are drawn out of themselves to enter into his passion and the passion of others.

He is risen! They enter into the newness of his life rejoicing. They are ready to speak his love not only with words but with actions to others. Three and one-half months are over; at the final session, celebration of the Eucharist brings the retreat to a close and to a beginning.

The Lay Directress

We have discovered that the lay member of the team brings an important dimension to the retreat. She brings herself, her own prayer, her expertise as a lay woman living as the retreatants are living, her ability to articulate back to them what they have experienced because she herself has experienced God as they have.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough the necessity of having a lay member on the retreat team. From 1968 to 1972 we gave retreats in the home with only religious as the retreat team. It was only with the added in-depth dimension of the lay person that the idea took hold, caught fire, and moved.

19th Annotation Retreat

We have learned a lot from experience about the selection of the lay member of the team. We have found that women over thirty, married for at least ten years, who have made an "At Home Retreat" and have been changed by this experience are the best potential lay retreat directresses.

We have learned that if a directress has not experienced herself as loved, as lovable, as acceptable by God she is judgmental of her retreatants. She is not able to recognise all that is happening within them of God and tends to move them at her rate rather than at his. We no longer have lay persons recommended by sisters as good potential retreat directresses. We wait, we pray, and as we see someone develop during a retreat we ask her if she would like to be trained to give "At Home Retreats".

The most effective lay people in our "At Home Retreat" movement have a sense of humor, a good marriage, are able to listen, to discern, to empathize, and are experiencing Jesus Christ as alive and well in their married lives. This is what we look for in our selection of an "At Home Retreat" lay directress.

The Religious Directress

More and more we find that women religious are seeking to expand their present ministries in the Church into more pastoral areas, into a more spiritual ministry. Giving "At Home Retreats" is one way they can fulfill this desire.

Many of our religious team persons are active either in the formation of their own religious, or are members of a parish pastoral team, or are CCD coordinators or parochial school teachers. They are able to be active in their present ministries and give one "At Home Retreat" at a time.

None of the religious involved with the program is involved full time. We think this has been an advantage. The sister may give her full attention to the ministry for which she is primarily responsible. Meanwhile, she is not bound to seek "success" in retreat work. She is free to let God be with his people and she follows them through their retreat.

19th Annotation Retreat

We require the same qualifications for the religious directress as for the lay member of the team. She must be a woman of prayer; she must have made the *Exercises*; she must be stable in her religious life, mature, with a sense of humor, a listening ear, an ability to articulate and to discern.

Training

Teams complete a three-month training course together before giving their first "At Home Retreat". Weekly supervision, days of input, and evenings of evaluation add to their skills.

The training course is wide-ranging. The future teams study *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, receive communication skills, explanations of spiritual direction, the use of current audio-visual aids to bring out into contemporary form what Ignatius sets forth - all the tools we can give them.

In our first training sessions we learned that the religious and laity were leery of one another. As they worked together, learned together, shared together and prayed together, they began to recognize the talents that such a team would bring together to complement one another. Once they begin to give a retreat together, they say that they would only give a retreat this way - each brings something to this type of retreat experience that is necessary and would be missed were the retreat given *only by* a lay person *or only by* a religious.

WE HOPE THAT OUR LEARNING HAS HELPED YOU.

CLC AND MARRIED COUPLES

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We have been married for one year and members of the CLC's for 5 years; as a matter of fact, we became engaged almost as soon we joined the CLC's. We were in the same group for 4 years, and then we changed to a group for young people; we wanted to experience with them, not only the ideal of service, but also our own personal growth in faith. The group has helped us, especially with regard to our prayer.

Apart from the fact that we met one another in the CLC's, our joining a group corresponded to a need we both felt for christian formation, in a community context.

From the point of view of a married couple, we consider that our group has fully met our expectations: we have been given the opportunity to live and to grow together as a couple, as a christian couple, along with other young people, some of whom are engaged, others of whom have not yet made this choice.

We have been helped considerably through finding a common spirituality which has henceforth marked our lives. We came to this common point from different backgrounds - one of us had worked with the Scouts' Movement, and the other had been involved in Catholic Action.

The fact that the others in the group look on us as a couple has given us a sense of responsibility, and the inspiration, to be open to others, individually, but especially as a couple.

Our vocation has emerged in the course of these years, mainly due to our experiences in the CLC's: the Spiritual Exercises, weekly meetings, prayer and the weekly Eucharist together, summer camps, the experience of helping in the local Church and in the town. And we would like to mention a further significant experience for us - being with a group of engaged couples (CLC's and others) who were preparing for marriage.

Our membership of the CLC's has deepened our Christian commitment, and this in turn has made us become more responsible people, in the community at large and in the Church. So we have looked for ways of becoming more involved in the suburb in which we live, and in our parish.

With regard to our suburb, we have tried to be a Christian presence, for others, and to develop in ourselves a civic-mindedness demanded of people who are aware of their living situation and the needs that surround them.

With regard to our parish, we have tried to be a Christian couple, and to be seen as such by the young people and the adults. At the time of our marriage, we were very conscious of the presence of CLC friends, and of the presence of friends from the parish. The celebration of our marriage sought to be one of those joyous moments in community that the whole parish is invited to experience, like the other sacramental realities of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Life in a CLC group presents no problems to a couple, provided that this is the choice of both partners and that the group itself is open and welcoming to the presence of couples. If we believe in a variety of vocations in the Church of Christ, we should equally accept a variety of choices - vocations - in our CLC's. There is no reason at all why a couple should be a hindrance to the normal growth of a group, just as there is no reason at all why a couple should try to impose their experience on the rest of the community. The presence together of different vocations (couples, priests, single people) facilitates openness to others and the sharing of the variety of charisms found in the Church.

As far as our experience in community is concerned, we must admit that there were some difficult moments between those who had already decided on marriage, and those who were thinking otherwise. Through the common effort of coming to understand the different rhythms of life among us, we have succeeded in maintaining a mutual respect and a real fraternity in Christ, and we have grown together through these different experiences.

Both as a couple, and as individuals, we realise that we are little engaged on the national and world level, perhaps because we are too absorbed by our daily commitments...

News

AFRICA: MADAGASCAR - a group of young adults...

We have just received a long report giving the history, the life and the activities of a group of young adults. We quote one passage which underlines an interesting aspect of the group: "Our group comes together once a month, for a day of recollection or formation. So that the group may truly be a community of families, the parents bring their children. Each month, this community of 23 people (13 children) comes together to pray, to share and to celebrate the Eucharist with joy and simplicity. It must be added that the 13 children are an important part of our community life; they take an active part in the Liturgy, they receive a formation that is appropriate to their years, and of course they play together. As a community we feel that our children, living the faith with us, their parents, will grow up to be faithful sons and daughters of the Church, at the service of Christ and all His people."

Romuald RALAYSONAV

ASIA: JAPAN - towards greater participation...

We have already started preparing for 1981 Asian Formation Course. Our Provincial is very cooperative and the Provincials' Conference is quite interested in it. We have also started saving money for this one month course.

Last month we had our usual yearly meeting of those who are responsible for the various CLC communities in Japan. One of the main items was to discern about what we should do with our central office. This process has started two years ago. To make a good discernment about it we had a group of former executive council members who collected the necessary data and made a detailed analysis of the past 10 years. This growth-process enabled us to see our direction - which is for greater participation of all the local communities - in other words de-centralization and distribution of the various responsibilities all around the country. This value has been discerned and given priority to a central office with paid office help. This bi-monthly full day meeting of the executive council, including an over-night stay, will hold together and give direction to the whole CLC in Japan. We are working towards a Japanese CLC community on the national level. This endeavour includes:

wide participation in the executive council; exchanges of formation personnel; participation in all the local assemblies not only of members from various communities, but also the members of the executive council. We plan all the Spiritual Exercises on a national level and we make the Exercises together from various localities. A new form of the Exercises according to the 19th Annotation has started under the guidance of Fr. Ribas for married couples in the most southern part of Kyushu, Miyasaki.

Our Assembly last month has decided to put equal emphasis on expansion and on deepening of CLC. In addition to that we have started an endeavour to connect the members who do not belong to any community right now. One member of the executive council has this task and we all work together to establish again deeper relationship with these people. There are also two core-communities, represented in the executive council, whose particular aim is to work out an on-going formation course for CLC members and the other community aims at pre-CLC community formation, i.e. extension. Another aim of the assembly was to put more emphasis on our social involvement and propagation of faith. All these together with our Asian and International involvement have representatives on the executive council so that these aims may be really carried out. Incidentally, looking back on our assembly, it is clear that the Spiritual Exercises are really accepted as our common source of spirituality and bond of unity. The Japanese National CLC Federation is also definitely moving towards a Community of real sharing, support and challenge. Fortunately our Youth CLC's are active and giving an excellent model and vitality to all the other CLC communities in the country.

Ed NEMES

LATIN AMERICA: from COLOMBIA, I have good news...

Finally, the young Jesuits begin to look towards the CLC's. The priests who are working in the "Casa de la Juventud" (House for Youth), who have worked with youth since some years ago, are going to direct their efforts to the formation of groups oriented towards the CLC. For this purpose and in order to help us in the formation of young Jesuits, Fernando Mendoza returns to Bogota. So we are going to have a team of about 5 young Jesuits in Bogota who are beginning to work with the CLC's.

In Medellin, we are planning to form, if we are capable, two or three groups of young married couples.

Gregorio ARANGO

EUROPE: DUBLIN '80 - a response to Rome '79...

A European meeting is scheduled to take place in Dublin from May 1 to 4. It was decided that the Dublin meeting should in some way be an experience of community. During the World Assembly, the real need to deepen the sense of community at European level was again emphasised. In planning the Dublin meeting the guiding team has taken account of the wishes expressed, and hope that "Dublin '80" will be remembered as a real community building experience. This meeting will be a response on the part of the European CLC members to the orientation decided upon during Rome '79 : "a World Community at the Service of One World".

Nuala GARRETT

ITALY - some activities...

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| April 24 - 27 | National Convention in Naples. It has as its theme: "An Assembly towards a National Community: To discern what is more urgent and universal (G.P.7)". |
| June 23 - July 5 | a stay in the mountain, with moments of reflection on some themes suited for youth who are in search of maturity in faith; the stay consists of recreation, tours and communitarian service. |
| July 28 - Aug 10 | an experience of prayer, work and holidays together in a work camp for university students and young workers. |
| July 31 - Aug 15 | also for university students and workers; it consists in the animation of a town in the mountains. |
| August 18 - 31 | Formation Course I to be held in Galoro. |
| September 1 - 13 | Formation Course II for those who have already attended the first formation course. The theme will be on mission and service. |

LUXEMBOURG - news from the 2 pre-communities...

Youth: There is a meeting once a week, for an hour, between 1 pm. and 2 pm. So far, this meeting has been well prepared by the person responsible for it. Some changes will gradually take place as the young people themselves, turn by turn, take more responsibility. Over the school holidays (all the young people attend school) there is one full day given to "recollection", and then one day of recollection every 6 weeks. These days have been very well prepared, and that is the secret of their success. The present dynamic of the group is aimed at helping the members express themselves more deeply about themselves and about the connection between their life of faith and their daily living. At this stage, what is important for the members is to be regular at the meetings and to work out some sort of framework for their living. Because we are so scattered, we do not engage in common action. That would have been excellent in binding the group together, but unfortunately it is not feasible. In August we are planning to have a 4 day session with these young people.

Adults: The first stage of initiation is almost over. The group has been together for almost 3 years, but since September it has become much more cohesive as a group. We have felt the need to clarify certain areas, at least in the presentation of the CLC's: here it has been a question of the spirituality of the Spiritual Exercises, of a commitment for life, of a way of living the Gospel and of living in the Church... a life of prayer, discernment, etc... I believe it was a good move to give people the time until Easter 1980 so that each one may decide whether or not he/she is called to the CLC's. At one time there were 13 of us, and that is too many. At the moment we are 11, but I believe we will soon be 9. Certainly the group has become much more vigorous.

I see more and more clearly how demanding the CLC's are, both for the members and for the assistant. It really is a question of entering into a process of serious formation, in which I am the person responsible for this formation; and that takes a great deal of time. Personal relations develop, sensitivity is called for, especially to follow the evolution of the group, step by step, and for discernment. But I try to introduce each one into his/her responsibilities in the group, as a member of the group. And the fruit? We will see that only later, but already one cannot help noticing an obvious spiritual growth in a number of cases. I am witnessing the action of the Spirit - there is no doubt at all of that!

Jacques de l'ARBRE

(continued from page 2)

And of the little 4 year old boy I helped to bury in a stark, bleak grave and how the father and uncle squatted inside and prayed - and I knelt and prayed with them too.

Then the children - who used to follow wherever we went, calling out, "Hello, O.K." and the picture of the youngsters carrying their brother/sister to receive medical treatment and how they cherished and held them so lovingly, and the way they'd laugh too - especially captivating were their expressions of wonder, delight and surprise when they changed their rags to clothes. Then there was the old lady who asked for a sarong and when offered 2, refused ... "Someone else might need it".

When we farewelled them, one of our interpreters wept saying "Before, no one care about no one, now it is different".

Dear friends, the stories are endless and the faces with their mixture of sorrow and joy will be with me always. I felt so strongly all the time the power of God and the support of my family, sisters and friends. I remember Tomry an American saying to me, "Irie, God really works in Khao/Dang", to which I replied: "He works just as well back home, except we don't see Him so clearly".

And so I pray in gratitude for the privilege of being enabled to have eased the burden a little in the lives of these special people, knowing that while I was giving, I received just so much more. While I was part of a Red Cross Team that deals with Emergency Relief, the needs will be there for so much longer, and it is my great hope that we as Sisters of Mercy can continue with what is still in "embryo".

With peace, joy and love in Jesus.