



PROGRESSIO

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THE CHILD, GOOD NEWS FOR MANKIND

The International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB) sponsored a meeting at Geneva, 29-31 Oct. 1979, whose theme was, "The Child as Teacher..." The aim of this conference was to convince adults of the necessity of regarding children, and of listening to them, with love and attention. The talks and the exchanges which took place at this conference have just been published, and here we present a summary of the address given by Abbé François Courdeau. The perspective he develops complements the usually narrow vision many of us have with regard to the relationship between children and adults. In a word, this perspective challenges us, when we look at children, "to discover how the spirit of childhood bubbles over in them; for it is this spirit that the Gospel reveals to us as the secret of the Kingdom, and the way we must follow on the road to salvation".

(Editor's note)

If it is our duty to give the child what he needs for harmonious and successful development, we must also be ready to accept what he can offer us. The child is the bearer of fundamental VALUES, and thereby today's opportunity to build tomorrow's world.

I - THE CHILD, ECHO OF THE GOOD NEWS:
Justification and Foundation

Scripture and Tradition alike justify this affirmation.

1) Biblical Sources

Every child born into the world, because he carries with him the full power of the Spirit that quickens man, re-sows the seed of truth of man and re-incarnates man's authentic being. Whence comes Jesus' warning: "Unless you become as little children"... Luke 18: 15-17, Matt. 19: 13-15, Mark 10: 13-16.

2) Pronouncements of the Church

Pope Paul VI to the Director of UNICEF on 28 June 1978: "to develop the priceless value of the child in the world of today". The message of 1 January 1978 for World Peace Day: "Children are the prototypes of the new world fashioned according to the Scripture".

II - THE CHILD, MANIFESTATION OF THE GOOD NEWS:
Threshold and Listening Post

To understand the child, the adult must cross a triple threshold.

1) Acceptance of a process of becoming

The future of mankind, like that of the child itself, depends on acceptance of the need to develop and be transformed.

2) Openness to receive

To be poor, according to the Gospel, is to be willing to receive from another, to change and develop at another's instance.

3) Priority of being over having

For mankind, as for the child, what matters is to turn away from the pursuit of having in a closed consumer's world, and to commit oneself to "better being" through "fuller being".

III - THE CHILD, MESSAGE OF THE GOOD NEWS:
Its Content and Clarification

The child invites us to take the way of progress, and shows it to us.

1) The child sees and marvels

The child knows how to 'stand and stare', contemplate in wonder, give thankful praise as Jesus did in the Gospel.

2) The child loves and trusts

We are not to develop in solitude, but in the love which brings us together in a spirit of equality and generosity.

3) The child acts and creates

For man, work is a fulfilling means of expression, a way to collaborate in creating and serving the community.

IV - THE CHILD, INVITATION OFFERED BY THE GOOD NEWS:
The Call and the Way

In revealing his message, the child makes a threefold call on us.

1) Reflection enriching our interior life

The child's education succeeds to the extent that he develops a sense of mystery and moral awareness.

The triple obstacle to be overcome is constituted by materialism, extroversion, and diversion.

2) A rhythm of life which finds a place for repose

If this rule is not respected, Nature takes her revenge on health and peace of mind.

3) Humility in awareness of our limitations

The Gospel, like the child, reminds man of his weakness, and invites him to be modest, moderate, and patient.

Is not this earnest contemplation of the Child, echo of the Word of God for the man of today, the truly original contribution that the International Catholic Child Bureau can make to the International Year of the Child? The child, prophet of modern times, like John the Baptist prepares the Way of the Lord.

RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE

Experience of a guide

We publish here our last article for the year on "The Retreat in daily Life". So far we have presented articles that offer 'guidelines' for giving the retreat in daily life. This present article does not so much offer guidelines as the experience of one retreat guide. At the end of his article, Fr. Bourke asks a number of questions and suggests some tentative answers. Perhaps some of our readers would be interested in taking up the "open questions" that Fr. Bourke has raised. We thank him for his contribution.
(Editor's note)

In recent years the number of layteachers at Xavier College has greatly increased, and efforts have been made to give them a wider knowledge and experience of the Spiritual Exercises. There have been lectures on central meditations, especially the Foundation and the Kingdom. Similar articles have appeared in domestic publications. There have been week-end retreats, and several three or four-day seminars. The nineteenth Annotation seemed to offer a unique opportunity for our teachers, without undue interruption of their school and home commitments, to experience the Exercises at some depth.

Our experience in this sort of retreat has so far been a modest one. Five only of our staff of more than fifty have made it. Others have shown interest in the idea, and it is hoped further retreats will be made this coming year.

spiritual exercises

From the first it has seemed to me to be well worthwhile to invite the teachers to make the retreat. After the first two were completed, I wrote about them in the following terms:

"The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius can be profitably made by people whose business or family ties allow them only a limited time for prayer and reflection each day. The retreat will last about 30 days, and will require about an hour or an hour and a half of meditation each day. The Spiritual Exercises, like a course of physical exercises, are something that must be done to be effective. They become a reality by being experienced. The retreat presupposes a spirit of faith, and a generous readiness to respond to the Holy Spirit. Made perseveringly the retreat will bring a positive reward - clarity of purpose, strength and direction to the will, and love of God deepened and nourished by increased facility in the art of praying.

"The exercitant who volunteers to make the retreat will feel beforehand an interior attraction to make it: though such attraction can co-exist with diffidence or even antipathy. At some stage the Exercises will bring a sense of direct experience of God, loving, wise and good".

In response to that article three more came forward to make the retreat. In all five cases the period of 30 days has appeared suitable and successful. An attempt was made to cover the whole Exercises in the 30 days. Whether that was the best decision is open to conjecture, though at this stage I would not make a change.

Each weekday, Monday to Friday, the exercitants found a free period in their teaching schedule to visit the Director. Generally they spent about 20 minutes with him, discussing their progress, and obtaining material for the next meditations. They were expected to spend about an hour and a half in prayer each day, to make one full hour of meditation, and to go to daily Mass. They were given a copy of the Spiritual Exercises, but were asked to treat it like a text book, content to use only those passages that were indicated each day by the Director. Towards the end of the retreat, during the fourth week, they were invited to read any part of the Exercises they cared to. This invitation did not lead to anything notable. No important discus

spiritual exercises

sion followed, so their reading may have been only cursory. For instance, no mention had been made of the Rules for Discernment for the Second Week, and no one showed any curiosity about them.

The retreat began with a consideration of the Three Methods of Prayer, and with an explanation of the Presupposition. Next day they considered the Foundation Exercise. No attempt was made to propose arguments for the truth of what it contained, but all readily accepted it as a logical statement of the application of Christian Faith to our lives. It appealed immediately to all five. This was not surprising, for I soon discovered that they were all much more advanced in prayer and the interior life than they themselves suspected. In other words, the teachers who made the retreat were all drawn to do so by the hope that they might advance personally in the love and service of God. They were not primarily concerned with a study of the spirit of the Society, or of the Exercises, though these things were of interest and concern to them.

As first I felt some reticence about proposing the exercises on Sin, and particularly on Hell, in close conformity with the text. I soon found I had no cause of such reticence. The exercitants were not particularly conservative. They were sympathetic to modern spiritual guidelines. But they had no difficulty whatsoever in making the meditations as proposed in the Exercises. On the contrary I think this part of the Exercises was particularly fruitful and exciting for them. Indeed, as I hoped and should have expected, they were greatly moved and impressed by the First Week.

On about the 9th day they were ready for the Second Week. In most cases the Kingdom meditation proved somewhat strange and 'distant' to them. They tended to treat it more as a study than as an exercise. I think the popular notion of the 'military' quality of our way of life was a small stumbling-block in this case. But the effect of the Contemplation of the Incarnation, and the consideration of Two Standards, was immediate and fruitful. Contemplation of the mysteries in the Life of Christ proved easy and consoling to them all. There was a marked absence of disturbance of mind, or of tendency to question the historicity of Gospel narratives: (though earlier, there had been some need for instruction about the nature of the early chapters of Gene-

sis). They were by this time adding a 10 minute daily examen to their exercises - all eagerly understanding the benefit of the first point, thanksgiving for grace received. On about the 17th day the Methods of Making a Wise and good choice were considered; and the exercitants were given a whole day (and in one case two days), to consider Directions for Amending and Reforming One's Life and State.

The Third and Fourth weeks were made with fervour and facility. In one case the third week coincided with Holy Week, and then, after a break for Easter, this exercitant took up on Tuesday of Easter Week the exercises of the fourth week. The interruption did not seem to affect the integrity of fruitfulness of his retreat. Through-out the thirty days the full hour of prayer seemed to offer little difficulty. Sometimes they experienced tedium, but not notably: and all persevered without trouble. They seemed willing to go on, at the end of their thirty days; but were of course advised not to do so. They were grateful indeed for the experience, and have all followed-up the retreat by continuing to visit their Director at least occasionally. I have noticed that all five are quietly outstanding among the staff for daily attendance at Mass. Three of them are in the forefront of those who help us with Religions Education in the school.

From this brief account you will no doubt discern that the exercises, made this way, did not have any marked disturbing effect - little desolation, and a general peaceful consolation and ease. But for all that it meant no little sacrifice and self-abnegation. They were asked not to discuss what they were doing, even with their family, until it was completed. Nor was it easy in their homes to find solitude of time and place for their exercises. Occasionally they had to break up their hour of meditation because of some household crisis. But they showed great generosity and fidelity in returning to the meditation, and completing the appointed time. For the most part they found it not difficult, neither interiorly in their prayer, nor externally in adapting their daily lives to this order and routine. It is also my opinion that towards the end of the second week they experienced some new level of faith and self-knowledge, much as we do in our noviceship and tertianship retreats. This was a matter of great satisfaction to them, but obviously it would not be right for me to say more about it.

spiritual exercises

Were these 19th annotation retreats effective for the primary purpose we had in giving them here at Xavier? I think they were. The five exercitants expressed genuine gratitude. They completed their retreats with great respect for the Spiritual Exercises, for Saint Ignatius in particular, and for the Society. I know that the general opinion of the Community is that all five are excellent examples of what we hope layteachers will be in our schools, as ever larger responsibility is assumed by the lay staff. For my own part I hope more teachers will accept the invitation to make the retreat. In fact I wish it were being put before them more positively.

Did this primary purpose lessen the efficacy of the 19th annotation retreat by covering too much in too short a time? The answer is not easy. The five who have made the retreat would have stayed, with great benefit, on the exercises of the first week, perhaps for another 6 or 7 days; and then would have built on their experience of prayer by meditating on the mysteries of Christ's life. Occasionally, as with the Kingdom Exercise, a kind of academic approach intruded into their retreat. But it was not a notable intrusion, and the Meditations on the Passion were probably more fervent and fruitful than the second week contemplations. As to the fourth week I am far from sure. It may be that experience in giving these 19th annotation retreats will enable me to take more of the fourth week for lay retreatants. Certainly the emphasis today, in spiritual life, is on the Paschal Mystery as being fulfilled here and now. The Exercises themselves may make it somewhat of a corollary of Christ's historic death and resurrection. But that Christ is suffering now, and risen now; that we in Christ are engaged in the passion now and also now risen to new life - this can be brought into active spiritual living through the fourth week. I leave the question there, as I do not feel I am able to do more than put forward pros and cons of it at this stage. But I feel in the case of our Xavier experiment the experiencing of all the exercises, and a prayerful consideration of all four weeks, had a real importance. At this stage I would still want to give the full exercises, for the full 30 days, to any other teachers who might accept the invitation to make the retreat.

Thomas BOURKE, S.J.

AN ASSEMBLY RE-LIVED

From May 10 to 14 the CLC of the Philippines had their yearly general council meeting. Originally to be in Margosatubig, Zamboanga del Sur in Mindanao, the venue had to be changed to Lipa, Batangas in Luzon due to the deteriorating peace and order situation in the south.

The theme of the assembly was: "Towards Growth in the Sense of Mission". It had as its objectives: 1) to have a deeper understanding of and participation in the mission of Christ; 2) to confront oneself and one's community with this understanding of the mission of Christ, and 3) to draw some guidelines in arriving at one's mission.

This article is written by a CLC member, a mother of 3 children, who was involved in the process, from decision-making about participation to the closing of the meeting.

It was a big and difficult battle between my heart and mind. My mind said I should go. My heart said I should not. Is it safe? Can I leave my family for a week? What does the Lord want me to do? These were the questions that occupied my mind since the time I received the invitation of the Leadership Community to attend the General Assembly. I prayed hard over it, yet it was difficult for me to make a decision because my human sensibilities were actively working within me...until the Lord Himself decided for me. Margosatubig that never was... Batangas here I come.

I brought my whole family with me to Lipa City on that warm and sunny afternoon of May 10. It was a very short

a national assembly

trip - just an hour and fifteen minutes from Manila. St. Francis de Sales Major Seminary was along the stretch of highway fronting a vast field of trees and horses' stables. There we were welcomed by the cool and fresh farm air, the chirping of the birds, the cries of the pigs, goats and cows, the imposing presence of the dogs and the smell of green grass and fertile farm soil. It was a place where one could be free to see, to touch, to listen and to breathe in nature - God's richest gift to man.

I went to the assembly armed only with an open ear, a loving heart and a curious mind. I knew that the Lord has His own ways so I did not have any expectations, only that we were going to do a lot of praying - it being a communal discernment. I also knew that back home, my own community would be praying for me and for the whole assembly so that the spirit would enlighten us in discovering and/or confirming the Mission of the Christian Life Communities of the Philippines.

Around 27 of us sat around the big session hall, age ranging between 17 and 70, from different walks of life, speaking in different dialects. The Holy Spirit will have to work doubly hard, I thought to myself.

May 11

Morning took some time to come. I could not sleep because there were five of us sleeping on three spring beds. My three daughters - Sunshine, April and Dawn - slept between Jody, my husband, and me, to keep them from falling off the bed.

The first session began at 8 o'clock in the morning. The chairperson explained to us that we were going to have a discernment for Action as a continuation of the last assembly. In order to achieve the objective we ourselves have decided that there should be the following: a prayerful atmosphere, openness, internal and external freedom, alertness and joy. I felt alertness would be my problem, feeling my eyelids drooping after a restless night.

(Cont. on page 21)

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

Here are two more youth experiences of formation in CLC. They come from two different countries : Philippines and South Africa. Two different continents: Asia and Africa. Yet, their orientations and steps in CLC are noticeably common.

They could serve to show and reflect on how one situates where the Youth members are, how to plan where next to guide them and some possible steps to be taken.

May such sharing of experiences also encourage other member federations to report on their formation efforts.

YOUTH PROGRESSIO

ON YOUTH FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Seventy one (71) youth from 10 different relocation areas of Luzon attended a Formation Camp last April 9-13, 1980 at Camp September 21 (Kabataang Barangay Site), Los Baños, Laguna. The Youth Camp was a joint effort of Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (SCAPS) and the CLC. Fr. Ben Sim, S.J., Rory Valdellon and Aida Endaya were among the facilitators.

The Camp was not just a bundle of experiences nor a single account of events. It was rather a dynamic process of liberation that has transformed new life among the youth.

Each day was treated with a theme. Faith, Love, Life was for the first day. The first half of the day was spent for discovering God's love in nature through an activity called Nature Walk. Here the participants were asked to walk in silence and contemplate in nature. The experience of the whole morning was summed up as: "I am loved by God and I experienced His love for me through His Creations; so that my outlook in life has changed and I am again starting to build my Faith".

In the afternoon the Fantasy Trip initiated the Campers to trace the love of God in their lives by remembering the past. Each asked a question: "At what particular event/s, place/s, or with what people did I feel I am most loved by the Lord?" In silence they found that the common answer was: "When I was down and troubled, God is near and is watching me". There were realizations too; a) that each one has the capacity to contemplate; b) that in contemplation one is able to review his own participation in life; c) that God "has loved me even before I was formed". The first day has assured each one of the love of the Lord by tracing that love in nature and in the events of their lives. That feeling of love has prepared the participants to go on and seek the will of the Father.

Response and Reconciliation was the theme of the second day. Again there was a Nature Walk in the Morning. Unlike the walk in the first day, the individuals were not left alone by themselves, instead the facilitators guided their respective teams. They looked at nature not to trace the love of God but to look deeper and see how nature responded to the love of the Father. The participants were also asked to focus their attention on people. It was found out that nature at times has responded better than man. Man's response was limited and sometimes not worthy. And why? Man became the slave of his own sinfulness. And in order that his response be acceptable and worthy, man must be freed. He must be delivered from the bondage of his sin because we have to respond in the spirit of Freedom and Love.

Through individual reflection, the participants saw that the obstacles in responding were not brought by self alone but by our relationship with others and by the structure of our own society. Seeing the obstacles in general, the group quieted themselves and asked: "How did I participate in the making of these obstacles?" Responses were not

shared, instead the people continued examining themselves until they felt the need for reconciliation. The 3 priests who were among the facilitators made themselves available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We were graced then with loving mercy of the Father.

The first and the second day has brought the campers to the realization that man is loved inspite of his being sinful. Because of that unconditional love we want as a community to give thanks to the Father.

A construction of the Place of Sacrifice took place. This activity brought the small group to be closer to one another. It also gave an opening to the creativity of the youth. Moreover, it gave them the sense of accomplishment, unity, love, freedom, peace, victory and joy.

While the 3 groups were busy building the Place of Sacrifice, the facilitators were also busy preparing the food for the Hunger Meal. The food was distributed unequally leaving too little or almost none to 2-3 individuals in each group. We had it during lunch time. The rationale behind this activity was to get the feel of how life could be with out sharing. And once more the words of our Lord: "I witnessed the affliction of my people and have heard their cry of complaint" became real. It was a deep and painful experience of being poor for these young people. They wanted to shout: "Why like this? Others have more, while some too little or none at all". It therefore led the participants to the deeper reality of injustice and oppression in themselves and among themselves.

With a deeper appreciation of the need for sharing, the group also felt the need to give thanks to the Father as a community. The whole group which was divided into 3 smaller groups shared and offered the Sacrifice of the Mass at each place of Sacrifice. They shared in the Love Meal (Agape) too. There was a feeling of oneness with Christ.

The fourth day was spent for the general evaluation of the Youth Formation Camp and planning by area. It was seen and accepted that the Youth Camp offered a new and entirely different alternative for struggle - the way by which our strength is drawn from Christ. The process it offered is slow but it was a continuous seeking of the will of the Father.

The planning by area resulted in a common need to have an Echo Seminar of this Formation Camp for each respective area. As tentatively planned 2 to 3 delegates who were already in this Youth Camp will be sent for the preparation of this Echo Seminar. This is to prepare the young to run their show. Of course one or two facilitators will be around.

Evaluation and planning were not enough for the fourth day. The whole of 3 days' experiences were deep and strong enough to encourage the campers to a commitment; so each one pronounced a word of commitment during the offertory in the day's celebration of the Eucharist. They offered themselves, giving a part of their time and effort for the formation of their own self and then of others. That day has given everyone a feeling of fulfillment.

The fifth day was the last day of the Camp. We had to end in order for us to take another step. We had to go back to where we belong; to the place each one of us is needed. Everyone is commissioned to do His work.

As the Apostles were sent, we were sent also, hoping in the promise of our Lord, "I will be with you till the end of time".

And we went home feeling the Spirit of the Lord was up on us. This Camp has changed the life of the Youth. The youth who were once in the dark have come to light and are facing the world full of courage and vigour. They are standing now with Faith rooted in Christ armed with Love and Hope ready to work for the liberation of others.

As a witness of the process of liberation going on among these young people, I can't help but look back, turn the pages of the history of my life. I recalled how God has treated me when I was young like them. Perhaps I was loved too but I was not aware of it. Maybe He was always there watching me but I was too busy fancying the things of this world that I did not get hold of Him. Maybe I was too young then.

But they were young too, even younger. It was not too late. Witnessing is also a part of it. I felt His love too. I was also liberated. It did not stop there. I gave my YES to HIS call of working for better and greater service - the

work of Salvation. There are still many other youth to be helped. Many have gone astray. And so I gave up teaching and now work full-time in the Christian Life Community of the Philippines.

Aida V. ENDAYA

C.L.C. LEADERSHIP COURSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The annual CLC leadership course for youth was held at Koinonia in Johannesburg. The course began on the morning of Ascension Thursday, 15 May and ended with the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, 18 May.

Some 80 people from the four Provinces of the Republic of South Africa and Swaziland attended. The course was conducted by a team of three comprising Sr. Eugene (National Promoter), Sr. Elizabeth, and Greg Lourens who is a full-time CLC worker, resident in the Eastern Province. The theme of the course was "Building a Pre-CLC Community." The course was organised so as to enable the young people to experience living in community on both a multi-racial and national level. On the opening day, the emphasis was on "Caring". Ample time was devoted to reflection and sharing on "Caring in Creation" and "Caring in Relationships". The theme of the second day was "Sharing" with special reference to sharing in creation, in society and in CLC. During the session devoted to sharing in CLC, the participants were divided into pairs for the purpose of making newspaper collages which illustrated their experience of sharing in CLC in the past as well as their expectations of sharing in the future.

On the third day of the course, the stress was on "Conversion and Service". The story of the Prodigal Son was used effectively to provide a beautiful illustration of conversion and a period was set aside for a reconciliation service during which there was time for those who wished to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. A stimulating talk on "Service in the Church" was given by Mr. Michael Masoeu,

one of our leaders who hails from Qua-Qua in the Orange Free State. On the closing day, the emphasis was on elections and evaluation. After a suitable period of reflection and prayer, the delegates elected the six members of the National Youth Executive. This body is representative of the various provinces in South Africa and Swaziland. Each executive member has the responsibility of keeping regular contact with the CLC Secretariate at Koinonia in Johannesburg. This provides the CLC team at Koinonia with a comprehensive picture of where groups are situated throughout the country as well as useful feedback concerning progress made and difficulties encountered by the various groups. The members of the newly elected executive will meet with Greg and Sr. Eugene at the end of July when four days will be devoted to helping them form community and to overall planning for the next twelve months.

During the leadership course each day began with a short prayer service which was prepared and conducted by the members themselves. The highlight of each day was the celebration of the liturgy. On one occasion during the celebration, a representative of each region was invited to give a brief account of the various apostolic activities carried out by the groups in that region. It was both enlightening and impressive to hear about the wide range of activities which have been undertaken throughout the country.

The social aspect of CLC was not neglected during the course. On the opening night the film "The heart is a lonely hunter" was screened. The story provided good examples of what can be achieved when people care. It also illustrated very well the tragedy that can ensue when people do not care. Another evening was set aside for games which were organised by the young people themselves.

The overall consensus of opinion at the end of the course was that the four days had been a fruitful experience and there was unanimous regret that the time had passed so quickly. Our national promoter, Sr. Eugene, was the main organiser of the course and those of us who had the good fortune to attend are sincerely grateful to her for the time, energy and expertise which she used for our benefit.

A PARTICIPANT

YOUTH IN SEARCH...

What follows is taken from an every-day letter, written quite frankly and spontaneously by a youth leader in the CLC spirit of search. Editor.

To let you know something about myself... well, that's not easy. At the moment I'm in the midst of a process (?), facing some difficult questions about my own way in the Church. High hopes have to face a reality, which makes them look unreal. It seems to be impossible to find or to establish a community of people with the same aim, living a committed and continuous life together as Christians... as a direct answer to the now-a-days-questions both in the world and in the Church.

What is God's call for me? I was and I am sure that I shall build up a community, a Christian-community and a life-community; a new way of living "church". A change of structures, habits, consequences, vision, life-style... is a very big thing and I'm alone. Ridiculous!

I feel also a bit like Abraham, as you also described your own position, looking out for the promised land. He left the tradition and a secure lifestyle. God promised him to become father of a great people - and he didn't see a son until he grew to be an old man.

Faith is a strange thing! God tells us to stay hopeful, when things go wrong. He talks to us of Christ's death and resurrection, which have to become our death and resurrection. He teaches us not to get preoccupied in the search for achievement and success, - but He talks of the good works! A faith without good works is dead. So... what kind of good-works, what kind of efforts, what kind of success?

I'm hungry and thirsty - be patient, be patient! I turn right, I turn left - be patient, be patient! I'm dreaming and planning - face reality, be patient!

Perhaps that's the reason why I didn't write to you for so long. Not that I'm down or without any hope. But there are so few to talk to about this. I would like to talk to you of a small community, living together and sharing life, faith,

problems and hopes. It's not enjoyable always to dream, to talk of things which don't come true.

More than a year and a half ago, I came here with two companions. There was no clear vision for the other two. They were students and on the move. Well, we started our community as an experiment. God would help us to develop in His way. We did make contact with so called "basic-groups" of the church here: Christians on the way to finding their identity, their social consciousness, their profession... developing new structures for community. As members we are still in a prayer-group of 10 people. There are two or three other, bigger communities, which go further in sharing their life here. We (specially me) know them and members visit each other from time to time.

But to talk of our own little house-community, living together: after a year one member had to leave us to continue his studies as a seminarian. Another who works in a hospital joined this prayer-group, and asked me whether he could live with us. He came last September. And he will leave us again in September, to live together with a young woman. These things are very natural and normal. Everybody develops a life of his own. You see: it's nearly an impossible thing to establish a real life-community outside a monastery, living as a normal christian (in the way of the early church). Things go slowly. But I know that there's a meaning to it. NOT MY planning, constructing,... not the human efforts or cleverness - but, HIS GRACE constructs the community. I have to stretch out my whole existence to the living Christ, to face His guiding hand in the daily situations and meetings. I want to learn of His patience, His life style: doing the will of the Father and praising God in 1000 little things.

Becoming a believer and a positive-man might be the best answer to the difficulties I face. You once wrote me some joyful words about the blood-group of a christian (B+ve). I think of St. Francis, of his PRAISE - and I love God, SUN AND RAIN.. as we sing in the psalm. I try to let this B+ve blood run through my body. And HE will guide me.

(Continued from page 12)

We were divided into three groups: school, urban and rural. I was included in the urban group composed of three other members. One was a young man full of dreams and ideals. Another was a young professional determined to face whatever life would bring her. And the other was a middle-aged woman who has accepted life as it is and yet is willing to give a hand in our mission, having so much faith in the goodness of the Lord.

The first day was full of reading materials, personal sharing in small groups, poster sharing in the big group and reflection. I was deeply struck by the questions posed by the resource person: "What do you perceive as your unique contribution to the whole people of God as a service group to the Christian Community? Is it the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises? Is it the Bond of Community that we try to form?"

Realization... New Learning... Life is likened to a mango tree... The fruit is our day to day living, needing sustenance that comes from the roots (values, culture and faith deeply rooted) and has to pass through the strong trunk before it can become. Is it possible to effect change in this situation?

The day has turned into night and I remembered that early during the day Sunshine gave me a little white flower called Adelfa. It was inside a cone-shaped paper on which was written: Dear Mama, I love you. Happy Mother's Day. I also remembered when the children and I sadly bade good-bye that afternoon to Jody who headed back home to be ready for the next day's work in the office.

May 12

Hearing the distant tolling of a bell, I woke up begrudgingly. I felt the bitter taste in my mouth and remembered that I failed to brush my teeth the night before. There was not a drop of water... only stinking washroom... and power failure... I thought of the poor people who experience all these every waking day of their lives.

a national assembly

More reflections... more praying... more sharing... There is a great need for us to adopt Christian values in our life. Many of us are concerned about our basic economic needs; even our life structure is such that a person's right is not given importance - only what he has and whom he knows. The Christian family is being challenged to uphold the validity of marriage and the importance of stability in the family as the basic unit of our society. Basic food prices are soaring high, leaving the poor with less and less; even the children and the youth are becoming confused with all the consumer ads present in all media. They become frustrated as not being able to attain the "good" life they see and hear about. Where do we go from here? What am I doing about it? Seeing the reality of the identical pyramid structure in the socio-political-economic-spiritual areas, I felt hopelessly small and weak. How can the CLC help change the values of the people when the people's faith is so deeply rooted in its culture? How can the CLC work when even the church or folk religion re-enforce the existing structure? There is a need to change the authoritarian pyramid to a loving Christ-centered circle. LOVE NOT FEAR.

Dawn came and tearfully showed me an insect bite in her arm. I kissed it - the universal medication. Priceless. And no danger of an overdose! LOVE NOT FEAR.

May 13

Lord, help me to go through this day with your guidance. Again there were more data gathered, more learning and more questions. How do I feel about violence, the foreigners, and pressure? Heavy stuff. I had to stop, think and pray. Our common vision: God's kingdom of love, peace, justice and freedom. Do the noses of my community face one another, or all together do they face Christ? What is Christ sending me, my community, the national community to do? I wanted to evade the question. Fear not love. But the Lord has said: "Be not afraid... I go before you always... Come, follow me and I will give you rest..." I cannot run from His love. He had prepared the way and I only have to follow. Where? How?

I felt free and joyful. Perhaps the little bird felt the same way when after being caught, April decided to set it free. Free from the confining world of a plastic bag. April and I watched it together as it flew to the window singing merrily. Both of us smiled.

I have often wondered what a bishop looks like in a close-up picture. Now I know... He is a man of authority, no doubt, but concerned about the plight of his people; he lives with them, giving love and support. This day the Lord has gifted us with this person, this Bishop, at a time when we need most a link with the Church, a confirmation of our work, thrust and vision of the community. Thank you, Lord and may his tribe increase.

May 14

There was a joy of expectancy in the air when the last day began. Perhaps the spirit of the Resurrection has been filling our hearts to make us optimistic about the task ahead of us. Now I see clearly what the community has - for mation, basically the Ignatian spirituality, being shared with other people, especially the poor, forming communities, witnessing Christ's simplicity and spirit of service. Now and in this world.

The General Assembly closed with all of us there, including my little ones as we celebrated the Holy Eucharist. There we sent one another to fulfill our Mission. There I saw myself, in all humility, accepting my orders. Remembering how Christ commissioned the Apostles to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28,16) we sang to one another the Song of Blessing:

*"The Lord let His face shine down upon you
The sun rise out to meet you on your way
The Spirit of His love invade the circle of your
friends
Your vision keep you changing day by day"*

Beb's A. SIM

GOD TAKES OVER

(Dynamics of an Initiation Retreat)

An Initiation Retreat patterned on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius has been, for me, one of the most effective preparatory forms of the Ignatian Exercises. In fact it goes beyond being a Preparatory Form, it is an experience of God's presence, action and power in the context of prayer. This is at the heart of the Exercises. A certain degree of preparedness is required of those making the Initiation Retreat. This has much to do with the gradual maturing of the individual at all levels: human, social, spiritual.

An open, loving, trusting attitude towards self- and others is basic if one is to maintain an open, loving and trusting attitude towards God. This is essential in an initiation retreat. Similarly, a capacity for commitment which is, ultimately, fruit of one's encounter with God. I strongly support and provide means by which CLCers can develop these aspects of life (human growth and social awareness) and particularly recommend and conduct pre-retreat labs, to further such growth, prior to a person making the Initiation Retreat for the first time.

I - FROM DOING TO BEING

As the aim of the Initiation Retreat is to experience God, to be invaded by His Presence and Power, the fruit of the retreat depends very much on the retreatant's response to God's action, on his readiness to be led. The gift of God is nothing less than Himself. Once God takes over, everything else falls into place for the retreatant.

An individual brings to the retreat all that makes up his world: his family, his relationships, his work, his cares, his feelings, his attitudes, his needs... together with all this, he also brings his "operation gear", his way of handling life outside, his viewpoints on how to get what he wants. 95% of the time this is how we all operate.

In the retreat there is a complete reversal from one's normal way of going about things. Life demands that we do things in order to succeed; in the retreat we have to give

preparation for the exercises

up doing, to make things work. We have to let things be, to let ourselves BE and to let God DO. This is a difficult task for most of us, especially as we often link our self-worth with what we accomplish.

The need to do manifests itself in various forms during the retreat: reading spiritual books, engaging in light activity one does not get the time to do otherwise, excessive meditation and reflection (on God), talking, planning before hand how to pray, how much to pray, following a fixed pattern of prayer etc. Anything that will take the individual away from the apparent uneasiness of just BEING THERE.

WITH THE HEART

What does it mean to just BE THERE before God in the context of the retreat? It is to have the disposition of a little child... a trusting open attitude before God. It means to hand over my life to God.

In practice, to be there before God means to be always present to myself i.e. to become aware of what is happening with me, TO LISTEN to my heart, my feelings, my body... not resisting anything, just letting things speak to me without trying to figure out, reason out what is happening... just LETTING GOD BE GOD IN ME. The presence of God is then felt in all that I see and experience around me and within me.

This attitude before God does not imply pure passivity. A human being is never a lifeless dough in the hands of His Creator. He is a pulsating, vibrating aliveness and he does not give up his right to be himself before God. The disposition of the retreatant is that of a man who waits for the other to speak, to fill him, only then he RESPONDS. More often than not, he may be led in ways he is not familiar with, for God's presence is always new. A readiness to be led by God in these new paths without waiting for something safe and known to happen, without blocking the experience in any way, is the key to letting God take over.

There is a tendency to escape from this level by trying to figure out what is happening. The role of the Retreat Guide is important in that he helps the individual

preparation for the exercises

remain at the level of the heart and discern the movements of the Spirit. He does this by mirroring back to the retreatant what is happening within Him, pointing out the signs of God's presence, encouraging and supporting him in his struggle, suggesting possible responses, praying with and for the retreatant.

II - THE MEETING PLACE

Prayer is the meeting place where man encounters God in the retreat. Prayer is what the Initiation Retreat is all about. A lay person who is a beginner in the spiritual life, who is not used to spending long hours in prayer, may come to the retreat with fears that the retreat could be a waste of time because he or she does not know how to pray, or that it will be a difficult and boring thing to be doing for so many hours at a stretch. Most of these misgivings arise out of misconceptions about prayer and an inability to handle difficulties in prayer.

In my experience of guiding retreatants, I have found it most encouraging and rewarding to help them in their prayer. I consider this an essential task of the retreat guide: to expand the prayer life of the individual, to make prayer a discovery, a thing of joy. Besides guiding individuals according to their particular needs, I conduct a common prayer session for the group every day, leaving people free to use the methods of prayer and the exercises learnt, as and when they want to. Retreatants have found this common session of tremendous help in the retreat.

PRAYING WITH THE WHOLE MAN

A fixed method of prayer regardless of what state of mind or body one is in, may be an obstacle to establishing contact with God. The best attitude is a willingness to let everything in one become part of prayer. It then becomes discovery, a unique event each time.

To facilitate this, I introduce the retreatants to various methods of prayer... fantasy prayer, repetitive prayer, prayer of the name, variations of vocal prayer, contemplating the Gospel scenes, recreating scriptural passages... etc. Retreatants discover a whole new awareness of God and themselves.

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

Obstacles to prayer are inherent in the very nature of man in his quest for the spiritual, especially if he is not accustomed to long hours of concentration and stillness. Apart from disability due to extreme physical and psychological conditions, difficulties in prayer such as drowsiness, tension, distraction, boredom, restlessness etc., affect one and all at different times and with varying degrees of intensity.

While guiding retreatants I offer various ways of overcoming common difficulties such as physical exercises, relaxation exercises, awareness techniques etc. Retreatants have found these of great help in prayer.

The body and its role in prayer should not be underestimated. People generally pray best when they are at an "optimum" level of alertness i.e. neither too drowsy, nor too alert. Through certain physical exercises and breathing exercises one could attain this "optimum" to a large extent.

The body also 'participates' in prayer as the imagination, senses, mind and feelings do. Man is one total whole and no part of him can be excluded from his response to God. I have experienced myself how a particular bodily posture has helped me attain the fruit of total surrender to God.

AWARENESS - THE DOOR TO CONTEMPLATION

Awareness is at the heart of experience; it is the ability to be conscious of, and present to everything that happens in and around one. Awareness helps one attain concentration and stillness required for prayer. People try to overcome distractions, feelings etc., by fighting them and the secret of making something disappear is to become intensely aware of it. By concentrating on one's body, senses, thoughts, sensations etc., one acquires concentration, stillness. I introduce a number of these concentration exercises to the retreatants and recommend at least five minutes of awareness at the commencement of prayer.

Awareness is not only an aid to prayer, it is also the door to contemplation... that "inner heart", the fa-

preparation for the exercises

culty which lies dormant in most of us. As this level we can have a very deep experience of God. Here no methods are required. While remaining in total awareness of one's body, senses, breathing etc. at some point GOD TAKES OVER; then even in darkness and dryness there is the awareness of presence... one is simply immersed in Him. At this stage the Retreat Guide has nothing more to do than support and encourage the retreatant to rest in that stillness.

Oriol PUJOL

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6. A Collection of Religious and Popular Songs highlighting CLC themes (\$ 2.00, including postage).

THE CALL OF THE FATHER

(Impressions of one of the participants who took part in a recent Course in French-speaking Belgium)

August 1980 : Blood-shed in El Salvador, repression in Bolivia, racial riots in South Africa, thousands of people arrested in South Korea, political and social tensions in Poland, stark famine in Uganda, new waves of refugees in South East Asia... What is our CLC response to these evils? How are we preparing our communities to confront the 'real situation'?

Such questions lead us to the 'nerve centre' of the CLC's - that is, spiritual discernment. We speak about it a great deal, but do we learn how to practise it personally, and in our groups? In answer to this question, the leaders of the CLC's in French-speaking Belgium recently held a session on discernment, as they considered it a necessary complement to an initiation session on the CLC's held last year. The immediate goal of this meeting was not to run a communal discernment with a view to action, but rather to introduce people into the process of discernment and so familiarise them with Ignatius' method for making decisions. We publish below a "witness" from one of the youngest participants.

(Editor's note)

A number of CLC leaders and guides met at Virton (Belgium) from July 7th - 12th, to spend some time together in an atmosphere of prayer and faith. These days, to make such a choice of one's time means giving up other engagements, but it is also one way of responding to the Spirit and expressing a common aspiration of wishing to spend some time with Christ, for His People.

July 7th, evening:
Re-living of and
reflection on the
past year.

The group had met at Virton one year previously, and this introductory session into the CLC way of life had left a marked effect on all of us; coming together once more, we realised that

- (1) The sub-titles, giving the theme for each day, have been added by the Editor.

a formation experience

'Virton I' was not simply a fond memory, but that it had been a very deep and 'graced' experience of unity in the Body of Christ. In an atmosphere of trust and openness, we had listened to one another, and this experience had led us to a deeper appreciation of one another and of our own lay vocation in the world and the Church. In a word, the experience of personal and community growth led us inevitably to the values of Mission and Service.

Consequently, we began 'Virton II' with an evaluation, trying to listen carefully to any promptings of the Spirit. In this way we were led directly to the object of this second session - *spiritual discernment*, as both the foundation and end of our Christian communities. Through bringing our experiences before the Lord, we endeavoured to highlight the specific character of our way of life.

July 8th:
day of reflection Before engaging in a project of this nature, we found it absolutely necessary to put aside our cares and concerns. We spent one full day in quietly listening to the Lord speaking in the Scriptures, through others and in daily events. In all humility, we prayed to receive the Spirit, and, in a manner of speaking, we shared in our own little 'Pentecost', through a deeper experience of the Father's love. This time set apart enabled us to establish a certain 'priority of faith', and so offer ourselves anew to the Lord for His Service.

July 9th:
Sharing and sum-
ming up our way
of life The next day, in a 'listening' atmosphere, we worked together in teams to see how we would present a profile of the CLC. The different presentations were brought to a plenary session, and all together they showed clearly the central CLC themes - the centrality of Christ, the sharing of experience, trust, mission and attachment to the Church. It was quite obvious that the CLC's embrace the whole person and require a full commitment.

July 10th:
Evaluation in
practice We were led on to discover the necessity for evaluation, as a form of prayer and of being present to God; through it, we remain 'in Christ'. In

a formation experience

fact, through an attitude and readiness to continually evaluate, we can really live out the dynamic of the Exercises; we develop our spiritual affectivity which enables us to discern what is more urgent and universal. Through looking at the past, we were led to look to the future, to see what the Father expects of us and our community.

July 11th: We became very much aware of how a
The community community, which is united in Christ,
helping in a can help one of its members.
personal discernment

July 12th: We also became aware of how a group -
Group discernment as a group - can discern some issue
of an issue chal- which challenges them, through the
lenging the group members helping one another to be
sensitive to the signs of the Spirit,
in faith and in love.

Through this sort of experience of the Church, in an atmosphere of deep unity and listening, we recognised our own particular spirituality - how the CLC's had developed in all of us the capacity to trust and a 'feeling' for what is essential. This union of minds and hearts was something quite tangible.

These days brought a new understanding of the CLC's to all of us. Each of our groups is on the way to becoming a community of discernment; together we search for a clearer vision of what are the real issues in our life and how to serve Christ better. Such a missionary attitude - in openness - to the world and the Church, is very demanding, especially in terms of fidelity to Christ and the need for constant discernment of the Will of God; it really is a question of living life to the full. This sort of living, following the lines of an authentic Ignatian spirituality, emphasises the centrality of respectfully listening to others, of the Eucharist as the mystery of faith, of union with others and of evaluating (which can be a way of praying) as a prelude to change. In all this, there is a sense of wonder at the love of God, together with a lively sense of Mary in our lives.

* * *

a formation experience

Speaking more personally, one of the things that came home to me during these days was what an important part my group had played in my own vocation. The reason today why I am willing to give my life to God, and through Him, to His people, is because my own experience of friendship has led me to believe in people; I believe in people because everyone is a son or daughter of God.

I am also very conscious of the primacy of love in the christian experience. In times of doubt, it is crucial for us to see Christ as coming to us and calling us by name; we have been chosen to save and to be saved. In our following of Christ (and it is important to keep following Him), the Eucharist holds a central place for it is the prayer of Him who puts his whole being in the hands of the Father. We can unite ourselves with Christ and humbly offer ourselves and make our hearts more open to the grace of God. Remember the young boy who gave Jesus five loaves and 2 fishes, and with that He fed a whole crowd! The only thing that really matters is to give the Lord the little that we have, the little that we are; for nothing is impossible for Him and without Him we can do nothing.

Looking back on my own experience, I realise that in everyone there is a thirst for the Divine, a spark of eternity. To speak of God is to fan this flame; and in the name of Christ we can do wonders and heal people, even as Peter did.

During these days, my own experience, in faith, was a very rich one and was due to the depth of personal contacts and to the emphasis that was given to the centrality of the person of Christ. These are the sort of moments that mark us for life; they affect our choices, deepen our intimacy with the Lord and help us grow in freedom. In fact, they write our own salvation history.

Overall, this experience enabled me to 'centre' myself once more on God, to enter into myself and await the call of the Father. "In my distress, I called on the Lord and He heard my cry". The prayer of Brother Charles immediately comes to mind: "My Father, I abandon myself to You, do with me what you will". In the risen Lord, we can face any dangers and threats the world has to offer, and in Him go forward to help establish His Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

MARC