



MARCH 1982
51st Year
N.2

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PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE
COMMUNITIES * C.P. 6139 * Borgo S. Spirito 5 * 00195 ROME *
ITALY * ENGLISH-SPANISH-FRENCH EDITIONS. EDITOR: José GSELL

"The Exercises in Daily Life"

We draw our readers' attention to
Progressio Supplement, n. 18-19 (November 1981):

THE EXERCISES IN DAILY LIFE

by

Maurice GIULIANI S.J.

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C.P. 6139

00195 ROME - ITALY

THE NAMES OF GOD

THE ANNUNCIATION

There is no feast in the Church which is not one of God's feasts. Perhaps this tends to escape us a little when we see the trappings that surround some feasts - the trees obscure the wood, the prismatic radiance distracts us from the sun. Thinking of what is called 'folk religion', we probably think of such multiplications and diversions. Yet Ash Wednesday is not about ashes any more than the day before it is about pancakes : the overtly great days, like the seemingly small days, are all about God. God in his deeds, God in his relevance, God on his mission - yes to all that: but God, first, last and always.

It is so with the feast of the Annunciation. Claudel has a play called *L'annonce faite à Marie*, and that title makes a stress like the one seen in countless paintings of the event. The bowed Virgin, arms crossed over breast, hears the news from the angel, and consents. Her emotions may be as various as the artist can manage, but it is the consent that predominates. All of a sudden, out of all the world, God has impinged upon her : and we gaze and gaze at her, whether she is on the wall of Fra Angelico's cell or in some handsome book of prints, or (as often enough) in some convent parlour which seems stripped bare of most other signs of life. She becomes prominent, magnetic, against her own will.

There is no point in one's feeling guilty about this. She had the proper circumstances for her humility, and we have ours. Ours is paradox, and sometimes comedy. We fall short of true vision : we give our hearts where we should only lend them. Sometimes this happens because we are evil, but more often it happens because we are ourselves - human does as human is. But guilty or not, we may change our minds, or at least reconsider. And to reconsider the priorities in the paintings, to trace the rays that touch her back towards their origin is to see - what? Not to see God, as we may say that we see anything or anyone else : the eyes, the mind, even the heart cannot have that reach. To see Godwards, rather, to see along God's lines: to find one's glance or gaze caught by God's. To find God happening, and in that to be surprised.

"Surprise". It is a neglected category when we speak of God - more neglected, even, than "beautiful". Perhaps

there is a link between the two neglects; for to talk about the beautiful is to talk about what leaves us thunderstruck, tongue-tied - it is to talk about the surprising. And we have the greatest difficulty in handling all this intellectually. As Kierkegaard said of something else, "it seems impossible, or at least as baffling as trying to depict an elf wearing a hat that makes him invisible". One can think about being surprised: but how does one think about the surprise itself?

Yet as God is more than just and is justice, and as he is the love with which we love him, he is more than surprising and more than the God of Surprises: he *is* Surprise, *Ipsum Superprehendere Subsistens*. The Lady bowing in astonishment is bowing not only to God but in God: and he moves not only to still her but in stilling her. More: we may say that the one she bears will be not only the Word incarnate but Surprise incarnate. And strange as it may seem, when, later, the willing or the unwilling witnesses of Jesus were astonished at his words and deeds, their astonishment itself was a godly thing, not merely a divinely-achieved pro-paedeutic to godliness. This ungaily emotion, so hard to negotiate and so easy to obliterate, this is part of the immediacy of God.

It was news to Mary that she would bear her Lord: the Lord she bore became more and more news to her. And thinking of her (as we have to) in temporal terms still, we must think too that he grows more and more news, discloses himself more and more as Surprise, now too. If there is a moral in that for us, perhaps it is that those moments of surprise against which we shield ourselves so adeptly may be not only the remarkable touch of God, but the best warrant of his lasting embrace.

P. STEELE S.J.

A REFUGEE ENCOUNTER

Sakaew, Thailand, 40 kilometers from the Cambodian border, is the site of a refugee camp, that was hastily put together by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in cooperation with the Thai Government. Within the space of a few days, over 30,000 starving refugees poured across the border, and into the Sakaew camp. Most of these were Khmer Rouge soldiers, cadres and their families, faithful for the past four years to the Red Chinese-backed communist government of Pol Pot, who was routed by the Vietnamese army early in 1979.

Also among the refugees are over 2000 anti-communist Chinese and free Khmers, who took advantage of the Vietnamese attack to flee their communist captors, but unfortunately wound up in the same Thai refugee camp with them.

When I visited the camp, at the request of a Thai bishop, and with the idea of bringing participants of the year's UNDA / Asia and OCIC / Asia meeting in Bangkok to volunteer their help, 50 to 60 refugees were dying each day. The causes ranged from tuberculosis to malaria, but these were conditioned by anemia and malnutrition--starvation--stemming from the weeks and months spent fleeing from the Vietnamese forces.

The sight of someone starving before my very eyes, too weak to prepare the food given him, or too far gone for it to do any good, was an experience that excited feelings of misery and rage in me. What combination of irrational forces and events restricts this world's goods, and keeps them out of the reach of feeble old people and innocent babies? The sight of elderly people dying in the dirt and dust, and children so starved and withered that they looked 90 years old, was causing even the newsmen to forget the original purpose of their visit and volunteer their slight, seemingly futile services : to cook meals, bathe children, carry the sick and dying to medical wards, try to comfort the 300 or 400 pitiful orphans, etc.

It was the orphans--so dazed and unresponsive--that were the main target of my subsequent visits, first with the participants of our meetings, and then again, for one week, with another Jesuit.

My companion Jesuit--Kevin Kersten of the Wisconsin Province--an excellent singer and entertainer, soon discovered what a miracle music and mime and playing the clown could work among the miserable inhabitants of that death camp. The two of us spent our time wandering in and out of the tents, through the orphanage and sick wards, with our guitars and all the songs, funny faces, gestures and sound effects we could recall or invent. The sound of a guitar and clapping hands made the orphans get up off their mats and smile, a little light returning to their eyes. A wink or a cross-eyed grimace brought peals of laughter. And a little select shaking of the hips could very nearly cause a riot! Soon we were bounding up and down the dirt paths with the children whooping and screaming, behind us, all but trampling the tents on each side of the road.

When I talked with the Chinese refugees in the camp about the wild reaction of the children, and even of some of the adults, to our singing, they said it was very natural after the four years of horror they had been through. Cambodia's former population of 8 million had been reduced to less than half (with the Chinese population going from 600,000 to about 10,000!); the strictest discipline and the most radical brain-washing techniques had been constantly in use. Dress (in black, loose clothing) was uniform, seriousness and silence was demanded, complaining about too much work or poor health, or lack of food brought execution by a club, a knife, or a suffocating plastic bag. It had become a common practice to cut out the heart, liver and gall of the executed victim; cook them and serve them to the family for dinner--an excellent way of enforcing discipline, providing needed nutrition, and demonstrating what little respect for life was left!

There were horrible stories--and they seemed endless in number and variety. The Chinese, none of whom seemed to have a complete family remaining, frequently told me that they had cried until they had no more tears to shed. The ones I met were the most intelligent, the healthiest, and the luckiest of all the Chinese formerly living in Cambodia. The ones who did not perish by execution saw their children shot in the air or bayoneted by Thai border guards during their first effort to

escape last May, then their old people trampled in the panicked flight back into Cambodia, and finally starvation in the mountains for those weaker than they. Finally only they--the survivors--were allowed to come across into Thailand.

Even more horrible than the stories was to view each day the living remains of Pol Pot's insane regime. The Khmer Rouge refugees in the camp were, on the whole, very much like "lifeless zombies", as one magazine article described them. Once I found an old woman dying on the road only 10 feet from the door of the dispensary, while people walked casually around her, and 50 or 60 others sat in the shade of the dispensary shed waiting for their pills, no one lifting a finger to help her. When I motioned for a young Cambodian boy to help me carry her, he rose in docile indifference, and we got her into the shed.

Once when I was entertaining the orphans, a famished looking girl of about 9 or 10 crawled toward me, curled up in my lap and began to weep. I was amazed when some of the onlookers began to snicker and joke about her distressed condition; but I later saw the same reaction repeated when someone went insane or died.

When Thai guards shot three thieves one night about 100 yards from the Catholic Relief Services medical ward, a group of battlescarred young Cambodians simply stared drowsily at the flares and flashing rifle fire as if they were watching a boring TV show. Compared with what they had been through, minor incidents such as that were no cause for alarm.

By the end of the week, it had also affected me. Once during my nightly song fest in the Chinese section, sitting on a patch of dirt surrounded by about 300 people (half of them screaming children), I found myself singing an old mandarin favorite into a flashlight and the barrel of a rifle. Since no one around me seemed terribly alarmed, I just pretended that it was a microphone and kept on singing. The angry Thai soldier began threatening and gesticulating at everyone present until the crowd gradually dispersed, and I decided that it was time to go to bed.

It was not just being accustomed to death and suffering that made the people apparently so indifferent to it; it seemed that many of the Khmer had almost lost their desire to live. Although they still spoke their party line of going back to defeat the Vietnamese (a goal which the

Thai government seems most likely to encourage), they were very unconvincing. Most could barely find the strength or interest to get up and drag themselves to the dispensary to pick up a malaria pill or to the nearby latrine. The lack of concern which they showed for their sick actually made some of the Red Cross volunteers suspect that they were intentionally letting their weaker members die. More likely, however, I feel that nightmarish experiences and political pressures to which these poor, simple peace-loving country-people had been subjected were simply too much for them. They had been forced to do too many inhuman things, and they had lost much of their motivation to live. What is their future? Will there be any surviving Cambodians at all, if they do return to fight? Can they even be a normal people again?

The one light in the entire arena of misery is, of course, the volunteers. If anything can give these people the will to live again, and to live humanly, it is the sight of volunteers of every nation and religion picking up the sick, covered with dirt and excrement, carrying them to medical centers where they are cleaned and treated and fed. Many of the Chinese refugees who had seen their relatives and friends killed by the dozen at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, were inspired by the example of the volunteers and joined in the effort to save lives, tried to forget the past, and began living again--for others.

The flight of a refugee is, on one hand, an act of fear and desperation and, on the other, an act of faith and hope in the goodness of their fellow human beings who are waiting to receive them and help them begin life anew. How many refugees have seen their faith and hope justified? How many have been bitterly disappointed? What can we do to help them?

Jerry MARTINSON S.J.

REFLECTIONS ON MISSION

The very reality of Mission involves changes, sometimes quite radical, in the life of a person who is 'missioned', and so it is a very controversial subject. It can cause anxieties and personal difficulties which sometimes even lead to crises for someone who wishes to live in conformity with the Gospel. We frequently come across cases where individuals or groups go through this sort of crisis or conflict. This is mainly due to the fact that mission involves all sorts of ramifications which have unexpected consequences for the person or the group, and so conflict arises.

Most people have a certain number of tendencies, aptitudes and natural gifts which lead them towards a definite type of work. On the other hand, most people also are deeply touched by the needs of our impoverished world - hunger, ignorance, injustice, misery and so on. Eventually, they acknowledge their deep conviction that they can no longer live as Christians in this world without some concrete commitment to it.

In what follows, we are going to try to elaborate a theology of Mission, looking at it from within the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises.

* * *

God Himself is the origin of every mission. This is the only way to judge mission and to interpret it properly. Consequently, mission, in as much as it is a part of the Christian life, belongs within the framework of the successive initiatives of God throughout the history of faith, in Israel and in the Church, since it is only an extension of this faith.

If there is one thing that our christian faith constantly affirms, it is that God always takes the initiative to intervene in human history, from within. Creation, the Covenant and the Incarnation are not three independent events, three mutual pacts between God and man; rather, they are three distinct expressions of one and the same initiative of God. In each one of these we find the same elements: 1) Initiative of God, 2) presented under the form of an invitation, not an obligation, 3) carrying a gratuitous promise of fidelity on God's part, in spite of the continual infidelities of man.

These three moments of the history of salvation have a common character to the extent that they are the expression of the love of God who communicates Himself; but each one accentuates more a particular aspect of the initiative or invitation of the Father. In Creation, we can see above all an invitation to accept our own existence; in the Covenant, an invitation to place our confidence in God as the only Absolute; in the Incarnation, an invitation to have confidence in the life of man and to see it as the place where we meet the Father and He reveals His love. These three aspects exist together in the christian life and they are inseparable. Since revelation is also an historical process, these aspects are discovered little by little to the extent that revelation itself develops and uncovers new facets, hitherto hidden, which fill out what has gone before.

The initiative of the Father is continued in Christ. When He founds His Church, He does nothing more than to entrust to men the task of continuing His work in the world. Now, this work consists in revealing the Father and inviting all people to listen to the word of hope and to live according to it through being part of a believing community. That is the mission the Apostles received. We can see there, first of all, the aspect of a responsibility being conferred and then the aspect of a sending on mission. But neither of these two aspects comes from the personal initiative of the Twelve (who had very different ideas...); they come from the person of Jesus. Each one of these aspects is consciously registered by the Apostles in their personal experience of Christ dead and risen. This experience fills their life to the point that it completely changes the ideal of life they had worked out for themselves; and it is an authentically personal experience because it touches the depth of their being. This is the way the Apostles thought, this is what they were aware of; and so the mission they

had received was very much alive in their hearts - the mission growing out of their profound experience of Christ which transformed them into living hearers of the living Word, sent to preach to all men.

Hence we see how, at the moment when the Church is born, mission is inseparable from the personal experience of Christ dead and risen.

We can say the same about the mission of each christian. The mission received by the Apostles is transmitted to the whole Church in such a way that each of its members receives it in his or her heart as a living hearer of the living Word - not as an obligation from outside one's life and foreign to one's personal experience, and still less as a simple, spontaneous initiative which is independent of one's personal attachment to Christ in the Church.

Moving on, we might say that the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises leads the retreatant, at the very heart of a personal experience of Christ, to discover what is his or her own personal mission. It is precisely due to this personal contact with Christ that the retreatant deepens his own christian identity and discovers or discerns better his mission in the Church of which he feels himself a member. This is usually called "doing the will of God", which unfortunately can easily be interpreted as an intellectual knowledge of something outside myself - which is why we do not use the expression here. If, then, the retreatant has this experience of Christ and really becomes aware of his mission, the result necessarily will be that he puts his life in order.

Although it may be quite well known, let us recall here that the fact of 'ordering' one's life takes place in one's heart, not on the level of abstract ideas. Consequently, this awareness of mission in the course of the Exercises, occurs within the area of the person's affectivity and interior knowledge, taking into account also the whole reality of the person. In a word, it is a question of seeing my own reality filled with the reality of Christ, as totally and as radically as possible. Henceforth my life will be deeply influenced by this in the normal course of my day to day living. This is why the awareness of my personal mission is inseparable from the Election, which consists in nothing more than assuming, freely and trusting in the grace of the Father, this mission which the Son has

entrusted to me within the Church, and which the Spirit gently pushes me to live out.

Precisely because my life is lived out according to a normal historical process, my mission will be expressed in terms of temporal realities, under the form of concrete activities. So that is where my mission will be expressed, and that is also where it will be discovered - not on some imaginary plane that does not exist. Consequently, the awareness of our own mission is connected with the awareness of temporal realities and also with the historical framework - personal and social - in which I live out my life. The wider the scene I take in - to the extent that this is possible - the greater will be the variety of aspects represented in this framework, and less will be the danger of subjectivism on my part, when, in the course of the Exercises, I come to discover, be aware of and make the election of my mission. This is why, in the course of the Exercises, the contemplation of creation and the interpretation of history (mine and all men's) with *all* its aspects, precedes the careful listening to the call of the King which is addressed to me personally.

Since the framework in which I discover my personal mission is an historical one (personal and social), it is logical to think that the aspects of this reality which claim a more urgent service from us will quite rightly be the most pressing ones. If, as we said earlier, the Incarnation underlines God's invitation to us to have confidence in human existence and to be involved with people, it is also logical that it is the needs of men (the needs of all nature) which call to us in what we do, in our life and in our person. And this is precisely the point of a possible interior conflict - the tension between these calls and my personal mission. How to bring these together?

First of all it has to be said that the simple fact that there is some need is not a sufficient criteria for it to be *my* mission to meet that need. This would make it too simple to verify or identify my mission, and as a matter of fact, if people work in this way, the idea of mission becomes depersonalised and we do a disservice to those who are in charge of it.

Consequently we should try to reconcile two things:

(Cont. on page 21)

YOUTH - PROGRESSIO

The Importance of Listening...(CONTINUED)

The Second Round: I offer and receive a word that is personal

a) I speak to someone

If I have really listened to the others, it may be that I myself now feel like speaking to them. The Second Round offers me this opportunity, but before I take it up, *I need to examine from where my words are to come.*

If, for example, I feel very disturbed at the moment, it is normal that my words are an expression of my human judgements, aimed at convincing the other of the soundness of my ideas and of his need to accept them.

Instead, could it not be that when I am invited to speak, it is not to bring the other to my way of thinking, but rather it is God using me to help my brother grow in his own uniqueness to which he is called? Hence, before speaking, it is well worth examining the source from where my words are to spring: will they be for the service of God, because it is God Who calls me to speak? Or would it rather be my effort to project myself?

Respect and Humility are the signs which point to the source of my sharing... Humility, because the other persons are a mystery, still only a little revealed to me. Humility, again, because I don't speak for myself alone, but for God;

or at least because I believe that what God makes me live may throw some light on how my brother also lives.

In short, *it is from the source of love that I speak.* If I have never loved, I will never be touched by what the other has to say, nor reach the other. Hence, community is meant to teach me how to let myself be affected by the life of my brother; to so accept him that he is helped to become what God wants him to be, not live up to my expectations. In any case, my sharing is never to defend my opinion, nor to put myself ahead of the others, but simply to be an instrument of God.

b) Listening to a word addressed to me

Perhaps, when it comes to my turn to listen, my first mental reaction may be to defend myself: "this is not exactly what I was saying... you are mistaken here!" This is true and false at the same time.

True, because no other person can fully enter into the meaning of my words, much less into the mystery that I am. But at least, I may know that the other speaks to me with respect, recognizing my uniqueness and that part of the infinite which is in me!

False, because often in this first reply I may tend to by-pass the words of the other person. I am in a situation where I am to receive, rather than to give; to learn, rather than to teach; to be second, rather than first. Hence, here it is difficult to understand a word which is not one of praise for me. It is hard to let the shadows of my mind be replaced by light, especially when this light comes from the other person... But in reality, this light actually comes from God. My brother is only the torch-bearer; the words he speaks are what he himself has only received from God.

To listen, then, is to grow in humility. I do not make progress alone. We are only the silent witnesses of the growth taking place in each other. We are mutually affected by growth; we advance together and we learn to help and to be helped.

Here, I would like to emphasize some important points

of the Spiritual Exercises which are implied. The guide, who accompanies a retreatant, does not project himself, but just indicates the stages of a journey which have been approved by the Church and which he himself has experienced. The Spiritual Exercises offer a criteria for discernment, not aimed at reducing a life-experience into a formula, but rather at shedding light on a person's own unique experience. They help him to grow spiritually and to personally meet Christ in a free response to His Call. The wisdom of the stages, proposed in the Spiritual Exercises, is that they touch the very heart of human life and experience, without reducing the uniqueness of persons. Hence, to accept these stages is an act of humility, also communitarian, and an expression of trust in the Saints who have gone before me and been formed in the same school.

To listen, then, is to walk together, as one cell of the Church; to become a man of reconciliation in the world. To listen is to allow oneself to be questioned and to admit that one does not dispose of the whole truth. It is a schooling of the heart and a prayer on which all other stages of growth are founded. The desire to listen grows little by little. Is it not also the central disposition for prayer? Lord, what do you want of me? Lord, I ask for the grace to choose to follow the humble Christ, because I have need to grow in love.

In the same way, I gradually become capable of asking my brothers: what do you want of me? This is also what happens to one who asks for spiritual direction; for the help to discern the way he lives, to distinguish between the word that helps him and the cunning suggestions of the evil spirit. This spirit seeks to hamper his growth in following Christ.

The Third Round: I recognize the call of the Lord

Every meeting has to be brought to an end. In all that was said, that I understood and tried to listen to, I must now recognize what is most important: the Call that the Lord personally addresses to me. If I have participated in the meeting with an open heart, it is but natural that at some moment or other my horizons widen, that I review my opinions and my style of life.

The Community or Group, then, is the place where I grow; where the lives of my brothers and sisters make me more open to new horizons, and ready for a new confrontation with the Spirit of my Lord. Daily life often tends to effect just the opposite, to more and more limit our universe and narrow our heart.

Let us consider here *two of such obstacles*: a heart that is closed and a heart that is not able to discern. A *closed heart* is one, unconsciously of course, which does not accept to get involved in listening. It believes that it is well above the level of the sharings; it leaves the meeting, simply reinforced in its old convictions, having neatly arranged a few more barriers to limit its universe and close itself to God.

A *heart unable to discern* is less common. This is of the man who is so thoroughly involved in the listening that now everything begins to appear as a Call of God. Or, that the meeting has indeed engendered new Calls; but that these are not yet relevant, just now! Or, by wanting to do too much, one sets up an impossible task and insurmountable obstacles to be discovered only later! It is in prayer and in an attitude of Ignatian indifference that I must now feel the exact direction in which I may now concentrate my efforts. *The meeting unfolds to me many such directions and this is good.* It also enables me to understand the other persons and to eventually help them some day. *But the actual area of my own growth may be elsewhere.* It is only with the help of a spiritual guide that I may be able to find this area of my growth and the direction in which to concentrate my efforts. It may well be that this guide may ask me to temper my great zeal and rather to adopt the attitude of poverty and openness to God's grace. It is God who leads me to where He wants me to be, and not I who am to choose and decide my way of involvement... for the Lord!

Conclusion: May the whole meeting be a prayer

If these reflections have helped to understand how difficult it is to conduct a good meeting, then may they point

(Cont. on page 31)

COMMUNITY BUILDING SEMINAR FOR YOUTH LEADERS

Fr. HORACIO DE LA COSTA FORMATION CENTER (the newly built Christian Life Community Formation House) was blessed by the very first formation seminar - the Community Building Seminar for twenty two (22) youth leaders from six (6) depressed areas of Metro Manila last October 16-18, 1981.

The seminar was an effort of the Youth CLCs in the Philippines to invite and gather other youth to initially experience and acquire skills of forming a community in the context of faith. This was also an initial step of the Youth CLCs to realize their thrust of being of service to other youth especially the poor youth.

The central themes of the seminar were Discovering the Self, Discovering Friendship, and Discovering Community. Sharing of responsibilities of cleaning, cooking, and reflections as well as group dynamics exercises deepened group process and community spirit. All these facilitated the process of community building. Mutual brotherhood and communal life were thus enhanced.

These youth, on the 3rd day of the session, had expressed the need and willingness to undergo a series of follow-up seminars. The CLC of the Philippines on the other hand had really planned to conduct five to six 3-day seminars for them and other similar groups in one year. We believe that this is very important since the seminars these youth have been getting are mostly ideological in nature and hardly anything is offered on faith dimension.

Although the Christian Life Community of the Philippines can offer a good program and provide resource people, our financial incapacity prevents us from carrying out our program since we are always in financial crisis. On the average of 40 participants and with the cheapest rate of 50 pesos (\$ 8.00)/day per person for the accommodation, one seminar (3-day program) would require pesos 6,000.00 (\$ 800.00).

We believe that in spite of our limited resources our

Good Lord will not abandon us. We believe too that our brothers and sisters in the Christian Life Community all over the world can share with us in our hope and effort to carry out this mission and help fulfill the Father's dream among our young people.

God bless us all!

Adelaida V. ENDAYA "Aida"

* * *

REPORT ON "MISSION - ZARABI '81"

Thanks to the Prayer Group of St. Jeanne-Antide, in Alexandria, Missions of Evangelization in Upper Egypt began four years ago.

Every week, we meet to pray for an hour. We felt the need of ACTION along-side our contemplation; action inspired by the same contemplation. Thus, we decided to organize a Mission every Summer in Upper Egypt : at Naga Hamadi for the first year, at Galaweya for the next. For 1980, we went at the beginning of Summer to Mekhalfa. For this year, we hoped to continue our work in that last village. But this was not possible. Instead, Providence led us to Zarabi, where there was a Community of St. Jeanne-Antide. Our Mission lasted from Friday, September 4th till Thursday, September 17. We were 17 Youth Members, ten girls and seven boys, without a Religious Priest or Sister - a factor which greatly affected the outcome of our Mission, as the conclusion will show.

We were divided in two groups, one of 5 members while the other was of 10. Both groups were mixed. Daily we walked 8 km to the village of Abou Khorse, and worked there from 9 am to 12. There were about 60 children between the ages of 4 to 15 years, and some women. The second Group worked at Zarabi itself. Of them, two girls remained for

the whole morning with about 4 to 7 women at the Sisters' Convent, while the other 8 members gathered about 250 children between the ages of 4 to 12 in the Church. Here, they spent the morning from 10 am to 12.30, in sub-groups of 30 or 50, each led by one of our members. One member was assigned to cooking the food. Freddy, who had just finished his medical studies a month ago, helped the Sister Nurse to visit the sick in their homes.

Catechesis was the great aim of our Mission. We began each day by playing with the children for about 45 minutes. Then, we taught them hymns and songs for another similar period of time, which pleased them greatly. They were very quick to learn, thanks to Khaled at Zarabi and Rafix at Abou Khorsse, both of whom had guitars. This was the most successful part of our Mission. This was followed by a full hour of Catechism, based on the Themes drawn from the previous evening's Film Show. But one had to be very flexible with the Themes. Each leader followed his inspiration, but always basing the lesson on a Gospel Story or passage. Then, through pictures or drawings the children expressed freely what they had learned.

Every evening, all came together again, children, women and a few men... to practise the Hymns... all hoping that the Projector would be ready for Slides on the Life of Jesus Christ. Three of our members undertook to give the commentary, which was often made difficult due to the noise!:

We also visited certain homes, which was a very important aspect of our work, and which needs to be done even more. The people were very poor, very simple and hospitable. All the members of a family slept in one single room, while the other room was reserved for all the animals: cows, donkeys.... and chickens.

One characteristic of the village was that the women do not come out into the open without being fully covered in a 15 meters cloak or garment - only one eye is visible. Thus, they were often heard to say to our young girls: "Here our animals are treated better than us".

In the Church, the real assistants and participants are the children and the men. The women are "imprisoned in a sort of cage", at the back of the Church, left there to talk among themselves.

Often we ourselves spent a good part of the after-noon

richly reflecting on the Theme : Action, Contemplation. Together we prayed each evening. We also enjoyed many walks: early one morning we went to the Fields; another day we tried to scale a mountain, with somewhat less success; so, we visited a Monastery of the Great Virgin. One day we stopped all activities and invited Fr. Joseph Mary, originally from Poland, to give us a conference and celebrate the Holy Eucharist. He led us again to the mountain for prayer! Personally, I felt a great call and a profound love towards the Poor Egypt. One needs days of peace and quiet to bring out such Calls.

One day, we walked for 2 km to a third village, to project a Film on the Passion and Death of Jesus.

For the first three days of our Mission, it was very difficult to get our work going, because three members took responsibility, because we did not know each other well enough and because there were great differences in ages. On the fourth day, however, we began to feel one, as we also chose one Leader. But, he was young, with great impulses and tensions. He needed support and sometimes his orders were not obeyed. This gave rise to endless discussions, till finally the group found itself drawing a conclusion which was the same as the order given at the start. This process was tiring and diminished quite a bit the efficiency of our Mission. For this reason I am of the opinion that, for a similar Mission, the Group needs to be accompanied by a Religious Priest or Sister. This would avoid certain less fortunate decisions taken by the other members...

On the whole, very excellent work was done in the two villages. Of course, it could have been better...

*"One never loses; one always learns.
Thank you, Jesus, for the work you entrusted to us.
We hope that it was done according to your will.
And thanks also for the useful lessons helping us
live better what is poverty and commitment..."*

Reda RAMSES

(Cont. from page 12)

on the one hand, a great concern to see, as broadly and as clearly as possible, all the needs of people. On the other hand, and at the same time, I should also be attentive to my interior growth; my experience, the development of my christian living. In reality, all we are saying is that if we really want our work-service to be a mission and not just an activity, we have to live in an attitude of Ignatian discernment. All of us are probably aware of cases where choices have been made which have not brought together these two dimensions. It has even happened that these choices have led to the loss of christian faith of those who made them precisely because these choices led to a growing disintegration of their personality. That is why it is so important to reconcile these two dimensions when, whether on the individual level or the group level, we come across the question of choosing work or a service that is particularly difficult, (difficult, for example, because it would imply a significant change in the person's socio-cultural milieu). These are usually the cases that create difficulties, sometimes serious, for the progress of an individual or a group.

In this connection, let us note some attitudes, actions which can help us see more clearly and with greater objectivity in these situations which are made more difficult as they are rather subjective. In this way, a person can overcome his difficulty and move towards the choice of his own mission which has been properly discerned.

- An accurate critique (from the christian point of view) of the consumer society, in as much as it implies a certain life-style : it is necessary that we have this attitude when we are making a choice or discerning a mission, especially in countries where the ideology of consumerism strongly conditions the conduct of people, imposing on them its criteria of competitiveness, efficiency, usefulness and productivity, which is a whole model of behaviour and a scale of values (good and evil in the ideology of consumerism, and according to the christian ideal, do not coincide). That is why it is necessary to distance our selves from it all, even physically, for a certain period of time to counteract the 'cultural addiction' we unconsciously acquire through being immersed in such a society. Only in this way can we discern with a greater christian objectivity the choice that is confronting us.

- The experience of an insertion in milieux different from our own. These experiences, by way of an 'experiment', can help us acquire a direct knowledge of the living conditions that we would find if we were to choose to live there permanently. Such an experiment (on the level of work) can be understood in the spirit of no. 157 of the Exercises. Moreover, even if this is not done at the time of election, it still can be useful, to widen the horizon of my knowledge of the real needs of people.

- To listen to the advice which is the fruit of discernment in the group to which one belongs. For the other members of the group, it is not simply a question of expressing their opinion on the matter at hand, but of communicating what each member of the group experiences and conscientiously feels (as a result of prayer) with regard to a choice which must or must not be made. This practice is to be recommended when a member of the group is confronted by an important choice. It presupposes a high level of listening on the part of those who make up the group.

- A growing vision of mission : as opposed to a fixed attitude according to which the person thinks he or she has seen quite clearly, and once and for all, in what exactly his or her mission consists (and consequently, what is the choice that has to be made). Since human living is a growing process, the discovery of a personal mission also takes place in the same way. There will be intense moments when certain aspects or dimensions of one's mission will appear more clearly; this will be, and quite rightly, the time for election. But then there will be ordinary times in the course of which the person will live out the choice made, until he discovers a new aspect of his mission. In this way, little by little, the person acquires a deeper sense of mission. This is what gives meaning to the repetition of retreats according to the Exercises. And so mission appears to me, little by little, as embracing more and more my whole personality and my life as a christian. This growing understanding of mission can help considerably in our not closing the door on other possible choices which, at the present moment, are not required by our mission, but which may be in the future; christian living is a growing process.

In a word, this process of discernment in my life leads me to discover, always more deeply, my personal mission and so to choose, because of it, concrete services (which also

become missions). The essential means, without which other means are quite useless, is the growing identification with, and the interior knowledge of the mission of Christ, that is, the interior knowledge of the person of Christ as sent from the Father.

During his mortal life, Christ discovered, little by little, his mission and in faithful obedience to the love of the Father brought together, as no one else has ever done, the call of the Father and the needs of men. He came to the point of complete self-offering, he came to the election which revealed to him the desire of the Father - that he should drink the chalice.

Christ did not shut out any aspect of reality, he did not limit the range of possible, concrete choices. He threw himself into the arms of the Father... and on to the arms of the cross. *"That is why God has exalted him and given him the Name that is above all other names..."* (Phil. 2/9).

Juan-Jesús BASTERO S.J.

INDIA

The National course on Social Awareness at Bangalore conducted by the Indian Social Institute was a good experience of sensitizing. What is Poverty? Poverty is a symptom. Then what is the cause? The structures of society? Why? and how do we analyse and seek change in them? We analysed together - 40 of us from all parts of India - the Indian Situation - the rural and urban situation, land, health, education, political, social and economic systems, even religion - is it an 'opium' of the people? We studied together contemporary papers of Julius Nyerere, and the Bishops of Brazil on "The Cry of My People". We learnt that

1. The problem arises because the man or the nation that is rich has power over the lives of those who are poor and this happens naturally as a result of the normal working of the SYSTEM.
2. The purpose of development is MAN. We must participate, in building a society which serves MAN, enhances his well being, and preserves his dignity.
3. Social justice must replace the present oppression and inequalities. In order to achieve this, there must be economic development and equitable distribution of resources - alongside - social and political development.
4. There must be a true conversion of men, attentive to Christ, to an honest examination of their lives, to

love and brotherhood of men. Mere scientific analysis and solutions in themselves are inadequate.

5. God identifies with the POOR. This is the HISTORY of Scripture - from EXODUS to JESUS the LIBERATOR. The Church-I-We cannot remain indifferent. The Church must be at the service of the world and identified with it in and through the heart of humanity, the realities of human life.

6. The solution is to be found in SOCIALISATION OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION (a phrase needing more research - it is not Socialism or Marxism) with Christ our inspiration and model.

The following 2 days this course was integrated into exposition of phases of the Spiritual Exercises and CLC by the delegates just returned from Manila - only Giuseppe and I had to substitute Sr. Sabina who could not come to this part.

Anthony MARTYRIS

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OIC MEETING

BUILDING A EUROPE FOR THE 1980s

This was the theme of an interesting meeting held in Brussels at the end of November 1981.

The organizers were from the European Branch of the International Catholic Organizations (OIC) and the Catholic Information Office on European problems (OCIPE). Their aim was to stimulate a dialogue, for the first time, between their participants and a group of high officials in the European Community (EC). This would also offer the occasion for examining the possible conditions for collaboration between the Church, through her Episcopal Commission (COMECE), and the European Community.

About forty people represented nine European countries and expressed the pluralism of Catholic organizations. These included the Catholic Archbishop of Athens, the Representative of the French Foreign Ministry for dealings with Non Governmental Organizations belonging to the United Nations (ONG), the Delegate of FIAT at the European Community, the Secretary of the Belgian Episcopal Conference, etc.

The theme of this first meeting was developed in the light of the socio-political goals of the European Community for the first half of this decade.

The European Community

The point of departure was that "it is one of the prime objectives of the European Community to integrate the economic policies of its ten member countries with the creation of a common economic structure for all the 270 million Europeans. This would offer an improvement of living conditions to all the citizens of the Community".

In the light of this fundamental objective of the European Economic Community, the participants tried to study not so much the achievements of this Community since its foundation in 1958, as its major needs today seen as effects of the world economic crisis at the European level.

These major needs were signaled out by the group of "experts", all belonging to the General Directorate for Social Affairs of the European Community, in a language often very dry, but rich with factual data. It is difficult for me to mention here each and every need in detail. From the three days of work, I will only briefly mention what touched me most.

The most vulnerable sections of Society

It is a well known fact that any economic crisis first cuts at the weakest sections of the social fabric. Here, I think of *the Youth*. Beyond doubt, they are the most affected by any economic recession. Of the ten million unemployed persons in the countries of the European Community, forty-five percent are those below twenty-five years of age. I think, next, of *the Migrant Workers*. These, who are

uprooted from their historical and cultural context, are the first to pay the price of any reduction in the labour force. These, therefore, make up a good part of *the Poor*, who alone number 10 million in Europe. Even without noticing them, they stay at our very door step. They make up the suburbs of our great cities. Our meeting focused attention on the Berlin-Kreuzberg example, which loudly speaks for all others...

I think of *the Women, the Handicapped, the Families..* In all these sections, one has to face the difficult problems and situations caused by drugs, prostitution, etc. which have reached alarming proportions.

Much concern and time were devoted to these and other similar factors, which were said to block the development and growth of Europe and even lead to widening divisions within the continent. Europe is tired of walking on its own feet, finds breathing increasingly difficult... Yes, this great "sick" Europe is short of vital energies!

Christian Values

In this context, our Christian response has a greater meaning and urgency. Together with all men of good will, we have to give a new future to this Europe which is in need of new perspectives, of values both modern and authentic which have a spiritual foundation and which our European countries can still experience and express. It is the duty of us Christians to bring out this new wealth.

It is not enough to talk about "a new quality of life", when the very living is endangered in so many ways. We have to make a new transfusion and incarnation of the teachings of Jesus Christ into a society which has become apathetic and inert. While giving her testimony, an Italian parliamentarian challenged Christians to get seriously involved in stimulating and following up any action in the executive and legislative levels of the European Community. One concrete step would be to check on the actual implementations carried out by European parliamentarians, their Commissions, etc.

The follow-up

Thus the Meeting opened up for the participants many

new fields and ways for involvement. Yet, it was decided to direct all energies towards that least favoured section of society, the marginalized. A work-group was formed, which will keep as its aim: *Man and his human dignity*.

Even when we talk of Europe and the European Community, we are actually concerned about all men and persons. This is the starting point of all our hopes and efforts. This is the teaching of John Paul II. At this moment my thoughts turn to our last General Assemblies and to the involvement of the CLCs!

The Institutional Church today shows a greater concern and sensitivity for communitarian realities. With this in mind, at the end of the whole work, it was decided to make one of the follow-ups a close collaboration between committed lay people, parliamentarians and European officials. This would help all Christians face up to the new needs of a Europe for the 1980s.

Gian Carlo MURKOVIC

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FORMATION MATERIAL

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF CLC IN GERMANY

Werkheft für Gemeinschaften Christlichen Lebens

This periodical for CLC members and groups appears 4 times a year with 24 pages. Each number has one overall theme and offers series of articles accordingly: there is a scripture-picture meditation; a challenging article on actual issues in society, politics or Church, called "signs of the times"; an article on a specific element of the CLC way of life; one article on methods of prayer according to the Spiritual Exercises; 4 worked out models for group meet

ings; some pages covering recent documents of the Church, spiritual experiences in literature or some personal witness and - of course - information about CLC events, tendencies within CLC, courses, meetings, personal experiences, new books. Price DM 14.--.

GCL-Intern - for members and groups

A mimeographed circular with information from the federation, from the European and World CLC and from other CLC federations, reports on personal experiences, e.g. with the Spiritual Exercises, with formation - days, with CLC way of life, personal information from members, challenges for social action, information about written material etc., 4-5 numbers a year, 20-28 pages.

Korrespondenz zur Spiritualität der Exerzitien

A printed periodical, which at present appears only once a year (about 100 pages). It is mainly meant for guides, lay-people, priests and religious, who want to live the spirituality of the Exercises. Each number treats a basic theme of the Exercises and presents practical methods or experiences with this spirituality in daily life, in spiritual guidance, in integrated formation, for the societal dimension of life and service etc.

GCL-Werkmappe - for group guides and group leaders

A collection of loose working papers for group work, based on Leturia's "Toward Christian Life Community - Beginnings and Growth" and on own group experiences. It is meant to become up-dated as soon as new methods or papers arrive from the grassroot level. Part I describes the way of a group from the beginning to a Christian Life Community. In each stage main elements are developed in detail: starting and goal of this phase, happenings during this phase, methods and contents, practical hints for the guide... Part II brings written material for each element: methods, texts, literature, starting points for group meetings. Price DM 18 (incl. the cover), DM 8.-- (without cover).

GCL - podium

Challenging articles (mimeographed), often from translations of World-CLC events relating to CLC way of life, to signs of the times, to problems of the world today, including translations from "Progressio" or Roma'79, like Reilly's or Campbell-Johnson's presentations, articles from Fr. Pedro Arrupe etc.; published as the need arises.

Texte der weltföderation

Texts of the World Federation are translations of the official documents of the CLC-World-Federation, e.g. the "Survey", the "Deepening our understanding of the General Principles", "God works like that" (Louis Paulussen), Lektoria etc.

All material and periodicals are available in German only! So - what's the use for you? But do remember our work in your prayers, so that life will be transmitted in all that paperwork!

(Cont. from page 16)

now to the importance of bringing this same meeting to a proper ending.

But, what I would like to stress as something still more important is the point of *making the whole meeting a prayer.*

We began the meeting with a prolonged moment of placing ourselves in the presence of God, so as to quieten ourselves and to be able to listen to the WORD brought in by the others. What is this silent listening, required in the Three Rounds, if not the very heart of prayer? After getting me out of myself and into the presence of God, I let this WORD of God resound in me so that it reveals the eternal newness of God in Jesus Christ. It is a word that could surprise me with new insights, while strengthening me where I am!

*Could not the travelers of Emmaus make a good picture for this action of God? Jesus joins their company. He is just the man about whom they are concerned and desolate. He listens to their shattered dreams: "we had hoped that he would liberate Israel". They had never looked beyond this point. They had deviated from the ways of God. But at least now they were open to the word of Jesus, which sounded different from their way of thinking. Jesus was the other person ("are you the only stranger...") and he spoke with humility and kindness. *Listening and respect stand out prominently in this scene, where God shows himself in human form.* God at this moment of their history had to speak to them through the words of man. They were so buried in the failure of their plans that their prayer could only bring them into a self-confrontation.*

What is the Third Round if not like the Colloquy in our prayer, when we gather up the fruits of our prayer, when we offer all our liberty to God, recognizing and affirming that it is He who has spoken to us.

The Holy Eucharist would be an appropriate end for our meetings. Even the Travelers of Emmaus experienced this! As God has put a word into our life, it is now good to let this strike roots. When the meeting with others has been hard, when my heart has not been truly open to what is larger than my own interior world... then, the Eucharist places us before Him, who can reunite us. He founded the Church, to which

we are called for recognizing our sins and for experiencing His grace and for receiving His Body. The Eucharist again is the unique means to give us the force to continue the journey of life, He being the first traveler to lead the way. Hence, the Eucharist is the time when the word of the other persons, the word of God through the others.... may enter and take root in my heart. Or, it is the time when I receive the strength to live, to accept my poverty, to affirm with others my desire to journey together in the following of the humble Christ.

May our meetings be an experience of this spirit of commitment and humility. May the Lord help us discover what is exactly a *Christian Life Community where all find unity through their poverty, through their desire to be of mutual help and through their growing in the likeness of Christ.*

Michel ULENS, S.J.

Our sincere thanks to those who have already contributed to

THE SOLIDARITY FUND
for delegates to Providence '82

We also make an appeal to those who can contribute but have not yet done so, in order that our next Assembly may truly represent our Community, and be a tangible sign of it.

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