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THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES THROUGH „QUESTIONS„

(Continued from May)

5. THIRD WEEK

This week is like a repetition of the Exercises so far. Jesus in His passion followed the will of God no matter what the consequences would be (Principle and Foundation); dies for our sins (First week); is, upon the cross, a wonderful model to inspire our love for Him and is a confirmation of the price to pay in the work for the Kingdom (Second week).

5.1. The historical passion of Jesus

Try to contemplate in a heart-felt way the mysteries of the Passion. I suggest for you, as a general background, four dimensions of Jesus' Passion.

- a) **Theological dimension:** Why Jesus' Passion was an act of obedience. (Phil. 2,8)
- b) **Ecclesial dimension:** Why Jesus' Passion was an act of solidarity. (Col. 1,20)
- c) **Political dimension:** In what sense Jesus' Passion was a political process. (Jn. 11,47-54)
- d) **Personal dimension:** Why this dimension has always been very moving if we look at Jesus (Lk. 22,41-42) and if we look at ourselves (Gal.2,20).
- e) **Conclusion:** A colloquy with Jesus.

5.2. Jesus' Passion today

Live now in and with your imagination the sufferings of the followers of Jesus today. Those who suffer in more hidden ways and especially those who suffer, like Jesus, publicly.

- a) In today's struggles for the Kingdom who are the Sanhedrin? Pontius Pilate? The pharisees? The sadducees?

The zealots? The cowardly disciples? The people passing by? Who are John and Mary? Who is Jesus?

- b) Attentive to your own personal feelings before this new passion of Jesus, pray gently and quietly.

6. FOURTH WEEK

This is the prolongation of the third: a deeper identification with Jesus, but now in His happiness and glory. It is the time of hope and trust. The end of our journey will be the resurrection, as it was for Jesus.

6.1. The resurrection

The contemplation of the passages of the Gospel could be followed by some questions:

- a) Why didn't the disciples and friends of Jesus easily recognize Him after the resurrection? (the disciples at Emmaus, Mary Magdalene, the apostles at the lake...) Is there, perhaps, a deeper meaning here?
- b) What do you think or how do you feel about these expressions: "For if the dead are not risen, neither has Christ risen" (1 Cor. 15,16). "And if Christ is not risen, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins" (1 Cor. 15,17). "If no one believed in the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus would not have been raised" (Karl Rahner)?
- c) Are there, in the present world, in the Church and outside the Church, some signs of the resurrection of Jesus?
- d) Now pray over this.

6.2. Contemplation to attain the love of God

God's love for us and our love for God are not just for special times, like those of retreat. We must continue our love's movement during daily life. For that reason St. Ignatius gives us a good way to love God in all things. This way is gratitude.

- a) Could you remember some moments of your life when God's love for you has been very clear? Why?
- b) Could you imagine these kinds of moments in your daily life in the future? How could you respond to these gifts of the Lord?
- c) Now, write, if you would, a prayer which you can repeat every day as a summary of your exercises.

7. A FINAL REMARK

Using this method with groups

There are two ways (probably more) we can use this method with groups.

- a) Sharing and enriching the individual experiences within a group.
- b) Using a group, a community or an institution as the "retreatants" of the Exercises. In this second way the questions most likely, should be changed. For example if all the religious of a high school or a group of lay people in a parish want to discover the will of God in their institution they can pray with questions like these: What is or what are the sins of this institution as a result of many personal responsibilities? What is the concrete call of Jesus for our institution? and so forth...

The experience of institutions "doing" the Exercises has, in some places, been very fruitful. It could be developed in the future.

Néstor JAEN, S.J.

TRANSMISSION OF LIFE

(Fourth of a series of articles on Family Life, from the working group "CLC and Family Life").

We would simply like to share with you our point of view regarding the transmission of life which occupies first place in black african society.

Concrètement, our reflexion will be on:

- fertility and its impact on the black african Christian family
- planning and limitation of birth in the black african Christian family.

I. FERTILITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BLACK AFRICAN CHRISTIAN FAMILY

a) Negro-african vision of marriage

Like traditional Africa, black Christian Africa gives much importance to fertility. For black african Christians, marriage, is a sacred act which perpetuates the lineage of husband and wife. It is a kind of ministry of life and of the future of the lineage which a married person exercises in the name of all and with their agreement. Thus defined, marriage is both eminently personal and at the same time communitarian, as opposed to the narrow, individualistic concept of family considered only as a nucleus in itself.

b) Marriage advice

Based on this concept of marriage, some black african Christian parents face their sons with a dilemma:

- either to ask for divorce from a wife who cannot have children
- or to accept polygamy through marrying another woman who can bear children.

This can also happen in cases where the woman has children of only one sex, either all boys or all girls.

In some tribes when the husband is sterile, arrangement is made with maximum discretion for a brother or cousin to have intercourse with his wife so as to give him children.

c) Consequences

The unwarranted interference of parents creates instability in a couple not having children. The couple can no longer live united, faithful, forever in their commitment. It reaches a point where the barren wife obliges her husband to take on a second woman who can give him children so that she will not be repudiated.

d) Point of view of the Lubumbashi CLC

That procreation has value, we agree; but to consider love only as a secondary purpose for marriage to such a point as to eclipse it seems to us incompatible with real Christian marriage.

Parents who intervene in this manner risk the happiness and growth of a young couple.

On this subject, Vatican II says: "Even in cases where despite the intense desire of the spouses there are no children, marriage still retains its character of being a whole manner and communion of life and preserves its value and indissolubility" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50-53).

"However, the fruitfulness of conjugal love is not restricted solely to the procreation of children, even understood in its specifically human dimension: it is enlarged and enriched by those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world". (*John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio*, n.28).

We make these two statements our own.

In case a partner becomes impotent for one reason or another after marriage, or in case of continuing sterility, there is still a place for a couple to intensify their love for one another in remaining faithful to each other and to reflect on the cross of Christ which can lighten up the suffering of a couple who places all their trust in Him.

The true measure of love is to give life.

II. PLANNING AND LIMITATION OF BIRTH IN BLACK AFRICAN CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Contraceptive methods are still not well-known by many, especially in the rural area. Often, one waits until their child begins to walk to have intercourse again.

Nevertheless, in case of an "unwanted" pregnancy, a couple should still welcome the child as a gift of God, accepting him/her with all their heart.

In the rural area, one cannot speak of the limitation of birth. In the cities, however, those who are better-off economically or of middle class, aware of their economic difficulties, use contraceptive methods to space births and at times they may be able to limit the number of children.

Point of view of the Lubumbashi CLC

Like the Pope, we condemn the use of artificial contraceptive methods. Nevertheless, as much as possible, each partner should avoid imposing on the other a continence which could expose the other partner to the temptations of Satan, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor 7,1-5. In verses 4 and 5 of the same chapter, it is said that "the wife has no rights over her own body, it is the husband who has them. In the same way, the husband has no rights over his body, the wife has them".

Regarding limitation of births, we believe that a per

son cannot just follow his/her own whim in putting an end to human life just as he/she pleases.

We should not have recourse to abortion but unconditionally accept a child born of an "unwanted" pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental vocation of a couple is, without doubt, to continue the creative work of God, that is to say, to transmit human life together as free and responsible collaborators of the Creator.

Nevertheless, as we have said in our first sharing, love between husband and wife is the first purpose of marriage. We should not base our hopes first and foremost on the number of children because it is Jesus who gives us a guarantee of eternity in our life and apart from Him there is nothing good nor lasting.

The Christian couple is a TRINITY, that is two hands, like two paddlers in a canoe, in the hand of God moving in the same direction.

Tasinda Pagu MALUMBA

NEW DIMENSIONS OF CLC IN THE NORTHEAST OF BRAZIL

"A Wandering Aramean was my father..."

Background:

The development of Christian Life Communities in Brazil, like many other aspects of Brazilian spirituality, follows the history of the people of God in the Scriptures. Several years ago Fr. Cesar A. dos Santos, SJ and some members of JAM (Juventude de Aço Mariana - Youth for Marian Action) travelled to Chile where they encountered the Christian Life Communities for the first time. Since they were seeking something "more" in their lives as young Christians, they resonated with the exciting movement of CLC in Chile and sought to experience this new form of community life on their return to Rio de Janeiro. Many young leaders were attracted and soon there were formed several communities.

During this time a young Jesuit theologian, Emilio Magro Moreira, helped in the orientation of one of these communities, "Mary of Nazareth", as he completed his theological studies prior to ordination. After his ordination he brought this rich experience of CLC to the impoverished Northeast of Brazil - to the city of Salvador, BA. Now a priest, Fr. Emilio began seeking out young people, leaders from his parish, and alumni from the local Jesuit High School, and so formed the first pre-CLC community in Salvador. These young men and women came from middle to upper class families in a city where poverty and misery is the norm. After a year of efforts trying to mold a community, various members sought out other personal or professional alternatives.

"And God sustained his people in the desert..."

Far from being discouraged by this first attempt, Fr. Emilio sought some help from the CLC groups in Rio. He organized with them a Course for CLC coordinators which was held in Terezina, PI. This training course attracted many Jesuits, including two novices, and religious sisters from various parts of the Northeast of Brazil. It was a time of reflection, insight, and renewed conviction that CLC had

something very special to offer, perhaps because it has such a tremendous respect for the experiences of ordinary people. Sr. Lidia Boite, of the Swiss Congregation of the Holy Cross, recognized its possible impact for many interested youth in her slum parish back in Salvador, and thus began the suspicion that perhaps we had been looking in the wrong places for members, assuming we had to hand-pick leaders from the middle and upper classes.

"Give us water to drink..."

On their return, the various participants of the training course continued their work mainly with poorer classes of people, generally following the normal formation of the base christian communities, waiting, listening, at times applying one or other formation technique of CLC to help the various groups in their parishes grow. Many others became interested in CLC so we invited our friends from Rio to give another course, this time in Salvador. There was a need to create "multipliers" who could help the great demand that was growing in many poor communities in the periphery of the city.

All of a sudden there occurred a phenomenon that was to be repeated in many places. Young people approached Sr. Lidia and Fr. Emilio and asked for a special orientation - they sensed they needed or wanted something "more" in their lives, but they weren't sure what that "something" was. They began to meet and discuss together just what they wanted. They began to share experiences and many young people asked for a time once a month for a more individual and personal conversation.

"You sha'll be my people and I shall be your God..."

Who were these young people? Generally they were a mix of young men and women who had grown up in the poor neighborhoods. Some had been actively formed in the base christian community through catechetics, youth and liturgy groups, scouting, etc. and they were serious about their lives. Others had not been "active" in the community but they also were looking for something "more". That something more wasn't a social group for parties or to create another Carnival experience - in fact, they wanted some-

thing significant, less massified. They had a simple faith and a strong resonance with Mary. They were youth who wanted to remain faithful to basic human and christian values in an environment completely contrary to the Gospel. As one youth put it: "I'd like to run away from all of this oppression and misery but I feel I should remain and support and encourage the others, even with all of my limitations. Can you help me?"

"The brethren were of one heart and mind..."

The attention which they received in these new small groups made these young people feel they could support and encourage others, made them feel responsible and this created a real interest and curiosity among others. It wasn't long before these new groups sought more common action, in service, prayer and reflection. Those already engaged in some activity in the base community sought to link up with others to further develop a corporate sense to their mission. Others looked to find new areas of service neglected because of lack of interest or personnel. Significantly, all sought to deepen their prayer and to celebrate this new joy and confidence which they experienced together (which even surpassed the happiness experienced in their own families). They radiated goodness and responsibility.

They also asked for help to discern what it means to be a dedicated lay person in the Church today. They reflected on topics of current debate such as the relation of politics to their lives as Christians; how to develop humanly and understand oneself and others; how to discover silence in a world of noise and confusion. All of these and many other topics created a substantial search for the "more" which was realized in days of study and reflection, prayer and action. It was a natural development to seek a retreat experience together. They reflected on Mission and the Person of Jesus Christ, the Prophets, etc. Gradually each group sought a name - "Boa Esperança", "Mariama" and "Magis". These names became symbols for the good work which the Lord had begun in them.

"I will not leave you orphans...but will send my Spirit.."

Then, suddenly, a series of events happened which at first sight were quite disconsoling. Fr. Emilio was sent to Rome to study Spirituality. Sr. Lourdes who guided one of the new communities was transferred to a new mission. Three months later Sr. Lidia was called back to Switzerland to serve as a General Counsellor for her Congregation. I remained with Sr. Ana Rita, whom the young people "chose" to accompany them, long enough to give a five day Ignatian retreat before also being sent abroad for a sabbatical renewal! But the fruit of these months of "crisis" was not desperation or depression but rather renewed responsibility and commitment amongst these new, seemingly "orphaned" CLC groups. In fact some members of the Mariama group decided to live together in a small apartment community which became the focus of much joy and hope for the others. All of the CLC groups were present at the dedication of this new search for something "more" in communal living, just two days before I left Brazil.

Here in Europe we three, Sr. Lidia, Fr. Emilio and I looked back on this strange "orphaning" as a sign of God's special care. The CLC's are after all, lay groups, which grew out of their peculiar search to live the gospel. These CLCs in poor parishes were something different, something new that God was working in our midst and no Assistant could take the place of His guiding Spirit. The main charism of CLC is to leave or dispose the members to develop according to God's direction and call. Although it seems a bit radical, this total dependence on the Lord of the groups in Salvador has born much fruit. The groups have had a special time to grow along their own rhythms and new blood has entered to guide and help their growth.

We hope that others will recognize this new environment for CLC in their own countries and will be encouraged by our experience, always remembering the recommendation given to St. Paul in Galatians 2,10:

"The only thing they insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do".

Walter J. CONLAN, S.J.

YOUTH-PROGRESSIO

Foreword

The articles which we publish here give food for thought and they are a good illustration of questions that have been touched on in previous issues.

These pages present us with some points of meditation on the appearance of Jesus after His resurrection, the development of the young-adult communities in Flanders as they face the questions that their lives pose, and the decision of a CLC group of young doctors in Ecuador to take up a service among the poor.

The connection between these articles is obvious as they present groups of young people who are searching, in prayer, to integrate their faith and daily living through their choice of mission.

Especially in Ecuador, through the experience of working in a poor area, and with the desire to work for others and not for personal gain or advancement, and in the hope of setting up hospital structures in disadvantaged areas, we see a CLC group growing and developing, which has received its mission through discerning and evaluating its talents and the needs around it. There we see young people who have put their gifts at the service of society through making a clear and preferential choice for the poor and marginalised.

These three articles offer us an occasion for meditation and prayer; they invite us to listen to our brothers who are working in a situation different from our own, to pray for them and to challenge and confront ourselves with what they have chosen. Also, it seems to me it would be a very good idea to continue to have new contributions, to exchange our experiences, our problems, our choices and difficulties. In this way we would help one another to grow and to discover the call of the Lord for each one of us, in the different parts of the world.

This is one of the signs of being a world community.

Giovanna CHIRRI

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

The appearance of Jesus to the disciples John 20,19-23

With the death of Jesus, those who followed Him and believed in Him have also to go through their own 'resurrection', their own passover: from a tangible vision to a faith vision, from a quest for visible signs to an internal assimilation of a new and transforming life.

Distressed and discouraged, they find themselves alone.

It is Mary Magdalene who goes to the tomb first, "the first day of the week", to pay homage to Someone who has lifted her up and restored her dignity, in whom she has placed all her trust. On seeing the stone rolled back, she runs to tell Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loves ... Both of them, upon entering the empty tomb, are the first to believe, to welcome this unprecedented event, to have faith that the disappearance of Jesus' body is for Him to show Himself in a new body, in a glorious Presence. Mary is given the privilege to see Jesus, but she needs to have her name called before recognising Him... To the disciples, locked up in their fear of the Jews, Jesus makes Himself be "seen" clearly, without any possible doubt...

To understand the text:

Let us listen to Jesus:

- What is His first word to the disciples?
- To them, He shows His wounds. Mary, He only called. For Peter and John, it was enough to let them feel an 'absence-presence'... But, the wounds of Christ, are they only arguments to convince the disciples?

Are they not necessarily imprinted on the resurrected body of Him who, throughout His life, has sought to trans-

late into action, attitudes, and words, in His whole body, His love for men/women? Let us re-read John 10,11-18; 12, 23-26; 13,1-4. Christ's wounds are wounds of Love, and "the love which suffered and offered them will forever make them ineffaceable" (André Louf, "Seul l'amour suffirait").

Let us now take a look at the reaction of the disciples:

- What kind of joy do they experience? Is it the simple joy of finding one another again? See John 16,22-24.
- "He said to them: 'Peace be with you'". What is the Peace of Christ? What is its source? Let us re-read John 14, 15ff.
- Peace... for mission.

The mission of the disciples is rooted in the Easter event. "...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses..." (Ac 1,8).

In what does the mission of the disciples consist? Pay attention to the phrase: "As the Father has sent me, so also do I send you..."

The gesture of Jesus:

- "...He breathed on them..." (v.22) The Spirit is the Breath. Jesus makes this gesture of breathing, just as He made the gesture of breaking and sharing the bread. Is it only to support His words? Let us recall the gestures of Jesus in the Gospel, His gestures towards the sick, the paralytic, the man born blind, the children. "Jesus does what He says and says what He does". - The Mystery of the Incarnation.
- The Holy Spirit, why? What is the first ministry to which Jesus invites His disciples? Does it not remind us of His work of freeing people, liberating them from suffering, from sin?

(Taken from "Sel et Lumière" n.2)

THE YOUNG DOCTORS OF THE "GONZAGA"
CLC COMMUNITY OF ECUADOR

The CLC is a young movement in Ecuador, a country with a long and fruitful tradition of the Marian Congregations (Sodalities) and lately of the Christian Life Communities which seemed to disappear a few years ago. Today, the movement has been restored and offers here a snippet from the life of one of its communities. Six young doctors made a promise to their Bishop to commit themselves for three years to work in one of the most needy areas of the country "serving the sick and the most marginalised poor, not seeking any profit and working full-time, bringing the people the salvation and love of Christ, inspired by the Gospel spirit and the Church's teachings". This is the CLC Community "Gonzaga". One of its members writes:

Our small community, "Gonzaga", was made up almost exclusively, without intending it to be, of medical students. We were then at the beginning of our studies in the faculty. The CLC was not yet structured at this second stage of its development; we therefore became its initiators despite the fact that we were inexperienced and still searching for the way. At the same time we were committed to pave the way for this style of life of our spirituality. Today, this move has been confirmed and built on by the fact of other university students joining our communities.

As we advanced in our study of medicine, the concern to find an apostolic commitment which, according to the General Principles, would mean "responding to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live" became ever more urgent.

Light came during our practice of rural medicine, through our first contact with one of the country's poorest areas. It became more and more clear in the course of our rural practice and reached its climax in a spiritual

discernment we did after having made the Exercises. At the end of this period we asked ourselves: "Do we remain united as a community or are we to go our own way?" "Do we remain in the capital or do we feel called to an apostolic commitment in poor areas?" These led to other questions with their implications. All possible consequences of this option, including the degree of solidity of the group, capacity for renunciation, disponibility and so on, were analysed in detail. Then came the moment for saying what each one feel: "My personal disposition, absolute disponibility for this undertaking", "formal commitment",... To summarise, of the seven members of the community, seven affirmative answers were given in favor of a common apostolic involvement in their professional field, and for the most needy. However, one had to withdraw from the program for family reasons.

For legal purposes, the creation of a specific entity was necessary. Thus, the "ASMED-CX (Association of Committed Christian Doctors) was born with its own Statutes where the spirit we desire to live is reflected: faith; science; love; work in rural or peripheral areas; disinterested service and full time; research; knowledge; to defend and teach in the scientific, moral and social fields, the doctrine of the Gospel and of the Magisterium of the Church; human, scientific and professional development; aid for the country's development through concrete programs; opposition to immoral practices in the exercise of the medical profession, even having recourse to conscientious objection, if necessary, to refuse cooperation; hope for the sort of remuneration that would respect human dignity, but always in conformity with Gospel simplicity; life of communion and sharing resources, a common fund, genuine brotherhood...

Our dream? To create a Hospital of Special Services which will unite scientific expertise with a total mission of service to the most needy.

Our present situation? We are based in two suburban zones of Sto. Domingo de los Colorados - Los Unificados y Abdón Calderón -, and in a third one on the boundary with Esmeraldas, La Independencia.

In "Los Unificados" we are handling two Clinics. The set-up is as follows: a drugstore for the poor, bedding for the sick under observation for a short period of time, small living quarters for the two doctors and a small study and meeting hall. The place was donated by a local group (Centro Artesanal barrial).

In "Abdón Calderón", there are two other Clinics with a set-up similar to the above. The locale was donated by a school run by the Cooperative.

In "La Independencia" there is a small hospital in the process of being set-up, a laboratory and some beds already in use; a team to run the hospital is being brought together - we are waiting for two more to join us. The assistants of the infirmary share this same vision, including pooling material resources in common.

In addition, we have organised and given six Formation Courses for District Health officers, four in Quindé and two in La Independencia. We have also given talks on First Aid, Sex Education, Natural Method of Family Planning and so on.

We are aware that the work undertaken demands, on our part, a certain renunciation and a profound personal, social and group commitment to God and to our neighbour, which makes it all the more necessary to intensify our spiritual life, to achieve the desired results in the apostolic life of the group. Nevertheless, the security that He alone can give us up enables us to look forward to the future with great optimism. We feel, with great joy, God's presence in our hearts. We would like to finish by expressing our conviction that the Lord would definitely like us to continue helping the poor whom He loves so much.

Galo SEGOVIA

YOUNG ADULTS IN FLANDERS

A community of one hundred to a hundred-and-fifty young people between eighteen and twenty-five to thirty years old: either just starting or nearly finishing their studies; having just graduated or looking for a job or already at work; engaged or just married; just having had a first baby or expecting a third one. In other words, we are passing through a period of life which is still developing, where nothing is definitive yet: we are still shaping our attitudes towards life and defining what mentality and spirit should be ours.

We are altogether a "small herd". We are only a few! But we believe in the power of "mustard seeds" and in a permanent concern for the Kingdom of Heaven. We do think that a little flame can spread plenty of light and warmth in a chilly and harsh world.

We meet in twelve to fifteen basic communities throughout Flanders. They all have their own name, identity and story. We meet on the campus, in each other's home or in parishes. A number of newly weds belong to our basic communities. They even constitute the majority of several of these communities but in general, they do not stay very long with the young adults once they are married.

Once a year the local groups meet on what we call our "day of union" where we learn from each other what is going on in the different groups. On the eve of the "union day" we meet in two groups. There is an exchange of ideas about the same topics and there is time for prayer. The following day all groups hold a plenary meeting and discuss the most important conclusions and experiences of the previous evening.

The last week-end of September we organise "introduction days" in a seaside resort. Traditionally, on these days newcomers and people interested in CLC are welcomed.

During the Summer Holidays representatives of individual groups get the opportunity to make a retreat for some days during the "formation-days" (Vormingsdagen).

And finally, all CLC-members from all over Flanders meet on a Sunday in the second half of August. That is our "family-day", a day when young and old meet.

In the course of 1983 we felt the need for a clearer profile. We actually wanted to know more about ourselves and to allow the "outside world" to have a better understanding of what we stand for. Father Fernand Van Neste presented a first draft which we started to work on and which undoubtedly led to a great deal of reflection in many groups.

Whatever our situation, profession or character in our local groups, we want to help one another find out how to lead a christian life and how to bring into harmony our everyday life and our christian aspirations. What we aim at, in other words, is to become more receptive so that God is no longer far away but very close. When trying to do this we learn how important Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises are. We believe that it makes sense not only to make a retreat for three, eight or thirty days, but also to integrate the Exercises into our daily lives as best as we can. That is why most of our groups really want to have a spiritual guide to accompany them.

Myriam DEVRIENDT

TITHING, A POSSIBLE STEP TOWARDS GREATER SOLIDARITY

Who among us, on meeting a child or a beggar asking for alms at the entrance of a moviehouse or a restaurant, has not thought: "How am I going to spend this money in front of such a person?" Who has not questioned himself or herself if the money about to be spent should not, on the contrary, be given to satisfy the hungry or warm the freezing?

This has surely happened to all of us. But, should we then give away what is left over, after all our basic needs have been met? All of us, at one point, must have asked ourselves: to what extent are we to express our solidarity? or, if the command of the Lord to love one another has a limit?

At the bottom of our heart we know that there are no limits nor can there be. If we do believe in Christ and if we truly affirm what we say in the prayer of the "Our Father", that we are children of the same Father who loves each one of us and that we are all brothers and sisters in Him, in the family of God's children, then there is no limit.

Why? How would we feel if a father spends money on horses, books or music while his children go hungry or are barefooted? We would surely be scandalised, not only us, but also others who do not share our faith. In any family, solidarity and fraternity is best expressed in attending to the members who are most in need. To them (the delicate in health, one having difficulty in learning, and so on) we dedicate all our care and the best of our attention, and it is but natural that we spend more on them than for the rest.

If our faith is real, what is happening now to the large family of God's children should also scandalise us. It is scandalising to see a brother suffer while another squanders. To be exact, even if there were only one brother or sister wanting in life's essential, no other person has the right to waste in the way it is happening today.

Therefore, we should renounce our superfluous spending like changing our car, buying a better radio, spending more for holidays, and - why not - even going to the restaurant or cinema.

But, who among us think this way or is capable of doing it? Perhaps when we were younger we wanted to dedicate ourselves more fully. Many of us felt we were capable of giving up everything and wanted to do it.

Perhaps, now-a-days, nobody is capable of such limitless generosity. Often it has become an impossible dream we look back to with nostalgia. Facing the dramatic situation many of our brothers and sisters find themselves in - specially these days - daily we become more aware that our response is inadequate and mediocre.

Before our own indifference and weakness in the world today where the poor are suffering ever more, we react possibly by feeling anxious and guilty. This behaviour, instead of helping us take positive action, makes us feel hopeless and paralysed and hinders the true expression of our solidarity. Another possible reaction could be to feel complacent and say to ourself: "After all it is only an ideal and God knows we are weak". Both attitudes are common and very likely to happen to us. But as for the paralysis and ineffectiveness of the one reaction and the complacency and discouragement of the other - neither seems to give life and enable God's children to develop as He wants for each one.

God's Pedagogy

God's pedagogy is based on what we are, that is on the reality that we are weak and sinful. It is from our sinfulness and our weakness - which the Lord loves and accepts - that He is calling us to follow Him and become fully men and women.

The Lord calls and He waits for an answer. Every man and woman is called to boundless generosity and total heroism. And the Lord always shows the way. He knows quite well what we are capable of today, what is within our

reach, what is possible in our situation and our present reality.

The Lord knows that a response is always possible. And we also know. Between paralysing anxiety and indifference, there are always steps which each person can take to start the long road which for some will end in limitless and total generosity.

Despite the weaknesses in each one of us, the Lord wants us to grow by taking significant and successive steps, always only those within our reach. God wants us to grow beyond our poverty and weakness, like the Publican in the Gospel who could develop, unlike the already "perfect" and arrogant Pharisee.

Tithing: an effective expression of stewardship (for God)

We know that our life, our talents, our wealth and all we are, are not truly our own, nor do they belong to us, not even partly. Everything comes from God and we are no more than His instruments, His administrators. In truth we are only the stewards of the Lord, of the goods He has entrusted to us for the benefit of everyone.

God the Father created the world for everybody. Without knowing the reason, and certainly through no merit of our own, some of us have more possibilities than others. This is true of the members of our community and probably also true for many who belong to the CLC's. We certainly have had the opportunity to develop ourselves and to study. Many of us were able to go to University and obtain a professional degree. Therefore a good number of us can find jobs which bring security and a good income.

On the other hand, the vast majority of our brothers and sisters simply do not have the same opportunities. For them life always brings anxiety and insecurity, which often they do not deserve, no more than we deserve our "privileged" position.

In the Old Testament the Lord asked His people to pay

tithes. This was ten percent of everything: harvest, fruits, animals, money and so on. It was a concrete gesture to remind them that everything comes and is from God. The tithe symbolised the sovereignty of God over everything. Its objective was solidarity in the use of the earthly goods, be they for the levites, the foreigners, the widows or the orphans; that is, the poor, those without inheritance, possessing no land and are unable to satisfy their own needs.

Today, the tithe has totally lost its force and meaning. However let us think for a moment on the tremendous repercussion this would have in our country if we were to take it up. According to technical studies, in Chile today between 20 and 25% of the people are actually living in conditions of extreme misery.

These persons have a monthly family income of less than 7,500 Pesos (\$ 50.00 US), receiving only 5% of the total national income. To move out of this extreme misery, they would need to double their income, at the least; that is, be given another 5% of the national income.

On the other hand, the more wealthy half of the population gets 80% of the national income. If we, that is the richer half, would only give away 10% of our income in favor of the poor, it would be possible, theoretically speaking at least, to wipe out extreme poverty in Chile. Obviously things are not so simple, given the fact that one has to consider the many economic factors at play and that it is extremely idealistic to expect such generosity from everyone. But the simplicity of the example helps us appreciate the magnitude and effect this tithing could have. Even if not everyone, but only a significant number were to tithe, it would already be possible to eliminate part of the suffering and marginalisation of so many of our brothers and sisters living in misery. And if it is possible, would it not then be a moral obligation, as our Bishops at Puebla say?

The experience of our community

Recognising our weakness while always making an ef-

fort to accept our mediocrity and sinfulness, we undertook to discover realistic and feasible ways of following the Lord. We became aware that while not giving up this feeling of nostalgia and admiration for radical and heroic enterprises, such ventures were impractical for most of us, and left us anguished and paralysed to the point of not doing anything. Therefore, we decided instead to ask ourselves: what is the response we are able to give in each situation - a response that is possible and inescapable if we are to remain faithful to our call.

And so, interested by the meaning of tithing and stimulated by its possibilities, it seemed to us a possible step to take. Obviously, it is not only the tithe that the poor need, but also a change of those unjust social structures that facilitate and perpetuate their misery. (On the other hand, it would be sad if this were just a formula to ease our consciences and make us forget our other responsibilities). The truth is that in the tithe we seemed to have found a possible and practical avenue, something within our reach to help us grow in a greater solidarity. Consequently, for some time now we regularly set aside 10 percent of our family income for the needs of the poorest, generally through supporting the campaigns and initiatives giving work to the unemployed. The truth is that it has not always been easy. For those who work only occasionally and are semi-retired, it has really been a difficult and serious act of renunciation. For others, it has meant reducing plans and projects, less savings, but it has obviously been easier for them.

For both sets of people, after a year and a half, the experience has been very enriching and positive, we feel. At varying degrees, some with more, others with less difficulty, we have been able to do something possible, within our reach. And yes, we feel that we have taken a truly deliberate step, and, in all sincerity, one that is irreversible -for the rest of our life. Little by little, we are getting accustomed to this small step; soon, we feel we will be approaching the moment when we need to ask ourselves what further steps could be taken which are possible for us and within our reach.

We believe that even though imposing this tithing on ourself is only a question of justice and cannot serve to ease our consciences nor make us forget our other responsibilities, it is a real and effective expression of solidarity and its implementation has truly provided relief to many of our brothers and sisters who find themselves in extreme conditions of poverty.

Even though we have opted for a fixed percentage, equivalent to 10 percent - the tithe in the Bible, the deeper meaning of generosity is to be measured in another way. At the Temple the Pharisee worked hard to fulfill his obligations, including paying the tithe. The widow gave only a few coins, which she would have needed to live. For us, the 10% we are giving will never correspond to what the Lord asks of us and we will not stop questioning ourselves on this matter. For our friends or members of other communities, perhaps only a few coins or a percentage less than the 10% we give may mean, in the eyes of God, a greater generosity and renunciation. The Lord knows us and knows everything. He will always appreciate the generosity and selflessness of the poor widow, more than the rigorous Pharisee fulfilling his obligation.

If we venture to share this experience, hopefully with due modesty, it is because we believe it is also a way possible for other CLC members having similar concerns. In one way or another all of us can grow towards greater solidarity. This tithing, or even only a few coins, seems to be a possible step for many people who, between the two poles of heroism and selfish indifference, seek a way to be faithful and to express greater solidarity.

Let us not forget that if this practice of tithing were to become a common practice, it would have an enormous global impact for the mitigation of poverty in our country.

It is a possible avenue to take towards greater solidarity.

"Joseph of Arimathea" Community

A RETREAT «IN THE STREETS!»

At the end of April/beginning of May, there was a meeting of the national CLC assistants in Rome. Fr. Claude Flipo S.J. (France) was asked to write a paper dealing with what it means for a Jesuit to be an Ignatian guide in Europe today, on the national level. The paper was very well received, and one of the points that the writer raised was the necessity of awakening and developing a sense of being "called", especially through fostering "activities" that are truly symbolic - signs that attract and invite people. It seems to us that the two witnesses which follow are a very good illustration of the point that Claude was making. (Editor's note)

Recently we received the following letter from a Sacred Heart nun in Australia, who gives retreats and is involved with the CLC's:

"For a number of years I have been wondering about our way of giving retreats. Some time ago, some of us had a dream to house a program in the inner city where we could listen to the poor, learn to pray from that stance, be challenged to a deeper understanding of the Gospel. Then the change happened in 1982. I went to the Philippines and experienced a feeling of growing discomfort when I returned, as well as a feeling of not knowing how to tackle our 1st World syndrome. I have enjoyed my work in the parish and the CLC groups are growing. However, it is still a very struggling experience in terms of true Gospel responses.

Many of us Catholics have a remote understanding of the real Australian challenges - multi-culturalism, unemployment, poverty, and so on. Some groups are growing in this awareness, but, generally speaking, we do need to reflect on how the Spiritual Exercises can lead us more deeply to 'conversion' as a Church. Our 'poverty, oppression and injustice' can be subtly hidden.

To make a long story short, myself, another sister (a sister of Charity), and a Jesuit tried to respond in a small way to this feeling of discomfort. A week ago we offered a retreat of 6 days on the 'inner city streets' (around Kings Cross, Sydney). The other sister was able to arrange for beds in the area. There were 12 people who made the journey together. These included an Ugandan refugee and his wife, a psychiatric nurse, a young girl working with delinquent youth, the Provincial of the Good Shepherd Sisters who has initiated street ministries at night among the prostitutes in Sydney and Melbourne, another nun from my Order and the Jesuit in charge of the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Sydney.

We began the retreat with a simple invitation to go into the streets and really "listen to the poor". In a most Spirit-led way the dynamic of the 1st week of the Exercises emerged for each one with deep self-revelations of sinfulness and of the wonder of God's mercy in terms of our broken world. There was no need as a director to introduce any of the meditations. It all just happened as they touched pain and hope within themselves. The area is a place of blatant exploitation and some parts have been taken over by the gay community. For some of the retreatants it was a 'mind-blowing' experience as they had never set foot in this area. Many prayed about 3 hours a day and then in the evening we gathered in a little terrace house to share experiences and have a simple meal. We cut down on any form of extravagance and were able to cover costs with a small donation from each one.

Just before we went on retreat a memorable reflection with Bishop Claver S.J. (Philippines) and Retreat Directors confirmed what we had planned. He spoke of the need to resist a 'personalised spirituality'; Biblical spirituality is about the conversion of a people. Can we share in a more communal way experiences of sin and grace? Can we identify the demons of Australian culture? How to evangelise in this culture? Some aspects of these questions emerged during the 'Street Retreat'. We experienced a strong sense of 'community' through sharing of weakness. From 10 years of giving retreats, including the 17 times I've given the 30 days, I would say that this was the

strongest communal experience of the 1st week of the Exercises".

M.K. r.s.c.j.

Delegates at Providence will remember Kay Hooper, one of the delegates from Australia. Kay was on the retreat, just described, for a part of the time, and she writes:

"I only had a week-end, but those two days were a very powerful encounter with Christ poor and Christ's poor. I just spent the time wandering round the streets or just sitting - going wherever I felt led. For me it was quite a scary experience - not knowing 'how to be' in this place, feeling uncomfortable and unsure, not knowing why I was here or what I was meant to do. Slowly there came the awareness that He didn't want me to do anything - just to know that He was with me and that He loved me dearly. I came to see my own poverty - my own fears - those fears that lock me in, and Him and others out. I prayed to be freed of these fears and I guess I can see where this is taking place in little ways in the days since then The importance of community came to me, too. On the retreat, our small group met each night for Mass and a meal and being able to share with this group brought home to me how much I need a sharing community...It has been a fantastic experience - recognising what it means to be truly human, to recognise that for Christ to be truly human was to be one of the broken and wounded people, one of the outcasts!"

NEWS...NEWS...

South Africa

LOOKING INTO 1985

We cannot escape the fact that we live in South Africa. Our country, at the moment, is in a state of crisis - there is hatred, fear, guilt, violence and suspicion growing all around us. And it is in the midst of all these tensions that we are called to find Christ and to serve Him.

In what way can we, in all our smallness, be like Jesus in this festering situation? What role can CLC have in South Africa in 1985?

Here are some reflexions:

- * The goal of CLC formation is to help each individual member experience the love of God the Father - because it is only this love which can heal and transform us so that from the very depths of our heart we know that we are either a son or daughter. No longer will we need to find our identity and security in the colour of our skin, nor the amount of money in the bank, nor the type of education we might have received; rather, we will now know that we belong to the family of God. He is our Abba and we are brothers and sisters.
- * But look at our family in South Africa! Some of our brothers and sisters are trying to split the family according to the colour of our skin. And it is this attempt which is breeding hatred, violence, fear, guilt and suspicion amongst the family members.
- * Instead of God's love drawing us closer and closer, hatred, fear and suspicion is forcing us further and further apart. I think it is reasonable to say that if it is God drawing us closer, then it must be Satan inspiring the opposite.
- * Christ's mission on this earth is to draw us back into a loving relationship with the Father and thus to re-

unite us into one family. This is His vision - a vision He died for.

- * As His brothers and sisters,
- do we have a vision?
- do we have a vision that we are prepared to die for?
- do we have a vision - hope for South Africa?
- how can we begin as CLC to put it into action?

I ask each person to prayerfully reflect on this most important issue during one of the group meetings:

- to listen to one another
- to try and hear what God is saying to us as individuals and communities at this critical hour.

AA

Venezuela

Some months ago, in February 1985, the National Community of Venezuela was born. It is the evolution, over several years, of 8 communities and 9 pre-communities that have opted for the Ignatian way of life. The communities are found in the major cities of the country: Maracaibo, Barquisimeto, Merida and Caracas.

These communities are marked by their commitment to service which takes the form of "animating" a youth pastoral center, evangelising and teaching catechism in poor areas, organising youth camps and so on. At the same time members are being formed to integrate faith and life. For the purpose of creating closer and deeper ties among the communities and establishing common programs and activities, like doing the Spiritual Exercises together, going to mission camps and so on, the National Community of the CLC's in Venezuela emerged.

[Information taken from the first issue of the CLC bulletin "Arboles" (Trees)].

Mexico

The latest circular letter from Mexico informs us

that a new vice-ecclesiastical assistant has been named for the Mexican National Community; he is Fr. Luis Valdés Castellanos s. j.

The same letter also gives us news of their up and coming activities, like their national assembly to be held from September 14 to 16, and the national youth meeting they are organising for the beginning of 1986. At the same time the National Executive Council also encourages their members to become involved in the 1987 Synod of Bishops which, as everyone knows, has as its theme; "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World". The members are to participate in the activities of their parish or diocese and take up this theme in the meetings of their CLC groups. We support this initiative and hope that all our CLC members and readers will do likewise.

French-speaking Canada

Our readers might be interested to know that there exist, in some major cities of the U.S. and Canada, several CLC groups among the Vietnamese refugees. These were initiated by Fr. Julian Elizalde s. j., missionary in Vietnam for about 20 years, who is presently taking care of the spiritual guidance of the Vietnamese refugees in these two countries. One of the groups established in Montreal called LINH THAO requested to be affiliated to the French speaking Community.

The information we gather from the French Canadian CLC bulletin is that the group is composed of a dozen members, between the ages of 25 and 30, who are mostly students. They are very active. For example, every Saturday they lead a sharing on the Word for their compatriots which gathers from 20 to 30 persons each time. Every year, when Fr. Elizalde goes to Montreal, they organise retreats in which many participate. They have their recollection day every month. Their main difficulty, for the moment, is the language. They understand French and can express themselves when it is a matter of dealing with ordinary subjects; but they find it hard to have to speak about spiritual things. They will gradually manage, we are sure.