



PROGRESSIO

SUMMARY

JANUARY 1988

7th. Year

.1

- BLESSED RUPERT MAYER -
A WITNESS AND COMPANION TO US
(Ingeborg v.Grafenstein) 3

- A NEW EVANGELIZATION FOR THE
BUILDING OF A NEW SOCIETY
(A. Ibargaray, A. Pomar, J.L. Testa) 11

- FOUR WAYS OF BEING WITNESSES
OF GOD TODAY (Michel Ulens s.j.) 15

- CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES IN POLAND 23

- THE EXPERIENCE OF A CANADIAN GROUP
(Camille Besette) 27

PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY
C.P.6139-(Borgo S.Spirito 8)-00195 Roma-ITALIA
ENGLISH-SPANISH-FRENCH EDITIONS
EDITOR: JOSE REYES

PUBLICACION DE LA COMUNIDAD MUNDIAL DE VIDA CRISTIANA

Toda correspondencia debe ser dirigida a:

C. P. 6139 - 00195 ROMA (Italia)

EDITA Y DISTRIBUYE:

Federación de Comunidades de Vida Cristiana de España

Maldonado, 1 - A - 28006 MADRID (España)

Depósito legal: M. 38.913-1986

IMPRIME:

Impresos y Revistas, S. A. (IMPRESA)

Torneros, 58. Polig. Ind. Los Angeles

GETAFE (Madrid)

**BLESSED RUPERT MAYER S.J. -
A WITNESS AND COMPANION TO US**

When John Paul II, during his recent visit to Germany, beatified Fr Rupert Mayer s.j. he did so in Munich where the new Blessed had lived and worked from 1912 to 1945 (except for 3 years of absence during the First World War and 5 years of imprisonment during the Nazi time). Since his death in 1945 people of all ages and social backgrounds have come in their thousands with their sorrows, prayers, gratitude to his tomb. It is in the crypt of the baroque church of "Our Lady of the Annunciation" which was built in 1710 by the Sodality for Men, i.e. the Marian Congregation, and since then has been their meeting-place. As Rupert Mayer held the charge of what we would call today the "Ecclesiastical Assistant" to this large and then very flourishing Sodality during the critical years between 1921 and 1945, e.g. the uprising, victory and defeat of nazi ideology and political power, he played a prominent role in their courageous attempts to discern the "signs of time" and to actively strive against the common trend and injustice. I was in close collaboration with the lay leaders he formed during those years, mainly within and through the Sodality. He was able not only to speak up boldly and clearly against lies and dangerous developments or to protest vigorously against injustice and political terror, he also managed to save many persons by hiding them, by helping them out with money or other means, so that they could find their way into exile in time. Despite all the risks of working in such a way and even of belonging to such a body as the Sodality, more and more men dared to join the movement. Yet Rupert Mayer's concern was not numbers but a solid formation and preparation for their mission within an

increasingly dechristianized society. He helped them to discern the signs of the time and to give their response in all the areas of life they were involved in as laymen. And he as well was helped by them: it was through his constant close contact with committed lay people, working in all kinds of responsibilities, that he got the information needed for being concrete and up-to-date in his preaching. Though he was not at all a brilliant speaker, people crowded to listen to his sermons because he took up questions that really moved them. Preaching in those years was a means of giving truth a chance in the midst of lies and illusions and to inspire people to witness to Christ and his Church in spite of an atmosphere of violence and hatred.

Thus I feel it is not only his commitment to the particular Munich Sodality which makes it worthwhile to present his life's message and witness here in PROGRESSIO: to me he is not just the "apostle of Munich" as he was called already during his life time, nor just the local saint as he was declared by John Paul II, but like a "city on a hill" he has a message for us in CLC as we try to "unite our human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of our christian faith" (as the General Principles say in n.3) or to live out what we received as "the grace of Loyola '86: "...They invite us to follow Him in His Mission as Mary did - in freedom, poverty and solidarity. They invite us to do so with a listening heart and a determination to work for justice and the defence of life..."

Let us first have a look to the main events of his life and at some of his characteristic ways of acting and thus let ourselves be challenged and encouraged by his example and companionship in our own ways of living out our share in Christ's mission.

1. A man for others - his life-story

Born in 1876 at Stuttgart he grew up in a deeply Christian family: his parents were both committed to the social needs around them and to Church activities and

concerns. He profited from an open-minded education (not self-evident at this time) where music and sports had their place as well as studies and prayer. Talented more in sports and violin-playing than in speculative subjects, Rupert was never a brilliant student but from his early days he worked hard to achieve satisfying results and to make the best use of his talents. Though his decision was clear to become a priest, he made his theological studies at different universities and he participated in the life of other students. Then he entered the seminary for his final preparation towards the priesthood. After his ordination he worked for one year as a parish vicar - already then not just caring for spiritual needs but also for better housing or clothing of those entrusted to him. He then entered the Society of Jesus. As the Jesuits were still expelled from Germany he made his noviciate in Austria and his supplementary studies in the Netherlands. For one year he was socius to the novice-master and for five years worked in a team of Jesuits giving retreats and renewal courses in parishes throughout Germany, Switzerland and Austria. After his tertianship and final vows he was assigned to Munich to start a new pastoral work for the diocese: to care for the ever increasing number of young people leaving their poor farm areas and seeking jobs in the large city. Yet there they experienced new misery and unemployment. They suffered from being cut off from their roots and quite often the practice of their faith. Very soon the bishop saw that he had got the right man for the right place: Rupert Mayer easily found contacts for them. He went to the barracks where these newcomers often lived for years, listened to their problems and looked for solutions with them. He also sought help from a number of generous young Catholics who were ready to commit themselves to the needs of their time and who only needed his inspiration and backing for the work. He clearly saw that only joint efforts would succeed in changing things and that the witness of lived Christian faith and love was not the privilege of priests and nuns (as it was the common way of thinking in those days). So immediately he started to form groups of active lay people whom he cared for very much; a way of proceeding which only needed to be intensified when 9 years later he was assigned to be

the Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Sodality of Men. The same concern for substantial help for families in difficult situations led him to found - together with 2 diocesan priests and three young girls - a new religious community specializing in this matter. From its start in 1913 until Rupert Mayers' death in 1945 he accompanied and sustained the growth of this community besides all his other tasks. The beginning of the First World War brought an interruption to his pastoral work in Munich. He went to care for those wounded and dying in the battle-field. For three years he did so without sparing himself. Again it was his selfless commitment to all their needs combined with his courage and kindness that won their hearts. At the end of 1916 he got wounded himself and lost his right leg. This meant almost one year of recuperation, but it was no barrier to his continuing full-time work as soon as he was back in Munich. There he found a new, tense situation with many social and political troubles, fighting and a growing gap between rich and poor. This meant that it was not enough to continue as before, but he must go to where people were now struggling. He felt the need to help them as they searched for new directions in the turmoil of lost values and new political ideas and ideologies. Thus he spoke to the returning soldiers in order to open their minds to reconciliation and courageous efforts to build up a new and more just society. He insisted on many occasions that fidelity in faith could not be separated from solidarity, justice and love. He also dared to go to the places where convictions were expressed and consciences were influenced in one way or another, e.g. the numerous political gatherings where people, especially workers and countless unemployed and frustrated men sought for a solution to their problems or at least a new vision and hope. There he felt the Christian vision was needed to build a more just and healthy society and there he went, listening and observing as well as speaking up and exposing himself - a dangerous thing in an atmosphere of tension, suspicion and often hatred. He was threatened several times by fanatics, especially in a meeting organized by the newly emerging national-socialist party some months before Hitler's first attempt to take over, when Rupert Mayer frankly explained to the audience that he did

not see how it was compatible to be a Christian and a member of that party. Ten years before Hitler obtained political power, his own analysis of the given situation was clear, and so he did not hesitate to share his insights with others and to warn the thousands of people he regularly reached by his many sermons and public speeches. His words became even stronger and more urgent as the danger he had foreseen and predicted for so long became more and more a reality. Thus it was natural that his name was on the black list as soon as the national-socialists had come to power in 1933. Facing the danger, he continued to call things by their right name and thus opened the eyes of those blinded by false promises or frightened by all kinds of threats. And even more, he didn't hesitate to protest against injustices committed by the police or authorities and to detect lies and calumnies in the mass-media propaganda. As a consequence he was taken to court and condemned to six months in prison. Already it was 1937. After being released, he himself had decided to preach again in the same way and to run the same risk as before. But his bishop and his provincial, wanting to save his life (he was already 61 years old then and not in good health), asked him to abstain from preaching for a while and to concentrate on his many other pastoral and social activities. He did so in obedience but with sadness in his heart, because he knew this could mislead people into thinking that he was being intimidated and ready to agree with the official political line. Yet he doubled his efforts to strengthen individuals and small groups of courageous people, especially students, as well as his men in the Sodality - trying to assist them in their own discernment and in their actions according to their belief. And so, even while he was not allowed to preach, he remained a suspect person the nazis wanted to eliminate as one of their most influential opponents. In November 1939 he was detained again and this time brought to the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen. After nine months of complete isolation from any other prisoner, of hunger and lack of necessary medical care he was close to death. A Father Mayer dying as a martyr however would have been even more "dangerous" for public opinion (already his imprisonment had aroused strong reactions among the Munich population) than a free one would have been.

So those in power found a much more elegant solution. In August 1940 he was transferred to a benedictine monastery in the South of Germany where he remained confined until the day of liberation 1945. Behind the walls of the monastery he was "free" and able to recover physically; but he was completely cut off from the outside. He was not able to speak out the truth as before, nor be with those suffering more and more from the bombing in Munich, nor allowed to assist those whom he used to serve as a priest and as a friend in all kinds of troubles. Even more than being reduced to a completely passive way of being with those in pain and need, he was tormented by questions like: Why did the bishop and his provincial give in to the nazis' demands - though he had asked them not to spare him? What would the faithful say while he was having his peaceful time in a monastery far from distress while they were exposed in the battlefield or bombed in their houses? Wouldn't they be scandalized by this? To accept this decision in obedience and to entrust it to the Lord that he would turn even this to a good end was harder for him than the experiences in prison and made these five years of silence the greatest trial in his life. Yet this was not the end. Three days after the capitulation he was back again in Munich, terrified by the devastation of war and yet immediately taking up his part in the immense task of starting again from point zero. Free again to preach, he encouraged people to trust in a new beginning and to give their best to the common tasks, he pleaded for solidarity and love and reconciliation instead of denunciation or bitterness, he inspired faith and hope instead of resignation and despair. And just as in the years preceding his imprisonment he was present for all those who turned to him for help in various problems; 50 to 70 people a day used to come in order to ask for food or heating or jobs, etc. Again he didn't rest until he found ways to at least soften their misery and restore hope and trust in a loving God. Yet his mission was fulfilled now. Only six months after the liberation he suffered a stroke during mass on the feast of All Saints while preaching; with the words "the Lord... the Lord... the Lord" he ended what he had to say and do here. Two hours later he was called into the light and peace of the

Lord whom he had served so unreservedly in his brothers and sisters.

2. A challenge to us

Looking at the life of Rupert Mayer as we have tried to do may cause different reactions within us. It might be interesting for a group to share what are - for each one of its members - the points that have a special impact on each person and then to help one another to discern what might be each person's own answer to such a challenge.

To finish let me highlight three strong points that touch me very much and propose some questions flowing from them which might be worthwhile to consider and pray about:

- 1) Rupert Mayer was not an especially talented man in the normal use of the term. But he used the talents given to him as much as he could for making Christ's love present wherever he lived.

How do I use my talents? Do I use them or rather complain for not having more or better ones? Do I invest them into my share in Christ's mission? Do I use them in collaboration with others so that we can complete each other as 1 Cor 12, 4-31 tell us to do?

- 2) Rupert Mayer always saw his place where people were in need, were longing for life and light and truth, were struggling and suffering. He didn't rest until he could bring help or, if there was no means of helping, staying there - not caring about the cost to himself.

How prompt and creative is my love? How long does it last? Am I ready to expose myself to pain and suffer-

ing or am I easily trying to avoid distress and danger or sorrow? What are the main blocks and hindrances to love in my own life? Do I really pray as Ignatius invites us to do in his "prayer for generosity", to "work and not to seek for rest... to fight and not to heed the wounds...?"

- 3) In his clarity of discernment, Rupert Mayer surely could rely on a good dose of common sense and solid information which he always tried to get. But of even greater importance, so it seems to me, was that his life-style and resolution to really do what he recognized to be God's will, disposed him to see clearly and to act strongly.

When I look honestly at my lifestyle as it is: where does it help me - and where does it hinder me - in following Christ poor and humble? And how can I use better my CLC way of life in order to discern more clearly and to live out more firmly what I discerned? Thinking of my community: how can we support each other in this matter?

After all I am sure we can count on Rupert Mayer as companion and helper on our road and in our struggle to live out our mission today.

Ingeborg v.Grafenstein

Mission - Evangelization

A NEW EVANGELIZATION FOR THE BUILDING OF A NEW SOCIETY

In PROGRESSIO N.4 - 1987 we published the first part of this article written by members of the Argentinian CLC on the World Day of Youth. The second part offers a synthesis of the statements which Cardinal Pironio made on that occasion. The challenge of evangelization concerns the core of our CLC mission, and so we deemed it useful to publish this summary.

A contemplation of Jesus - His person, His words and saving deeds - shall bring us to a fundamental conclusion: with Jesus everything is evangelization and this teaches us that evangelization is neither a temporary, nor a circumstantial activity of our lives. Essentially evangelization involves all that we are. We are either evangelizers or not, as we are either Christians or not.

It is necessary that our contemplation contains three key elements:

- The Holy Spirit introducing us to the Word that we are to announce, and into the hearts of the people who will receive it.
- The Good News - i.e. the announcing of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world (John 4,42);
- The poor, the first people addressed in Jesus' Gospel, because they are disposed more than anybody else to receive the Good News and to welcome the Kingdom in their hearts (cfr Mt 5,3).

There can't be any "new evangelization" without a new demonstration of the Holy Spirit, who helps us to penetrate contemplatively and with delight into God's Word and gives us, at the same time, the profound capacity of discovering Jesus and to serve Him through the poor. The challenge of a new evangelization for the construction of a new society suggests three basic ideas:

- it involves proclaiming Jesus Christ again and again.
- The purpose of this proclamation is the conversion of all men and women.
- This does not mean a "new Christianity" but the evangelization of cultures.

A new evangelization

The reality of a world transformed by technological, cultural, political, sociological and economical systems is calling forth the challenge of a new evangelization. It supposes efforts towards the achievement of:

- an evangelical reading of history (to discover the new signs of the times);
- a permanent deepening of the mystery of Christ (His person, His work and His word);
- the interior changes in men and women and the transformation of society.

Three things are leading us to believe in the efficaciousness and creativity (as well as urgency and universality) of a "new evangelization", more committed to the full freedom of peoples:

- The awareness of a dramatic historical situation characterized by the crosses of famine, violence and the huge social, economic and political imbalances,

- the experience of solidarity with human suffering,
- the deeper, more communitarian (and more ecclesial) understanding of the full ministry of Christ.

An evangelization like this - intrinsically committed to the transformation of society - calls for three attitudes in the Church:

- a) A constant and renewed spirit of conversion which allows the Lord to evangelize the Church.
- b) A readiness to accept humiliation and death, as Jesus did, in the service of others. This means living the Mystery of the Incarnation.
- c) An indissoluble integration of evangelization and development of peoples, as well as the true and full liberation of all men and women.

The civilization of love

Paul VI and John Paul II have spoken of a "civilization of love" as the fruit of a new evangelization.

What will be the essential elements of this quite new civilization of love? They will be truth, freedom, justice, respect, defence of human rights, life, love and peace.

And how can one contribute concretely, while still young, to the construction of that civilization of love? A concrete form would consist in the full acceptance of the motto which the Pope has proposed for these Days: "We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love towards ourselves" (1 John 4,16).

What can we do for peace? Let us not wait for the third millennium. We have to start at once. Working for peace means, first of all, living an evangelical way of life that is based on love. A path of peace for young

people consists in generosity, a simple life-style, cooperation with others, solidarity with those who suffer, all in a truly Christian spirit: "as Christ has loved us".

Our Young People

Without a detailed analysis of the situation of youth, we can point out some positive characteristics:

- a) a special sensitivity to human problems;
- b) an evangelical commitment to justice, freedom and full liberation.
- c) preferential option for the poor;
- d) a strong hunger for God and His justice;
- e) a great demand for coherence between faith and life.

This leads us to a reflection on our young people in the light of a "new evangelization" for the construction of the "civilization of love". Here are some concrete and urgent requirements:

- a) the need for saints;
- b) prayer and contemplation;
- c) joy and hope, as the fruit of God's love and as signs of the Holy Spirit;
- d) a true sense of the Church - ecclesial communion;
- e) a spirit which incarnates the Gospel in the world by the quality of our presence in it.

In this work of evangelization, we shall lift our eyes towards Mary: "May She be the guiding star of the continuing evangelization that the Church, obedient to the Lord's command, must promote and realize, most of all in these difficult times which are full of hope" (E.N.81).

A. Ibargaray, A. Pomar, J.L. Testa
(Members of the Argentinian CLC)

Youth - Mission

A continuation (Part II) of "Do not fear, You are the salt of the Earth", published in PROGRESSIO n.4 - 1987.

FOUR WAYS OF BEING WITNESSES OF GOD

Up till now, I have after all only invited you to be prudent and hopeful. I have said to you but one thing: the Lord has to take his time to educate you, to make you the good missionaries that He wants you to be.

Your first mission then is to form a relationship with Him and trust Him completely. Even at night, or when you feel weak and poor, God is educating you and preparing you.

But, is the mission only for the future? Should we not worry about it now? Must we wait until we are completely ready? No! Absolutely not! More than anything else, I'm afraid that this is often a trap in the CLC: We never stop educating ourselves, we never assume that we are capable of throwing ourselves into the water. We are too often afraid!

Even if his followers had to go through Jesus' Passion to appreciate fully His path, it is still true that he sent them out on mission very early. The fact is, if you've found out some truth about Jesus, you are already ready to bear witness to it.

Surely the idea that we have of mission, especially at the beginning, is very simplistic; while the disciples were already healing, they were also failing, and Jesus reproached them for their lack of faith.

Of course we do not say everything that there is to say about Jesus. And please do not take it too hard if people sometimes smile at your ideas. It is true that very often, at the age of sixteen, we have not gone through

enough to understand the difficulty which some people, who have had different wounds than ours, may have in believing the words which we proffer. But there is at the same time one grace that your age has: that of freshness, the marvel of first love; of that, everybody has a great need. When you discover the Lord, do not hesitate to bring testimony of it to Christians, even to those who are in the dark! With humility of course, but at the same time, with firmness! I am not going to conceal from you that at a time when there was deep night in my religious life, in one of these moments when the Lord was educating me, I said to my superior that I was unable to find any other strength to keep going except that of the amazement I felt at seeing Him at work changing the hearts of my companions. In the Church we ought not to have those who know and those who learn. We ought always to have those who learn from one another!

How then can you be witnesses from today on? There is no rule which applies to everybody. Some need to be stimulated, pushed out of their shells; others have to be moderated. It is up to each one to decide what can be of help.

1. Let my acts be witnesses along with my words

To be a witness, is not just talking about the Lord, it is also living in such a way that - I quote the Gospel - In seeing your good works, people will honor your Father (Mt 5,16). This is saying the same thing as the prayer which you surely know: "Help me to be so kind and happy that all those who come near me can feel your presence". These are not supposed to be words blown into the wind; they should be lived and seen.

And if we are called to be witnesses of the love of God, we must begin here and now. If we believe that we do not know how to be witnesses of this love until the day we are in India, we are kidding ourselves; it is here and now that we must learn to love. If God is your rock, your inner strength, you will have less need to join the team of the strong, to take shelter among those who love you.

You will be able to find those who are most in need of help, those who are rejected, you will begin to live in solidarity with all those in your class. Quite a few lose all credence because they proclaim too soon their faith in Jesus, without their lives being in tune with their faith: "If salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men" (Mt 5,12). Happy are you if you not only listen to Jesus' words and proclaim them, but also live in accordance with them.

I remember a fourth year class which had just come back from retreat - all fire and excitement. They had decided to collaborate closely and take care of those who were weaker. After eight days, they began to understand that it was not as easy as that. Those whom they were visiting to offer help, were not welcoming them as benefactors. Or again, the man full of rhetoric, who accompanied me to a children's camp. On the very first night he wanted to go back home because the kids were insubordinate and ungrateful. Here he was, spending his vacation for them! But if loving was that easy, a lot more people would be doing it! What extraordinary things would we do?. Do not the Pagans do the same thing?. Is it not a bit too easy to love for the purpose of being admired? How far away this is from the love freely given by the Father, who will love us in our poverty and not for our strength. That is the love of God, that has to be our love! Then, you must ask yourself if what really keeps pushing you forward is the need of the other and your desire to be a witness of God's tenderness.

2. To look on with humility, as the Lord does

And in fact, it is not really what we do but the way in which we do it that will be a witness of our faith. And that is good then! Because many can't afford the luxury of choosing their work, because some do not even have a job and perhaps this may be our case.

There is one way of looking at those we encounter which is in itself a testimony. I remember this word of a

friend of mine about one of my Jesuit companions: "When you speak to him, you can feel that you exist in his eyes". In many of our relationships, are we more worried about ourselves than we are about the other? Do we look at other people in such a way that they can feel that they are worth something to us? Do we look at our companions with hope, certain that everyone is capable of doing better? Do we look with tenderness and truthfulness without emphasizing their weaknesses and pushing them into a corner? Are we as concerned as Jesus is, who loves the sinner while hating the sin? Have we the concern of Gabriel when he came to see Rodrigo in his cell? (A scene from the movie - The Mission). If his words were tough, this is because he believed in him! Never give up hope on a person. Never say: "They are poor"! And it is not even a matter of giving them a chance to see if they have something in them after all. No, nobody is ever to be shunned, nobody is a poor person and nothing more, each one is unique and worthy of being loved! The fact is that we are not saints enough to take care of one another with God's care. There is a second aspect which seems to be fundamental to being a Christian: Humility. To be able to truly encounter people who are wounded, you must be very humble! A wounded person cannot tolerate condescension. Then if you believe that being a missionary is to go towards others believing that you bring all the truth and love, you will go towards disaster, bearing false testimony. In order for your message to be listened to, the person listening to you has to feel that you are humbler than he or she is, and poor in spirit. Only if that person feels that you do not think too much of yourself, that you do not think that you are better than he or she is, perhaps they will begin to listen to you and will discover that your only strength, your only driving force, is the love that God has filled you with.

How can you acquire this humility? Once again, through the large and small darknesses of our lives, the experience of our limits, our sins which make us feel full of shame, the loss of our illusions about ourselves, until one day we cry out with Elias: "Oh I'm worth no more than my Fathers! (1 Kings 19,4). And then too, all the

importance that Jesus gives to the purification of our pride in the constant and humble request to forgive our brothers and sisters every time they have something against us, whether we are right or wrong. Then there is the important place of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where we drop our masks, where we stop thinking that we are bigger than we are and recognize that we are small sinners, and discover the joy of a free pardon! Holiness is that joy!

This kind of humility means that the person out on mission is not to be full of affectation. It is the awareness that we are nothing without the love of God, that we have received all we have and that we are poor in the sense in which I was speaking before. We understand what humility is, especially when our little experiences teach us that we have still a lot to learn about the meaning of: loving truthfully. Certainly Christians have within themselves a certitude that makes them ready to give their life: they know that they can find the trust of all people in the person and in the face of Jesus. Hence the importance of contemplation, of attending to the Gospel so as to discover who Jesus really is, to understand Him from the inside in order to live like Him. But Christians are also conscious of their myopia, and how short sighted they are especially when they encounter other people, the poorest among them in particular. But through them they will further discover the face of Jesus and what the love of God is. Taking every thing into account, there is at least as much to learn and to receive as there is to teach and to give. A real relationship is always mutual. It is hard to believe that we will always have something to learn from everybody.

During this holiday I had the chance to live for a while among the drug-addicts and alcoholics in Berdine, in the south of France. I am not quite sure that I would have been able to live in those circumstances a few years ago because my inner confidence in Jesus was not yet great enough to allow me to start a new life at the center of a world which was very different from the one I was accustomed to. Living differently always gives me a feeling of

fear, of uncertainty. Living totally in this situation, without any intention of bringing some great testimony, I tried to bring a glimpse of Jesus to everybody and, moreover, to discover from them, what I could, about my Lord. After eight hours, hearts began opening up on both sides. And particularly, in one meeting with a drug addict I was deeply touched by a feeling of purity, of justice and injustice and a feeling of God as well, in a way I had never felt before; I was feeling very small compared to him; he revealed to me the real face of the Lord, a face that I had not met through the others in the group! Certainly it seemed that I did have something to give him, talents to share, but how much more did I receive!

3. Do not blush, and speak simply

It was only after having spoken of this manner of being humble, in which everybody knows they have to learn from the other, that I could emphasize here the importance of the testimony of the word, because if the latter is respectful and humble, it won't be rejected.

In your classes, in your school, there are more believers than you would think, but there is a fear of admitting belief which has to be overcome. I have always been struck by the fact that in the same school one class of rhetoricians can sometimes have many people joining their group of believers while another has none! But the most extraordinary thing here was my having to learn that a class, magnificent in its openness to God, had declared only three years before that it was almost atheistic. In the 4th class in fact, during a retreat a priest had asked how many of them believed in God: only three hands were raised... By contrast among the rhetoricians there was a simple expression of faith of which the following anecdote is a good example: during a school trip, one of the group had been in complete silence for half an hour with his eyes closed (in the bus). A person next him, who did not belong to a group of believers, at a certain point asked him: "are you sleeping?" "No, I am praying". "Oh" the other one said a bit astonished, "is this something that

happens to you very often?". "Every day" the other one answered. "Well, in a certain way I do too. How do you do it" and there they were talking away... What had happened during these years? Some of them had dared enough to declare themselves believers, to involve themselves in some strong experiences at the level of faith and evangelization, such as for example, the celebration of Holy Week... and since these kids did not act at all like bigots and were well integrated in their class, the others lost their reserve and began talking to them about their faith.

During the period of your retreat in particular, dare to be witnesses to what you believe in. And do not be upset if you feel that your words have no echo. It is never possible to measure on the spot the results of a testimony. The IMPORTANT THING IS TO TESTIFY, NOT TO CONVINCE! It is up to the Lord, and not up to you, to convert hearts. This is why Jesus says to us: "When you have done all you have been told to do, say, 'We are merely servants we have done no more than our duty'".

How should one testify? It is not necessary to say on all occasions: "I am a Christian, you know". But there are thousands of opportunities. Speak of an experience lived with others, or of a great prophet of our time, of a small community you have come across, or a film like "Mission". See what people have understood about it and help them to understand even better the lives of the characters in it and the meaning of their lives.

4. A mission everyone grasps: PRAYER

When you feel shyest among people, when you find no use for yourself in anything, let me try to help you one last time and this is for everybody. The mission is not accomplished by being good and performing good deeds, it starts with Jesus whose servants we are. Its purpose is to lead more people towards Him, and there is at least one thing which is within everybody's reach: prayer.

Pray for the people you meet, for those you see in need, for those in whom you see the Lord at work. It is after all the most fundamental mission of every Christian to confide the ones you love to God and to so act that your heart could always expand in order that those you bring secretly to God may become more and more numerous. Are you the most intrepid and audacious amongst all those who are here? ask yourself if you pray, in the certitude that first of all, all depends on God and not only on yourself.

In particular, when someone is suffering, the important thing is not to say a lot of words, but to be there, to pray, and to show that the trial your brother or sister is going through does not shake your faith. Think of Gabriel next to Rodrigo. He did not try to convince him of the love of God; he did not say very much; he certainly had to suffer a lot seeing Rodrigo destroying himself and lugging his burden. He did not want to minimize Rodrigo's trial; neither did he want to surround him with tenderness, to hug him against his heart, because it was not up to him to replace God. Jesus is the one who saves, not us! But he prayed for Rodrigo, he suffered with him, and by simply being there he was the living proof of these words: "Do not be afraid, I am with you! Do not be afraid, He is with you". And only after Rodrigo had gone through the experience of pardon and resurrection, was Gabriel able to show the tenderness of his heart and to hug him.

Michel ULENS s.j.

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITIES IN POLAND

The first CLC Communities in Poland came into existence in 1978, and were followed by others in 1982. Now there are 27 communities in all, nine of which are at a Pre-community stage. Our National Community was affiliated to the World Community in August 1986 at Loyola during the CLC World Assembly.

A year ago we started a stable coordination of life within our National Community and we began developing bonds with the World Community. We have been in touch by mail with representatives of all National Communities in the world, at least by sending holiday greetings. We also ensure a permanent flow of information and formation materials to all our communities. For five years now we have been organizing regularly (about three times a year) two days of formation meetings for guides and coordinators of all our communities. In October 1986 a Pastoral Centre of Ignatian Spirituality for laity was established. The Centre offers an ancillary service to the Polish CLC. Its particular aim is to discover and deepen the spirituality of our movement as well as that of our mission. There are five work-groups within the Centre:

- the mission of the laity
- the CLC spirituality
- evangelisation
- the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in daily life
- seminars preparing spiritual guides for the Spiritual Exercises.

As a result of their work the five groups have prepared and promoted formation materials and, as well, have prepared and conducted formation meetings and seminars for CLC.

This past year four two day national formation meetings for guides and coordinators of all our communities have been held. The meetings were devoted to the issues which, right now, are most crucial to the growth of our communities. One of these meetings was devoted to the temporary commitment to live the CLC way of life. From the beginning of the development of our communities we have been encouraging our members, after the minimum of one year's growth in a community, to take up the task of deepening the grace of being called to live the CLC life. This can be fulfilled through concrete measures aimed at the development of the attitudes and values crucial to the identity of our vocation. Our experience proves that making a formal Commitment is an important element integrating us both within ourselves and within a community. We have come to a deeper understanding of the content of this Commitment and elaborated it anew. In the new text we take into account our concrete reality and the development of the movement throughout the world. This text of the Commitment formulates in a dynamic form the values and attitudes by which each of our members is supposed to live and grow in his/her CLC vocation. A large number of our members have made the Commitment which defines our way of life and acting.

Another meeting was devoted to mission. The general understanding of mission has been deepened, and in particular, there has been a growing awareness of our internal and external commitments to the mission of Christ. Since the starting point of our groups was evangelization, our special concern has been to develop in our members the attitude of self evangelization and the evangelization of others.

The subject matter of another meeting was the identity of a guide and coordinator. By separating these two functions, the responsibility for the growth of a community has increased. Work on interpreting functions in individual communities helped in clarifying tasks and crystallizing roles and the way of acting in groups.

Three seminars for coordinators and guides have been held this year:

- a five days' seminar aimed at the preparation of group coordinators for working in groups,
- an eight days' seminar aimed at the preparation of guides for working in groups.
- a four days' seminar aimed at discerning what are the most urgent appeals coming from our society and the subsequent commitment of our CLC today.

This last seminar helped us see the value of an integral personal and community development. In the dimension of personal life, we see the importance of focusing on and developing the following values and attitudes:

- the development of the attitude of self fulfilment which is supposed to help us develop all our gifts, abilities, talents, thus enabling us to respond to the changing reality in a creative and active way;
- a fuller acceptance of ourselves and a fuller personal integration, with particular sensitivity to the integration and development of our social involvement, taking into account family or single life as a way of life;
- the development of the attitude of discernment of various aspects of our life, commitments and activities connected with conscious decision-making and assuming responsibility for it;
- conscious growing in our faith formed on the basis of discovering the presence of God in our life - "here and now" along with incorporating it in our life. It will lead us to freeing ourselves from schizophrenia between faith and life, faith and social justice and love;
- experiencing daily life, particularly its difficult moments such as stress, frustrations, conflicts, fears, anxieties as a chance for personal growth;
- the development of self-evangelization and evangelization of others, and bearing witness to the world around us with our lives, attitudes and actions.

In the dimension of community life we have found the following important:

- seeing a community not only as a place of formation but also of discernment and apostolic commitment;
- an important attitude and method of working in a community is discernment and putting into life what has been discerned. In the process of discerning the concreteness of goals, tasks, activities and commitments should be emphasized;
- in an apostolic and social commitment - forming the attitudes of fidelity to ideals, evangelical patience, courage in overcoming difficulties;
- seeing more fully the various forms of human poverty and the need for a greater involvement in support of the poor.

It should be stressed that the seminar used the dynamics of discernment in a community, thus deepening our experience of discernment. It gave a basis for the revision of life and commitments in individual communities. The seminar gave directions for work in groups, in the immediate future.

In our National Community we put much emphasis on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the most important means of deepening the grace of being called into the CLC. This year we have organized eleven rounds of eight day Ignatian retreats.

The development and growth of newly established communities is a special concern of our National Community. Seven new communities have come into existence this year. We have ministered to them, among other things, by conducting three formation meetings for the leaders of the new groups.

Our National Community values a lot the experiences of other National Communities. We want to express our gratitude and appreciation to all those who have been willing to share their experiences with us.

A CLC member

Formation - CLC Process

THE EXPERIENCE OF A CANADIAN GROUP

I want to share some of the experiences of my small CLC community. I will consider three main points, all in light of the Spiritual Exercises:

- I. The history of our group
- II. Its community life
- III. Its spiritual life

I. The history of our group

A. The foundation of our group

In 1984 Fr Remi Potvin got together a few people with a view to relaunching the CLC among adults of 30 to 40 years of age. At the time he spoke about it to me, I had just finished the complete Spiritual Exercises in daily life. Since I truly had the desire to extend in some way the experience that I had just lived, I immediately accepted. We thus formed a group of seven in September 1984, in a small room in the Church of the Gesu.

We were seven very different persons, men and women between thirty and forty years of age, coming from very different cultural and social milieus. To talk like Fr Futrell, I would not have married any of them! The first meeting was devoted to breaking the ice. Two weeks later, at the second meeting, there were three new recruits. We began to read and share the Gospel and made some stammering attempts to sketch out plans for the future. And thus we continued during the following weeks: a few people joined us and a few left.

At Fr Potvin's suggestion we decided to adopt a method for giving life to our meetings. It had to do with the "Followers of Jesus". This is a method for forming CLC

groups, prepared according to the spirit of the Exercises (though able to be used by other groups too), and a fruit of the experiences had by the Anglo-Canadian CLC, at the initiative of their guide, Father John English, s.j.

This method was exceedingly valuable at the start. It helped us to avoid the mistakes that are the lot of timid adults who do not know each other. It let us gradually to discover each person's interior motives, within the discreet limits set by the theme of each meeting. But we abandoned it after a year for a number of reasons, and without making any long investigations into them.

Then we began our Second Year. We were flying with our own wings. We had become a true community, a volunteer group of adults, to cite Fr Futrell, and our "communion" was faith enlightened through the Exercises. There were four of us, plus our group guide. We established a programme for the coming year. The meetings involved a period of listening: in this exchange, we closed our eyes in a darkened room and each person freely recounted in what way God had most spoken to him or her during the past two weeks. Each one could then communicate to the group what the stories told by the others had inspired them to say, and in turn respond themselves to the reflections expressed by the others on their own story.

Thus, the listening and sharing, the common prayer with the psalms, the sharing from the Gospel, the preparation of the World Assembly of CLC at Loyola 1986, and the organization of the group became the programme from September 1985 to September 1986. In addition to all this, the following recommendation was made that each of the four members make an effort to give the Exercises. One person out of the group was already giving them, another had the project in mind. So, a beginning was made.

B. Rupture

It was during the course of the meetings devoted to structuring our group that the light shone forth. We were trying to think how to recruit new members, what

procedures to follow to integrate them into our group. It was then that we gasped with amazement that the four members had all done the Spiritual Exercises completely, and three of them within ordinary life. Astonishment and alleluia. This was then our core and our motive force. A number of people had filed through the door of the Gesu to join our group, and those that had remained were the only ones who had done the Exercises.

This was a revelation for us: the key to our operation. We decided very quickly that each new member or aspirant should have completed the full Exercises before joining us. These few months would prepare us to receive the new recruits, and they would be notified, at the end of the Exercises, that the group existed.

Our approach has begun to give forth some interesting fruits. This year, two persons have begun the Exercises, and finished them; they have been with us since Spring, increasing our ranks by a spectacular 50%. We were four in number, and now we are six!

C. Development of the group

1. The surprising discovery that all our stable members had done the Exercises, sent us back to the history of the CLCs. In fact, the CLCs were born out of the Exercises. For some years, Ignatius had given the Exercises mostly to laypeople. These persons, once the experience had ended, insisted on remaining in contact with Ignatius, and wanted to live according to the spirit of the Exercises. Thus it was that there formed around Ignatius a kind of community that one might consider as the first CLC. The fact that a number of the members of this first community later on formed a religious order, the Society of Jesus, did not at all put an end to the lay community, which is still going on. The CLC thus came into being out of the Exercises: we had retraced the history of the first group from its origins without knowing it.

2. Another surprising thing: in 1981 the world CLC secretariate published the results of a survey of our process of formation throughout the world. This survey

revealed that the groups develop according to the same steps as the Exercises. In fact, the groups go from a pre-community stage, which last from about three months to a year, to an initiation stage, which last from one to two years and is the equivalent of the "Principle and Foundation". We are now at that stage. There then follows, with very elastic limits, a redemptive stage, equivalent to the first week. Then there follows the second week phase, at the end of which the Commitment is normally made. Thus the Exercises form a valuable pedagogy.

II. The group's community life

What remains of the Exercises within our community life? There are three elements to be brought out:

a) discernment, b) confidence and c) caring for others

a) Discernment

This typically Ignatian method of evaluation and coming to decision has remained with us. Each big decision to be taken, is discussed within the group, matured and prayed over for some time, and then discussed further. At the end of these phases we are, almost always, unanimously agreed on the decision to be taken.

While doing the Exercises the retreatant is called upon to scrutinize his or her emotions and different responses in order to be able to recognize the movements of the Spirit. After the Exercises, this practice leads us to search constantly for the divine action within us. By means of listening and reflection, we try to do this all together and leave the field free for God within our lives and recognize His continual providence.

b) Confidence

This attitude brings confidence with it. In fact, we are happy. All the events in our lives, even the most harmless and the most mild, bear the hand of God. We are drawn into accomplishing His Reign with such a vivid sense of being held, that nothing can unnerve us. We are so sure that He is everywhere and is seeking to use us to the

30 -

maximum, that JOY attends us everywhere, even in the most hateful happenings of life. We can then be stronger when the time comes to go through it, so that God may kill several birds with one stone (this is truly the hallmark of God). In short, as I said before, we are a happy group.

c) Caring for others

A corollary of this confidence in divine action in our lives is our concern for what our other group members are going through. In them too God is working to establish his Kingdom. And even if our programme involves very few exclusively social gatherings, we are always astonished to see how far God will go to sketch out his motifs in the tapestries of our lives. It was the poet Rilke in his letters to a young poet, who said that "fate is like a wide and magnificent fabric, in which each thread is laid by an infinitely gentle hand..." Right from the first day when I read that image, I solidly visualize the Creator slowly unrolling this marvelous fabric of our lives, surprising us at each turn by the richness of the motif and the density of the colours.

As a group, we are trying discreetly to discover and to admire the work of God within each person's "fabric". And we are convinced that our lives are solidly joined one to another, and not just with regard to our group life. On this subject, I should like to quote the Jesuit General Fr Kolvenbach, who said at Loyola: "We are solidly joined to others for our lives and even for our salvation. This solidarity for our lives is inscribed within our human nature, since it is a reflection in each person of the communion of the Trinity".

III. The group's spiritual life

What remains of the Exercises in the more specifically spiritual aspects of our groups?

a) Prayer

First of all the taste for and the habit of praying. From colloquy to colloquy in the Exercises, our heart

overflows, and now finds it necessary to converse regularly with the Trinity. At times we offer the group the treasures gleaned during this quest for God. But, even if prayer is an active motor within us, it remains hidden.

b) Circularity

Then, we have remarked that we remain "hooked" on one exercise in particular. One person may be obsessed for months by the details of the Contemplation to obtain love. Another, without ceasing, goes over the tableau of the Assumption. It is as if, in some underground source, the water of the Exercises quietly nourishes our group, and even unbeknowns to us.

c) Giving the Exercises

The third spiritual richness of the Exercises in our group is one that everyone desires, but that not all have experienced. It is to accompany the people who are doing the Exercises. This step constitutes a valuable nourishment. It is in helping others do the Exercises that we ourselves digest them, and unceasingly remasticate them so as to extract from them their inexhaustible abundance.

In our group there is a marked desire to deepen the pedagogy of the Exercises, so that they can become, by our means, an instrument of service to the Church.

And we are not the only ones to feel like this. The World Assembly at Loyola reaffirmed that the identity of the CLCs is based on the Spiritual Exercises. The Assembly recommended, among other things, that a training team be made up to help those who are guiding others in the Exercises... It underscored the need to verify the tie between the CLC and the Exercises. Finally, it affirmed that social analysis can be clarified by the Exercises.

Camille Bessete