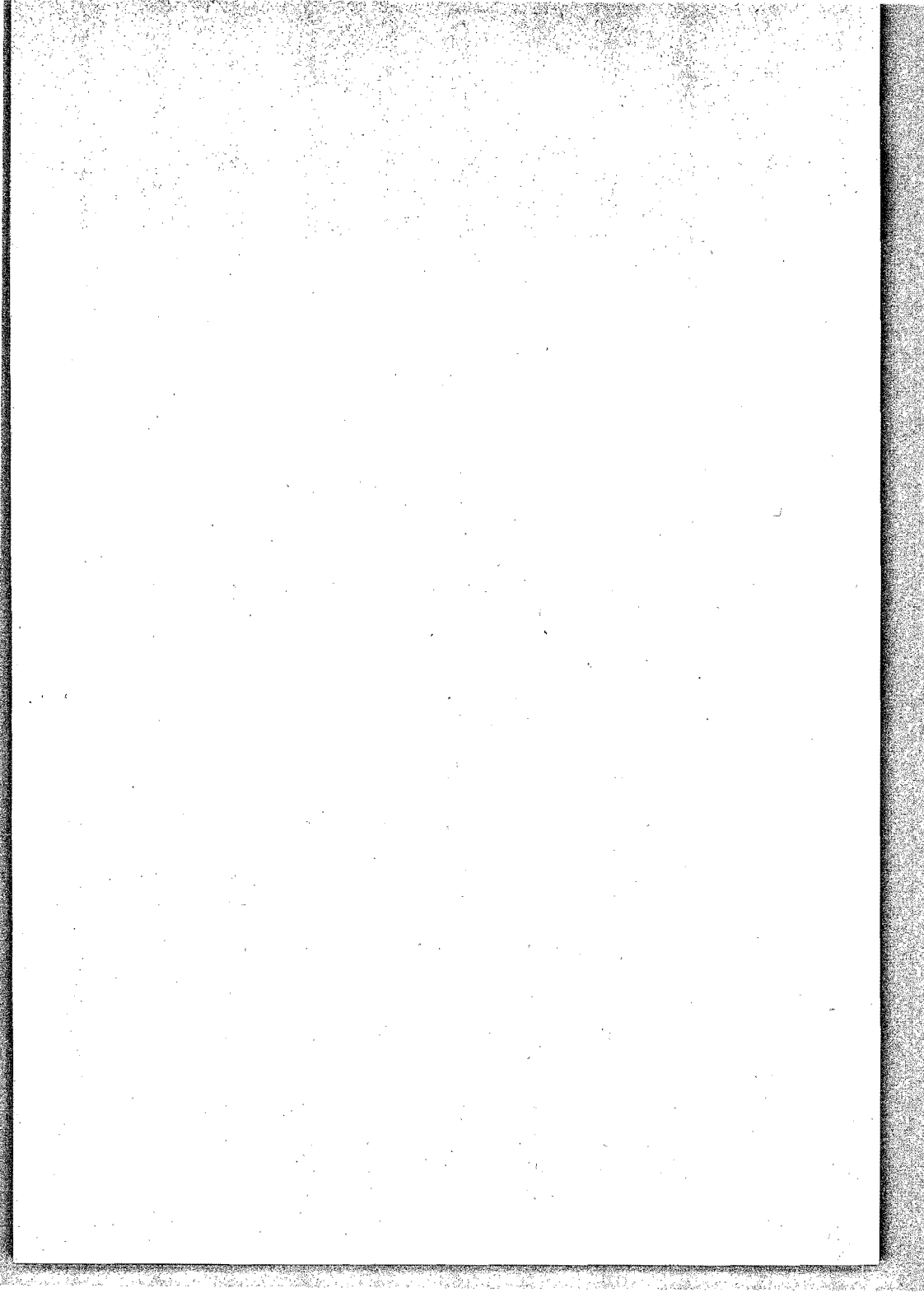




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Community and Mission

GLIMPSES OF REAL COLLABORATION

Patricia Jones from Liverpool, England, gave a paper on the Laity and Formation to the Synod in Oct. 1987. She speaks of formation as "releasing in people the power that is within them". On collaborative ministry, she speaks of "the interdependence of vocations experienced in many situations" and a "conviction that formation should involve priests and people together". "We need collaboration in ministry because it reveals the nature of the Church most effectively". "The gifts available to the community are multiplied... the effects of collaborative ministry resemble Jesus feeding the 5000 on a few loaves and fishes". "We need encouragement to develop, through formation, more active participation by lay people in those moral choices and political actions which shape our society and world... This must be a priority for formation, and means learning to live with conflict even within ourselves and our communities. But conflict like failure must sometimes be part of our witness. Here as in all of our lives, we are living the cross of Christ and must accept the pain".

I have "worked with" people in our own Catholic Church (and others) in a variety of ways over a number of years. Last year I was invited to write on my experience of collaboration, and in the rich reflection which preceded the writing, deepened my own experience and understanding in a way I wouldn't have believed possible. Before that, collaboration was just a word for me. I was very stimulated by Patricia Jones' paper, and it has led me to further reflect in this way on my own experience.

I have been a member of a Christian Life Community since 1983, and of the Victorian Guiding Community of 5 (3 lay and 2 Jesuits) for over a year. My experiences/glimpses of "real" collaboration came mainly from these groups. Ignatian spirituality, the spirituality of the CLC, is an integrated spirituality bringing faith and life

together. Our Victoria CLC meetings begin with scripture, a time of prayer in silence, and then faith and life sharing. I have been amazed at the ease with which the business generally seems to be dealt with in the atmosphere of openness and respect that seems to be generated in the prayer and sharing. (We can get stuck at times!). All of our activities and courses have seen lay people and Jesuits collaborating in community to plan, present and evaluate.

I believe that this process of prayer and faith sharing enables "real" collaboration to take place in prayerful people who are open to one another, who bring themselves as they are, who believe that each one has a very small part of the Spirit of Truth. "Real" collaboration is a way of being present to the other, in opening oneself in the prayer and faith sharing to the mystery/person of the other and so to a deepening of the Mystery/Person/Truth of the Lord who is present in the deepest part of each of us. It means being vulnerable, trusting the other, not controlling. If I really "meet" another, I am touched at the very core of my being. (Laplace in "An Experience of Life in the Spirit", p. 16 says that mixed groups in retreat "help a person discover his essential core, which is beneath and beyond such specific differences". This seems to say much of what I am sensing). Such an experience seems to shape or change one - I can never remain the same - it allows a "glimpse" of another part of the Truth, and so shapes my own person, and in that my service and mission, and it does the same to the other person.

It seems that an important operational attitude for "real" collaboration is to really believe that the other has something to offer - an openness to receive expresses something of our interdependence as members of the one body. I have experienced this attitude in different degrees - we have our struggles - and we come with all the richness and scars of our lived experience as men, women, lay, married or single, celibate priests, and it would seem that each of us has been shaped and called forth in our own lives and mission with an increased sense of our own interdependency.

John Frances Kavanaugh in his powerful book "Following Christ in a Consumer Society", the Spirituality of Cultural Resistance, p. 123, says that the "mutually sustaining forms of chastity in marriage and in the single celibate life are yet to be fully investigated"... "Both forms of chastity witness to the human condition and its full promise"... "its full promise"?... woman/man "fully alive"... in "real" collaboration... a freedom of relating with a greater wholeness of one's own person; and sexuality an integral part of that personhood... I believe that we have glimpsed something of this in "real" collaboration, and our own marriage has been enriched by it.

Cardinal Lorscheider from Brazil speaks of how he has been changed in the concept and practice of his ministry and his way of praying by being with people in basic communities praying scripture and sharing faith and life in the light of scripture. He as bishop has become a brother among brothers and sisters. Is this an example of the Third World showing us the way and where empowerment comes from, and the change and conversion that it involves?

It seems to me that if we are to become the people of God, then the model has to change, and that is not going to happen by focussing on and shifting the power base, or by struggling and hanging onto power. I believe in, and have experienced, the Lord as empowering in community, when the focus and source is the person of Christ. Otherwise isn't there a real danger that the liberated will become the oppressors? "Real" collaboration is co-praying from the heart - bringing ourselves as we are to the Lord - and in direct conflict with the power struggle. Sure, we can collaborate without praying. We can sit on opposite sides of a table, giving and getting a little, getting things done, or maybe even joining hands across the table. "Real" collaboration is more like sitting in a circle side by side in openness with one another and the Lord, in mutual interdependency of his empowering in that vulnerability and giftedness.

The Christian life (at the risk of oversimplifying) seems to be about growing in relationship with the

Lord, with others, with myself. This growth involves communication, reconciliation and service - none of which is easy or without cost, especially with the powerful influences of our consumer culture. I fear that we laity are not really praying. If this relating with the Lord is happening in a real, honest sort of way, and there is balance between the "doer" and the "prayer" because the "doer" is being "re-sourced" in prayer by the Source, then service naturally springs from that. If I experience someone loving me, then I want to respond. It seems to me that's what happens in real prayer. If I come to the Lord as I am in my life, and give Him time, then more than with any other relationship after a time my life shows signs that I have been affected, touched and moved to change however subtle.

I wonder if we are not at the threshold of a new understanding of this whole area of relating. Is the call of our age to discover the unity in our diversity, as we move away from the "them and us" to "we", a whole people of God? I believe that moving towards "real" collaboration and meeting in ongoing exploration and reflection is vital. Is this what being Church is all about?"

Mary Nolan (Australia)

**THE VIETNAMESE AND CLC
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

In the past seven years Ignatian retreats among the Vietnamese have encouraged the formation of more than forty communities, organized in six regions of the US and Canada. These groups consider themselves part of the Vietnamese Movement of Companions of Jesus (DONG HANH CHUA KITO). Their sense of belonging to the National CLC Community is not based on a formal commitment but in personal friendship, built in the annual conventions, both regional and national, on the yearly Retreat they share in common, the monthly Newsletter and many projects they discuss and implement together. Yet they do not consider themselves as part of the national and world Community of CLC.

However nation wide we have more than one hundred members of these forty groups who have made the commitment to join the CLC Community. Most of them are leaders of these groups, able to draw inspiration from both the Vietnamese traditions as well as from local resources, from the Vietnamese movement as well as from the US CLC Community.

Across the United States and Canada the young members (more than eight hundred, from 17 to 35 years of age) of these 40 groups of Vietnamese Companions of Jesus are deeply involved in the pastoral work of the Vietnamese Communities in such ministries as the choir (very popular among the Vietnamese who love singing), the Catechism Classes, teaching the Vietnamese language to the children, or as leaders of the Eucharistic Crusade. The Vietnamese Pastors, the Parish Council and the parents have great expectations of our groups. I believe that, given the urgent needs of the refugee population in terms of cultural differences, human and religious crises as well as their rich human and religious resources, our Companions should be even more deeply involved in the Vietnamese community.

These groups have come to existence in our week-end Retreats, which we started offering here in the States and Canada in 1982, and back in Vietnam in 1972. These retreats are very Ignatian. In two days and a half the young retreatants experience God as a loving Father, understand the purpose of life, the call to live with God and become like Him. They experience conversion and forgiveness, they learn how to meditate and contemplate the Gospel, the value of silence... Every year more than 74 retreats are offered to Vietnamese in the United States and Canada. The team in charge of these retreats includes two part time and one full time Jesuits with the help of prayer companions. Until now these retreats are given in Vietnamese. We also offer to our old-timers five day and eight day retreats under the direction of Jesuits and CLC directors in English or French. More than 15 companions have done the Exercises in daily life for a period of six to nine months. I think that we have a long and rich experience in giving and adapting retreats to young people.

But I want to come back to our groups. Most of our groups are not yet real "communities". Neither will they join the National Federation as a group. Among the forty groups only three or four could be affiliated to the National Federation at the present time. The fact is that these three or four groups function by themselves, isolated from the Vietnamese Pastors and communities. Thus their apostolic dimension is questionable and the image they project is creating misunderstanding about our movement. The rest of the groups, which are the big majority, while being deeply involved in the pastoral activities of the community have no objection to being considered as members of the Vietnamese Companions of Jesus. However the very proposal to affiliate themselves to the National and World Federation appears to them as a threat to their identity, would divide them within the group, and alienated the whole group from the Vietnamese Pastors and Community.

According to our Bylaws, to be considered as part of the Companions of Jesus a group doesn't need to make a formal request or pledge. But we demand that:

- a) two or more members be affiliated and one of them be the guide or coordinator of the group,
- b) that the whole group makes the retreat every year,
- c) the group follows in fact the way of life of the General Principles.

Those members formally affiliated to the Companions of Jesus, more than 100 at the present time, are able to assimilate the Vietnamese culture and the CLC way of life. We hope that they can build a bridge between the Vietnamese, who tend to isolate themselves within their own culture, and the National and World Federation. We are asking the USA National Federation to allow these young Vietnamese to be affiliated on an individual basis, electing delegates on a regional rather than group basis.

But even more important is the question: "Are we ready to listen and be sensitive to the increasing demands addressed to us?" "Are we ready to learn, to improve, to adapt, to experiment and, finally, to commit ourselves in the service of our brothers and sisters?" Most of us are keenly aware of our shortcomings. The RETREAT PROGRAM which is our most valuable contribution to the pastoral work among the youth in the United States and Canada and every year invigorates and replenishes the ranks of our groups, totally depends on three Jesuits only, and two of them have their main commitments abroad. With more than 74 retreats a year this small team is booked solid and cannot expand any more. Meanwhile the needs of the youth call for expansion and diversification: while the big majority feel comfortable only in Vietnamese, their younger brothers and sisters are only fluent in English or French. While those who have made the retreat several times ask for greater silence, more freedom and longer periods of prayer, the new comers have to be led, step by step, into mental prayer, discernment of spirits and the value of silence.

If we want to answer God's call to our movement we have to expand and diversify our retreat program offering retreats for old timers and for beginners, retreats in Vietnamese and in English or French, three day, five or eight day retreats if needed. We hope to see

more priests involved in the retreats but our movement will have to bear the main burden of adapting, experimenting and offering these retreats.

THE GROUPS have also shortcomings and many needs. Although there is a great diversity among them, there are some recurrent problems common to most: they consider themselves as part of the Companions of Jesus Movement but few have read and studied the General Principles and other basic documents. Many look like "prayer groups", "Bible sharing" groups, or pious associations. Some meet every week, some twice a month, others only once a month. The formation seminars we have organized in the last three years have improved the quality of the meetings, encouraged the sharing of leadership within the group and created better communication among the groups of each region. But most of them are still reluctant to organize group activities and projects as part of the group's life. Many of them refuse to become involved as a group in the activities of the Vietnamese community. They think that the personal commitment of the members, active in different activities of the parish, is enough. In general they lack interest in organizations outside their own. Many misunderstandings between them and the pastors could and should be avoided.

There is a great need for formation of group guides and coordinators. This formation has to be offered on a regional basis and very often within the ups and downs of the group. But we lack guides able to travel, visit them and followup their progress.

Our monthly newsletter "THE COMPANIONS" (DONG HANH) has improved very much in the last three years. Each issue has a topic and one of the groups prepares it. This initiative has helped to improve the quality of the newsletter and the participation of the groups. But the newsletter should also be the instrument of communication between them, sharing experiences, reporting on activities, publishing materials which prove to be helpful to the group... But in fact, as of now, only a few of the priests and lay members carry the burden of the newsletter.

We have an office with a full time secretary. She is a volunteer, with a great capacity for work, deep spiritual life and apostolic zeal. But again, she is alone carrying the burden of the Newsletter, publications and administration of the movement.

If we want our movement to serve the communities and be really effective in helping the youth we have to improve the involvement of priests as spiritual leaders of the movement, the formation of our leaders and of our members. We have to reinforce and expand our apostolic program. Let me elaborate each of these aspects:

The Companions of Jesus, as well as the CLC are lay movements. But unless we get more priests involved as spiritual leaders in different areas of our movement we will not be able to address the needs of our youth and offer any significant contribution to them. Only in close collaboration with the Vietnamese Pastors can we contact the youth organizations and the youth at large. The Companions of Jesus movement is the Vietnamese version of the Christian Life Communities which are inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and guided by Ignatian spirituality. We need Jesuits involved in every aspect of our movement: directing our retreats, offering spiritual direction to our members, counseling our groups, writing themes and materials, offering seminars, encouraging different adaptations of the Exercises to different age groups and environments. At the source of this quest for the involvement of priests in our movement is a need for constant purification from all attachment to power even in its most subtle forms, a humble awareness of our limitations and the belief that the Lord chooses and sends His pastors as spiritual leaders of His flock.

In most of our Vietnamese settlements we are going through a period of grace: baffled by a world of science and technology in which many of our young men and women excel, exposed to many negative views of the Catholic Church, attracted by moral permissiveness, confused and unhappy, many young people look at the Church for answers and for help. Many Vietnamese Pastors rely on our movement to inspire the pastoral work among the youth. It

is up to us to be aware of their needs, attentive to the Spirit and generous in our service. The Sp. Ex. are the most powerful instrument God has put in our hands to reach the youth and help them listen to God's call, grow in self-knowledge, detach themselves from self interest and self love and open their hearts to God's love and calling. But we need to be flexible and creative in directing the Exercises. We have to be ready to use Vietnamese, English or French. Our movement needs a small group of lay people seriously committed and well trained in Ignatian spirituality. This small group has to adapt, experiment and direct many forms of retreats, in collaboration with the priests, in every region and community to which we are called.

This small community of lay people has to help the groups too. Most of our groups do not know how to integrate the need to foster the spiritual life with the need to maintain communication between the members and become involved in apostolic activities. Very often the groups cannot solve the tensions within, the conflicts with the pastor or the lose of heart under the inevitable failures in their apostolic projects. We need a team of guides ready to visit them and help them go through these crises as soon as they arise.

Finally we need to reinforce and expand our apostolic program. We need to reinforce our monthly publication THE COMPANIONS (DONG-HANH) as the link between the groups, sharing experiences and materials, providing documents, themes, inspirational articles. We should encourage the communities to organize youth days, recollections, seminars on Holy Scripture, Theology, Cultural conflicts, and other topics that concern our youth today. The needs are urgent everywhere. In order to meet these needs we have to be generous and open to the Spirit. The Companions of Jesus are well rooted in the Vietnamese Community but the effectiveness of our presence is at stake. We base our confidence in the very very special love the Lord has for our young brothers and sisters, in the power of the Spirit and the generosity of our youth.

Julián Elizalde s.j.

THE SHAPE OF THE CHURCH IN THE YEAR 2000

The shape of the Church in the year 2000 will depend on the shape of the inward journey that we are travelling now.

We all have an inward journey and whether we realise it or not, we all operate out of "images" that shape and determine our inward journey. When I use the word "image", I am not referring primarily to an imaginative image, but rather to an attitude - or set of attitudes - that direct our ways of acting and responding. Quite often these attitudes are not acknowledged, or articulated - and that can cause problems. Let me give an example. In his book "The God of Surprises", Gerard Hughes tells the story of giving a retreat to a young man who was an extremely committed and dedicated Christian - at least on the surface. At one stage, Hughes suggested the young man meditate on the Marriage Feast at Cana; and that evening he described his meditation - it was a scene of great merriment, lots of food and wine... people dancing and enjoying themselves... And then Hughes asked: "Did you see Jesus there?" The young man answered: "Yes, Jesus was there... He was sitting alone, in a white robe, a staff in His hand, a crown of thorns on his head, looking very disapproving". With a little help, this young man came to see that though, on the surface, he had a positive "imaginative" image of Jesus, he actually was operating out a very different image. He admitted that he never felt any joy in any of his commitments; on the contrary, he had an oppressive sense of duty, he suffered from, as Hughes puts it, "a hardening of the 'oughterries'"; he simply felt driven by a tyrannical and disapproving God. That was the "operational image".

Now, I believe there are some basic models, or images, we all operate out of - there is our image, or model of Redemption; our image of God; and our image of Church. These three models are very closely linked, and linked together, they can form a set. And I would suggest

that there are two basic sets - there is a Power/Fear set, ("Power" in the sense of the capacity to coerce or dominate); and a Love/Vulnerability set ("Vulnerability" in the sense of being open - not shielding oneself - and abdicating one's capacity to coerce or dominate).

REDEMPTION: From the Power/Fear set point of view, Redemption is all about keeping out of sin and saving our soul. Adam and Eve had their chance and they lost it. The moral order was upset - creation offended the Creator, and was justly punished... all of us. Jesus came to restore the moral order, thereby placating His Father who was angry - "that guiltless Son who bought your peace; and made His Father's anger cease", as we still say in the Breviary at Easter. So Redemption is all about keeping on the right side of God; otherwise He'll get angry and send you to Hell; He is All-Powerful.

This naturally leads into an image of God as Judge - He rewards us if we are good; He punishes us if we are bad. He has us where He wants us, but if I'm really good He'll never get me.

THE CHURCH: The Church is the Ark of Salvation, like Noah's Ark. Evil is all around; the waters of destruction may run high, but the Church rides them all in serenity and peace, because She is the Ark of Salvation. This Ark can never sink - that's how Powerful she is; so stay on board, keep the rules, and you'll be saved.

Now let us look at the Love/Vulnerability set.

REDEMPTION: Redemption is a call to intimacy - intimacy with God our Father, and intimacy with one another - to live as brothers and sisters. When Yahweh creates Adam, there is a great intimacy between them - Adam is created in His own image and likeness. And there is great intimacy between Adam and Eve - they are naked and unashamed. But then they sin, their hearts are divided, and the intimacy is lost. Adam and Eve hide themselves in the garden from Yahweh, and they also hide themselves from each other - they put on clothes - "masks" - to hide their own vulnerability. That is the message of the Fall - a story of lost

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intimacy. So what redemption is all about is restoring that lost intimacy - intimacy with God, and intimacy with one another. Jesus is our Redeemer because He is the revelation of the Father's love; He is the enduring sign - and reality - of God among us, God ever with us. His death on the cross, in a world broken by sin, shows us that the Father's love is utterly vulnerable to His creation - for when the love of the Father is fully revealed, what we see is a Man with a broken Heart. And Jesus' rising shows us that this love is unconditional and everlasting. In other words, to say that we are redeemed, our sins are forgiven, is to say that the Father, in Jesus, offers unconditionally His own vulnerability to meet our vulnerability so that we may grow in intimacy with Him. That's one aspect of redemption, and it is inseparable from the other aspect - restoring the intimacy that Adam and Eve lost with each other. Jesus died an individual, and He rose a community in which people, as they grew in intimacy with Him and His Father, would also grow in intimacy with one another because either way, the two are inseparable - people sharing a common life, building the sort of world in which people can truly live together as brothers and sisters, children of the one Father.

IMAGE OF GOD: The image of God is as Father; loving us with all the fidelity, gentleness and vulnerability we see in the father of the Prodigal Son - God as Father, with infinite compassion and unconditional love, loving us when we are sinners. When we were vulnerable, He showed us His own vulnerability in the Heart of Jesus.

IMAGE OF CHURCH: From what we have previously said, the model of Church, as community, is rather obvious. However, the Vatican Council II offers us a number of models of Church - Sacrament of the world's redemption, the Pilgrim Church, the People of God. Obviously, then, there is not one exclusive model of Church. Nevertheless, I would suggest that the model of Church, as community, though not an exclusive model, should still be a dominant model that qualifies all our other images. Why? Because all Christians, through Baptism, become brothers and sisters of Christ, in Christ. In other words, through Baptism, we

become sons and daughters of the Father, and are called to live out this fundamental truth of our reality. So if, being Christians, we do not live as brothers and sisters, we are denying the basic truth of what we are - we are leading lives that are unbelieving and untrue. That is, the call of the Christian is a call to community - to make this world of ours a real global village where each person can be fully himself/herself and show forth the richness and diversity of the Father's love: and in this broken world, community can never happen unless people acknowledge and share their own vulnerability - the way Jesus has done with us.

Now, if we bring these two sets of images together, and compare them, we can draw one very enlightening conclusion: when Vulnerability meets Power, the result is alienation (fear); when Vulnerability is met by Vulnerability, the result is intimacy. I would suggest this further clarifies our options with regard to the sort of inward journey we wish to promote, because, as I have already said, our inward journey is shaped by the models we operate out of. If we choose to operate out of a predominantly Power-Fear set of images, our inward journey will be a journey in the direction of alienation; if we choose to operate out of a predominantly Love-Vulnerability set of images, our inward journey will be a journey in the direction of intimacy. And if we oscillate between the two sets, then the chances are that our inward journey will lack integration, and we won't quite know where we are, or what we want.

These different sets of models can help us understand the different patterns in people's behaviour - why some people feel driven, and other feel drawn, why some people are negative and critical, and others are supportive and encouraging; why some people are judgmental, and others are open and accepting; why some people are anxious and fearful, and others are grateful and hopeful; why some people condemn, and others trust; why some people are pre-occupied with law and guilt and sin, and others are peaceful and joyful and talk of the Father's mercy and forgiveness; why some people see the Truth as something to be defended, and others see the Truth as something to be

lived and proclaimed; why some people say: "If you're good and say your prayers, then none of the things you fear will ever happen to you"; and others say: "If you trust and say your prayers, then whatever happens to you, there is nothing to be afraid of". Of course, often we straddle both lines, but basically it's a question of emphasis - a question of our fundamental stance before life. Just to summarise what I've been saying: we all have an inward journey. This journey is shaped by the different images we operate out of. Some images reflect a stance before life that is largely dominated by Power and Fear - life is all about doing what God tells us, or else. The will of God is something outside of me - some divine blue-print that I must measure up to. Other images reflect a stance before life that is largely dominated by Love and Vulnerability - life is all about accepting the Father's love and sharing that love. The will of God is for me to be fully myself, my own authentic growth, in Him, for his people. It is only to be expected that the images we operate out of are reflected in our behaviour which, in turn, reinforces our images - there is a mutual interaction between our operational models and our behaviour.

So - I do believe we are confronted with a choice... now. Rather ironically, a journey in the direction of alienation creates strong community bonds. Those who make it together are united against a common enemy "outside"; but they dare change nothing lest this breach the walls and let the enemy in. I don't think that's a good shape for the Church in the year 2000 - always winter but never Christmas...

On the other hand, a journey in the direction of intimacy is a rather risky business. It is a journey into openness and freedom; and people who have been freed by Jesus are not always the most comfortable companions. But people who live in intimacy with Jesus, and with their brothers and sisters are capable of proclaiming the enduring love and fidelity of the Father, in words that come from the heart. And I think that is an excellent shape for the Church in the year 2000. I'd like to reinforce this point and suggest that the journey into intimacy is actually a

crucial matter for our western culture today. To return to Adam and Eve - after they sinned, they put on "masks" to hide themselves, their own vulnerability, and today our western culture excels at that. There is so much emphasis on clothes, fashions, so much emphasis on externals: cars, houses, gadgets, which come to be regarded as an extension of the person who owns them. But in reality, all these things are barriers between people - masks behind which we hide our own vulnerability, and grow more and more lonely and isolated. I think it is rather significant that those cultures where people live naked, or half-naked, have a very strong sense of community.

I have mentioned that we have to make a choice between a journey into alienation and a journey into intimacy. One very important factor to enlighten our choice is the attitude of the present Holy Father. In recent times he has written to the Bishops of Brazil, commending and encouraging them and saying, in so many words, that the shape they are giving the Church now is the key to the future of the Church... basic Christian Communities - an adventure into intimacy.

How do we foster our inward journey into intimacy? First of all, through prayer, because real prayer is a journey into intimacy with the Father and Jesus and one another. Real prayer - so what are some of the signs that prayer is real, and not an experience that simply reinforces fixed attitudes?

- 1) First of all, prayer is basically a surrender to the Father - letting God be God in my life, establishing the Father as the absolute in my life, thereby relativising all my other options. What are the signs that this basic attitude is operative in our lives?
 - a) If I truly surrender to the Father, then I will really listen to other people. Surrendering to the Father and listening to other people are inseparable; they are the same sort of experience. To surrender to the Father is to let Him be God in my life; listening to other people is letting

them be themselves in my life. The quality of my prayer and the quality of my listening are inseparable.

- b) The sign, or one of the signs, that I am establishing the Father as the Absolute in my life is that I am grateful about the past, open to the present and hopeful about the future - everything is in His hands. The opposite of this is an "if only" attitude which subtly sets up a false absolute, and takes things out of the Father's hands... "If only I'd done things differently... if only that had never happened" - we're drawn away from the present moment and tied to regrets about the past. "If only I can do this... if only this happens, everything will be O.K." Again, we're drawn away from the present moment by fears and anxieties about the future. When the Father is the Absolute, everything is in His hands; an "if only" attitude sets up regrets and fears which rule us and so become false absolutes which take things out of the Father's hands.
- 2) Real prayer flows out of our daily life - at least as part of our prayer, we talk to the Father and tell Him what's on our mind and in our heart. The only way we grow in intimacy with a person is by revealing ourselves to the person; as we grow in intimacy we tell them more and more. The sign that this intimacy is not occurring is that people are afraid to express their feelings, especially their negative feelings, to the Father. If I'm feeling angry with the Father, and never dare tell Him, then our relationship is blocked, it can't grow.
- 3) Prayer which flows out of daily life is a constant experience of conversion; our horizons broaden and our heart grows bigger; we begin to see life where before we saw only shadows, or something negative. The sign that we are not experiencing conversion is that we remain extremely judgmental - condemning others and blaming them for the shadows we're afraid to face in our own heart.

- 4) If our prayer is real it deepens our sense of mystery, the mystery of God, the mystery of life, the mystery of other people, and so our capacity to love is enhanced. By a sense of mystery I mean the readiness to let-go to the other, the openness to see, in the other, an invitation to experience something more, to experience things differently. If our prayer is not real, we won't have much of a sense of mystery - rather we will tend to see God and life and others, especially in times of difficulty, as problems; our main concern will be to be in control, to get on top of the problem - the power syndrome.

Now, I do believe in what I have just said about prayer, but I must immediately add that often I also feel quite lost when I "direct" people in prayer. As I have suggested, simply to tell people they should pray can, in some cases, be a disaster - it can reinforce negative experiences, or attitudes. So, if I find people who do have difficulty in being regular in prayer, I emphasise the following points:

- I tell them I have no "expectations" of them - I am there simply to accompany and reflect back on their experience and sometimes offer suggestions. If a person is struggling with prayer, living up to my expectations is a further burden, and can interfere with their own interior journey.
- I emphasise that prayer is not a performance but an encounter, which the "no-expectations" approach can help reinforce.
- I suggest they set aside time, to let the Father love them, so that they can experience prayer as something that happens to them, rather than something they're doing.
- I suggest they try to discover why they don't pray, for, if we don't pray, it's because we don't want to.

The sort of model we have for community is most significant for our inward journey. I would suggest that

the model of community which fosters best a journey into freedom and intimacy is stable groups of people who come together, on a regular basis, to pray and to exchange their experiences of life. Prayer together is essential - to establish clearly that this group wants to be a faith-community; and also the opportunity for people to exchange on the level of experience - not on the level of ideas, on the level of experience. This is equally important because self-disclosure to a community (in an appropriate way) is essential for personal growth; unless I can come to articulate my experience of life, to others, I will never come to own my own reality, and I will never quite discover who actually lives behind the mask.

If people, on the personal level, are praying out of their daily life, this is an experience of integration - bringing together faith and daily living; and it is also an experience of growing in intimacy with the Father. This double movement of integration and intimacy is further reinforced if they come together, in small groups, to pray and to exchange on the level of experience. Because, in the group setting, through prayer they are bringing the light of faith to the different areas of their life (which is a process of integration); through listening, respectfully, to one another, they are deepening their attitude of prayer, as surrender to the Father (also a process of integration); and through sharing their experience of life they are gradually revealing themselves to one another, thereby growing in the journey into intimacy and freedom. How freedom? Because the process in the group of listening to one another is an experience of "affirmation", not "approval"; and affirmation especially fosters freedom.

Though I have been talking about the shape of the Church in the Year 2000, I have also been describing different aspects of our CLC way of life - which suggests that the CLC's have a unique role to play in forming the new face of the Church that is emerging.

Patrick O'Sullivan s.j.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 1988

The following is part of a summary of the report entitled The State of the World's Children 1988, issued by the Executive Director of UNICEF, James P. Grant. May we be concerned and near to those who call us to a true, practical and fraternal charity.

One death in every three in the world is the death of child under the age of five. And each week more than a quarter of a million young children still die, in the developing world, from infection and undernutrition. Yet in the 1980s, despite the difficult economic climate, the limited promotion of low-cost measures is already resulting in the saving of nearly 40,000 young lives each week. It has therefore been shown that it is now possible to prevent most child deaths and most child malnutrition by methods which any developing nation can afford to implement and which every industrialized nation can afford to support.

These are the facts which tower over any consideration of the state of the world's children. And they are facts which have as much to say about the quality of children's lives as about the quantity of children's deaths. For infection and undernutrition also touch the lives of even larger numbers of children who live on with ill health and poor growth, unable today to develop to their full mental and physical potential, unable tomorrow to fully contribute to the families they will have or the communities in which they will live.

Amid all the many other difficulties facing the world's children, the questions of child survival and child development therefore remain paramount, not just because of the sheer scale and severity of the problem but because of the emergence, in our times, of dramatic low-cost possibilities for its solution.

Those new possibilities arise from two converging processes:

First, it is now known that the major threats to children's lives can be defeated, in large measure, by informing and supporting parents themselves in taking inexpensive actions. If applied, these techniques and this knowledge could drastically reduce -by at least 50%- the quiet carnage of a quarter of a million child deaths each week.

Second, a surge in communications capacity has made it possible, for the first time, to put that knowledge at the disposal of the great majority of the world's people. Sixty per cent of the developing world's adults can now read and write. Eighty per cent of its children now enrol in school. Radio reaches into a majority of its homes, television into a majority of its communities. Two million doctors, 6 million nurses, and many more millions of community health workers are now at work. And tens of thousands of non-governmental organizations, peasant co-operatives, labour unions, youth organizations, and women's movements, now add up to a depth of organized resources which could be the means of supporting the majority of families in using today's health knowledge.

A revolution beginning

Health promotion is therefore the great opportunity of our times. But it cannot be accomplished by the health services alone. If the challenge is to be met, it will be met by a social movement rather than by a purely medical movement. And what is needed is a society-wide alliance of all those who can communicate with and support parents - health services and education systems, religious leaders and mass media, government services and voluntary agencies, business enterprises and labour unions, people's movements and professional associations.

Only such a 'Grand Alliance for Children' can create the informed public demand for, and practical

knowledge of, the methods which could now bring about a revolution in child survival and development. Today that Grand Alliance has begun to gather. And the child survival and development revolution is now under way.

Counter currents

Sadly, the 1980s have also seen counter-currents running against such progress for the world's children. The weight of wars and conflicts has fallen most heavily on the children of those regions. Less visible but just as tragic has been the economic recession which, in recent years, has eroded both family incomes and government services in so many nations of the developing world.

But paradoxically, that context of economic crisis provides a special opportunity to promote, on a massive scale, basic child health measures such as immunization and Oral Rehydration Therapy * (ORT), breast-feeding and birth spacing, better weaning and regular growth monitoring. For these are the very measures which can offer the most protection for the least cost to the largest number of children. Yet they are also the measures which can be afforded even in difficult economic times -IF a nation's leaders make a clear political commitment to that goal and IF a nation's organized resources form a grand alliance to achieve it. That commitment to children is beginning to be made.

Universal immunization by 1990

Through the United Nations, the world has set the target of immunizing the great majority of children against six main diseases by 1990. The annual benefit is saving of over 3 million lives. The annual cost is less than the price of ten advanced fighter planes. And if any further argument is necessary, the creation of a universal

* Oral Rehydration Therapy is the name given to a range of actions designed to prevent and treat dehydration, during episodes of diarrhoea, by giving a child fluids by mouth.

system for immunization will be essential to the delivery of new vaccines -for example against malaria and AIDS- which may well be developed over the course of the next decade.

Present trends also suggest that approximately 30 individual nations will fall short of the 1990 target unless a supreme effort is mounted before the end of the decade. But trends are not inevitabilities. And all nations could still achieve and sustain the 1990 target. The main problem is therefore not finding the vaccines or the syringes or the refrigerators. It is finding the political commitment, finding the management and organizational skills, and finding the ways and means to inform all parents that all pregnant women need to be vaccinated against tetanus and that all children need a full course of vaccines before the age of one.

Oral rehydration therapy

Social mobilization is also now beginning to put the breakthrough known as oral rehydration therapy (ORT) at the disposal of many millions of parents. The health services alone cannot empower a nation's parents with ORT. In most countries, the majority of doctors have themselves not been trained in its use. Retraining health professionals, at all levels, to use and to teach oral therapy, is therefore a necessary but not a sufficient condition for its spread. And in the countries now seriously attempting to put ORT at the disposal of all parents, it is an alliance between the health services and a wide range of new resources for health, including the schools, mass media, religious leaders, other government services, and non-governmental organizations, which is demonstrating that this CAN be done.

It is not nearly enough. Progress is far too slow. Three million children should not still be dying each year from the dehydration which any parent can prevent at a

cost which any parent can afford. Yet the WHO targets to be achieved by 1989 (50% of parents using ORT, and 1.5 million children's lives being saved by it) are not going to be met unless there is a sudden acceleration of the world-wide effort to promote the ORT message over the next two years.

Political will

It can no longer be considered acceptable, in a world which has any pretensions to civilization, that so many millions of children should be dying, and that so many millions more should be stunted and blinded and brain-damaged, because the world has neglected to fully inform and support their families in today's practical and affordable ways of protecting children's lives and growth.

Usually, it is the political commitment of a nation's leadership which can mobilize a whole society, procure the necessary resources, co-ordinate supply and demand, and put the weight of permanent government services behind a sustained national effort. Experts in health and other fields of social development need to shape and simplify their expertise into plans which are practical and affordable, with obvious starting-points and attainable objectives, and to present those plans in such a way as to capture the imagination of both politicians and public.

The public role

In both developing and industrialized nations, members of the public can also play a part by supporting the many voluntary agencies. That support may sometimes take a form which seems a long way removed from the subject of child health. It may mean support for debt relief and restructuring, or for increases in real aid and a renewal of loans, or for restrictions on arms sales and a lifting of trade barriers against manufactured goods.

For in its day-to-day work, UNICEF sees too often how short a step it can be from a balance-of-payments crisis to a shortage of essential drugs, from a rise in oil prices to a mobile vaccination unit without fuel, from a debt falling due to a clinic being closed, from the withdrawal of a food subsidy to the stunting of a child.

Reaching the poorest

Even with the political will to do what can now be done, the knowledge road to health still has many pitfalls. Success in reaching the poorest - both with information and with practical and on-the-spot support in using it - is made much more likely with the support of one great resource which has not so far been discussed: the community health worker. With approximately three months' training, a community health worker can help to root today's basic child health care knowledge in a community.

If that health worker is also a part of the community and its culture, then he or she is likely to know how best to adapt and communicate health information. That knowledge is vital. The poor are not empty vessels into which information can simply be poured. They have their own knowledge and beliefs about sickness which is often inseparable from the cultural and economic life of the community. Sensitive, respectful and effective communication is one of the most needed but most neglected of skills in development and the most important part of the community health worker's task.

The cost of training such a person - and people with little formal education have been taught to give this kind of support with great success - can be less than one fiftieth of the cost of training and equipping a fully qualified doctor. It is therefore not inconceivable that, within the next few years, every village and neighbourhood could be served by such a health worker. Some nations are already nearing that goal.

Support for women

The realization of today's potential comes down to a thousand small, everyday, almost unnoticed actions by many millions of mothers in poor communities throughout the world. A significant improvement in the state of the world's children therefore depends most of all on the state of the world's mothers. It is therefore the mothers who will normally be the focus of the information and support which a society can summon. At the moment, that support is often weak or non-existent. And the everyday hardship and discrimination which women face is today the single most important barrier to the improvement of their own and their children's health.

Conclusions

The world is well started on the way of realizing this extraordinary potential: basic low-cost measures are already saving the lives of approximately 5,000 young children each day. But protecting the lives and the normal physical and mental growth of many millions of the world's children will remain a priority task for the remainder of this century. All can therefore share in that task. All can play a part in the great gain for humanity which could now be made. All can now help to take this step towards a more genuinely civilized world.

Question Box

CLC AND PARISH LIFE

In this new section, PROGRESSIO tries to answer some specific questions which sometimes are asked of the World Secretariat. These answers do not have an "official status" but they represent a point of view taken by the Secretariat team in light of the General Principles, recent World Assemblies and the lived experience of CLC in different parts of the world.

QUESTION:

"Some pastors feel that those most likely to be interested in CLC are the people most involved and committed to the parish. If they become involved in CLC the fear is that they will no longer be involved in the parish. Could you comment?"

ANSWER:

I can understand the concern of some pastors. CLC can look like another meeting in an already busy schedule among their core group of parishioners. It could also raise the fears which have arisen with regard to some of the lay movements during the past 10 years. They may look like parallel organisations to the parish system!

Whatever the reality of these fears, it is clear that both CLC and the parish are dedicated to the mission of the Church. I would presume that communications are very open with the local bishop and pastors in a context of faith and mutual respect. It is wonderful to see situations where a bishop can call on members of the CLC for difficult tasks which are an expression of the mission of the Church. This presupposes that the CLC has maintained good communications with the bishop, informing him of its vocation, the talents and activities of its members. It means that the bishop is relating to fully formed Christians who are formed in a discerning process.

and understand that the sending or missioning from the bishop is given and received only when it is surrounded by evident gifts of the Spirit, e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness... (Gal. 5,22).

It has been quite traditional for parishes to "lose" lay members who have experienced a vocation to another part of the Church's mission. This is so for those called to priesthood or religious life. In most cases this has been graciously understood and accepted and seen as a blessing for the parish community. But the principle is just as important for lay people whose vocation calls them beyond parish boundaries e.g. into involvement in the market place or towards the diocese as such.

In fact, many CLC do commit themselves to parish ministry as part of their apostolic service even if not the major part of it. What is important in these situations is the place of community, communication, prayer and a process of discernment which leads to new choices for action in the Spirit of Christ. Whether to work for the parish or beyond it, the key factor is the Christian motivation which informs the choices after the data has been gathered and evaluated. Our sense of Church coincides with the prayer of Jesus: "Father may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me". (Jn 17, 21). The Spirit draws us to the mission of Jesus and to the actual steps of making ourselves known, accepting the risks involved and the sometimes painful steps of prolonged communication.

I can think of situations where the local pastor seems to be losing the services of an active parishioner. One situation is that of the very active parishioner who becomes exhausted. He or she wants something (a very common expression of people entering CLC joins a CLC group. In this group it becomes this person does not know much about discernment this lack of awareness which has led to exhaustion near burn-out. For some time he or she has been on various committees and active involvement in parish life and a good self-love as the Scripture

Hopefully, after some time, this person will make new commitments which are much more clearly choices for life in the light of the Spirit.

Another situation involves the persons whose life is divided between family, business and local Church. After joining CLC they come to appreciate the action of God in their lives in the business world. It changes their attitudes towards the market-place. It is no longer only their job, but also the place of their apostolic service. Realizing the amount of time and energy involved, they consult their pastor and say that this new direction in their lives means that they must resign from the parish council. If this new direction is understood by all parties as a vocational choice, then it is a furthering of the mission of the Church and a sign of the vitality of the parish community.

ECHOES . . . ECHOES . . . ECHOES

POPE JOHN-PAUL II went to St Andrew's church at the Quirinale, Rome, on November 13th. This is the national center for the Italian CLC. He wanted to pray at the grave of St Stanislas Kostka, a young jesuit novice, who died in Rome in 1568 at the age of 18.

The Holy Father said: "I have been walking for so many years, not only since my adolescence but also my childhood, near this Saint, patron of young people, especially in Poland. In Rome too, I used to walk with him when I was a student... almost every day. I used to come and ask him for spiritual help... I want to go on in this way at the beginning of this second decade of my petrine ministry in Rome. In this way, I felt a necessity, an impulse, almost an imperative of my heart to come and pray on this special day, November 13th, at the grave of the one, who, after completing his journey on earth, crossed over the threshold of Heaven which he had always longed for."

This privileged meeting, characterized by an atmosphere of simplicity, prayer and joy, was an important moment for us CLC members. On this occasion, we felt a deep communion with our Bishop and Pastor. On that evening, he communicated his desire to be near each one of us in a very simple way. After singing "stay with us, it is already late", we left the church with something more in our hearts...

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