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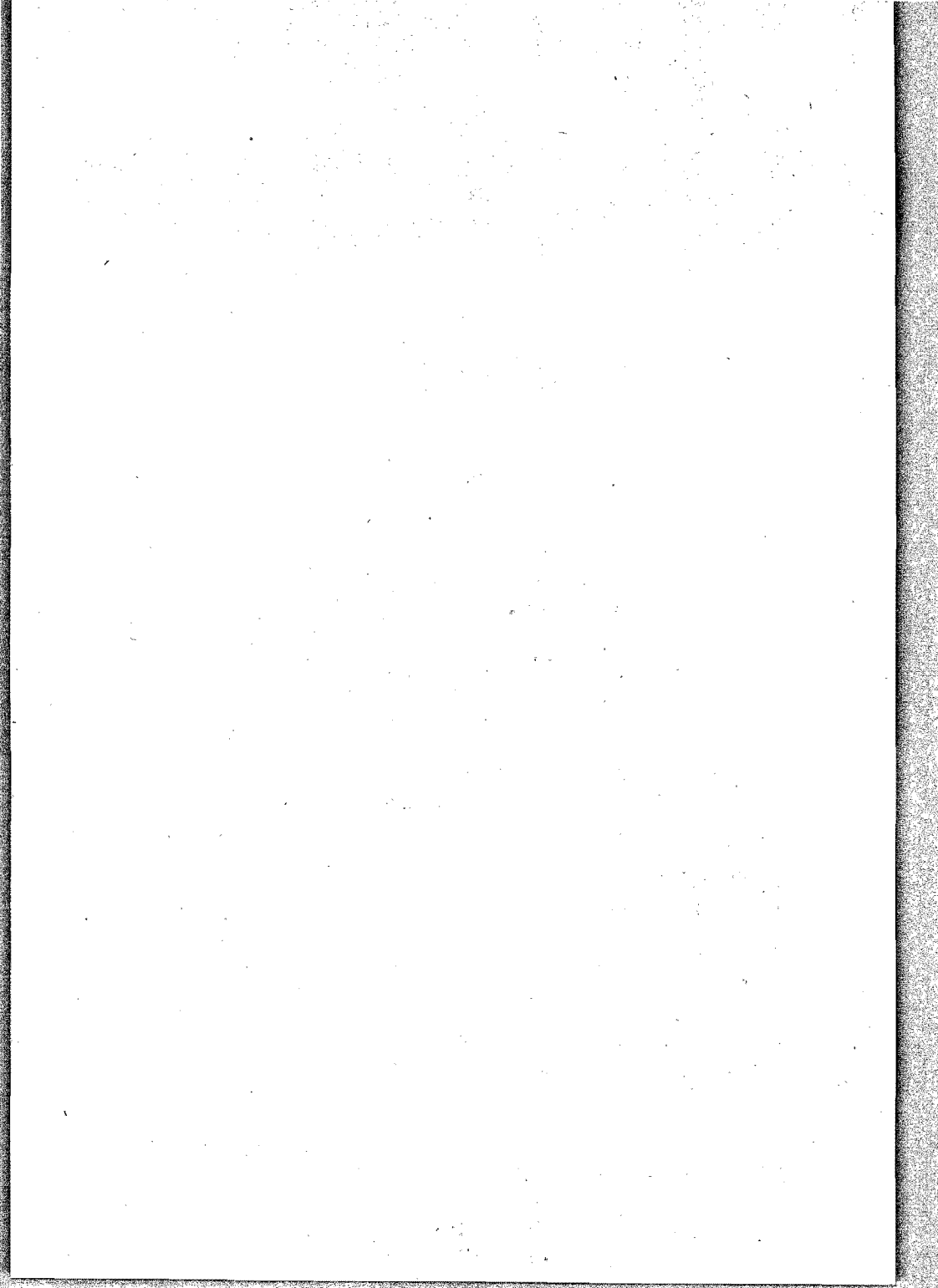
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Life of the Church

THE CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA: A Composition of Place

At the last Latin-American meeting of national CLC leaders, the lecture printed here offered a starting point for the exchange of views that followed on the apostolic commitment of the CLC in the respective countries.

At this meeting it is our intention to consider, together, the situation of our CLCs in this continent in order, next, to discern what Our Lord wants us to do, and then with determination and resolve to try to translate His will into practical terms - into action. This task of considering, of contemplating, in what we desire shall be a thoroughly Ignatian approach, has begun with our preparatory prayer - the entire remote and proximate preparation leading up to where we are now. We have also observed the First Prelude "... calling to mind the history of the subject that I have to contemplate" (Sp.Ex.102), as St Ignatius proposes with the contemplations of the Second Week of the Exercises. And we have indeed recalled in summary fashion, with the help of the posters that each participant has brought along, the salient features of the "history" or background of the CLCs.

And now, to be faithful to the spirit of St Ignatius, I should like to put to you something equivalent to what he would call Composition of Place.

In other words, we dispose ourselves at this time "to see with the imagination the material place where the object is that we wish to contemplate". This "material" place, for our present purpose, and at this meeting, is our Latin-American continent. We shall now try to "situate" our CLCs within the realities of this continent, and I would therefore invite all of us to place before our eyes -as prayerfully as possible- its particular contours.

I shall try to suggest one or two general continent-wide approaches, though my analysis is sure to be partial, incomplete. Inevitably, too, it will bear the mark of my own viewpoint, the point where I myself stand and whence I am speaking, the country I live in, the particular Church that I belong to. Nor will what I have to say be a specialist's analysis. I am no social scientist and perhaps my command of "socio-analytic mediation" is not very great. And yet I am an observer of reality and I "ruminate" - I seek to be informed and I keep aware of what goes on around me. To be sure, there will be people here competent in these matters, and able in the groups to supply what is lacking in my analysis. That is why it will be necessary - in the groups - for us to supplement this composition of place in order for us to discern and decide on, with greater profit, the approach for our GLCs for the future.

My analysis, then, will be based on two major aspects (strongly) linked and interlinked, namely:

- the social/economic/political/cultural aspect; and
- the theological/ecclesial aspect.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC-POLITICAL-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

1. Poverty

There are today 500 million Latin Americans, 300 million of whom live in extreme poverty. By the year 2000 there will be 150 million more. Here we have the fundamental drama of our countries. Instead of declining, the number of people living at the poverty threshold or below it, even, is increasing. Utter poverty finds expression in the reality of hunger, layoffs, housing problems, education, health and land hunger. And poverty goes hand in hand with a scandalous contrast of minorities and groups living in extreme and ostentatious wealth, so much so that, in one and the same country, we find groups of persons with an economic level equivalent to that of Belgium and the immense majority with an economic level as disastrously low as that of the poorest in India. Brazil-Belindia is a case in point.

Poverty in these terms - and it is a black spot on the face of Latin America - is observable not only at a superficial, isolated level, but has deep rooted and complex causes and components. To mention only some of them:

- external debt - an evil spirit darkening our peoples' lives and crushing them with excessive interest payments.
- inflation and, in some countries, hyperinflation (Nicaragua, Brazil and Argentina are examples). Wages never keep pace with inflation. Purchasing power and quality of life are eroded;
- the market. This is the great regulator of all life. It grabs all power unto itself and legitimizes any result;
- an economy counted in dollars - an unstoppable process. National industry is privatized or goes into decline, with our creeping dependence on the industrialized countries. To-day Latin America is a continent suffering from economic interventionism.

And the consequence of these evils? For example:

- departure in ever greater numbers of the middle classes and capital with them;
- mounting corruption in government;
- accelerated pace at which the rich get richer;
- growth of the informal "black", "submerged", "alternative" economy, and the illegal economy of the drugs and contraband;
- life growing more difficult daily for an ever increasing number of people.

Procedures change but the situation seems to be common to all Latin-America countries. The ranks of the middle classes are thinning, and their proportion and influence with it.

2. Violence

This is another dramatic phenomenon, closely linked with the first. In many of our countries, there is the painful realization of the effects of organized violence - in the form of repression, paramilitary groups, land grabbing, guerrilla warfare. My mind turns to Peru, with its Sendero Luminoso; to Colombia, with its more than 100 paramilitary groups; to the attack on La Tablada barracks, in Argentina, and other episodes besides. Throughout this process of violence (and it has other aspects as well, the hidden, the institutionalized aspects) the chief victims are women, the blacks, the indians.

3. Return to democracy

There is no denying the process of re-democratization that is going on in many of our Latin-America countries, as in Brazil, Argentina and Chile. But the process is not the outcome of improved living conditions in the middle-income and working sectors, but rather a tactic of the military to ensure that the handling of our Latin American crisis shall be left to civilians. There is political despair among our youth, which is greatly aggravated by the absence (or massacre) of political leadership and by the fact that there are no prospects before them. Our peoples - some of them for the first time in many a long year of their history - will soon find themselves confronted with municipal, and even presidential, elections.

4. Growth of people's movements

Whether we like it or not, we must recognize that there is a mobilization afoot, especially among the working classes but also among the middle classes. There is an infinity of neighbourhood groups, women's groups, etc., constituting so many authentic examples of people's mobilization.

5. The Media

The media "create" a sort of symbolic reality and dictate patterns of behaviour, direct consumer habits and

conduct, and manipulating the world of symbols. All this is an invasion of the inner person - via symbols. The media have the heaviest responsibility for the wave of hedonism and the alienation that has taken hold of the middle classes. Alarming, they are beginning to capture the youth among the working classes - the ideology of gymnasia, the cult of the body, the quest for pleasure at any cost, and the eschewing of any effort. And the list could continue.

6. The irrational, the resort to "magic"

The abandonment of hope leads on to the quest of escape valves and "magic", individualistic, spiritualistic outlets. There is a marked expansion among fundamentalist sects, and in resort to games of chance.

7. New found identities

Woman, the black person, the Indian - all are taking on an identity in our culture. And in the Church community, too. The process raises novel questions and throws down novel challenges to society and to the Church.

ECCLESIAL ANALYSIS

The Church in Latin-America is a Church to which the rest of the world looks with respect and hope. This is a Church, twenty years on from Medellin, that has seemed to have something fresh to say. And it is a Church that has opted for the poor, in so doing translating for its own context the great new tidings of the Second Vatican Council. Accordingly, it is a Church within which decentralization has been able to develop, together with a creative approach to pastoral work and to theology, where Base Communities might come into being and flourish with their fresh and alternative ways of being Church. Here the Church has earned the respect of, and encouraged dialogue with, intellectuals and even atheists. Sometimes and in

certain sectors, this opting for the poor has taken on somewhat radical features and opened the way to political and partisan decisions, on the one hand and, on the other, to the emergence of persons of great, outstanding prophetic stature. And many martyrs.

To-day, however, we are witnessing a swing of the pendulum, as it were, in the movement of openness that began in the Church with the Second Vatican Council. In some rather radical circles they speak of a "restoration". I prefer to call the movement one of "moderating equilibrium", even though it might suggest a conservative hue. This opening to the poor and the working classes does not come separated (no human process does) from ideologies. And ideologies have often come to loom rather large, to the point where they have caused concern among the Universal Church. In many parts and in many situations Church people have been directly involved in political - party - militancy, in armed fighting, even. Sometimes this has amounted to a full-scale departure of Christian militants gradually abandoning their communities, to throw themselves into a political militancy - only to be devoured by it. The Church is beginning to acknowledge that it failed to lend support to and adequately accompany these lay people who are thus casting off their moorings within Her.

At the same time, we are witnessing a vigorous and quantitatively significant growth in new movements - Communion and Liberation, the Focolare movement, Opus Dei, and others which are looked on by the most progressive elements in the Church as being neo-conservative and of set purpose in opposition to the Base Communities. These movements have of late been the only instances where the Church has something to say to the middle classes, since the more advanced Church of the 1970s was concerned almost exclusively with the working classes, to the neglect, and even the rejection, almost, of the middle classes. Movements with something to propose for the middle classes are gaining ground, notably in university and professional circles.

As far as the hierarchical Church is concerned, one is aware of a very clear line from the Universal

Church in the appointment of new bishops. The latter are usually persons of more moderate views. In the training of priests there is a move towards a more unified style of formation, withdrawing the seminarians from the universities and putting them back in the most tightly closed seminaries. The same can be said of certain religious congregations. The episcopal conferences, such as Brazil's, which carry considerable weight in the life of the Church in our continent and in the country, have been reminded of the need for greater caution in the statements they make and the approaches they follow. Some bishops have been warned - personally and directly - over the attitude they have taken up (Don Pedro Casaldaliga is an example). Outstanding theologians that have been identified with the Theology of Liberation have been warned, some of them even receiving sanctions (Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino, among others).

The same conception of the Church that began to predominate following Vatican II (and, especially, here in Latin America in the aftermath of Medellín, finding expression in such names as People of God, or Local Church) has come to have other expressions attached to it such as Church - mystery, Church - communion, Church - visible unity.

There you have - in my attempted analysis - how I perceive the Latin-America Church in our time - a Church torn between the steps already taken in one direction and insistent calls in another direction which, while not being the opposite, is quite a different one. In such a situation we are called to see, as St Ignatius would have us do (to "see" the persons, places, and so on), our CLCs.

I shall give you a few questions as a guide for the group work. But I should like us to keep before our eyes at all times the golden rule of St Ignatius; if the questions help us to complete and render more real our composition of place, excellent! If they don't help us, then let us put them another way and let us press ahead as the Spirit guides us.

1. What additional approaches could I, from where I stand, propose for the analysis of the social, economic and political situation that has just been described?
2. To what extent do I, as a Christian, feel called to do something about it?
3. What is my perception of "my" local Church?
 - as a community?
 - as a doctrinal and pastoral line to follow?
 - as regards its role as a transforming power within the realities of the social and economic situation? and what demands and challenges for myself do I discern within that situation?
4. What is my perception, here and now, of the lay Christian's situation in Latin-America?
 - within the context of civil society?
 - within the context of the ecclesial community? and

What challenges and demands does this perception imply for me as a CLC member?

Maria Clara Lucchetti B.

ignatian witness

GOOD NEWS ACCORDING TO ME
WHERE AM I COMING FROM?

I want to talk about Ignatian Spirituality. Last night we celebrated a liturgy of thanksgiving for Ann Cook who was called to heaven after 88 years on earth. She and her husband Bernie had been associated with the Sodality in its transition into Vatican II and into the Christian Life Community Movement. Afterward during the reception in the parish hall, I overheard the voice of Marie Schimelfening explaining to the assistant pastor: "CLC is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, lay apostolic movement in the Church, founded in 1563; we are based on Ignatian Spirituality." The associate pastor was young, smiling and impressed and said: "you can't go wrong there." Marie has a gift that way. So here I am wanting to talk with Ignatius about that spirituality of his and I began by praying:

Me: Inigo, are you listening?

Voice: What do you think?

Me: I think that question sounds just like you.

Inigo: Is that all? (He doesn't waste words).

Me: (a little jumpy) No, it's not. I want to ask you some questions about Ignatian Spirituality.

Inigo: Now we're getting somewhere -- shoot!

Me: First of all I just came back from my annual retreat at Ignatius College in Canada and I'm fascinated by the sculpture of you leaning into the wind with your cloak flapping out behind you.

(* Taken from "Harvest" publication of the USA National Community.

Inigo: Why?

Me: (I jumped into the middle of it). It makes me think you were counter-cultural in your day and I like that!

Inigo: We didn't have exactly that term in 1563, but I'm interested, Bob.

Me: (settling down) Well, I have been with the CLC Movement for 12 years (since my retirement) and with these lay people there are a number of other new terms connected to your spiritual exercises.

Inigo: Give me a start on a couple.

Me: Well, like (by now I'm talking fast!)

- Reading the signs of the times (for discernment)
- Discovering who I am for the first week
- Sharing my faith story with others
- Facing the "ism's" of my culture
- Slavery to fear and guilt
- Recognizing my gifts and accepting my limits

Inigo: Hold it! I'm getting the picture.

Me: (calming down) OK, but one of the big "ism's" in the USA today is individualism. Men and women both seem to need to make it on their own... in big business, finance, world trade and all that. So where does that leave the poor!

Inigo: I saw something like that in my day and called it wealth, status and pride, in ascending order.

Me: But in the USA we know we are the richest and the best country in the world and we suspect others are out to get us. It's like a crazy fear! We have the biggest military build up in the history of the world!

Inigo: So what's your alternative?

Me: CLC says we need each other - that's the community angle - but its slow catching on. Did you have to cope with anything like that?

Inigo: (He was beginning to smile).

Me: CLC is counter cultural, you know!

PAUSE: I had the feeling we could burn the midnite oil on all of this. I let my steam ease out and I began to relax a little. Then Ignatius said one last thing:

Inigo: I like the way you lean into the wind, Bob, and let your old stuff flap behind you... (Then he was gone and I was smiling at the photo of his statue I'd seen in Canada).

Confession: I prayed, "Thanks, Jesus, for Ignatius!" Then I went to bed... and the next morning I wrote this document about me and CLC and I knew I was confirming my call to collaborate with more and more lay people.

AMEN.

Bob Johnston s.j.

THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL ACTION IN THE WORLD TODAY (1st part)

We publish here the 1st of two parts of a keynote address by Father Henry Volken s.j. He is a Swiss Jesuit who has spent most of his Jesuit life as a missionary in India. At present he heads the Jesuit Secretariat in Rome for the Social Apostolates.

This article can be helpful for us as we struggle with our own attitudes towards cultures different from our own, towards the very poor and our solidarity with them. This keynote address was originally given to the Annual Study-days of CEBEMO, 24-28 April 1989. CEBEMO (Catholic Organization for Joint Financing of Development programmes) is centred in Amsterdam, Holland.

Introduction

I am to share with you my perception of the Church's social action in the world today. Four years ago I had been called from India to the headquarters of the Society of Jesus to promote the social ministry of its members, and so the world has in a way become my parish. I feel at ease with the term "social action" since my fellow-Jesuits involved in justice and peace ministry, especially in Asia and Latin America, use with preference this word when talking or writing. In fact social action groups and basic human communities with Christian and Non-Christian membership, are anticipating much of what a Local Church in Asia still has to develop. But already for 15 years the Federation of Asian Bishops has pursued with great determination the development of an authentic Asian Church through meetings of the "Bishops' Institutes For Social Action" (BISA). The role of the Church in Africa and in Latin America in human development and liberation - and that's the meaning of "social action" - makes this focus even more relevant for the South of the world. In several African

countries only the Church is able to give strength to the people in a desperate struggle for food, peace and justice. The same holds true for the majority of the poor and victimised people in Latin America. Thanks to remarkable prophetic religious leadership, they are now themselves the dynamic center of the Church in the measure it already is the "Church of the Poor". There we find, it seems to me, the deeper meaning of "social action" as a presence of 'communities of disciples of Jesus' able to give witness to the true God in the World of today.

DEVELOPMENTS

IN ASIA: Last November a meeting of 100 persons, who are "front-liners" of the Church's social action in 26 Asian countries, took place in Hua Hin, Thailand. Some of them, who have gone far in living a spirituality of solidarity with the poor and oppressed, have thus expressed their self-understanding: "Responding to the challenges of an awakening people, there is the emergence of a church committed to the Reign of God, the God of history, the God of all who yearn for freedom, unity and peace. This commitment is expressed through our being with the poor". I was struck by the fact that an earlier narrow economic-political approach has been transcended and that a specific Asian understanding of evangelical solidarity is now emerging. "Solidarity with the oppressed implies respect for their religious-cultural heritage, a heritage which had been violated in the past. The implications are radically new. The struggle of the poor must embrace liberative aspects of different faiths and cultures, the movement of women's liberation, the struggle to protect nature and life. Each of these in its own way will help us to live and give witness to the Gospel more critically as we work towards harmony and solidarity, values at the heart of the Reign of God".

I do not think I am being unduly prejudiced in affirming that South Asia (India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangla Desh) has a special place in the developments reflected at the meeting just mentioned. It was no accident

that the two theology resource persons were from India (both Jesuits and influenced by Aloysius Pieris s.j.). The Indian representatives at the meeting were but a few from among the many young religious, men and women, who share this new thrust in social action. They all interact with numerous youth of "Action Groups" in the country, in which one finds much of the pioneering in alternative development, in a life oriented popular education that gives strength to organizations of the poorest and most exploited.

IN AFRICA: In this immense continent there are several regional Episcopal Conferences. These have fostered increasing cooperation within regions. However, the focus of attention has been on pastoral-cultural issues. The grave problems of social justice and peace have rarely been addressed systematically. There are exceptions. A remarkable example we find in the document "Justice and Peace in Southern Africa". Outside Africa, in Europe and in the U.S.A., the Religious have set up an "Africa Justice and Peace Network", but within the continent, regional structures for cooperation on these issues seem still weak. The situation in South Africa is special. The struggle against Apartheid has united Church-leaders to take a bold stand, and theologians under the leadership of Fr. Albert Nolan, O.P., have produced the Kairos document that is outstanding in the world today.

New developments relevant for the whole of Africa are taking place in the Church's efforts to coordinate its work for refugees. We know the tragic situation of refugees, victims of violent, cruel conflicts and of famines. The total number of refugees is much higher than official figures indicate and is estimated at 15-20 millions, including the internal refugees. Coordinating the Church's response has become a necessity. I know of two full time coordinators, one appointed by the bishops and another by the "Jesuit Refugee Service". In the field of development one of the most remarkable new trends is the large number of women's organizations in rural Africa. Their concern with feeding hungry children and their disappointment with official development programs has led

them to find faith in their own initiatives. How much this is promoted by the Church, I do not know. But in the policy formulation of big social centers, like Silveira House in Harare, and INADES with headquarters in Abijan and branches in at least a dozen countries, emphasis is laid on training women and supporting women's groups in development and health. Other new initiatives, having a potential of becoming wide movements and programs, have been taken by daring individuals with a vision. These are in response to two much ignored calamities in Africa: AIDS and destruction of the ecology. In 1988 four Jesuits from Africa participated in a South-South encounter on "Appropriate Technology and preservation of the ecology" we had organized in India.

IN LATIN AMERICA: I believe, we would reach a dead end if Christian social action were separated from the Vatican II vision of the "Church that is poor" (L.G. 8), which, according to Cardinal Arns of San Paolo, is the basis of the most fundamental changes in the Church in Latin America. I was fortunate to be in Cochabamba last year when CLAR (Conference of the Latin American Religious) held its annual meeting. This gave me an insight into what I consider the most significant development for Church social action in that continent. It is a process of radical transformation of "religious life" among both men and women. On-going development of Christian Base Communities and popular movements are well known. But in the context of much division within Church-leadership, the clear direction which CLAR gives to religious life, based on an ever more authentic communion with the people, is a special sign of hope for the poor and oppressed. In Cochabamba the religious talked about "conversion to the poor", of how much they had gained, humanly and spiritually, from their incarnation in the world of the poor. They are convinced that it is the Spirit of God who has led them into this "promised land". They are able to formulate the tasks to be confronted if this movement is to grow and gain strength: Support and animation for this insertion and progressive inculturation, especially within the awakening world of the "indigenas"; deepening of the spirituality of consecrated life in the midst of the poor and of its insertion in historic movements; an appropriate formation in order to deal effectively with totally

new demands and difficulties. With great determination they are putting into practice the exhortation of John Paul II to the religious of Venezuela (Caracas, 28.1.85): "Be equally faithful to God and to His project, be faithful to your people!".

There is another aspect of this impressive development: The women religious are coming into their own! Their insertion among the poor is creating a new space for their feminine ways of perceiving, interpreting, deciding, acting, loving. The popular liberation movements need the way these consecrated women live "Liberation". It is far from competing with power, but deeply in tune with the mystery of the Kingdom of God, that like a seed is growing "silently". In the context of Latin America their life in the Church can have a deep healing effect on male dominated ways of life. And because all God-intended liberation has as center the life of the poor, from where the most urgent call comes to religious, the small inserted communities of religious women represent a break-through that not even Medellin or Puebla could foresee.

THE MAIN AREAS OF CONCERN

All concerns of the Church are to be rooted in its specific mission which is "to make known, by whatever means, the Good News of how God is involved through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the events of our time" (Nolan). There are no other activities besides, but all are meant to put people in touch with the living and liberating God so that they may at the same time understand their response-ability. "Human efforts and Divine initiative merge into one liberating enterprise" writes Aloysius Pieris. For this reason "areas of concern" cannot refer to content only, but must include the process in which they are operational.

I, therefore, begin with what is more related to process by quoting what I said about "people's participation" at the last Annual Assembly of COR UNUM: "Reflecting

on my own experience in India, I find that a decisive passage has been made in the Church's work with the poor during the seventies; it was a passage from a somewhat paternalistic approach, characterised by "thinking for the people, planning development projects for the people and implementing these" to another approach whose main concern is enabling the people to think, to decide, to act together. This was more in tune with the social teaching of John XXIII and Paul VI, emphasising that people have to be the subjects of their own development and destiny. On my visits to other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, I could witness how this passage "from help to solidarity" has given a new dynamism to the Church's work among the poor".

I have noticed all over a wide impact of Paulo Freire's "conscientization" approach. It has taken the concern for people's participation further, and has become an essential dimension in all justice-oriented Alternative Development.

Community Health

Across the continents of the Third World the Church's social action has probably made the single most important contribution in the area of Community Health. It had been initiated by pioneering work of exceptionally creative persons like David Werner, author of the most translated "medical" book: "Where there is no Doctor"; by christian doctors who realised that mission hospitals had been part of the problem, leaving the majority of the rural population without access to health care. Long before an alarm signal was given at the international meeting of Alma Ata (USSR), and the slogan "Health For All by the year 2000" was formulated, christian doctors had moved into neglected regions to set up community health programs. Their totally new approach to health care became an inspiration for many, religious women in particular. Community Health came to be understood as an alternative system precisely because it is based on faith in the potential of the people and the community to take on much of the responsibility for their health. Stories about illiterate

women who, through an adapted and step by step training, had become highly effective in curing simple diseases, imparting health education, reducing the incidence of common diseases, and even in becoming community leaders, had come to be widely known. "Training of trainers" became a priority concern. It meant setting up programs for re-educating medical personnel, so that these may acquire the ability to train basic health workers and to support community health programs. As health and health care have come to be seen as issues of social justice, Community Health is being integrated in official health policies of most Third World countries. Yet new structures by themselves are not sufficient, a motivating spirit has to animate them. And the Ministries of Health, at least in India, are looking up to the Church-sponsored programs (catholic and protestant) in which they find this evasive "ingredient".

Social. Economic, Political, Cultural Analysis

The logic of putting this as second concern following community health, is not apparent. But analysis of society is a prerequisite for community health work as for any other justice-oriented intervention in society. What is specific to Community Health is that it is a community-building process. Where the social stratification is minimal, the entire village community participates. In other situations the rich have no interest in this enterprise or oppose it because they want modern well-equipped hospitals. Thus, in most cases the "community" is constituted by the poor. With a proper approach a process of conscientization becomes part of the health program. Why are we sick? Why do so many of our children die? The immediate answers will be: "because we are poor, because we are illiterate, because we have not enough food, because we must pay the money-lender", etc. A process of political-cultural education is under way. The practical wisdom of the people discerns what initiatives are to be taken. The educated professionals involved in such programs carry on this analysis when they meet with other colleagues. In fact this is a regular exercise of "Medico-Friends", a national organization of young people-committed Indian doctors. In course of time they have thus

acquired a critical understanding of the country's health system and of its underlaying "values". This enables them to stimulate the thinking of the medical team of their community health center, of the village health workers and of the people interacting with these.

Societal analysis is a high priority concern in social action. Without having an analytical understanding of society the justice dimension of any organized development risks either to be weak or totally absent. This applies even to relief action if its effects are not to damage social justice. The concern for rigorous and comprehensive analysis has grown everywhere. In Asia there is a move away from a mere economic-political analysis and increasingly attention is given to cultural and religious reality. This trend has been less noticed in Latin America where the focus is more on the socio-political and its religious significance, in contrast to a marxist analysis alone. In African countries the pressure for economic development is very high and political leaders resent any type of public criticism. As a consequence analysis is kept at low key in development work. We find in the social encyclical "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" another type of analysis of society that wants to be theological. While appreciating its value and universal significance, one misses in it the element that can deal with conflict arising from "structured interests". These, however, are reflected in current development models. Any development effort that puts the "last first" has to face conflict.

People's Organizations

Most of the Jesuits and other persons I meet on my trips across Third World countries would say that their aim in social action is "people's education and organization". They do not refer to the poor as "poor", but rather as deprived and disempowered. Neither do they like the term "development", which they know to be a process that

increases the gap between the rich and the poor and is accompanied by massive impoverishment. Who is most interested in reversing this process? Obviously its victims. But there is no possibility for them to attempt doing this unless they gain social power and eventually also political power. In a meeting of Coordinators of "Jesuit Social Action" in India 'transformation of the structures of society' was declared essential to social action. There and all over, this is affirmed without a perhaps earlier arrogance and with a sense of realism. Years of experience have taught, that systemic change of society is a very complex issue and that the forces opposing it are formidable. In many of the countless people's organizations the on-going struggle is for sheer survival. The Foreign Debt burden has made this more so as the poor are being hurt the most by it and by the policies their governments pursue in order to fulfill the debt servicing obligations.

However, what the people's organizations have achieved despite adverse conditions and frequent cruel repression, in both the rural and urban sector, cannot but provoke immense admiration. Being myself more rural-oriented, I wish to just indicate one urban example of this. I refer to the "Pueblos Jóvenes" in the capital of Perú. Pushed out of their land on the Altiplano, the 'campesinos' have in successive waves come down to the plain and added millions to the population of Lima. Initially they begin their urban life with almost nothing except their bare hands and an indomitable spirit. Anybody needing more faith in the capacity of people for inventiveness and in the strength of popular religiosity can greatly benefit from a visit to these mushrooming favelas. It only needs listening to the stories of the people who gradually transform these into townships.

A major concern of all in active solidarity with people's organizations is, that their actual scope, even if federated, remains limited. In most countries of the South the government and the powerful groups are antagonistic to

these organizations that become the voice of the voiceless. The illusion, that N.G.O.'s or even the Church can provide these the support they need to emerge from marginality, is being dispelled. Only when the State and its institutions accept people's organizations as important partners in a justice-inspired development policy and strategy, will they move into the center of national life and contribute substantially to the nation's economy. It is crucial to understand better the role social movements and citizens' organizations can have in the support of people's organizations and in pressurizing governments to adopt people-oriented policies.

Henry Volken s.j.

HOUSEWIFE AND GROUP GUIDE(*)

A few years ago, I read an article in PROGRESSIO, signed by a Chilean woman, mother of 8 children and spiritual guide to individuals and groups. At the time I was very surprised and intrigued. It seemed so far removed from our French reality and from my own!

And yet... here I am, only a few years later, in a situation, though on a smaller scale, that is not too different. I have 5 children, not 8, (aged 4 to 13), and for the past four years I have served as guide to a Christian Life group. A few individuals have also asked me to walk with them for a while, as they made a choice or a decision, as they reflected on their situation; and some have wanted me to accompany them through the experience of the Spiritual Exercises.

A lay person serving as guide.

Despite considerable resistance, much has changed in France, on the level of mentality and in concrete facts. Not so long ago, a CLC community could not "function" without a Jesuit, or, at least, an Ignatian religious. To admit that a lay person could also fulfill the role of a guide was unthinkable. We have evolved, however, thanks to circumstances: need, of course, was a factor; but also a new awareness of the fact that a lay Ignatian community should not have to live forever as "consumer", but should be able to take responsibility for itself.

Today, lay people are sent by the community, as a

(*) From "Vie Chrétienne", monthly newsletter published in France by lay members of the Christian Life Community and Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

service, not to "replace" a Jesuit or a religious (we have neither the same status nor the same qualifications), but rather, to accomplish a precise task: to assist a group, using our own specific experience as lay people. I want to underline the words "are sent". To me, this is essential. If the Christian Life Community had not specifically asked me, I would never have considered it myself.

This is all the more true when dealing with individual guidance! I had to be told a number of times by "an expert" in such matter: "Go ahead! You can certainly provide a useful service in this area where the need is constantly growing" before I dared set out on this path. All mission is an answer to a call but this is particularly true in this case, since we can never feel "ready" never be sure that we are "up to it"...

I believe, and I experience this every day, that it is the call that gives me strength to continue with simplicity and humility, despite the reservations expressed within CLC; this is often the case in the Church, whenever lay people (and, worse yet, women) take over tasks that were not open to them in the past.

Conversion and joy

Beyond these difficulties and my own fears, the service I provide is above all, for me, a path to conversion. For I am the privileged witness of many events in the lives of others that cause me to look again at my own faith, at my life-style, today, in Christ's footsteps. But also, it is difficult to encourage others to adopt certain ways in order to further their own development and growth, if one does not practice them regularly oneself.

This service is also a source of joy. I have seen so often in my own experience, particularly at difficult moments, how useful it is to have someone to talk to who is slightly detached, who knows how to listen and is able to point to a few landmarks that might lead to the next step forward.

I have also noticed the freedom and the call to responsibility offered to me by Ignatian spirituality in my search for God, where I am, such as I am. Finally, I have received the fraternal assistance of a group that challenges me, day after day, year after year, to seek unity always in my life, the different parts of which (marriage, family, profession, friends, Church) increasingly become the place where I can "seek and find God", the place to which I am sent to try to be witness of his love and of his tenderness!

Sharing and support

This gift I receive I gladly share with others so that in turn they may become more deeply "alive" for the glory of God.

However, this is only possible to the extent that I am nourished and strengthened and enlightened through my prayer life, my married life and my life in CLC group (to which both my husband and I belong, with no particular responsibilities).

Finally, I would like to mention the importance, for us lay guides, of the work and reflection we do together on the Spiritual Exercises, with other Christian Life guides, Jesuits, religious and lay and in formation groups for spiritual assistants (part of the diocesan vocations service).

It is through encounters with others - priests, religious and laity - that I gradually learn how to better fulfill this service of spiritual assistance within the Church for the time that I am asked to do so.

And what about the five children? They guarantee a quick return to reality, should I ever lose contact with it! They are the ones who teach me most about listening, being available, searching together for the best solution to a question... all of that with no appointment!

Betty Bekelynck
CLC France

General Principles

I AM A CLC MEMBER

There are many members of CLC. But the phrase "being a member" is not enough. Every one has to express his/her commitment and identity in daily life, by fulfilling some basic conditions. It is paramount for me to see where I am and to be brave enough to act afterwards. The worst thing is to stay in a no-man's-land!

As a CLC member

- I belong to a steady community whose members meet regularly to pray, share their lives, and discern their missions.
- I make the effort to practice my Ignatian awareness examen every day.
- I live an intense sacramental life - Eucharist, Reconciliation, that goes beyond the Sunday commitment.
- Every year, I dedicate sufficient time to renew, in one way or another, my Ignatian Spiritual Exercises (I was not content simply to experience an initiation into the process).
- I identify myself with the CLC as a lay apostolic movement, in my country and at the world level. For me, it is not enough to participate in the small group, isolated from the wider community. Even more, I bring something by my presence to the meetings and activities of the larger community; I offer my contribution to help the community itself and support it economically.
- I know well the "CLC General Principles" and I try to live them out in my family, professional and social life.

- I take seriously my vocation as a lay person, my concrete mission in the world, which requires constant activity of spiritual discernment, taking always into account the preferential option for the poor and the Ignatian sense of the Church.

This life-style is what CLC expects from its members. Indeed, it is not for everybody.

Eddie Mercieca s.j.

Echoes... Echoes... Echoes...

The President of the CLC of Brazil, Maria Clara Lucchetti, on 4 May 1989 defended her doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Theology of the Gregorian University, Rome. The thesis, with its dedication to the lay people of the CLC who are striving after an Ignatian spirituality in their lives, has as its title "the Blessed Trinity in St Ignatius Loyola". The president of the examining board had words of praise for the CLC and expressed particular gratification that a mother of a family, from Brazil, should have been able to obtain a doctorate at a university in Europe, with a subject that she had not only developed with impeccable methodological rigour but had also lived out in her own life as a Christian. Present on the occasion were the candidate's husband, many Latin American residents in Rome, members of the World CLC Secretariat and several friends from Brasil. Among the last mentioned was the well-known theologian Fr Leonardo Boff. This doctoral award is a cause for rejoicing for the CLC worldwide.

L'EUROPE DES DEVOTS, now in an Italian edition running to 278 pages, has on the dust cover a statement saying what the book is about, namely the "origins of European society as seen through the Society of Jesus and its Marian Congregations, their day-by-day life, criticism and polemics, and ideology". The author, Louis Chatellier, is professor of modern history at the University of Nancy II, and specializes in the history of the Counter-Reformation. The original edition was published by Flammarion in 1987, while this Italian edition is published by Garzanti (1988). On the cover of the latter we read "The enormous influence that Catholicism has exerted and continues to exert on patterns of living in modern Europe can be discerned in a particularly revealing manner through a study of these Marian Congregations that the Jesuits instituted in their colleges as early as the XVIth century... Thousands of men begin to live in accordance with the same statutes, to come to know each other and to meet regularly. From 1600 on, the network of these institutions spreads to all European countries. The Congregations become a centre from

which there radiated a highly important influence capable of activating a forceful leaven among the faithful. Even if they did not enjoy unanimous approval everywhere in the Catholic world - we need only recall the violence of Pascal's attacks in Les Lettres provinciales or Molière's Tartufe - they have left an indelible imprint in Europe's Rhineland, the lands of the Mediterranean shore, from Paris to Lucerne and Toulouse to Naples. This imprint came gradually and imperceptibly to govern our daily lives".

THIS SUMMER IN NORTH AMERICA, in the newsletter of the CLC in (English-speaking) Canada, we read that their next General Assembly will take place from September 29th to October 1st, in Guelph (Ontario). The theme is "Mission beyond ourselves with Christ towards persons, societies, planet earth".

In the United States, CLC is to hold its National Convention, and has chosen as its theme "Walking against the wind". The dates are 10 to 13 August, and the venue Santa Clara, California. The Convention will also cover several subjects of particular interest: family life, the workplace-one's profession or occupation, the civic arena, leisure and recreation, population, environment, and lifestyle, social mission and the world, money and mission; youth walks against the wind.

To complete these points regarding North America, we have news about the CLC in Mexico, which is preparing to host the next World Assembly. Mexico's National Assembly is scheduled for 18-20 November, at Monterrey, Nuevo León. The theme is the same as that of the forthcoming World Assembly: our role in building up the Kingdom.

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A EUROPEAN WORKSHOP OF THE CLCs took place in Hasselt, Belgium, from April 28th to May 1st. 11 nations were represented with a total of 40 participants. The programme included periods of sharing on the meaning of Mission and the working documents on formation used in our own communities.

We confirmed the fact that we have a common language of Mission which is an inner moving attitude, a spirit of availability and generosity which opens us towards others. Meanwhile Service is the concretisation of Mission in the reality that surrounds us. Then, we continued this work in small groups, trying not to get lost in generalities.

Each one voiced the actual situation in his/her own National Community, and gave a faithful picture of the results obtained and the problems not yet resolved. The General Principles were the thread running through the debates and the point of reference for reporting each experience. Among the numerous helps that these provide us, three were analysed with particular attention:

Life-style:

More and more importance must be given, in the organisation of our daily-life, to the simplicity which generates deep changes within us and eventually enables us to change the social structures around us, which are often unjust today.

Love for Mary:

The importance of Mary and her role in our faith, her value as model for our activities of service, her generous and discrete attention towards others, were stressed. However, we felt the necessity of rediscovering her in our groups.

Spiritual Exercises:

They are the foundation of our spirituality, the steady and living base for our personal growth and community life; they enable this unity in the midst of our differences, which is characteristic of our being together with the same goal. The Exercises appeared as the privileged instrument throughout "CLC Europe".

It is difficult in a report to share clearly the atmosphere of a situation, the "marvellous transparency" in the complexity which we find between humanity and faith, culture and our inner life of spirit, and within the difficulties of expressing accurately our feelings and reflections in another language.

For me there remains my memory of persons and places, an awareness of the faith that brings me to wholeness and draws us together, and the discovery of so many diverse goals. For our communities, the impulse to go ahead is strengthened by the knowledge that they are not alone. The invitation to "cultivate their own garden" in a Europe that needs committed lay people, sure of their identity within the Church, helps them to assume their responsibilities in building a better society.

Marvin Ceccato