

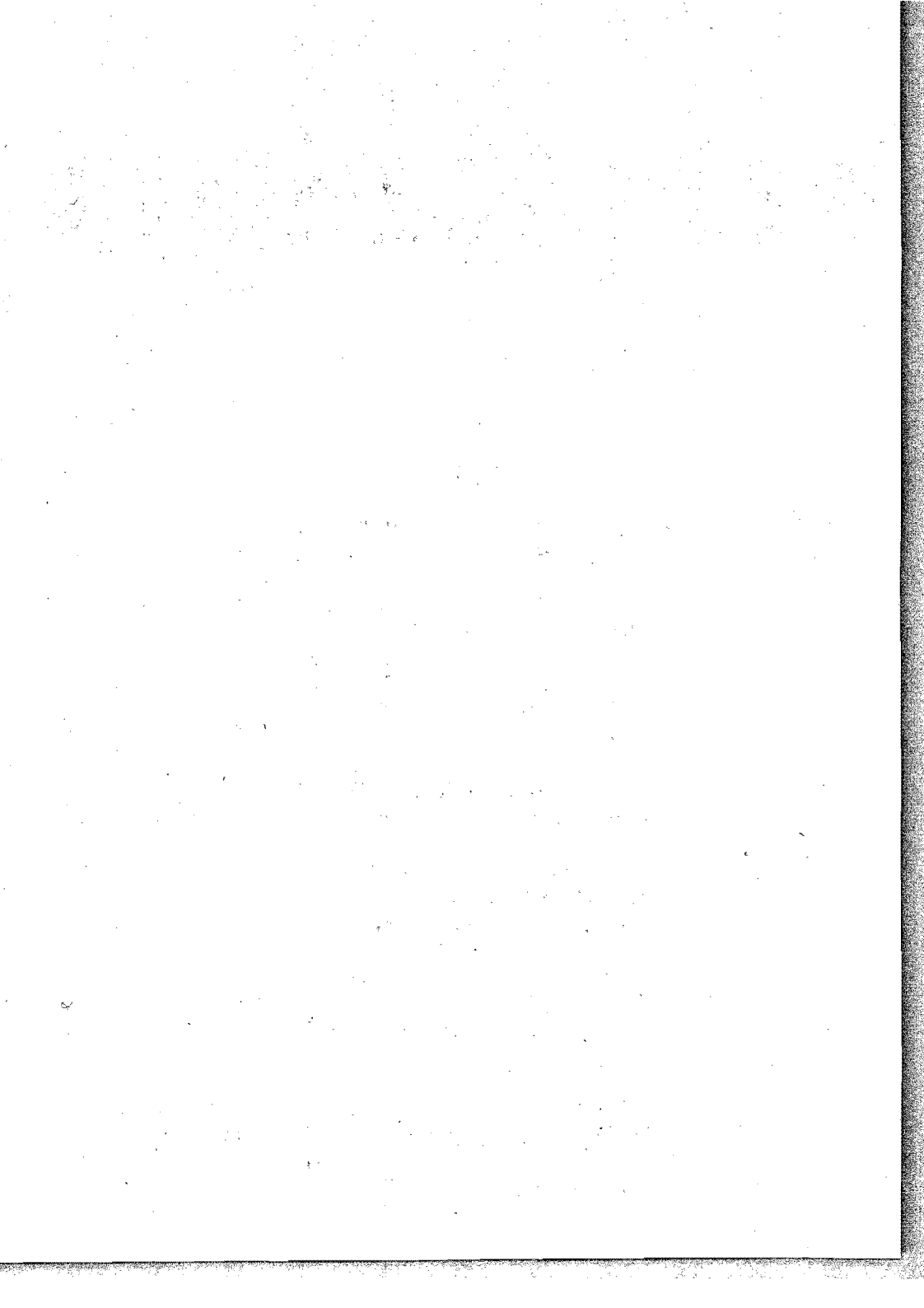


PROGRESSIO

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CLC PILGRIMAGE TO CHINA...

Sharing Dreams of Xavier and Ricci

This was the first time that CLC members from Hong Kong, Taiwan (ROC) and Australia went on a pilgrimage together. It was organized by the Society of Jesus of Hong Kong & Macao to celebrate the Ignatian Centenaries. Thirty two CLC members and their friends participated in the prayerful three-days journey, and visited places where the Ignatian presence had brought about lively apostolic events and had borne fruit: Macao - a Portuguese enclave where Jesuits have served since 1555; Shangchuan Island - the Chinese island where St Francis Xavier died; and Zhaoqing - where Matteo Ricci first stayed and preached in China.

Early on March 15th, we left for Macao by ferry. We went straight to the Chapel of Saint Jose where a relic of Xavier is kept. Sean O'Cearbhllain s.j. celebrated mass for the pilgrims. We had lunch across the border, in China, delighted that the religious publications and prayer books we brought along to distribute had gone through customs without any difficulties - one customs official mistook my bible for a dictionary!

On our way to Shangchuan, we stopped at the Jiangmen Catholic Patriotic Church. Because of shortage of local nuns, young nuns from the adjacent province had come to serve. They also study, knit and do other domestic work.

The high spot of our journey came on the following day. It took us no more than one hour on the ferry to reach the island where the saint had waited for months for a boat traveling in the opposite direction that would take him across to spread the Good News. He died, waiting on the shore, looking out across the strip of water and beyond, at the coast of China, a country which still

remains unconverted four centuries later. How much longer, before the Good News will reach the people of China? The chapel was rebuilt in 1982, the original having been badly damaged during the Cultural Revolution. The pain of separation was so great when I came across liturgy I had never experienced before, that I could not hold back my tears. The reading for that day was "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But how many Hong Kong Catholics, caught up in the uncertainties of 1997, are willing to follow in the footsteps of the saint? Is there here a special call to this group of CLC pilgrims?

The Hongkongers among us were not the only ones who were moved by this experience. Sr Joan Evans of Australia, who had been working in Thailand, later wrote: "Very specially I prayed for the Chinese people who in those couple of days had touched deep into the very core of my being... At present I do not know to what I am being called... is Thailand just a step to China?"

On March 17th, Fr Ma - the parish priest in Zhaoqing parish, accompanied us to "Do Yuen Chai", a house built by Matteo Ricci in 1583. Right next to the house is a block of government buildings, which used to be the Jesuit Star of the Sea High School. Sean O' Cearbhallain and Alvaro Ribeiro SJ -also from Hong Kong- celebrated their first public mass in China with us at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, rebuilt in 1986. The mass was in Chinese and a number of local people attended. The air was filled with Chinese hymns and a spirit of ecumenism prevailed. The first reading was from Jeremiah: "None of them will have to teach his fellow countrymen to know the Lord, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest". How utopian is it, in the Chinese context, to hope for this, or for the coming of the Kingdom? None of us will ever forget the emotional moment when we exchanged a sign of peace - the pilgrims, the celebrants, Fr Ma and the local old women all smiling, shaking hands, hugging, our cheeks wet with tears. Jan Carney, also from Australia, later reflected: "Mass on St Patrick's Day so touched me that it ranks among the peak experiences of my life - just like my wedding". Others were simply unable to find the words to describe their feelings.

Old Fr Ma, who is well over seventy, and has been saying four masses every weekend, then accompanied us to the tomb of Fr Simon Tang SJ, who died in prison during the Cultural Revolution. Fr Ma, who was also in prison for some time, told us "Fr Tang was a highly respected priest in Zhaoqing. He was a principal of the Star of the Sea High School and many of his former students are now senior government officials. I built this tomb for him not because he was a counter-revolutionary - I too was a counter-revolutionary - but because he was my brother and a good priest. He must be very happy up there in heaven to see us all here, praying for him".

The lives of the CLC members in our group of pilgrims have changed in many ways as a result of this pilgrimage. One visible change involved visits to a herbalist nun, who joined our pilgrimage. Sean visited her, and so did another CLC member who had also suffered from a stroke. The latter had this to say: "This pilgrimage is valuable and helpful to restore my faith. Many people are kind and generous... They encouraged me to be strong and faithful, to trust God. I will never forget this experience". Eadaoin Hui, Jennie Chor and Grace Tse - who have all taken part in CLC General Assemblies - also visited this nun and became more aware of their own health. Ludy Lee, from Taiwan, was a first-time visitor to the mainland, where she found confirmation of the great need for apostolic work among mainland Chinese.

As for myself - the lonely scene at Shangchuan; the figure of Fr Ma; the man whose curious eyes watched our mass in Zhaoqing from the door of the church; the millions of Chinese who have not heard of Christ; and the Christians in prison - all of these images often cross my mind when I read the newspapers, when I attend liturgies, when I study papers on Chinese education, and when I pray with my CLC friends. May God bless the Church in China

John Tan
Hong Kong CLC

CONSECRATED CELIBACY TODAY (*)

Marie-Geneviève Renauld is a religious belonging to the Congregation of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. As student chaplain, she is frequently questioned about her celibacy which many find puzzling and challenging. This article was written primarily for her students, but many of us will find it interesting.

In my travels through Moslem countries, I realized to what extent celibates - both men and women - are viewed as outcasts, living against nature on the margin of society and challenging society at various levels. This is equally true in all parts of Catholic Africa.

In Christian countries, we are quite used to meeting consecrated persons in our daily lives. There was even a time when their condition inspired great respect. Nowadays, society has become "liberated" and faith is socially less visible, and it has become much more difficult to understand why a man or woman would chose to live apart from the world and from society. We can see these attitudes reflected, for example, in the frequency with which priestly celibacy is a matter for debate in the media. Celibacy within the walls of a monastery or convent is a little easier to accept. But celibacy in the context of an apostolic religious life - how is that possible?

A precocious love-life

We learn from the mass media about the free sex-life of young people. This is based on a new system of

(*) Taken from an article in Vie Chrétienne n.348, dec.1990 - a magazine published in France on a monthly basis by lay CLC members and Jesuit priests).

values, one that is quite coherent, in fact. Those who adhere to these values:

- reject the idea of prohibition in sexual matters;
- claim equal freedom for men and women;
- recognize the fragility of couples, where children are often wanted as a means to cement the relationship;
- for them, lasting relationships are to be feared, not valued;
- marriage is no longer viewed as a source of security;
- they live together more and more often without being married; etc...

These developments are due to a number of factors, including higher income levels, greater autonomy at an earlier age, birth control through contraception and abortion, abstention from religious practice, etc.

For the most part, the young people we meet in university chaplaincies are not financially independent - they still depend on their parents for most of their income, even when they have a scholarship or part time work. Frequently it is during these years of study that young people discover love, and begin to ask certain questions. They freely discuss, among themselves and with the chaplains, a wide range of issues including their ideas about free relationships, sexual relationships, contraception. Some are very private concerning their own lives; others assert with great conviction that they will have no sexual relationships before marriage; and others feel that, once they are engaged to be married they are committed and there is no reason why they should not give themselves completely to each other. Debates can be very intense. Though the young people who come to the chaplaincies are mostly Christians, and some percentage bring with them strong family values, nevertheless they are children of their times.

Another kind of love

How does consecrated celibacy fit into all of this? On the whole, students appear to favour a married

priesthood. A few are reluctant to accept this idea; without being able to give reasons other than tradition, or the material difficulties that would arise for the priest and his family. As for me, they know of course that I could have married, had children and been happy in marriage. I tell them that because I felt called by God to consecrate my life to his service and to the service of others, I chose, one day, to answer this call.

At that moment, and by this choice, I gave up one-to-one love, mutual support, children, family life. Celibacy is not an escape from marriage, for men or for women; it is a different kind of love. I have given up the love that exists in a couple, but this does not mean I have given up love. The fact of being consecrated gives me much more freedom to love more fully, to give my love to all those I meet, to all human beings loved by God. It is the love of "agape", a gratuitous love, completely disinterested, a total gift of self that wants nothing in return. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ lived - "There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves".

Three-sided relationships

I have not given up my sexuality, I do not repress it; I am a woman and I assume my femininity in all of my being, directing all that I am to the Lord. He is the one who gives me this freedom, this availability to others, and makes it possible for me to love everyone in him. My emotional relationships are always three-sided in a way, because it is with him that I can truly love the other. God's love is immense; it includes every man, every woman, whoever they may be, and my desire is to make this love known, to love all people with God's love. The learning process is a very long one; it gives life both to myself and to those I love.

Living celibacy day by day

This isn't always easy. Giving up legitimate joys is not something one does without suffering; consecrated

celibacy can only be understood in the context of faith in the God of love. It can only be lived out in relationship to others. It is a continuous process, never something fully acquired. I need to constantly find strength and renewal in prayer, deepening my relationship with God so that I can be ever more available to others, free, fulfilled, happy and faithful in a celibacy offered to God.

Living in celibacy means living in the faith and the love of Christ with whom I am in love and whom I serve in serving his Kingdom. Living out my celibacy means accepting solitude, even in the midst of my brothers and sisters; it means renewing day by day the gift of my life to the Lord in recognition of his grace. This solitude is filled by the Lord himself through regular prayer, the personal and profound relationship with the one who has loved me from the beginning of time; it is also filled by the bond that links me to my sisters in the congregation and to all those who have allowed themselves to be seized by Christ in order to live this particular form of radical availability with the Church and in the world; finally, it is filled by the many bonds that have grown out of my involvement in various Christian communities, by all the friends who support me and respect me.

Young people are aware of the weaknesses that can appear along their own paths and lead them to failures of various kinds. But they are very demanding with those who have committed themselves to follow an evangelical life. If through our discussions they can understand that priests and religious cannot be placed on pedestals, since they are human and therefore fallible; that consecrated celibates can live out their celibacy fully if they are helped and supported by Christian communities; that they themselves have a role to play in helping those who help them grow in love and respect of one another - then our discussions will not have been in vain, especially if they realize and believe that beyond all of our weaknesses, God is "the faithful one".

Marie-Geneviève Renauld

PERMANENT COMMITMENT IN THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES

CLC members in Bologna, Italy, felt the need to explore in depth the theme of "permanent commitment". They invited the World Secretariat to participate in a day of reflection on the subject, based on the General Principles and on the recently adopted General Norms. The following article was presented in Bologna and could be useful to other communities and CLC members, who after several years of shared experience, wonder what, in themselves, is "permanent" and defines a life-style.

Permanent commitment is already mentioned in the 1971 General Principles. The wording was reviewed and amended in Guadalajara in 1990 in order to clarify both the substance and the form of commitment, in view of the complexity of this issue.

To provide a context for reflection, I will first comment on the 1971 document, which contains useful insights for a pedagogical and spiritual process; these are important to remember, as are the appropriate adaptations and amendments. I will then discuss some of the reasons why it is so difficult today to deal with the issue of permanent commitment. Finally, I shall make a few remarks on the text that was adopted at the last World Assembly, and suggest a few interpretations and implications.

I. The 1971 document and the insights it provides

Articles 9, and 15 of the 1971 General Principles deal with commitment to CLC. The text contains many terms that refer to a process of growth, the final and stable expression of which, in subjective terms, is permanent commitment. There is mention of "entrance into a group", which "presupposes a personal vocation". There is mention

of a period of probation of at least one year during which the candidate is "introduced into this way of life". During that year, candidates not only "learn", but also "test" - alone and with the group - the authenticity of their calling. The Spiritual Exercises are recommended as a means to an "enlightened decision". At the end of this process, the candidate is admitted "upon approval by the group". All of this is in the old version of Article 9.

The next paragraph states that "Admission includes commitment to this way of life and to membership in a particular group". However, there is an immediate acceptance of the fact that this requires time, especially for young people, time to "grow in understanding their vocation". This is why there is a provision for a "temporary commitment which can be renewed". Permanent commitment is made only after a suitable trial period by the candidate. All of this is stated in Article 10 of the 1971 version.

Finally, article 15 states that "After permanent commitment, all remain members of their group ..."

What can we say about these insights into a process, insights which in their substance have been retained in the new text?

1. In the relationship of each person to the community there is a process of growth that can be summarized as follows: vocation, entrance, initiation, testing, decision, admission, renewable temporary commitment, permanent commitment, stability in the vocation.
2. In the relationship of the community to each person there are some key elements that can be summarized as follows: attraction, introduction, proposal of a style, formation, testing, acceptance, intimacy (confrontation), fruitfulness (confirmation).
3. In the 1971 text, the word "member" is reserved to those who stay, in other words those who are "permanently" part of the group (see GP 1971, 15);

others are referred to as "candidates" (see GP 1971, 9 and 10). In this respect, the 1990 text makes a different choice, using the word "member" for all, while preserving the idea of a process of growth.

4. The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are both the implicit source of the process proposed and the explicitly recommended means. Those who are familiar with the Exercises know that a culminating point is always the "election"; at a given point in the dynamics of the exercises, election necessarily leads a person to make or to confirm choices (the 1971 GP spoke of a "personal decision" that is brought on by the experience of the Exercises). It is along these lines that we must understand the visible expression of an inner process of growth in Christ, which we call "commitment".
5. The personal dimension, expressed in the words "personal vocation", "own vocation", "enlightened decision" is an inevitable part of the CLC process of personal growth. In the final analysis, the relationship with CLC cannot be defined merely as "membership in a given group", but rather as "a personal response to a calling which is also personal". This is why, from the stand-point of the individual, CLC is a life-style (GP 1991,10). And this is also why the World Community is made up of individuals, and not groups (see GP 1990, GN1); individuals who grow within the community and gradually adopt a life-style.
6. The word "vocation" must be understood as a dynamic process. This is why we can say that "entrance presupposes a vocation" (GP 1990, 10) and that after entrance, members will need a certain period of time to "discern their vocation" (GP 1990, 10). Finally, we can say that "our community is made up of Christians... who have recognized in the Christian Life Communities their particular vocation in the Church" (GP 1990, 4). Thus there is no need to make a distinction between "candidates" and "members". A vocation is a call. Jesus's call will almost always be

imprecise in the beginning, a general attraction (where do you stay?... Come and see). The apostle does not yet dream of being an apostle, nor does he imagine the perspective of the cross and resurrection. But he has been called and has already given his first answer. If a community is capable of attracting new members (come and see), it is because the community is living out the Spirit of Christ calling, at first in a generalized manner. We become apostles through a process of growth which is made possible by the presence of the Spirit of Christ.

7. It is only by recognizing the transformative action of the Spirit in our own lives that we can finally say "Take, Lord, and receive..." and thus enter into a permanent commitment. This must not be lived with fear, nor can it be viewed as a mere formality. It must be lived liturgically, with joy, with gratitude to the Lord who, through this community, has called me, has made me grow and given me the desire to "follow him more closely and to work with him" (GP 1990, 4). This is why I believe that the word "fruitfulness" should always be associated with the expression "permanent commitment". Fruitfulness is always the result of "growing intimacy" and that is why I associate the word "intimacy" with "temporary commitment". However, and I repeat, a growing intimacy always creates fruitfulness. It has always been said that the CLC way is the way of the Spiritual Exercises, culminating in the contemplation to attain the love of God. Anyone who has not lived a process of growth in Christ cannot express with freedom and joy the total offering of themselves implied in the words of the "suscipe et recipe". To suppress permanent commitment would be tantamount to arresting the process of the Exercises, which is the process of the CLC.
8. The word "permanent" must be said fearlessly. A persons's deepest desires - as indeed God's desires - are always permanent. These are sometimes frustrated, but they do not go away. Note how the 1971 text speaks

simply of "commitment" ("Admission includes commitment", art.10) and only later, almost as an after-thought, does it introduce the idea of "renewable commitment", "especially for young people". Yet, in my experience with young people, I have always marvelled at the desire for permanence in their commitments. To say to a young person who is in love for the first time "Don't Worry, this isn't going to last... don't commit yourself too much, this is just a first love, a temporary love" shows a great lack of respect. The young person lives this love with complete generosity, however limited, and his/her greatest desire is that it should last. In Spanish, the word "permanecer" literally means "to stay". We know how important this word can be and how closely it is intertwined with the idea of bearing fruit, of fruitfulness.

I will invite you to read - as an exercise - John 15:1-17. Read it a first time, slowly all the way through, without stopping. Then count the number of times the word "stay" appears, with its synonyms and derivatives; then how many times the phrase "to give fruit" appears, and its derivatives. Then reread and savour verse 11. Next, reread verse 16 and try to understand why this verse was proposed as the central theme for our last World Assembly. Consider your fears about the word "permanent" and turn to God, repeating the words of Saint Ignatius: "Give me your love and your grace, for that is all I need". Finally, get together with a few friends who have already done the same exercise and have grown in Christ in the Christian Life Community, not necessarily within your same group. Together, recite a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts you have received; as you celebrate the Eucharist together, take for your first reading General Principle 7.

II. Some typical difficulties

I have attempted above to bring out the deeper intuition that underlies the long-standing practice of permanent commitment (PC). None of this, however, provides a simple solution to the wide range of problems that make it difficult at times - even for deeply committed members

of CLC - to make a permanent commitment explicitly. I must admit that I have personally experienced, and still do, all of the difficulties I am about to discuss. Thus I cannot propose solutions to every problem. All I can do is suggest a few directions along which we can together continue to explore God's will for us in this area.

1. Individualism in our relationship with God

Difficulties with PC often arise when we believe that "there is a direct line between me and God". When this attitude is applied to the Sacraments - particularly by very young people - it makes it possible to be Christian without going to Mass, and to confess one's sins privately to God. In a more subtle manner, this attitude can lead us to think that I make and evaluate my own commitments in privacy with God, without having to go through the intermediary of the concrete and specific community which helped me to grow into these commitments; and that the ecclesial aspects of these commitments are rather implicit and general. This is frequently the result of an individualistic upbringing in a society that does little to develop a social dimension for these commitments, one that is more open to grace. I believe there is today a tendency to go beyond such extreme forms of individualism; today we can pray together, and share the real problems of life. We have learned to value communal discernment and we have become more open to spiritual direction. We are beginning to rediscover the value of signs, in particular in liturgy. However, we do not as yet recognize in PC a consequence of this trend to greater openness. We retain images that no longer have much to say, or we become resigned to the idea that what is within us cannot be brought out to be confirmed and validated by the community.

2. A castrated process

Earlier, I established a link between PC and the Contemplation to obtain Divine love. I remember Fr Paulussen once talking to me about a very good person who

had often done the 8 day Exercises and who had asked him to accompany him. This person had never reached the stage of the contemplation to obtain the love of God, despite numerous eight-day experiences. "I think this is very serious", Fr Paulussen said to me. A complete process can only lead to commitment, to an offering of self. If we do not wish to remain entrenched in individualism, such a commitment must be ecclesial, must be welcomed and celebrated by the community.

3. Difficulty with forms

Even if we accept all of the above, we still must find external forms that are meaningful in our own cultural context. I think that for this it is essential to put to work the creativity of each community. We should not attempt to transfer models that have been successful elsewhere. The search for new forms should not refer exclusively to PC, but should also have reference to other aspects of the CLC process; passage from one phase to another, imagery and symbolism, etc. In the 1990 GP, this important task is entrusted to national communities (see General Norm 5).

4. A narrowing of horizons

While it is important to respect the necessary links to a specific community and a particular region, I believe that one of the major problems comes from linking PC too closely to these limits. The 1991 text spoke of "entrance into a group", of the admission of a person into a group. True, it did say that membership "includes commitment to a particular style of life" (1971 GP, art 10), but also stated that after permanent commitment, "all remain members of their groups" (1971 GP, art 15). Personally, I am not attracted to the idea of permanent commitment to a group. Moreover, it does not seem to me at all desirable from an ecclesial point of view, or healthy from a psychological standpoint. Why should I bind myself permanently to a particular group? Would it not be better

to say that as we grow in maturity in our vocation, we also grow in universality and naturally tend to stretch our horizons. In particular, the option for a World Community points in this direction. The PC clearly refers to a life-style, to the universal community that is born from such a life-style, to the General Principles (our "covenant with the Church"). Certainly, all of this is lived through a concrete community, but one that can change.

5. The problem of authority

The theme of authority is implied in that of PC. Who receives the commitment, who authenticates it? The clericalism of the last few centuries of Church history, which is still very much a part of us today, made the priest the center of all these things. Without wishing to downplay the figure of the priest (see on this point my article on spiritual assistants and priests), we nevertheless want to give greater importance to the community in the area of authority. I am impressed by the way in which we can share our lives, give each other fraternal criticism, even in those areas of life that have traditionally been considered private. And yet, at the same time, we hesitate to give the community the authority to accept and authenticate our commitment, in a climate of communal discernment. Subconsciously, we still have a very clerical view of authority. Let me give an example: in defining our sense of the Church, the 1990 text reads as follows: a sense of the Church "includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand" (GP6). Some delegates had problems with this wording, because it expressed too much submission to the hierarchy. They were reassured once it was pointed out to them that the words "where the needs of the Church so demand" do not necessarily imply the needs of the hierarchy, but rather those of the People of God. Another example: General Norm 32 states that "The Church authority which grants official approval to a national, regional or local community is the World Christian Life Community; canonically approved by the Holy See, with the consent of the bishop or bishops concerned". Although commitment is to the World Community (GP1990, 7),

the latter can only act through particular communities which are its authentic expression. Thus community, at every level, is the authority that receives and makes authentic our commitment.

6. Fear of freedom

We have been formed in the spirit of the Exercises, and so our idea of freedom is not a restrictive one. However, we must still engage in the daily struggle to overcome our fears and our spiritual setbacks. Those things which, subjectively, can appear to enslave us even to the point of paralysis, are often objectively very simple. The 1971 document used the word "permanent", but stated that, after making a permanent commitment, "all remain members of their group unless they freely withdraw". This idea is also present in the new text. What is there to fear? It is worth noting that the marriage ritual uses the word "indissoluble" to express the idea that, when married people separate, the bond between them continues to exist. The CLC bond does not have this kind of indissoluble quality (that marriage has), nor is it bound to a state of life (as in the case of religious vows). PC is a step that we decide to take in order to follow Christ, according to a particular way; it belongs to the realms of offering, of desire and of grace: "Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favor and help. I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise..." (The Spiritual Exercises, 98). It is a matter of using fully our freedom and not at all a matter of losing some part of it.

7. Devaluation of the lay condition

One last difficulty I would like to mention derives from a commonly held view that lay people in the Church are precisely those who do not make radical

commitments - they live in a state that is less perfect but allows greater freedom; those wishing to openly express a desire to follow Christ should become priests or religious, through a solemn profession and a promise to remain celibate. Thus, any talk of commitment among lay people was viewed as a "clericalisation" of the laity, something which could only be proposed in very special cases. Today we are learning to recognize the real value of the wide range of vocations growing out of the one single vocation to holiness and the one common call to mission. In such a context, it is no longer difficult to accept the idea that lay people might wish to make their commitment more explicit.

III The 1990 document

The above is an introduction to a reading of GP 10 and General Norms 1 to 7.

The basic concepts of "vocation, entrance, initiation, testing, decision, admission, temporary commitment, permanent commitment, stability in vocation" are developed in these norms as methodological proposals.

The one year period, suggested in the 1971 text, has now become much more flexible, based on experience (see General Norms 2 and 3). Flexibility is increased in two ways: a) the periods are set in the General Norms rather than in the Principles; b) the length of time before permanent commitment is increased to a maximum of 12 years.

In view of the difficulties concerning form (see point 3 above), concrete arrangements are left up to national communities; it is implied, however, that the one thing that must be present in such commitments is some reference to the General Principles (GN 5).

The Spiritual Exercises remain the source and the means of this process of growth; however, new forms that have developed in recent years are introduced. In order to

avoid any castration of the process, General Norm 4 links the concept of PC to "an experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises", in one of the accepted forms. Among the various possible forms, it seems to me that a series of eight-day retreats over a period of several years, coupled with a sustained experience of communal life and other means of growth (see GP 1990, 12a), corresponds to a complete experience of the Exercises. General Norm 2, as distinct from GN4, links temporary commitment to "an experience of the Sp.Ex.". The term "an experience" does not refer to the number of retreats that a person may have made, but rather to the fact that it is not necessarily the complete experience.

With respect to forms, periods and paths to be adopted in order to rediscover the value and the practice of PC, we must keep clearly in mind General Norm 6; it is based on wise and progressive Ignatian pedagogy, without which we run the risk of losing all the potential richness of PC.

The alternative was to omit all reference to PC; the General Assembly did not opt for this solution, although it was well aware of the difficulties discussed above. No doubt, the members of the Assembly had faith that the Lord would show us the path to follow.

José Reyes

FOLLOWING CHRIST IN POVERTY

The National Convention of the Italian CLC took place this year in Naples. The theme was "Following Christ in Poverty" and one of the speakers was Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach s.j., who addressed the convention in the words that we are now publishing.

1. Saint Ignatius and poverty

Those familiar with the Spiritual Exercises know that Ignatius constantly insists on poverty. He hardly mentions the problems raised by human sensuality, but the words "poverty" and "poor" can be found twenty times in the text. This is particularly true in the great meditations - on the Foundation, the Kingdom, the Two Standards, the Three Kinds of Humility - where prayer always leads us to follow Christ poor. Ignatius first lets us discover that human beings can be called to praise God, whether they are wealthy or have few possessions (23). Later, however, in view of Christ's own choice to preach in poverty the richness of God the Father - that is, with simple and modest means - we are invited, in following Christ, to be ready to participate in this choice for poverty (98).

The Church today knows better than ever before that the Good News cannot be proclaimed by means of vast publicity campaigns, and certainly not in the framework of a violent ideology or conquest. Rather, the Good News is brought by the lowly and poor examples that each one of us gives in the home, in the family, at work, through a personal incarnation of the Lord's Gospel. This proclamation in poverty is revealed in the Eucharist. We can and we must celebrate the Lord's last supper in sublime cathedrals, with music and in solemnity; however, in the

end, the mystery of God is not manifested in all of this splendor, but in the host, the bread we eat daily and the wine we drink at our table.

Ignatius reminds us that the Lord was born in extreme poverty (116); he does this without dramatizing, simply pointing out a fact that indicates a choice and a preference on Christ's part. This story of the Nativity emphasizes the insecurity of the life of Jesus's family, and the proximity of poor and simple people, much more than any material difficulties they may have experienced. The Gospel is proclaimed to the poor; it will always be the sign of God's presence. For the poor among us are proof that we have not acted according to the will of God, who wanted us all to be fully human. This is why, since the days of Abraham, the Lord our God has indicated a preference for those who suffer, for all who are poor - for they are victims of the sins of humanity, victims of the one who lies, who is evil from the beginning.

Ignatius well understood human nature, and knew that there is in us an instinctive distaste for poverty. There is in us a great desire to have everything, to possess every power, to want everything. In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius shows clearly that we are creatures of need. Very realistically, he does not speak to us only in terms of our hunger and our thirst for God; he takes into account our need for sleep (84), our need for a house and a room (103), our need for food and drink (210-217). Ignatius is concerned for our physical strength; he certainly does not want us to become sick as a result of the Spiritual Exercises (83). Ignatius is well aware of all our needs. He also knows that, all too often, we do not allow ourselves to be guided by what is truly necessary and useful in order to be people at the service of God; that we are led by our dreams and by our imagination, often stimulated by publicity, or by what we see around us of luxury or richness of life.

In the Two Standards, Ignatius warns us against the evil spirit who does not want us to have life, but rather wants us to be lost; who uses our neediness to

make us extremely vulnerable to all possession, to the point of stifling us (142). With great realism, Ignatius guides us to imagine a situation which brings out our desire to possess more and more, as well as our fear of not having this or that. Ignatius is not trying to lead us to total dispossession, to total abandonment of all things or to contempt for all ownership or for all power. He seeks only the truth of what we really are before God, with his Son, and in their Spirit. To begin with, we are not objective when we talk about wealth and poverty. In defining bare essentials, our point of reference is always a "jet-set" life-style, a "dolce vita", and our standard is always as high as possible on the shifting barometer of our needs. No one spontaneously thinks to align themselves with the immigrants or the refugees among us. Moreover, in the meditation on the Two Standards, Ignatius warns us that the evil spirit always tries to tell us that Christ's poverty take us away from the world and ties us down to inhuman destitution. As the Lord himself said, the evil spirit always wants us to think that we "lose our lives" when we follow Christ in his poverty.

Finally, Ignatius reaches even deeper. Through the riches that we desire to possess, it is our very selves that we want to own. We want to live for ourselves, work exclusively for ourselves, think increasingly only of ourselves. The more we own, the more we believe ourselves to be self-sufficient; we feel we no longer owe anyone anything -especially not God, from whom we have in fact received all things. "Woe to you that are rich", the Lord said (Luke 6;24) for the rich are self-satisfied, they no longer need anyone, obsessed as they are with the constant race for ever more wealth, since even the richest of us never owns enough.

Having uncovered our desires, Ignatius guides us toward the joy of giving. If God himself is gift and forgiveness in his love, we who have been created in his image and resemblance will never be ourselves and happy until we offer our lives as "oblation" and gift of self,

in the image of Christ and following his example. To recognize this truth about ourselves is, for Ignatius, to attain "supreme spiritual poverty" (146). Everything in us is a gift from God, and all that we do must therefore be a gift to God and to us who are his children; this is truth, and teaches us our place before God. In his Spiritual Journal, Ignatius later called this "a loving humility", humility because it recognizes our truth, and does so not reluctantly but wholeheartedly - "lovingly".

All of this spiritual formation has no meaning outside of Christ's choice to be poor. In the meditation on the Three Kinds of Humility - or Christian love - this choice is proposed to us in the following terms: "to chose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches" (167). Especially in our times, when people are more likely to let themselves be guided by the values that emanate from Christ rather than by his person, it is important to understand that the point here is not an ideal of poverty, a programme of poverty that must be implemented - the point is to follow the person of Christ poor.

For Christ is poor in his person. He was never destitute; no one ever found him - a tramp in a gutter. His cousin John the baptist lived in greater poverty than he did. Nor was he rich - a man of gold and silver, Jesus belonged to a simple family with enough to get by, as long as all went smoothly and there were no accidents. Because of this, Jesus is comfortable in wealthy homes, where he often has friends. Now, this Jesus, who should normally have defended the status quo established by his rank and class, goes out of his way to serve the poor and the sick. He does all he can to bring these people out of their misery, for God his Father does not want us to die, or to suffer. In Jesus's words affliction is never accepted as normal, and nowhere in the Gospels is there a complacent word about suffering. God wants us to be rich in Him; in this sense poverty that is affliction is simply intolerable in the eyes of God, and can have no value.

2. Blessed are the poor

Poverty that is affliction can never be a Christian ideal of life; but, for the individual, it is a different matter. Poverty in itself is not blessed; the beatitude is addressed to poor people, those who are poor in their hearts. For although Jesus is not destitute in what he owns, he is poor in his person, in the depth of his heart. He does not belong to himself, he is the Father's son in everything. God from God, light from light. And that is why, so often in the Gospel, Jesus in his poverty confesses that he can do nothing - it is the Father who acts in him. He does not proclaim his own word, his own truth, but that of the Father. Thus, to follow Christ poor means above all to recognize that all is gift, all is grace within us. This is the spiritual poverty Ignatius spoke of (98, 146, 147). However, because we are not pure spirits, our poor hearts, in following Christ poor, must express themselves bodily, concretely; in Ignatius's words - effectively. For Ignatius, spiritual poverty is essential if we want to be poor in spirit with Christ poor. However, he lets us discern what will be the concrete form of our effective poverty. There are different vocations - as in the Three Kinds of Humility. Francis of Assisi was poor in a different way than Pope Pius X, and yet both followed Christ poor. Doctor Moscatti's poverty is different than that of San Gennaro, and yet both follow Christ poor. The Spiritual Exercises are precisely meant to help us discover - each according to our own vocation - a concrete way of following Christ poor. Just as in the Gospels, the Lord does no more than call, asking that we follow him, by helping him with alms to beggars, or by giving a part of our capital to the poor, or by giving up everything. In the same way, Ignatius refuses to set up a programme for us to implement, a detailed rule that we would simply have to follow and apply. Ignatius would like us to be inspired in everything by the example of Christ. Once a year - each according to his/her own vocation - we should allow ourselves to be challenged by Christ poor to discern whether in our daily lives, in the choices we make, it is indeed Christ poor who guides us

and not an evil spirit, a diabolical spirit, driving us always to want more and to keep what we own exclusively for ourselves.

In contemplating the Gospel of Jesus poor, Ignatius saw around our Lord rich people who were poor in their hearts - as, for example, that friend of Jesus's who gave him his new tomb, jeopardizing his own reputation to do so. There were moneyless people as well, among them some Pharisees who did not own much, but only thought of themselves and felt self-sufficient. Of course, great wealth is not in itself a sign of poverty of heart. This is why in the Sp.Ex. Ignatius wrote that it is always better and safer, as concerns our person and our lifestyle, to limit and restrain ourselves as much as we can (344). This advice is not meant to encourage us to abandon all possessions simply for the sake of abandoning them. It is meant to encourage us to follow Jesus who, though he was rich, gave away his riches to enrich us. In the same manner, and each according to our own vocation, we must live the riches we have -whether they take the form of money, skills or other qualities - in the service of our brothers and sisters who need these riches for their enrichment. Thus, a poor heart takes our eyes away from the world of the rich and of the exclusive self, and makes us look at others, at the poor. Ignatius praying with the Gospels did indeed discover the Lord poor among the poor. Whoever helps one of these children, helps me - Jesus.

Today, through radio and television, documentaries and newspapers, we are constantly in touch with the overwhelming reality of the poverty that surrounds us - out there on the horizon, but also right here on our very doorstep. Such a situation does not lead to contempt for money. Ignatius devotes one entire meditation to the story of three groups of men who must manage ten thousand ducats (157), and he adds to the Spiritual Exercises guidelines for the distribution of alms. Thus, he wants to teach us, as we follow Christ poor, to deal with money seriously and respectfully, whatever our own station in life. We cannot be evasive in our spirituality, and when it comes to matters of money, we must find God in all things by

managing "all I possess" (5) as something received in gift. In response to the gratuitous nature of this gift, Ignatius asks that all this wealth be managed with "justice, goodness, and mercy" (237). It is always in giving something more of ourselves beyond all obligation, routine, or convention, that we discover the joyful gratuitousness which is the characteristic sign of those who follow Christ poor - in the family, at work, in life. In the continuation of this vision, Ignatius cannot imagine being Jesus's companion in poverty without sharing in his preferential love for others. It is not a matter of ideology or politics - only of following Christ poor as he constantly enriches the poor. Ignatius does not discuss this at great length, but he acted on it much more than we do, by giving a roof to poor people in his home, by defending them against State and city authorities, by attempting to abolish the inhuman condition of beggars, and by founding institutes where lay people could come together to meet the needs of the poor. Ignatius understands - from up there - that the society we live in is no longer the one in which he lived; that we must talk about charity and justice; that alms-giving must be replaced by healthy socio-economic structures; that the gap between the rich and the poor in our world is much greater and, since the days of Marx, much more visible. Yet, it is up to us to translate a spirituality of poverty of heart into effective poverty; recognizing that all we have was given to us, in gifts and in forgiveness, we need to share the love of Christ poor by proclaiming the Good News to the poor. Blessed are the poor, for those who follow Christ poor will come to their aid in the name of the Lord.

Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ

UNITED NATIONS HAPPENINGS (45th Session 1990-91)

As we enter upon another new session (46th) of the United Nations General Assembly, your UN representatives of World Christian Life Community wanted to bring you up to date on last years happenings (45th session). There are five major areas we want to bring to your attention, reflection and action:

First, the historic World Summit For Children took place at start of last year's General Assembly. At the end of September 1990 leaders of 152 countries, including 71 heads of state and representing 99% of the world's population gathered at UN Headquarters in New York. Shortly before the World Summit took place, the UN document on the legal rights and protection of children became international law. The document is called "The Convention on the Rights of the Child". A Convention becomes international law when twenty or more UN member countries ratify the document. To date, more than 50 countries, about one-third of UN membership, have ratified this very important document which has been drafted to protect those under 18 years of age from hunger, want, neglect, exploitation and other abuses. It took the UN ten years to come to agreement on the terms of this Convention. It took less than ten months for it to be ratified by twenty countries and become international law! Maybe this tells us something about the importance of this Convention.

CLC national offices and local communities can ask themselves two questions about this Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- 1) Has your country ratified the Convention? If not, is there a way to help the process of ratification along?

- 2) What can you personally or your local community or national office do to help support and strengthen this Convention on the rights and protection of our children?

Second, a vast quantity of time and energy was spent during the 45th session in preparation for the 1991 World Conference on the Environment and Development. Brazil will be the host country for this very important conference. The conflict between environment and development has been a growing concern both in first and third world countries. As we move toward the new century, many of the issues and outcomes of this conference may well effect the future of our planet and of individual countries for years to come.

As a people of the Incarnation CLC members can ask themselves how they might contribute to the preparation of this conference. There is need for technical, scientific and professional input from people who hold Christian moral and ethical values. There is need for volunteers to help in the many details of preparation. Contact your national UN office or your UN representative directly for further information.

Third, the UN's preparations for the International Year of the Family are in full swing. The year 1991 will be specially dedicated to the family as the basic structure of human society. Many issues are connected with the family, e.g. women's issues, the place of men in the structure of society, one-parent families, homeless children and a host of others. Again, this is an issue of urgent concern in today's world of competing and conflicting values.

As Catholics members of CLC have a large interest in the meaning and value of the family. CLC members or local and national communities can look for ways to try and make this upcoming Year of the Family a significant one. Contact your national UN office or your UN

representative for more information and for possible ways to help in preparation and implementation of this 1994 Year of the Family.

Fourth, at the UN WCLC is an active member of the International Catholic Organizations (ICO). This organization has an office close to the UN and the various ICOs meet together regularly to exchange information and to have briefings on issues before the UN. One of the most significant topics under discussion this year was the 100th anniversary or Rerum Novarum. Over these past hundred years the Church has spoken out on a whole host of social issues which connect either directly or indirectly with human and ethical values. As CLC we identify with the Church's desire to see all people live in peace and justice. Our reason for being a member of ICO and a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the UN is to try to continue the tradition of the last hundred years and to try to participate in the challenge for peace and justice that lies ahead and that the UN is trying to address.

Fifth, the most obvious and pressing issue over the last year was the UN involvement with the Middle-East war. Enough has been written on this in the secular papers. The large questions of the Middle-East remain. It is expected that much of the time and energy of the 46 session will have to be taken up with the ongoing problems of the part of the world and an attempt at some solutions.

Rev.Daniel J. Fitzpatrick, s.j. (*)

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SYRIA: A letter from the National CLC Promoter, Fr Zygmunt Kwiatkowsji s.j. was brought to the Secretariat in Rome by Abdul Masih Atiyeh, one of the lay leaders of the Syrian CLC. Abdul was present as an observer at the Guadalajara General Assembly, and he came to Rome to take part of a meeting concerning Christian presence in Muslim countries. We are happy to share some excerpts from Fr Kwiatkowski's letter with our readers: "We recently ended an 'Ignatian pilgrimage'. About 70 CLC members took part in it. We walked about 100 Km divided in four stages. During the pilgrimage we studied the Principle and Foundation, and some rules on discernment and the election as key elements of our Ignatian spirituality. We slept in the open, and could meditate under thousands of stars. Every day we celebrated mass and took some time to meditate and to share our experiences regarding the theme of the day. The main goal was not so much to commemorate the Ignatian anniversaries, but rather to take this opportunity to have an experience which would help the members of the various Syrian groups to feel themselves as belonging to one national community. We certainly fulfilled this expectation. The pilgrimage was at times exhausting, especially because of the sun and of the weight we were carrying. 2 days of retreat followed the pilgrimage, and we really received an encouragement for our future as one community. Looking at the way people said good bye to one another, it appeared very clear that we had created new and strong bonds of community."

U.S.A.: Last August the CLC of the United States held its National Convention focusing on the theme "Discerning hearts for servant hands". The keynote speaker was Fr Jim Borbely s.j., who spoke of "Consolation and Desolation: Their Impact on Mission". The Featured speaker was José Reyes, who developed the theme "In Service to the Kingdom: World CLC perspective". The convention was immediately followed by the delegate Assembly, which among other things confirmed the appointment of Fr Walter Farrel s.j.

as national Ecclesiastical Assistant and elected Ed and Marilyn Bourguignon as national Presidents.

Italy: On the occasion of the Ignatian year, a youth convention was held at the church of St Ignatius in Rome, from September 10 to 14. About 1500 young people, from every part of Italy, attended the meeting. The participants belonged to several different groups and institutions in some way related to Ignatian spirituality, and a good number of them were CLC members. The activities were varied, and included conferences, sharing in small groups, Ignatian witnesses, and an audience with the Pope in Castelgandolfo. The conferences were given by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Fr Giuseppe Pittau s.j., Fr Bartolomeo Sorge s.j. and Mr José Reyes.

International Youth Forum: Angelika Schelb, from Germany, and Jacek Gleba, from Poland, represented the World CLC in the 3rd International Youth Forum. The Forum took place in Czestochowa, from 7 to 10 of August, on the occasion of the VI World Youth Day. In a post-card dated 11 August, they briefly shared with the World Secretariat what they were experiencing: "The 3rd International Youth Forum has finished now. For us, the two delegates from CLC it was a very good experience to be here and to have the possibility to meet young people from 75 countries all over the world. In workshops we were sharing our very different experiences of way of life and faith. We saw what a richness the Ignatian spirituality could give to the Church all over the world."