



PROGRESSIO

PREPARATION FOR HONG KONG '94

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CONTENTS

Editorial	3
Prayer	4
Community for Others	6
Where are we in Today's World	
An introduction to the nine Workshops	12
WORKSHOPS	
1. Formation of Group Guides	14
2. Guide's Formation in Giving the Spiritual Exercises	18
3. The Youth	23
4. The Family	28
5. Work as Mission	34
6. Service to the Poor and Marginalized	40
Prayer	44
7. Our Socio-Political Involvement	46
8. Interreligious and Multicultural Dialogue	52
9. Mass Media	57

EDITORIAL

At the threshold of 1994, Progressio is thankful for all of those who have been supportive with articles, witness and other contributions. We are also grateful for the generous response to our request for sponsorships, for we were able to send Progressio out to all of those who wanted it. Please keep up the good spirit; we depend on your support for the year to come.

We do not know what this new year will bring for each of us, but we do *know in whom we have put our trust*. We also know that everyday is a new chance and also a new challenge for us: a **chance** because we experience our Lord's love, we know that he loved us before we could love him, and his promise is to *be with us everyday to the end of time*; a **challenge** because this love that gives us life in its fullness is *sending us to go into the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation*.

This challenge is more vivid than ever before with the approaching World Assembly in Hong Kong '94, and it is a new and urgent call to us as an apostolic community: a **COMMUNITY ON MISSION**.

This double issue is mainly dedicated to the preparation for the World Assembly. The pictures, prayers and quotations are meant to help for personal prayer. Let us take to heart the advise of Saint Ignatius:

For, what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly.

AMDG



Printed in *Bread Broken for a New World*, (Center for Continuing Religious Education, Archdiocese of Adelaide) p. 8.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,

my memory,

my understanding,

and all my will

– all that I have and possess.

You, Lord, have given all that to me.

I now give it back to you, O Lord.

All of it is yours.

Dispose of it according to your will.

Give me your love and

your grace,

for that is enough for me.

Community for Others

**Mission
supposes
that

someone
sends
and
someone
is sent**

What do we mean when we say that CLC is an apostolic body, a community for mission, or that our life is essentially apostolic (GP 8, 12b)? Very often, it has meant that CLC members give an apostolic purpose to their profession, undertake some apostolate or do some social service. Of course this is an oversimplification. Our charism involves something more – perhaps something different.

Mission supposes that someone sends, and someone is sent. To be on a mission is to be sent. The Church is sent by Christ to carry on his mission throughout human history. CLC is sent in the Church and by the Church. When the Church confirmed the General Principles and Norms, she recognized and approved our specific apostolic and charismatic identity, and she sent us out to carry on the Church's mission.

A service or apostolate undertaken by an

individual or by a group becomes fully mission only when those who carry it out have been sent in and by the Church and in and by the community. They are the mediators, the sacramentality, of the Lord Jesus who sends us.

SENDING SUPPOSES COMMITMENT

Sending supposes commitment, and commitments can only endure when the one who is sent is aware of having been chosen. When Jesus chose and called the Twelve, *he called to him those whom he wanted* (those who were close to his heart)...*to be with him* (to become his companions), *and to be sent out...* (Mk 3:13-14).

The personal experience of being loved and chosen fortunately comes before everything else. Without this experience no commitment can last. In the *Spiritual Exercises* to choose is to be chosen. This is the basic personal experience: *to be received under his standard* (147); *to beg the Lord to choose us* (157); and *he, or she should beg him to be chosen* (168). This is the grace to be asked for.

In Ignatius' experience, the grace earnestly asked for by "the Pilgrim" and confirmed by his

mystical experience at La Storta, was that of *being placed with the Son*. Some have called this fundamental experience a seduction experience.¹ *You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger* (Jer 20:7).

The personal experience of being loved and chosen fortunately comes before everything else.

This is at the heart of the Ignatian pedagogy of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which in fact is a pedagogy of Christian affection. The life of CLC, in as much as it *holds the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality* (GP 5), is based upon the fundamental experience of falling in love with Christ.

Only with this grace is it possible for a person to make a personal, radical option for Christ. It is *personal* because the disciple wants to be with him, become his

¹ Catalá, Toni, "Seguir a Jesús pobre y humilde: Del ayer de Ignacio al hoy del mundo." *Sal Terrae*, Feb. 1991: 103-113.

companion regardless of the consequences, and identify one's whole person with Christ in his totality. This option is unconditional, fundamental, free and personal, and it gives meaning to one's whole life.

*FALLING IN LOVE WITH CHRIST,
CHOOSING CHRIST,
AND BEING SENT BY CHRIST*

After making this free-choice out of love for Christ, are we ready to be sent? To believe in Jesus Christ is to be ready to be sent, for vocation and mission are intrinsically connected. God always chooses and calls in order to send. We find this again and again in the vocation narratives of the Old Testament: Moses (Ex 3), Isaiah (Is 6:1-13), Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10), etc.

To believe in Jesus Christ is to be ready to be sent.

Falling in love with Christ, choosing Christ, and being sent by Christ are graces. These are the graces to be asked from God; for which we can prepare ourselves by removing from our lives those

obstacles that keep us from Christ. But the transforming miracle by which we become someone sent only happens when we allow the core of our being (one's affections) to be touched by God's grace.

HOW IGNATIUS SEES MISSION

When we are ready to be sent, we are like Jesus. He is the Son sent by the Father; he is the **AVAILABLE ONE**, as Father Arrupe said creating a new christological title.

Ignatius of Loyola perceived in God a Trinity of love (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and was touched by God's solidarity with the human family. This solidarity moved the Father to send the Son into the world for the redemption of the human family (Contemplation of the Incarnation in the Sp.E.). What touches Ignatius about Jesus Christ is that he sends his disciples as he was sent. The ideal of Ignatius' life is this *apostolic life*. He finds himself in the middle of this double sending: the Son by the Father and the disciples by Jesus.

Those persons who find their Christian vocation through CLC are introduced into this

experience of mission. Can this *apostolic life*, with a mission similar to that of Jesus, be the ideal of an association of Christian lay faithful? Let us remember that when Ignatius received this charismatic grace and acted accordingly, he was a layperson, had not yet founded the Society of Jesus, nor had he received his priestly ministry.

In the growth process of the CLC at local, national and world levels are we not lacking what is precisely our most characteristic grace? The order is not: first lifestyle and then mission. On the contrary, first we are sent, and then we develop an apostolic lifestyle accordingly.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR MISSION

We know God's love – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – by the Son's mission from the Father, and the Spirit's from the Father and the Son. *God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him (1 Jn 4:9). The Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life (Jn*

12:49). Faith consists in knowing Jesus whom the Father has sent (Jn 7:28-29).

Our mission, too, draws its origin from the Father, is realized in the Son, and is accomplished in the Spirit.

Our mission, too, draws its origin from the Father, is realized in the Son, and is accomplished in the Spirit. *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you (Jn 14:26). We are associated with the Son's mission in the Spirit: As the Father has sent me, so I send you...Receive the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:21-22). Jesus also said: As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you (Jn 15:9). The Gospel reveals to us the link between falling in love with Christ and the sending in mission. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last (Jn 15:16).*

MISSION IS COMMUNAL.

Mission is always communal. A task carried out personally becomes a mission when it is part

of the Church's mission. The World Community, recognized and integrated into the mission of the Church, is for us the mediator who, by means of the national and local communities, transforms into mission our apostolic tasks and our humanitarian services. Being ready to be sent demands much humility and transparency before the community to which we belong, because it is the community who will give the task back to us as a mission after it has been discerned. Personal discernment to choose is completed by communal discernment to send.

Personal discernment to choose is completed by communal discernment to send.

TOWARDS HONG KONG '94

The World Assembly is a major challenge, but it is not the greatest one we have. The greatest challenge is to really become *an apostolic body* – a World Community for mission – capable of undertaking those difficult and urgent tasks in today's Church and world. However, this can only be fulfilled with the coming-together of men and women, people with

different charisms, communities, and different races and cultures associated into *one world community* with a common charism and spirituality. The challenge of a communal-associated mission and the challenge of an international mission will come together and become our horizon for growth.

For the challenge of a communal-associated mission and an international mission we need available people. This availability is a fruit of our following Christ. This is why the *Spiritual Exercises* are seriously considered as an instrument for growth. We have to question ourselves if, after making the *Spiritual Exercises*, we do not experience the personal change by which we become more available and ready to be sent.

We need people and communities sincerely committed to mission, deeply moved by love and ready to be sent.

The World Assembly is called to be a Church's mediator for mission. The World Community, being sent by the Church, sends its members out with the mission of proclaiming and building the

Kingdom of God in today's world – with its often risky tasks that others cannot carry out. The World Community should know how to discern and choose those tasks *more necessary, most urgent*, and those aiming at *a more universal good*. These are some of the Ignatian criteria for apostolic discernment.

Such a plan may seem unattainable, since a World Assembly can hardly go beyond some general lines or options. However, the strength of a World Assembly consists in the ability to turn into mission – a sending – what the national and regional communities have considered to be the most urgent needs in their environment. In any event, the World Assembly opens for every

member the horizon to work for a more universal good and the possibility of international cooperation.

We need people and communities sincerely committed to mission, deeply moved by love and ready to be sent. The present moment seems to be not only the moment for a communal mission but also for a joint mission with an international scope. This would be only living out our definition of *being a World Community at the service of ONE WORLD*.*

This would be our new challenge: to see whether this is the moment for a joint mission – for an international mission. Then we should decide accordingly.

* This long process started in the Rome Assembly, 1979, at which Father Arrupe, with prophetic vision, gave a talk of its theme: "One World Community at the service of one world." Once the transition process from federation to community was completed, there was a growing discernment on mission stated at the Loyola Assembly, 1986: "Mary, model of our mission" and continued in Guadalajara, 1990: "CLC, at the service of the Kingdom". It is necessary to go further in the discernment of the support structures needed in order to carry out the mission, but we should not forget the change of personal and communal attitudes needed for mission, according to our charism.

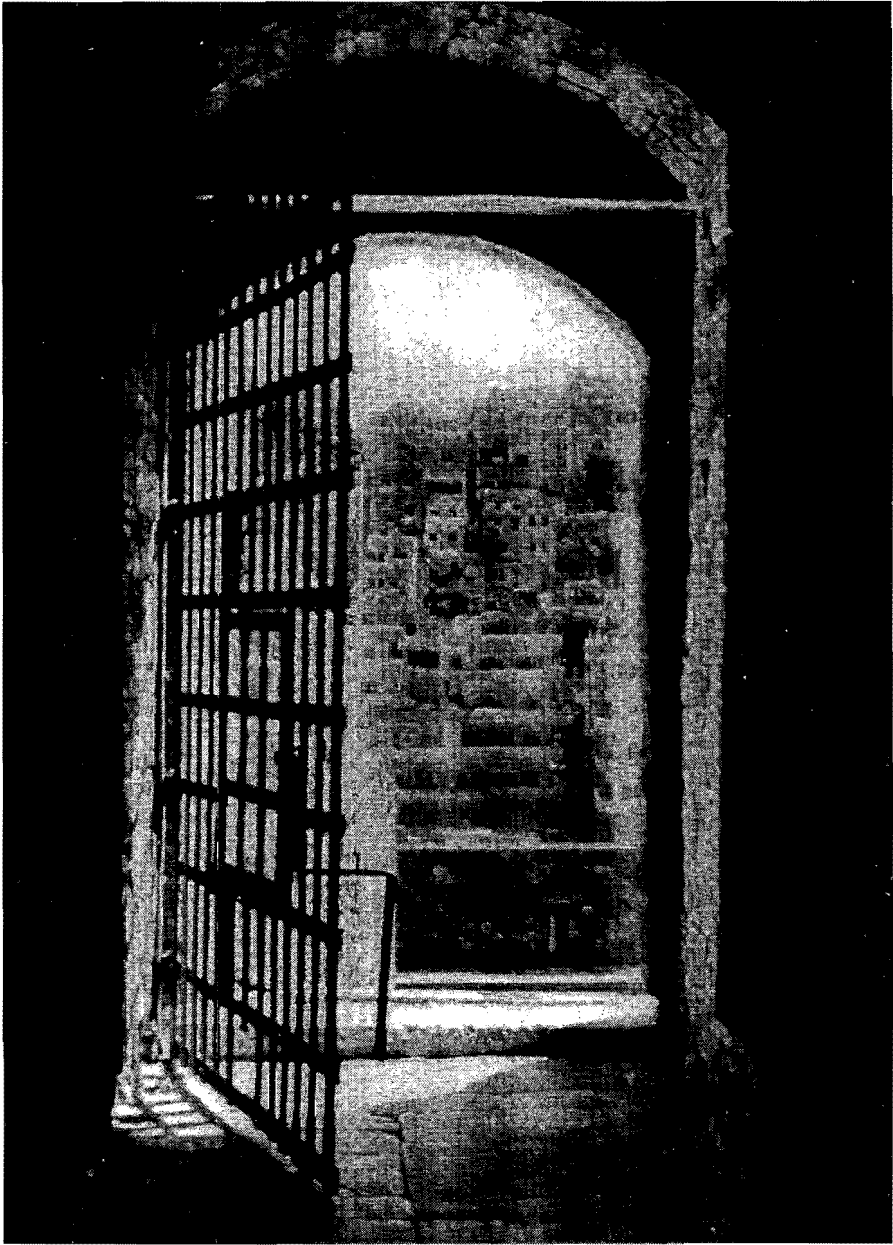


Photo by Hilde Körnig taken from *Benediktinerabtei Königsmünster*, Germany.

WHERE ARE WE IN TODAY'S WORLD

*An Introduction to the Nine Workshops
of Hong Kong '94 -*

To define the abstract term *WORLD*, we shall focus on nine areas of this world: the nine workshops. *Where are we, as CLC, in today's world?* This question can only be asked at a world level if each member and local community takes time to reflect on their personal experiences of mission during past years. Then, together, we can evaluate these experiences.

The real preparation for Hong Kong '94 is: *seeing our experiences on mission in the light of Christ's call.*

The following pages of the nine workshops *are not* meant to be a comprehensive or a "scientific" examination of the topics covered. The articles are co-produced by several CLC members from different countries, and they are meant to help us reflect on the main question for next year's World Assembly: *Where are we in today's world?* God's will is revealed to us through the events of our times. We, therefore, are invited to the Ignatian prayer of Examen as individuals and also as a community to see ourselves in the events of our time and the call we have received by asking:

What have I done for Christ?

What am I doing for Christ ?

What ought I do for Christ ?

1. FORMATION OF GROUP GUIDES



Zimmermann, *Mirjam* Jan. 1991: 15.

Group guides:

at the service of the group,

its growth and

*the living out
of its mission*

For a group to be alive and effective in the goal it is pursuing, the sharing of responsibility among all the members of the group is essential. Yet, for a well-functioning group a coordinator is required, and, in the case of a larger Community, an elected leader is required as well (cf. General Norms 41a).

When a group becomes part of CLC, its leadership will then be shared with the **Ecclesiastical**

Assistant, who is principally responsible for the christian development of the whole community, and helps its members grow in the ways of God... (General Principles, 14).

However, there is another essential requirement for a CLC to grow and bear fruit: it is the role of the **group guide**. Based on a worldwide experience of 25 years, our General Principles define clearly the task of the guide: *The guide, well formed in the Ignatian process of growth, helps the community to discern the movements at work in the community, and helps them to maintain a clear idea of the CLC goal and process. The guide assists the community and its coordinator to find and to use the means needed for the community's formation and its mission* (GN, 41b).

If we want to deepen the understanding and practical impact of the group guide's role, we can use the two WCLC documents on this topic: *Clarifying different roles: a supplement to the Survey and Formation of Group Guides: methodological orientations*. Both of these were prepared by an international Working Group at

the request of the World Executive Council (after Providence '82 and Loyola '86, respectively).

FORMATION OF GROUP GUIDES AND ITS IMPACT ON MISSION

Why do we feel that it is important to stress this topic in preparing for Hong Kong '94? Why should there be a special workshop for it? What contribution can it give to the overall theme of *Community on Mission*?

The answer is threefold:

- a) As experience shows, CLC needs the service of well-trained group guides in order to live its charism and mission. This is especially true when a group is using communal discernment as the process of decision making, as well as carrying through and evaluating its activities and apostolic commitments.
- b) As a determining factor for the renewal and, more and more so, in the renewal process, the Christian Life Community has rediscovered the *Spiritual Exercises*. The *Spiritual Exercises* and its pedagogy are not only CLC's own

specific source of identity and apostolic vitality, but it is also a gift that has to be conveyed to the whole Church.

Parallel to this, there has been a rediscovery of the proper *way of proceeding* as a community. This, too, is not just meant as a gift to CLC, but it should be shared within the Church with other ecclesial communities.

Forming group guides and offering their service to those communities of the Church who ask for it has already been an area of mission for some national communities. It could become more of a service to be offered if we in CLC are ready to prepare ourselves for this mission. In many countries it would be an answer to a strongly felt need if we were able to:

- introduce listening and prayerful attitudes in a group's process of data-gathering, discussion, and reaching solutions.
- train leaders in faith-inspired ways of building trust, handling conflicts, and making decisions.
- facilitate the growth of inner freedom and the

readiness to take a stand and run risks for the building of the Kingdom.

- coach parish councils, etc... in more discerning and effective ways of proceeding and acting.

These are just some examples of the fields ready and waiting for the workers to bring in the harvest.

c) There is a third and even more extensive, although little explored, area of mission where the training of group guides, based on our practical experiences and rooted in our spirituality, can be fruitful. It is in the area of *secular organizations and efforts*, which is pointed out in General Principles, 8b. We certainly will have much to share and reflect on in this workshop, as well as "homework" to do in the preparation for it.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?...

HOW DO WE PROCEED?...

WHAT STEPS SHOULD WE TAKE?

We suggest that one take a long and prayerful look at their own experience of receiving and/or giving guidance to a group – be it at the local or national level – in

order to evaluate strong and weak points, as well as achievements and shortcomings. We do this in order to try to understand what the Lord wants us to do next.

As a guideline, we can use the steps from the Prayer of St. Ignatius' Examen:

Thanksgiving

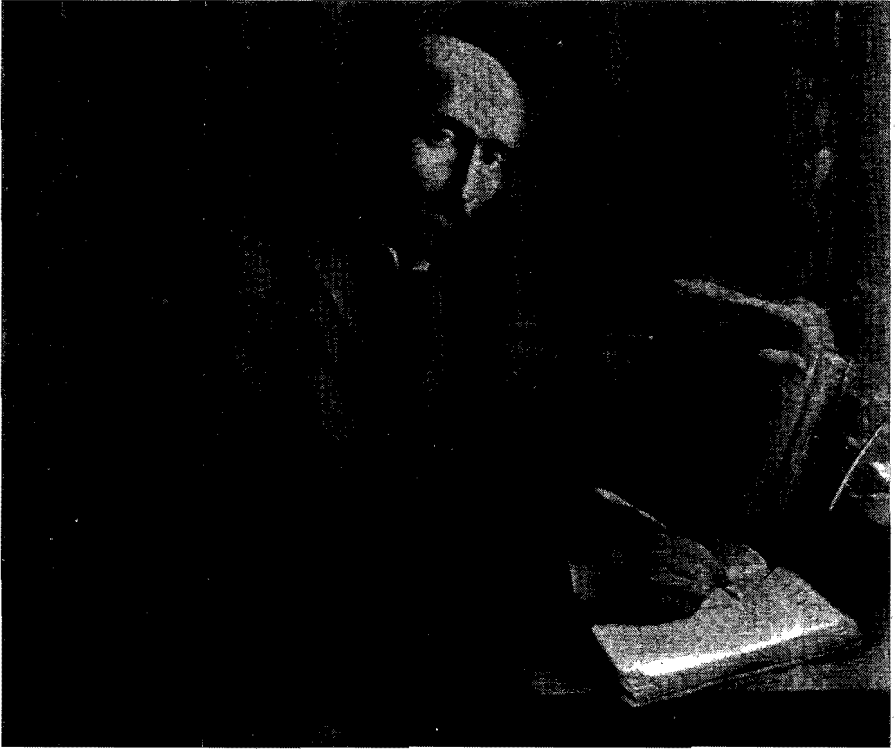
**Asking for
Light**

**Facing
Reality**

**Asking
Forgiveness**

**Hope for the
Future**

2. GUIDES' FORMATION IN GIVING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES



Photo, "St. Ignatius writes the Constitutions" (de Ribera, 17th cent.),
by Filice Bono and printed by So.Gra.Ro. S.p.A. - Rome, Italy.

The Spiritual Exercises are a gift of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church. In the Spiritual Exercises we find a pedagogical presentation of St. Ignatius' spiritual journey under

the guidance of the Spirit – *who dealt with him like a teacher with his pupil* – to search for, find and put into practice God's will in our lives. We are happy to see how the *Spiritual Exercises* have been

adapted to different cultures and situations, and how Jesus' life – *by fulfilling the will of the Father* – is the center of our discernment on what God wants from us at each moment of our lives.

We have to be very perceptive and see where we stand when looking as individuals and as communities into this instrument that God has given us. We realize that it is the Spirit of our Lord who can make us see reality, hear God's call and discover the deceptions of humankind's enemy.

EXPERIENCE FROM PAST DECADES

During past years, there has been a rediscovery of the spiritual and pastoral value of the *Spiritual Exercises* on:

- different ways of making the Exercises in seclusion or in daily life,
- biblical approaches,
- research on the text itself,
- the new importance given to individual guidance,

- the involvement of laypeople, religious men and women, and priests in offering the Exercises,
- contributions from psychology,
- formation courses,
- ways to pray offered in the text, etc.

There has even been great creativity in the way of offering the *Spiritual Exercises*. We should profit from all of these experiences. At the same time, however, we should not lose sight of the text itself, for only by staying within the limits of the original vision of Ignatius can we proceed with creativity and flexibility.

The Spiritual Exercises are meant to inspire a process which transforms our lives.

We have learned from experience through the years that the Exercises are not just a series of prayerful reflections or meditations over a period of five, eight or even thirty days. On the contrary, they are meant to inspire a process which transforms our

lives. During the limited time of a retreat, usually only a part of this comprehensive process takes place. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to where one is at in the process prior to the given time of the retreat.

The motivation, maturity, and generosity with which a given person enters the Exercises, in a given moment of his/her life-journey, determines the starting point for this retreat. At the end of a given retreat, it is then important to clarify how the person should continue their journey in everyday life.

So, it may very well happen that somebody covers in a retreat of 8 days only, let's say, the "Foundation" and the "First Week". After having lived faithfully in the light of this experience, the same person may

then, a year later or so, continue with the Exercises.

FORMATION OF GUIDES

In any kind of formation of guides for the *Spiritual Exercises*, it is essential that future guides experience the process of the Exercises themselves. Only by going through the school of joy and pain, fulfillment and frustration, and enlightenment and darkness is one educated in discernment. One can attempt to understand what another person is experiencing in their soul only after one

has experienced such movements themselves.

In addition to one's own experience, being trained skills is also, to a certain degree, necessary.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES #5

The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times. Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality. Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life. We recognize particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.

Although it can never substitute for one's personal experience, a guide needs to be trained in: the skills of listening and responding in a spiritual dialogue, using Scripture, being acquainted with different prayer methods, the ability to introduce these methods, and possess a basic knowledge of mental diseases. Above all, however, what is needed most is a solid, **personal** experience of faith.

Different forms of training programs for guides exist. The formation programs, however, should be extended over a long period of time – a minimum of one to three years. Thus, the participants can deepen their experience in everyday life. They can even start guiding others in simple prayer experiences. The evaluation of such attempts are extremely useful. Experienced guides can supervise beginners – learning by doing is justified under this condition. Next to basic formation, an ongoing formation is very helpful and necessary.

CHALLENGES

The Exercises sometimes seem to be ineffective. Problems exist when:

- People *make* them and are not changed in their deep attitudes and lifestyle.
- The Exercises are considered as a spiritual *oasis*.

How can such misunderstandings be prevented?

Sometimes the **social dimension** of the *Spiritual Exercises* is overlooked. They are considered as an individual affair. It is important to have an experience of involvement in other social milieus in order to become aware of where we actually stand with our own value system under the light of the Gospel.

How can such experiences be combined with the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises*?

Different ways to offer the *Spiritual Exercises* (eight days, in daily life, in groups, individually guided, as a couple...) have been developed so that many people can more easily take part in them.

How can it be made sure that the process of the *full Exercises* is lived in and through a series of short retreats or adapted forms of them?

The thrust and the dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the heart of the CLC way of life. They are *the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality*.

How can this experience shape the life of CLC communities?

The *Spiritual Exercises* have to deal with the wounds, inconsistencies and problems that a person can

carry, and only in doing so can the Exercises bring about deeper conversion and healing.

Sometimes, however, it seems that people stop continuing in the process or are no longer growing.

What can be done so that people get beyond this stage and move towards true apostolic discernment and commitment?

3. THE YOUTH

Who are the youth? It is not easy to define the age bracket into which young people belong. It varies from country to country and from culture to culture. For some, young people are aged thirteen to eighteen, for others twenty to thirty, or even twenty-five to thirty-five.

Thus, we do not speak here about age. Rather, it is about the way a young person feels at the age of getting an education, discovering responsibilities and integrating into society. The young person is neither a child nor a committed adult. The young person has some special characteristics: a personality still in the making, possible emotional instability, hesitations, doubts, generosity, optimism, solidarity, failures and disappointments...among many others. The youth are at the age when values, true or false, are chosen or

rejected. It is the age to be on the move. Young people, more than others, look for truth; they look for authentic experiences; they are ready to volunteer, but they do not like very structured and long-termed projects. Wherever they go, they bring along with them energy, change, new formulations, and why not conflict and crisis.

The youth are a challenge to today's world...that cannot be wasted.

In any case, it would be naive to believe that there is a unique prototype of youth common to all societies. However, what is common to all countries of the world is that the youth are a challenge to today's world, for the youth are the world of tomorrow. It is a critical age that cannot be wasted.

*WHY HAVE A WORKSHOP ON
"YOUTH" AT THE HONG KONG
ASSEMBLY*

As mentioned before, the young people are seen as a challenge for our world, and we feel that the Lord is calling us to see this challenge as a mission. We in CLC have a message both to live and to voice. But what personal, communal and apostolic witness are we able to offer to the young people? What image of Christ can they perceive from us? Do we help them discover their deepest desires?

CLC also needs young people for its commitment to more deeply ground itself in the world and in order to learn how to tune into the most current and urgent needs. To listen to the youth and to make ourselves available to their reality means to constantly question ourselves and both renew our lifestyle and our way of action. How do we integrate our Youth Communities? How do we encourage their taking part in the life of the community?

The following two important points must be considered:

a) The matter here is not to focus on creating or developing a new

branch of the CLC Youth.

b) Let us not work *for* the youth but *with* the youth. As we bring young people into formation, we, ourselves, will be formed as well.

*DISCOVERING OUR STRONG
POINTS*

- Is our CLC for Youth maturely developed?
- Are we working for the training of young people to be leaders in other movements such as the Scouts, the EYM (Eucharistic Youth Movement), Christians Today, Midade, LTS (Leadership Training Service), etc.?
- Are we involved in movements for the rights of children?
- Are we involved in catechetics and parish formation programs for those preparing to receive the sacraments?

CONSIDERING OUR MEANS

- Have we adapted the Ignatian pedagogy in order to pass its values onto the youth who do not belong to CLC (For example: by

way of individual and communal discernment, prayer groups, spiritual direction, etc.)?

■ Do we work with the youth keeping in mind their life-commitment?

FINDING OUR WEAKNESSES

■ Do we shelter ourselves within our group of friends? Do we consider ourselves as a "spiritual elite"?

■ Do we, at times, have a tendency to think that CLC is only for involved adults and not for teen-agers?

■ Do we only patronize young people without creating a real dialogue with them?

■ Do our activities appeal to them?

■ Can they understand our language?

■ Do we judge ourselves as already being faced with too many problems to even dare open ourselves up to the youth and their problems?

■ Do we expect immediate results?

■ Are we too confident in our values and methods to listen to the youth?

■ Have we ever asked ourselves how the youth see us? Could they rightly say that we spend too much time on ourselves which prevents us from acting?

THE MEANS WE HAVE TO FURTHER

■ To see the achievements of others who are experienced working with youth and to learn from them.

■ Look at today's children and ask: what cultural and educational formation do they need, and where can we cooperate with their educators?

■ Look at the young people considered as marginalized and ask: how can we help them?

■ Offer what we can to the youth in the form of entertainment excursions or activities.

■ Deepen our Ignatian roots and make them accessible to the youth.

■ Form *young* leaders for *youth* groups.

■ Invite others to participate in some activities which are not specifically CLC.

■ Avoid solely thinking in the long-term and offer small meetings, excursions, entertainment outings, etc. in the present.

Answering to all of these questions may create some tensions in our communities. However, we know that our aim is not to gather as many young people as possible. Instead, today in CLC, we want to turn our efforts towards a leadership of the young people – a leadership that is personalized, respectful and attentive to them.

If we want our community to be open to others and a sign for the youth, we will have to be even more sincere and truth-seeking. Equally, let us ask ourselves if we really are a prayerful, loving, patient and apostolic community. Have we drawn-up programs for action that help the youth in *their* vocation and *their* personal mission?

May the Spirit at work in the vitality of the youth open our eyes to the reality of the world around us, inspire us to contemplate the world in hope and act accordingly.

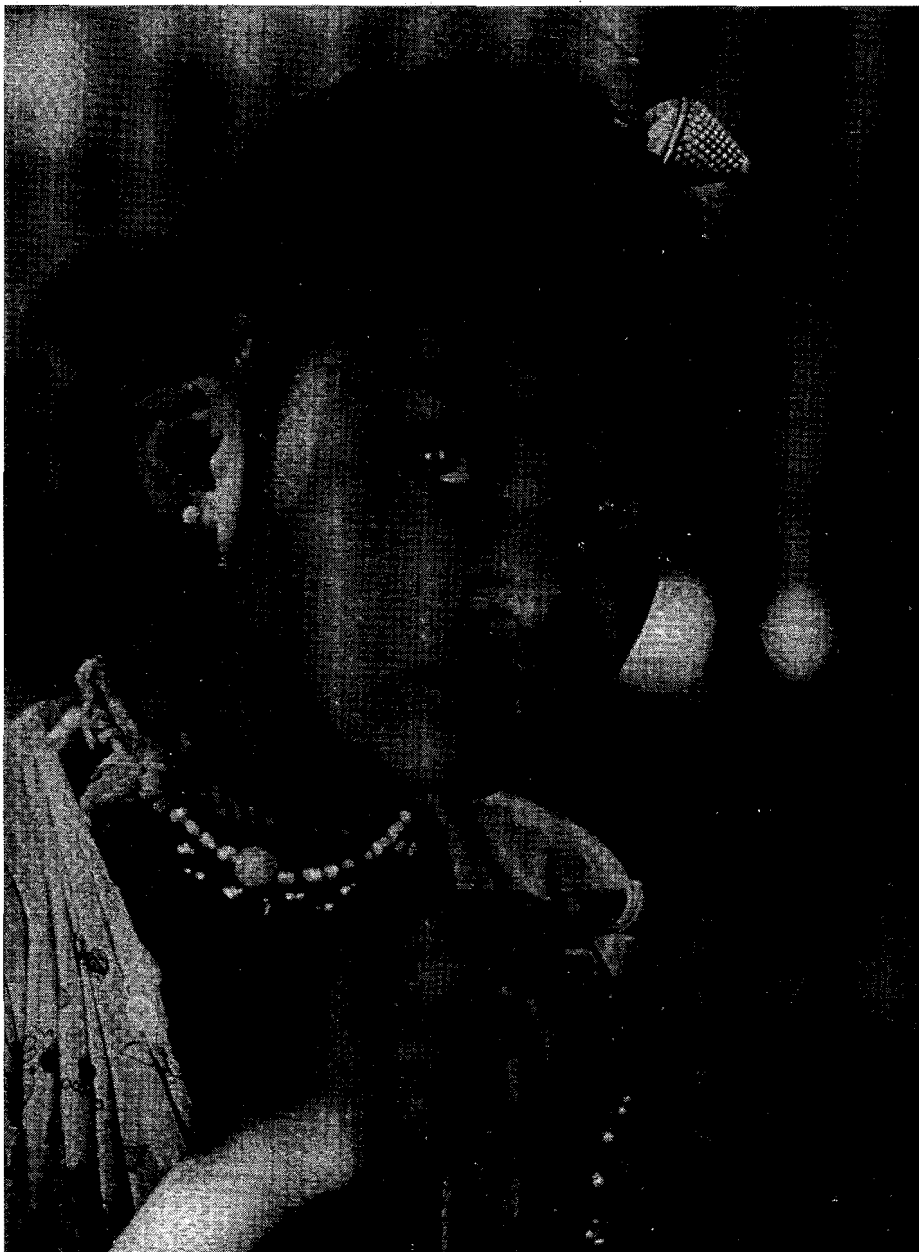


Photo by Hilmar Pabel taken from *Benediktinerabtei Königsmünster*, Germany.

4. THE FAMILY

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

We cannot speak about *family* without some understanding of its multicultural and socio-economic aspects. In preparation for the **International Year of the Family (IYF)**, an international conference was held last year in Brussels with the theme: *Changing Families in Changing Societies*. In the documents of the UN the family is referred to as *the smallest democracy at the heart of society*. In the preparation for the IYF, the family and its diverse forms and functions – a positive and essential unit in society – are looked at from many aspects.*

For all of us, the topic of *family* cannot be approached without some emotion. We all have a very personal experience of family, which is both positive and negative. We have been formed, as

well as wounded, by our families or by an absence of family. For some of us *family* means the experience of being sheltered, loved and cared for; an environment where the fulfilling relationship between a couple is experienced; a place where we learn to communicate; and it is the starting point for social, economic and religious life. For others, some of these experiences are missing.

Also, we have to be aware that the *family* in modern society has changed a great deal from what it was in the past. Many of the traditional functions of a family have been transferred to other institutions. However, for the balanced, affective, human and spiritual growth of a child, the protection and security of a family group is now considered more important than ever.

* In the course of the coming year, we will keep you informed of the ongoing IYF and where CLC, as an NGO, is directly involved in the different issues of the IYF.

As the **Christian** Life Community, all social and multicultural aspects of family are also of concern to us, for they directly influence our lives. However, we must go a step further and ask ourselves as a community within the Church: How can our faith and our Ignatian way of life influence and help both our own families and the families of today's world?

How can our faith and our Ignatian way of life influence and help both our own families and the families of today's world?

Vatican II in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, writes: *The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life.*²

In the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, we read:

The mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God himself... Among the various works of the family apostolate the following may be listed: adopting abandoned

*children, showing a loving welcome to strangers, helping with the running of schools, supporting adolescents with advice and help, assisting engaged couples to make a better preparation for marriage, taking a share in catechism-teaching, supporting married people and families in a material or moral crisis, and in the case of the aged not only providing them with what is indispensable but also procuring for them a fair share of the fruits of economic progress.*³

Pope John Paul II announced last July that on the occasion of IYF the theme of the 1994 World Day of Peace (January 1st) will be: *The peace of the human family has its source in the family.*

It is on this basis that you are invited to reflection, prayer and sharing in your group.

**WHAT MAKES
A CHRISTIAN FAMILY?**

While reflecting on this question, we received HARVEST, the quarterly publication of the National CLC of the USA. An article on *Spirituality in Families*

² *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.

³ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

written by Mary Ann Stenger, a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Louisville and mother of two teenage boys, gives a good answer. She shares with us the following reflection:

When we think of ideal Christian families, love is the central spiritual quality. But for love to be active, "justice" should also be present.

Families are as diverse as the people who make them. And people's experience of families range from positive to negative, from supportive to destructive. Establishing good family relations demands more than being together because people are related. To live as a Christian family requires spiritual strength and an ongoing effort to sustain love and treat each other justly.

Love is the power of life which brings individuals into meaningful relationships with each other.

Love is the power of life which brings individuals into meaningful relationships with each other. Family relationships like all human relationships involve

power, but the key concern is that the power within the families be loving and empowering of each individual, not dominating and destructive.

Each member of a family is an individual with unique needs and particular gifts. When love is made active as justice in a family, each member affirms the freedom, uniqueness and dignity of every other member, whether young or old. It does not mean treating each person exactly the same since each person has different needs and qualities. But it does mean valuing each person and recognizing and affirming their unique personalities, talents and needs.

The individuality of each family member has to be balanced by the unity of the family – not just a forced unity of relatives but rather a desired unity of shared values and common experiences. If our freedom and dignity is affirmed by other members in our family, we are much more willing to affirm theirs.

A shared unity is not one-sided and does involve giving of each member to the whole – contributing from one's abilities and helping others. But people also have to be willing to forgive

themselves and others, in spite of their failures and problems. A spiritually based family does not mean that it has no conflicts. How one deals with conflicts can be the best lesson in spirituality. Suppressing conflicts does not take seriously people's just demands and needs. The ability to accept others and to deal with life struggles is rooted in the empowering and forgiving love of God.

The ability to accept others and to deal with life struggles is rooted in the empowering and forgiving love of God.

In 1 Corinthians 12-13 Paul provides a theology of Church which seems equally applicable to a theology of family. The Church at Corinth was a community which had many conflicts in spite of their center in Christ. Paul describes the empowerment of the Spirit given to a diversity of members and working through a diversity of talents. *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all*

of them in everyone (1 Co 12:4-6). These verses celebrate the unique talents of individuals, but in the next verse Paul balances the diversity with the shared goal of serving the common good. *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good* (1 Co 12:7).

Paul's theology of Church in this letter does not propose a hierarchy of gifts and talents. The balance to each individual's talent and power is the common good rooted in a love which cares for one another (1 Co 12:25) and which shares in the experiences of individual members, whether suffering or rejoicing (1 Co 12:26). This balance sets up an ideal of mutual empowerment of all members by each other rather than an imposed unity held together by one or a few dominating members. The ultimate root of this individual empowerment is the Spirit of God who is the source of individual gifts and the power which sustains people in their struggle to be a family.

It is always easier to think about the ideal than to live it, but ideals can motivate us and give us the hope of doing our best. If people can experience God as empowering and sustaining them,

not only can that spirituality support them in their family struggles but also that experience of God can be a model for family

relationships. God's love and justice is the source and the pattern for love and justice in families.

AN EXERCISE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING
IN THE GROUP

◆ EXERCISE: Obtain several coloring pencils and a big sheet of paper and place them in front of you with the heading: *Family for me is like....*

Write (for yourselves or, even better, together in your group) what spontaneously jumps into your mind. Bring in your associations and your inner movements while reflecting on them before the Lord.

◆ REFLECTION: Look at the family as the nucleus of social life
in:
– your own family,
– families around you that you know well,
– the majority of families in your city/country

Where do you see achievements, fruits, and growth?

What are the shortcomings or problems?

Together (CLC: the group we belong to and our National CLC), do we see the urgency of the mission that *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is pointing out for a Christian family?

- Where as a community do we see the fruits of our involvement?
- What can we do to better fulfil this important mission?
- Where do we see possibilities of cooperation with other movements, associations and organizations within the Church and those outside of it?

5. WORK AS MISSION

THANKSGIVING -

Let us ask the Lord to see our daily work as a gift, as a privilege and as an opportunity given us to put into practice our desire to serve and to be men and women for others.

Being able to work is a gift, and it gives us a wonderful opportunity to evangelize. Our daily work allows us to improve our competencies, develop our abilities and other gifts received from the Lord; but above all, it allows us to build the Kingdom by denouncing injustice and supporting the structures that uphold the dignity of the human person.

Being able to work is a gift, and it gives us a wonderful opportunity to evangelize.

We must avoid those negative attitudes which prevent us from being grateful for the gift of work and make us view it as punishment. If we view work as such, we are locked in our selfishness, we neutralize the Good News of the Kingdom, and we see work as a hindrance for our own development, which is quite the opposite of how we should look at it.

If we assume a *thanksgiving* point of view, however, work will become a mission and the frustrations and disappointments we may face, together with our negative attitudes towards them, could be lived through as a liberating experience. In summary, work will become a mission that liberates us from attachments, develops our capabilities and offers us the grounds on which we can integrate faith and life.

ASKING FOR LIGHT -

When asking for grace and light we place ourselves in the concrete situation of our workplace. We ask the Lord to open our eyes to the complexity of our workplace, aware that we, ourselves, might be in fact playing into unjust and sinful interests.

Very often we do not realize that by our way of doing things, which is not necessarily evil, we are not faithful to the Good News. This happens because we contemplate our work and our mission to evangelize from a subjective point of view by asking: how does it fulfil me, and am I satisfied with my work?

Consequently, we are not led in our work by Jesus; our faith and life follow different paths. Work becomes only a job — often unpleasant; it is something that we have to do to earn a living and maintain a standard of life. Work can even become an obstacle to the development of other areas of our personality that are asleep within us. These areas of our personality may be deficient because we spend more time than is necessary working, and we are moved by an unquestioned pressure to work overtime.

It all seems to hold together a false way of viewing reality which prevents us from seeing work as a means to evangelize. Work seems to be rather an obstacle to carrying out *social works* and even as something that harms us.

Trying to be objective, at this point of the examen, we could ask: *How do other people see me?* This question will allow us to see objectively, from the point of view of reality, our performance as Christ's witnesses.

These three perspectives can help us:

- a) What are the characteristics of my workplace: is it a private or a public firm, how many workers are there, what does the firm produce?
- b) Who are my co-workers: how do they feel, what do they think, what sort of people are they, what attitudes do they have towards work, how do they see me, and what do they say about me?
- c) What are my specific responsibilities in the workplace, and how do I carry them out?

We base ourselves on these facts to avoid seeing work as something harmful for us and to avoid cynically closing our eyes to what goes on around us for fear of getting involved.

We must not forget that this grace will be granted to us only if we ask for it from the very bottom of our hearts.

SEEING OUR REALITY -

We have to look at our *work* trying to uncover the goals, plans and desires that motivate us when we actually carry it out. Often we think that people take advantage of our work, but really we are not ready to open our eyes to see our hidden desires for professional recognition, our using work as a reinforcement of our ego, our looking for security and, therefore, for the perpetuation of unjust structures.

The present uncertainty of the job situation can put pressure on us to compromise with evil, making sure that one's economic and family security is not put at risk. It takes great courage to enter into a conflict and risk our job when our dear ones' very survival depends on us. We lack faith and trust in

Divine Providence – *God takes care of the lilies in the field...*

It takes great courage to enter into a conflict and risk our job when our dear ones' very survival depends on us.

Everything around us encourages us to see our profession as something that should be beneficial for ourselves only. We give priority to job security, and all we can do as an answer to Gospel challenges might be to do some apostolic or social works which make us feel good because we have done something for others.

As a result, there is a general lack of interest in investigating the roots of professional disappointment, of the feeling that we work for a political party or for the boss's profit. This apathy leads to a perpetuation of the predicament and to the fear of probing down to the bottom of the situation because we fear losing our job. We are paralyzed by the need for security.

Besides, it is difficult in a society threatened by unemployment to experience work as a gift that should benefit others in addition

to our dear ones. Just as parents work for their children and are ready to give up their own interests for their children's development, Christians should attempt to see their work as a gift to benefit others less fortunate. This should not be only from the economic point of view, but it should also be in a more global dimension seeing if it provides enrichment and of what type.

In our Ignatian daily prayer of examen we go through the thoughts, words and deeds related to our professional work. By asking what are the prevailing needs and aspirations around us and how I should behave in relation to them, we wish to reach the very root of evil – not only in our own heart but also around us in the work environment.

REPENTANCE & RECONCILIATION

Let us keep in mind that our prayer should always take place in loving and trusting intimacy with God.

After becoming aware of our work environment and our involvement in it, we ask the Lord to forgive us

for our participation in the dehumanization of the workplace through wrongful employment dismissals, bringing others into discredit, manipulations, etc. From our sinful reality we contemplate how we continue exploiting workers, discriminating against women, avoid giving oppor-

tunities to young people, dismissing older employees because of their age or high risk of illness. We ask forgiveness for these situations and for our share in them.

Contemplation to attain Love

I will consider how God labors and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth, that is, he acts in the manner of one who is laboring. For example, he is working in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and all the rest - giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth. Then I will reflect on myself.

What should we raise our voices against?

When we see:

- work considered solely as a means of security;
- fear of voicing the truth;
- discrimination between women and men;
- negative attitudes towards work, seeing it as an obstacle to our personal development;
- few opportunities for young people;
- apathy towards the common interest of society, only looking out for our personal profit or that of the firm;
- situations of inequality and relations going unchallenged because of personal interests;
- the quest for a promotion – even by fraud – for the simple purpose of satisfying one's ego and pretending that it will help us in our personal development;
- profiting during circumstances of sheer necessity;

- exploiting the weak and the marginalized;
- and discriminating against some professions...

we must raise our voices against them.

What we have to further

- All ways that encourage people to feel fulfilled in their work and know that they are contributing to the common good.

It is necessary to promote all ways that encourage people to feel fulfilled in their work and know that they are contributing to the common good.

What to discern

- All ways of making people approach work as mission.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING IN THE GROUP

- What am I feeling after reading this article?
- What positive experiences do I have with my *work as mission*?
- What problems do I face in my *work as mission*?
- What is the role of my community in my *work as mission*?
 - Is my CLC group the place where I can freely discuss my experience?
 - Do I feel *sent* by my community?
 - Does my community have a method of helping its members towards developing *work as mission*?

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous,

Teach me to serve you as you deserve:

to give and not to count the cost,

to fight and not to heed the wounds,

to toil and not to seek for rest,

to labor and not to ask for any reward,

except to know that I am doing your will.

6. SERVICE TO THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED

There are many forms of poverty and many different types of marginalization. The purpose here, however, is not to recount the many unfortunate situations of our time. Instead, the purpose is to open all our eyes to the reality of the poor and marginalized in our world. It is best expressed by the biblical term *Anawim*, which is characterized by the foreigner, the widow and the orphan. That is, the ones who are without protection or means to provide for their own needs. The poor depend on the goodness of others. They are also often rejected and oppressed. Let us call to mind:

- the millions of displaced people, refugees and immigrants;
- the hungry and destitute;
- the marginalized, homeless, and lonely;
- the permanently unemployed;

- the children in the streets that are exploited and without a future;
- the ones affected by mental illness and depression;
- the AIDS patients;
- the drug addicts....

Jesus has shown God's preferential love for the poor through his mission *to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to let the oppressed go free* (Lk 4:18). Jesus' preferential love is expressed even to the point of stating: *whatever you do to the least among you, you do it to me* (Mt 25:40). His love for the poor assures us that we all are loved by God.

Following the example of Jesus, we are asked to love all people while having a preferential love for the poor. We live out this preferential

love when we see the world from the point of view of the poor: the poor's needs, views, joys, sufferings, and their present and future. In order to see and recognize the poor we have to become their neighbor, share their views, and defend their interests. To be their neighbor does not necessarily mean that we have to "move in next door," for physical closeness does not always create a community of sympathy and interest. Sadly, there are those who, though close to the poor and the marginalized, *have eyes but do not see and have ears but do not hear.*

A real conversion is needed within all of us. Whatever our situation, we all need the grace of conversion in our lives to better live out a preferential love for the poor. Some examples of conversion can be found in the lives of those who enjoy a comfortable standard of life, yet they have learned to think and act in support of the disadvantaged. Another example of conversion might be in the lives of those born poor who, while striving to improve their education and status, refuse to forget the needs and aspirations of their people, and they continue thinking and acting in favor of their promotion. Of course we cannot get involved

in all fields of poverty and marginalization. But as Christians we should become aware of the fact that they exist, belong to our world, and are related to us. We are all part of the same human family, and we all share the same world. We should be concerned, and we should become responsible for them.

Why are there so many poor people today who cannot take care of themselves, and who must depend on the goodwill of others?

Today, some 100 million people are on the move as migrants and displaced peoples. This is the reality of our modern world – not so much to be lamented but to be faced and understood. Of these, 45 million have been uprooted against their will. People are forced to move because of civil and international conflict, abuse to human rights, ethnic conflicts, or just out of sheer poverty. Their presence is a sign of a deep malaise in the way our societies relate.

There are many other reasons. Actually, each person follows a unique journey into helplessness. We have to discover the reasons why this or that person is unable to take care of himself/herself.

What should we do for the poor?

Good intentions are not enough. The poor are only really helped when they can stand on their own feet and take care of themselves. With this purpose in mind, we may choose to support with generosity – to the point that it may hurt a little – a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, a world-wide relief effort, socio-political actions, a financial investment.... A CLC community shows the vitality of this preferential love for the poor – not only in their way of thinking or of speaking sensitively about the dignity and the needs of the powerless – in activities and initiatives such as:

- choosing a simple lifestyle,
- supporting well-planned service programs which address urgent needs,
- offering one or several years of service as volunteers,
- showing solidarity by making generous contributions to trustworthy programs or institutions,
- combining our efforts with other communities,

- showing interest and supporting our delegates at the UN, NGO meetings,
- supporting the *Year of the Family*, and other international initiatives,
- supporting refugee programs....

Only when we offer visible signs in favor of the poor will we proclaim the GOOD NEWS OF JESUS. If we want the *New Evangelization* to be credible, we, the Church, have to show in a visible way that the Good News is proclaimed to the poor and that the poor and the oppressed are being liberated.

The concern of many countries today is economic recovery at all costs. By cutting expenses, the first budgets to be trimmed are the services to the poor and the powerless. This is, once again, the way that society perpetuates the underprivileged position of the poor in our world. In God's plan, however, the powerless enjoy the most privileged position.

Therefore, if we are going to follow Jesus a preferential commitment in favor of the poor is an unmistakable sign of his Kingdom.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND EVALUATION:

- Who are the *poor* in our lives as individuals, as a community?
 - What do they need? What requests do they address to us?
 - What are their most urgent needs at the root of all their other needs?
 - What events have precipitated their helplessness?

- What have been our best experiences at the service of the poor and marginalized?
 - How were the actions planned?
 - What were the results?

- What problems have we encountered at the service of the poor?
 - What problems have we encountered within CLC itself?
 - What problems have we encountered in the activity and its surroundings?

- From which social class do I identify myself? Do I usually think and work from the point of view and interest of the well-to-do or of the poor?
 - How does my concern for the poor reflect in my family/community lifestyle?
 - How does my concern for the poor reflect in my profession and work?
 - How does my concern for the poor reflect in my socio-political participation?



Photo provided by Chrétiens Medias - Fédération nationale
11, rue Portefoin - 75003 Paris (France) and also by Péronne High School (France).

*I was hungry,
and you formed a humanitarian
group to discuss my hunger.*

*I was imprisoned,
and you crept off
to your chapel
and prayed for my release.*

*I was naked,
and in your mind you debated the
morality of my appearance.*

*I was sick,
and you knelt and thanked God
for your health.*

*I was homeless,
and you preached to me of the
spiritual shelter of God's love.*

*I was lonely,
and you left me alone
to pray for me.*

*You seem so holy,
so close to God.*

*But I am still very hungry
and lonely
and cold.*

7. OUR SOCIO-POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

We live in a world marked by inequality and injustice. Progress has been achieved in many areas and on some important issues, but in many countries the gap between the rich and the poor, instead of shrinking, is growing wider. The poor are growing relatively poorer, and the rich are becoming richer – quite often it is at the expense of the poor.

The *eighties* are considered by experts as a *lost decade* for developing countries. In many countries of the southern hemisphere the social differences can be defined as a scandal. Close to the richness and opulence of a few, a large number of people live in misery and oppression. The lifestyle of the rich is an incredible insult to the poor's misery.

In the northern hemisphere the great majority of the population enjoys a high degree of comfort,

but the number of the marginalized and rejected, many deprived of their rights as citizens, is growing larger. To the ranks of the traditionally poor, we now have to add the *new poor*: those who are permanently unemployed, the refugees and the aged.

The existing injustices and inequalities between North and South are being reinforced and increased by a growing international-economic order that benefits the big, private interests at the expense of whole regions and nations.

In the final analysis, the privileges and luxuries of the rich, their power to dominate, and consumerism are, in light of the presence of poverty, an insult to human dignity. Justice and human rights are trampled upon everyday.

Many people of goodwill are involved in a variety of good

programs at the service of the poor; fewer, however, are those who launch political actions against structural injustice. There is a widespread lack of trust in governments and politicians. It is considered to be the field of corruption in which it is impossible to act in accordance with Gospel values.

Although it cannot be denied that this corruption is widespread and deeply rooted in the political set up of many nations, change will only occur if people are willing to enter this field with the will and capability to transform it. When we systematically choose to ignore the structural roots of many social evils, we become accomplices to the present structural sin and the upholding of injustice.

Vatican II, in its Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, shows high regard for the efforts of those who work in politics as a way to serve others by fostering the common good. Christians are urged to consider politics as a common and personal vocation, whose purpose it is to establish all those conditions which enable people to live in freedom and dignity.⁴ Furthermore, the Council advocates

political pluralism for Christians. Christians should work for the common good without excluding anyone. Since the poor are in many ways discriminated against, a main criteria for the political involvement of Christians should be to give a *preferential option for the poor*, marginalized and voiceless in society. By doing so, we as Christians are following Jesus; who, through his life, showed God's preference for the poor as a sign of the authentic universality of his love.

Jesus, through his life, showed God's preference for the poor as a sign of the authentic universality of his love.

Our mission as Christians is the mission of Jesus:

to proclaim the Good News
and make present the Kingdom
through our lives.

To fulfil Christ's mission, personal love (namely, the ability to give and receive love) is a precondition, but it is not enough. Vatican II calls for the *political charity* of a Christian to be expressed in political action. *Political love* is not as evident or simple as personal love. The awareness and understanding of

⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 74a; and 75a, c.

the structural dimension of justice and an active involvement is required.

Politics is also the field where we can grow in faith and in *compassion with the crowds*.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REALITY -

Since the fall of Eastern European regimes, we have observed, as a positive fact, the growth of democracy as the political system in many countries. Another positive fact is the decline of political blocks

and the definite progress made in disarmament. However, arms trafficking that fuels bloody conflicts in many parts of the world, international drug trafficking with its large and hidden economic interests, and many other problems still exist. In Europe, for example, a new outbreak of nationalism is provoking a horrible war, and

there is a general increase in racism and xenophobia.

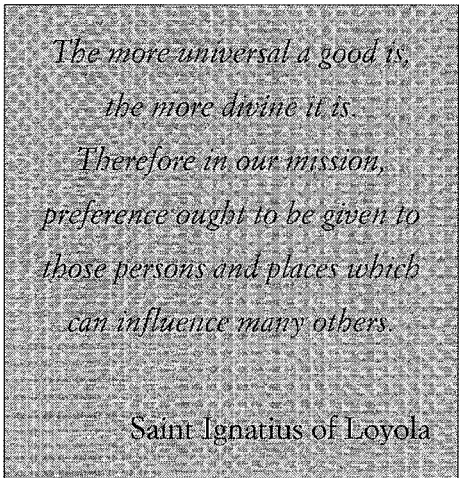
We value the high level of freedom and justice achieved in many countries. Nevertheless, it also becomes clear that the entire institutions of liberal democracy can co-exist with large areas of inequality.

It is obvious that the current political instruments available, conceived to defend national interests, are no longer adequate to cope with the challenges of a more internationalized world.

Even within the most solid of democracies,

there is a participation crisis. The citizens feel set apart from the political life and from public activities, which have become more and more of a monopoly held by an elite few.

The division of powers and their mutual controls have in many cases lost their original purpose. The real power lies in the hands of



big financial and economic groups, which play key roles in political decisions for their own interests. In many other countries democracy is fiction. The political and social power remain in the hands of the military and financial oligarchies; these systems are repressive, corrupt and people's participation is minimal.

Social life flows through a variety of associations, social movements and citizen-initiatives which further solidarity. It is important to become aware of the values upheld by these groups and social movements, for they are important to inspire and to develop a lifestyle based on new social relationships, as well as offering

the world a different way of relating to the environment, time, work and one another.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE REALITY

The *welfare state* tries to answer the citizens' requests for a wide variety of social services. This results in an increasingly large bureaucracy, mostly automated with less participation and responsibility from the side of the citizens.

In this field corruption and lack of responsibility can easily occur. Nonetheless, this is the place where real power can come closer to the citizens - the real beneficiaries of these services.

◆ To prepare ourselves in prayer, the following might help:

Scripture texts:

Is 58:6-12; Mt 25:31-46; Lk 13:10-17; Jn 18:37; Jm 1:22,27

Our General Principles:

Read and highlight those parts that concern our subject, pray with them and share your reflections in your group.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING IN THE GROUP:

- Where are we able to see the fruits of our involvement in the socio-political field as an individual and as a group?
- How do we decide on which field of mission to get involved with?
- Is my personal lifestyle an object of discernment in my group?
- How do I/we live the public dimension of my/our faith?
- What are we doing to inform ourselves of the socio-political environment?
- How do I/we develop a sensitivity for detecting injustice?
- How conscious are we about the structural character of social relations and, therefore, of injustice?

- How is it influencing our actions?
- How sensitive are we towards a development that respects and preserves the environment?
- Do I/we see the necessity of getting actively involved in International Organizations?
- How does the fact that the World CLC is, as an NGO (Non Governmental Organization), a member of the UN influence my life and decisions?

A concluding thought -

Why do many Christians refuse to get involved in politics, while injustice and human pain remain? Here, we have a question on how we understand and live our faith: we would like to see immediate results here and now, but we lack patience when we seemingly fail to obtain results. We should ask ourselves whether we really believe in a crucified God who reigns from the Cross of human failure.

If we do not want to become discouraged or *burned out* in the political struggle, we need to remember the Paschal Mystery and that we are supposed to be instruments in God's salvation.

8. INTERRELIGIOUS AND MULTICULTURAL DIALOGUE

This article is based on a preparation document for the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus titled: "Evangelization and Culture".

We cannot foster tolerance, dialogue or collaboration among people of different religious traditions and cultural backgrounds without some understanding of culture and how it relates to other elements of society.

Every people has their own culture – **a world view, a system of values and a form of community relationship and organization realized and celebrated in ritual.** Culture is permeated by values like dignity and justice, by norms that govern life and goals to be pursued. Culture is transcendent.

Quite often we find, within a community, a popular and an elite pole of culture. We may be tempted to favor the elite and

neglect the popular pole which is crucial for any real transformation. Popular culture must be distinguished from what is called *popularized* culture, which is not the way that people normally live. It is a packaged product, designed by groups that have money and power, and it is imposed on people through the media. Fashions, tastes and popular stars are created. Its interest is commercial. Its focus is alienating entertainment. It is probably the greatest challenge to anyone who wishes to evangelize culture.

GOSPEL AND CULTURE

The dialectical relationship between Gospel and culture is often described as *inculturation*. Fr.

Arrupe in his *Letter on Inculturation* writes:

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, while transforming and remaking it so as to bring about "a new creation".

What actually happens in a community that encounters the Gospel? When the Gospel is proclaimed to a particular community, this community already has a culture animated by a religion. The culture in which the Gospel comes could be oppressive when it encounters less developed cultures, especially if it is supported by political and economic power.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

We often hear about the impact of modernity on culture and also about post-modernism. **Modernity** for most people is: the development of science and

technology and the consequent industrialization and urbanization, the growing importance of media, and the organization and the movement from a feudal to a democratic political order while emphasizing at the same time the dignity and freedom of the individual. All of these elements are double-headed with positive and negative poles. In order to understand the modern cultural process, some concepts related to human development can be useful.

Technology comprises the mechanical means that are developed for exploiting nature by using its laws for the purpose of control and production. Technology can facilitate development, increase production, control disease, etc. It can also be used for the production of armaments, to exploit and destroy nature and the environment, and give people the illusion that they can control everything.

Industrialization promotes mass production, and so it can satisfy the needs of the poor and create employment. But it has also led to the accumulation of capital, either private or state-owned, and to a

growing gap between rich and poor countries. Mass production also gives rise to consumerism by creating needs artificially through marketing and advertising techniques. Efficiency and marketability may become the only goals, and profit may become the only motive of economic activity.

Industrialization and the correlated market economies provoke the process of **urbanization**. This helps in promoting freedom and social mobility. But it also gives rise to an atmosphere of individualism, egoism and competition. This leads to traditional family relationships breaking up, the uprooting of populations through immigration and aggregation in slums, the changing relationship of people to each other and to nature, and the placement of people under constant pressure.

Rapid and mass communication can promote mutual knowledge and relationships through the sharing of information and increased mobility. But they can also be controlled and used to disseminate propaganda, some of which may be false. They are often employed to promote commerce by creating needs through

advertisements (see workshop on mass media).

RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

Secularization challenges institutional religion. Religion ceases to be the dominant value system, and it is called to enter into dialogue with other social institutions. Secularization affects the morality of life: consumerism and the commercial structures created to satisfy it; competitive individualism and the selfishness that destroy the person as well as community at various levels, starting with the family; the privatization of religion freed from social responsibility; urbanization and economic migration that uproot populations and destroy socio-cultural structures; lack of respect for life in both its beginning and end and the complications resulting from biotechnologies; the destruction of nature and the exploitation of women; the speed of life that leaves no time for reflection and contemplation, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, etc. These must be met as contemporary moral challenges.

Religious fundamentalism may emerge in a situation where

religion seems too accommodating to modernity and compromises the earlier reassuring certainties. Fundamentalism seems to provide psychological security and may be used to take people's minds away from economic and political oppression.

New religious movements in Europe, America and independent churches in Africa suggest that we have, perhaps, made religion an intellectual and individual affair without giving their due to

community, to symbol and experience, and to imagination and emotion.

Sects tend to be fundamentalistic and need-based. They shy away from social and political responsibility. They may even be promoted in some areas for this reason.

Such movements may also suggest that we concretize in pastoral practices psychological and social needs, healing and relationships.

FOR REFLECTION

- From the perspective of the Gospel, how can we animate people to enhance the positive and counter the negative impacts of modernity?
- How can we develop a new language and a new way of dialogue and persuasion with which we can communicate with the young people of today?
- What can we do to make CLC and the Church a credible, creative and prophetic witness to the Kingdom of God in the modern world?
- Given the impact of these religious movements in our area, how can we dialogue with them?
- What could be elements of the faith formation of Christians that we should stress?
- How can we facilitate reconciliation in local and global situations where strong, divisive forces give rise to conflicts?
- How do we promote communion and collaboration in the World CLC?

9. MASS MEDIA

Facing the facts on Mass Media and seeing God's Design in it

Mass media – the press, radio, television, motion pictures and pop music – is today the most important leisure time activity in the world. It is also the most important source of cultural information for use in making personal decisions, and it is the way most people participate in our communities and nations.

Television has become an integral part of our routines in daily life even in the rural villages of Latin America, Africa and Asia. If once we transmitted the values from one generation to another through the teaching and story telling of the family, neighborhood gatherings and religious teachings; today, television is one of the most important ways that we tell our classic stories, present our heroes, and form young people in our values.

In the last ten years, new forms of media that have been appealing to

us, especially to the youth, are home videos, video games, music videos, computers and electronic mail.

In a major pastoral instruction on the media, the Church declared that she *sees these media as "gifts of God" which, in accordance with his providential design, unite all people in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation.*⁵

In the worldwide ecumenical meeting of Christian communicators at Manila in 1989, the leaders of the churches declared: *Communication is a crucial issue for the 1990's and for the future of humankind. It can lead to reconciliation or to destruction. It can bring knowledge, truth and inspiration, or withhold knowledge and spread disinformation and lies. Communication is God's unique*

⁵ *Communio et Progressio*; No. 2.



Photo of the stained-glass window, "Creation" by Sieger Köder,
taken from *Die Bibel* (The Bible): 1993.

gift to humankind, through which individuals and societies can become more truly human. Genuine communication is as essential to the quality of life as food, shelter and health-care. It is the process of interaction through communicative symbols which creates a cultural environment.

Communication, therefore, is part of every aspect of life. It has to serve society as a whole, and ultimately, humankind in its entirety. As a social necessity communication is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone – governments as well as formal and informal organizations of people. It should not be manipulated by a few or misappropriated by a single center of power.

Since media appeared in our modern world, one could say that it has exceeded itself, because it is no longer just a medium for conveying ideas, facts and messages. It has become an essential part of our cultures. Human societies and their media are constantly affected by one

another. In other words, there is an interdependence and mutual influence.

As Christians, we first have to see the positive aspects and effects of media in our lives. It is indeed obvious that the media has brought along an increase in knowledge, understanding, enjoyment, communication and solidarity. For example, where the fight against the violation of human rights is concerned, the newest and most important development in this century is a worldwide solidarity network that has been set up to react against and denounce such violations. In these denunciations, the media's role has been crucial.

Of course, we do not ignore the harm, destruction and evil mass media can cause when abused by ignorance or on purpose. In order to protect ourselves and others from the negative influence that media can have, we have to reflect carefully when and how this instrument can turn into a weapon against humankind.

◆ To prepare ourselves in prayer, the following Scripture texts might help:

Gen 1:26-28 God, the image of perfect communication, creates humankind in His own image and gives us the mission of governing the whole world.

Mk 7:31-37 The deaf man is deprived of the usual means of communication, but Jesus brings him back among his friends.

2 Tim 4:1-2 All means should be used in spreading the Good News.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING IN THE GROUP:

- How does the media influence my daily life and the lives of my dear ones?
- Which is the most important function of mass media for me (entertainment, information, education...)?
- What reality is presented by the media?
- Do I detect a certain view of the world?
- From which media do I get my information?
- Am I able to be critical towards messages and the way events are presented?
- What is my reaction to what I see and/or hear?
 - Am I moved, paralyzed, or motivated to action...?

- Do I feel helpless and exposed to mass media, or do I see a way of making a difference?

◆ **For Discernment:**

When looking at mass media as a powerful and very effective instrument of evangelization and the forming of people in all the world according to human and Gospel values:

What consequences does this have for my/our decisions as a(n) individual or community sent to *bear witness to those human and Gospel values with the Church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation* (General Principles, No. 4)?

Should we give priority to some specific media?



Photo of the painting, "The Birth of Jesus" by Sieger Köder, taken from *Die Bibel*: 1993.

**THE WORD BECAME FLESH
HE LIVED AMONG US
AND WE SAW HIS GLORY**

For this Christmas, and in the year to come,
we hope and pray that you, your family and friends
experience anew the joy, hope and challenge
of the Incarnation.

