



PROGRESSIO

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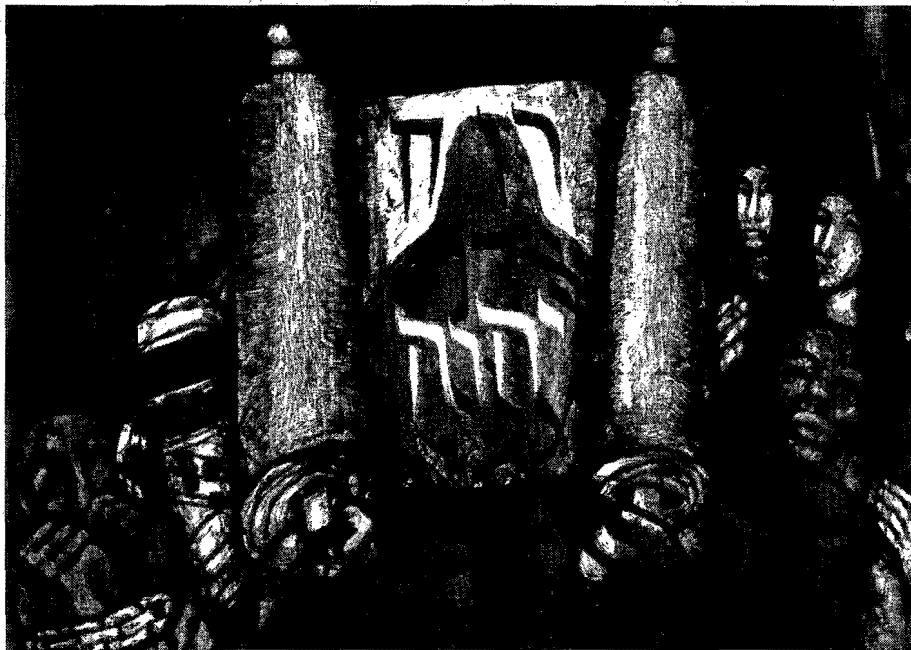
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Painting by Sieger Köder in the Church of the Holy Spirit in Ellwangen, Germany

When he came to Nazareth he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME
TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM
RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES
AND SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE,
TO PROCLAIM A

YEAR OF FAVOUR FROM THE LORD.

*The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"
(Luke 4,16-21).*

EDITORIAL

Last weekend, prepared with a green marker, I tried to highlight "the good news" in a well-known international paper. Would you believe I found nothing to highlight (I skipped sports and the stock market)? I felt depressed and indignant. Then, I chose a day for quiet and prayer. I took more time than usual for a personal review and I asked myself the question: "How much good news have I spread in the past week?" My answer was not uplifting either. I was humbled by the outcome of my prayer of examen and I felt ashamed of my easy criticism of the media.

The following day at Mass we had the reading of Luke 4,18: ... *He sent me to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.*

GOOD NEWS finally! And this provokes the question: "Do I feel sent to bring the good news - in words and also in deeds? Is this scripture text fulfilled in today's world through me? Do I waste my energy in lamenting about the state this world is in or do I trust the Lord's word : *If you abide in me , and I in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*"

This issue of *Progressio* is meant to bring GOOD NEWS. It gives us examples of "ignatian" persons of yesterday and today who entrusted their entire lives to GOD. May their witness encourage us to become more and more "Fulfillers of the Word". A new year has just started. It is up to us to proclaim it a

YEAR OF FAVOUR FROM THE LORD.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FRANCIS XAVIER

Reflections on his Life

*Fr Seán Ó Cearbhalláin S.J., Ecclesiastical Assistant
of the Christian Life Community in Hong Kong gives us
a sketch of the life of this great saint.*

In the sixteenth century, it was a long journey from the Castle of Xavier, Spain to the desolate island of Shangchuan (Sancian) off the southern coast of China. If you read any book on the life of Francis Xavier you will get an idea of the nautical, sanitary and social difficulties of the journey.

The list of places that Francis Xavier passed through from his birth in Navarre to his death in China is almost legendary: Paris and the college of Sainte-Barbe, Venice, Rome, Lisbon, Goa, Malacca, Kagoshima, Miyako, Yamaguchi.... Most of these places

still bear the names they had in Francis' day, and there are many books from which we can learn about them.

Although, you can still follow in the footsteps of Francis Xavier, traveling to the places recorded in his life story, you would experience little of his sixteenth century venture. To go on pilgrimage to the place of his death, as did many delegates from the World Assembly in Hong Kong, you would now skip rather quickly over much of the journey: a jet plane to Hong Kong, a jetfoil (high-speed boat) across the mouth of the Pearl River to

Macau, a bus through Taishan to the pier at Guanghai and finally a boat to the island of Shangchuan. Although the trip would be shorter, you could still fill the account of your journey with romantic and exotic names.

To experience the truth of the journey that Francis Xavier made, you must go to Shangchuan. Whatever means you use to arrive there, you will discover the truth not in the journey itself but in its destination. Standing outside the nineteenth century church dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, looking in prayerful silence across the sea to mainland China, you get an inkling of the lonely death that he faced. He was just 46 years old and had been waiting for some months to enter China. Worn out by his efforts, this man who had been such a debonair student at the College of Saint-Barbe, succumbed to fever and died in the presence of a few companions.

August 1552 to August 1994: a span of 442 years in which the world has seen changes too vast and too obvious to speak of. Francis Xavier could never have dreamed of the enormous changes that have taken place even in

areas that touched him most. When he left Rome for Lisbon on the first leg of his journey to Asia, the Society of Jesus had not yet received written confirmation from the Pope he was pledged to serve. It was still a small company of people, more a project than a full-fledged reality.

When Francis Xavier died, John Leunis had not yet undertaken his journey from Flanders to Rome to enter the society and his Sodality of Our Lady was still only a desire in the heart of God. Francis Xavier would have approved of the Sodality and the brilliant and dedicated young men who were its early members in the Roman College and elsewhere. He had hoped that many would follow him to Asia to spread the Gospel of the love of Jesus. Having seen and personally experienced the corruption of colonial officials, he would have seen the Sodality as a means of forming leaders educated in the ways of the Gospel.

In August 1994, for the first, and perhaps only, time an international pilgrimage of the CLC went to Shangchuan following the dream of Francis. Because of circumstances, the majority of them will never have a chance to

return to Shangchuan Island but that is not important. During the World Assembly, we had reflected and prayed about the notion of mission in today's CLC. The pilgrimage gave the delegates an experience of where Francis Xavier had died and a chance to share with Catholics who have struggled as he did. They, too, have remained faithful to Christ.

In reflecting on the external loneliness of Francis Xavier's death, we can sense its similarity to the death of Jesus, particularly as narrated in the Gospel of Mark, who stresses the loneliness and abandonment of Jesus on the cross. We know that the external loneliness did not penetrate and poison Francis Xavier's soul. While he must have questioned the seeming futility of it all, he was obviously sustained by a firm faith and an ardent love which brought sense into senselessness,

hope into hopelessness. Francis Xavier's death was that of a grain of wheat dying on rather forbidding soil. Once there was an apparent harvest on the island of Shangchuan but it wilted. We still await the abundant harvest.

Those who went on the pilgrimage gained an understanding of the amount of nurturing the small seed of faith needs in such surroundings and the cost of such nurturing. We pray that they can communicate something of Francis' sense of mission and ardent love to their communities at home. If the pilgrimage bears fruit in prayer and solidarity for the Church in China — the Church that Francis dreamed of but did not see taking root — then it will have had an even greater importance than simply being a follow-up to the World Assembly.

Pilgrimage to my Motherland

Jeanie Chuang, a member of the Hong Kong CLC, shares with us her experience of the pilgrimage after the Assembly.

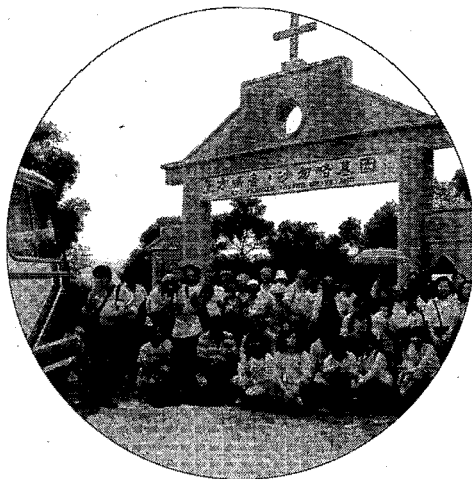
During these past few years, I have been on pilgrimage to Lourdes and Taizé in France and to Rome in Italy. It is quite natural for me to think of visiting other places in the world to experience God's presence and great works. But I had never thought of going to China on pilgrimage - to encounter God in my own motherland.

In China I had ambivalent feelings. I am Chinese, but I do not know much about the country, the people or even the culture. In the past I had not taken any initiatives to learn more about China or to feel more intimate with her. The pilgrimage at the close of the World Assembly gave me a chance to visit China with delegates from all over the world who are also strangers to this land. During the two-day journey, many episodes touched me and made me reflect: there was the hospitality and warm welcome of the villagers at St. Francis Xavier's Church. The villagers were as eager as we were

to meet other people. For them, it was a new experience to come into contact with so many people from other countries, who shared the same faith. For us, it was an opportunity to meet the local people, the ordinary village people and they impressed us with their rural simplicity.

There was the sharing with Fr. Ma, Fr Leung and the local Sisters. Through years of persecution, these priests and sisters manifested a strong faith and a spirit of perseverance. Throughout twenty years of imprisonment, the power of prayer gave Fr Ma the strength to uphold his faith. "Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel will save it" (Mark 8,35).

The older Sisters in the parish were touched and moved by the Lord on meeting the delegates. They had thought that they would never again meet people from other countries sharing the



same faith. They thanked the Lord for this gift.

Dedicated to the work of the Lord, they are like shepherds who take care of the lost lambs. They have done a difficult, tremendous work in spreading the Good News in this country. They asked us to pray for the Church in China.

Fr Ma made a big sign of the Cross in blessing over our coaches after we had boarded them, a blessing for a safe journey home.

The pilgrimage also gave the delegates from the World Assembly an opportunity for closer contact and more in-depth sharing among themselves, enabling

them to know each other better. Among our own Hong Kong CLC members there was a common experience to share: our relationship with the Church in China, the question of the future direction of the Hong Kong CLC and the community's mission after the World Assembly.



This pilgrimage was quite different from previous ones. It was a pilgrimage to my motherland: a place with which I have bonds; a place where the people have a special meaning for me; a place where I came to feel a sense of responsibility and the need to answer the question: how can I continue my mission to the Church in China?



From the castle of Xavier

to the island of Shangchuan.

Tomás E. Gómez Alvarez-Arenas member of the Spanish CLC builds a bridge from Navarre, the birth-place of Francis Xavier, to the island of Shangchuan where he died.

My heart was deeply moved when in August, at the end of the celebration of the CLC World Assembly in Hong Kong, we set foot on the island of Shangchuan where St. Francis Xavier had died. The experience of the World Assembly fresh in our minds, the future challenges opening out before us and the memories, distant in space but not in time, of the castle in Navarre (Spain) where Francis Xavier was born, all converged in my mind as we strolled along the shore where this great apostle of the faith had breathed his last. There this man, whom I had learned to admire and to love already in my childhood, had planned the last of his great undertakings: to win China

for Christ. At that time Chinese policy was already transforming the country into a place that was practically inaccessible to foreigners who reached its borders. At the same time its cultural development was changing China into a cultural center for the Far East. It was clear to Xavier that bringing China to Christ signified opening the door to Christianity in other nations of that part of the world over which this country exerted a notable influence. As he wrote to his companions in Europe:

*"I believe that in this year '52 I will go there where the Emperor of China is so we may spread the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. If it is received there, it will be a good influence in Japan...."*¹

He certainly understood the urgency of working for the Kingdom and the need to seek out the most universal good!

Francis Xavier's family had had a castle in the little Navarran town of Xavier in which he had been born 46 years before. Today this place is the center of pilgrimages and an obligatory reference point for the sincere and

simple faith of the Navarran people. Every year thousands of pilgrims arrive there during the "Javierada" the popular festival of Xavier and it becomes a principal meeting place with this saint. One indelible memory that I hold of this site is a carved, wooden crucifix: from the cross Christ radiates a gentle, captivating smile (see p.11). Tradition tells us that Francis Xavier prayed before this crucifix during his childhood. We are told that only his death, thousands of miles away on that far-off island of Shangchuan, dimmed that smile and caused the smiling Christ to weep blood. I often think of the saint traveling from Xavier, crossing continents, tirelessly seeking to win others to Christ and lying down thoroughly exhausted to die in the prime of life at the other end of the world.

Now, after many years, as part of the celebration of the CLC World Assembly in Hong Kong, I was given the opportunity to go on pilgrimage to this island where Francis Xavier had died. The community of Hong Kong had invited the delegates to participate in this pilgrimage at the

¹ St. Francis Xavier to his companions in Europe, Cochin, January 29, 1552.



end of the Assembly. The occasion was unique as its proximity to Hong Kong (a little less than 200 kilometers) permitted us to arrive there quickly.

Our first objective was the place where tradition says that Francis Xavier died. The walk along the beach, contemplating China on the horizon a half-hour away by boat, the contact we had had with the Church of China, the poverty that surrounded us, the memories stirring deep within me of my past experiences of the "Javierada" and the strong impact of the Hong Kong Assembly made those two days an unforgettable experience. They became a strong challenge to transmit the substance of the Assembly to my CLC community in Spain.

It was not by chance that St. Francis Xavier died on the island of Shangchuan: he saw that it was necessary to bring China to Christ even at the cost of his life. Nor was it by chance that we ended our stay in Hong Kong with a pilgrimage to this place. The World Assembly had stirred up a concern to look more closely at CLC and the realities surrounding it, to let ourselves be questioned by it. We saw the

need of working to eliminate the roots and causes of evil, the injustices and oppression in the world of today. There was the added urgency to coordinate our work both in the CLC and with others for a better integration into today's world. Our point of reference is a good Ignatian tradition: to go to those who suffer the most, to the most oppressed and to seek the greatest common good and the most urgent needs.

Francis Xavier was not a stranger to these criteria. On the contrary! If we look at him, we can learn much about how to respond to the challenges given us in Hong Kong. He had not an individualistic approach; in fact, he left behind him a great missionary organization. He knew how to look at the world around him, to recognize the most urgent needs and the tasks that brought about the greatest common good. Indeed, he lived in depth the Spiritual Exercises.

With these desires in my heart and with the prayer that we be given the same apostolic zeal of Xavier, I walked along the Shangchuan beach with my CLC companions from around the world. The scenery was similar to that which the saint would

have known almost 500 years ago. In the background there was a little hermitage where he had been buried for many years; there we celebrated the Eucharist. Whatever meaning this pilgrimage had for us was given added value by our contact with the suffering Church of China: we were able to see for ourselves its difficulties and limitations but also its great faith.

My experience has been that when we open ourselves to other realities, our own situation becomes clearer. Learning about the Church in China was an invitation to turn and contemplate the Church of Spain and the European situation. We must not lose the way: we must return to basics with a clear vision and fight for what is right.

Christians in a democratic society must participate actively to promote the values of the Kingdom, using the special opportunities that this type of government offers. In a well-to-do society, we must struggle to defend the interests of the poor and the needs of those without a voice. On a European continent that is beginning to unite, it is impera-

tive to be present in the construction of a better society.

From the distant lands of the East, Francis Xavier also remembered Europe. He urged his companions to commit themselves totally to the enormous task at hand and to avoid getting distracted by secondary matters. As he himself said:

"Many times I am moved by thoughts of going to study in these areas, particularly at the university of Paris, crying out like a man who has lost his senses, saying to those at the Sorbonne, who have more learning than the will to use it to bear fruit: how many souls stray from the path of glory and go to hell because of your neglect?"²

Francis Xavier's vehement desire and the message we received from the Assembly in Hong Kong offer us a special challenge. His words, coming out of the past, should have a strong resonance in our hearts and in our communities.

Our pilgrimage ended with a trip to the city of Jiangmen and a meeting with some Chinese religious and priests. This was another motive for entering China

² St. Francis Xavier to his companions in Rome, from Cochin, January 15, 1544.

after the celebration of the World Assembly. For them it meant a unique chance to meet with fellow Christians from around the world. For us it meant not only learning something about the situation of the Catholic Church in China, but also discovering the serious commitment that the community in Hong Kong has in regard to its brothers and sisters on this nearby continent.

It was the final witness of the community who had housed us during the celebration of the World Assembly. We will always pray for the Church in China and for our brothers and sisters of Hong Kong who did so much for us and to whom we owe so much.

Our journey to the island of Shangchuan had a truly special significance for me, not only because of the Assembly but also because of the important role St. Francis Xavier had played in my life. It confirmed what we had experienced at Hong Kong '94 and is a light for the journey to follow, an encouragement to face the challenges of the future.

The logo of this past assembly consisted of a big "C" encircling

a map of the world in which a flame burns with a cross in its center. This flame is no less than the fire that Christ had come to bring us, a flame that he desires be spread throughout the world. On this occasion the flame suddenly blazed from Asia, in clear reference to what the CLC Assembly must be: the beginning of a great fire that bears the Good News to all humanity.

Once this flame surged from the castle of Xavier, passed through Paris and Rome and stopped at the remote island of Shangchuan, at the doorway to China. It left behind it a trail of fire carried in the heart of the saint: the love of Christ.

Today we are invited to make the journey in reverse: starting from Hong Kong, our hearts on fire with the desire to be transformed into more effective instruments for bringing about the Good News. The entire world is our field of mission. May we absorb the message of this great missionary - St. Francis Xavier - so that we may become more and more a Community in Mission!

THE WILL OF
GOD
IS THE KEY
TO HOLINESS



Blessed Alberto Hurtado, SJ.

October 16, 1995 saw the beatification of the Chilean Jesuit Fr. Alberto Hurtado. On that occasion the Superior General of the Society of Jesus and our Ecclesiastical Assistant, Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ wrote a letter to the Society giving the following sketch of his life. We are printing this letter because we consider Blessed Alberto "a shining witness" for us in CLC: a contemplative in action.

Alberto was born on January 22, 1901 at Viña del Mar. His father died when he was but a small child. As his mother could not afford to live on her own, she moved to Santiago with her two children to live with relatives. Along with a respect for and service of the poor, she passed on to them a deep Christianity.

Alberto studied at the Colegio de San Ignacio, where his faith was nurtured through the means typical of Jesuit pedagogy: sacramental life, Gospel-based prayer, personal spiritual direction, membership in the Sodality of Our Lady (the present CLC), catechesis of children and social work.

His vocation to the Society took root while he was still in school, but his mother needed him so he decided to wait. He studied Law at the Catholic University of Santiago while working evenings. He was an outstanding president of the student branch of the University Sodality and an active apostle among the poor and marginalized. He tried his hand in the field of politics, which cost him a bullet wound in the head. In 1923 he was admitted to the bar. He joined the So-

ciety on August 14th of that same year.

Alberto never looked back; he lived his apostolic mission to the full, seeking Christ and serving him in the poor. When he left school, he wrote:

"Lord, I want to join your Society and, in order to prepare myself, I want to be a saint. I want to engrave your likeness in my soul and carry it into my life."

After the novitiate, he pursued with distinction the usual Society studies in Argentina, Spain and Belgium receiving licentiates in both Philosophy and Theology. He was also awarded a doctorate in Pedagogy from Louvain University, specializing in Psychology.

He struck both his companions and his superiors as a man of God, a joyful companion, one always ready to serve. He was ordained on August 24, 1933 and returned to Chile at the beginning of 1936.

In the following sixteen short years he was engaged in an apostolate that has put a lasting stamp on the Church and the people of his native country.

Today, Father Hurtado is identified with the poor, mainly because of the vast network of faith and service that was and remains the "Hogar de Cristo" (Christ's Home) that he founded. However, he was active in many different areas: giving classes in pedagogy and religion, guiding souls through spiritual direction, hearing confessions daily, giving retreats, guiding Catholic Action and the Marian Sodality, lecturing, building a novitiate and a retreat house, and founding and being chaplain to the Hogar de Cristo. He promoted housing for the working classes, wrote numerous books and was advisor to trade unions.

He was superior of a Jesuit residence, founder of the review "Mensaje", Province Treasurer and Province Consulter. For years he gathered street boys in order to offer them a hot meal and shelter for the night.

Work with the young characterized the first eight years of his priestly ministry in Chile. He published books and articles on issues of relevance for the formation of youth, most notably "Is Chile a Catholic country?", through which he woke up Chile-

an society and shook it out of its self-complacency.

The Bishops appointed him Advisor to the youth branch of Catholic Action, first in Santiago and then for the entire country. He traveled all over Chile giving retreats, workshops and lectures, organizing congresses and using all the means of communication available at the time. Some 600 centers of Catholic Action sprang up in just four years.

For him, the tragedy of the contemporary world consisted in the absence of God. *"This century has a wound in its heart. Deprived of God's presence, which alone enriches, the human person is sad and restless."*

He called on everyone, in the name of the Lord, to *"bring about in ourselves, as followers of Christ, the great revolution of living a Christian life"*.

Father Hurtado was convincing because he practiced what he taught. The love of Christ filled him and nourished him daily in prayer, the Eucharist and visits to the Blessed Sacrament as well as through his childlike love for Mary our Mother.

In his ministry with the young, he encouraged the generous and challenged the tepid and mediocre. He kindled in them the fire that burned in his own heart. He invited them to let themselves be filled by Christ, to do *"what he would if he were here in my place"*. This involved acts of service: *"that my Christian life be full of apostolic zeal, the desire to help others, to spread joy, to make this world a happier place to live in"*.

The young flocked to him to commit their lives to the Lord. They became ardent followers of Christ, whether as laypersons or as priests or religious. His book "Choosing Life" is dedicated to them.

His love of Christ went beyond the person of Christ. To love Christ is to know, love and serve him in his fullness: Head and Members.

Christ is especially present and met in the poor. This was his peculiar charism: to recognize Christ in the poor. "The poor one is Christ" he would repeat. He loved the poor he met at each stage of his life: as a university student, he loved Christ present in the workers dismissed from

the salt mines. When a priest, he loved Christ present in the vagrants who slept under the bridges of Santiago.

His vision of Christ compelled him to help remedy the grave social ills of the country. He kept repeating that *"to be Catholic is to be social"*.

Universities should awaken hunger and thirst for justice in their students. *"Mercy is not enough because this world is based on injustice."* The greatest work of mercy is to start planning and building a society in which misery will be extinct.

This is why he was so concerned with a structural solution to the problem of poverty: to root out its causes.

This concern is what gave rise to the works he founded, such as the Hogar de Cristo, the review "Mensaje", the Chilean Trade Union, as well as his books "Social Humanism", "Trade Unionism" and several others.

Father Hurtado looked beyond Chile and embraced the needs of the whole world. He was not indifferent to the millions of deaths of World War II:

"indifference towards our brothers and sisters would almost amount to fratricide". With a big heart he called for "*the rebuilding of the world*", what we would now call "the civilization of love".

The vastness of the task should not discourage the Christian, because God is present in the world with the will and the power to renew it. The Eucharist is proof of this.

The attitude of Christians vis-a-vis the world must be one of confidence and joy because they are granted the privilege of cooperating with God in bringing about a new world order that will achieve its fullness in heaven.

Father Hurtado loved the Church, the Bride and the Body of Christ, with great intensity. "*Draw no distinction between Christ and the Church.*" He toiled with and for the Church. He was always well informed about its successes and its failures. The Encyclicals were like God's gifts; he studied and propagated them with so much zeal that he could well merit the title "man of the Encyclicals".

His work with youth, and, particularly for the cause of justice,

resulted in the criticism and misunderstanding of many, even among the hierarchy.

He expressed his viewpoint with simplicity, respect and truthfulness. He was constantly animated by obedience and a staunch loyalty to and love for the hierarchy.

He lived life intensely, happy to be a companion of Jesus in apostolic work. He loved his long encounters with the Lord in prayer, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and the contemplation of God in nature. "*Can we not find three-quarters of an hour daily for God? If we do not, it is because we have not realized that God is a Reality far more important than food and rest.*"

Yet he was driven on all sides by the demands of the people. The following lines describe him: "*It is in God's plan that we be crushed. If anyone has begun to live for God in self-denial and love, all the miseries of the world will crowd around his door.*"

The inner inspiration for his intense activity was the fulfillment of God's will. "***The will of God***", he wrote "***is the key to holiness: to accept God's will, to***

cling to it, this is how we achieve holiness. From this point of view, how vain do discussions about contemplation and action, and divine and human means seem!" The fulfillment of the holy will of God made him often cry out: "I am happy, Lord, happy!"

Father Hurtado died of cancer of the pancreas on August 18, 1952. Two months earlier he had received the news of his impending death as a gift from God: "I've won the lottery! I'm happy, very happy!"

Those who knew him affirm that Father Hurtado is "a visit of God" in our day. He can be the same for us, since he invites us to seek God and his will passionately and above all else, thus reconciling values which seem in opposition such as:

- contemplation and action,
- the pastoral and the social,
- helping the needy and promoting a new social order,

- opting for the poor and motivating the rich;
- intense and immediate activity on the one hand and, on the other, study, the intellectual apostolate and a worldwide and long-range vision of our mission.

It is precisely because he was able to achieve a vital integration of these values, something that we sometimes find unsettling, in one and the same mission and in a loving following of Christ, that Father Hurtado's example is offered to us as a gift from the Lord and a powerful challenge to the way we each live our vocation.

May the Lord, through Blessed Alberto Hurtado's intercession, unite all the facets of our apostolic mission into one single love:

THE LOVE OF THE LORD HIMSELF.

SERVING CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH



Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer is married to Ekke and the mother of three children: Maria Laura, 23; Carlos, 20; and Marie Candide, 16. She teaches theology and has been in CLC since 1979. She was president of CLC-Brazil for seven years and in 1990 was elected vice president of World CLC. She has written several books which have been translated into various languages.

The Story of my CLC Vocation

This story describes the experience of my journey in the Christian Life Commu-

nity. I hope I can convey the dynamics of God's grace and my heartfelt joy in spite of some hard

moments I have had to go through. My story in CLC is basically the story of my life because it is also the story of my vocation. I daresay that speaking about CLC is speaking about my own deepest identity: I reveal myself to me and share my deepest self.

EVERYTHING BEGAN WITH A THEOLOGY CLASS

In 1978, after the birth of my third daughter, I returned to the university to take a Theology course. The professor was a serious Jesuit who spoke about the Church in Latin America: on the eve of the Puebla Conference, the Church wished to go much further down the road in its option for the poor.

His classes moved me; I had not yet been introduced into the rich and fascinating world of the movements of the Spirit. I wasn't sure what was happening and my feelings disturbed me. I began to ask myself how it was possible for me, given my social class, to live that demand which was a priority for the Church of my continent.

One day, gathering my courage I went to talk to my professor

about my mixed feelings. He listened with respectful attention and asked: "Why don't you make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius?" For a person who expected recipes and specific indications of what to do, this was a somewhat disconcerting answer.

I accepted the challenge and made a silent eight-day retreat. It was my first contact with Ignatian Spirituality and although it didn't solve my problem, it helped me experience God more strongly than ever. It introduced me to a different method of praying which opened new and wider horizons for the future.

I shared my experience with a classmate, a young Jesuit. Then I heard CLC mentioned for the first time. My colleague suggested that I gather in my home other married Christian couples who might be seriously looking for something deeper on their journey of faith. He promised to bring Fr Cesar, the National Assistant of the Brazilian CLC, to explain to us what CLC was. Of the twenty people whom I had gathered that day, six were disposed to begin a community. Although we did not understand the explanation very well, we felt a desire to try. Now, twelve

years later, I see two things more clearly:

1. The Brazilian CLC has discovered its identity by forging its own path.

2. CLC is one vocation among many within the Church, a vocation that demands a generous response to God's call.

THE TROUBLED ROAD OF A COMMUNITY

The journey of *Our Lady of the Wayfarers* Community started quite by accident. A young Jesuit, Thierry Linard de Guertechin, had just arrived from Belgium to give classes in demography at my university. I surprised him by asking that he be our guide and with an expression between amusement and perplexity he said "yes". Even today we laugh as he comments on how I tricked him and didn't adequately explain what he was getting into.

He first proposed that we make the Exercises in Daily Life as a group. This was a long process lasting more than two years, but it made us confront the painful reality of the departure of six

members and the near dissolution of the group.

We tried to attract other people but we frequently faced failure. Since we hadn't even been able to form a community, I asked God at times if he really wanted us in the CLC. It was then that an old friend called me. She and her husband accepted the CLC proposal and came to our small and fragile community; this gave us new energy to move forward.

In 1985, six members entered our community and gave it the composition it has today. As in all things of God, the succession of "happenings" was providential.

Our group is homogenous in age, social condition, cultural level, etc. but is very different in temperament, lifestyle, world visions etc. These differences cause some conflicts but also mutually enrich us. They have opened up the road to understanding, to the acceptance of the other and to stronger reconciliation. We realize that sin causes us to feel more deeply the presence of the Lord in our midst.

We felt that we were growing. Little by little we were turning

into CLC, a community of apostolic discernment and we began to understand that the experience of the Spiritual Exercises had really formed us.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

When our group began to structure itself in a more permanent way, I was graced to make the complete Exercises. My dream was to do a closed retreat. I realized that it was difficult to leave my family and my home for a whole month. My spiritual director suggested that I do it in steps, over a period of two years, taking advantage of summer and winter vacations. My husband agreed. So, in July of 1984, I made the First Week in eight days, followed by the Second Week, made in 12 days in December of the same year. In July and December of the following year I made the Third and Fourth Weeks respectively.

This was a powerful experience which made a profound impact on me. It gave new light to the Way of Jesus, a way I had desired to walk since I was young.

I had begun to learn by "doing" and to follow Jesus in the manner of Ignatius of Loyola: to follow Jesus poor and humble, laden with the cross of today's world, so divided by sin, injustice and conflict. To follow Jesus, Eternal King and Universal Lord, who calls me to his service and sends me into the world like a sheep among wolves to serve and to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God in the midst of people (cf. Lk 10:11).

To take part in the redemptive mission of Jesus, learning from him what I ought to do to give witness to that mission. All this came to be the *raison d'être* of my life.

The Spiritual Exercises also enabled me to see CLC in a new light, i.e., as a community of men and women called to follow Christ. I felt a burning desire to have all the members of my community experience the Spiritual Exercises and renew them each year. I knew this was the only way we would really come to be a community of discernment.

The Exercises also helped me to work with a nagging issue: how to live the option for the poor from my middle-class situa-

tion. I didn't find a solution but a way. On one hand, the General Principles (#4) call for a simple lifestyle.

On the other, and this was decisive for me, the Lord was calling me to use my theological and spiritual formation to serve the economically poor as individuals with faces and names.

I learned much from the *Pilgrims of Emmaus* CLC, a community on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Their simple and open sharing of life, their love and their facility for prayer (there were some who prayed at two in the morning, the only time they could find) and their total and orthodox dedication to the Church, all taught me why God favors the poor. The experience of giving them the Spiritual Exercises was one of the most richly gratifying moments of my life, and it confirmed my conviction that Ignatian Spirituality is not just for people of a higher social or cultural level.

My call to give the Exercises to others was a natural step on my journey. The most obvious result that I see coming from the Exercises made by lay people is the

awareness that Baptism itself is a call to holiness.

That is why St. Ignatius gives emphasis to the *Mágis*: to go beyond ourselves in serving the Lord. There is no room for mediocrity, but a constant call to go one step further.

I am more and more convinced that there is no possibility of having CLC without the experience of the Spiritual Exercises. Many members of our group are now assisting newly-formed groups and giving the Spiritual Exercises to others.

In the past, because of the children, my husband and I had done our retreats separately. Now we feel happy and graced to make them together. This has strengthened our lives as a couple and as a family.

AN UNEXPECTED ELECTION

It never occurred to me in 1983, that I could become a member of the National Service Council which is concerned with community formation and structures. When I was told by the national president that my name had been suggested for the Na-

tional Council my first reaction was to refuse. I was still at the beginning of my CLC journey and I had never even thought of assuming such a responsibility. She insisted. When I finally accepted, it was without knowing what I was agreeing to.

My three terms as national president of the Brazilian CLC were years of struggles, of failures, and of letdowns but equally of happiness, of achievements and of feeling that the Lord leads and brings to completion the work that He began. He is strongest where we are weak.

My companions on the National Council made our growth possible and, in the process, touched my heart. Today, there are more than forty established communities and others in the pre-community stage.

The challenges continue:

- to give a solid, spiritual and apostolic formation to members;
- to create lay guides to tend to the formation within new communities;
- to enable more people to make the Exercises;

- to work for our affiliation within the World Community;
- to acquire more apostolic visibility in the Church and in Brazilian society.
- As a national community and as a lay movement, to embody the evangelical and ecclesiastical option for the poor and the struggle for peace and justice, etc.

My heart is thankful to the Lord and to the National Council for having trusted me to further this mission. I learned a lot by sharing in the building of a CLC in Brazil with the help of three national assistants and various lay people who served on three different national councils. Truly, the Lord is the Lord of marvels!

THE GRACE OF BELONGING TO A WORLD COMMUNITY

In 1986, during my term as president, I was able to participate in the World Assembly at Loyola, Spain. At this event, the rich reality of World CLC opened up before my eyes. It was a joy to meet people from different cultures, deeply united

by this experience and by the common language of Ignatian spirituality. The human and spiritual qualities of the delegates and of the Executive Council fascinated me and made me thank God that he calls so many people to the service of the kingdom.

Belonging to the world body of lay people — of which my small community of *Our Lady of the Wayfarers* was just a cell — widened my horizon and added a new dimension to my Ignatian vocation. I began to see the possibilities of searching for and making this goodness more universal and more divine. (Cf. Const. Part VII, c.2, 622). As a World Community, we had traveled a road together. We realized that the text of the Spiritual Exercises has a weight and a decisive importance; this was the “grace” of Loyola ‘86.

After returning to Brazil, my main concern was to do everything possible to see that the “grace” of Loyola ‘86 be absorbed and lived as deeply as possible by our National Community. Thus, Gina Torres, Fr Romanelli and I traveled and related our experiences throughout different communities of Brazil, translated the texts of the Assem-

bly and wrote our testimonies in order that they be made available to all. We hoped that this would awaken in everyone the idea that we are a World Community; therein lies our strength.

In 1990, after finishing my third term as national president, I was nominated by several national communities as a candidate for World CLC vice-presidency. I was happy that the World Community would entrust me with such a serious mission. It was a beautiful experience to discern at all levels: with my family, my local community and with the national ExCo, finally arriving at a mature acceptance knowing that I would be supported no matter what the results.

In Guadalajara, after a discernment process, to my surprise I was elected. All was clear and joyful, a sign of the Lord’s confirmation.

The first year of my mandate brought unexpected events. A few months after the Assembly, when I had returned to Brazil, José Reyes, from the World Secretariat in Rome, informed me of the serious illness of our president, Brendan McLoughlin and

asked me to take over until his recovery. His illness kept him away for a year and I must admit it was hard chairing a 10-day meeting with people I was meeting for the first time, speaking in a foreign language and having to make serious decisions. All of this happened while my mother was just recovering from a painful and serious operation for breast cancer.

Mission is always bigger than we are because it is the Lord's affair, not ours. I was able to experience this truth in those days. Helped by the patience and kindness of the other members of the Executive Council, I was able to get through that meeting and await more quietly Brendan's recovery, which turned out to be in time for the next meeting.

During those first years my concern was mostly to be visible and present as a member of the Executive Council to the Latin-American national communities. I have always been convinced that the Executive Council must not be a corporate figure without faces.

That is how I found myself giving two formation courses in Mendoza (January 1992) and

then in Buenos Aires (January 1993). The first one only to CLC members, the second one to Jesuit students and also to lay people from all over the country. It was a marvelous experience and I am thankful to Fr Jorge Elkins, SJ and Fr Juan Ochagavia SJ from Chile who shared these two experiences with me.

Then I got a call from Peru and, in July 1993, I went there with Fr Ochagavia. Now we have requests from Venezuela and Bolivia for 1995 and it is really encouraging to see the results.

Through the experiences of the Spiritual Exercises the national communities are taking shape and opening themselves to the Lord's grace.

At the World Assembly in Hong Kong in 1994 I was nominated for president and vice president. But my decision was more complex than before as I had been living a new experience since 1993, one which implied a deep link with the mission of the Society of Jesus: the responsibility for leading one of the Province works - a lay formation center. It is a fascinating work but also a challenging one because every-

thing is new and has to be set up. I have the joy of being able to count on the collaboration of my CLC brothers and sisters; for us, this is the strongest experience of community.

After discerning my nominations at all CLC levels, I spoke with Fr Francisco Ivern, SJ, the provincial, who really believes in the importance of lay people and in mutual cooperation. He is a good CLC friend. My conversation with him gave me peace. I would not stand for president as there were many good candidates available for that position. But I thought that one more mandate as vice president could be helpful.

The Hong Kong Assembly not only deepened my faith and love for the World Community but it also gave me the experience of organizing a World Assembly "from within". It was a good pedagogical process filled with joy and pain.

My re-election as vice president for four more years strengthened my willingness to continue to help the growing process of this already grown-up and solid World Community which has to discover and consolidate its mission vocation.

The chance to work with this new Executive Council, where most of the members are already good friends; fills me with hope. It is a young and dynamic Executive Council, full of dreams and creativity. The Holy Spirit can do a lot with that.

Even before our March 1995 meeting, I can already put forward some of my dreams:

- To work more intensely for Jesuit/lay cooperation. I hope that the USA and Brazilian experiences can be useful here.
- To give importance to the formation meetings for Ecclesiastical Assistants.

Their preparation has to be careful and conscious.

- To find the basics of a formation program for CLC members in order to help guides and assistants all over the world. These basics should include the issue of *MISSION* right from the start. I hope my experience with the *Loyola Center of Faith and Culture* and our lay formation processes there can be of some help in all this.

CONCLUSION:

TO LOVE AND TO SERVE IN ALL THINGS (Sp.Ex. #233)

In May of 1989, at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome I presented my doctoral thesis in theology: "God and Divine Service: Mystical Theology and Christian Praxis in Ignatius of Loyola." The entire process of editing that thesis — taken on as a mission and as the fruit of discernment — entailed much self-denial and stress for me and for my family. I dedicated this thesis to the whole World Community, because CLC has helped me and continues to help me to live Ignatian Spirituality by converting my daily life to the service of the Kingdom. Daily it continues to teach me *to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things*, as St. Ignatius teaches in the *Contemplation for Attaining Divine Love*. The grace I ask the Lord each day, now as be-

fore, is *to grow in interior knowledge and love of the Lord* as St. Ignatius teaches the retreatant in every prayer during the Second Week. These past years, this inner knowledge and love are inseparably linked to belonging to a body: the World CLC with a special relationship to the Society of Jesus. I believe that belonging to this community, a missionary community, is essential to living one's Christian vocation in an Ignatian way. I hope that as an Executive Council, we can help the World Community to become more and more aware of this fact.

As the Society of Jesus begins its 34th General Congregation, where collaboration with lay people is such an important issue, we as CLC, should keep them in our prayers, because I believe that the strength and effectiveness of our mission in the future will depend on our capacity to work together for the Kingdom of God.



***The LORD is my shepherd
whom else should I follow***

***By tranquil streams he leads me to restore my spirit
and to refresh my body***

***He gives me LIVING WATER and the BREAD OF LIFE
He is with me always and he is the WAY***

***His tender love makes me whole
And when I proclaim my love to him
His answer is:***

FEED MY SHEEP.

