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LORD, WHEN WAS IT
THAT WE SAW YOU HUNGRY OR THIRSTY
OR A STRANGER OR NAKED OR SICK OR IN PRISON,
AND DID NOT TAKE CARE OF YOU ?

Mt 25:44

EDITORIAL

This photo of Domitilla and her three children, in an article telling their painful story, has been haunting me. They are the survivors of a Rwandan family of thirteen, and now they live a sad existence in a container 13 sq m provided for refugees and asylum seekers by the government authorities in Munich. I was on my way back from Germany to Rome when reading the newspaper with Domitilla's story and an appeal for help, and I consoled myself at first with the thought that in the *metropolis with the kind heart*, as Munich is also called, Domitilla would be flooded with offers of help. How wrong I was; there was not one! After reflecting on the situation and questioning several people, I discovered that the excess of suffering and tragedies we are confronted with daily, can lead to apathy and indifference.

When the disciples questioned Jesus *Why do you speak to them in parables* he answered: *The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen ..' (Mt 13:13)* and he refers to the prophecy of Isaiah: *You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull...*

How can we stay alert to the suffering around us ? **Jesus himself** — our **being with him** — is the answer. The very same words spoken by him to his disciples, Jesus will speak to us too:

*But blessed are your eyes, for they see,
and your ears, for they hear*

Saint Ignatius puts it this way: *... whoever wishes to come with me... has to labour with me...*(Sp.Ex.93). To be with the Lord, to work with him building the Kingdom, in other words, **MISSION** differently expressed, is the main theme of this issue.

The Vital Circle of Mission

OUR LIFE JOURNEY

There are many ways of approaching the reality of mission in our Ignatian spirituality, mission understood as the call to be an instrument of God in building the Kingdom here on earth.

But how do we experience this force for wholeness, this mission, which motivates our life and places it at the feet of the Lord?

1. We experience mission as a profound, constant desire which springs from the heart.

This desire is born after we have felt the unconditional love of God through Jesus Christ who sacrificed Himself for us. This love transforms, harmonizes and integrates our desires and our fears, so that we become people for others.

The experience of saving love that we find in the *First Week* of the *Exercises* gives us a new vision of our milieu, and of our own feelings, our characteristics and our talents.

It is an experience that, during the first years of our journey in CLC, leads us to discover the presence of God in all things, and His call to be, through Christ, the way of love for others.

During this journey, we discover gradually our weaknesses and our fears, but also our possibilities, as we come to understand fully the personal love that God has for each one of us. The step of accepting ourselves as we are makes it possible to fix our profound gaze, from the depths of our being, on the Lord (*Principle and*

Foundation), who will strengthen our desire to follow Him, by transforming our desires.

It is a journey of prayer and petition, asking the Lord to show us His working, His "footprint", in our life. To the extent that we acknowledge the love of God in every moment of our life, so will it be made whole in each of its facets (family, work, activities, etc); we can then speak of a way of life which experiences mission as being the instrument of the love of God and His Kingdom, in each and every dimension and sphere of human life.

The journey undertaken is one of discernment, a journey through which we learn to transform our desires, so that, (freed from the ties that bind us), we freely choose the risk of following Christ.

This risk of following Christ governs our way of living and being in the world.

The *General Principles* are an authentic decalogue for those who have been touched by the Lord.

Following Christ is a vocation in which, humbly acknowledging

the creative power of God in us, we do everything we are capable of. Our charism is: *...to work...for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.* (GP 2).

...bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation. (GP 4).

...to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. (GP 8d).

...to participate in social and political life... (GP 12b).

The *General Principles* are a guide for fixing the reference point in our life. Following Jesus contains a radical call to work for justice, in every area of our life.

In accordance with the guidelines of the last General Assembly in Hong Kong, we could say: it is no longer sufficient to be a "good" parent, a "good" worker, a "good" student. Our spirituality springs from the profound sense

of being loved by God; through imitating Christ we live our life so as to be more effective in promoting justice at work, in our families, our studies, etc. Through the dynamics of the "*magis*", one day we will be able to say, with full understanding and will, the prayer of contemplation to attain love. (Sp.Ex. 234)

2. How this journey in CLC is to be put into practice.

The discernment of a personal charism and the call to work for the Kingdom is confirmed in the small group, which in turn is part of the community at the regional, national and world level through the guidelines and recommendations of the General Assemblies.

CLC lives its mission in the mission of the Church, the people of God, called and sent out by the Lord.

This way of personal discernment is thus a way of communal listening, so that the options, projects and activities, which embody our being on mission, correspond to the real needs of others and the world, and to an apostolic motivation and fidelity to our personal charism.

The community confirms the call, and, as part of the Church on mission, the person sent is supported by prayer and regular evaluation to confirm or change the mission.

3. For CLC, who lives Ignatian spirituality, Ignatius offers us Mary as model.

She is the woman who listens to the Lord's call, welcomes it in her breast, within her heart, so that this act of welcome is the source that impels her towards the outside world, and makes of her a model of generosity and solidarity. Instead of contemplating her own spiritual insights, she went off to help her cousin, Elizabeth, and later on, took a quiet but active part in the public life of Jesus. She shows us the way, so that we are not satisfied with keeping God's call to ourselves, but are inspired to imitate Mary by participating in organizations and political parties and other institutions, whether church or secular, for whom the risk of following Christ becomes a call to fullness and peace in the Lord.

4. The following working diagram may be of use in understanding the apostolic charism of CLC.

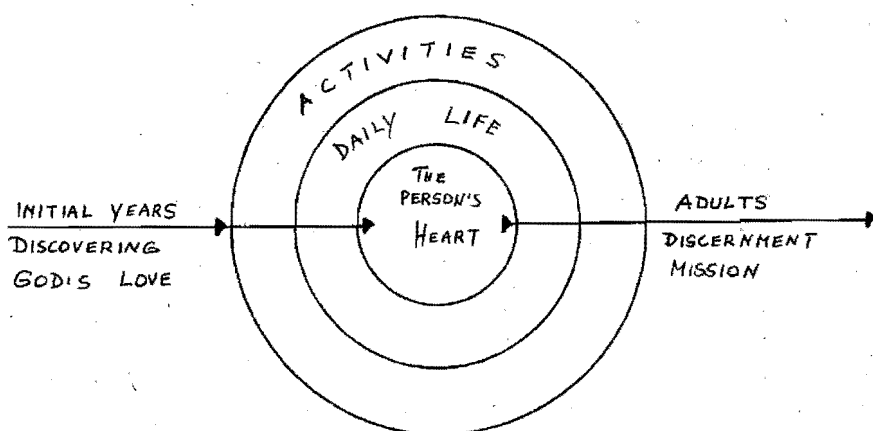
In the initial period, especially among young people, the gradual discovery of the love of Christ impels us to engage in all sorts of "outside" activities without our life being deeply changed.

As we grow by discovering God's love and by means of discernment, we find God at work in our daily life, in our "vital circle", until, at last, we acknowledge in our heart that God has entered into our whole being and has transformed (integrated) us into Himself.

From this moment on (the stage of maturity); the movement is inward, focused.

The acknowledgement, through discernment, of God's working in my life transforms our own way of life, and "colours" or modifies our vital circle, our daily life (work, family, leisure), and by the same means, influences and orients all of our public life, in CLC, in the Church, in each and every kind of secular association as well.

José María Riera
President World CLC



A Letter from Rwanda

Christine from Zaire is now working in Rwanda.
The following is an excerpt from her letter.

I have been in Rwanda since 11 November 1995. Our house is beside the Jesuits. A sign that the Lord has gone before us and welcomes us in our mission. We are able to go to Mass every day without having to walk far...

The academic year 94-95 has just finished, and that of 95-96 is just beginning. It was almost impossible, after the genocide, to open the university, but the results are positive. The professors have made great efforts, as have many of the students, who knew what they were doing.

As for the CVX, we pray, we watch, we contact people we

meet at Mass. Many of them are already involved in the "Emmanuel Community", a charismatic group. This year they have organized a course for couples. The sessions are spread over 3 months, one weekend each month (February, March, April). I took part in the February one. It was wonderful, and the participants were not necessarily members of the Community. They loved it, it was a new experience for most of them.

The events in Rwanda have left many broken hearts, but a marvellous enlightenment has come out of all this for some, "the meaning of their life". In these Emmanuel group meetings,

there would certainly be some people who want a way of deepening their faith, and the CVX in Butare will be born.

There is a planned meeting for Butare and Kigali on 28-30 June 96. We hope we will have found something for the two cities by then.

Butare is a university city and it has two congregations of Ignatian spirituality there. There is an Auxiliatrice Sister who has experience of CVX from the time of her studies in Belgium several years ago. She has just finished her studies in Law at Butare. She may be taken on as a teacher at the university, and her community has agreed that she can work with our CVX. This is a grace and a sign from the Lord, who reflects and works with us.

In Rwanda, there are many positive happenings, but the media scarcely mentions them.

What has happened has challenged all of us: we are lacking in love, we do not love enough, we do not love according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who came to teach us how to love. We are all poor in love. We are lacking in humility and simplicity to love.

Here the divisions and differences have opened up deep chasms. Fear, lies, lack of sincerity, covetousness, have all gained ground.

I left Rwanda in 1966; the atmosphere was quite different. It is a different picture and spirit that we find now. It will need a great deal of time, patience and love before the country finds its humanity again.

Every community in the CVX feels supported as part of the World Community. So we do not doubt that we sustain one another throughout the world by our prayers.

BECOMING

COMMUNITY

ON MISSION

This is truly a most exciting time for us CLCers. Our 1994 World Assembly in Hong Kong was a privileged moment; and, through its theme, *Community on Mission*, it focused our energies on a fulcrum which, inspired by the Spirit, will be a source of our ongoing renewal and development in CLC. Leading up to Hong Kong were our whole history of World Assemblies and all the apostolic service which we have undertaken in these last decades, but especially important was the 1990 World Assembly at Guadalajara, where we revised the CLC *General Principles* and renewed our focus on mission.

The International Formation Encounters held in 1993 and 1994 in five regions throughout

the world helped us to develop skills of social analysis, enabling us to recognize the signs of the times more clearly, and to discern what our particular commitments should entail. As we continue to educate our members in the tools of these Encounters, we will be able to engage in an ongoing process of sensitive discernment in all our mission activities.

Since Hong Kong we have held a series of "Jesuits and CLC" Encounters. These have been important for mission because we have begun to share the results of reflection and ongoing revision concerning what is a proper formation for the members of CLC, so that we can effectively become *Community on Mission*.

As one privileged to participate

in several of these recent meetings, and be given the conclusions from others, I would like to share some insights which may help us deepen our vision of being *Community on Mission*.

ONE MISSION,
MANY MINISTRIES

Whenever I am with a group of CLCers, and the issue of common mission arises, or more so when there is talk of discerning our common mission, there is immediate discomfort in the group. Notably, I have experienced this at two International Formation Encounters and at Hong Kong.

There is good reason for this uneasiness because what we initially hear in the idea of common mission is an implication of uniformity, that we would all do more or less the same thing for the same group of people; this is clearly contrary to our Ignatian charism which calls us always to read the signs of the times and to make ourselves available to serve the greatest need, with due regard for our talents and our other resources. CLC, I suppose, should never have a single common mission, in the way other groups

have, such as serving street children or promoting devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, solved our anxiety at the Bombay IFE and at Hong Kong with the maxim, *One mission, many ministries*. It is important for us CLCers to recognize that we do not, at this moment, need to discern our mission in any fundamental sense.

We are all called to share in the same mission which is affirmed in the *General Principles*, especially no.8. This statement is a formulation of our charism as it applies to mission based on the way the Guadalajara World Assembly, in a spirit of discernment, read the signs of the times. The statement serves as a touchstone as we discern more specifically how we are to implement this common mission. In fact, we use the word, "mission", in two different senses. The first is at the global level, as found in GP 8. The second is at the level of specific implementation, whether at the world, regional, national, small community, or personal level. This second level is what Father Mejia in his maxim means by "many ministries".

For example, in 1992, CLC Nairobi undertook a discernment of a common mission thrust. We considered the needs and our abilities to respond to them. We concluded that ministries toward youth was the call to mission which we were receiving at that time. Our discernment specified some particular kinds of projects in which we might become involved. Over time, some specific projects were suggested. Although CLC in Nairobi committed itself to this common mission toward youth, another level of discernment was still necessary. Members must discern, and decide with the support of their small community, whether and how they were to become involved in this common mission.

Except on rare occasions, such as a World Assembly, where a new formulation or statement of CLC's one mission is made, our discernment about mission is at the second level of definition where we are discerning a mission thrust and specific ministries. We could consistently use terms like "mission thrust" or "mission project" for this second sense; but in any case, it is important for us to avoid confusion by keeping in mind the two senses in which we use the word, "mission".

FROM ACTIVITY TO SERVICE TO MISSION

At present, a document is being prepared: *Our CLC Charism — Criteria for CLC formation*, which will be published as a Supplement to *Progressio* by the end of this year. This document was used as a working document at "Jesuits and CLC" Encounters, and revised afterwards. It speaks of three major stages of development for both members and groups, after they have had a brief period of introduction to CLC. It would be beyond the scope of this presentation (and perhaps premature) to speak of the three stages in any detail, but this division can help us understand the typical development that a CLCer (or a small community) undergoes as progress is made in growth in mission in CLC.

What will be important for our purpose is to see how in each stage there is vital growth as each person makes progress in becoming a member capable of contributing to the mission of CLC. Of course the term "stages" involves speaking in general. The three stages as discussed below can most easily be applied to those who join

CLC as young people; those who join when older will already have achieved much of what is suggested for each stage, yet this will still need to be integrated into their CLC way of life.

THE FIRST YEARS

The first stage is the first years in CLC after the initial introduction. It corresponds roughly with the stage of the *Principle and Foundation*, and the *First Week* of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In this stage, as a CLCer, I grow in sense of self as a individual uniquely loved by God the Father. I get to know myself in relation to others. I discover my gifts and limitations. I uncover the disorder in my life and experience God's healing power, especially in these areas of disorder. I begin to recognize my relationship to the world in all its beauty and potential, yet so seriously marred.

During the first years, I engage in many activities in school, at my workplace, and with my family. The CLC small community might organize one-off projects, such as a Christmas party for orphans or harvesting the crops of an elderly couple. There could also be

ongoing projects, such as visiting a home for the elderly once a month. I might decide to give religious instruction to children in my parish. Characteristically, I am engaged in many diverse activities in the different areas of my life and for many different reasons.

Even a particular activity, which is ostensibly to fulfil a need which others have, will also typically have other motivations. My small community is going to harvest the crop of an elderly couple. In addition to wanting to help, I might also be concerned about what the group members will think if I did not come; I want to be with my friends; I know good techniques for harvesting this crop, and I want to impress my companions. After I have finished the activity, I feel contentment. But why? Is it because I have been of Christian service, because my egoistical needs have been taken care of, or a combination of the two?

At this stage of the first years, it is important to recognize that people are helped by such activities; thus, these are clearly good in terms of the help provided. At the same time, the CLC community can do much to help the CLCer grow in

consciously recognizing all the motivations behind the choices made and in understanding the causes behind the different feelings I have. In this way, I, as a CLC'er, become more conscious of who I am. What motivates me? How can I be more sensitive to what my feelings are saying to me? How is God present and calling me in the events of my life?

Through living my many activities in this stage of CLC, I become aware of areas of selfishness and of generosity, and I grow in the latter as I learn to discern spirits. I begin to become more focused and to integrate my many activities into my growing sense of identity.

THE STAGE OF DISCERNMENT OF OUR VOCATION

The stage of discernment of our vocation corresponds to the *Second Week* of the *Exercises* because it is the time of deep conversion to Christ, the Christ of the Kingdom who calls us to serve with Him in His way. It is the stage when young persons entering CLC will make the election of their fundamental choice of state of life through the means provided by the CLC way.

Those who choose the lay life will make the further decision about CLC as their way of living as Christians in the following of Christ. Those who join when older will continue to grow in the CLC way until coming to the decision about whether CLC is the way each one is called to live out his or her life as a Christian.

On the level of mission, this is the stage at which a CLC'er is converted from engaging in many activities to living a life of service (or ministry, which is a word with the same meaning). This movement is founded on falling in love with Christ, the conversion to Christ, which enables us to find the depth of our identity in a relationship with Jesus Christ, and this transforms our lives through the committed desire to live in conformity with Him.

According to the insight of José María Riera, World CLC President, expressed at the "Jesuits and CLC" Encounter in Rome, activities are transformed into service when they are integrated in a heart that is in love with Christ. At this stage the desire grows to live and to do everything out of selfless love, a service that is like the self-forgetful service of Christ who

even laid down His life for His friends.

Gradually, as a CLC'er, I recognize the need to let my whole life be united in the loving following of Christ; and the many activities of the arenas of my life, such as work, home, and outreach to others, become integrated as service. During the first stage I had recognized my diverse motivations, and began to be healed of those not oriented toward God, so now at this stage I am further empowered to make my life a unity in the service of Christ.

CLC and my small community sustain me at this stage by providing the environment which supports conversion to Christ. This conversion might happen at the core of my being in a moment, but learning what it means to live it out in the various areas of my life, as an integrated life of service, will take time. There will be times of discouragement, failure and simply dogged hard work; and my perseverance will require the support of a like-minded community that understands my struggles. There will times when the community can guide me by means of insight or suggestions

because it has come to know something of my pitfalls and where I can become stuck. The community provides perspective; when I feel lost in my struggle, it can remind me of the growth that has already occurred. It is with my companions that I can celebrate successes and rejoice in the growth I have attained.

THE STAGE OF APOSTOLIC MISSION

The stage of apostolic mission is the stage of maturity in CLC; one is focused now on living as a member of a community on mission. It is the stage of the ongoing living of the generous commitment arising from the election during the *Second Week* of the *Exercises*, in all the actual situations of one's life and in new situations with their possibilities for service.

There will also be periods of living in the *Third Week*, as one struggles to embrace the suffering that commitment to Jesus' way of selfless service entails. Here one experiences the deep desire to live Jesus' way, the way involving insults and humiliations, for love of Jesus as He is found in the outcast and the oppressed.

There will even be periods of the *Fourth Week*, when one experiences the consolation of recognizing that one's own efforts contribute to the victory of Jesus as it is being realized in the world, indeed, as the Kingdom is being built.

At this stage service becomes fully mission because each CLC member is sent to serve by the CLC community. To be on mission means to be sent. As Christ was sent on mission by the Father, so we must be sent through the Church to continue His mission; so it is through the sending by CLC that our service becomes mission.

The fullness of our life as CLCers is being sent on mission by CLC; but it is essential that we do not understand this in a juridical way, but in a relational way, just as the Father sent the Son in terms of their relationship.

As a CLCer, I have gradually grown in my Christian life to choose CLC as my way of life on the basis of a call discerned to be from the Lord. Through this whole process of growth, I have been becoming a member of the Christian Life Community, especially focused in my small

community. I have been learning about myself as I relate in community, and I have gradually shared the self I am becoming with the community. The community comes to know me better and helps me to know myself.

Now, I have reached the stage of personal and Christian integration when the focus in all areas of my life is more and more on mission. I need to discern constantly that this becomes progressively more appropriate to its aims, and it is only natural that I will want my community to help me with this discernment. I will discover that the community will be of help in pointing out an area where I am blind. I will recognize that the community has resources of information and analysis which are beyond my own and which will support my discernment.

The discernment of mission is communal. The community discerns with me. When agreement is reached between my community and me about my service, then the community sends me on mission. Because the community sends me, the service is both my mission and the mission of Christian Life Community.

This sending, however, is not the end of the process; it is a gesture of the community's ongoing commitment to my living out my mission as CLC lives out its mission. CLC, at its various levels of being community, but especially through my small community, will help me continue to discern how best to implement my mission; and help me adjust or even change my mission radically as subsequent information and discernment indicate.

It is important that we do not understand mission as the extra things I do. In mission, life and service are integrated. I may have little time to do "extra things" after I attend to fulfilling sensitively both my responsibilities as spouse and parent and my duties at my workplace. This is the case for most CLCers; and, in this case, these are principally the areas in which CLC helps me discern how I am best to serve, and these are the areas in which CLC sends me on mission.

A SMALL COMMUNITY MISSION PLAN

The foregoing discussion of how CLC sends its members on mission might sound rather

theoretical. What does it mean in practice? Since most of our countries have relatively few members living at this stage of apostolic mission, we are all in the midst of learning what it means. Here I would like to offer the example of my own CLC small community, although we are only at the beginning of this stage of apostolic mission ourselves. A few months ago, we drew up a small community mission plan.

First, each of us spent time discerning what he or she felt is the focus of his or her CLC mission at this time. Each shared this with the community at one of our meetings; some spoke about the mission of CLC in Nairobi toward youth, others about a focus within his or her family or at the workplace, some again about another service that he or she gives. After each one shared, the others were invited to make comments about how they saw this person's mission.

Each of us took the results away for further consideration and shared again at the next meeting. Spontaneously, in the midst of our discussion, we found ourselves speaking of a common area of concern of many of our

members, and we expressed what we might do together to meet this need. Finally, we formulated our small group mission plan, with the particular commitment of each member. Through this formulation we were sending one another on mission. We were committing ourselves both to ongoing support of one another and to ongoing discernment with one another.

Periodically, our written statement of mission will need to be revised as mission must evolve continually. I think that this example could serve as a model of how to send members on mission for CLC small communities which are at the beginning of this stage. The obvious limitation is that it concerns only one or two areas of each member's life of service as mission. Still, it is a beginning which can be expanded.

PROGRESS AS COMMUNITY ON MISSION

Community on Mission was the theme of Hong Kong '94. I think

it remains a statement of CLC's identity. It would be difficult to discover a more concise definition of our fundamental identity as Christians who are invited to live more fully the life of the Trinity, Itself the most intimate Community from which the Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As CLC we are committed to growing as *Community on Mission*. We commit ourselves to living as a community which supports its members in living our Christian life by following the vision of Ignatian spirituality.

We are community, never for its own sake, but for the sake of our mission.

Through our experience of living as CLC and through our reflection on this, we are growing in discovering the process which will enable all of us to be formed so that we may accomplish our fundamental goal of becoming *Community on Mission*.

Terry Charlton, SJ

Christians should influence political order

The author, Father Peter Henriot, SJ, is trained as both a theologian and a political scientist. Besides working in a parish, he directs the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Lusaka, Zambia and is last but not least the National Ecclesiastical Assistant of CLC Zambia. With this article, Fr Henriot is challenging us as a world community.

Do you ever hear people in your country say: "The church should get out of politics?" Yes, it is true, some people shout like that whenever a church leader or church organisation makes a comment on what the Government is doing or how the economy is operating. When a pastoral letter from bishops comes out calling for respect for human rights or honesty in elections, there will always be people who say that the church has no business meddling in politics. The church should be about saving souls and nothing more. Period!

How can we answer these comments? Personally, I believe that Christians are obliged to take very seriously the challenges of political life. True religious faith obliges Christians to pay attention to politics and to participate in whatever way they can.

First of all, it is very important to understand what people mean when they say, "the church should get out of politics", and why they say such things. They may be fearful that religion will come to dominate the state in the sense that priests and ministers will claim to be the only ones fit to govern. There certainly have been instances of this in the long history of the Church and of other religious bodies. Surely, that is wrong and not what we want here in Zambia today.

But it is one thing to say that religion should dominate the Government and another thing to say that faith should influence the political order. Our Christian faith doesn't give us a specific political plan for how a government should be run or how the economy should be managed. But it does tell us a lot about justice, peace, community, solidarity, respect for rights,

concern for the poor and respect for the environment. And these are values that we really do want all governments to pay attention to today.

Where do we Christians find these values that should influence the political order? They can be found very clearly in the teachings of the Bible. For example, the Old Testament is clear about the truth that all women and men are equal and have great dignity, since all are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). The Psalms sing of God's special care for the poor and oppressed (e.g. Psalm 34, 72, 82, 146). The prophets were constantly challenging rulers and the rich who were oppressing the poor and the powerless (e.g. Isaiah 1:10-17; Micah 6:6-16; Habakkuk 2:5-11; Amos 8:4-8).

In the New Testament, we have Jesus announcing his mission as Good News to the poor, freedom for prisoners and protection of the oppressed (Luke 4:14-21). He courageously challenges the Scribes and Pharisees who exploit the people (e.g. Mt 23:1-28; Jn 10:40-41), rejects Sabbath laws that neglect people's needs (e.g. Mk 3:1-6; Lk 6:1-5), and tells people to give to the government (Caesar) only what the government has the right to claim (Mt 22:21).

So when someone asks why Christians should be concerned about public issues such as government policies and actions by government officials, we can simply point to the Bible and explain the message found there about rights, justice, and the duties of those who have authority. That doesn't mean, I repeat, that we can find in the Bible a clear plan, a platform, for government to follow. But we can indeed find the values and the norms and the guidelines that should influence the actions of government.

Let me clarify this point by making a very important distinction between three different positions: "political", "partisan", and "neutral". "Political" refers to the public order, the role of government and authority, the rule of law, the domain of human rights and the participation of citizens in elections. It involves the actions a government takes in promoting the common good and protecting people's interests and welfare. Thus, it can also involve economics and cultural affairs.

"Partisan" refers to political parties, groups that organise around a set of principles and policies (a manifesto), with hope of winning the support of voters to place them in office. A partisan position is one that is put forth over against

another group's position. It implies choosing sides.

"Neutral" refers to a stance that withdraws completely from the public debate over key issues, offering no comments or commitments. The "affairs of this world" are simply of no interest to a group or an individual that takes this neutral stance. They just have no opinions.

Now clearly, the Church and individual Christians should be "political" in the sense of showing concern about order, justice, rights, honesty and the effect of policies on the poor. These are matters that directly affect the dignity and "well-being" of people. They cannot be ignored if Christians really are respectful of the worth of each woman and man created in God's image and likeness.

When someone says that the Church is being "political", for example, because it speaks up for free and fair elections, or expresses concern over the new Constitution, then Christians should very clearly say: "That's right! The church has to be political!" It has no choice but to be political if it is to be true to its mission and ministry of caring for people's well-being in the fullest sense. Integral evangelisation means preaching a Gospel that really touches every aspect of people's

lives, and this includes the political aspects.

But this certainly does not mean that the Church in its leadership and statements should be "partisan", in the sense of endorsing a particular party position or supporting a particular party candidate. Individual Christians can do this. Indeed, they should do this by becoming active members and supporters of the party that they believe will best serve the people with honesty and justice.

But the Church embraces people with many different opinions about how politics should be run. Therefore the leadership shouldn't side with only one group against another by taking openly partisan positions. It would surely divide a church community if the pastor were to stand in the pulpit and tell people how they should vote in the next election! It is also obvious that the Church and individual Christians should never be "neutral", standing completely outside the public debate over basic issues of values and directions. To do so would be to deny the importance of influencing the world around us with the Good News of Jesus' Kingdom. The Christian community cannot be neutral in the face of human suffering, of dishonesty, of injustice,

or of oppression of the poor. This is certainly true in a number of countries today.

ATTITUDES

Today the issues in quite a number of countries are so important for the survival of people that Christians cannot avoid becoming political. For example, the "first independence" in the 1960s brought to the states of Africa freedom from colonial rule, and government by the majority was established in democratic structures. But in the majority of countries democracy was soon done away with, and violations of human rights became common. One-party regimes, military dictatorships and "presidents-for-life", all meant that most people simply had no say in what went on in the political order.

But with the coming in the 1990s of what many have called the "second independence", democratic structures of multi-partyism and constitutional guarantees of human rights have begun to be established. These are important "structures", but even more important are the "attitudes" that people must have if freedom and rights are to be preserved. These "attitudes" include respect for others, dialogue, tolerance, accountability by leaders,

responsibility by citizens and hard work by all.

The Church in several countries now has a great opportunity and serious responsibility to encourage the proper attitudes to make true democracy function. This is a "political" task for the Church in the best sense of working for the common good of all the people. A non-partisan approach to civic education should be undertaken in local parishes and church communities, with explanations of what elections are all about, how to evaluate candidates and manifestos according to the values of justice and peace, of the moral duty of voting, and of what expectations people can have of their elected representatives.

Individual Christians should also be encouraged to enter actively into politics, joining a party, running for office, accepting an appointed position. Sometimes Christians object that "politics is a dirty business!" Well, it certainly will be very dirty indeed if all the "clean" people leave it only to selfish, dishonest and ignorant people! If more committed Christians got involved, then the tone and style of politics could be notably improved. If Christians in general are to become more active in politics, influencing its tone and direction, they will need education, not only

in civil matters, but also in the Church's social teachings. Our Church has important teachings about human rights, responsibilities of those in authority, ethics in business, rights of workers and justice for the poor. We need to hear more about these teachings through sermons, adult classes, small community discussions and youth groups. Then these teachings can enter into the public debate and can affect decision-making.

The Church has a great challenge in the world these days! The Good News of Jesus that we share is facing in our societies a lot of "bad news"! The bad news of poverty and hunger, of wars and ethnic conflicts, of refugees and homelessness, of corruption and oppression. But the Good News is about love and life, reconciliation and community, justice and peace. In the current situation, that means that the Good News can't help but be highly "political".

SHOULD CLC MEMBERS BECOME "POLITICAL"

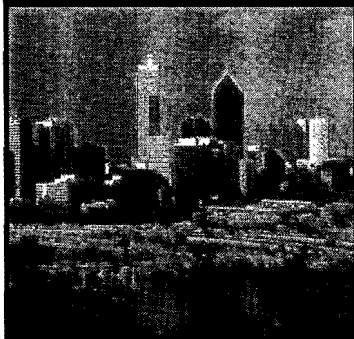
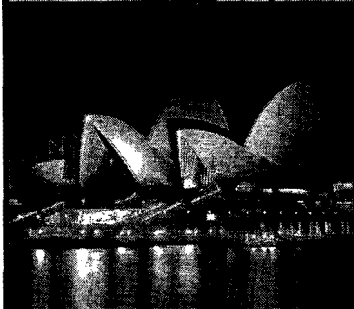
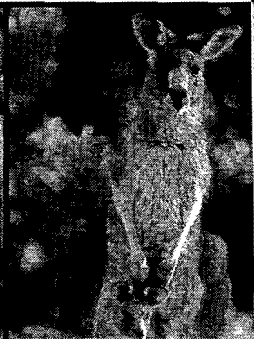
Surely the answer to that is YES! **Part of our mission today must be promoting the values of Christ's Kingdom in the public order.** Issues of human rights, concern for the poor, justice for women, respect for life unborn and the elderly,

dignity for youth and the marginalised: all of these issues and more are on the agenda of any group or individual following Jesus in today's world. And they certainly do involve politics!

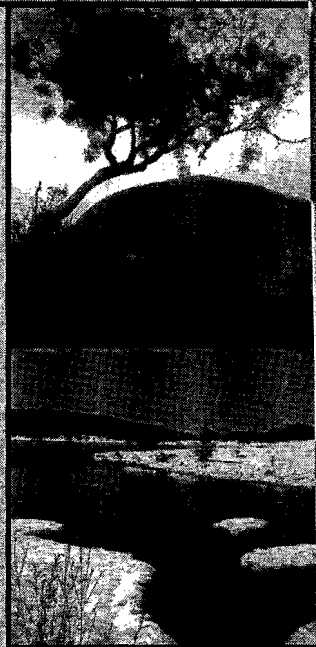
I believe that our CLC way of life can contribute some very important elements to our political activities. The first is that we act in a community and as a community. We may not always agree on all the details (who does in politics?!), but we can agree on the need to support and challenge each other and to witness in our community's life to the values we want to see in society at large.

Second, we can bring to political action the gift of discernment from our Ignatian spirituality. Wisdom, clarity about ends and means, indifference in the light of God's ways, and loving generosity will make our political choices more in accordance with Gospel values.

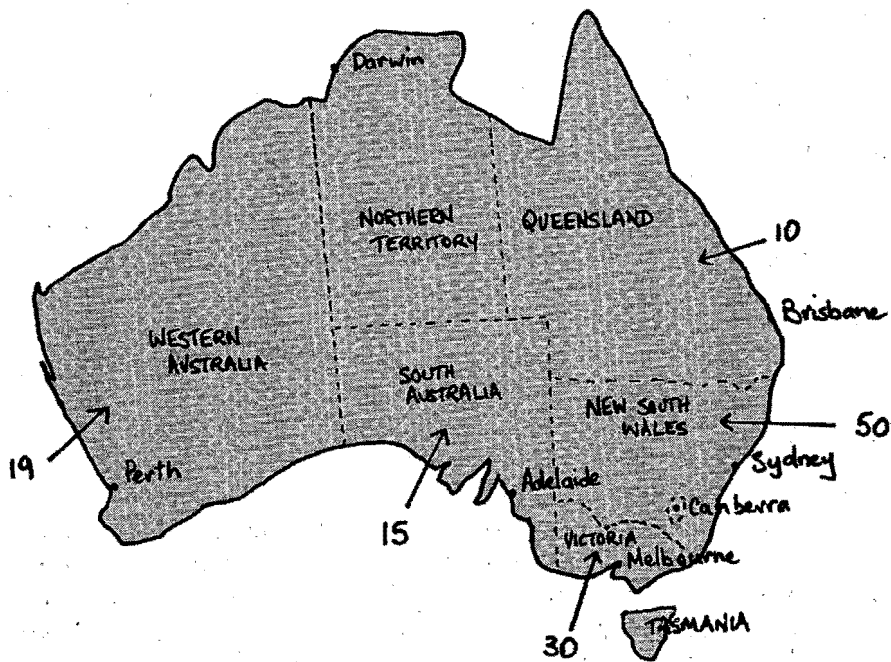
Third, we can be open to the risk and sacrifice that working for justice in the political order may entail. Again, our Ignatian spirituality strengthens us by helping us to experience that we are *labouring with* Jesus in the work of the Kingdom of justice and peace. **That labour necessarily involves the cross, but also the resurrection.**



Australia
is the only land that is quite different. It is slightly smaller than Brazil and the US, and comprises an entire continent with a unique fauna and flora. The 1,900 km long Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef, and Ayers Rock is the biggest monolith.



The Christian Life Community in Australia



Number of CLC groups in five states

Australia is a land of contrasts: from lush tropical rainforests to deserts, and from surfing beaches

and coral reefs to snow-capped mountains. As a people we represent diverse cultural backgrounds. Our CLC

members come from all walks of life, which enriches us as a National Community. CLC is present in five of the six Australian states.

OUR HISTORY

Our first CLC group began in 1976, after Maxine Hogan and Noel Bradford SJ (our current Ecclesiastical Assistant), attended the World Assembly in Manila. Between 1982-1985 José Gsell and Patrick O'Sullivan SJ, from the World Secretariat, visited Australia on a number of occasions. They conducted a number of formation courses with the help of local resource people whom they trained and supported. In 1986 our first National Assembly was held, and as a result of a communal discernment, a unanimous decision was reached to strive to become a national community.

From 1986 on, structures gradually emerged to enable our desire to become reality. These needed to be appropriate to our circumstances. Australia is geographically large (7,682,300 sq km in area, 3,600 km from south to north, 4,000 km from east to west), but small in

population (18 million, 30% Catholic). It is made up of 6 States and 2 Territories. We have a Federal Government and each State/Territory has its own parliament. Most of our population is located around the coast and is centred in the capital city of each State.

What has emerged is a State ExCo in each of the five mainland States and a National ExCo (first formed in 1989). The National ExCo is responsible to the National Assembly, which is a meeting of the members of each of the State ExCos, and is held every four years (2 years before/after a World Assembly). Every four years we also hold a National Gathering, which is open to all CLC members. This takes place in the year following a World Assembly. Even though a National Gathering is not a governing body, it is a very important way of tapping into our members' ideas and giving them an opportunity to have a voice. The National ExCo meets once a year for at least four days. The State ExCos look after CLC on the regional or State level.

These structures are important only in so far as they foster and facilitate national CLC as part of

the world community. Let us look next at the growth and changes that have taken place, and the challenges that now present themselves.

MORE RECENT EVENTS

In 1994 we involved our national community in a preparation for the World Assembly "Community in Mission". Groups and individuals were invited to participate in a 3 meeting program involving prayer, reflection and sharing, and to complete a questionnaire at the end of this time. Of our 126 groups, 69 (55%) responded. The survey showed that the age of our members ranges from 30-70+ years, and that the average age of our members is 50 years. Groups had been together between 6 months - 11 years, with the average length of time being 5.6 years. These figures would be fairly representative of our national community. None of the questions showed the socio-economic levels of our members, but it would seem that our groups cover a broad range.

Groups were invited to share on the areas of service in which they were currently involved, and on

what they perceived as the areas of most urgent and universal need in Australian society. The three areas of highest involvement were: service to the Poor and Marginalised; Work; Church. The three highest areas of need identified were: Importance of Family; Christian Witness/Leadership; Justice Issues. The significance of our national reflection lay not only in the quality and quantity of the information gathered, but also in the fact that our members were invited beyond their local group to participate in being part of a national and indeed a world reflection on our CLC call to be a *Community in Mission*.

Reflecting on our Australian reality in preparation for the 1994 World Assembly in Hong Kong, the delegates arrived at the following summary:

In Australia:

- personal formation has been a strength;
- experience of community and the wider community is developing;
- there has been an increase in confidence for mission;

- the national reflection has heightened an awareness of service and of community.

At our National Gathering in 1995, we reflected over four days on *Where are we as CLC in Australia, and where to from here?* At the Gathering, through the process of the Examen, we used as our starting point the calls that we heard in our Australian society. People participated in workshops with others who were involved in similar areas of service. There were a number of common themes that emerged across the workshops.

1. Formation. The formation of members in the spirituality of CLC is still seen as important and in need of deepening. There is a thirst to be empowered by the Ignatian way to become more sensitive to the most urgent needs of society, and to know how to respond to these needs.

2. Missioning. CLC groups to be encouraged to mission/empower individuals in their areas of service, and individuals to involve their community in recognizing and confirming their call.

3. Networking. We want to encourage networking by: developing common interest groupings from among CLC members; establishing a directory that describes common interests of CLC members.

Those present at this time experienced a great *energy* or *shift*. As one of our members, Sue Buckingham, expressed it: *we looked at the world through God's eyes in contrast to our own, and as a community, we experienced a desire to make ours the mission Christ wants to entrust to us.* Or as Mary Nolan put it, *we asked Jesus to bring us into His life instead of asking Him to come into our life. It seemed that the grace at the National Gathering was a subtle but very significant shift from consumer, individualistic spirituality (very common in Western society) to Christian communal spirituality.* Julián Elizalde SJ, who was present throughout our Gathering, likened this *energy* to a grace experienced in a retreat; a grace that we get to know in the time after a retreat as we come to live it.

One of the outcomes of the Gathering is that we have set up a national register whereby

peoples' interests are recorded. We are exploring ways in which the information gathered can be used and ways in which people might enter into networks. Those who have expressed an interest in Young People have made a start already and will be exchanging news of their activities through a newsletter this year.

After our National Gathering, the National ExCo devised a Four Year Plan, which contains the following goals, and outlines steps to achieve these:

- To deepen CLC members in Ignatian spirituality and CLC charism.
- To seek greater clarity on what formation for CLC is, and what is appropriate at the various stages.
- To seek more and better CLC guides.
- To plan more effective service.
- To have a more vibrant representative CLC, with young people involved, and with outreach to young people.

- To widen our leadership base and to encourage CLC members to develop their leadership qualities.
- Better financial stability and viability for the mission of CLC.

At the end of the first year, the National ExCo, together with our State ExCos, evaluated our progress and the proposed next steps. The Four Year Plan is a further progression along our journey in mission. It has given us a common focus, with freedom to respond within our own State realities. Dialogue between National and State ExCo is essential to formation for mission.

Over recent years, our belief in collaboration for mission has led to a number of projects with Jesuits and the wider community.

- Retreats; Jesuit Tertians /CLC members provided 3 week directed retreats in daily life to members of CLC and wider church in provincial cities and country towns which had few Ignatian resources.
- Men's Retreats; weekend retreats for men were provided

by CLC men and Jesuits in Melbourne and Adelaide.

- Jesuit Spirituality Ministry; 4 CLC members have been invited to join the Jesuit ministry.
- Days and weekends for young people; there were CLC/Jesuit ventures in most States.
- Bishop's Social Justice Consultation with Young People; CLC and Jesuits participated in the first stage of listening to young people in a national consultation.
- Formation; a small team of Jesuits and CLC members will meet and explore similarities between Jesuit and CLC formation.
- Jesuit Social Services; Jesuits and CLC members have met, with a view to closer links.
- Media coverage; *The Inner Path*, a 15 minute TV program on Ignatian spirituality and its relevance for today, which featured a Jesuit and a CLC member, has been broadcast nationally.

The Jesuits have been generous companions over the years. The

various States have called on Jesuits who were supportive of CLC and willing to assist with providing input on Ignatian spirituality. Some of our State ExCos have Jesuit members or facilitators.

OBSTACLES TO GROWTH

Distance is one of the biggest obstacles to building community in Australian CLC. At the local level within a State, members as well as groups may live over 100 kilometres apart, and that is compounded when an inter-state or national meeting is held. For example, a meeting in Victoria can mean a 24 hour coach journey each way for someone living in Queensland, and a 2 day coach journey each way for someone living in Western Australia.

We do not have any paid CLC workers in the Australian community. We have relied heavily on the generosity of our members and Jesuits.

Another daily challenge to the growth and well-being of CLC in our country is the predominant values of our society, which put emphasis on consumerism,

individualism, economic rationalism and self-satisfaction. These pull strongly against Christian values and community, against a reflective stance and commitment to life in its fullness, against growth in relationship with God, self and others. We are conscious, too, of the suffering experienced by our young people growing up in this society. One member expressed his hope that we will put the heart back in Australia: that is, the love of God, of people and of our land.

CLC in our country has not been without its internal struggles. It has been difficult to discern at times which way the Spirit is leading us when CLC members hold diverse views. As a sinful human community, we have experienced conflict at all levels of CLC, not least in finding out how to work together as State and National and with Jesuits. This *First Week* experience, while never easy, has been fruitful in showing us our need for union in Christ. One of the reasons we have come so far as this is our willingness to listen

and dialogue in order to discover the truth. There exists a freedom and encouragement for each State to take risks and to learn from the evaluation of its actions.

THE FUTURE

Where do we hear the call for our national community today? Our focus in the early years was on the spiritual growth in individuals. We now recognize the need to help our CLC members to integrate all aspects of their way of life; mission, community and personal faith journey. We need also to develop better ways to read and respond to the signs of the times. Our greatest and most urgent challenge is to learn to recognize the Lord's call in our lives and to find practical ways to respond. There have been major changes in Australia in the last ten years, and the rate of change has had significant impact. There is a *troubledness* in our Church and in our society, and it is important to help our CLC members focus on where the Lord is calling us in this world.

