



Centered on Christ



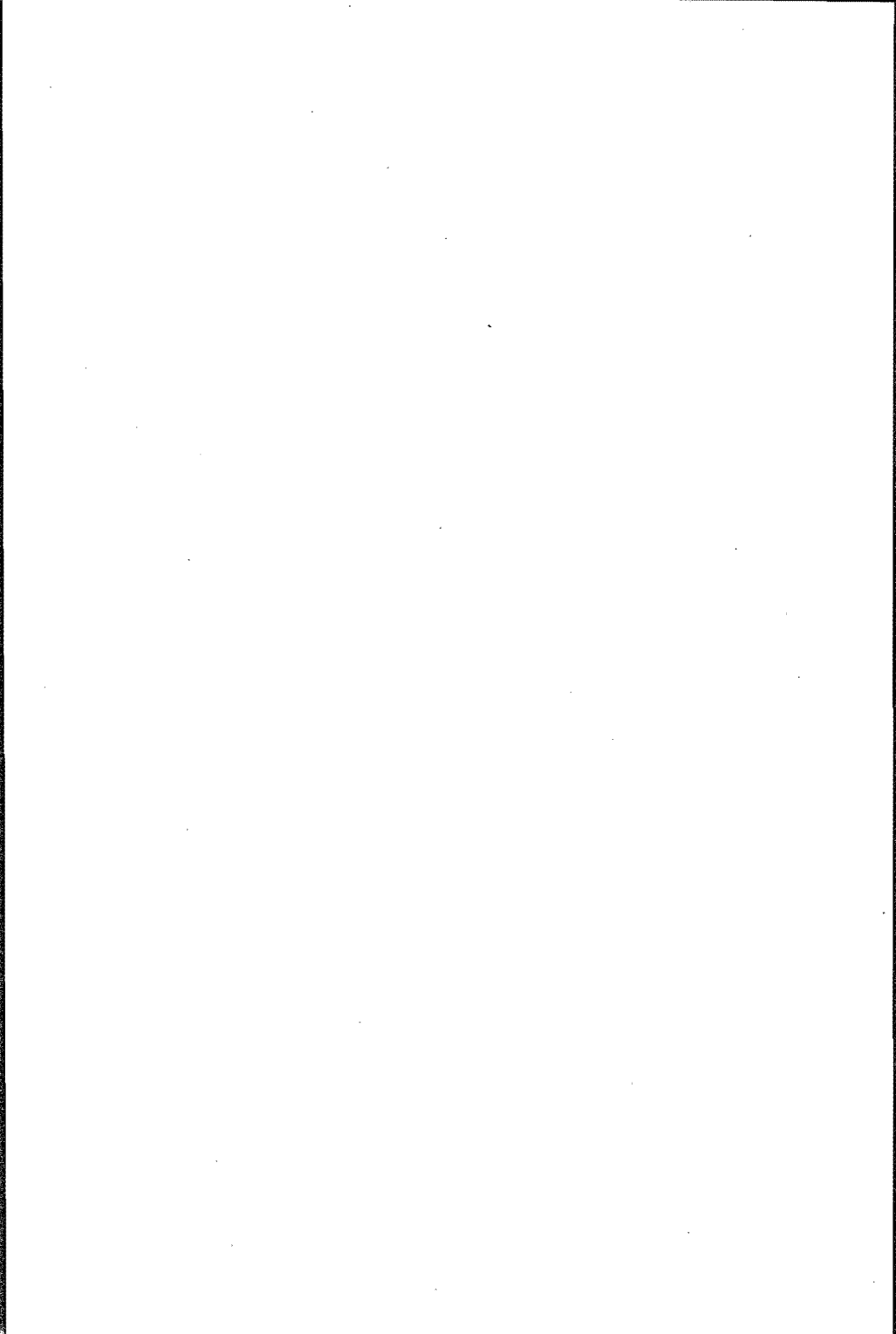
Nos 3 and 4 1997

PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

C.P. 6139-(Borgo S. Spirito, 8)-00195 Rome-ITALY

English-Spanish-French Editions

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The Risen Lord - Icon by William Hart McNichols. SJ

Editorial

Centered on Christ . . . *The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery (GP 5)* Do we fully understand this statement - what impact does it have on us in our daily lives, on that of our communities - on our *way of proceeding* in CLC?

This issue of *Progressio* offers some stimulus for reflection. "**And you, who do you say I am?**" — the Lord's question requires a personal answer. Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ shows us who Christ was for Ignatius and how he answered the Lord's question. In the first article we read: *He desires and insists on receiving from us an authentic response that comes from deep within ourselves...* Fr Tim Quinlan, SJ invites us to *...listen in the Spirit for a contemporary expression of the Ignatian charism for CLC*, and Marilena D'Angiolella formulates one possible answer to the question of how CLC can express its identity on the threshold of the year 2000. The testimonies of some CLC members highlight how a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is an indispensable condition for Mission, while Fr Joseph Tetlow, SJ gives us refreshing insights into the use and misuse of discernment.... Finally, with the pilgrim, Mary Ward, we are invited to leave "safe grounds", to follow His call and so to **become a letter of Christ written by the Spirit, sent to today's world.**

This is the Scripture text (cf. 2Cor. 3,3) chosen by the World CLC for our 13th General Assembly in Itaici/Brazil 1998, along with the theme: **Deepening our identity as an apostolic body - clarifying our common mission.** The workshop topics and areas of concern were chosen to help clarify CLC's Mission on the eve of the third millennium, and they are centered in Christ. This *Progressio* wants to encourage and foster this Christ-centered approach.

The outcome of the assembly will be more than just a mission statement if the members of this community long more and more for a deeper personal relationship with Christ that leads to authentic personal conversion, to communion and solidarity, in short: to **Mission**. It is not a coincidence that the theme of the Synod on America concisely expresses what is important for us in World CLC: **Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, the Way to Communion, and the Way to Solidarity.** It shows that we are all moved by the same Spirit. Let us end this year in thanksgiving and praise for His love and grace, and begin the New Year confident of His guidance.

Who do you say I am ? Ignatius of Loyola: Experience of Christ

Précis: Who do you say I am? Ignatius first responds desiring visibly heroic deeds for a great King. Then he contemplates the human life of the One of the Trinity and finds Christ choosing the way of labor, suffering, and humility. He follows the Christ of the sixteen mysteries of the second Week, always on the move, going to the cross. Knowing Christ as the One of the Trinity, Ignatius also knows the Spirit working in the Church and in the Incarnate Word, who chooses the "last place." Uniquely, his God is entirely a God at work; he knows the Father in the concrete particulars of Christ's life. This Trinitarian inspiration means laboring in concrete particulars, open to the transcendence God is implanting in them. In the passion, the always active Christ seems passive, but he is actively choosing powerlessness. Ignatius knows from personal experience that this last place repels us. La Storta confirms Ignatius's being placed with the One of the Trinity who chooses poverty and humility. Ignatius's final sense: All of Christ is my God.



One day, near Caesarea Philippi in Palestine, Jesus asked a question of a group of twelve men: "Who do you think I am?" (Mt 16:15). It is a clear and precise question that we still ask today. To tell the truth, at first Jesus had asked something more simple: What did the people think of him. The twelve could have limited themselves to giving the routine responses. But hearsay or slogans were of no interest to Jesus; nor were the crafted formulas of

professional theologians. He desires and insists on receiving from us an authentic response that comes from deep within ourselves. This response should not be merely the chance to say or to repeat some truth heard from others or recounted in books. The issue is to speak the honest truth: "*And you, what do you say?*"

Leafing through the book of two thousand years of Christianity, we find an uncountable number of

personal responses, new and unsettling. Occasionally it has been noted that, while each of the thousands of images and statues that illustrate the figure of Buddha rigidly maintains the same characteristics, the most extraordinary diversity runs through the attempts at depicting the countenance of Christ. To start with, a Michelangelo, a Dalí, the painter of an icon, and the sculptor of a medieval cathedral appear to have nothing in common when they try to depict the countenance of the Word incarnate. But then, turning to personal experiences of encounters with Jesus, holy men and women have communicated markedly personal and individual ways of responding to Jesus's question: "And you, what do you say?"

Of course, "only one is your Master, Christ" (Mt. 23:10). But his person is so rich and his personality so inexhaustible that it is impossible to reduce his face to a single expression. It is possible, on the other hand, to be caught up in one or other of the unique characteristics in the treasury of the Good News that is Christ. He can be the Poor Man for Francis of Assisi, the Omnipotent Lord for the Byzantine of the East, the Beloved Groom for the school of Carmel, or the Suffering Servant for a base community in Latin America. Each time, we are dealing with a new response to the same question posed by the Person of Christ. Ignatius of Loyola's Christ is located in this spiritual context.

Jesus Christ, the God to serve

In the first period of his life, Iñigo López de Loyola, born in 1491, was content being a refined and joyous young man, who loved fine clothing and the good life. A solid Basque, however, he was strongly attached to a faith that made him repeat what was said of Jesus. To elicit from him a personal response, Jesus makes use of what happens around 24 May 1521 in Pamplona. The Spanish city is awakened that day by the sound of a French horn to the proposal of an honorable capitulation. The French soldiers are many and the Spanish garrison, unpaid for eighteen months, not very confident. But Don Iñigo de Loyola prevails, for a Spanish garrison ought never surrender without resisting the French invaders. During the murderous duel of artillery around the city of Pamplona, Iñigo stations himself in the most exposed spot to regulate and correct the firing ranges. Then the moment comes when a canon ball ricochets off a wall and strikes his right leg under the knee.

The wounded man insists on returning to the manor house in Loyola, where recovery is long and painful. He asks for some books to read in order to distract himself. Accustomed to immersing himself in novels patterned on themes of chivalry, he discovers with deep chagrin that the library offers him only the Life of Christ and a book in Spanish on the lives of saints.

Attracted in spite of everything by the golden legends of the holy knighthood of this gentle captain, the Eternal Prince Jesus, Iñigo begins to discover the call of another King. And he pauses to reflect.

One is not converted by a book; one is converted by what a book makes one discover. So the reading that excites Ignatius's imagination while recovering—and makes him dream for two, three, and four hours without realizing it—achieves something. On the one hand it proposes all that he must do in the service of a certain lady of noble rank, and on the other, it incites him to put himself at the service of Jesus to do the "great deeds" which characterize St Francis of Assisi and St Dominic de Guzmán. The worldly dreams fascinate him but leave a taste of vanity, sadness, and hollowness. The seductive alternative of being at the service of Jesus leaves him happy and contented, as if his life has finally found there its true fulfillment.

Within these conflicting trains of thought that agitate him, and the growing recognition of the service to be rendered, Ignatius progressively **discovers Jesus Christ whole and entire as his God.** In fact, it is precisely in the experience of meaninglessness, of disgust with life, and of the joy of living to serve Jesus that the encounter with Christ occurs. The new thing for Ignatius will not be confessing his Christian

faith—which will be simply the Church's faith—but a vision of Jesus that cannot be separated from serving him in the concreteness of daily life, oriented now apostolically, and which in itself evidences a response to the question asked by the Lord. This response is transformed into a triple scrutiny which should lead to the service of Jesus's mission: ***What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ?*** For Christ—who from Creator became a man, and who passed from life to death on the cross for my sins.

Christ, One of the Trinity

Ignatius's initial experience is then enriched by immersion in life with Christ, by being a companion in a real sense in a "pure service of the Father" guided in everything by the Spirit. If we try to distinguish in this experience the features of Christ that Ignatius saw and lived, what strikes us above all else is that Christ is One of the Trinity. From the beginning of his experience with God, Ignatius discovers the Triune God—no doubt influenced by the *Life of Christ* written by Ludolph the Carthusian (who died in Strasbourg around 1377).

His great devotion to the Holy Trinity is characterized by a growing familiarity into which is interjected a spirit of reverence in the presence of the Divine Majesty. This Trinitarian attraction will not be, as in the

monastic tradition, a repose in abandonment to the mystery of the contemplation of glory; for Ignatius, it transforms itself into a contemplation of all created things, starting in their Creator who is the Trinity.

Probably, Ignatius was the first person in the history of Christian spirituality to **perceive the Trinity as God at work**—as the God who continues to work, always filling up the universe and actively awakening the divine life in all things for the salvation of humanity. If the inspired monk contemplates, the inspired Ignatius works—adhering with all his heart to the designs of the Trinity, offering himself to act in synergy with the Trinity so that his work is for the Trinity's glory.

In that way, **the Trinitarian attraction in Ignatius's devotion tends to embrace the whole of humankind.** His devotion seeks only God; not, however, only for himself, but rather for all his brothers and sisters, so that all created things, not evil in themselves but often averted by humankind from their source and origin, will return with humanity to true meaning in God.

In this Trinitarian prospective, Christ comes as God. It is sufficient to examine Ignatius's semantics to note that his christological titles revolve around Christ our Lord, the Christ, the Lord, the Eternal Word, much more rarely Jesus; and it

follows from this that Ignatius refuses to see Jesus in any way other than in his majesty as Lord, One of the Trinity. In this way, the glory that surrounds Christ with splendor is not only the glittering renown of an extraordinary ruler or the halo of an outstanding spiritual leader, but the glory of the Eternal Lord of all things. This will never be disconnected or disassociated from the fullness of the divine being which reunites him to God the Father. It does not really matter that this divinity is hidden in the manger or on the cross; it does not really matter that it shines through his words or at the right hand of the Father: For Ignatius, Jesus is the Lord, the Eternal King, because he is the Word of God.

As a consequence, Ignatius does not recognize the distinction made between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. This does not involve, however, any depreciation of the intense passion that Ignatius feels for the historical Jesus—his words and gestures, his lifestyle and the place where he lives—all of which help in reaching him whom Ignatius never stops loving and praising in his majesty as Eternal Lord.

It does mean that Jesus can never be what some people today claim: one voice among the many voices of spiritual teachers, of the wise, and of prophets. His is rather the voice, the light, the truth, because Jesus has the status that none of the others have, One of the Trinity.

One of the Trinity always with the Spirit

Since Ignatius's Christ is One of the Trinity, he is always with the Spirit. What exists in modern western culture today already existed in the sixteenth century: the temptation to liberate the Spirit from christological mooring, which is trammled in Paul's conviction that the Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor.3:17).

In this area, Ignatius proves cautious. He cannot forget the painful experience he went through in 1527 in Salamanca, where he was arrested and imprisoned as an enlightened one [alumbrado], one of those who believed themselves directly instructed by the Spirit alone. "You, Ignatius, talk about your experience with God. Now one cannot do that unless he is qualified either by theological learning or by the Spirit. You do not speak out of theological learning; therefore you speak by the Spirit" (see Auto.65). Ignatius says nothing; should he claim to be enlightened by the Spirit he would move onto dangerous ground, risking an encounter with the pyres fired by the Inquisition to still the voices of those enlightened by the Spirit.

Ignatius intends to live under the Spirit, though he is aware how often it is troublesome to discern what the Spirit is inspiring, and how one can let himself be confounded by theories or religious beliefs, above all when trust in the Spirit leads to

marginalizing Christology and with it Ecclesiology. Extremely sensitive to the mystery of the One of the Trinity who made himself incarnate, Ignatius finds the Spirit, now not as pure spirit acting in illimitable space, but from the annunciation made to Mary always as **the Spirit who reaches out to the person of Christ, and in the same spiritual reach, to the body of Christ that is the Church.** In this way, Ignatius's spiritual experience moves intricately into the dialectic between the Spirit and the body of Christ—the Spirit that forms and continues to form the body of Christ, inspiring in the concreteness of our lives here and now the options and the orientations that were those of Christ, in order to make us like Christ.

Ignatius discovers in his experience of faith that what the Spirit tells me in the depths of my own self and what the Gospel and the Church tell me from outside can be in tense conflict. But that conflict can be only temporary and apparent, because in the final analysis it is the same Spirit who utters its word within me — enlightening, unique, irrevocable — and who in the selfsame movement guides and enlightens the Church. Companion of Jesus in his Spirit, Ignatius knows that he must never be absolutely rational, a calculating person who reduces everything to the reasonable. Rather, he must remain open to the impetuosity of a Spirit who breathes where it will,

completing the work of Christ: open to enthusiasm, to what is gracious and fresh that the Spirit does not cease to stir up in the body of Christ, that is the Church, incessantly making all things new.

From this, it follows that **Ignatius moves in a Christology of the visible**. If the Spirit moves me, it is the visible aspect of Christ's earthly life that allows me to verify the authenticity of this motion of the Spirit. To this Christology of the visible belongs also the body of Christ which is the Church.

Ignatius cannot conceive a division of, or envision any opposition between, the charismatic Church and the institutional Church: the Church whole and entire is where the breath of the Spirit creates the body of Christ, the Bride—with its own hierarchy and authority, with its grace and its laws, its Easter joy and its cross, its charismatic enthusiasm and its institutional structures, its Christ and its Vicar of Christ: it is the same Spirit who inspires and leads to the truth, whole and entire. This approach was called by the Fathers of the Church "a sober drunkenness," and by Ignatius, "a spiritual sense," the human reason searching for Christ, enlightened by the light of faith in the Spirit.

But what is true for the Spirit is also true for the Father, with whom Christ is united in the Trinity. Again, in his spiritual experience, Ignatius

cannot conceive a Jesus detached from his Father. Ignatius finds access to the Father in the actions and gestures of Jesus, in each of which (following the tradition of the *devotio moderna*) he discovers so many theophanies, believing that all the scenes of Jesus' life are also mysteries that speak of and reveal the very mystery of God.

Christ on his way to the Cross

It is the concrete particular that expresses what God is, Jesus's Father and our Father; and the concrete particular is the only way to know the universal. How can we reduce this Ignatian vision to a neat sentence? In a book published in 1640, an author set himself the task and created this maxim: *Non coerceri a maximo, contineri tamen a minimo, hoc divinum est*. Translating that is not very easy, but the sense is this: "To be unconstrained by the greatest, to be contained even in the slightest—this is the divine."

To put that into our perspectives: **To live in the dimension of the universal, yet to labor on the concrete particular, this is the divine**. This is the mystery of Christ, because he who is the "greatest"—above and beyond every conceivable frontier border, the unconstrainable Majesty of God, the divine Majesty that nothing can force or impede—is found in the "least," in the flesh and heart of the Incarnate Word, in

a precise place in the Roman empire, in a precise time during human history. In this vision of Christ's mystery, Ignatius adopts a line of conduct: **following Christ, to immerse oneself in concrete work according to one's opportunities and one's abilities**, but single-heartedly straining towards the infinity of God, who presents in the here and now the wide horizons of his plan of salvation.

In selecting the readings that will reveal the universal of he who is One of the Trinity, Ignatius has clear preferences. So, starting from the Call he has heard, he chooses those parts of the Gospels that fit best with the perspective he has adopted. To put it this way, they form a Gospel according to Ignatius. Looking closely at the selection Ignatius made, one notices immediately that his Christ is always on the move. He is in a paschal state: that is, according to the etymology of the term, he is constantly on passover, passing over from city to city, from village to village, until the fulfillment of the great Passover—Easter—in which for our sakes he passes over from a cruel and debasing death to the joy of everlasting life. Contemplating the Lord, One of the Trinity in movement and on the way, is a summons to us to start on a way along which He will be our companion.

As a consequence, understanding Ignatius's Christology requires

entering personally into the movement which it depicts. Even when Ignatius invites us to contemplate in simplicity of heart the mysteries of Jesus's childhood, his contemplative gaze finds everything in action: Mary and Joseph travel without stopping with and for the sake of the child; angels, wise men, and shepherds come and go in order to greet he who is sent by God his Father, and who for thirty years continues to advance and progress in order to fulfill the mission that he was sent on. And it is in his role of announcing the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God, of his Father and of the Father of all humankind, that Christ makes his ascent to Jerusalem.

The sixteen mysteries chosen by Ignatius to mark this journey bring us to encounter the Lord fully active. On this journey, sufferings seem not to exist; the cross is never mentioned here. Only in the last mystery does Ignatius observe that "there was no one to receive him in Jerusalem" (SpEx 288).

It is the icon of the Pantokrator that determines the selection of passages proposed by Ignatius: five passages of the Gospels that reveal his glory as Son of God, five others that put in high relief his divine actions in performing miracles, two that similarly reveal his power over sin, two that call attention to his speaking with divine authority, and finally two passages that tell how the

apostles were sent out to continue along all the roads on earth the mission of the Lord. Then, suddenly, the Pantokrator disappears and its icon darkens. As always, there is a way that must be travelled, and on this path, too, intense activity rules. But the Lord finds himself condemned to a passivity to be painfully endured, which deprives him of everyone and of everything. Even at the level of language, Ignatius distinguishes this kenotic change with a distinctive linguistic mark: He no longer uses the Name, but designates the Lord simply as "he." He, One of the Trinity, who until now exhibited incessant activity in words and works is changed into the grammatical subject of a passive verb: "He is dragged before Annas." Even more often, he is the grammatical object of an active verb: "They led him out" (SpEx 291,295).

The Eternal Lord compassionate in powerlessness

It is no longer the Lord who lays out his route; now others drag him along a route of "labors, fatigue, and sufferings" from one place to another, and the divine omnipotence is revealed now in human powerlessness (SpEx 106). The point here is the choice that Ignatius made, attracted by this unsettling mystery. The Evangelists themselves reveal to us a more active Christ who does not cease, in what he says and by his silences, to condemn

the injustice inflicted upon him. The Ignatian perspective in contemplating this way of the cross clearly focuses on what Jesus suffers and not on what he does: his not responding during the trial; his not reacting to the provocations and ill-treatment. It is true that Jesus carries the cross; but Ignatius immediately adds, "but he could not carry it" (SpEx 296). He does not hesitate to see the proclamation of this powerlessness already present in the kenosis which the Gospels announce beginning with the time of the infancy: the Word as *infans*, the one who does not speak. This time, in the mysteries of the passion, the powerlessness is freely accepted: "journeying and toiling, in order that the Lord may be born in greatest poverty; and that after so many hardships... injuries and insults, he may die on the cross!" (SpEx 116).

Ignatius is not looking for a kind of compression of feelings to the one feeling of attachment to Christ; and he does not even raise the problem of human suffering and death. His entire attention is focused on the total abasement of Christ who suffers, of this One of the Trinity, Creator and Savior, who submits to the shame of the cross and to the hatred of his own people. The divinity hides, but not in a sort of pure negation. There is a purpose and motive, which Ignatius discloses in a series of *fors* that give the meaning of the path the Lord has chosen. One of the Trinity has

suffered for us, for me, for my sins, to fill human pain with his divine presence, to save the human race, and all this for love.

Christ has not ceased to fight against suffering, which he always considered an infamy and which he felt in himself with such anguish that in the olive grove "his clothes were already full of blood" (SpEx 290). No word of the evangelists renders the disgrace sacred; rather, it is the compassion of Christ who suffers with us and for us that sanctifies the suffering.

Bound to this passage for love of us, Christ does not abandon his mission, he does not retreat or retrace his steps, as he must defeat suffering through suffering. The radicalness of the way Ignatius proposes to us, this God who suffers and dies, lies less in a stress on the sorrow and suffering themselves than in the disconcerting choice that God has made for love of us.

Because of his experience with Christ, Ignatius knows our instinctive resistance to it, our almost visceral refusal. "All of Christ is my God," he will write later in his spiritual diary, well aware of our tendency to make up a Christ to fit our own standards, one who legitimizes our refusal to accompany him on his passage, wherever he may go, knowing that his ways are not ours. (Spiritual Diary 87)

In a certain sense, we have to accept this on the evidence: in the beginning, Christ deluded Ignatius. From the One who has every power in the heavens and on earth and who is the King of the Universe forever, Ignatius — extraordinarily sensitive to all that is great and honorable — would have looked forward to an evangelical enterprise of resounding success for the sake of this same God. Instead of that, he encounters in the Son of God the one through whom scandal comes. Christ certainly has what it takes to create enthusiasm in crowds or to mobilize an elite. He can handle the hard labor and dangers of engaging in brilliant combat that ends with a magnificent victory. What is more, Ignatius aspires to the remarkable and the spectacular — of course purely for the greater glory of God. But this is not the way Christ chose. He will announce the coming of the Kingdom "in poverty, in humiliation, and on the cross."

Ignatius, unlike other masters of the spiritual life, does not seem to be interested in what went on in Christ's spirit, in his prayers and his feelings. What matters to him is what Christ chooses as his way, as his paschal journey. This is entirely traced out in a freely chosen dynamic development toward a hazardous and outcast human state. This choice is particularly surprising since Jesus belonged to a class of society that, neither well-off nor wretched, enjoyed a lifestyle that was modest but quite secure.

Nonetheless, the Son of God truly and freely chose to go down to the last place, going against the impulse that drives every one of us to go up higher and to put distance between ourselves and the outcast and rejected, the stranger, and the poor of every kind. The cross is the result of this choice. It is the reason why Ignatius, who writes often about the Lord's passion, can maintain a gravely sober tone—nothing lyrical, no flights. For in the end the cross is not about death; it is, rather, the symbol of the role that the One of the Trinity has chosen. It is this choice that Ignatius privileges first among all the real events on Calvary—the choice full of the love of God. Then he talks about the crucified Creator and Lord.

Ignatius, imitator of Christ for God's glory

On 15 November 1537, on the Via Cassia in an area north of Rome still called "La Storta," Ignatius has a vision of his Christ. He carries the cross; and Ignatius obtains the reassurance that Father God places him with his Son—he carries the cross—as companion on his paschal journey. Then he gladly sees Christ in the middle, in a sense: in the last place, which he has chosen, and in the first of all places on high, which is his own place. It was not Jesus who fabricated that last place, it was humankind following after Cain who devised it for the successors of Abel. This last place is at the frontier of

the inhuman, on the border of the human.

Ignatius cared about this social insertion of Christ's among those who are condemned to misery, who are dispossessed, and bereft of real freedom. Yet in this last place the face of Jesus intimates his mystery and allows his divinity to show through. Ignatius always deals with the Word incarnate in the fullness of his sovereignty. In this unsettling paschal context, Ignatius dares to advance the choice that Christ made, fully aware from his own personal experience that the last place, despised and repulsive, disgusts us absolutely.

If the foolish love that the Lord has for humanity has made him choose the foolishness and the scandal of the last place, which disgraces and crucifies, then **Jesus's companion can only present himself as a fool for Christ**, should the service of God's glory deign to designate him for that. "In order to imitate Christ our Lord better and to be more like him here and now, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth; contempt with Christ laden with it rather than honors. Even further, I desire to be regarded as a useless fool for Christ, who before me was regarded as such, rather than as a wise or prudent person in this world" (SpEx 167).

To choose what Christ has chosen: but as Christ made this choice out

of love, to complete the mission given to him by God his Father, so Ignatius wants to make the choice not on his own initiative, but only if Christ calls him to choose the last place to serve better the praise of him who holds in everything the highest place, his Divine Majesty. **The initiative belongs to the Lord who is at work here and now, in his Church, in his people, and in all the things that happen in the world.**

The companion of Jesus wants union with the Christ who wears himself out in order to bring every man and woman to the Father—to bring everything created to its fullness, accomplishing anew again and again, the choice which the Christ has made, **and so to collaborate with him for the salvation of the world.**

In and through this election, the companion of Jesus is invited to place himself actively in this middle which, for Ignatius, is Christ, reaching the universal of the Trinity who dwell there and refining everything authentically christian in himself. In his personal encounter with Christ, Ignatius yielded to the evidence in the end. Announcing the Good News of the glory of the Trinity to a people who give quite a contrary meaning to glory requires following the One of the Trinity and appropriating the Gospel of the cross. This is not in the first instance

to desire to suffer and die. Rather, in the first instance, it is **to live dying wholly to self for the sake of putting oneself at the service of Christ** in everything—even at the risk of being considered as He was, a madman—so that in the end the glory of the Trinity radiates in the life of our brothers and sisters, and illuminates history, which is already filled with the Spirit of Christ who is working in it.

This paschal glory will impart a characteristic ignatian optimism to a vast variety of vocations and missions, through which men and women made fools for Christ will participate in the revelation of the foolish love of God, incarnate in the person and in the choices of Christ, the One of the Trinity, crucified.

This is how Ignatius responds to Jesus' question: "And you, who do you say I am?" Once he has gazed on and lived through all the mysteries of the life of Christ our Lord, the joyous light of the incarnate Word shining out in Him who was crucified and rose, Ignatius responds with a little phrase that he wrote in his spiritual diary: *ser todo mi Dios. You whole and entire, you be my God.*

Reprint : "Review of Ignatian Spirituality" number 86/1997. Conference held by Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J in the chapel of the University "La Sapienza" in Rome, 18 December 1996.

What is the mission of CLC ?

Father Timothy Quinlan SJ, World CLC Ecclesiastical Vice-Assistant from 1986 to 1991, is still much involved with CLC in Australia. As a fruit of personal prayer he offers to World CLC the following approach to the above question for the coming World Assembly 1998 in Itaici :



I was reflecting on this issue with somebody recently. He was saying how easy it is to be straight jacketed by words and end up feeling rather empty over the ensuing clichés! Rather, he said, we should let our imaginations have free rein first and notice what comes up.

This interchange got me reflecting on my own experiences during the past few years.

In a period of time in the Church and World when our faith in Jesus is being challenged and tried, it is good to turn to the saints who in their time, saved their day.

We look to their experiences of God and the effects these had on themselves and their neighbours. What is deeply real for them is found in their mystical experiences and writings.

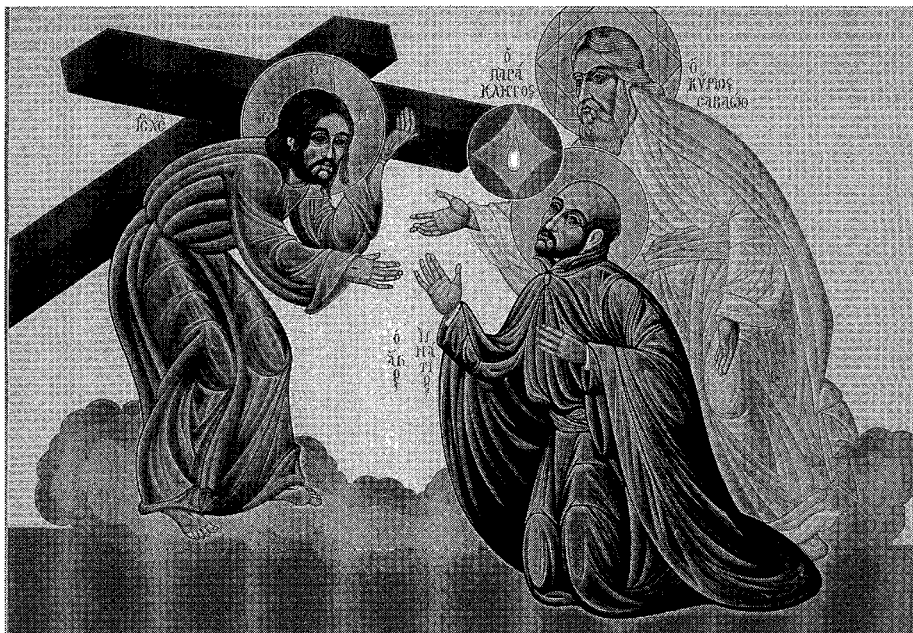
As an Ignatian family we turn to Ignatius of Loyola and look to his profound mystical experiences. I suggest two for your consideration and prayer.

The first occurred during his year at Manresa. While sitting next to the Cardoner River he had a deeply moving awareness of the **oneness of the whole of creation** in Christ (Autobiography 29-30; Sp Ex. 230-237).

As I allowed myself to sit with this mystery the words of the Gospel came to mind:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly." (Lk 6, 27-28)

Oneness for Ignatius was not simply an ideal, a beautiful thought, but something to be expressed in the middle of the market-place.



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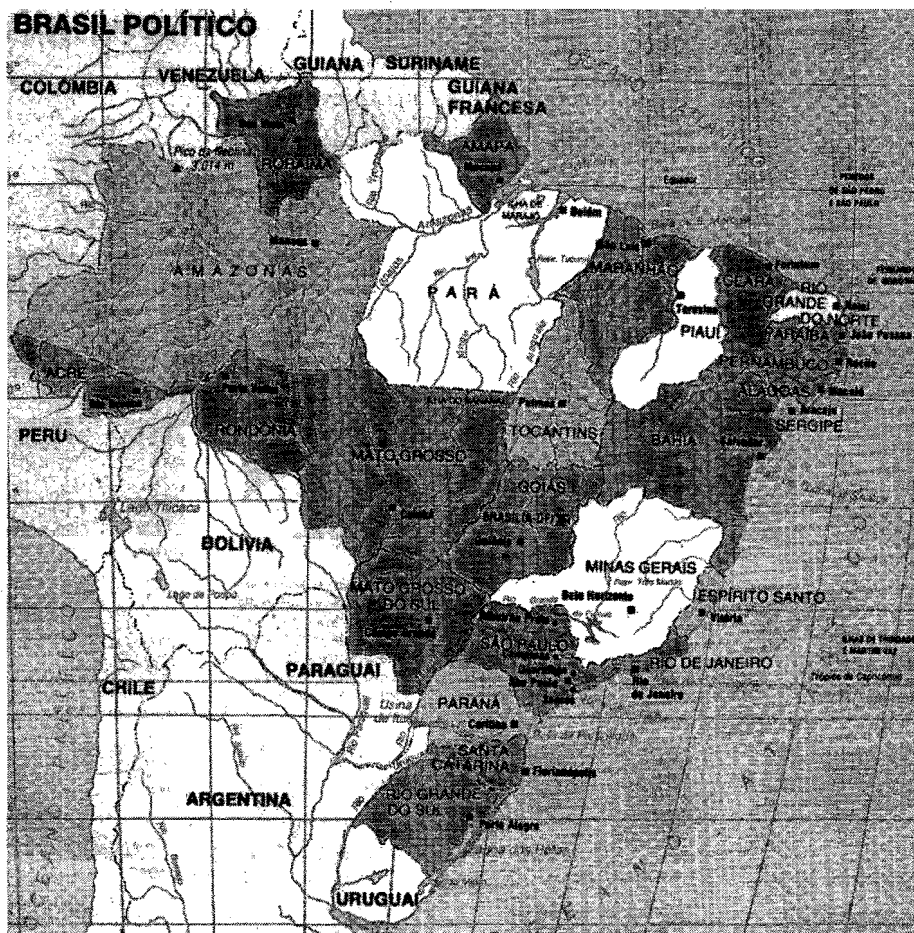
The second mystical experience occurred at la Storta (Autobiography 96). As we know through Father Laínez: 'Ignatius saw **Christ carrying a cross** on his shoulder and the eternal Father nearby, who said to Christ: "***I want you to take this man for your servant***".

Not only is he given a mystical experience of the whole of creation, existing and living in Christ, but he

is given a profoundly personal call to live this out in utter communion with Christ in the community called Church.

I suggest, therefore, as a way into appreciating the mission of CLC, that we allow ourselves to enter into these God-given experiences of Ignatius and listen in the Spirit for a contemporary expression of the Ignatian charism for CLC.

Christian Life Community in Brazil



In the following cities CLC groups exist (From south to north):
Santos, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, Caminas, Cachociro do Itapemirim, São José do Rio Preto, Belo Horizonte, Goiânia, Salvador, Feira de Santana, Recife, João Pessoa, Fortaleza

The next CLC World Assembly will take place in July 1998 in Brazil. The objective of this article is to give the World CLC some knowledge of the CLC Brazil.

Brief history

The CLC began in the year 1977, when some participants of JAM (Jeunesse d'Action Mariale - the youth section of the Marian congregations), very active in the movement and in the youth groups of their parishes, felt that there was an emptiness in their lives. They desired to live more fraternally with their companions so that they could share their concerns and their queries, while knowing that they were united by faith in Christ. They sought a more profound and incarnated prayer. Although they did not know of the existence of CLC they desired to build communities of Christian life...

In 1977 in Itaici, ten young people from JAM participated in the Holy Week. When they returned, they got together to reflect on what they had lived there and to think of ways to continue their experience. Some thought of a study group while others wanted something more oriented toward apostolic work. On this occasion they became aware of the existence of Christian life communities through a document, SURVEY, which gave information on its development. They invited other friends from JAM, who also

desired to have a richer Christian life and began to read SURVEY. They then met every fifteen days to try to follow the process that would bring them to form a CLC community. At Pentecost 1977 CLC Brazil was born.

The first groups were made up mainly of young university students from the lower middle class. Living in the northern area of Rio, many worked and studied at the same time. The groups were initially accompanied by Jesuit scholastics, some of whom continued to accompany the CLC groups after their ordination. A Cenacle sister, Sr. Lydia, was also present from the beginning. Nevertheless, the small number of guides available prevented the group from proposing CLC to others. To cope with this problem, the Central-East Province of the Society of Jesus, answered the request of the priest who was guiding CLC, Father César Augusto dos Santos, S.J. to finance a series of courses for group guides between the years 1980 and 1986. The objective of these courses, which took place on weekends, was to present CLC to religious having an Ignatian spirituality, thus hoping to motivate them to take charge of accompanying groups.

Some of these religious initiated groups with a CLC perspective, proposing it to those to whom they were rendering spiritual guidance.

They also explained this process to prayer groups who already had been meeting for some time: some accepted the challenge of "something more" which the CLC seemed to offer. This is how groups began outside of Rio: in the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia and Goiás. The experience of the exercises in daily life as a group also encouraged them to begin. Once the Exercises were concluded, the group sought a way of continuing and CLC seemed a good possibility.

With the expansion of CLC, it became necessary to establish a formal structure. During a meeting to which representatives from all groups were invited, first Statutes were drafted.

The members of CLC Brazil

The CLC Brazil is presently made up of 34 affiliated communities and 68 pre-communities. The number of persons varies according to the groups: an evaluation made in 1991 showed that the communities had at least 8 members and the pre-communities 10. On the whole, a little more than half of the participants were women. About half of the members were celibate, the others being married. Among the married people, the couple usually belonged to the same group.

We find a great variety of professions: administrators of societies,

lawyers, bankers, shopkeepers, home makers, contractors, nurses, engineers, students, civil servants, doctors, workers, professors, etc. We can note, however, that the large majority of the members are salaried employees.

The greater number of communities are found in the large urban centers or towns. As a result, members live conditioned by a modern, secularized culture, and suffer the consequences of the process of accelerated urbanization which has been evolving in the country these last decades.

Their formation

From the beginning, the CLC Brazil has attached great importance to the formation of its members. In January 1978, a couple of participants of the first group followed a stage of formation for members organized by CLC Chile: the Mini-Manila. The account of their experience gave impulse to others members of the groups. The following years, other persons lived the same experience and those who had participated organized days of formation for others with the material they had brought back. Some Jesuits also participated in Mini-Manila and returned filled with enthusiasm for CLC.

The attempt to create communities formed by using the process described in the SURVEY

was not the success we had hoped for. To this end we used the method employed in Chile (To arrive at CLC - Beginnings and growth), as well as material prepared by the group guides. Later we also used a series of meetings prepared by the CLC France and the books of Ceferino Garcia (CLC Spain).

The formation of CLC members is the object of constant attention. At the National Meeting a period of time is usually given to a formation theme, according to what is proposed by the Church or the needs of the national community. The Regions, too, regularly organize days of formation with specific themes.

The good formation of guides is another concern. In 1989, we organized a formation course for new guides, lay and religious, after observing that there was a real lack of persons capable of giving this service. The course was comprised of an individually guided 8-day retreat, followed by 8 days of formation in guiding CLC communities. Other courses followed.

In 1996 we inaugurated a new way of forming guides: for 4 weekends in the course of the year we concentrated on themes developed in the preceding courses. Before the course began, the 8-day retreat was made — not in groups but individually according to the

possibilities of each person. This was considered essential.

The development of a formation Plan, offered to the whole national community in 1996, had a significant impact on the growth of CLC Brazil. The process to be followed by a group in order to become a community was described step by step: acceptance, pre-CLC and CLC. The plan also foresaw a national program of formation for guides. It contained elements which reinforced the unity of the CLC Brazil while remaining faithful to the General Principles of the World Community.

During these last three years, the CLC has been able to count on the precious assistance of the East Central Province of the Society of Jesus which is presently organizing formation centers for the laity, placing the accent on the connection between faith and culture. The Loyola Centre of Faith and Culture in Rio as well as another center in Belo Horizonte are already working in this way. These centers propose a biblical, theological formation, and a great number of CLC members also find room here for apostolic and professional activities.

The Spiritual Exercises

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola are "the specific source and the characteristic

instrument of our spirituality" (GP 5). The CLC Brazil has always attached a fundamental importance to the experience of the Exercises as the primary source of formation. The experience of weekend retreats following the line of Ignatian spirituality prepares members for the 8-day retreat organized by the retreat houses or by CLC itself.

The option for the Exercises in daily life (EDL) has been used to adapt to the dynamics of the lay life. In Brazil a series of books have been published with biblical adaptations of the Exercises oriented towards daily prayer. It often happens that a CLC group uses them as a source of their common prayer.

These last years, many CLC members have made the complete exercises, some in 30 days, some by stages: three periods of ten days each at six month intervals. In the course of the first period, we give the Principle and Foundation and the first week of the Exercises. The second stage concerns the contents of the second week. Finally, the experience is concluded with the third stage encompassing the third and fourth weeks of the Exercises of St. Ignatius.

Another innovation is what we call the "small steps": an adaptation of the 8 days in four weekends set over the period of a year. This aims at preparing the person for the experience of the 8-day

retreat and the complete Spiritual Exercises.

It is the desire to offer each member of a community or a pre-community the occasion to personally experience the Ignatian spirituality. This motivates our search for alternatives that will enable a greater number of persons to live this experience.

It is fitting to emphasize the CLC Brazil's response to a question that is crucial for its development: the permanent spiritual orientation of its members. We cannot imagine a CLC that does not have a spiritual life based on St. Ignatius of Loyola. Being that there were an insufficient number of spiritual directors to respond to the request for accompaniment in retreats and in life, some members who had a deeper spiritual life were invited to prepare themselves adequately to render this service. This preparation was carried out by the Center of Ignatian Spirituality at Itaici. This year, the Centre of Formation for the Laity of Rio de Janeiro and of Belo Horizonte will also offer this type of formation. At present, the CLC Brazil already has a significant number of lay spiritual guides.

Apostolic activities

The CLC Brazil grew by developing its concept of mission. The privileged place of mission was in the professional and family milieu - the

places where lay people pass the greatest part of their time. To give a Christian witness in these places is the first challenge which presents itself.

A large number of CLC participants are engaged in intra-ecclesial activities, such as: catechetics (for first communion and confirmation), courses of preparation for baptism and marriage organized by the parish, various pastoral ministries (family, prison, barrios, miners, etc), ministries of the Word and the Eucharist. By living in inter-ecclesial space, the CLC members practice an active apostolate in which they see themselves sent by CLC there where they perceive and receive their mission.

The CLC communities of Cachoeiro, of Itapemirim, Goiânia et João Pessoa are traditionally spending their vacations and Holy Week living in rural communities and sharing their lives (poverty as well as riches) with the people, animating the ecclesial activities.

Some members have extra-ecclesial apostolic activities. At Belo Horizonte, we have taken on a work of human promotion, and the organization of the work of the street cleaners, as well as a pioneer work for a community nursery. In this town, all the communities are engaged in the Taquaril Project which has united a group of institutions seeking to change the

situation of one of the poorest areas of the town.

At Recife and in São Paulo, members of CLC are involved in the Ronda: helping to distribute food to people living on the streets. In São Paulo there are even members who feel called to bear witness and who are committed to working within the political milieu; one of them was elected to the town council of Jacarei.

In Rio de Janeiro, some members dedicated themselves to the prison ministry. They bring spiritual assistance (retreat and exercises in daily life) as well as juridical and material assistance to prisoners of an important prison.

The local community

The local community is the place where each member perceives, expresses and receives the confirmation of his or her belonging to CLC. It is composed of a varied number of persons (from 3 to 12, 8 in most communities) who meet to share their daily prayer, the most important events of their daily life and of society, and the apostolic activities carried out. Moreover, they seek to deepen their formation (either by themes connected to Ignatian spirituality, or those themes that are relevant to their specific community). This meeting can be weekly or, most often, bi-monthly. Each community chooses a member

to represent them at the regional committee, which meets regularly to organize retreats, formation activities and leisure for all participants of the communities and pre-communities. In other words, it seeks to animate the communities of the region.

Some meetings are dedicated to prayer. Others begin by an initial prayer, followed by a sharing of the strongest sentiments raised up by the texts, by daily prayer or by a fact of life that was brought out recently while participants were considering a study theme. The review of community life is done periodically.

Organization

According to article 8 of the CLC Brazil Statutes, its governmental organizations are: the General Assembly, the Plenary Council of Services (PCS) and the Executive Commission of Services (ECS).

The General Assembly is held annually and is made up by the delegates of affiliated communities. The ECS includes a coordinator, a vice-coordinator, a secretary and a treasurer (elected during the Assembly) and a spiritual assistant: a Jesuit named by the Provincial of the East Central Province. The PCS is made up of the ECS and representatives of the regions and meets quarterly. At present there are 34 communities organized into

regions: Rio, São Paulo, Minas, Bahia and North East.

Another point that deserves to be mentioned is that CLC participates in the ecclesial institution of the country. For many years now the Brazilian Church has a national conference of Bishops the CNBB. Organizations of religious, deacons, priests and the National Council for the Laity (CNL) are organically linked to it. CLC has participated in this council of the laity both at the diocesan and national levels.

The next World Assembly in Itaici/98

Since the choice of Brazil as the site of the 1998 World Assembly was confirmed, the national CLC, with deep gratitude to God, lives in expectation of this world event with a sentiment of great hope and the desire to serve the whole world community. To give just one example, some communities decided to study or to deepen their knowledge of one of the official languages of the CLC. The preparatory work has begun to unfold in conformity with what the ExCo asked of us. As of today, we can make known to our brothers and sisters throughout the world our desire to welcome them warmly.

Here are some aspects of the country and of Itaici where the 1998 Assembly will take place.

Brazil is a sub-continent which has approximately 150 million inhabitants. The language spoken here is portuguese and the country is the largest Catholic country in the world. European colonization left traces which, mixed with the African culture and the indigenous culture, mark its society notably in its music, its food and its mixed races. For many years, Brazil was a country of immigration. Even today, groups of different origins form colonies of Italians, Japanese, Germans, Polish and others.

Itaici is the name of a district of a small city called Indaiatuba which is in the state of São Paulo.

The house where the Assembly will take place is the old novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Brazil, which has been converted into a retreat house. It is a building constructed in the '50s and can house up to 400 persons. Besides the main church, it has various chapels. Annexed to the main building is an auditorium - Queen of the Apostles - where the sessions and the assembly meetings will take place. This place has all the infrastructure necessary for the unfolding of events of this magnitude; there is potable water throughout the whole house. This is the site where the annual meeting of the Bishops' Conference of Brazil takes place.

Itaici is about 100 kilometers from the city of São Paulo; two

autoroutes link these cities together. It is about 500 kms. from Rio de Janeiro. In July, the period in which the Assembly will be held, the climate is generally agreeable, the temperature oscillating between 10° (50° f.) in the morning to 25° (75° f.) during the day.

Finally, CLC Brazil is happy to take the occasion that it has been given to make itself known to the World Community and to ask all its sisters and brothers to pray that the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, lead it to truly serve in order to give praise and glory to its divine Majesty.

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News from Australia

In June/July, 1997, Sydney, Australia was host city to several international and regional meetings of the Ignatian tradition, and to Fr. Peter Hans Kolvensbach S.J.

The Jesuit Provincials of East Asia met prior to the World Congress of Jesuit Alumni, which began on July 9, and at which Jean Warin, a CLC member from the Philippines, was a keynote speaker.

The first CLC event, held June 28 - July 3, was the Six-Day Retreat and Communal Apostolic Discernment Course for seventy people.

Led by Fr. Julian Elizalde S.J., a team of CLC, Jesuit and religious directors guided CLC, Jesuit and religious participants from Australia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, New Zealand and England through the 3-day silent retreat and the 3-day course (based on a model developed by Spanish Assistants).

Forty of the above went on to the International Formation Encounter (IFE) for Jesuits, Religious and CLC, which took place July 4 - 8, 1997. There were 112 participants: (27 Jesuits of whom 5 were novices, 13 religious women from 7 orders and 72 CLC members). These participants in

this first CLC international meeting ever held in Australia came from ten countries - Australia, England, Hong Kong, Italy, Korea, Philippines, USA, Taiwan, Zambia and New Zealand.

Members of the guiding team for the IFE were Victor Kachaka (Zambia), Shane Martin S.J. (USA), Ronnie Villegas (Philippines) and Australians Kay Hooper, Andrew Bullen S.J. and Mary Nolan (co-ordinator) with Julian Elizalde S.J.

My final word can only be one of thanks to the organisers of the IFE for a very rich experience.

The aims and objectives of this IFE were:

- to find ways and means to place mission as central and starting point for CLC formation at all levels,
- to realise how much we share the Ignatian charism,
- to acknowledge, accept and celebrate the differences in our vocations,
- to learn how to pursue the magis together.

"The CLC Charism" document was used as basic text with presentations given on five Instruments, namely:

- *CLC - community in mission,*
- *Community discernment and Apostolic Mission,*
- *Vocation as choice of state of life and vocation as transformation of lifestyle,*
- *Ignatian pedagogy for vocational discernment,*
- *Formation in the first years in CLC.*

Topics were discerned in an experimental way in the small workshop groups of 6 - 7 people. The workshop summaries of the three main topics — Mission, Vocation, and Ignatian Pedagogy / The First Year — were rich in content and the climate in the workshops was excellent.

The only scheduled optional, "How relevant is Ignatian spirituality for young people today?", attracted nearly 100 people! This took the form of a panel of 5 CLC members, all under 35 years of age, sharing their stories/opinions and their discussion.

In response to the request for "deeper conversation" on some topics, a choice of 4 optional topics was given on another evening: "The CLC Charism document", Retreats, Collaboration, and Formation. During lively and fruitful conversation on the document, the concerns of several of the IFE participants' about this document were raised. Plans have been made to rewrite some sections before the end of

November to send to World CLC ExCo.

Fr. Kolvenbach spoke to us and received questions and comments on the final afternoon. His talk synthesised much of our experience and learnings of the IFE and was very confirming (see page 32).

For most of the people present, this was their first international meeting. Such meetings have an incalculable value for the development and mission of CLC on national and world levels, with Jesuits and Religious. I strongly believe that we need permanent structures that will give the national CLCs more opportunities for formation, education and dialogue in the world CLC.

A great gift and grace of this time was the richness of the collaborative experience and understanding. The aim of the IFE came to life in the experience of "deep church" in our unity and diversity in our Ignatian charism, central to which is mission. We returned to our ministries enlivened and energized with new understanding, ideas and concrete plans.

Echoes from the IFE have been very positive - Fr Patrick O'Sullivan, SJ and Michelle O'Brien follow with impressions.

Mary Nolan
President CLC Australia

International Formation Encounter in St. Ignatius College, Sydney, July 4 -8

Rather than give an overall coverage of the IFE held recently in Sydney, Fr Patrick O'Sullivan SJ, World CLC Ecclesiastical Vice-Assistant from 1979 - 1986, in this article shares some reflections on the experience, which may raise some further questions. The IFE was a typical CLC event in the sense that the key to its success (and it was a success!) was the vitality of the small groups where a strong "listening mode" prevailed, and people interacted on the level of their experience.

Mission

There was a clear consensus as to the centrality of Mission in our CLC way of life, and given that ***our process should reflect our goal***, there was an equally strong consensus that Mission has to be an essential dimension not only of any of our Formation programmes but also of any serious introduction into our CLC way of life.

Many acknowledged that there was a certain confusion in how *Mission* is understood. For example, some people still see "Mission" as

something "extra" they should be doing in addition to the heavy demands of family life and profession. For myself, the most engaging approach to Mission, coming from the groups and general discussion, was one that sees Mission as rooted in our relationship with Jesus.

If our relationship with Jesus is a real event in our life, then we will have "the mind of Christ", and see things the way He does, and thereby carry on His Mission in the world. Unless what we do is rooted in this relationship, then no matter how grand it may appear, it is a non-event as far as the Kingdom is concerned.

Moreover, in line with this approach to Mission, Jesus is present not only in our own hearts but also in His Body, of which our local CLC group is a cell. Furthermore, He is present in those to whom we are drawn (or sent) - family, friends, work-place, the wider community, especially those in need. Consequently, Mission really comes alive and energises us when this three-fold Presence of Jesus resonates and

interacts - Jesus present in our heart, through prayer, Jesus present in our CLC group, and Jesus present in those to whom I'm drawn (or sent).

In short, what appeals to me about this approach is that it portrays Mission not as something we should be doing but as a relationship we are called to foster - our relationship with Jesus - and wherever that relationship may lead us on the personal or community level.

The word *sent* is closely associated with the idea of Mission, and has a strong scriptural foundation (John, 20/21). In this context, the significance and importance of "sent" is that it highlights the centrality of our relationship with Jesus in whatever we do. Jesus is the initiator, as opposed to us "doing our own thing" and calling it Mission. There can be no Mission without the intrusion of "the Other".

However, a number of people stated that "sent" did not quite capture their experience of Mission. To them it was more an experience of being "drawn" along a certain path, and having this, in turn, "affirmed" by their local community.

If the majority of CLC members actually experience Mission as being drawn and then being

affirmed by their local community, perhaps the word "sent" is not always the best word to use in CLC circles, and it can somewhat obscure the lay character of Mission.

Youth

It goes without saying - though it goes even better if we do say it - that the presence of young people was seen critically important in CLC. The view at the gathering that impressed me most is one that sees youth groups as an occasion for us to listen to and learn from young people (especially, though not only, regarding their experience of Church), and also an occasion for us to offer young people an experience of formation that will enable them to make an informed and Christian choice about their future.

In other words, the formation that takes place in youth groups is not to be aimed at leading them to discern whether or not they have a CLC vocation. Its purpose is rather to help them discern to what way of life Jesus is calling them - whether it be, for example, a particular profession, or the CLC way, or may be even the religious life or priesthood. Moreover, many suggested that the word "vocation" does not resonate with young people to-day

- though, of course, this may vary according to the culture.

Why groups falter

When a person tells his or her story and is listened to with reverence and respect, this experience releases a tremendous amount of energy and love from within the person. Jesus' interaction with Zaccheus (Luke 19/1-10) is an excellent example of what happens when a person is acknowledged and respected. Now, this "way of proceeding" is at the heart of the CLC process in the small group. However, the fact is that numbers of CLC groups do falter, and there seemed to be a general agreement that this was because the process in the group becomes flawed. The following were suggested as the most common reasons why the group process breaks down:

① There is a lack of a firm commitment to regular meetings; it is impossible for a group to be "in process" if attendance is irregular.

② members of the group do not have a daily pattern of prayer and examen. When this is the case, two things happen:

(a) People who do not reflect and pray regularly are not in touch

with their real "story", and so are not able to tell it at the meeting - their sharing becomes quite superficial.

(b) Once the sharing in a group becomes superficial, no love or energy is generated, and so the group looks more and more inwards, instead of outwards.

③ Evaluation is not structured into the meeting. Unless a group evaluates, the possibility of change and growth is severely limited.

Lay character of CLC

Though CLC is an "ecclesial event" (embracing both lay and religious/clerics), the CLC way of life is essentially a lay vocation.

The ecclesial dimension of CLC was very much to the fore at the IFE, with a solid presence of religious (including many Jesuits); but some felt that the lay character wasn't as clearly defined as it might have been. For example, in the discussion of the booklet, "The CLC Charism", the former Provincial of Australia (Bill Uren S.J.) pointed out that the Ignatian criteria for apostolic discernment (English edition, p. 31) are meant for a religious order, and cannot be automatically assumed to apply to a lay, apostolic community.

But it was especially in the area of formation, where a person journeys into the CLC way of life, that some felt the process outlined was more akin to the sort of formation we see in religious orders rather than the sort of formation that is appropriate for lay people. There was/is no question about the need for CLC formation, nor that people undertake a journey that passes through different phases as they assimilate more and more the CLC way of life. The point, rather, was that lay people live out of a different "time-frame" from religious. More specifically, in the religious life, a person who enters an Order is already "committed" - at least, that is the assumption - and so the time-frame for his or her journey can be rather tightly structured. There are exceptions, of course, but they are exceptions. However, in CLC, people grow into their commitment at their own pace, and so the lay character of their formation requires that this journey be marked by flexibility, and the capacity to live ambiguity. In a word, the lay character can easily be lost in a tightly structured approach to formation. Moreover, I would venture to suggest that flexibility and the capacity to live with ambiguity are essential components of the Church of the future, which is already being called, "The Church of the laity."

My final word can only be one of thanks to the organisers of the IFE for a very rich experience.

Patrick O'Sullivan, SJ
Sydney

Impressions of a participant

The mood is gentle but passionate, the auditorium full, and Father General is about to speak to the IFE participants. His presence is in itself a sign of the importance and value of CLC. Through his words he shares his hope for and a vision of an international family. He emphasises the very issues concerning CLC formation that we had been addressing over the four days of the IFE. What really is the essence of CLC and how do we actively express that? By the end of the IFE, there is no doubt in my mind that the essence of CLC is mission and the means are apostolic communities.

As a young lay woman I was made aware of the need to develop new ways of perceiving the Church, both in a literal and in a structural sense. I was deeply impressed by the varied ways people were already exploring their roles as apostolic communities throughout the world within their local communities. For example, there is great diversity of work being done

within the family unit and the work place, not merely because that is where someone's life is but because a genuine sense of call exists, coupled with a real desire to bring a quality of presence, a sense of Christ, to whatever daily work or family role is being accomplished. In this way a presence is nurtured and strengthened through active participation within CLC groups, and a living out of Ignatian spirituality which is a gift needing to be taken beyond CLC communities.

There was much discussion about the collaborative nature of CLC, the connection and interconnection of lay people, religious, and Jesuits. Indeed the IFE was well attended by lay men and women, religious and Jesuits. There was some unresolved consideration of the status of each group and of the model or models that should be adopted to ensure ongoing collaboration. The desire to continue to have Jesuits and religious as active members of CLC seemed strong as this appears to be a source of much CLC strength and richness. After all, exploring ways of working collaboratively is rightly considered important to CLC formation.

One theme carried throughout the encounter was journeying both on a personal level and as a community. I was continually astonished at the openness and willingness of people in sharing their personal stories. This had, I believe, a cathartic effect on all who listened and it brought enormous depth to the encounter.

There was also much discussion of young people and of the relevance of CLC and Ignatian spirituality to them. Many countries that were represented, including America, Korea, and Zambia, had very positive experiences of successfully nurturing CLC groups specifically for young people. Australia seems to be lagging a little behind in tapping into this age group (16-35 years old). But the awareness of the issues and difficulties faced by this age group in today's society was strong, as was the desire to develop groups for young people. Perhaps the strongest impression that has remained was the immense goodness in people and their willingness to share their gifts and the energy that CLC inspires.

Michelle O'Brien,
CLC Australia

Father General speaks to the participants of the IFE

Christian Life Community and the Jesuits are united in a deep personal love for Christ. In the first year of preparation of the Jubilee year the Church wants us to renew our common devotion to the person of Christ.

The personality of Christ is so rich that we can only recognise a few aspects, a few features, of his richness.

Benedict was struck by Christ in prayer. Francis was challenged by Christ in poverty. And Ignatius? He sees Christ on mission, going from one village to another, from city to city.

Christ always proclaimed that He did not come on his own. He is sent on mission by His Father. "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in the one who sent me." (John 12,44). For that reason the incident of Jesus remaining in the temple is important for Ignatius, did you not know that I must be at "the pure service" of my Father.

Praying the Gospel, Ignatius contemplates the missionary words

and deeds of Christ, so as to learn how to be on mission with Him. Ignatius is astonished to see how Christ, the King, accomplishes his mission as a simple rabbi, going around with his disciples, not imposing His person or His good news, but proposing Himself, gathering the people in the new commandment of love, coming to heal the planet in the name of the Father.

The mission for the good of humanity encounters resistance; however, the suffering of the cross will not be a reason to give up His mission. The risen Lord continues His mission, going from one to another as consoler, bringing consolation, says Ignatius, exactly as friends comfort one another. Ignatius believes that the risen Lord continues today to be on mission in our world.

However to continue His mission Christ seeks to send us, as He was sent by His Father. Ignatius had no other desire but to be with Christ on mission. Entering Rome at La Storta, he had the mystical experience of the Father placing him with Christ carrying the cross,

to help all men and women whom the Lord will put in his way, bringing them to Christ the alpha and omega of their lives. CLC members and Jesuits share Ignatius' desire to be missioned by Christ. It is through the Spiritual Exercises, in a personal encounter with Christ, that each of us can discover how he or she is called to mission. Hence the importance of not only speaking about Ignatian Spirituality, but doing the Spiritual Exercises, in order to receive our mission.

Because our creator is love, we should not be astonished that we do not receive our mission alone or to be lonely, but to share our mission with the mission received together as Church, as CLC or as the Society of Jesus. In Christ's missionary perspective, mission never concerns only the individual. This does not mean that all members of a CLC have to do the same work, the same apostolic activity.

It means a common effort to address the needs that CLC discovers, here and now, and to help in the name of Christ. It is also a missionary task, not to remain looking inward, not to centre on exclusive sharing and praying, but to look outside, to hear the religious and material needs of the people with whom we live and to agree on what our mission will mean concretely, in this situation, here and now. To continue His mission the risen Lord, living in our midst, loves

to mission us, to need our effort to help men and women receive His good news.

For that reason it is useful to observe the difference between what is typically Ignatian - what CLC and Jesuits have to discover, to foster, and to deepen, in common - and what is the specific CLC way of being on mission and the specific Jesuit way of proceeding on mission. We should be more and more aware of a clear CLC identity with its own creativity and initiative in mission, and more and more consciousness of the typical Jesuit way, written down in the updated Constitutions. Deeply sharing a common Ignatian spirituality CLC and Jesuits can learn from their own experiences, enrich one another and accompany one another in the same mission of Christ.

It is in this perspective that the responsibility of the Ecclesiastical Assistant should be seen. He is not the representative of the Jesuit Order. He is not a director as in the time of the Sodalities. It is not up to him to organise the group or to make a personal parish out of it. The assistant should be a Jesuit with an active understanding of Ignatian spirituality, ready to make this available to CLC and willing to learn from the originality of CLC's specific way of being Ignatian. His service is to give and to receive, above all to help to discern what

the Lord is doing through His - the Lord's - CLC to continue His mission, here and now.

The natural spiritual link between CLC and Jesuits should exclude every kind of using one another as tools to continue functioning. Very clearly the General Congregation warns that partnership and cooperation with others in ministry should not be a pragmatic strategy resulting from diminished manpower. It is an essential dimension of the contemporary Jesuit way of proceeding. In practice, for Jesuits, this means that they should not count on CLC members in order to save apostolic activities declining from lack of Jesuit manpower. However, if CLC from its mission wants to join the Jesuits in an apostolic project or takes the initiative to start a joint venture, the Jesuits, according to the desire of the General Congregation (13,17) should accompany CLC in their mission, in a common mission.

If we speak about partnership and sharing a common mission, we should not forget that we are urging a genuine conversion of the heart. Individualism is the trend of our times and we all like to be in control. Still the Spirit through the Vatican Council pushes the people of God to become united in Christ. The call to be men and women for others has now to be founded on Christ's desire to be one, to be with

others for others in the strength of the new commandment of love. We must be ready to share our spiritual and apostolic inheritance and experience, to listen and to speak out, to learn and to teach. Sharing will be possible only in a common mission, if Jesuits give and receive, and CLC members not only listen to "his master's voice", but take initiatives, take the responsibility of CLC's mission into their own hands.

It is in this mission-minded context that CLC's spontaneous desire to remain in formation should be understood. Not in the sense of acquiring skills or learning lessons to obtain a qualification or a degree. For CLC formation is growth in the Lord, maturing in his Spirit. In Ignatian spirituality, formation is not a question of studying to know who God is, or what God reveals, even if this can be helpful. Formation is to grow in Christ by doing what the Lord wants me to do for His brothers and sisters.

This "formation" does not remain on the intellectual level, does not consist only in knowledge and information. It challenges the whole person to discover more and more in Christ our personal mission and our mission as a member of CLC to labour on mission in the Lord's vineyard. Without this active missionary outreach "formation" cannot claim to be Ignatian in its dynamism.

Current Status of Discernment: Confused and Peculiar?

Can members of Christian Life Community possibly need another article about *discernment*? Hard as it may be to believe, we do. Let me begin to suggest why by recounting an incident.

When their house was broken into for the second time, Beverly and Charles felt their courage and consolation fading. They had discerned with their CLC community whether to move away from an eroding neighborhood. They had felt called to help keep it alive for the elderly who could not move (the Lord's little people). They had put up with a lot—car smashed, things stolen, fear when they went out of their house and fear when they came back to it. When the house was broken into a second time, they began discerning again. While they were discerning, Charles was attacked and barely escaped serious injury.

Even this little sketch of their situation raises the question: Did they need to *discern*? It is possible to wonder because the current status of ignatian discernment is somewhat confused and peculiar. We have gotten past some major exaggerations ("Every discernment must have eleven steps..."). But we continue to make great demands on discernment,

in situations as varied as the search for vocation in life and for the right neighborhood.

Think of how much we now call on discernment. Jesuits are asked to review "all ministries both traditional and new" by means of discernment "both personal and communitarian" (Norm 256). Jesuits have found this extraordinarily demanding. CLC links its ignatian charism to apostolic discernment, so that a keynote address in Johannesburg called CLCers "The Discernment People" (Progressio, nos. 1 & 2 1997). CLC documents typically perceive discernment as the "intelligent and contemplative attention given to the Spirit" in all corners and aspects of life (Formation Guidelines 93). Then, those who give *Spiritual Exercises* tend to inculcate discernment as the ordinary way of coming to choice. Guides of the simplest Exercises in Daily Life would not omit explaining discernment even to the newest recruit to the spiritual life.

We all seem convinced that to follow ignatian spirituality is to turn discernment into a way of life. This rather peculiar conviction has become fixed at least in part by pressure from other spiritualities. We

might feel that, since other spiritualities have their distinctive characteristics, ignatian spirituality must have its distinctive characteristics. For most of us, ignatian discernment leaps immediately to mind.

The conviction that discernment is central in ignatian spirituality is surely correct. But the conviction easily leads to exaggerating its centrality and preeminence. That exaggeration accounts in several ways for discernment's confused and peculiar status.

First, an indifferent definition

The first source of confusion is not new: we have tended to oversimplify the preconditions to discernment. The preconditions have been explained many times, in several serious scholarly studies, official statements, and popular articles. Unhappily, the documents that we seem to have read the most are the documents intended precisely to simplify. All too often, ignatian directors and CLC formators have summarized all preconditions in a word: *indifference*. They describe indifference as keeping a dynamic balance in passions and desires. This is surely helpful. The person who is too passionate about an ideology, after all, will find what God wants only by accident. In the same way, too strong an attachment by Jesuit colleagues to the honored tradition of a school would likely skew any

decision they reach about that school.

Certainly, without indifference there can be no genuine or even honest discernment. Merely being at a balance, however, does not lead anyone to act. Yet action is what ignatian discernment leads to, so other preconditions must be as important as indifference. They are, and they are indispensable. Look at this very partial list: (1) an attitude of gratitude—that all is gift from God; (2) an unshakable and almost aggressive confidence that God leads us and gives us power to read the signs of the times and respond to them; (3) careful, faith-filled, critical thinking; (4) the freedom to accept the fact that the Gospels challenge human culture—every human culture.

That list could be made much longer. But the point here is that if anyone thinks that reaching *indifference* prepares one fully to make an ignatian discernment, then one has an odd understanding of discernment.

Second, confusion says...

When we consider even that quite incomplete descriptive list of the mindset and heartset that allow ignatian discernment, we begin to see that discernment is simply not a process meant for everyone at all times in their lives. Neither is it a process required of everyone. We need to see this point clearly: The basic Christian indifference that

keeps us from making some creature into a god is necessary to every baptized person; Ignatian discernment is not. This simple fact challenges the growing consensus that discernment is actually the adult way to make any moral, religious, or spiritual decision whatsoever. That consensus needs tempering, because adults do and must find God's will in other ways.

Three of these other ways are worth noting. For whether adult Christians are liberal or conservative, whether they resonate with liberation theology or with integralism, they find what God wants (1) through their consciences, (2) through wise response to compelling circumstance, (3) and through obedience to legitimate authority. The exaggerated view of discernment—that it is the adult Christian's way of making decisions—entails this second confusion: That somehow, discernment supplants these other ways of finding what God wants. It does not and cannot.

First, conscience. Conscience is the first of these ways. A Christian often has no further to go in reaching a decision—whatever he or she might desire—than recognizing sin. Absent any excusing cause, for instance, a traveler need not *discern* whether to pass by a sufferer bleeding on the roadside; he or she need only obey the Christian conscience' command to help. Many Ignatian Congregations and the Jesuits, even while they were

talking about making a discernment, were actually being moved by their consciences to work against injustices. They may even have felt their consciences giving them an imperative and peremptory command.

Second, compelling circumstance. On the other hand, they may have been acting in another way that God lets us know the divine wishes: by the pressure of compelling circumstances.

In some situations and at some junctures, "the signs of the times" hardly need reading. They cry out and almost compel response. Religious ministers everywhere have faced such situations over and over again: they have found abandoned orphans, inhuman ignorance, severe hunger, structured injustices. Almost without reflecting, they have known what they were to do.

Charles and Beverly and their community did not judge early on that the couple would act sinfully by moving out of their neighborhood. They were choosing between two good things in choosing to stay with the poor or to move to safer ground. So, when the couple found a true mission in caring for their neighbors, they remained and the community collaborated with them willingly. Courage and consolation were among them. But at a certain point, the signs of the times had shifted, completely and irreversibly. The outpost that

Beverly and Charles had hoped to maintain became untenable. They did not have to discern. They did have to move. They needed to feel the pressures of the compelling circumstances and find God's voice in those developments. It was not easy for them and they were tempted to ease their emotions by discerning. They really just had to obey the way God was shaping their lifeworld.

Third, obedience. That raises a third muddle. Some of us seem to think that discernment eclipses simple candid obedience or at least renders its demands enigmatic.

The CLC community could meet only on Sundays. Several of the couples found problems getting to Mass and joining the meeting. Should they discern whether the prayer and sharing of the CLC meeting could reasonably take the place of weekly worship? The group decided in the negative. The meeting could take the place of Mass one or other time, perhaps, but not habitually.

During the twentieth century, we have felt grave stresses in our appreciation of obedience. We have come to connect it with being a child. We simplify it and reduce it until it seems to be just the mindless response of the automaton. We feel terrified that simply obeying is somehow opposed to autonomy and authentic self-direction. And perhaps most grievously, we have grown wary

of both civil and religious authority for the very good reason that authority has been abused wretchedly and continues to be abused.

In the sixties and seventies, moreover, the laity were tempted by one or other exaggeration to ignore the Church's authority. During that same time, members of ignatian communities were tempted to swathe their obedience in the folds of discernment. There were times when it was hard to tell that a religious was actually obeying a mission or a command. Often enough, both lay and religious have been falling into that narcissistic self-absorption that Fr General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach identified in a *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* (#82) as "perfectionitis." We have felt driven to a self-fulfillment that comes exclusively from within our own selves, eschewing help from common laws and commands.

We are mistaken about that. **For we need obedience in our lives, and obedience belongs to the human condition.** We suffer when we cannot obey directly and with candor. To begin with, we all yearn for a well-ordered civil society, free of violence and gross injustice, and that means that we want good laws and statutes, and we want them obeyed. But beyond that, even if we Christians did not need obedience simply because we are human, no disciple of Christ can ever forget that he said, "If

you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The One whom we follow poured himself out, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). Being Christian means obeying in many ways and at many levels. Jesus Christ did not come to wipe out law but to make it complete. What is that "complete law"?

We will know it when we are keeping the Commandments and the instruction of the Church and even civil laws (joyfully though never uncritically) for love of God in Christ.

In addition, there is the *magis*

Well and good: discernment does not turn conscience off. Discernment does not preclude straightforward response to compelling circumstance. Discernment does not dampen obedience. With these distinctions, discernment stands out perfectly clearly, correct? The distinctions have ended its confused and peculiar status, once and for all?

Not very likely, for one reason that those familiar with ignatian spirituality will have been teasing out all along: There is an ignatian mode of following conscience, of responding to compelling circumstance, and of obeying. In this case, we really can sum it up in one word: *magis*. In our way of proceeding, we live the degrees of

humility, respond to pressures, and obey—always with the *greater good* in the front of our minds. Perhaps it has been this yearning for the *magis*, more than any conceptual problems, that has caused ignatian disciples considerable confusion about discernment.

We can hardly doubt that every form of ignatian spirituality seeks the greater good. On this particular point, for instance, the *Constitutions* of the Dorotheas of Frassinetti typify all ignatian constitutions. They state the simple determination "to go where there are greater hopes for a greater service to humankind" (#28).

And CLC is as clear on this point as it is on anything. The Formation Guidelines summarize the predispositions necessary to apostolic discernment this way: "One must, in short, have what is necessary to allow one to opt for the greater glory of God and for the universal good" [93].

The Jesuit *Constitutions*, in their turn, give extraordinary definition to the *magis* in a series of long paragraphs [622-624]. St Ignatius there suggests in meticulous detail how Jesuits are to think about where to go, what to do when they get there, and even about who should go where to do what. But in the end, everyone who makes a decision must "***keep the greater service of God and the more universal good before his eyes.***"

Just of itself, the ignatian thirst for the *magis* means that the ignatian spirit is always prepared to discern. The most basic reason is that **discernment involves choosing among or between good things**. Two instances: Conscience did not require that CLC members of the Ignatian Apostolic Network of Rio de Janeiro commit themselves to lead others through the Exercises. The members examined possible apostolic ways and means and chose this as the *magis*. And again, the Chilean CLC community went through a process to discover which among all the good apostolates they are called to commit themselves to (cf page 43). Whatever conscience, compelling circumstance, and obedience may or may not have indicated, these decisions and thousands like them are, altogether appropriately, *discerned*.

Third, several excesses and a misplaced norm

Perhaps this discussion about discernment begins to seem unnecessary or at best tediously long, particularly to CLCers who have given it a lot of thought. But we ought not quit before looking at a third fact about the confused and peculiar status of discernment, a fact especially pertinent to CLCers.

John recounts his two weeks since the last CLC sharing. He continues overworked and very tired. He cannot find quality time with his children. He thinks he needs to discern once more

his commitment to the soup kitchen and the formation team. His community agrees.

Here is the fact: Discernment does not seem to save many of those who practice it from overwork, overextension, fragile hope, and loss of joy. Carrying this discussion through must help explain that curious fact.

Overwork does not mean merely being extremely busy; it means not being able not to work. Overextension does not mean merely having lots to do; it means rarely being well prepared to do anything, regularly failing to do almost anything happily and well, and continually living with or for distraction. Fragile hope does not mean despair or mere melancholy; it means living in a rage against the world or the Church, working as though everything depended on humankind, and worshiping as though prayer were just another human work.

And finally, the loss of joy. Everyone knows that a good decision well made brings the Third Week grace of peace even in suffering. But what is happening to the joy—the Fourth Week grace, joy which is not the world's joy—that marks authentic apostolic discernment? Those who live with little joy are not practicing discernment. They may be practicing prophetic witness, heroic virtue, or mystical prayer. They are not practicing discernment, or at least not practicing it wisely and well.

These problems rarely bother the rich and righteous or those who straggle along, barely avoiding deadly sin. These problems, rather, plague the good and zealous people for whom the norms of discernment in the Second Week are meant. These people—religious, Jesuits, CLC members—may well have mislaid St Ignatius's fourth norm for the Second Week, which can be understood to say something like this:

It is characteristic of an evil spirit to mask as an angel of light. He starts out supporting deeply committed persons and ends recruiting them. As an instance, he comes with *good and holy thoughts* familiar to committed people but then, a step at a time, he manages to leave that way and to draw them into *his hidden fallacies and perverse design*. [SpEx 332]

Today, the "good and holy thoughts" occur to zealous people instantly when some good apostolic action appears: "Do it!" But it is no argument in favor of an apostolic action that it is simply a good thing to do. Not in ignatian spirituality. That it is good makes an act a possible apostolic option, not an obvious choice. Yet for several reasons these "good and holy thoughts" to do instant good have been creating a problem for those who follow ignatian spirituality in postconciliar and postmodern times. The laity has grown aware of Christian vocation and are for the most part much freer to shape their own lives. Christians have grown better at reading the

signs of the times and recognizing apostolic opportunity. And the Church has been discovering that the Spirit sprinkles charisms and calls throughout the Body of Christ.

Consequently, when we give ourselves to *Spiritual Exercises*, we seem to discover alluring freedom to do good, and we seem to find ourselves walking through a positive forest of good things to do. Here precisely is the fertile ground of temptation for those who try to serve God, and the hotbed of confusion about discernment.

The task of discernment is to *choose*, which means *to elect, select, or single out*. That seems obvious enough. But one of the "hidden fallacies" of the spirit of confusion is that choosing the *magis* can mean simply choosing *more*. The insinuated fallacy here is that anyone truly devoted to the greater good can always take on more things to do.

Misunderstood that way, the *magis* drives serious apostolic spirits (particularly the young and the more mature who have never learned patience) to keep adding things until, overburdened and overextended and foundering, they are burnt out. Their mistake is never to have looked at the reverse side of *to elect*, to that other indispensable action in discernment, which is *to reject*—even some quite good things and even some things that are not too much.

So this perhaps tedious discussion of discernment leaves us with an unpretty and all too familiar picture. The "perverse design" that begins with understanding *magis* as simply *more*, or with taking the *magis* as a mandate to depart from authentic gifts and charisms—that "perverse design" leads to the loss of the joy of the Lord. In the end, good and holy people are recruited through this design not to a life of sin, but to a life of overwork, overextension, fragile hope, and little joy. Does that sound a bit like more than one CLC community, more than one Jesuit community, we've known?

Who would want to join a community like that? We might well be looking at one of the reasons why ignatian congregations, Jesuits, and CLC communities are having trouble recruiting. We might well be looking at some other negatives embedded here, but it will not do to end negatively, even though this essay has examined the confused and peculiar state of ignatian discernment.

We need to move away from these muddles about discernment, its confusion with conscience, critical thinking, and obedience. As we do, we will clear up the last muddle of all: discernment as a process and discernment as a mindset and heartset. Perhaps in part because of the pragmatism of the powerful global culture, we have been

reducing discernment to stages and steps. It is more than that.

When we live ignatian spirituality for a while and become mature in the Spirit, **discernment becomes a way of living—a mindset and heartset.** We still need the processes, particularly in our lives as communities. The Chilean CLC is now showing us that. Every one of us needs what the Guidelines for CLC Formation call "the pedagogy of the examen," which helps us to reach "apostolic discernment as a permanent state" (no.102). What does this "state" look and feel like? The full answer would gather everything we know about spirituality in the ignatian tradition. So start with these salient points: This mature spiritual state grounds working steadily while remaining contemplative, finding God acting all the time and in absolutely everything, trusting peacefully and profoundly in God's care, and coming to the point at which we can sense joyfully when the Spirit is leading to some greater good. **All of this in and for love of Jesus Christ, with whom we are sent into the world by the Father.**

When we grow more or less into this mindset and heartset, we can hope that we have clarified the somewhat confused and peculiar state of ignatian discernment for ourselves and for our communities.

Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J.

Discernment of the Apostolic Mission in CLC Chile

In *Progressio* nos. 1 & 2 of 1997, we spoke of the steps of apostolic discernment that were begun in December 1996 by the Chilean community, and we requested prayers that the Holy Spirit accompany us during the development of this process. To finalize the first stages, we strove to arrive at a consensus regarding the response that we wanted to give to God's call. For this reason, we dedicated our 5th National Assembly, which took place in September 1997, to harvesting in prayer the fruits of our work. We expressed this in a document which is the Grace of our National Assembly.

We lived this discernment process by following the pedagogy learned from Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises. We based ourselves on three questions: Where is the most urgent need? Where do we feel the Lord is calling us and what is our mission as a national community? What steps are suggested to put it into practice? We arrived at the National Assembly with a work document in which we expressed the response to the first two questions. It was the result of the work of 100 small communities which actively participated in the discernment process. The third question will motivate the later work

of the regional communities and of the new National Executive Council.

Members from the various regions arrived at the Assembly with their different stories, ages and vocations. We lived a rich community atmosphere with openness and availability. We sought to respond to the main question of the discernment: What is our mission as the Christian Life Community in Chile today? This question comes from two sources: the national community's strong desire to respond to the challenges of a country going through a rapid and contradictory process of transformation, and the invitation given at the World Assembly of Hong Kong (1994) and at the National Assembly of Chile (1995) to deepen our apostolic dimension.

This availability to be and work with the Lord, which we renewed in the Assembly, allowed us to be vulnerable to His passage in the Church and in Chile today. We experienced our needs, limitations, joys, hopes and pains. Upon opening to the world, we met with the faces of the poor of our country, with those of our young and their seekings and dreams, with those of our children and elderly, and with those of our couples and families.

From Ignatius we inherited the sense of a God present in the world. Thus, we looked at our times with hope and desired to commit ourselves passionately to its transformation. In the plurality of values and options, we sought to discern the call of Our Lord to follow and serve him as lay persons inserted into a multifaceted and challenging culture.

We strongly feel that the Lord calls us to rise beyond ourselves, to renew the different forms of service that we have developed in our history as a community, and to seek methods of action and of a transformation of the reality we are living. In a special way, the Lord has strongly sown in our National Assembly the great desire for a meeting with the poor and the underprivileged, and for solidarity with the many forms of poverty. Also, we feel the call to help others find the full meaning of their lives, to take risks for a greater justice, and to continue developing a style of life and of work that is coherent with what we are.

With hope, peace and gratitude we handed out the document, which brings together and organizes what has been discerned for the regional communities and for the Assembly itself. We desire to live the mission received with an attitude of listening and service in the face of the concrete needs of our country. We feel called to serve in poverty and joy, considering the history and reality of our community, while supported by the prayer of the World Community.

Our Mission - The grace of the 5th CLC Chile National Assembly

With hope, the 5th National Assembly of CLC calls all its members to commit themselves to the following apostolic priorities:

- To open ourselves to this world, to society (Acts 1,11) and to the Church of which we are a part, in order to find Jesus, who made himself one of us (Phil. 2,5-7). To be his witnesses in the midst of the world in which we live and in every dimension of our lives (GP4), placing in him the concrete projects of humanization (GS16).

To evangelize our culture and, in dialogue with this world, to develop a lifestyle marked by openness and simplicity; mercy and justice, solidarity and honesty, asking the Lord for the grace to be and to recognize the light on the lamp-stand (Lk 8,16) and the leaven in the dough (Mt. 13,13).

- To bear witness to, to celebrate and to communicate the value and joy of the family, and the vocation of marriage as a way of holiness. To carefully see to its needs, to heal the sufferings it contains and to welcome families living in special situations. To support the search for a greater warmth in interfamily relationships and to give impulse to opening to the needs of others, thus fostering the richness and strength of the family.

To strengthen the affective and spiritual growth of couples, during the step of courtship, in their journey of discernment towards matrimony and in the different stages of maturation along life's way, so that conjugal life may reach the fullness of commitment and fidelity ("for better or for worse, in sickness and in health").

- To be conscious that young people carry within themselves an enormous evangelical force which creates new life for society and that today our Chile calls for changes. For this reason it is necessary that young people take on a real commitment as protagonists in the different tasks and challenges of the country and of the Church.

To welcome, support and accompany the young in their searching; their needs and their interests, helping them to face their most pressing difficulties and giving them the incentive to follow the way of Jesus.

- To live and to offer the richness of the Spiritual Exercises, source of our spirituality, as a way of encountering the presence and will of God, who is the full sense of our lives.

To share the abundance that we have received, committing ourselves actively in the intellectual, spiritual and apostolic formation of others, and offering our experience as a Church community.

- To go to meetings, to serve and to be present among the poor and the underprivileged. To recognize that we are called to a more simple personal and community life and to an efficacious participation in social, political and economic structures. To lessen the breach which divides our society.

To share the efforts of the poor and the underprivileged to overcome poverty. To collaborate in extending quality education, which leads to human promotion, labor training and a worthwhile formation. Let us recognize in the Ignatian pedagogy, our particular mark in educative service.

- To commit ourselves apostolically — our talents, studies, work, professions, experiences and capacities — to the service of the most needy, searching for organized forms which lead to this goal.

To promote and accompany the rediscovery of our daily work as the ordinary way of following the Lord, and of serving in the construction of a more humane society. To bear witness to Jesus and his Good News in the different work places, following our way of life and assuming there the ethical dimensions of the Gospel.

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Chris Mikalev and his wife Roberta from CLC Malta

CLC

A life long invitation to grow

In today's world we receive many invitations which result in us giving something of ourselves to others. I have realized that the invitations which were unexpected

and full of honesty and simplicity left me with a calm, happy and open feeling after I had responded to them. This is how I received Roswitha's invitation to put pen to

paper and share with you my experience of joining CLC and the effect it had on my life. Before I continue I must warn you that as you read you may say to yourself "so what's so new about this person and his life?". The answer is: *nothing* but I can assure you that these experiences have radically changed me!!!

Way back in 1986 after I had returned from a social work project in a slum area of Palermo, Sicily two ex-school friends (who had been on the project with me) invited me to a few meetings of their pre-CLC group. The members of this group were all ex-school friends so the initial *'getting to know each other'* was a short task. After I had attended a few meetings I became seriously interested and was asked to decide whether or not I was to become a member of Ampelos (The Vine).

Looking back on this decision I realize that by accepting this invitation I was not only filling an immediate personal need for true friends but I was also embarking on an unknown journey that would gradually change my outlook to life and my life itself.

The first real invitation to love and trust the Lord came as a shock to me. The day the Lord called my father to Himself left me feeling that the whole world and all I held dear was falling apart. In this invitation of love and trust I found the support of Ampelos and CLC.

This experience was so powerful that I regard it as one of my life's milestones, it was an experience of love that has marked me. I realized that in faith the mystery and reality of life and death have meaning. It also showed me that while the relationships I had were important I still needed and desired a deeper (intimate) relationship with God.

Some time after this experience a Jesuit friend gave me another "invitation". He suggested that I take daily prayer seriously if I really desired a relationship with God. As he guided me through this new adventure he suggested that I follow the Exercises in daily life. Once again I accepted the invitation and once again my 'inner' life took another direction. As I look on this experience so many feelings flood my heart but most of all are feelings of joy, love and companionship.

These feelings were so great that a 'natural' reaction was to be a witness of these feelings. This was the start of my special relationship with God. I believe that one of the side effects of the Exercises was my *acceptance of self*, with all that is good and not so good in me, without being traumatic about it because I know that I am loved as I am.

In 1991 Ampelos was looking for something radically new to take us all into a new stage of growth. We felt that the Community had grown and matured to a point where we could calmly identify this need. With the help of the Eccl. Assistant (Godwin Preca sj) we took a decision to stop Ampelos. The members were given a clear invitation to take the CLC way of life more seriously.

The people who took up the invitation joined with other people from other communities which had stopped and together we formed two new young adult CLC communities. This was the birth of my new community Khamira (Yeast).

It was around this time that I had started to involve myself in the National CLC secretariat. My involvement in the National Community has always been the

fruit of the support I found in Khamira. This support gave me the strength to carry on working even when things seemed to go in the opposite direction.. The growth process taking place in Khamira is what has given me the inner strength to carry on working and growing on this journey.

This process has become so important to me that it is one of the main sources of strength in my life. The support, presence and companionship of the members of Khamira has helped me identify and accept other invitations of growth in an always deeper relationship with God and love for others.

Another invitation which has become another milestone in my life was the European CLC Youth Meeting held in Chantilly, France. The meeting itself was my first exposure to CLC as a wider community. The meeting left me with a positive feeling which was partly the reason why I accepted to be Malta's next EuroLink after I returned.

In this new role I found the EuroTeam to be of support in answering my many questions and encouraging me to develop my work. At this point CLC as a

Movement started to make a lot of sense amplified by the fact that corresponding with other Eurolinks and meeting people at the occasional meeting helped me feel part of a European CLC Community.

All the struggles and questions regarding my presence in CLC, my community and the national community suddenly made a lot of sense in this new dimension. A goal I set for myself as Eurolink was to expose the Maltese Community to its international dimension. The exposure I was looking for was one of active participation in the growth process of CLC as a World Community.

Today, thanks to the support of Khamira and the Maltese Leadership Community, I have accepted an invitation by the Euro Team to be of service as a member of the team. My aim as a member of the EuroTeam remains that of bringing the life of the World Community to as many people as possible. My involvement in this team has brought the World ExCo and the World Community much closer to me. I consider myself a very fortunate person when I see the amount of invitations and support I have received along my journey.

During this time my involvement in CLC has not been the only area of my life that was undergoing change and growth. My personal family life has also undergone change and growth.

In May last year I married Roberta, a person whom I had known for a number of years and together with the Lord we decided that the way forward in our relationship was that of a married couple. Our relationship, like the other relationships in Khamira, has always been a matter of priority.

We believe that a healthy relationship between a married couple will leave the couple open enough to accept new invitations that come their way.

My family life, professional life and CLC are so intertwined that it is very difficult for me to describe one aspect without effecting the other. My daily struggle to find the balance between the many calls for my time is what I go to the Lord with in my prayer. There I find the answers to my questions, and also the occasional invitation waiting to be freely accepted or rejected. The choice is mine while my journey continues . . .

My CLC Vocation

The place the Father has given me to serve his son



Alberto Gossweiler and his wife Maria Ana Duhagon on their wedding day

To speak of my vocation is to speak of the deepest areas of my life. It is to speak of my project of life, of my relationship with our Father, of my being Church, of my being a layman. In the Ignatian spirituality, I have found the tool I

needed to know the Lord and above all, to listen to His call and to give my response. To speak of my CLC vocation is to speak of the place my Father has given me to serve His Son.

A bit of my personal life

I come from a family that has been a gift of God. I have the warmest memories filled with happiness of my father, my two sisters and my brother. I remember my childhood as a time of playing and learning from my parents the significance of being a Christian. And perhaps it was they who forged the image of God the Father that is within me. This God the Father who constantly looks after His son and gives his life for him, who consoles him when he cries and reprimands him when he is mischievous. Alongside them I have passed my 28 years of life.

I went to the college of the Irish brothers (Christian Brothers) until my entrance in 1988 into the University of Uruguay where I studied Chemical Engineering. I graduated at the end of 1995.

Already, some time before, I had started working in our national electric company, the company I still work for today. Professional activity led me to think about the need for improving my formation so this year I began my Masters in Administration (MBA) at the Catholic University of Uruguay. The world is changing rapidly, all is becoming global and it is necessary to have a good formation to

confront the situation. The management of organizations today is not only for those who have the will to do so but also for those who are formed to the task. As Christians we must have a better and deeper formation.

Last December 28, one of the biggest changes of my life took place: Maria Ana and I began our married life. We had begun to live the most beautiful project that we had ever thought of for the rest of our lives. A basic project in the love of God that we promised to build day by day. A project which is a gift of our Father; one that we wanted to live with commitment to Him, that gave us much excitement and hope. A project which we hope would be expressed by new lives which will come in the future.

My life in CLC

I received the sacrament of confirmation in my last year at the Catholic College of the Irish Brothers. I received it with many questions running around in my mind. In certain moments I was scared because some of these questions were rather basic for someone arriving at this moment. But what moved me to receive the

sacrament of Confirmation was the desire for a deeper and more grounded encounter with the Lord. They were doubts that impelled me to go on searching and searching.

The year after I ended my studies in college and was already in the University, I felt the need to give answers to these questions. There was a parish close to my home and I went to see the parish priest. I told him that I wanted to serve others and he asked me to help the children of a very poor district with their school work. With two friends I arrived there and we began to go every week to carry out the task that this priest had commended to us. There were times when I discovered the face of Jesus in the midst of the poverty and the precariousness, and was deeply moved by the suffering of so many brothers and sisters whose only fault was not having the same opportunities that some had.

Still there were questions in my heart that at times slowed me down and became more pressing when I saw the sufferings of others. Questions that touched the deepest part of my being and were on the one hand: "where is the Lord?" and on the other "what do you want me to do?"

At this time we also formed a group in the parish which did not last very long. I was not able to identify much with what we were living in the group meetings and after a short time I stopped going to the meetings. I felt that it was not for me and without too many arguments, I moved away.

One day while I was attending a course at the University, we began speaking with one of our young professors. In a certain moment of the conversation I mentioned that I was looking for a group in which to live my faith. He asked me if I had ever thought of CLC. My answer was that I had never heard of such a strange acronym and we stopped speaking of the subject.

A short time later, we met a friend and among the many subjects we spoke of, almost at the end of our conversation, I asked him if he had ever heard of a movement called CLC. To my surprise he answered yes and said that he belonged to a group. I asked if they admitted people like me who had so many doubts in their heart and he answered yes.

A little later he invited me to a meeting where he presented me to the CLC. There were various members of the community and

the ecclesiastical assistant. From the beginning I sensed that this was what I had been searching for. This new world opened up a perspective wholly unknown to me. I saw a style of life lived by others which seduced me and I felt it liberated me. It showed me my attachments but gave me a much deeper hope. Right then and there I joined the community. Yet I remember minute by minute of that day almost eight years ago. Today I belong to a community called Horneros (the name of a Uruguayan bird known for the style of house that he builds), a group made up of three women and three other men.

The year I entered I lived one of the most profound experiences of my life: four days of spiritual exercises. An experience that has remained recorded in my heart because it was the first time I felt that God was so close, giving me all his affection. Two years later I made the 30-day Spiritual exercises in daily life for almost a year. With the help of the director of the exercises, I lived the experience which marked the before and after of my life of faith. It gave an answer to the hardest question that a man can ask himself and ask God: What must I do for you, Jesus? The process

of seeking the call of Christ, and giving an answer: to choose the way of following Him, to be in the place which the Father gave me to serve His Son. To choose to be a layman and to be in CLC.

In 1994, I ended my period as treasurer of the CLC in Uruguay. Two years of work on the national council and accompanying the growth which we lived as a community that was becoming stronger day by day. At this moment I felt that my work on the national council was ended and something impelled me not to present myself for the election of the new council that was to be carried out that year. My desire to serve was strong and coincided with the theme of the World Assembly of Hong Kong; repeatedly I asked the Lord to clarify my mission as a lay person in this world. My prayer was the product of my exercises, bring me Father, there where you want me to serve you. Then I was sent as a delegate of Uruguay to Hong Kong.

The World Assembly was a confirmation of my special vocation within our Church. To feel an identification with so many people from so many cultures, customs and languages

was an incredible experience. There my request to God was accentuated even more: entrust to me the mission you desire for my life.

The last day of the Assembly with the new ExCo already elected, the most unexpected proposal in the world was made to me: to be coopted into the World ExCo. A most inconceivable proposal for someone who had arrived with a heap of questions to the Lord: that your will be done, O Lord, that your will be done, O Lord, that your will be done, O Lord... My first reaction was: these people are crazy. How can they propose that I be coopted to be integrated into the World ExCo? And my following reaction was no. But after going over it in my heart throughout the night a great clarity came and the thought: you have been asking the Lord all this time to put you where He wants you to serve and when he gives you the opportunity you say no. How could I refuse Him if I had asked to do his will for so long?

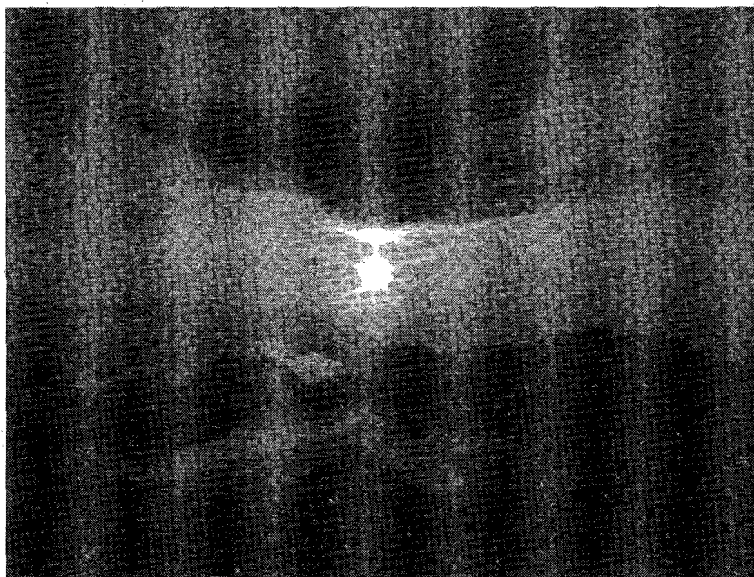
I was coopted and began a new step in my CLC life: I began to work on the international level. To live more closely the life of CLC in other countries was a grace of

the Lord. It is a work which I have appreciated greatly since the beginning and which gives me much joy. It is to be able to help this Christian Life Community to grow in conformity to the will of our Father.

María Ana and I met in CLC. This is where our histories came together and both of us feel that it is the place where we want to live our Faith: accompanying others and having them accompany us in our day to day life. They accompany us in our growth as spouses. We want to live this Love with our brothers and sisters in community and open to the world. We want it to be a Love not closed away for ourselves, but a Love to share with others. So we want to live it here where Christ has placed us to serve. May it be He who gives us new works and brings new challenges to our lives.

I pray that the Lord will send Maria Ana and me to those places where He wants us to be. I asked the Father many times that He show us day by day our special mission and those tasks that he wants from us. We will live in the happiness of receiving his grace and sharing with CLC the joy of loving and serving Him.

Fulfilled by God's Love



At my visit to CLC in Zagreb, I met a young man called Tihomir . Touched by his radiant happiness I wanted to know more about him.. He wrote the following letter:

My name is Tihomir. In English, it means silence (tiho), peace (mir). I am a young man and like many young men of my age, I was in love with football. It was my dream that one day I would become a rich and famous football player. But God seems to have had other plans. Instead of helping me to become a footballer, he took my life into his own hands: he gave me brain cancer.

At first, I saw this sickness as God's way of telling me to retire from service to this world. But then I began to recover somewhat from this illness; this I read as a sign that now I was to serve the Lord. And God gradually gave me everything I needed in order to be able to serve him to the best of my ability. I would like to share with you some of these gifts which the Lord has given to me on my spiritual journey.

Once, in the spring of 1985, when my head was really hurting me; I went in imagination to the place in my head where I felt the pain. There I found a boy. I thought that he was my brain, so I told him all my troubles. He seemed to understand me completely. I asked him his name. He answered, "Domingo". Afterwards, in a foreign dictionary, I found that this word means "of the Lord" or "of God".

Before I was hospitalized in February 1988 for my brain cancer, I made a list of all the activities which I would do when I recovered. I was twenty-five years old and I planned to get back into sports, to travel, to write... Thus, when I was admitted to the hospital, which was filled with sadness, I was not afraid. I felt so much at peace that I could help other patients. I realized now that this peace was a gift from God; he was guiding me although I did not realize it at the time.

A few years later, in December 1994, during a lecture on the spiritual life, I felt a tremendous peace come over me and from the depths of my being came a message: "Serve God with your whole being!"

During another spiritual seminar in July 1996, I understood and

accepted in a more profound way that all the good it seems I do, I really don't do, rather it is God who is acting through me. I realized that I was a useless servant. I must tell you, in that humble awareness I felt such a happiness: I was now free! All the false walls of pride had been torn down!

On 26 December 1996 as I was sitting in the courtyard I perceived by the spirit what I will now describe to you.

In the courtyard which is surrounded by a high wall there were a number of children who each had a flower to take care of. All these flowers made the courtyard very beautiful to look at. However, some of the children were lazy and grew tired of caring for their flower. So they neglected it and naturally, it began to wilt away. When these children saw was happening to their flowers, they grew envious of the children whose flowers were still beautiful. At night some of these children went and destroyed the nice flowers, while others forcefully took the flowers of those children who were weaker. Our courtyard had become a place of conflict, quarrels and ruined flowers.

However, the Lord, who is powerful, chose to lift some children up above the wall so that

they could see what was on the other side of this wall. I, without any merit of my own, was one of those children. Beyond the wall, I saw such fantastic beauty: endless meadows, filled with flowers which were much larger and more beautiful than those here in this courtyard. The meadows glowed with a wonderfully warm light. They were filled with beautiful smells and sweet melodies. As I gazed, the Lord said to me: "Be obedient to me, and you will eternally enjoy that which you have seen beyond the wall."

On the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2, 1997, after Mass, a family friend came to tell me that after I had left the hospital, she had talked with a well-known doctor in that hospital. He had told her that I would not live long, perhaps a year or two. My mother had also gone to speak with the head of the Hospital section where I had been. He and my mother had known each other from childhood and he also told my mother the same thing. A good neighbour, who knows the doctor who operated on me, confirmed this news. Listening to what these good people were sharing with me, I realized that although I had forgotten to bring a candle to church for the Candlemas celebration, a candle with a flame

of happiness and joy was now burning inside of me.

On 6 June 1997, I composed this short reflection which I have entitled "I can't any more"



*I can't hate any more,
can't fury any more,
can't envy any more,
can't grieve any more.
Still I can "only" love,
wish the best for all.*

*Oh, how beautiful it is, my God,
to be fulfilled by your love!*



God has given me rich creativity and intelligence. With these gifts I could have lived a good life here on earth. However, when I "tasted" the heavenly gifts, nothing earthly any longer interested me. I am now a happy man, a really happy man, and I wish that all others may find this happiness: God. The one and only happiness is in God. He gives it lavishly to everyone who asks for it sincerely in faith

To you, Roswitha, and to all others,
with great happiness,

Tihomir

Always for the greater glory of God

A commitment for a life project

How can we mature a spirituality embodied in the concreteness of our daily life? How can we become believable models of the new evangelization? These are the questions that the Italian Church asks itself after the Palermo Conference, in the document: "With the gift of charity in history."

These are the questions that we ask ourselves, as CLC, as a community which recognizes itself as Church and wants to walk with her. How can we express our identity today? How does the Lord call us to be CLC today? This is the basic question which guides our journey of inquiry. A journey of inquiry traversed by some key words: the project of CLC, a style of gratuitousness, in a time which is moving rapidly towards the threshold of the year 2000.

A project:

A project is the contrary of the ultra-conservatism which teaches that "things were always done this way." A project is the antithesis of that speaking endlessly "at" one another that becomes fatal when we look only at the

present without reaching for the future. Ours is the *spirituality of the "magis"*: "the "more"; it is a journey, a constant openness to what is new. Those who are nostalgic do not help the community to grow in the direction indicated by God. Memory is important if it opens onto the future and helps us to live the present as an opportunity that the Lord gives us as a gift of his love.

A community project

The CLC vocation finds its sources in Ignatian spirituality, but it doesn't become exhausted by living the spirituality on a personal level. The Ignatian spirituality is necessary and indispensable for a CLC vocation but it is not sufficient. Many persons worthy of praise live the Ignatian spirituality although they do not belong to the CLC. Why then, have we recognized the fact that we have a specific vocation? Recognizing our vocation in CLC signifies considering the importance and the value of community. G.P. n. 7, speaking of communitarian ties, reminds us that "We are bound together by our common commitment, our common

way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother." Let us ask ourselves the significance of having Mary as the icon of our community. Mary is she through whom the gratuitousness of God assumed a countenance and became visible in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us. To have Mary as our icon can also mean that CLC is called to become an instrument of God's gratuitousness which wants to manifest itself in our times. Mary is she who is able to bless her God and make her life a daily benediction to the God of life.

A common commitment, a common way of living... CLC cannot only be a community for the formation of its members. It does not simply mean a weekly meeting from which we draw the motivation to live better our daily lives as Christians. CLC is a community which becomes a sign of salvation. By means of its being a community, with the words and actions of a community, it is called to express the truth that the Lord is the Savior.

A common commitment, a common way of living,... The strength and the tangibility of the good news to mankind pass through the credibility by which we announce it as a community called to become a blessing of God's gratuitousness. "The people of today need places where the Gospel is lived and incarnated," places where salvation history is narrated. Therefore, the basic question which animates us is how to make the Christian Life Community a place where we daily

narrate the salvation that Jesus works in us.

A style of life

In the synthesis of last year's conference we said: "Today, we have been called to make present, understandable and provocative what Jesus has given us, transforming it into a style of existence by the rhythm of our daily lives." Therefore, it is a matter of continuing this journey, giving tangibility and a content to the desire for a shared style of life. A style of life is an habitual way of behaving; it is an ordinary way of living, speaking and acting. Therefore, a style of life regards how we normally and ordinarily live our daily lives, our being a CLC community. If someone asks us, as they asked Jesus, "where do you live?" that is, where can I tangibly see what you are and what you do every day, can we respond as Jesus did: "Come and see."? What would we say? Where is our "come and see"? If we invite someone to come to our home, to the home of our spirituality, what should that person find? Above all, a way of living, a usual way of relating to time, to money, to living family relationships, to work, to the apostolate, and to a social commitment.

We are not speaking here of discovering new volunteer services, or new commitments, because every community, listening to the most urgent needs of their own area, organizes and chooses what responses

they will give. It is rather a matter of giving tangible contents to a style of shared life in which we commit ourselves as a group, because it is as a group that we are called to give witness today.

A style of gratuitousness

This lifestyle on which we base our commitment is a style of gratuitousness.

Gratuitousness is the "being" of God who reveals himself to us by creating the world and humanity simply out of love. Gratuitousness is the "being" of God who leaves his divine condition in order to enter fully into the human condition to the point of giving his life for us. From a true meeting with the God of gratuitousness, our life becomes benediction, it becomes a blessing of God who is at work in our lives and in the lives of all individuals.

The gratuitousness we are speaking of is not that of commercial propaganda. It is not a strategy for augmenting sales, for making the product CLC more palatable. Gratuitousness is the style of a God who asks us to become persons capable of recognizing his gifts and of becoming instruments of his thanksgiving, i.e. of his gratuitousness.

Today it is difficult to live a style of gratuitousness but this is certainly the reality that most provokes others. I love you, not because I want something in return, I love you only for love itself. This is the reality that becomes provocative in a world where the only

dominant element is the logic of the market, where even those areas that should most be marked by gratuitousness (we can think of free time, of friendship and family) are in reality organized by the logic of profit.

To make visible and, in some way, perceptible the fact that today it is possible to experience gratuitousness born from the love of Christ: this is the task which awaits us. A difficult task which passes through our daily living, our everyday reality which contains all our weaknesses, and our limits. We do not pretend to construct a perfect, idyllic community but simply to permit the gratuitousness of God to become history in our humble and ordinary existence.

There are indications, there are the fruits of a style of gratuitousness: for example, availability to God's action, giving without expecting to receive, paying attention to the poor, dedicating oneself to long-term projects, perseverance, being ready to share one's own experiences, hospitality. There is the concern that one's own community be useful to the Church and to the world more than to the affirmation of the community itself. As a community, we must resist the overwhelming forces of the marketplace.

Let us attempt then to better define what we believe to be the style of shared gratuitousness, discovering concrete commitments, daily gestures which can begin to indicate our desire

to be converted to Christ. We are journeying towards an ever deeper understanding of what living a type of shared gratuitousness means for us. Let us begin to identify the concrete and possible commitments for all of us, the commitments in which we invest our time and energy, the commitments which we make our own, and on which we will eventually be verified.

But let us take this step, by going from abstract ideas to the concreteness of a communal event which involves our daily living. Let us try to name things: what are the commitments, minimum, simple, liveable which, for example, a CLC family can live today to express gratuitousness? What do we mean by expressing gratuitousness in our use of time, money? What does this mean in tangible terms?

An oriental poem says:

***I told the almond tree
Brother, speak to me of God.
And the almond tree flowered!"***

When, in love, we experience God as He who caresses and embraces our lives, then our lives becomes as eloquent as the almond tree producing flowers. The flower of creativity in love, as Paul reminds us, bears fruit: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Gal. 5,22)

It is not the observance of a law which opens life to newness, nor can a wise discourse generate conversion.

It is abandonment to the loving Presence of life that permits it to open itself to that "more" which brings about the discovery of the springtime of love. It is from having met and experienced in our own lives the gratuitousness of God that a style of gratuitousness is born.

A time of grace.

A project of CLC, a style of gratuitousness in the time the Lord has given us to live.

A time of grace, a time of jubilee! This is the favorable time, the *Kairos*, the propitious time which God has given us. It is this time that we are called to live in depth. We cannot waste this time that the Lord has given us; the gifts that He has given are too big to be ignored.

Therefore, with hearts filled with the things that the Lord has suggested to us, let's work in groups, keeping in mind the task that we have, a binding task. We truly wish you good work, so that our community can progress towards a greater transparency of the gratuitousness of God and can make of its existence a blessing of God, so that others may "see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (1Peter2,12). Always for the greater glory of God.

Marilena D'Angiolella,
President CLC Italy

To Step beyond the Niche



Contemplating a Sculpture

In 1996, in Bamberg, Germany, a new work portraying Mary Ward was added to the many created throughout the world since the year 1621. In the inner courtyard of the Mary Ward Institute, in the niche over the door of the church, you can now find a sculpture made by Albert Ultsch, an artist of Bamberg.

In this sculpture we meet a pilgrim. She seems happy and recollected. We can feel a certain lightness emanating from her and a great clarity and firmness of spirit. Dressed simply, she is exposed to the wind. Her face — with eyes closed — is turned toward the interior sun of God, which gives her light and the orientation she needs to start on her adventure with Him. She is given a new and profound vision that is a divine illumination that makes more precise what Gods wants of her in her unusual life.

Where does this woman get her creative energy? We find embossed over the heart of Mary Ward the initials **IHS** which are the Greek initials for the name of Jesus. From this name, as from a bright source, rays of light emanate. This name is written in her heart. She has given Jesus her

heart. She points it out with her left hand.

"He was so close to me, he was within me, as I had never experienced him before ... I clearly and directly saw Him enter into my heart and little by little hide himself there... He took possession of me." (Annotations from the Exercises of October 10, 1619 at Liege).

It is Jesus on whom Mary Ward leans. He is her staff, the pilgrim's true support. That's why she easily holds the pilgrim's staff in her right hand.

Mary Ward had already walked some distance before she was able to clearly recognize the road laid out before her: a new road, in fact one that bothered the Church of her time. Furthermore, it was new in a revolutionary way for women of that era. It is not surprising then that such steps were not understood, were opposed and even provoked indignation.

But with spiritual clarity the pilgrim continued along her road. In 36 years - from the moment she had recognized her mission in 1609 until her death in 1645 — she had gone fifteen thousand kilometers, for the most part on

foot. "To tell the truth, we may ask how Mary, whose health was poor and weak, was able to stand such treatment" states one of her biographers. To this question Mary Ward herself could answer:

"It seems to me that one must first know this road (that is the road of the Exercises), then desire to follow it, commit oneself to it, the rest will then be done by God. Whoever wants to accompany me in this commitment to construct a world of solidarity in peace, justice, unity and love, must walk with me on this road."

Thus with a firm step and with courage, Mary Ward walks beyond the niche - leaves safe grounds. She lets herself be moved, even ardently captured, by the call of Jesus which she has in her heart. She is ready to be sent by Him.

What touches me looking at this sculpture of Mary Ward? Are we not also called again and again to leave our "niches," our self-made security and protection, whatever these may be? Certainly, we have to leave safe grounds and set out like Mary Ward but like her, again

and again we must stop and look at He who is the way, the truth and the life (cf. John 14,6); He who is the good shepherd and shows us the road (cf. John 10,11). We must be open and allow Him to inspire us with His fire, zeal and perseverance for His mission. In other words, we must be **on Mission with Him**.

With the promise of Jesus, we find ourselves as those **sent, always on mission** along the road.. Mary Ward's message to us is not to cling to our own support and staffs but to be drawn towards Jesus, who liberates and heals us, who gives us energy, joy and life.

As the pilgrim Ignatius, Mary Ward, too, is **a letter of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God for today's world** (cf. 2 Cor. 3,3). And we in CLC — what will be our next step beyond the niche so that we, too, will be a letter of Christ sent to today's world?

Franz-Reinhard Daffner,
Augsburg/Germany

Note of author:

I am most grateful to Sr Beate Neuberth, IBMV, Bamberg for the photographs and the precious information.