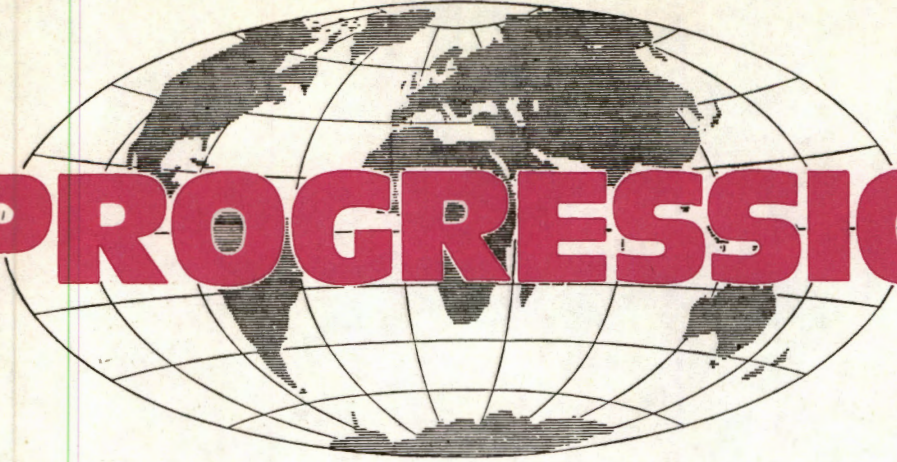




PROGRESSIO

Building Bridges

Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue



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EDITORIAL

The "Weeks" after September 11

The articles in this issue of *PROGRESSIO* cluster around issues of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue as lived within CLC. This number was planned before the events of September and since then many people have started to think that the time for dialogue is over and we must draw clear lines and build strong fences. But this is no time to lose heart.

Over recent months I have been surprised by how many times a phrase or an idea from the Exercises has struck me as I reflect on the current world situation. When many people speak about the possibilities for peace or even for survival, we hear fear, lack of hope and above all the lack of charity. I have often been reminded of how Ignatius describes desolation in the rules for the discernment of spirits: "loss of confidence, without hope, without love . . . sad." Perhaps we have been, and still are, in a collective moment of desolation. If this is so, Ignatius insists this is no time to be making changes in our fundamental orientation.

We are tempted, at the world level and at the personal level, to change our attitude towards Muslims because of what some Muslims did on September 11. We think of revising all our policies on immigration, on refugees, on multiculturalism. We speak of closing in on ourselves, protecting ourselves from the 'other'. Some people have even turned to violence following this absurd logic: some Muslims tried to kill us; Muslims are different, therefore anyone who is different must be a Muslim; therefore I can kill him.

Ignatius is right. This is no time to be changing our attitude to the world. This is no time to let fear drive us to turn back the clock to the days when we lived permanently in fear of one another, armed to the teeth in order to ensure our security.

Of course, security is a good thing. We cannot live without some measure of it. But Ignatius also warns us of evils that suggest themselves to us under the appearance of good. We need to ask where this 'good' of security will lead us. We are already seeing the early results of our quest: the curtailment of freedoms; increasing suspicion and fear even to the point of paranoia; exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers; vastly increased military spending at the expense of more constructive things; a discourse of permanent war.

Are we not running the risk of losing our life because we are so concerned to save it? We talk about protecting our liberal, democratic heritage, but to do this we have to close our borders; institute military tribunals; control information; spread disinformation; discriminate on the basis of religion; develop a monochrome culture. The talk in Europe is about protecting our Christian heritage from some imagined Islamic threat. Yet in trying to protect our Christianity, we end up denying it. We exclude the poor who come looking for work and survival; we push away those who are fleeing war and injustice; we put our trust in military strength and "heightened security" rather than in the pursuit and justice and solidarity.

The Meditation on the Two Standards also keeps echoing as I listen to all this talk. We are proud of our wealth and economic development, proud of our technological progress. The developed countries are honoured, envied, emulated. Riches, honour, pride . . . Can we hear the whisper of the Enemy in the plain outside Babylon?

But what do we have to be so proud about? Perhaps Ignatius would encourage us to return collectively to the First Week and get a realistic view of ourselves. It is only seventy years ago that Europe gave us the horrors of Fascism and Stalinism, the Holocaust and the Gulags. Have we forgotten so soon? Since our "Enlightenment" of which we are so proud, how many millions have been killed in our civil wars - for even the World Wars began as what we could call European civil wars. The bloodiest day in U.S. history as it turns out

was not last September 11 but another September day in 1862 during the Civil War Battle of Antietam.

The developed countries preside over a global economy of frightful inequality and injustice, effectively conniving with corrupt leaderships in developing countries to crush the poor under an intolerable burden of debt. In many of our countries genuine freedom, justice and democratic institutions have only the most tenuous of holds.

Or perhaps it is only the Christian world that has the right to be proud. But have we forgotten our long history of religious wars? Have we forgotten how we slaughtered each other in Rwanda and Burundi so few years ago? Are blind to what took place in the Balkans even more recently - Catholics against Orthodox, and both against the Muslims? And what of Northern Ireland?

None of this is to deny the values we hold or the good we do, the achievements and the blessings of our cultures. Rather it is a call for a more humble and realistic view of ourselves as we face the important choices of how to organize our life together in the years to come. The world today is making these choices with too much haste and too little reflection. The advice of Ignatius might have something to offer us.

Dan Madigan S.J.

OUR COMMON MISSION

CHRIST and CULTURE (#3)

We commit ourselves to becoming involved to find a new way of being universal Church drawing to itself from all that makes today's reality so rich in its diversity.

We promote dialogue in the Church and between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, other religions, people who are searching and all of good will.

We work for authentic inculturation in local Churches, helping Church in promoting what is positive in the local churches and challenging their negative aspects, and applying this to pastoral service, to catechetics, to liturgy and to theology.

We work to integrate with our faith every aspect of our reality, including family, marriage and work.

We promote the values of authentic human relationships in the Church, which implies attention to healing our brokenness and working for the transformation of sinful structures

ECUMENISM AND CLC



I have been a member of CLC France since 1994. From the beginning, I was interested in the European dimension of the community. Thus, I found myself travelling to Sardinia, Germany and Luxembourg... many occasions to meet others and to discover different ways of *"living in the CLC family"*.

When I was called upon to represent CLC during a European ecumenical meeting from April 17-22, 2001 at Strasbourg, France, I quickly answered yes. Undoubtedly, this was more for the pleasure of encountering others and because of the European aspect, than from any profound motivation for ecumenism.

Thirst is born of absence... and I think that the taste for ecumenism is born when we realize that our Christian brothers and sisters miss us. I am French Alsatian and I grew up in a region where cohabitation among religions was a normal fact of life: Protestants, Catholics (and Jews) were numerous and had the same certified statute. The Orthodox community was equally as present in Strasbourg. Certain Alsatian villages have only one place of worship a "simultaneum" where we celebrate Catholic or Protestant ceremonies. The premises of the faculty of theology are shared between the Protestants and Catholics: the plenary meetings take place in the hall between the two Institutes! Certainly, we went through religious wars and there is still a certain restraint among us. I had participated in pluriconfessional celebrations; I had been a witness at a Catholic/Orthodox marriage. Still, I must admit that I had never truly reflected on ecumenism as if, in the end, there wasn't much left to do about it.

For me, this meeting was the occasion to overturn some convictions. During these days I met many people: young, old, woman pastors or bishops, cardinals, Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Baptists, among others, as well as Orthodox. We conversed and at times changed the world together (or at least our Churches). But although at times we prayed together, we could not be

united in sharing the same Bread. This lack, among brothers and sisters whom I had discovered, uncovered a taste, a desire within me that I had not suspected.

The meeting took place in two stages: first a preparatory meeting of two days for young people. There were a hundred of us from all over Europe: representatives of movements, different communities or Episcopal conferences all together. We formed a group, but it was one where languages and ways of praying were blended without losing their own identity.

I was impressed and overcome by the fact that certain persons from France and other European countries, often people younger than I, were already quite involved in ecumenism: organizing meetings, conferences, etc. Actually, I felt very humbled in presenting what was done in CLC through an ignorance of an ecumenical reality for CLC (which really should exist... at least I hope so!).

After this, we joined about one hundred Church leaders coming from the Conference of European Churches (KEK), the Council of Episcopal European Conferences (CCEE) as well as various prominent ecclesiastical personalities of Europe. In fact, the idea was to allow a authentic meeting, not only among the different confessions, but also among different generations: to "have the young participate, by entrusting them with an ecumenical vision for the future and the pursuit of the council process of justice and peace, and to safeguard creation". For me, this was the occasion of intensive, true meetings: I walked, discussed, shared with people who were as dissimilar as a German Lutheran woman bishop and Cardinal Etchegaray. I believe that these times of meeting were the occasion for the youngest of us to be endowed with the mission of enabling ecumenism to live and grow.

It was the first ecumenical meeting where young people were represented on such a large scale. We can hope that this is the first meeting of many. Perhaps future meetings will see a more important place given to the young in the tribune. It should be noted that at times some felt that they were more supporters than real performers in the event. Yet, it was often repeated to us that the young make up the future of ecumenism. However, it is true that there is a long road to be traversed on one part or the other: to accept the slow diplomacy of the oldest members and the passionate impatience of the young.

These periods of encounters found their zenith on the last day with the signing of the "charta oecumenica" by the representatives of the CCEE and the KEK. This text had been debated in all the Churches of the KEK and of the Catholic Episcopal Conferences of Europe and was sent to everyone as the basic text in their search for reconciliation and unity. It is neither a text of law nor of dogma but rather a commitment, a journey: ecumenism must be lived.

The participants were entrusted with the responsibility of transmitting to our churches, our communities, and our countries the fruits and results of this meeting. I heard and read that some of the youth, observers, journalists, and directors, at times asserted that there was much more to do, that we had not gone far enough. As for myself, I remember above all what we were told: that there were three enemies of ecumenism ... *suspicion, inertia and impatience!*

Therefore, it is true: there is much yet to do... to build... in the Church, in our hierarchies, in our communities and maybe it is not in years that we must measure our progress. In this, the contribution of our elders was essential for me. I realized that what was feasible for this meeting had been out of the question some decades ago. In the opening celebration, Elisabeth Parmentier commented on the pilgrims of Emmaus, comparing the two routes: that of ecumenism and that which led the two disciples towards the inn. She stated that we are still en route; our eyes are not yet opened. But perhaps in some years, we will realize that our hearts were burning within us ... in Strasbourg in 2001.

As for myself, I have the impression that this meeting will call me to go further in this journey of ecumenism. I had arrived at the meeting rather lukewarm, but I left with the deep desire to work for ecumenism on my level. I also see in this invitation, a call for the whole Christian Life Community. I reminded myself that we are a community of Christian life. I hope that CLC will have yet other opportunities to participate in such meetings and I hope that those who represent CLC can repeat the achievements leading to the sense of ecumenism in our community.

Marie-Sandrine Saas

SEEKING WHAT IS COMMON CLC AUSTRALIA



Joseph Hoo has been involved with CLC for about 4 years and is currently the State President of CLC in Victoria, Australia. He is also a member of the Australian CLC National Executive Committee. Joseph is 30 years old and is currently a corporate lawyer, having previously worked with the Jesuits in Australia at Jesuit Publications (which publishes Eureka Street, Madonna and Australian Catholics).

When I reflect on my journey as a Christian, individuals or groups of individuals have played an important role in my formation. I have always found it easier to see and experience God in the faces, words and actions of people who have journeyed with me.

I recall that as a young boy, my parents were attracted to a particular Chinese Methodist church. In this church, they found caring, loving people who were very supportive of our family at a time when we were new migrants to a country whose language and culture were very foreign to us.

As an adolescent, I became curious as to what was my role in life and where I fitted in. Again, I was blessed to have been welcomed into the community at my local Baptist church by a group of people who took interest in me and were generous enough to offer support and guidance without seeking to control my life.

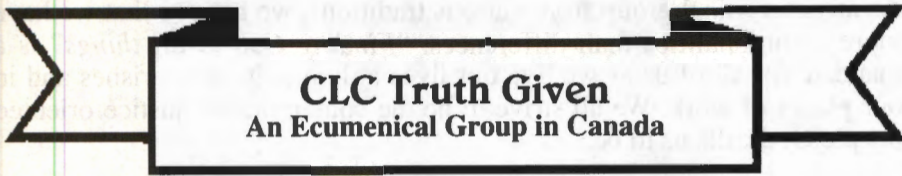
My mid - to late twenties were another period of great change. CLC was a reminder that God loves me, at a time when I felt very alone, abandoned and dry in spirit. In CLC, God gave me the gifts of listening,

reflection, discernment and spiritual nourishment. Most importantly, though, CLC was the gift of a community of people who loved me, and who challenged me, and were committed to helping me to live more authentically.

Dan Madigan S.J., a member of my CLC group, once explained to me the Two Standards by way of a practical example. He suggested that the way of God is to focus on what is common between us and binds us together, whereas the way of the devil is to focus on what is different between us and separates us.

I guess my experiences of God and church are not so much experiences of differing institutions, words and concepts. Rather, my experiences are of a common struggle with others to discern God's will. I challenge myself to be humble in accepting that I am struggling just like everyone else, and that I don't have better or more answers than anyone else. I am seeking to love others in the way that God loves me: just as I am, not for who I could be.





CLC Truth Given

An Ecumenical Group in Canada

Our Background

CLC Truth Given began in January 1992. It was the result of an ongoing faith-sharing group begun during the Renew Program in the late 1980's in a local Roman Catholic Church. At the conclusion of the Renew Program a couple in the group (John and Colleen) left for Guelph, Ontario to begin a sabbatical year. They were commissioned by the Renew group to "*go and bring something back for the group,*" some structure that might assist the group with its growth and development.

While in Guelph, the couple was accompanied by a Jesuit priest. They were introduced to a CLC model of Christian community living. The Renew group in Wolfville had grown in the meantime to about 12 persons. Many were already friends within a small geographical area, actively participating in various church communities. A number began to express an interest in meeting regularly to share a Christian journey. The group consisted of married couples with families, single as well as mid-life to senior people from the Catholic, United and Christian Reformed traditions. After returning to Wolfville and rejoining the group in the fall of 1991, John and Colleen presented their findings on CLC.

Our Understanding of CLC

CLC for us means "Christian" principally. The word "ecumenical" also means, "*of, or representing, the whole Christian world.*" We understand the value of particular traditions and expressions of faith and doctrine. The point of CLC is to help all people live more fully a way of life based on the life and teachings of Jesus. CLC has a particular charism offered through the Spiritual Exercises. We believe that Christians from all traditions have something to learn from Ignatian spirituality. We are discerning Christian communities of apostolic service.

As an ecumenical group from various traditions, we believe that we have more commonalities than differences. "*Finding God in all things*" is a mandate for all of us as we live our lives at home, in our parishes and in our places of work. We all strive to be the contemplative justice-oriented people God calls us to be.

We know from our experience as a group that diversity of traditions adds considerably to our understanding of Christian community living. Listening in community with others from different traditions has affirmed and enriched our experience as a people of God. Persons of traditions other than the Roman tradition have a rich history of evangelism and/or social justice, which history may enhance the living out of the CLC vision. Persons of the Roman tradition bring much in terms of spirituality and liturgy to ecumenical communities. Together we have a more complete appreciation of the Christian perspective. All of us in the group desire to know the resurrected Jesus and to live our mission out of this relationship.

Our Issues

As with any ecumenical group we have had to address a few issues; namely, the *Eucharist* (some of our members say Communion), the *formation manuals* and *Mary*.

Eucharist

We have had Catholic and Protestant forms of the Eucharist. Members of our group are or have been from the Baptist, United Church, Christian Reformed Church, Anglican and Catholic traditions. In some areas there is concern about sharing the Eucharist with "non-Catholics". Some of us have experienced the disquiet and rejection that comes with certain rules. Celebrating the Eucharist or Lord's Supper in a tradition other than the Roman Catholic one is not a problem. Celebrating in the Catholic tradition, however, is a problem wherever a "Communion of Hospitality" is not the norm.

Eucharist for us is an acknowledgement that Jesus is at the core of our community and we desire to share and celebrate our joys and concerns in His tangible presence. We know that the point of Eucharist

is to unite us as His Body, not to divide us. We look for ways that enhance our understanding of each other and ways to support and encourage one another to live more fully the principles of CLC. Eucharist helps all of us.

Manuals

We have followed rather faithfully the CLC manuals, which were and continue to be a great help in our formation. The format is very helpful and the content is rich in substance. The language or vocabulary of Christians from different traditions is important to consider in an ecumenical group. A couple of groups in our area, starting with the intention to follow the CLC way, have chosen another way since their interpretation of the material is that it is for Catholics. In our own group we have tried to understand the material more broadly listening to the way in which each one reads and understands the material. While efforts to use inclusive language for women are applauded, we believe that there is a need to address the language issue so that all traditions can experience inclusion in the material.

The written word, whether it be scriptural, ecclesial or social, is very important to persons of other traditions. The expression "the Church" is often made in the manuals. If this means the Roman Church, it should be written the "Roman Catholic Church." If this means the "Christian Church," it should be made clear because the former expression is exclusive in an ecumenical setting whereas the latter is inclusive. The words "consolation and desolation" and the word "formation" are used often in our meetings. We have had many discussions about the meaning of these words as other words might be used by some to express the same meaning.

Mary

In places where Mary is considered in the meetings, it is important that a competent Guide introduce her. We have found in our community that her importance to members of the Roman tradition is acknowledged easily and Mary seems to grow on the persons of other traditions. The women in the ecumenical communities fare quite well, as they meet an extraordinary model, to them, of womanhood. We found in

our group a need to talk about our understanding of Mary and her role and place in the Christian Church.

Our Suggestions

We believe that we can promote CLC as a vocation within the Christian Church. Our experience as an ecumenical CLC group is that we are a microcosm of the Christian Church. With more ecumenical groups, people from various traditions will be able to see themselves represented in different groups and at different CLC levels. Perhaps the inclusion of an Anglican or Christian Reformed CLC member on a committee to revise the formation manuals would facilitate future ecumenical CLC meetings. The resource material would also have to come from a greater variety of ecumenical sources always keeping in mind the CLC charism and spirituality.

Why not have a Regional Council and a National Council that is ecumenical in composition? One of the fears of some people joining a CLC group is that they will be converted. The conversion in CLC is not to a tradition but to Jesus.

A Group Guide for ecumenical and non-Roman Catholic communities is a high priority if the questions and concerns are to be addressed satisfactorily. The Guide needs to understand and value other Christian traditions and needs to be clear about the universal nature of the CLC principles. While the Roman Catholic tradition and history of CLC need to be acknowledged, the universal message of CLC as apostolic Christian discerning communities needs to be the focus.

Conclusion

We have discovered as an ecumenical CLC group that diversity is a gift from God. What we do with the gift says much about who we are and where we are on the spiritual path. Belonging to an ecumenical CLC group has been a happy and valuable experience for us, happy because of the people who make up the group and valuable because it has broadened our understanding of a people of God in the Christian Church.

Experiences and Reflections

CLC Germany



Patricia Schweier, a native of Augsburg, Germany, studied Theology and Roman Languages. Currently, she is a teacher of Religious Education, French, and Spanish in a Mary Ward School for 11-19 year old girls. A member of the Marian Congregation since 1966, Patricia joined CLC in 1978 and in 1989 made her Permanent Commitment. She is a Guide of the Spiritual Exercises as well as a Group Guide. A member of the Euroteam for 12 years (Secretary and Coordinator), Patricia is the current Eurolink for CLC Germany and a member of CLC Germany National Executive Council.

The history of Germany, the country of Martin Luther, the first reformer and originator of Protestantism, is marked a lot by the period of Reformation. “Cuius regio eius religio” (meaning...the sovereign decides on the religion of his subjects) was the slogan that helped people in Germany to live in peace after many hard years of struggle in the 16th century. Those who wanted to maintain membership in their religious denomination had to leave the region where they lived, *if* it was not the one of their sovereign. Families moved and had to look for new conditions of life. But, from the very beginning, there were some places, such as the independent cities (freie Reichsstädte), where the living together was organised by parity, i.e. all functions in politics and administration had to be given in an equivalent way to Catholics and Protestants. Augsburg, the town where our National CLC Secretariat is today, is the most authentic example of this.

Of course the situation in Germany has changed a lot. Nevertheless, there are still regions where the Catholics or the Protestants form the majority in the population, where the mentality of people, architecture and other cultural aspects reflect, in a typical way, the denominational shaping. In our present society, more and more of the population is integrated and the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism have become less important. The differences are more evident between Christians looking for a deeper way of living their faith and those who are indifferent towards religion, who don't practice their faith, or have even left Church. After Vatican II, many Catholic and Protestant parishes organised encounters between their faithful, common prayer meetings or even common activities.

Where is CLC in all this? Concerning ecumenism, we have experiences in different areas: Protestants attending CLC group meetings, ecumenical participation in CLC formation programs, giving the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in the Protestant Churches.

1. Protestants as group members

Since the contacts between Catholics and Protestants are part of our daily life, we do not organise special encounters or any spectacular activity. The opportunities to be in contact are various and numerous: in the neighbourhood, at the work place, in school... and there are also a lot of inter-confessional couples. The inter-confessional contacts among parishes also offer a channel of getting to know Ignatian Spirituality. In many Roman Catholic parishes, a special form of the 19th Annotation is offered. Protestants who are interested can participate and sometimes they act in co-operation in offering the sessions. These contacts arouse interest and sometimes the one or the other Protestant is invited and accepts to attend a group. Therefore, we have groups all over Germany with Protestant members.

This situation is quite normal

- experiences in life and faith are shared,
- relationships are deepened and are mutually enriching

- problems that may arise are similar to those of other groups attended by Catholics only.

We have even observed that our name "Christian Life Community" sounds seductive. We have met persons who believed that CLC is an ecumenical organisation; they are disappointed in learning that our community is deeply rooted in the Catholic Church. Others might be confused and ask: "Didn't they find what they were looking for in their (protestant) Church?"

There is a moment when the fact of belonging to different denominations becomes a crucial point, even an obstacle that seems to impede progress. It is the moment when the members want to make a decision about continuing as a CLC group. This is at the time of asking for a temporary and, later on, for a permanent commitment. It is a question of membership. Some Protestant members have left the group at this point and it has been hard to do as very few have converted to Roman Catholicism. Most of them ask why they should not be allowed to commit themselves to CLC as they are. They are confronted by a deep desire to continue in CLC on the one hand, on the other hand these group members feel rooted in their own Church. The difficulty also consists in the fact that in our secularised world, it is more and more difficult to recognise differences between those likeminded Christians albeit belonging to different denominations than the differences that exist, perhaps even more expressively, among the Catholics themselves. Isn't it most important in today's world to defend the basic values of Christianity common to both denominations more than dogmatic interpretations that are only understood by theologians? The responsible persons are asking how to handle the question.

According to Canon Law, only a member of the Catholic Church can be a member of an officially recognised catholic community such as CLC (Can 316). In which sense then could a Protestant be integrated in CLC? As an associated member or a guest? Or, does this mean that any case, he or she will have to be rejected? What would Christ do in this situation, He whose concern it has been that "*...they all might be one*"?

2. Participation of Protestants in our Formation Program

When somebody applies for a weekend session on Meditation or an introductory form of the Spiritual Exercises, of course, we do not ask what religious denomination he or she belongs to. Thus, we have experienced that it is only at the end of such a course, and perhaps by chance, that we learn that a person is not a Roman Catholic. For the Spiritual Exercises themselves, it is different. Since the retreatant and the Spiritual Guide always meet for a first colloquy a certain time in advance, the Guide knows what faith community that the retreatant belongs to, but this doesn't hinder accepting him or her. There are other criteria for participating in the Spiritual Exercises.

In that context, what seems to be especially interesting is that Protestants feel attracted by a spirituality linked to a saint and a religious order, which played an important part during the counter-reformation. Saint Ignatius and his obedience towards the Pope, the Society of Jesus and their loyalty towards the Catholic Church, both often defending apologetically the Roman doctrine, is a symbol for the fierce quarrel between Rome and the Reformers. For many Protestants this image of the Jesuits still is valid.

Some of the Protestants, who participated in our formation program with a critical but unbiased attitude, discovered a way of deepening faith and connecting life and faith that they missed in their Church. They also discovered that Martin Luther and Ignatius had the same concerns, the same objectives: they wanted to renew the Church and to help the faithful to live as true Christians, even though in different ways. Consequently, some participants applied for formation as Spiritual Guides – and they were accepted. Thus, during the past decade about 12 non - Roman Catholics (primarily women: priests, Religious Sisters of Protestant Communities and lay persons) were trained as Spiritual Guides. They offer the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in their respective Churches.

The experiences of this course for Spiritual Guides have been very positive and enriching: important experiences of deep relationship and unity. The participants engaged themselves in the process of the

Spiritual Exercises and the more they advanced in this Christ-centred spirituality, the more they felt one in belonging to the one body, the Body of Christ. There was no difference between Protestants and Catholics concerning the openness towards the steps of this process nor concerning the difficulty to understand, for example, the way St. Ignatius describes the meditations on sin or hell. It is usually the wording that is difficult for people in our time and society and it has to be translated into contemporary language.

A special question is always about the celebration of the Eucharist. The Protestant Christians are invited to participate in the Eucharist and they really feel at ease. They appreciate the way of celebrating Eucharist during this course. Since they are integrated, as everybody else is, in the whole program – they take part in the responsibility of preparing morning - prayer, by leading the daily examen, by reading the scripture, by offering their personal intercessions. So far it has not yet been a problem that the pastors (all of them female up until now) have not participated in administering the Eucharist. If perhaps one day the wish to do so were mentioned, surely the whole group would speak about it and discern what decision could be taken. Only once, on one of the courses, was the Eucharist replaced by an ecumenical Liturgy of the Word.

“Our feeling with the Church”, as a topic during the formation course, always provokes discussion, but not in a polemic way. The participants try to come to an understanding with what happens in their own Church; they ask critical questions and suffer the separation. On October 31, 1999, when the common “Declaration Of The Justification Doctrine” was signed in Augsburg, the participants, from one of the formation courses, were present during the ceremony. It was a deep and wonderful experience for them and they agreed that this step that focused on *the common faith* must not be without any consequences. This common experience surely pushed them to commit themselves with new energy to the ecumenical movement. In this way, the input given by a CLC formation course and the witness of the participants is a seed that hopefully one day will bear fruit for the whole Church.

3. Ignatian Spiritual Exercises in the Protestant Church

It is most astonishing that the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, in the form they are offered by the CLC (a 10 day silent, individually guided retreat), do not only attract individuals of the Protestant Church, but are offered as a part of the official training program of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria. For instance, for about 10 years, one of the formation centres invites a Jesuit and CLC members to come and guide this course. In 1999 a book, with precious witnesses of some retreatants and interesting reflections on Spiritual Exercises within the Protestant Churches, was published.

One of the Protestant pastors wrote: "I always looked critically at the traditional over accentuation of the didactic-dogmatical moments in the life of our Church. The experiences in practising ministry confirmed these experiences. Therefore, two years ago my inner development led me to the meditation movement, since I had practised forms of Christian contemplation for several years. I only had some faint knowledge about the Spiritual Exercises, but I expected to live a more concrete form of spirituality. These expectations have been fully confirmed."

The CLC members who offer this service of guidance are also happy about their positive experiences. They meet persons who are curious, who are open for new forms of prayer and of discovering the Bible in a totally new way, and who experience how useful it is to be accompanied by a non-directive and competent spiritual guide. Traditionally, Protestants are centred on the Word. They take great care of very good and elaborated texts and sermons. They are used to study, discussing exegetical commentaries and to cope with religious matters in an intellectual and theoretical way, but they are not used to praying with images (as an example) or simply to listen to the very personal message of a Scripture passage. For them, it is a new experience to spend a training week without any books and without listening to lectures, but listening to God in silence and to what He says to them through their life, their hearts and the Scriptures.

In order to help the retreatants to get acquainted with the form of the Spiritual Exercises, different methods has been used. One of the

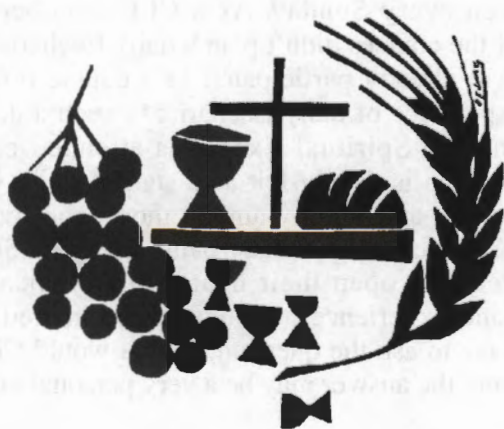
courses began with three days of introduction, i.e. the participants met twice a day for a short explanation and prayer guidelines; during another course every evening some instruction was given in order to explain the key elements (structure of prayer time, the Principle and Foundation, Discernment etc.)

How to find a merciful God? Martin Luther was tormented by this question and his answer that a person's salvation lays entirely within the gift of God (that the person cannot rescue himself or herself by good works, but only by faith) is deeply rooted in Protestantism. To *do* the Spiritual Exercises can immediately evoke the idea of justification by work and cause a certain reservation. But, one of the retreatants summed up his experiences and corrected this possible misunderstanding by describing the deeper reality of the Spiritual Exercises; he called them, "*...the grace by which I am allowed to co-operate with the Grace*".

Another interesting experience is the importance of the Eucharist. In the Protestant Church, they are not used to celebrate the Lord's Supper every day, not even every Sunday. As a CLC member recalled, the organiser of one of the courses didn't plan a daily Eucharist. Some of the retreatants, who had already participated in a course offered by CLC, appreciated this experience of daily Eucharist to such a degree that they asked for it during the Spiritual Exercises attended exclusively by Protestants. Communion is deeply felt as a sign of unity with God who offers Himself as a gift and – unity among those who live an intensive process together! And so, it is especially painful that the Spiritual Guide, to whom the retreatants open their hearts to and speak about most intimate feelings and experiences, should not be invited to the Lord's Table. Again we have to ask the question, "What would Christ would do in this situation?" and the answer may be a very personal one.

When Jesuits and CLC members are invited to guide the Spiritual Exercises in a Protestant institution, it is considered as a service offered to brothers and sisters who are grateful for the presence of Catholics sharing with them, their experiences. Then, it is up to the Protestants to find their own way of doing the Spiritual Exercises and actually, they are developing their own forms.

CLC in Germany has many possibilities to contribute to better understanding between the Catholics and the Protestants. We are really grateful for all the enriching experiences and we painfully miss the unity of all Christians. There are those who might be afraid that these contacts may level the still existing differences too much; there are others who ask whether we really can speak of ecumenism as long as we are only inviting the Protestants to participate in our tradition without being able to co-operate as partners. But, we feel that common spiritual experiences are an important contribution in the move ahead towards "reunification". After all, it is not our work but the work of God. We have the grace to co-operate with Him. This reminds me of the other essential moment in Germany history.



BUILDING BRIDGES

Ecumenism in Marriage and CLC

Married for nine years, 40 year old Ulrike Thiele and 44 year old Heiger Scholz are an ecumenical couple. Ulrike, a Lutheran, and Heiger, a Roman Catholic, live near Hannover, Germany. Ulrike comes from a Protestant family and in her youth she led her parish's youth group. Today, she works as a deacon in the local Lutheran parish. Heiger's family was Catholic in name only. After his Confirmation, he had little to do with church and religion. After studying law, he now works as the chief executive of their town.

We first met when Heiger started to work as the Secretary of the Social-Democratic group in the Hannover County Council. Ulrike was (and still is) a member of the council.

How do we live our ecumenical marriage?

First of all, each of us belongs to his or her own parish, be it Lutheran or Catholic. This is especially important for Ulrike who, being a deacon, celebrates divine services on Sundays and short services on other occasions. But we are often guests at each other's parish and familiar with the two churches and the different liturgies. Particularly important for us are – of course – joint ecumenical events:

- the ecumenical way of the Cross in Lent, where Christians of both parishes carry the cross from one church to the other across our quarter;
- the short services on every evening between Christmas and Epiphany moving each day from one Christian church to the other in the whole town;
- the interdenominational talks which are organized every year - this year about the book of Exodus;

- the multiple occasions on which both parishes meet, particularly for the "Ball of Seelze Churches", a dance to which members of all Lutheran and Catholic parishes unite.

Despite all marital and ecumenical ties, there remains denominational difference. For Ulrike, as a Lutheran Christian, the divine service centers on God's Word and the sermon equals the Lord's Supper in importance. A Holy Mass without a sermon to her seems incomplete. For Heiger it's just the other way round. And, how could it be otherwise? There are the "*great differences*" between our two churches - the questions of offices, of unity with the Pope and, especially for Heiger, the problem of Communion and of the veneration of Eucharist. There are also many different denominational habits - from the sign of the Cross to the question about whether the Bible should be bound in black or in other colours as well.

Yet in spite of all that, we recognize the basic structure of our own forms of service in the partner's service and we know that both churches are seeking to live and preach God's love in their own traditions.

The way to CLC was actually Heiger's way. After he returned to Church, he attended a meditation weekend that CLC offered to the public. He continued in the way of the Spiritual Exercises and found his spiritual director, a Jesuit, who is the Society of Jesus' promoter for CLC in northern Germany. The longer Heiger became involved, the more he longed for a group.

That came to be in the spring of 2001. From different CLC courses seven people (eventually thirteen) were interested in forming a group, so nine of them started on the way of becoming one. In the group, we have two married couples, two priests and three single persons. Seven are "cradle Catholics", one woman is a convert to Roman Catholicism from Lutheranism and Ulrike, who is and remains a Lutheran. Because we all live in a circle of 100 km around Hannover, we meet only every three weeks.

In the first six meetings, Father Hans-Berndt Bollmann S.J. led us into learning to read our lives. This involved a set of meetings introducing the most important forms of Ignatian prayer such as the examen, the review of life, praying with Scripture, decision making and so on. In the German language it sounds much nicer, with double alliteration: *Leben lessen lernen*.

After that period, every one of us arranged one meeting and this time helped each of us to learn much about the others. After one year, we've now tried to take stock and to find out what each of us hopes and expects from the group and from each other.

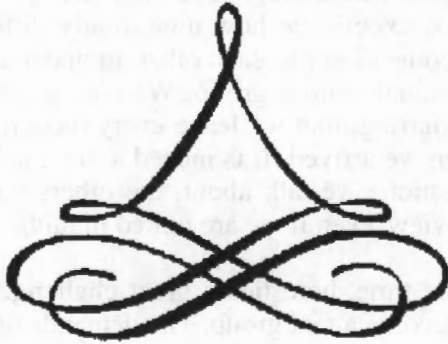
It's not too surprising that there are as many hopes and demands as there are members. Some of us are striving for a real CLC group while others are not interested in any larger community other than our own group. We perceive that this is only natural in this stage of group forming. It will be our task, as well as that of the group, to seek a process to decide how far we will journey together and when, if ever, we'll have to part. For now that's not the question of today or tomorrow. We feel that even now our group has a lot to give to each and every one of us, whatever its future might be.

What is most interesting about our group? The most exiting element for us is to experience how nine totally different people strive and are guided to come closer to each other, to understand each other and to form nine individuals into a group. We are happy to be part of this process and it is amazing, that we leave every meeting calmer and more consoled than when we arrived. It is indeed a great help to learn how the others see the questions we talk about, the others who look from very different points of view, even if we are united in faith.

At the same time, here lies a great challenge for our group, as well as for us, to become a real group. The demands of members are very dissimilar and after the stocktaking, it's not certain that everyone of us will continue to go a common way. So our challenge is not to lose anyone or at least to part without any hurt.



We live in a town where only a good half of its inhabitants are either Lutheran (the traditional denomination here) or Catholic. Most of the others do not belong to any church at all or are Muslim. It is our hope that the one Church of Jesus Christ may become evident in the future, despite all the differences that grew in the past five centuries since the Reformation. We hope it will become clearly visible in common sacraments, mutual acknowledgement and in greater communion even, and foremost, in the Eucharist. It is our firm belief that - *only if all are one, we will be witnesses for Jesus Christ, who can save the world and us with her.*



Part of the Rainbow Nation

CLC South Africa

Jill McKay was born in Johannesburg and holds a B.Soc Science from Rhodes University. Prior to her marriage to Royd, she worked as a Social Worker primarily in personnel work in Recruitment/ Selection and Training. Jill joined CLC and the Catholic Church in 1986. Currently, she is part of the CLC National Formation Team and works on the National ExCo as the National Secretary as well as being responsible for communications. Jill is a Guide of the Spiritual Exercises and a Group Guide for CLC. For relaxation, she enjoys walking, reading and writing a little poetry. Jill and Royd are parents of James 23, recently graduated in Journalism and Emily 22, recently graduated in Film and Media studies.

The “Rainbow Nation” is how Archbishop Desmond Tutu described South Africa - a nation of many colours, cultures and creeds. During the darkest years in South Africa, his presence was one of deep compassion, humour and fearless opposition to racism and discrimination, including religious discrimination. He chose to stand for tolerance, forgiveness and hope. Hope was the key word. “I am a prisoner of hope”, he used to say.

CLC is part of the Rainbow – a colourful sign of hope – with people who come from different cultures and, though mainly Catholic, often have different creeds in their backgrounds. During our National Assembly in 1999, we reflected on President Thabo Mbeki’s speech “I am an African” on exactly this theme of the intensely colourful background of cultures that makes up our nation and the multitude of influences that have affected us. We “Africans” in South Africa reflect and carry with us the joys and wounds of our past and are a “mixed bunch”. This brings vigour and vitality to our faith. These days, while we shake and shudder with turbulent world events and face many changes, it

is helpful to remember the miracles we've experienced in South Africa, and how we have survived, in relative peace.

I was asked to write this article on our ecumenical experience in CLC. So I offer a few thoughts from my own personal story and from the CLC perspective, in the context of our "Rainbow Nation".

I am a convert to Catholicism and have been a Catholic and in CLC for 15 years – drawn by the Eucharist. Recently, at our very beautiful National Assembly in the hills of the Magaliesburg, we reflected on the Two-Standards Meditation and our experiences in the Church. We found, in our sharing, that many of us in CLC came from very mixed religious backgrounds. I realised that I was born an "ecumenical" person! I had an Anglican mother and an elderly Methodist father. After my mother's death, when I was five years old, short of money and care, my adventurous father started looking for suitable lodgings for us with private families. He was open to people of all faiths so, in our various boarding houses, we lived with Scottish Presbyterians, German Lutherans, a Russian Orthodox musician, my French Protestant Godmother, South African Catholics and, because my father was particularly fond of Jewish people, an Orthodox Jewish family!



I learnt to love Jesus through the loving care and example of my dear old father, as well as learning religious tolerance. So when our Jewish landlord invited us to share the Shabbat meal on Fridays, my father was deeply honoured. Our kind hosts had no objection to our Christian grace! My father hardly knew, or particularly liked, Catholics. Yet, he chose a Convent for my first school and he experienced his first and only Catholic Mass the day before he died, when I was thirteen years old. This was at Boys Town in Magaliesburg. Nearby at the Good Shepherd Retreat

Centre, some forty-five years later, our 2001 CLC Assembly took place and our National Community found great encouragement and healing. So, the hills in Magaliesburg hold special significance for me.

For many of us, living through our personal “ecumenical journeys” has been a painful process, often fraught with a deep sense of rejection and anger. In South Africa, our history has been one of discrimination on many levels. Our legislation was full of “boxes”. We were categorised by colour and creed from the moment of birth and our acceptability often depended on having the “right” colour and creed, depending on which group of people were the judges. What complications!

We emerge, in CLC, from these complications! The same painful complications help us to have empathy towards those struggling with ecumenical identity in their search for God.

In CLC, South Africa, we have members whose backgrounds are Calvinist, wildly Pentecostal and fundamentalist Christian, Lutheran, Jewish and one member who was raised as a Hindu and converted to Catholicism at school. On our National Formation Team, Pat and Fr Dermot are the only cradle Catholics, while Veronica had a Moslem father and a Lutheran mother! Six of our 15 members who have made Commitments are converts and, though some of our families are “pure” Catholics, many marriages are “mixed and matched”. This picture is also true of many of our parishes. *Vive la différence* and *Deo Gratias*!

It seems that the colourful mix of our people and backgrounds has given a certain openness in attitude and a generous, welcoming spirit in CLC towards all people searching for God. Denomination or particular brand of faith doesn’t seem to matter too much.

The process of personal growth experienced through the Exercises and in CLC, brings grace and freedom. It is with this growing freedom that we set out on our Mission. Though not deliberately ecumenical, much of our work happens to be with people of different denominations – people searching for meaning and a new relationship with God. This is evident, for example in our outreach-activities, such as Days of Prayer and various forms of Retreats offered in the different

CLC Regions. In addition, people who belong to other churches often come to CLC asking for spiritual direction. Many of our CLC groups have a few members who are not Catholic and we have Pre-CLC groups who are from Anglican parishes. Working on special projects, there is often ecumenical co-operation. For instance, the CLC Young Families groups, who are involved in a Catholic Home Schooling project, share ideas and resources with other Home Schooling groups from different churches.

The ecumenical “flavour” is not by design but simply seems to happen in CLC. It is part of praying to be open to God’s will – to welcome any person, made in God’s image – and the belief that the Good News of Christ is meant for the whole human race! In South Africa, we live with great crises: Aids, rape, violence, poverty and unequal distribution of wealth. When confronting these, religious differences seem less important, although there are disturbing radical fundamentalist groups who seem opposed to peace. Perhaps there is also growth in becoming unselfconsciously ourselves in CLC and freer to express our deep love for Christ, His mother and the Church to which we belong. As we journey, we become humbler and simpler, more in awe of God’s grace.

We have learnt that mission is present at all stages of our journey and it is in “stepping out” – perhaps over enthusiastically at first, but later, more naturally and with more discernment – that people seem to want to join in! For several years now, I have been part of a Rosary group, which meets each week in the squatter camp near my home. Saying the Rosary together is, for me and for the extremely poor people who live there, a great grace and source of encouragement. We sit together – sometimes on chairs, sometimes on paraffin tins – and share (CLC style), pray together and help one another practically. We also do a simple Examen. There’s a core of Catholics but many are not Catholic and some claim to have no belief. When there’s a sick person or someone dying in the area, we are called to say the Rosary there – Catholic or not. The people are tolerant, respectful of one another’s differences and are learning about the Trinity and Our Lady! We come together, rich and poor, from different cultures, united in our need of prayer, searching for God’s grace. From time to time, people with particular needs ask to join in. Two of my closest friends have asked to

visit the group - one seriously alcoholic at the time (though recently in wonderful recovery) and another who claims to be and "unbeliever" yet felt powerfully drawn to attend!

Most people can benefit from aspects of CLC and from Ignatian Spirituality. I have several friends who claim to be Agnostics. Yet they ask for prayer and have started to appreciate and practise a simple Awareness Exercise and to Journal! So, what else can we do but try to be true to our selves and our faith? CLC does not suit everyone and we are not trying to bring in the masses to CLC or to the Church!

In South African CLC, our long-range formation process is adapted from the Magis programme. It starts in Pre - CLC Groups, with a basic, firm foundation of Ignatian spirituality and this is not threatening for people who are not Catholic. How do we cope when people who are not Catholic show an interest in CLC and the General Principles? A gentle introduction and patient discernment helps pave the way. Of course, there have been awkward times in the past and anger towards the Church and towards CLC. It seems lately, however, that humbly trying to live our CLC way and answering questions as simply as possible - without becoming too intense - is helpful. At the same time, we try to pray, face and share problems such as the painful issues around the Eucharist, openly and honestly. Then we leave it up to God!

To illustrate the point, I have permission to tell you a little of the journey of one of our team members in Cape Town. Jane encountered Ignatian Spirituality through a Meditation course, offered by CLC, in her Anglican Parish. This was some 15 years ago and resulted in an Anglican prayer group, guided by a CLC member. The group continued for many years and Jane took over the leadership. She attended CLC Days of Prayer, made her first 8-day retreat and started to receive regular spiritual direction. Eventually, she asked if she could join an established group and became increasingly interested in CLC. She attended a Lysfasi Spirituality course and joined in all our CLC workshops and retreats. Her passion increased! Finally, together with 11 others, she made Temporary Commitment to CLC, at our National Assembly in 1999. Jane was fully CLC, though an Anglican who loved her church. We were proud to have our "token Anglican" who was such a passionate, yet humble member of

CLC, with a love for Our Lady! We faced the pains of denominational division and rejection together. More recently, she became part of our National Formation Team and later, she felt called to become a Catholic.

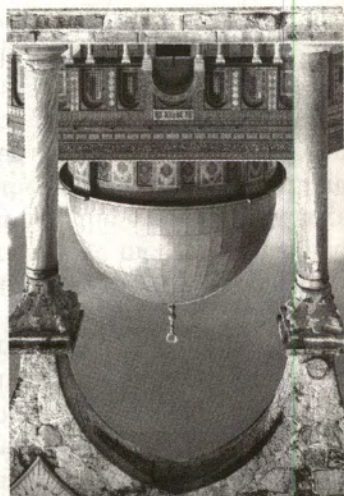
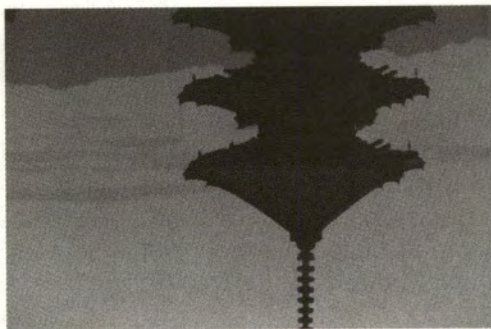
She writes:

"It was exactly a year ago to the day (22nd November), while on retreat, that I realized God was calling me to take seriously conversion to the Catholic Church. Yesterday, with permission from the Archbishop, I was confirmed and received by Fr. Dermot Preston at a special Mass at Kolbe House. The Mass was celebrated in a spirit of such generosity, as Catholics, Anglicans, Quakers and Presbyterians came together for this occasion as one community... I am so grateful for the way I was released so lovingly by my Anglican family and received so warmly by my new Catholic family. I feel at home with you."

Two more converts came through CLC last year. Louise wrote, "God is not mad at me any more – nor was He ever! In fact I discovered the truth... that he really, really loves and accepts me for who I am. This huge paradigm shift came as a result of attending CLC Days of Prayer and the Catholic Church for the past 18 months... what a privilege and a joy!"

What more can I say, except that if we are passionate about following Christ and helping others, irrespective of their particular religious persuasion on their journey to God, CLC is a gift. We are grateful to be part of the World Community and continue to be "prisoners of hope" in our Rainbow Nation.

Lately, on my walks with our large Bouvier puppy, I often meet a Buddhist nun who has come to live nearby. We smile, greet each other and talk briefly – mainly about my dog. Perhaps, soon our conversations will turn to prayer...



Interreligious Dialogue



INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: AN IDEA WHO'S TIME HAS COME

A native of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., Thomas Michel S.J. is a member of the Indonesia Province of the Society of Jesus. With an academic background in Islamic studies, he taught Islamics in Indonesia, worked at the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the Office for Islam and, in Bangkok, served as interreligious and ecumenical secretary for the Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference. In 1996, Fr Michel was appointed by the Father General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach, as secretary for the newly created Secretariat for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome, Italy.

The Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi

On 24 January 2002, Pope John Paul II invited the leaders of the world's religions to Assisi to take part in a day of prayer for peace. This was not the first time that religious leaders assembled, at the Pope's initiative, in Assisi for such an action. On the first two occasions, in 1986 and 1993, I was on the staff of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and thus fully involved in the preparations and execution of the events. At the Day of Prayer held this past January, I was able to take part in the proceedings from the more relaxed viewpoint of a simple participant, rather than having to worry about seating arrangements and trying to make sure that everyone was at the right place at the right time.

My overwhelming impression is that the Day of Prayer represents an idea whose time has come. In the 1986 prayer, we met resistance and opposition on many sides: conservative Catholics, the evangelical wings of other Churches, and many followers of other religions. In fact, there were only a handful of Muslim participants at the 1986 prayer and even fewer Hindus, and those few we had to search out and plead with them to come. A number of individual Christians and Churches questioned the theological propriety of praying with the followers of other faiths. The followers of other religions had their own suspicions. What was the Pope

up to? Did he have a hidden agenda? They also had their own religious constituencies to contend with. Would they, on their return home from Assisi, be accused of syncretism or collaboration in idolatry?

It was a very different story this year. When the Pope announced the 2002 Day of Prayer, so many religious leaders and groups wanted to take part that the organizers were forced to severely limit the numbers of Christians and to turn away many of those of other religions who wished to take part.

There are several reasons for the change of attitude. On the one hand, Pope John Paul has been giving a consistent message over the past 20 years, a message that has been heard and appreciated. His opposition to the Gulf War in 1991 was surprising and welcome news to Muslims that under his leadership the Catholic Church was ready to take an independent moral stance, rather than simply bless whatever political decisions were taken by Western governments. The credibility achieved made possible even more dramatic gestures in subsequent years such as his reception by the Sheikh al-Azhar in Cairo and his much-photographed walking hand-in-hand through the Damascus mosque with Sheikh Kaftaro. Similarly, the Pope's visit to Israel and sensitive gestures at the Western Wall in Jerusalem convinced many Jews of the sincerity of his offer of reconciliation. Similar events in Bangkok, Delhi, and Tokyo seem to have been successful in conveying the idea that what the Pope is really interested in is peace, not domination.

However, the initiative of interreligious dialogue could not have been successful if it were the vision of only one man. The presence in Assisi of 30 Cardinals, including Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation of the Faith, showed that in Catholic theology and practice there has been no "turning back" from the commitment to interreligious dialogue. Moreover, the high-level participation of Christians of other Churches indicates an ecumenical consensus on the propriety of coming together with other believers to pray for peace. Orthodoxy was represented by no less an authority than the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartolomeo, and representatives of the World Council of Churches and major confessional organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation, the World Assembly of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican Communion displayed Christian solidarity in supporting interreligious collaboration for peace.

Not only Christians were professing their desire to work with others for peace. A strong international Jewish delegation was present, and the number of Muslim leaders had to be limited to about 50. Many influential Muslim scholars and religious authorities had to be content with participating "in the audience" because there was simply not enough room on the podium. The number of Buddhist participants, especially from Japan, had to be limited as well. To me, all this says that there is an overwhelming thirst for peace among religious believers today and a readiness to work with others to achieve that goal.

The aftermath of 11 September

The success of the Prayer for Peace in Assisi is not unconnected with the tragic events of this past 11 September. The terrorist attacks that resulted in a great loss of lives and the total destruction of the World Trade Center in New York were a reminder that interreligious dialogue may be the only alternative to a spiral of violence and retaliation that could result in an even greater loss of innocent lives and even broader destruction.

The spectre of "America versus Islam" or even "The West against the Rest" is one that has come to preoccupy many thinkers in political, social, and religious fields. After the 11 September attacks, Americans, as well as many from other Western industrialized nations, feel themselves besieged. They consider themselves victims of an underground movement that seeks to destroy the societal values they hold most dear. They are angry and want to retaliate, even if the main casualties of such attacks are helpless Afghan or Iraqi civilians who had no part either in the terrorist attacks of 11 September nor in choosing their respective governments.

For their part, Muslims consider themselves victims of aggressive military, economic, and cultural policies of Western nations under the leadership of the United States. A recent poll by CNN in seven predominantly Muslim nations showed that 67% of those interviewed see the United States as a threat to their well-being. While condemning the 11 September attacks from the perspective of Islamic faith, they point out that many more Muslim lives have been lost in Bosnia, Palestine, and Chechnya than were taken at the World Trade Center. The incalculable

number of those who have died in Iraq, especially of women and children, due to malnutrition and lack of medicines and health care as a result of ten years of international embargo, provides the grounds for their claims that they have been victims of government-sponsored terrorism.

Even where actual violence and military action have not occurred, Muslims perceive the cultural invasion of Western - mainly American - products and life-style, brought by the Western-dominated communications media and entertainment industries, as a danger to their way of life. Many Muslims are convinced that the West is out to destroy Islam as the last bastion of resistance to a global consumer-oriented society based on humanistic values and neo-liberal market policies.

Breaking the impasse

Have we reached a cultural and religious impasse, with both sides convinced of being victims of the aggressive intentions and deeds of others, whom they regard as enemies, and are ready to fight to preserve their lives and cherished values? Have we reached the "clash of civilizations" predicted by many Western writers and policy-makers?

Among the alternatives to polarization and violence is interreligious dialogue. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II says that, "All Christians and every Christian community are called to practice [interreligious] dialogue, although not to the same level nor in the same way". (RM 57) Almost 40 years after the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra aetate* committed the Catholic Church to enter onto a path of dialogue with the followers of other religions, the concept is still not well understood among Christians. Some think that Christians are called to enter into theological discussions on the Trinity and Christ's relationship to the Father, areas into which they feel they are not well prepared to delve. For others, dialogue seems to be understood as a type of public relations consisting mainly of platitudes and avoidance of hard questions and difficult issues.

Church teaching subsequent to the Council makes it clear that neither of these ideas is what is meant by dialogue. The term comprehends a broad range of positive relations with people of other faiths: living together in harmony in neighbourhoods and cities, working

together for the good of all, studying current issues and problems together, and even sharing in respect and friendship what each holds most deeply, their faith relationship to God. While some Christians in almost every nation are making efforts at building positive relationships with the followers of other faiths, as a Church we are still scratching the surface. Many prejudices, suspicions, and obstacles remain which can be overcome only through patient effort and dedication.

In the months since the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, many new initiatives have been undertaken by both Christians and Muslims to sit together and study the geopolitical situation and explore paths to peace. Muslims are beginning to realize that they have not communicated well the nature of Islam as a religion of peace, and are thus eager to reiterate the strong Qur'anic prohibition of killing innocent persons. Christians are beginning to see the need to distinguish between the teaching and way of life of true Christianity and the baggage of modern civilization, from Johnnie Walker whiskey to MTV, discotheques, and the geopolitical agenda of "Christian" nations, that often passes as part of Christendom.

One of the big problems that face both sides is the burden of history that each bears. Christian imagination has been formed by images of the invading Turk, of slave raids in the Mediterranean, of harems and dissolute oil sheikhs. The Muslim image of the Christian goes back to events of the Crusades, reinforced in more recent centuries by the ravages of colonial domination and post-colonial interference. Each group can draw up a long list of grievances against the other, until one wonders whether any space for mutual acceptance and reconciliation exists.

Prejudices and suspicion cannot be overcome solely through books and lectures. Christians and Muslims have to meet, to explain their concerns and hopes for the future, to try to listen with open hearts to what the other is seeking to express. In short, they have to try to understand each other as believers in God who seek to do God's will in all things. Although the support of bishops and clergy is necessary to form an awareness of the Church's commitment to dialogue, interreligious relations are essentially a work of the laity. As the Pope continues in the above-cited passage: "For this, the involvement of the laity is indispensable. By the example of their lives and through their own

actions, they can work for the improvement of relations among the followers of the various religions, while some can make a contribution to research and study.” (RM 57)

If it is not to be carried on in an ivory tower, dialogue today must treat the real issues that disturb people. Some might define religiously inspired terrorism as the key issue. Others might say that it is the lack of social justice throughout the world, the gap between the rich and the poor. Yet others might define the problem as one of how to live as conscientious believers in a world in which God and God’s will is marginal to economic, social, and political decision-making. However the problems are defined, it is clear that they go beyond any one religious community or any one nation, and cannot be adequately faced by any group working in isolation from others.

We must also move beyond seeing the central problem in narrow terms as being one of Christian-Muslim tensions. Such would not serve to explain the Buddhist-Hindu conflict in Sri Lanka, inter-tribal conflicts in Africa, the international debt crisis, class warfare in Latin America, problems of population control and bioethics, the globalization of culture and economy, the role of women in society, and the breakdown of traditional family structures. These are merely some examples of the many issues that need to be included on the agenda of interreligious dialogue, precisely because they are bigger than the concern of any one group and require the cooperation of all to resolve. On many of these issues, Christians, Muslims and other believers will find themselves in agreement, while on others they will have to challenge each another from the perspective of their respective faiths.

I am convinced that interreligious dialogue is an idea whose time has come. If we are to move beyond the burdens of history to build a more human, God-centered world characterized by peace, harmony and respect for others, we can only achieve this through dialogue and cooperation. Let us not delude ourselves. Such a utopian vision will not become a full reality until the parousia, but Christians and other religious believers are called to be people of hope, who work to build God’s reign on earth without expecting to see results in our lifetime. If our efforts are sincere, persistent and faith-filled, God will produce the results in God’s own time.

WORKING SIDE by SIDE



Agnès Rausch has been a long time member of CLC Luxembourg serving in leadership positions since 1987. Currently, she is a member of the Euroteam, which is the coordinating team for CLC in Europe. As a social worker employed by Caritas, Agnès is working with refugees.

Although I accepted to write an article for *PROGRESSIO* on the theme of the “Relationship between Christians and Moslems” it is not because I am an expert on the subject. However, working with refugees in Luxembourg, a majority of whom are Moslems, I was able to discover the Islamic world through interaction with believing Moslems: I might say Moslems who have fervent beliefs. Some time earlier, I had followed a formation session on Islam in Europe organized by the Jesuits in Paris. There I learned about the five pillars of Islam (profession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage), which apart from the references made to the Prophet, characterize so many elements dear to my own religious faith.

I also learned about the diversity of Islam.

- Sunni, Shiites in Iran and Alevites in Syria
- the popular Islam of the marabouts in West Africa

- the Islam of the embassies and immigrants in France
- Islam and secularism (cf. Kemalism) in Turkey
- the Mystical Islam of the Sufis
- the modern Islam of the integralists

In this diversity I could again recognize many parallels with the history of my own Catholic Church. With this background, further developed by reading books written by Christians who had dedicated their lives to dialogue with Islam, I felt open to a meeting with the *Other*.

In this article I will limit myself to describing my relationships with my Moslem colleagues since they are the people with whom I have been more closely in contact for some years already. First, however, it is important for me to thank my employers, the Catholic institution Caritas, who willingly accepted to hire Moslem co-workers.

An intellectual from a North African country, Sara studied sociology in Paris, then taught in her country. Seeing the growing insecurity around her, she had to leave her family. Thanks to her discreet, reflective and tenacious manner, she was able to build a well-attended multi-cultural centre in a little town in northern Luxembourg. Her practice of Ramadan taught me much about the discipline of the body and of going beyond oneself. There were also her words, which the fourth day after the death of my father, reminded me that the time for tears was ended and that life must continue on its normal course.

For Elsa, it is completely different. She comes from the Balkans and, for her, Islam is above all a cultural identity. She manifests her faith in God and her love of neighbour by her hospitality and warm welcoming spirit, stronger than the weight of family cares. As a young woman she seeks the right road combining fidelity to the domestic traditions of her specific country of origin with an openness to the value of new opportunities in the society, which has welcomed her.

Originally from a communist country, Fatima is torn between two influences. On the one hand there is her spouse who is influenced by an Islam with integralist connotations and values of fraternity as well as the

equality preached by communism. On the other there are her adolescent children following their peers in the materialistic values of Luxembourg society. She is the one who suffers the most from the sacrifices that the first generation of immigrants/exiles must make. It is also she who rebels the most against the unequal sharing of wealth both here and elsewhere. On this point I can easily agree with her, but at times she lets herself be carried away in justifying behaviour that seems strange to me.

Regarding all three, I must say that their natural acceptance of my role as elder in this service, of asking my counsel and of adhering to "the Christian philosophy" of Caritas astounds me. Nevertheless, I don't know whether or not they also adhere with their hearts. Does their professional practice always reflect the so-called Christian values?

For Hossein, whose maternal ancestors are descendants of the Prophet, it is still another story. He is a person of profound spirituality. He learned about Jesus Christ by reading the Bible and was able to recognize in Him the Son of God, while remaining faithful to the heritage of Moslem mysticism and his Persian culture. His detachment from everything material while still enjoying it, his perception of death, eternal life and God's mercy are lighthouses for my own spiritual life.

Thus my Islamic colleagues cause me no problems. Yet there are still questions that remain. Should I commit myself to work so that Islam be recognized by Luxembourg as the Christian religions (Catholic, Protestants & Orthodox) and as the Jews are?

- ☐ Who will validly represent these Moslems living in Luxembourg, being that today these divisions exist among them?
- ☐ Why does a Moslem not have the right to change religions when the Koran states that there should be no constraint in religious matters?
- ☐ Why should a young Moslem woman not have the right to marry a man who is not a Moslem?

- ❑ And the scarf? Why is it such an important sign for pious Moslem women while in our society it risks being understood as a sign of submission?



Surrounded by Moslem friends and colleagues, I am not alone in seeking answers, but those received do not always satisfy me. We must travel a long road in drawing closer together. A precious step on this road was a meeting between two Moslem women and the CLC group that I accompany. We listened to the history of those “without documents” in Luxembourg and we were able to pray together and share the same hope: that there be a life of dignity for everyone, under the watchful eye of our God, who is all Merciful.

CLC European Vacation



Members from 10 nations enjoyed a week long CLC European Vacation at le Centre St. Hugues de Biviers in France last August. Forty adults and twenty-four children from Austria, Belgium, DR Congo, France, Germany, Great Britain, Iraq, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Slovenia speaking French, English or German lived, prayed and played together.



"If all depended on children, there would not be any war on earth!"



That was our unanimous conclusion. They know how to overcome the barriers of language, race and culture.

***Thérèse Breisch
CLC Luxembourg***



Meet the ExCo



Brigitte Minier

The 24 Hours of Mans influenced my whole infancy. Undoubtedly, that is where I got the taste (moderated little by little) for speed and race - cars. That may be strange for a little girl but that's how it was! I preferred to play cars with my brothers than to play with dolls.

It was also at Mans that I studied. My parents, believing Catholics who did not practice, first sent me to public school. Around the age of 8-9 years, they had to recognize the evidence: I thought only of having fun at school. They then decided to place me in a private Catholic school where the sisters took charge of my education with a lot of special courses – the situation was that serious however not quite desperate. I followed the classic itinerary of the period: solemn Communion, Confirmation. Once I re-entered a normal education, I quickly discovered my vocation as an English teacher. In 1974, when I was 24, my parents' situation changed suddenly. My father had to close his little factory and fell into a deep depression, which has lasted until the present day. Already independent, I numbed myself with trips and a fast-paced superficial life while being passionate about my profession. The fate of my parents seemed deeply unjust and gave me the desire to gnash my teeth at life... *CARPE DIEM* (enjoy the day)!

After finishing my secondary studies, I seldom stepped into a Church. But, following some years of turbulence of "entertainment" as Pascal would say, life began to gnaw at me and questions began to pursue

me. Life made no sense. Were we just puppets? Or to quote Shakespeare who said it much better than I did: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." What to do? This was an existential crisis.

Finally, one fine day in 1980 in the professors' hall of the high school where I taught, Father Pierre Iratzoque S.J., the Jesuit chaplain, asked me if I wanted to join a CLC group. A bit curious by nature, and somewhat worn down by the questions within me, I accepted. That was the beginning of a long history leading up to the present time.

Some of the persons in this group were searching, as I was. This suited me fine! It was not really a "pious" group. There was no question of speaking too much of God – and this was the beginning of a great happiness. François, our lay guide, knew how to accept us as we were without rushing us, thus, we progressed tranquilly. I did not know who was the most patient: the Lord or our guide. But, I could only give thanks for this time lived without haste.

Then in 1982, the same Jesuit suggested that I make a "little" retreat according to the Exercises. Ten days, that would in fact become 12 days, changed my life. I lived such an experience of liberation during that time of personal encounter with the Lord, that it was a veritable renaissance for me. Nothing had changed and yet everything had changed. Above all, I carried within myself a kind of profound, dynamic desire: a thirst to help others to live this same experience of liberation - a little like St. Ignatius' desire "to help souls". My guide encouraged me to go in this direction and helped in my formation. I was like one starving: happy to discover a way of life and avid to know more in order to share and to journey with others. I participated in numerous sessions, retreats, and workshops about, and formation for, the accompaniment of the Exercises. I worked on guiding the Exercises in daily life with numerous Jesuits: Frs. Gouet, Dravet, and Giuliani among others. For me, it was a bit like being sent into orbit. For a number of years, I had lived the fruits of this fundamental experience of discovering that I was deeply loved by God. Going over that now, I realize that I had good fortune and much interest. The weekends, as

well as the rest of the time, were full but this did not weigh on me. I was like a fish in water.

During 1986, I was entrusted with doing some accompaniments. I spent some years as part of the team of Centre Notre Dame des Coteaux in Toulouse guiding retreats during the summer. These teams were predominately male (mainly Jesuits) during this epoch and few laywomen were involved. I will always be grateful to Father Edward O'Neill, director of this Centre at the time, for having confidence in a young lay woman.

Little by little time passed. Sensitive to the need to be "competent workers and convincing witnesses" to which the General Principles call us, I passed some competitive exams for professors in order to be more competent and more available. After being director of the Anjou-Maine region in '86, I was elected in '91 to the National Team of CLC France as National Secretary. These four years of intensive volunteer work were a period of great grace for me; an intense time of working in a team with Christian, Marie-Claire, Thierry, Clement, and once more with Edward called to accompany the National Community during this period. Nor can I forget Betty, Irene and Monika. We all had different characters but we complemented one another marvelously. It was necessary to face up to the growing number of members (CLC France passed from 3000 members in 1991 to 4200 members in 1995), to form lay guides, to make proposals for the young members because 35% of the members were less than 35 years of age. It was an intense period: four years of very strong memories.

First of all, there was the experience of what I call communal strength and dynamics. To be there together reunited in His name at the service of the Community one feels small, and incompetent. But we were animated by a strong desire to respond together to a need of the Community. Little by little we gathered together our three loaves and 5 fish, in order to build something starting with what we were in our diversity, seeking the common good, and trying to be creative and flexible. Some months later when the project became reality what a sense of thanksgiving was ours as a session or retreat unfolded and the participants smiled and were visibly happy. To know and feel in an

almost physical way that we were tools in the Lord's hands, that He fashions us day after day, individually and together.

The other unforgettable experience was that of the community discernment for the resumption of the Spiritual Centre Saint-Hughes de Biviers near Grenoble. When the Society of Jesus proposed that the CLC France take over the Centre, the National Committee composed of about thirty representatives from different regions of France entered into a discernment. Personally, like many others, I hesitated. Was it reasonable? Were we as CLC called to this mission? Etc. etc. I remember interminable conversations with Michele, Pierre, and others looking at the pros and cons. Then meticulously accompanied by our National Assistant we gathered together to live a weekend communal discernment as a sort of conclave. We alternated long periods of personal prayer, sharing in small groups then sharing in a larger group. We also alternated times of desolation and consolation - to receive the decision as a mature fruit. A unanimous YES! There was intense joy in seeing one of the members of the same National Committee sent in mission by CLC, go across France with her husband and children to settle in and take over the direction of the Centre. What joy today to see that this house continues its mission with a new renewed team and that St. Hugues now belongs to the Community! Numerous members go there each year to welcome or to be welcomed.

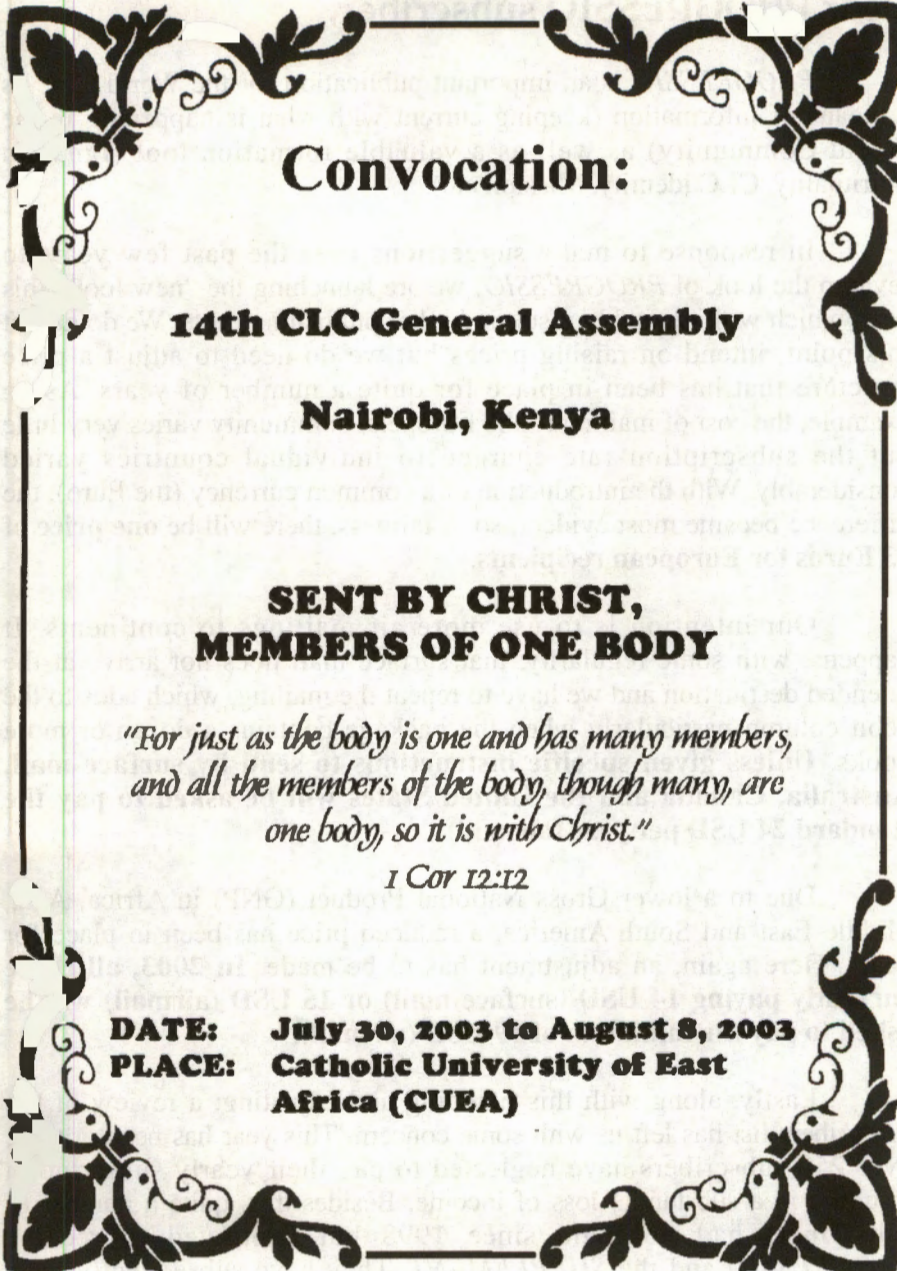
The grace of a mandate is also that it finishes and that others follow with new priorities, new charisms. That too is the strength of a community. The period 1995-97 was a brief interlude, which allowed me to renew my strength while continuing to do formation for CLC and participating in workshops on education: CLC Education. In 1998, CLC France asked me if I were available to be France's delegate to the World Assembly in Itaici in Brazil and eventually a candidate for the World ExCo. Being that it was not necessary to leave my profession, it was possible and that's what happened. For three years now, I have been part of the world team and it is a tremendous grace. There again, we must marvel to see how the Lord puts together people who are so different in culture, language etc., yet united in the same desire to serve Him in the way of St. Ignatius.

These world assemblies are truly moments of intense sharing, and seeking the will of the Lord. We were about 150 delegates coming from more than 50 countries. What diversity - from Taiwan to Cameroon, from Croatia and Peru! The Assembly at Itaici permitted the World CLC to receive this "Common Mission" like a mature fruit.

Now our task as ExCo is to share this fruit with the whole community throughout the world. It is a fascinating task but one that is terribly difficult. At times we feel so very small in regard to the amplitude of the challenge. Because it really is a challenge to live in a World Community, to make this community go beyond individual identities, respecting the journey of each National Community while being concerned for the progress of all. We meet once a year for a week, usually in February to consider the past year, to deal with the present and to foresee the year to come. Needless to say these eight days are full and intensive. Besides these meetings we communicate principally and intensely by e-mail in a close link with Gilles and Leah in Rome (World CLC Secretariat).

In going over what I have written, I recognize that the word "thanks" appears various times. I want to end by giving thanks for this road travelled: a road of companionship within and outside of CLC. Thanks for all those whom the Lord has placed on my path in all the teams in which I was fortunate enough to participate. I give thanks for the persons who are with me on the journey and who invite me to go further— not necessarily in space but to go further in the search for and discovery of this God who is nearer to me than I am to myself.

Announcements Information

A decorative border with ornate floral and scrollwork patterns in the corners and along the sides, framing the central text.

Convocation:

14th CLC General Assembly

Nairobi, Kenya

**SENT BY CHRIST,
MEMBERS OF ONE BODY**

*"For just as the body is one and has many members,
and all the members of the body, though many, are
one body, so it is with Christ."*

1 Cor 12:12

DATE: July 30, 2003 to August 8, 2003

**PLACE: Catholic University of East
Africa (CUEA)**

Dear PROGRESSIO subscriber,

PROGRESSIO is an important publication for the World CLC as a means of information (keeping current with what is happening in the World Community) as well as a valuable formation tool (Ignatian Spirituality, CLC identity, Mission etc).

In response to many suggestions over the past few years to revamp the look of *PROGRESSIO*, we are launching the "new look" this year, which will inevitably result in higher publishing costs. We do not, at this point, intend on raising prices but we do need to adjust a price structure that has been in place for quite a number of years. As an example, the cost of mailing to the European community varies very little but the subscription rate charged to individual countries varied considerably. With the introduction of a common currency (the Euro), the difference became most evident, so in fairness, there will be **one price of 23 Euros for European recipients.**

Our intention is to use more air mailings to continents. It happens, with some regularity, that surface mail does not arrive at the intended destination and we have to repeat the mailing, which adds to the debit column particularly when the package contains a dozen or more books. Unless given specific instructions to send by surface mail, Australia, Canada and the United States will be asked to pay the standard 24 USD per year (airmail).

Due to a lower Gross National Product (GNP) in Africa, Asia, Middle East and South America, a reduced price has been in place for years. Here again, an adjustment has to be made. **In 2003, all those currently paying 14 USD (surface mail) or 15 USD (airmail) will be asked to pay the minimum of 19 USD (airmail).**

Lastly, along with this planning and adjusting, a review of the subscribers list has left us with some concern. This year has been critical; over 250 subscribers have neglected to pay their yearly subscription resulting in a substantial loss of income. Besides this, quite a number of subscribers had not paid since 1998 but continued to receive *PROGRESSIO* and the *SUPPLEMENT*. They have subsequently been

deleted from our mailing list. Currently, there are over 290 subscribers who have said that they cannot pay so receive the publications free of charge.

The whole issue of promoting subscriptions to our CLC publications is very important as the proceeds, realized by regular payments, makes it possible to continue the publication.

With this in mind, the plan of action, born out of necessity, will be as follows:

- We will understand that those we have not heard from and who have not paid for more than 3 years are no longer interested in being subscribers. Therefore, we thank them for past valuable support and remove their name from our mailing list.
- Those who, at present, are receiving a gratis subscription are asked to contribute to at least some of the costs entailed in printing or mailing.
- For those who lead busy lives and have merely overlooked sending a payment, we empathize and look forward to receiving your subscription payment soon.

If you find yourself in any of the above categories, we ask that you prayerfully reflect on this information and we await your response.

Sincerely,

Gilles Michaud
Editor

CORRECTION...

PROGRESSIO # 3-4, 2001, page 29

The persons in the picture with Fr Arrupe were incorrectly identified. We apologize to Fr. Vincenzo Insolera SJ who was wrongly identified as Louis Paulussen SJ and Domenico Mamiza wrongly identified as Patrick O'Sullivan SJ.

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✓ In the absence of a written cancellation your subscription will be automatically renewed each year.

