

Pentecost Sunday 10 May 2008

To all CLC members

From National CLC Formation group – Anna Munari, Liz Pichner, Veronica Hendriks, Fr Bill Uren sj, Nick Galante (NEXCO link) Mary Nolan (Co-ordinator)

Dear CLC Friends

Thank you to those who have returned responses to the Stage 1 'Our Graced History' National CLC preparation reflection for the World CLC Assembly at Fatima in August (contained in our letter of 19 March 2008). If you have not yet replied, it's not too late - please send as soon as possible.

We are now beginning the second and final stage of our National CLC preparation 'Towards Fatima'. As a Christian community engaging with the world, we ask ourselves, what characterises us as a CLC community? How are we engaging reflectively with the world in which we live? In what way is our common mission challenging and/or inspiring us to share our resources with our communities and the world?

To assist in our reflections, we propose reflection on four examples of the ways three Christian communities of different eras operate:

- The early Christian community;
- Ignatius and the early Jesuits (and the Sodalities of Our Lady – the original CLC). We see this way of reflective engagement in Jesus and the Samaritan woman.
- Our very own Australian CLC Common Mission 1999 which defines our key areas of concern and engagement with the world as Australian CLC.

1. Characteristics of the early Christian community from [Projects 137](#).

"The following are some of the characteristics shared by the first communities:

- The freshness of individuals who received, first-hand, the innovative news of the Gospel;
- The radicalism with which they lived and announced the news of the Gospel;
- The capacity to bring the evangelic message forth to all people;
- The questioning that their life style provoked in others;
- The capacity to attract others;
- The way they overcame conflicts that originated in the heart of their community;
- The strong experience of communion, which had a profound impact on people: "See how they love each other!"

2. The Seventh Contemplation from Projects 137 exploring how the early Christian community engaged with the problem of material resources. It was not about money, however, so much as security.

Seventh Contemplation: Material Goods (Acts: 4.32-5.6)

"...did it not remain your own?... How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?" (Acts 5:4)

The communion of mind and soul ran so deep in the community that there were no people in need. There were cases of extreme generosity, such as the case of Joseph of Cyprus, who sold his property to give it all to the apostles.

It is in this context, that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is presented: deceiving the community, lying to the Holy Spirit, making themselves recipients of privileges. In a later episode, money is also presented as opposite to the Holy Spirit and salvation. "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!" (Acts 8:20) Peter said to Simon, who wanted to buy the power of the Spirit for himself.

The apostles have a firm stance toward money. Consider a modern analogy - the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphira was that they were looking for self-protection, power, their own safety, having the community as something complementary, and keeping God as a guest in a safe space. There was also agreement and conspiracy to sin between husband and

wife. They used deceit and lies when trying to hide the truth from the community. In this case it was about a piece of property, but we can also think about other assets: personal talents, knowledge, spaces, time, projects, etc. In the end, we need to avoid the sin of thinking and acting in very individualistic terms without consideration for community and justice. The project that excites me - is it my project? Or is it a community project aimed at achieving greater justice, and reaching the greatest numbers of people?

It is a difficult episode as both Ananias and Sapphira die due to their sin. Embellishing ourselves sets us apart from others, and in this way we die and deprive others from what they have a right to. In this way, we kill! Death is the consequence of our sins; the resurrection is the work of God's mercy. Thus, being witnesses of the resurrection is being merciful. In today's world, it is especially compelling that we review our relationship with money from this perspective. We also consider the inequities in the institutions of our Church, and act as the disciples of Antioch who determined that, "... according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea." (Acts 11:29)¹

3. [Ten steps on reflective engagement with the world](#) ('spiritual conversation') drawn from the early writings of St Ignatius of Loyola and the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus². (See Appendix 1). Ignatius's rules for reflective engagement with the world. We suggest the Samaritan woman (John 4: 1-30) as a scripture text illustrating Jesus and the woman in reflective engagement. Clancy writes, *Nadal favoured a communal spiritual conversation. Something like this was at the origin of the Sodalities of our Lady founded by John Leunis and the original CLC.* How are we as CLC engaging reflectively with the world in which we live?
4. [The Australian Common Mission of CLC 1999](#) following the World CLC Assembly in Brazil 1998. See page 2 *Background to ACM* for outline of process of development on local, national and international levels. (Appendix 2)
5. [Projects 138](#) the latest letter from the World CLC EXCO to National CLC Communities

We suggest you put aside two meetings if possible for this reflection and response.

Questions.

- **As members of CLC in the Australian context, how are we challenged today by these four examples of Christian community living?**
- **What other matters, if any, do you want our delegates to take to Fatima?**
- **Any other comments?**

Please send your response in one page to the CLC Office Christian Life Community, PO Box 5207, Manly QLD 4179 Email admin@clcaustralia.org.au .by **Friday 21st June 2008**.

Let us be united in prayer with our world community as we move towards Fatima World Assembly of CLC.

Blessings and Peace

Mary Nolan for the National CLC Formation Group

¹ Cf Three Classes of Persons Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius No 149-156

² Clancy Thomas H, SJ. 'THE CONVERSATIONAL WORD OF GOD', A Commentary on the Doctrine of St Ignatius Loyola concerning Spiritual Conversation with Four Early Jesuit Texts. The Institute of Jesuit Sources St Louis 1978 ISBN 0-912422-34-3