



World CLC Day 2004

Remain faithful in a world that changes - The meeting of the small community -

The Nairobi CLC Assembly led us to an attractive ideal. We want to become an apostolic body, starting from what we are today, with humble awareness of our deficiencies, but also recognizing and being grateful for what we already have as the fruit of our journey.

Along these same lines of gathering together what we have, Nairobi proposed that we “use the tools available to CLC, such as ‘The CLC Charism’.”¹ As we know, it is a document² meant to describe the CLC vocation and the process which originates and nurtures it, from the initial call to a life commitment. The Nairobi Assembly wants to look at this vocation and process from a particular viewpoint: the call that we experience to be a more apostolic body, a community able to reach out into the world, sent in mission,³ reaching distant horizons.

“Our CLC Charism” is a proposal that, starting from experience, articulates personal and group processes and repeatedly correlates the dimensions of vocation, mission and community that characterize our CLC journey. Within the Ignatian tradition, it springs from the Spiritual Exercises and aims to focus on mission. As it moves ahead in the process that it wishes to describe, it comes to the conclusion that CLC “is not only as a community of apostles, that is of persons more or less committed to their own individual missions, but rather, it is an apostolic community in which the members, although dedicated to their own different tasks, **share** together their lives and the way they each carry out their mission. They also **discern** together the object and content of each other's mission. They are **sent by** the community and, with its help, **evaluate** how they are following Christ who was sent by the Father”.⁴ Nairobi takes up these ideas once more, seeking to place itself on a very basic and practical level – that of the local groups – and uses four words that will characterize our journey in CLC. Indeed, the final document affirms that “the **local group meetings** may need to be refocused to better live out the call to be members of an apostolic body who practice personal and communal **discerning, sending, supporting** and **evaluating**”.⁵ As you see, the words are almost the same, although “share” has been changed to “support”, as if wanting to emphasize that it is not a matter of a free, intimate or spontaneous conversation, but of a dialogue that empowers the participants, that sustains and stimulates them in their mission.

Now in the light of the Nairobi document, let us reflect on just one aspect, that of “refocusing the meetings of the local groups.”

In our daily life of faith we desire to remain faithful to the Lord who called us yesterday and continues calling us today. Each one of us and also our group has its own history, which has

1 Recommendations from the Nairobi World Assembly to Christian Life Community: Formation, n° 3.

2 PROGRESSIO: Supplement n° 56, December 2001: The CLC Charism (Revised).

3 Cfr. Recommendations, op. cit., Preamble n° 3; and also: In Formation, n° 5

4 PROGRESSIO, op. cit. n° 132.

5 Recommendations, op. cit.: Our National Dimension, n° 2.

gone through various stages of growth. Our personal circumstances are changing as years go by and we live the different seasons of our lives. We recognize the different stages of growth through which our CLC group moves ahead, as well as the great diversity that exists between communities. As we become conscious of our history we also become aware of our desire to REMAIN faithful to our option for Jesus Christ – our deepest identity – in a world that CHANGES unceasingly and which challenges us.

The Assembly of Nairobi confirmed us “in our call to become a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church.”⁶ We want to respond to this call that seems to require PERMANENCE amid the CHANGES that the world demands of the Church and CLC. In this tension we recognize the way of life that identifies us. For this reason, we realize the necessity of journeying together, supporting each other in our weaknesses and benefiting from the strengths of others. We recognize in this our total dependence on God, and our personal and communal need for continuous conversion in the Lord.

The Nairobi Assembly suggests that this journey in fidelity has to be perceived and challenged also in the small community meetings. For this reason, one of its recommendations states that “the local group meetings may need to be refocused to better live out the call to be members of an apostolic body”.⁷

It is clear that in our meetings we must be faithful to the graces received in the past (PERMANENCE, recollection, defending familiar grounds), but also be receptive to the new calls of the Lord, praying for the grace to recognize them in the various ways in which we hear them today (CHANGE, openness, vulnerability).

In our regular meetings we wish to share the daily spiritual movements about the needs we have perceived around us and what we have done about them. We are sure that by means of those motions the Spirit of the Lord supports our fidelity (PERMANENCE) so that it continues rooted in the Spiritual Exercises and committed to the CLC way of life. He also opens our hearts to recognize and respond to Jesus in every new circumstance (CHANGE).

How can we best carry on our meetings?

1. Each of us shares a brief summary of his/her main spiritual movements since the last meeting.
These movements would concern especially any concrete needs or opportunities that we have noticed – in what has been happening in family, work, profession, among friends, in the church, in the nation – and what the Spirit inspired about the more important of them.
The spiritual movements may also refer to needs or opportunities noticed in apostolic works in which one or more of us are already engaged.
Attentive listening will enable every one to contemplate the ways in which God relates with us.
2. A while of silent reflection in the presence of the Lord will allow each one to go over the needs and opportunities that have been mentioned. Which among them resonate in me? Which attract me, or challenge me? What response would give a fuller meaning to my own life, to the lives of others and of the community?
3. Before any discussion we share the fruits of our prayerful reflection. How does my spirit respond to the needs or opportunities mentioned? We believe the Lord is calling each one of us and that His Spirit is active in the community. He will guide us to do what He wishes us to do.
4. The following discussion will help us to clarify, first, what we have heard, and then, what will we do about it. This eventually leads to personal or to communal conclusions.
Nothing is excluded *beforehand* from these conclusions, if the meetings really are for

⁶ Recommendations, op. cit., Preamble n° 1.

⁷ Recommendations, op. cit.: Our National Dimension, n° 2.

discerning what God, our Lord, wants us to do in response to a need. Frequently a single meeting will not be enough to arrive at a clear conclusion. But if the need and the possible responses are meaningful, it is normal that they continue to be present as time goes by. The daily examen will make me aware of the spiritual movements during those days or weeks. Sharing about them in my community eventually leads us to a conclusion. This will require a personal or a communal decision, about what has to be done, or about learning and reflecting more on the need or opportunity that has emerged.

In our world that experiences constant CHANGE we frequently ask ourselves how to REMAIN in a living relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church. The type of meeting we are suggesting – grounded in the Spiritual Exercises – is a process that includes a personal commitment to the daily examen (consciousness examination), a regular participation in the small community and an appropriate on-going formation. A better response to the CHANGING needs we encounter requires a PERMANENT discerning attitude which belongs to the core of Ignatian spirituality.⁸

The small community meeting helps us to live in this discerning attitude; it also allows each of us to support the life in mission of the other members. In the process of understanding what the Lord wishes us to do, the community can actively participate in making the mission explicit and concrete. It can also share the responsibility for that mission and support its accomplishment.

Finally, we suggest four brief points for revising and evaluating our local communities, and for reorienting them if necessary. These points can be first considered from the perspective of the apostolic action of the individual members, and then from apostolic options of the community as such.

1. When and how have we practiced apostolic discernment in our group? And when in the larger community? (Structured, semi-structured or less structured forms, but in the line of apostolic discernment)
2. How have we practiced the sending in mission or the confirmation of mission in our group? And how in the larger community? (Also consider the methods used by others and how they could be improved.)
3. How and when have we experienced the backing, the support or the permanent stimulus of the group (and/or of the larger community), in connection with our apostolic work?
4. How has the group (and/or the larger community) helped us to collect, value and develop our apostolic action?

Together let us acknowledge with gratitude the felt presence of the Lord in our midst.

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⁸ PROGRESSIO, op. cit., n° 118 - 121.