

REFLECTION ON WORLD CLC ASSEMBLY 2008

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Over the weeks and months ahead there will be a number of reflections arising out of the outcomes of the Assembly held at Fatima. In this short reflection I will as far as possible confine my remarks to a number of experiences that have remained with me.

Attending the Assembly as a delegate with Lisa and Chris remains a precious experience and memory. 60 nations attended the Assembly, and in this environment my threshold of my global image of Church has been expanded. It was almost as if World Youth Day provided the kick-start, but Fatima gave me a more heightened sense of the universality of Church. The openness and warm hospitality of our hosts the Portuguese and all the other delegates stressed the importance of the gift of hospitality within CLC. Since my return the sense of isolation down-under is a reality (forged by the tyranny of distance). I pray that we will in the future expand our horizons to identify the global community. All the members of the Asia-Pacific region expressed the hope that we can come together more often. The Latin, European, African, Middle East regions managed to come together or into an act on a far more regular basis -- the geography helps.

Father Patrick O'Sullivan SJ was unable to attend as Australian EA because of duties at the seminary. Meeting took place between Father General Nicolas and EAs from other nations, and I attended the meeting representing Australia. There was a recommendation to Father General that he give urgent consideration to the appointment of younger Jesuit EAs, and he encourage the provincials to introduce CLC to Jesuit when they are much younger. This recommendation was supported by number of Jesuits who were in attendance. Father General noted the request and said he will give the matter further consideration.

On the Sunday after the Assembly commenced, the host nation entertains the delegates and visitors, mass is celebrated by Father General - it is called visitors day. All the nations are encouraged to wear their national costumes. Plenty of music wine food and song. The photographs can only communicate the diversity of dress and colour. We Australians struggled to define a national costume. The visitors included: 18 Japanese, 50 French, many Spanish, and one Nicaraguan, and of course plenty of Portuguese. Father General mixed freely amongst those present, and he was sometimes almost mobbed for the purposes of group photographs. The Japanese in fact made a 30 day pilgrimage culminating in Fatima. I just wonder whether some Australians might do the same for the next World Assembly. When you next travel check where CLC groups are operating and make a contact. At one of the plenary sessions it was suggested a person be nominated by a nation to carry out this task, and so advise Wexco.

I quite was fortunate enough to meet every delegate at some stage over the 10 days. In interacting with so many, I came to appreciate our graced history in Australia. We three Australian delegates are proud to report that we are reasonably well placed in our growth, and it is an occasion for gratitude and celebration. We are blessed with a diverse membership. At the same time, the Assembly did highlight our need to invite/expand our base of younger members. I was also impressed with the number of young adults in their 30s, often married with children but in leadership roles within CLC.

Many poor sister nations attended the Assembly. Many, particularly from Africa, are under resourced. Perhaps we might assist these communities not only as an expression of our solidarity, but also a real opportunity to provide a preferential option to the poor. We are already sending off some of our formation material.

I conclude by observing that we are very fortunate to have Father General Nicolas as our EA. He was inspirational at the Assembly, and I hope that you will all get an opportunity to see and hear each speech on video in the not too distant future.