

Report of the meeting of National Assistants in Gent (Belgium), January 2007

In January 2007 (26-28) the European national assistants of CLC met in Drongen near Gent (Belgium) for an exchange about their experiences, dreams and hopes for their work with CLC.

Present:

Alberto Brito, Vice-Assistant of the World CLC, Mark Rotsaerts, European Provincial Hannes König (Austria), André de l'Arbre (Belgium fr), Wauthier de Mahieu (Belgium fl), Antun Volenik (Croatia), Antonin Vedral (Czech Republic), Anthony Nye (England & Wales), Claude Charvet and Bernard Mendiboure (France), Thomas Hollweck (Germany), Sajgo Sabolcz (Hungary), Gian Giacomo Rotelli (Italy), Michael Callagher (Ireland), Gudaitis Algimantas (Latvia), Stasys Kazenas (Lithuania), Pierre Meyers (Luxembourg), Alfred Micallef (Malta), Dariusz Michalski (Poland), Herminio Rico (Portugal), Bernard Misovic (Slovakia), Eliseo Domingo and Inocencio Martin (Spain).

In the presence of Daniela Frank, World President.

The meeting was organised by Alberto Brito sj and the Euroteam: Agnes Rausch (Luxembourg), Leonardo Becchetti (Italy), Martina Zupanic (Croatia), Monika Sander (France), Andrej Benda sj (Slovenia). The last meeting of assistants took place during the European Assembly in Lille (France) in 2004.

The preparation was based on an important document from the World CLC: "The relationship between the Christian Life Community and the Society of Jesus in the Church", published in July 2006 with an introduction from the President Daniela Frank and the Assistant Peter-Hans Kolvenbach sj.

Alberto Brito, Agnes Rausch and Andrej Benda proposed in the invitation letter for the meeting to consider the following topics:

- Experience like national EA in the last two years (lights darks, challenges, opportunities in the national and European level)
- The relationship CLC – SJ within the Church
- Expectations regarding support for the mission.

Many Jesuites were happy to meet again, and happy to welcome the newcomers: from Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia.

Friday, January 26th

The meeting started in the afternoon and after a short presentation, workshops took place around two questions:

- 1. Lights and darks of my service**
- 2. Challenges and opportunities**

It appears clearly, that the appreciation of CLC by the Company is different in each country, depends of the size and the status of the community: if it is a starting community or already well formed, able to educate competent members. And one of the questions could be: for a Jesuit, is the CLC experience a grace or a task? The aim is partnership.

Creating a real partnership is a mutual process: In a starting community, the Jesuit is needed as a guide but he must be attentive and help the members to grow up and bring them on a way to maturity. And this is one of the difficulties: Jesuits like to be needed and many persons like to be guided; so everybody has to learn to take his responsibility. Jesuits must be attentive to the personal life of the members and don't ask them too much; on the other way, many CLC'ers are highly educated, competent in different national communities but not known in the society – they could be involved in work with Jesuits.

CLC is not an organisation for free time; it is a way of living inspiring for the daily work. So, if in the beginning, CLC could be seen as an apostolate of SJ, the aim must be to see CLC as an apostolic body, CLC as partner; the point is that we have to move from individual to common apostolic initiative; many possibilities are existing but we have to rethink them in a new way. Be creative!

Evening session

Presentation of the *World CLC* by Daniela Frank: three main points

1. Different points of World CLC community and CLC on regional and world level

As world community CLC is divided in Middle East, Asia Pacific, North America, Latin America, Africa and Europe. Each region has specific and diverse characteristics regarding their social, cultural, politic, economic reality. For example:

At the moment for **Asia Pacific** region the big challenge is how they can find ways to collaborate and develop the communication among NC's (difficulties: distance and language).

In **North America** the members of the groups are from different nationalities a part from the American: Vietnamese, Korean, and Latin American etc. They have regional meetings every two years. Some CLC'ers are involved in New York NGO group whose main issues are water and human rights.

Africa is trying to develop a regional structure therefore was held all African meeting last year.

In **Latin America** CLC exists almost in every country but without a strong coordinating structure. Even the formation programme MAGIS is very wide spread and it was realised twice up to no, a third one is in preparation, also for non CLC'ers

2. Main concerns of the WExCo

Formation – A document on formation CLC Charism II is in preparation. Not all NC's have formation plans or formation teams which are necessary. In future we should pay attention on formation of group guides.

Leadership - If we want to grow as apostolic body it is a big challenge for those who are leading our NC's. To find out what are the key elements of CLC leadership or new challenges we organized the international leadership formation course in Rome in December 2007.

Cooperation CLC and SJ – CLC and SJ are two communities within the Church. CLC as a community in Catholic Church – in that sense CLC'ers are involved in their local parishes, as to be present in local church is recommended for CLC. The spirituality we are rooted, give us a right to make a contribution to the Church. All ignatian communities together can be a significant sign of hope.

Apostolic initiatives – many initiatives exist in different NC's but unfortunately we as WExCo are not informed about them. For these reasons we publish *Progressio* – our journal where different NC's can write and present their apostolic initiatives. There are

some common apostolic initiatives for example in Korea for young CLC'ers, Kenya for children infected by AIDS, in Europe forced migration etc.

In the evening, prayerful review of the day prepared by Thomas Hollweck sj.

Saturday, January 27th

Introduction to the work with the document **“The Relationship between the Christian Life Community and the Society of Jesus in the Church”**.

Alberto Brito introduced two question for the work in plenary:

- **What is my first approach to the text?**
- **What is my opinion about the spirit of the text, how do I taste it, how does it apply to CLC and SJ?**

Of course, different opinions came out, from ‘very well thought’ until ‘it is not clear enough’. One of the questions was ‘to whom is it addressed? CLCers, Jesuits or ecclesiastic Assistants?’

Here some of the different proposals:

- Who is CLC – a sign of spirit?
- I enjoy the friendly tone of the document, and happy to read the language of lay people as manifestation of the spirit
- Good text but too long, therefore it will not be shared
- Expectations of EA it is too much for me to obey, I can not promise to do it
- CLC begins to be an apostolic body and SJ is one for 400 years
- I hope we shall discuss relationship SJ and CLC on our next general congregation in 2008
- I see the idea in the document that for the good relationship you need two independent bodies
- I see CLC seeking for mission in coordination with SJ, it is good and possible to accomplish but beside the common apostolic initiatives it is good that CLC continue to seek for its own apostolate
- It is a challenge for SJ through the role of EA to help CLC to develop the mission not vice versa
- Afterwards if we have two independent bodies, it is not clear who really belongs to CLC – the groups can come and go or for Jesuits it is a lifetime commitment
- For SJ it is clear, we deal with child (CLC) and parent (SJ) kind of relationship ...

After the plenary, **working groups** have to discuss on the following points by choosing the one/two they felt most challenging for them:

Church (first chapter of the text):

Why is it difficult to live the world community dimension

Do we wish to be more/less public and how does it go with the canon law

Vocation in the church

EA represents the hierarchy

Integration of CLC in the local church and the bishop's conference

Relationship with other movements and ecumenical dialogue

Jesuits

Our role as directors or guides, how does it live in my local community, how it is lived by CLC and my Jesuit community

What is your opinion about the apostolic partnership?

Experiences you have with NC and provincial of your province, connection with young Jesuits

Experience of Spiritual Exercises for CLC

Sunday, January 28th

Evaluation

prepared by Leonardo Becchetti cf powerpoint presentation

CLC-SJ Relationship

Input of Daniela Frank: A model of religious-lay cooperation for the church?

- The horizon: independent and well formed personalities are the basis for a quality relationship
- The horizon cannot be immediately at reach for beginners (dependence from the local Jesuit's individual charism)
- Picking up best lay people breaking the link with CLC not a good strategy (principal-agent not best model)
- Governance of CLC-SJ partnership in apostolic realities has to do with quality of relationships but also depends on quality and motivation of lay members (without good quality lay people is difficult to establish good partnerships).

CLC vocation and apostolate

- Actualisation of Ignatian spirituality in everyday life (family, job, civic)
- Not just voluntary work in free time
- To attract CLC members we must show that CLC may help to change their everyday life in the three domains
- In best cases CLC vocation leads to a transformation of professional and family lives into apostolic action (new apostolic realities in the organisation of family and profit and no profit enterprises)

A common CLC-SJ mission ?

- Diffusion of Ignatian spirituality and creation of an Ignatian style in the respective fields of action
- Nurturing an Ignatian spiritual environment creates the proper environment for vocations and is beneficial for both CLC and SJ
- Inside/outside orientation: salt is for foods but we must take care of the "factory of salt" as well

Progressive pedagogy in accompanying CLC vocation

The problem of different speeds of beginners and advanced

When newcomers are random entries not possible beginners group

Groups with vocation for hosting new members are a solution. But new members require ad hoc guidance

Proposal for SJ

- To have a formation moment for EA assistants
- Provincial is EA and nominates delegates
- Summary of the meeting to send to Provincials
- Present postulates about SJ-CLC

The path for growth of CLC “corporation”

- Wellcome organisation for new members (beginners group or random entries in gateway groups)
- Investment in formation and leadership for creation of new guides (lay guides, leaders of Spiritual Exercises, CLCers with leadership vocation)
- Mechanisms of horizontal contagion
- Jesuits start-up
- Contacts with international events to broaden vision of what is CLC

CLC as a public association

- Wellcome organisation for new members (beginners group or random entries in gateway groups)
- Investment in formation and leadership for creation of new guides (lay guides, leaders of Spiritual Exercises, CLCers with leadership vocation)
- Mechanisms of horizontal contagion
- Jesuits start-up
- Contacts with international events to broaden vision of what is CLC

→ After this presentation, two questions were introduced:

- 1. How do we feel at the beginning and how is it now?**
- 2. What we shall bring to our NC's?**

Here some answers:

I feel encouraged, satisfied, challenged to work on CLC issues more

Thank you for the clearer role of EA

It was good to meet my neighbour CLC communities; it is a step forward in understanding

CLC'ers are not meant to be workaholics as we are, we share the same illness

I have more questions than answers now

I feel supported and it gives me hope and strength

My general impression is that “Church of laity” as mentioned for GK 35 is becoming closer

It was an eye opening experience for me

By listening others I got the opportunity to go back on certain things I feel that I missed them

I feel enthusiastic about the document; pulling ourselves into the document seems more important to me than working on it

It is important for me to have the opportunity to work with my brothers Jesuits

It is for me as EA a “recruit camp” it can be for young Jesuits as well

It makes me aware that CLC is a concrete community.

And finally:

The meeting took place in a wonderful Jesuit House, comfortable and well organised where we met Bart van Emmerik sj (link to the Netherlands CLC) and Nikolaas Sintobin sj (Ynigo).

We were welcomed warmly by the flamisch CLC and the meeting was based on their very good organisation. Saturday evening, we could visit the city of Gent and Euroteam offered a

diner in a typical flamish restaurant where Charles Bokor, the french speaking belgian Eurolink, was very happy to speak hungarian with Sajgo Sabolcz. Mass and prayers helped us to become nearer, to start a European network for all those who are linked to the ignatian spirituality, Jesuits and lay people. A network with future.

Martina, Leo, Monika