



## DOCUMENT ON THE ROLE AND PROFILE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL ASSISTANT IN CLC

### I. PREAMBLE

The members of the World Executive Council of CLC, in dialogue and common discernment with our World Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr. Arturo Sosa S.J., have been working on redefining the figure and profile of the Ecclesiastical Assistant, at all levels. We want to adapt it so as to *best help the growth of the community in its characteristics as a lay, Ignatian and apostolic at this time in our history, taking into account the ecclesial and world contexts in which we live today.*

In carrying out this process, we are mindful of what we experienced at our last General Assembly in Buenos Aires. Fully confident that the Spirit worked in the delegates present there –and that they made themselves available to allow it to act– the assembly experienced that communal discernment is the best way to deepen our vocation as a lay Ignatian apostolic body. We are called to discern reality by moving forward, deepening, and sharing. Our "feeling with the Church" today is intimately linked to this *Kairós* we are living, guided by Pope Francis. We want to continue to grow and to contribute, through our identity, to a Church that is becoming more synodal in its identity and way of proceeding. Thus, walking together, open to what is new, being creative and bold, we have entered this difficult but necessary exercise. We have done so, moreover, from a respectful view of our Ignatian history and grateful for the gift of so many Ecclesiastical Assistants at all levels, who have been generous companions in the journey.

We invite everyone who reads this document to do so with benevolence, knowing that it is a response to the invitation we have received today, aware that this will be deepened and refined over time as we constantly seek the "Magis". We eagerly invite you to accompany and support this document, as a necessary adjustment and impulse in our journey.

### ***THE ASSISTANT, A PERSON CALLED TO...ASSIST, THAT IS, ACCOMPANY***

The one who occupies the role of Ecclesiastical Assistant, mainly, is called to view the community with hope. The EA's role as a servant is in relation to the community. Even if he / she is not "usually" a member of a community, the EA is immersed in the heart of it. As a very welcome interlocutor, he / she walks with the members of the community and accompanies the life and growth of the community. The EA's position is primarily borne from a place of graciousness and freedom. Recall the image proposed by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the Annotations<sup>1</sup>, to describe the dynamic between God, the person who gives and the one who receives the Spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> Annotation N°15 of the Spiritual Exercises "...when seeking the Divine Will, it is more fitting and much better, that the Creator and Lord Himself should communicate Himself to His devout soul, inflaming it with His love and praise, and disposing it for the way in which it will be better able to serve Him in future...."



Exercises. This gives us an idea to define the fundamental responsibility of the Ecclesiastical Assistant.

*"...The assistant takes part in the life of the community in its various levels according to the General Norms. Working in collaboration with other leaders of the community, he is principally responsible for the Christian development of the whole community, and helps its members grow in the ways of God, especially through the Spiritual Exercises..." (G.P. N°14)*

With the proposed approach, the person who is in the role of Ecclesiastical Assistant is called to "work", always in collaboration "with others in charge", but from his or her specific role. We do not want a "director of operations" nor a passive observer.

CLC knows that it assumes its vocation better when it is complemented by the figure of the Assistant, while the latter is more available for service when he or she does not assume responsibility for the final decision of a process of community discernment.

*"...Generally at the national, regional and diocesan levels, the ecclesiastical assistant is a priest; in special cases the competent authority may assign the function to any other qualified person, always taking account of the role that the CLC expects from its assistants (GP14)..." (N.G.44)*

It would be an oversimplification to refer to the Ecclesiastical Assistant using a state of life. Although in smaller numbers, there are now women of religious congregations and lay members who serve CLC as Ecclesiastical Assistants at both regional and national levels.

In harmony with the ecclesial and world contexts, we propose to imagine with audacity and courage a new figure of the Ecclesiastical Assistant who will accompany CLC in this process of maturity as a lay and Ignatian apostolic community.

It is important to be attentive to the use of the words we have chosen in the second part (Profile of the Ecclesiastical Assistant). They support the desire to respect the specificity of the role of the Ecclesiastical Assistant. The verbs of this service "*collaborate, promote, encourage, assist, accompany, care for, support, strengthen, participate in...*" evoke an active assistant, free but in a role of equality.

In the Profile section of the document, we express our desire for the figure of the Ecclesiastical Assistant, what we expect from him or her in the fulfilment of his or her service. We hope you follow the reading with this "music" in the background – those of which we have been expressing in the previous paragraphs. We do not believe that a single person has all the characteristics that have been articulated in the Profile. CLC seeks and desires for a person willing and able to help this apostolic body to respond to God's call and to build, progressively, a lay Ignatian community, exploring and acting with ever greater coherence. These are starting points for discernment that will be adjusted to times, places, and persons, as Saint Ignatius of Loyola have said.



## II. PROFILE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL ASSISTANT (EA)

### A. What do we expect from a CLC Ecclesiastical Assistant?

#### A.1. The Ecclesiastical Assistant at the national level and vis-a-vis the National Executive Council

##### A.1.1. Participates in the life of the community

- Walks with the community, with an eye beyond the horizon.
- Offers us their apostolic experience and encourages the participation of CLC in the mission of Christ, encouraging us to deepen and develop our identity and mission as an Ignatian lay apostolic body, present in the Church and in the world.

##### A.1.2. Invites and helps the community:

- To do, together, an eschatological reading of the General Principles and the General Assemblies.
- To explore new invitations or challenges, being deeply connected to the spiritual and historical roots.
- To become, more and more, a lay, Ignatian and apostolic body at all levels: ordinary, apostolates, institutional and international<sup>2</sup>.

##### A.1.3. Participates in the Executive Council:

- Actively accompanies and assists the Executive Council.
- Promotes and facilitates communion and the spirit of personal and communal discernment as a privileged process for decision making.

##### A.1.4. Supports the formation and growth of CLC:

- Promotes the Spiritual Exercises in all their possible forms as a specific source of CLC spirituality, taking care of the way they are given.
- Encourages the participation of CLC members in different ways (theological; biblical; ministerial; Ignatian; apostolic; socio-political; among others).
- As a member of the Executive Council, collaborates in the care and growth of the other Ecclesiastical Assistants, seeking to generate common spaces that promote sharing, reflection and the search for "Magis" in the services that the EA's provide.
- Collaborates in the formation of group guides.
- Works together for the development and growth of CLC in its charism, respecting the process of growth outlined.

#### A.2. The Ecclesiastical Assistant vis-à-vis the Society of Jesus, the Ignatian Family and the Church

CLC is an international association of lay Christians recognized by the Catholic Church. In this sense, it is the responsibility of the community to make the links and spaces for collaboration with the Society of Jesus, with other institutions of the Ignatian family and with local ecclesiastical authorities. We hope that the Ecclesiastical Assistant will assist,

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<sup>2</sup> Levels of Mission, "Challenges for the CLC Mission". Franklin Ibañez en Progressio Supplement #70



advise, and accompany us on our journey to be and live as an apostolic body that collaborates in Christ's mission and that "feels with the Church".

**B. What are the specific responsibilities and qualities of the Ecclesiastical Assistant that we hope will give added value to CLC?**

**B.1. Specific Responsibilities**

The Ecclesiastical Assistant helps and encourages the contribution of the laity in its efforts to understand the signs of the times in the Church and to develop a better understanding of what is central to an Ignatian lay apostolic body. To be capable of carrying out Christ's mission in the Church, it is necessary for the EA to dare to accompany new ideas and initiatives. To be open to exploration, being faithful to the roots of CLC.

- Offers CLC his/her theological knowledge and mastery of doctrine.
- Takes care of the community, offering pedagogical tools which help it to move faithfully and creatively in the Church.
- Fulfills statutory and canonical obligations that guarantee a timely presence in the various processes and structures of CLC.

**B.2. Desirable qualities and competencies of the Ecclesiastical Assistant**

- Open and willing to know and assimilate the General Principles and General Norms, as well as the different historical stages of CLC, its most relevant moments and the documents of the General Assemblies and World CLC.
- Collaborates to carry out the mission of Christ, received by CLC: service of faith, promotion of justice and reconciliation, preferential option for the poor.
- Enthusiastic on the mission to which he / she is being sent.
- Prayerful, with spiritual and affective maturity, who possessing a "contemplative spirit in action".
- Sensitive in reading the growth of the community from his/her position.
- Experienced in the Spiritual Exercises, having assimilated them, and believing that others can have this foundational experience as well.
- Flexible and open to listening and understanding different opinions, respecting the diversity that exists in CLC.
- Committed to living according to the model of the Church as the People of God, approved by the Second Vatican Council, and promoted by Pope Francis: a synodal Church, which expresses itself best through community and participatory means.
- Believes that God works within the community and is able to discern in common with them, being patient and respectful of others rhythm.
- Develops and formulates the work in conjunction with the team, bringing together different perspectives and sensitivities to deepen the identity and mission of CLC as a lay Ignatian apostolic body.
- Open to work with young people and, at the same time, sympathetic and understanding towards the adult generation. He / she is able to build intergenerational bridges in the community.
- Able to work from a disposition of empowerment, taking care not to create dependencies on any person.



We invite all those who have received the mission of being an Ecclesiastical Assistant, those involved in the appointment processes and the World Community to pray, to join in the reflection and to be creative in their implementation in order to best carry out the fundamental invitation of this document.

Rome, November 2020

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