



**Letter of communication between the Executive Council and the
world Christian Life Community**



Dear Friends in Christ and CLC,

Greetings once again and peace to you all including families and friends. We write to you bringing news of the latest CLC World Executive Council, on this occasion, held in Lille, France. We are grateful to CLC of Lille and France who kindly invited us to have our Exco meeting in the very peaceful Ignatian Retreat House of Hautmont, Lille. We also appreciated the opportunity to meet the leadership team from CLC France and CLC ExcOs from both French and Flemish speaking Belgium and exchange encouraging stories of CLC community life and growth.

In coming to this meeting, we were conscious of a number of matters to be addressed such as follow up to our recent surveys on DSSE, financial co-responsibility, guides formation and Ignatian advocacy and networking. We were also aware that we are halfway through our current Exco term and our Fatima mandate and needed a critical assessment of progress so far. In addition, we are fast approaching the need to begin preparation for the CLC World Assembly in 2013. We now report on these matters and take the opportunity to express gratitude to the global CLC community and the Jesuits for your cooperation and solidarity in all these various projects. We also appreciate your prayers and support during the year which have all helped to make our meeting a joyful one, with some honest and worthwhile progress.

CLC Exco and Secretariat - consolidation of arrangements

During 2010, we saw the settling in of our new Secretariat Team comprising Executive Secretary, Franklin Ibáñez, Sofía Montañez in Communications and our World Vice-

Ecclesial Assistant, Fr Luke Rodrigues SJ. We have received very positive feedback about their contributions to CLC life in their various roles and thank each accordingly. Especially, we thank Van Ngyen, our secretary and administrator for her dedication and very effective service to CLC over 17 continuous years.

The CLC Global Picture

An important part of each meeting is hearing and discussing an overview of each CLC Region. While impossible to mention all CLC national communities here, we at least mention some of the particular Regional highlights as follows:

- ***Africa:*** We heard encouraging stories of developments in formation, guides training, special apostolic projects (eg in HIV/Aids) and retreats in a number of countries eg Zimbabwe, Cameroon, DR Congo, and Rwanda. We also note the international cooperation in some of these countries from Germany, Switzerland, and others. Of special significance, however, is the decision to plan an All-Africa Assembly towards the end of this year. Work has now begun on this major project and we ask your prayers and support for its success.
- ***Asia/Pacific:*** In November, CLC Hong Kong hosted a 4 day Asia Pacific Regional Assembly on the theme “Embracing our diversity” attended by 10 CLC member countries and 4 observers. The Assembly was a significant contribution to building CLC Regional identity and community. Follow up work on the Assembly recommendations is beginning and is focusing upon website communications, formation, developing CLC Regional structures and helping neighboring CLC national communities (eg Singapore, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and others) with special needs. The many good works of various national communities in the context of a globally developing region were discussed. Vietnam is seeking formal incorporation with world CLC.
- ***Europe:*** The work of the Euroteam and Eurolinks continues with special attention to emerging communities such as Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia (the latter seeking incorporation). Some of the stronger national communities, such as France, Germany and Italy, continue with their formation programs and their apostolic works both locally and internationally. They have also provided very strong support for the global CLC community from time to time - either directly, or through the Rome Secretariat. It is hoped the Leadership program will be developed for European needs in 2011 and introduced in 2012.
- ***Latin America:*** The 3 year Magis formation program for CLC people is in its fourth generation and has proved very successful. As a lay run process, it is becoming more independent as graduates of successive courses continue their involvement in financial, academic and mentoring aspects of the program. This MAGIS program could be a useful model of cooperation for adaptation in other CLC Regions. Other programs/activities continue on such matters as CLC/Jesuit

collaboration, advocacy and various apostolic works. Continued encouragement and support is being provided for communities in special need such as Guatemala (moving towards incorporation), and Cuba.

- ***Middle East:*** While CLC is not yet big in numbers in the Middle East, we note and pray for them especially in the context of recent political developments there. Their presence is an important and challenging witness in this part of the world. We heard reports about their depth of commitment like that expressed in Lebanon with its focus on the Spiritual Exercises and General Principles.
- ***North America:*** Although North America does not have a Regional structural arrangement, the individual national communities of Canada (French speaking) Canada (English speaking) and the United States of America continue to work on structures, leadership and various aspects of the Fatima recommendations. In particular, efforts are being made in further development and delivery of formation programs, especially for guides.

Recent CLC Surveys and Progress Reports

Seeking to give fullest practical expression to our Fatima recommendations, CLC Exco initiated, during 2010, a number of projects three of which have involved surveys and engagement with national communities.

The matters addressed related to the practice of DSSE, Financial Co-Responsibility, and Guide Formation and, picking up an earlier initiative, Leadership. Initial survey results revealed considerable levels of appreciation, commitment and practice. Not unexpectedly, the surveys also revealed some differences both between and within national communities in terms of interpretation, emphasis and practice. Very briefly, a few comments are made here as follows:

- ***DSSE:*** The practice is increasing with more emphasis on the “discernment” stage of the DSSE process; considerable formation processes and material existed but more was considered necessary.
- ***Financial Co-responsibility:*** Increasing levels of commitment were noted both in survey responses and in practice. Once again, some divergence of practice was noted. The Exco will do further analysis of findings during this year.
- ***Guides’ Formation:*** Results suggest some shortage of guides, slightly varying views on the role of the guide, an increasing use of lay guides, and also fairly close agreement on content and process of guides’ formation. Challenges identified included engendering appreciation of the significance of the role, finding more members prepared to take on the role, and developing improved formation processes and materials.

- ***Leadership formation:*** Several national communities in Africa are offering local courses following the 2009 Leadership Courses offered in both English and French. In 2011 and beyond, we hope to see further Leadership implementation in the European and Asia/Pacific Regions. Feedback from these regions suggests that some extra work may need to be done to accommodate inter-regional cultural differences – something we will consult about in the near future.
- ***Temporary and Permanent Commitment:*** More and more national communities have raised the issue of “Commitment”. This is a positive challenge for us and, following consultation and assessment, will be addressed again in the future.

Thank you to CLC national communities almost all of whom have engaged in some way in these discussions. We will be reporting on these matters further through future issues of *Progressio*, *Projects*, letters to national communities and website postings. For those national communities yet to respond to any of these matters there is still time to do so now.

CLC Apostolic Developments

One way or another, the recommendations of Fatima encourage us to full and whole-hearted engagement in Christ’s mission, personally and collectively. This central aspect of CLC life is being developed at two levels: one at the personal level of compassionate works, the other at the higher structural level of social justice through systemic change. While individual people and national communities may experience a call to one or another of these levels of apostolic works, we hope all see these approaches as complementary and equally worthy of attention. Directly supporting both these levels of apostolic expression, we report on the following initiatives:

- ***Establishment of a special fund for apostolic works:*** We are setting up an existing fund in a new way to support specific “concrete” projects of an apostolic nature. We thank some national communities (we must especially mention France and also some individual members) who have already helped substantially to begin this fund. In time, we will publicize it more formally, clearly identifying its exclusive purpose, ie “the option for the poor”, how the funds can be accessed (and some simple guidelines) and how donations and bequests might be made. We already have a number of pilot projects (in Nigeria and Chile).
- ***Apostolic Advocacy and Networking:*** Recently, we received from many national communities their summaries and views on the subject. Thank you for this – other responses are still welcome. In *Projects* 146, and based on these findings, we put forward some observations and further articulation about CLC apostolic works for justice. We thank, especially, our previous Executive Secretary, Guy Maginzi, for his contribution to this work. His term as WCLC Advocacy Coordinator came to an end on 31st October 2010. Mauricio Lopez will take up this task on a part time basis. With increasing clarity, we move forward retaining our focus on Ecology

(water) and Migration. In particular, we seek to consolidate our networks and encourage practical intervention.

CLC as a Lay Apostolic Body

A framework document is currently being prepared drawing together much of the above discussion and linking all this with other important aspects of CLC life such as vocation, commitment and identity and also with past World Assembly themes. Once a draft has been prepared, we will be seeking feedback from various representatives of your communities to produce the final document. The early draft is very promising.

Finances

Concerning our Operational budget, last year was a significantly improved one. In the spirit of financial co-responsibility, almost all national communities were able to contribute to CLC operational budgetary needs. While the situation is improving, we still need to address some accumulated deficit to secure our longer term financial viability. To this end, a strategy to reduce one of our greater single costs (accommodation) is being implemented (see below). All these matters will be addressed in a financial letter to national communities in April.

Financial Sustainability.- This project has emerged out of a desire to ensure our operational budget reliably meets all reasonable needs on a long term basis (a Fatima recommendation). The second most expensive item in this budget is the cost of accommodation for our Executive Secretary, ie about €17,000 per annum. Recently, the landlord of the accommodation we rented previously made a very a reasonable offer of sale. Work is continuing on an assessment of the need for this type of accommodation, on the feasibility of the proposal put to us and accessing wider CLC community wisdom on the subject. We will be in contact with national communities with news of further progress soon. Our ultimate and only interest in this matter is to free up and enhance our apostolic capability.

Communications

Publications: Following some intensive work by Sofia Montanez, our publication processes are back on schedule - we had 5 issues of Progressio publications in 2010. We are now receiving a wider range of article contributions from national communities as well as their greater involvement in publication processes. In future, advance notice of forthcoming issues of Progressio will be posted on the website along with an index of Progressio articles. We will be making a special effort to promote Progressio, both normal issues and the Supplements, and seek your cooperation with this task. We are also developing an internet payment plan.

Website: Feedback about recent improvements has been very positive. Comments have been made in terms of the improved usefulness, relevance and quality of information displayed - "It looks alive", one person commented. All your news would be most welcomed to be published here.

CLC Virtual Library: We also mention a significant long term project of establishing a virtual library on our website. This will include digitalized Progressio Supplements as well as formation and other materials.

The CLC World Assembly, 2013

We are very conscious of the need to begin planning for the next CLC World Assembly in 2013. In doing so, we are reviewing many aspects of the matter eg the history of our past World Assemblies, being a witness in the world, and awakening a deeper appreciation within the CLC global community of one of our Regions. We also address such practical matters such as costs, capacity of a host community, political realities and more. Following reflection, discussion and some preliminary "soundings" among CLC members and national communities, the Middle East, and in particular Lebanon, has emerged as a possibility. Also Chile is a real option. We continue our prayerful discernment and consultations in this matter knowing that we need to make a decision by 12th June.

Once again, we take the opportunity to thank all national CLC communities. We join with you all, following the Feast of the Annunciation and the CLC World Day of Prayer, to serve our CLC world community engaged in Christ's mission, in the Church, in the world.

United in prayer and service,

Daniela Frank
President

Chris Hogan
Consultor