

PROJECTS

Back from the World Assembly

Nº 170, September 2018

Original: French

*The final document of the Buenos Aires World Assembly is not ... final.
And maybe we should not even refer to a document, because it's rather a narrative.
Thus, you have two excellent reasons to dive into the reading with curiosity.*

We believe that the starting intuition was an inspiration

The 2018 World Assembly started to take shape, at least in the mind of the members of the 2013-2018 W-ExCo, when we identified a grace worth being asked for with faith and determination: « We desire greater depth and integration in the living out of our CLC charism in the world today ».

To deepen and integrate what had already been identified strongly enough to be considered as our charism!? This proposition was bold because it exposed us to the reproach of a vain or even narcissistic repetition.

Nevertheless, we actually addressed the proposition as a grace to ask for, sensing that the Spirit had something to tell CLC now about its identity, its vocation and its mission as a lay Ignatian apostolic community.

The Spirit worked in us and we let it do so ... with all our might

We dared to affirm that CLC is a gift for the Church and the world. We had yet to address seriously the question of the meaning and especially the implication of this statement.

In the context of the repeated calls of Pope Francis, we felt of course very concerned by the theme of discernment and more specifically the communal discernment.

Rather than dealing with the « subject », we wanted to try a communal discernment in real time, with 204 delegates from more than seventy countries. We had a clear methodological canvas, but no security net.

Almost all of us were confronted with some resistance, moments of doubt, and thus with the temptation of regaining control. However, the Assembly itself made an extraordinary act of faith and held to the end, trusting in God. We definitely experienced what we pray so often: “Take, Lord, and receive all our liberty, our memory, our understanding and our entire will”.

The “final document” is atypical but consistent with the starting intuition and the event that we experienced

The final document of each World Assembly opens us to the future, of course. This being said, the document which will help us to benefit from the momentum generated by the Buenos Aires Assembly is less “final” than ever. If we have reasons to believe that the Spirit has blown, we’ll need time to let the text unfold. This will require an effort of understanding, as atypical as the document itself.

It is a narrative. The story of a journey which, even before leading toward a destination, constitutes an event in itself, i.e. a meaningful experience. The word “experience” appears 10 times in the text. That’s why we invite you to read the text in community, preferably by listening to the live testimony of your delegates. Indeed, it is desirable to read the chosen words and also between the lines. Moreover, we invite you to put the text in a wider perspective, reading again the letter of convocation and Projects 168 and 169. These preparatory documents shed light on the whole process, through its continuity as well as the adjustments that were made.

Other tools yet to come

In order to support the indispensable exercise of rereading, the newly-elected ExCo will publish a Progressio Supplement. This Supplement (#74) will include not only the inputs of the guest speakers, but also a fundamental rereading of the process and some elements of the methodology that we followed in the communal discernment.

Moreover, as a preparation for the world CLC day of 25th March 2019, the next issue of Projects (#171) will invite the whole community to take an active part in the effort of understanding the call that was heard during the Assembly. It is a matter of listening to a call that is universal, and at the same time, to engage ourselves concretely in a particular context.

A new Executive Council at the service of the World Community

To introduce the new ExCo, I would like to loosely quote a delegate: “We ask those who will be elected to build a discerning Executive Council”.

We must indeed hope that the team will be capable of discernment. You will judge in due course, but if you have a sense for humor and want to try a forecast simply by looking at the faces, here is the ExCo:



*From left to right: Alwin & Rojean Macalalad (Executive Secretaries), Diego Pereira (Consultor), Fernando Vidal (Consultor), Najat Sayegh (Consultor), Daphne Ho (Consultor), Catherine Waiyaki (Secretary), Ann Marie Brennan (Vice President), Aeraele Macalalad, Denis Dobbelstein (President), Herminio Rico SJ (Vice Ecclesiastical Assistant). *not in photo: Arturo Sosa SJ (Ecclesiastical Assistant)*

With the whole ExCo,

Denis Dobbelstein

President of the World CLC



17th World Assembly of the Christian Life Community
Buenos Aires, Argentina 2018
CLC, A gift for the Church and the World
'How many loaves have you?...Go and see' (Mk 6:38)

FINAL DOCUMENT

***We journeyed together desiring greater depth and integration
in the living out of our CLC charism in the world today,
and the Lord called us to DEEPEN, SHARE, and GO FORTH.***

1. We journeyed to “the end of the earth,” Buenos Aires, in search of the missionary spirit and zeal that has transformed Pope Francis and enlivened our Church. Our journey led us to follow in the footsteps of Bergoglio, to the *Colégio Maximo de S. José*, where his pastoral vision was originally established and developed among the people and parishes in *Barrio de San Miguel*.
2. We were also led into an experience of the Church in Latin America which offers a model for evangelization in our increasingly secular world by seeing the possibilities for liberating people to choose Christ. We saw the Spirit at work in renewing, energizing and missioning lay people.
3. We came together as one World Community. We desired to grow in gratitude for the gift of our community and way of life, to deepen our responsibility for enabling the Lord to multiply the loaves we have received, and to increase our impact on our world. We discovered the apostolic significance of our way of proceeding as a lay Ignatian community and the gifts we have to offer to a world that is groaning in labor pains¹ for spirituality and transcendence.

PREPARING FOR THE ASSEMBLY

4. **[Three Contextual Realities]** Our Assembly was called together amid three contextual realities: the 50th year anniversary of the renewal that led to CLC, a papacy renewing the Church, and the renewed call for the laity in our world today.² These contexts revealed a “Kairos” moment where we might reflect more deeply upon our identity and mission as a lay Ignatian discerning apostolic body through the loaves we are invited to offer to be multiplied.
5. **[History of Mission and Identity]** We journeyed to the Assembly conscious of our history of mission and aware of our priorities. The most recent World Assembly in Lebanon in 2013 clarified our orientations for action at our discerned four frontiers of family, globalization and poverty, ecology and youth. The link between mission and identity was made evident in Nairobi

¹ cf. Romans 8:22.

² See Projects 168 and President’s Letter #4. See also *Evangelium Gaudium*.

in 2003 when we confirmed our call to be a lay Ignatian apostolic body with DSSE (Discern, Send, Support, Evaluate) as our way of proceeding.

6. **[Signs of the Times]** We journeyed amid volatile and complex times in our world's history, characterized by increasing polarization, a deepening ecological crisis, and an unwillingness to welcome the other. These difficulties delayed some delegates and prevented others from arriving at all. Our world makes our hearts ache, but we drew inspiration from the Trinity in their Contemplation of the world in the Incarnation, and confidence from the Spirit which hovered in the darkness over the waters of the original Chaos in the Book of Genesis. We saw the Spirit at work in how CLC Syria journeyed with us in prayer and fraternal affection even when its delegate's visa was granted only on the last part of the Assembly. We sought to place ourselves in the hands of the Spirit, full of confidence and hope that we could seek our way towards the future we only see dimly.³

BECOMING THE ASSEMBLY

7. **[Welcoming New Communities]** We were welcomed warmly with great generosity by ARUPA, the organizing team from Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Their welcome enabled us to enter into the joy of being one world community. We also welcomed the new national communities of Latvia, Mauritius Island and Vietnam into the World Community, adding to the communal gift that CLC offers to our world. Present at our Assembly were 63 of 67 affiliated communities and 8 observer communities. In total, there were 204 participants. This included 51 Jesuits, which reflects our strong spiritual bonds and collaboration with the Society of Jesus. The Assembly noted that the re-emergence of CLC in highly secularized societies like the Netherlands and Sweden confirms that our world hungers for profound community experiences that offer opportunities for evangelization.

8. **[Papal Greetings]** The Assembly received with gratitude and found inspiration in the surprise greeting of Pope Francis. He reminded us that humble thanksgiving for our gifts leads to the responsibility of going forth to encounter others. At the center of our spirituality are the two dimensions of contemplation and action, "because we can only enter the heart of God through the wounds of Christ, and we know that Christ is wounded in the hungry, the uneducated, the discarded, the old, the sick, the imprisoned, in all the vulnerable human flesh."⁴

9. **[Dicastery Greetings]** Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life greeted us with insights drawn from the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*. He invited us to reproduce in our own lives the various aspects of Jesus' earthly life in order to harmonize our whole life with the mission we receive from God. His greeting echoed the necessity of both identity and mission for the one who desires to follow Christ and incarnate God in our world today.

10. **[Journey with a Missionary Church]** The Kairos moment in our Church calls us to be missionary disciples to our world through an encounter with Jesus that opens us up to the love of the Father.⁵ Austen Ivereigh, a biographer of Pope Francis, shared that entering into this missionary spirit means: being Christ in our wounded world by helping people reconnect with creation and the world as creatures of God; to experience family and community which are the bonds of trust and unconditional love that build resilience, character, and self-esteem; and to help people find sanctuary. This journey invites us to let reality and the Holy Spirit guide us in our mission.

³ cf. 1 Cor. 13:12

⁴ Letter of Pope Francis to Mr. Mauricio Lopez Oropeza, President of the World Christian Life Community.

⁵ Austen Ivereigh, "The Francis Option: Evangelizing a World in Flux."

11. **[The Journey is the Experience]** We entered into a concrete experience of a missionary church through an encounter with the families and members of the Parish Community in *Barrio de San Miguel*. We had the opportunity to share our lives with one another. The Assembly was touched by the joy of the welcome we received and inspired by the generous spirit that animated the life of the community, in spite of the difficult realities they also shared. We were reminded that “the journey is the experience.”

12. **[History of Grace]** Maria Magdalena Palencia Gomez of CLC Mexico shared about our journey as a discerning lay Ignatian apostolic community from Pius XII’s challenge to the Marian Congregations to undergo a renewal process until the present. Her story of our history reminded us how the Spirit has been consistently present with us, patiently guiding and inspiring us as God has labored to shape and form us into a community at the service of God’s Kingdom.

13. **[Our Name as Identity and Mission]** Beyond our history of grace, Magdalena also shared several key stories and reflections that reminded us of our identity as Christian Life Community, which Fr. Arrupe had said was the name bestowed by the Lord upon the CLC and contained within it the mission of these communities. He had linked this to the call of Abraham, whose covenant and mission was established through the name given to him by God. We were reminded that our identity and mission are a gift entrusted to us by God. We have clarified and responded to this grace through the years, always navigating the tension between the promptings of the Good Spirit and the obstacles and divisions introduced by the Evil Spirit.

14. **[Being a Community of Discernment for Reconciliation]** Our World Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J., invited us to see our being a community of discernment as a gift for developing a laity capable of individual and communal discernment. This discernment can be shared with the Church and become a tool of wisdom for action in the world. Forming our members in both constant prayer and generous service will facilitate the link between individual reconciliation and our ability to become agents of reconciliation.

15. **[Magis as living in permanent tension]** Fr. Sosa touched upon the tension that arises as we deepen our relationships. He also referred to *Magis* as living in the permanent tension of being pulled to both God and to the world at the same time.⁶ We will need to navigate this tension in our communal discernment while being very attentive to the workings of the Evil Spirit, which may easily turn tension into conflict.

16. **[Sharing to create Community]** The tapestry woven by the various inputs helped us grow in our communal spirit and we were re-energized in the importance of being community. We opened ourselves more deeply into the gift of our way of life by sharing openly in small groups throughout the Assembly discernment process. We were awakened to the beauty of discerning together as a lay Ignatian discerning apostolic body.

DISCERNING AS AN APOSTOLIC BODY

17. **[Spiritual Conversation and Apostolic Discernment]** The delegates were invited to be part of a formal communal discernment process informed by the Spiritual Exercises employing spiritual conversation. For five days, each morning and afternoon, we followed a three-step sequence: individual prayer, sharing in small groups (in three rounds, allowing us to be moved and respond to what we have heard from others) and plenary. While the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises provided the framework, spiritual conversation was a sweet reminder of our small group sharing at home. The process was facilitated by the ESDAC⁷ team, which provided

⁶ Cf. Jesuit General Congregation 35, 8.

⁷ *Exercices Spirituels pour un Discernement Apostolique Communautaire*, <http://www.esdac.net/>

prayer guidelines and creatively guided us in the way each group offered its own insight to the whole Assembly.

18. **[Abraham's Trust in God]** As the Assembly engaged in the discernment process, Abraham resurfaced as a reference. When God calls him, Abram not only has his name changed to Abraham, but he is led by God out of his comfort zone without knowing where he is heading. Abraham's only assurance: his faith in God. As Abraham, we started the process with only our confidence in the Spirit, which helps us to find meaning in the midst of chaos. Similar to how each of us trusts the Spirit each time we do the Spiritual Exercises, the Assembly as a whole felt called to respect the process and trust the direction of the Spirit.

19. **[Joys and Struggles]** As days went by, we began to realize the process of communal discernment is challenging: it requires patience and openness of heart. We faced obstacles, resistances and pain throughout but realized these are an integral part of the process to be understood in light of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection. Like pilgrims journeying to unknown territories, we feel called to humbly share with our CLC companions our own experience and the fruits we have received:

- a. **We learned it is difficult to grow in indifference.** During the discernment process, we faced various difficulties, either with the way the process worked or with what was exactly being asked of us; at times, there appeared to be insufficient clarity. That gave rise to frustration, lack of meaning and desolation. We realized it is painful to put our attachments aside and focus our hearts on the greater good, which very slowly emerges from the group's sharing. In that process, we learned from one another to be humble and patient.
- b. **We experienced a growing sense of intimate spiritual connection among ourselves,** as our sharing went deeper and deeper, transcending our personal backgrounds, local realities and language difficulties. Although sometimes we resisted being more personal in our sharing, we were able to gradually open our hearts to each other; we laughed and cried and dreamed together. In that process, we became a community of friends in the Lord.
- c. **We felt liberated in acknowledging our frailties and imperfections.** At some point, we realized that, to truly walk together, we would have to be honest about everything that hinders the Spirit from flowing freely in our communities. We enacted and contemplated the various paralyses inhibiting our communal life, in order to acknowledge how our communities can easily close in on themselves, becoming self-centered; how they can be caught in a web of self-interests, falling prey to division and conflict; how they may let the passion for announcing the Kingdom die and lose the shine that attracts others to our way of life. In that process, we learned how the power of truth and reconciliation lived out in community can be profoundly liberating.
- d. **We moved from fear and doubt to union of hearts and minds.** As the days continued to unfold, despite the difficulties in adjusting to the process, and despite the occasional bouts of desolation, we began to feel genuine peace together. Throughout the Assembly we were sustained by the prayers of the world community which we felt, especially in particular difficult periods. This invisible but powerful current eventually erupted in deep gratitude, consolation, joy, hope and desire for the future. In that process, we briefly tasted the Peace only the Resurrected Christ can give us.
- e. **We realized we can take decisions together.** As each member in the small group began to grow familiar with each other, it became easier to identify convergence points in our sharing and find a common response for the questions proposed for our discernment. In that process, we learned how to merge our diversity into something more than just the sum-of-the-parts.

20. **[Treasure of Communal Discernment]** On the whole, the delegates to the Assembly experienced communal discernment as the way to deepen our vocation as a lay Ignatian apostolic body. While General Principle 8 urges us to know no limits in our apostolic calling, General Principle 2 is very clear in the need to respect ‘the uniqueness of each personal vocation [which] enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God’. Common prayerful discernment in successive rounds allows our spiritual movements to gradually converge throughout the process. This enables us to grow in confidence and ownership of our collective decisions. It is a process which requires humility and perseverance because resistances may seem difficult to overcome. However, the fruits – stronger community bonds, increased clarity on the route to take – are too precious not to be harvested. We gradually opened ourselves to the grace entailed in journeying together. We realized that the process itself is a grace – the journey is truly part of the experience.

FRUITS OF OUR APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT

21. **[What we received]** We arrived in Buenos Aires desiring greater depth and integration in living out our CLC charism in the world today. We leave the Assembly feeling deeply grateful and consoled for so great a good received. We felt sorrow for our paralyses. We were offered a way for deep internal conversion. As we felt reconciled with each other and with our history, our hearts filled with immense joy, we became real friends in the Lord, companions on a journey, re-energized for Mission. We feel confirmed in our call to be a lay Ignatian apostolic body in the Church.

22. **[Where we feel called]** Our evolving discernment led us to ponder the question: ‘As CLC community, we are called today to...?’ Among the many responses that were offered, three main windows were opened:

- i. We feel called to DEEPEN our identity, through an inner conversion that allows us to be more faithful and caring about our charism in all its dimensions;
- ii. We feel called to SHARE humbly with others the gift of Ignatian spirituality as lived out in our lay vocation. We view Discernment and the Ignatian tools and methods as precious gifts we cannot keep for ourselves;
- iii. We feel called to GO FORTH to serve those most in need and sow the seeds of mercy, joy and hope in the world in order to follow Jesus more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom.

23. **[How we will live out our calling]** The process of communal discernment held in Buenos Aires gave us a new understanding of CLC as a lay Ignatian apostolic body and inspired us to shoulder our financial responsibility in a more proactive manner. When translated into our national communities, the process of communal discernment can prove a powerful tool to improve the quality of our apostolic calling to the Kingdom. It may also sow the seed to help us understand whether there is a certain way of living out our call to Mission which is specific – and prophetic – to our lay vocation. The Assembly therefore recommends that the World ExCo expand, develop and evolve this process for use at the various levels of our world community. We also call upon national communities, through their delegates returning from the Assembly, to share the methods and fruits of this process to facilitate greater depth and integration of our charism in the apostolic lives of our communities.