



Towards Fátima 2008

First preparatory input

Journeying as an Apostolic Body: Our Response to this Grace from God

In Projects 134 we promised the first preparatory input towards our next world assembly. In this Projects we begin our preparations by the reflection of what inspired the choice of the Assembly theme: *"The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him what they had done and taught"* (Mk 6, 30-34). In this theme we aim to bridge the Itaiçi and Nairobi Assemblies by encouraging an intensive look on our graced history. In addition we desire to evaluate and appropriate our previous attitudes and practices in order to discern our next steps on the journey as an apostolic body. This Assembly is an invitation to deepen.

Looking back at the history of CLC, one might be reminded of the image of an unfolding flower. The fundamental pillars of the CLC (and previously Marian Congregations) way of life *Ignatian Spirituality - Community - Mission* were present right from the beginning. However only step by step, deeply rooted in ones specific sources, respecting the rhythm of each community and the characteristics of the respective periods in history and reading the signs of the time, the "flower" will come to full bloom. In each stage of our history, we were called to deepen a different aspect: In the first years of the renewal it was our rootedness in Ignatian Spirituality. Then towards the end of the '70s and beginning '80's it was the communitarian dimension of our vocation, leading us from a world federation to the ONE world community. At each stage, it has been crucial not to forget the other pillars.

Already in the 80's, "common mission" was an issue in CLC. During the 90's, the awareness of being an apostolic community deepened and was finally taken up by the 1998 Assembly in Itaiçi (Brazil), when the world community focused on *"Deepening our Identity as an Apostolic Body - Clarifying our Common Mission"*.

The discernment process of the Assembly in Itaiçi, experienced and prepared in the national communities, was focused on three areas of growth in Christian life: Christ and culture, Christ and social reality, and Christ and daily life. Looking at the Ignatian

criteria for mission, the needs we perceive in the fields selected and at possibilities of fostering the Lay-Jesuit collaboration, the process resulted in discovering three areas of mission and a set of necessary means for this mission:

"First, we want to bring the freeing power of Christ to our social reality. Secondly, we want to find Christ in all our varied cultures and to let His grace illuminate all that needs transformation. Thirdly, we want to live Christ so as to bring Him to every aspect of our daily life in the world. These three areas of mission were enlightened by the spiritual source which nourishes and empowers us for mission: the Spiritual Exercises which help us to grow in Christian life. In addition, we must attend to our own formation for mission, so that our community may ever become a more effective instrument of service."

The final document "Our Common Mission" includes a broad range of criteria and orientations for the service and mission of CLC at its different levels, and guidelines concerning the means of our common mission. Following the Assembly of Itaici, in many national communities, new apostolic initiatives were undertaken or those already developed by individual members or the communities were revisited, based on the "Common Mission" of CLC. In this process we noticed the rise of a fundamental question: Itaici gave an important input on the WHAT of our common mission uniting us as world community, but what is it that characterizes the way we live our (common) mission, i.e. the HOW?

In Itaici, the expression "apostolic body" was already being used, but to develop its meaning in daily practice more profoundly was the specific focus of the Nairobi Assembly in 2003. Only there, we "*felt confirmed in our call to become a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church.*" (Recommendations Nairobi 2003 as published in Projects 124)

Under the theme "*Sent by Christ, members of one body*", the world community had a profound look at the consequences of living that call at all levels. As a key for sharing responsibility in mission as an apostolic body, we defined the four steps of *discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating*. In community, we discern the calls we receive; it is the community that sends us to live the discerned apostolic service and that supports it. After finalizing the service or, after certain periods of time, the community evaluates the mission with the person or the group sent. Thus, even an individual service becomes a "common mission", as the whole community shares responsibility for it.

In order to live and act as an apostolic body, *we recognized that* CLC needs to revise its structures and processes, most particularly formation and leadership, so as to better respond to the call received. Accordingly, the world Executive Council was asked to develop ways and structures to support this direction. Of course, this is not only an on-going task and challenge at the world level, but also one for national communities and the existing regional coordination structures. Last but not least, this also is a challenge for the local groups.

Since Nairobi we have been growing in our understanding of the call to be an apostolic body each according to the rhythm of the national community. Our way of proceeding in sharing responsibility is steadily exhibiting the character of discerning,

sending, supporting and evaluating albeit with some challenges. There have been tremendous experiences and reflections about the core of our call as an apostolic body triggered by the Nairobi recommendations. These include; initiatives on regional coordination in all the continents, appropriate CLC leadership, appropriate formation, the profile of a CLC person, membership and commitment to CLC, apostolic initiatives as well as SJ-CLC collaboration. In all these we have received graces and noticed our limitations. Questions have emerged on various issues of our vocation and governance. For example more clarity is required about CLC membership and commitment. This demands of us a deeper reflection. It is time to take stock and to ask the Lord: where do we go from here?

We see this Assembly not as a new election but rather a deepening of the election to be an apostolic body. Together the delegates will evaluate what we have lived, develop a deeper understanding of our strengths, and opportunities as well as our shortcomings and disordered affections. We want to listen to the concerns in our communities as well as the challenges in the world and our church. From this reflection we hope to identify the several specific steps that will help us to keep progressing in our journey as apostolic body.

To live this assembly well the preparation process in each national community is crucially important. With this Project we invite you to the following steps.

Practical steps

1. To facilitate active and intense preparations towards the assembly, we request the formation of a national "World General Assembly preparation and implementation team". Once again, the role of this team will be to reflect and discern all the preparatory materials between now and Fatima. This task should not be left only to those who will be nominated as delegates to the assembly. The quality of our assembly is dependent on the level of preparation by individual national communities.
2. As a first preparation step, we invite you to reflect on the 'graced history' of your national community since 1967 or its foundation and send a two page summary of the key moments and graces of your particular journey. We would like to include the summaries from each national community in a Progressio Supplement available before the assembly. This supplement is a celebration of our 40 years since the approval of the General Principles. We appreciate your contribution by January 2008.
3. We are now inviting you to identify your own delegates to the assembly according to the Criteria for delegates (Attachment 1). Nominations to be received by the Secretariat by Feb 1, 2008
4. Similarly you are invited to nominate candidates for the next World ExCo according to the Criteria for candidates for the new World ExCo (Attachment 2). Nominations to be received by the Secretariat by Dec 1, 2007

5. National Communities also have the opportunity to propose changes to the General Norms. These must be submitted to the the Secretariat by the end of January 2008 so that we can send them to national communities 6 months prior to the Assembly. You can find a copy of the General Principles and General Norms on the website in documents.
6. As always we will begin a Solidarity Fund to support National Communities who are not able to carry the full cost of their delegation. To this end we ask for donations for this purpose. A separate finance letter will be sent to national ExCos.
7. We are in the meantime working with the host team for the practical issues regarding the registration of delegates. Registration can be completed online via the Fátima 08 website www.fatima2008.org as soon as it is launched. More detailed information will follow.

Finally, we would like to give you an overview of the preparation process.

- September 2007: World ExCo sends Projects 136 which will provide remaining materials for preparation in the national community
- October 2007: World ExCo sends Projects 137 on World CLC day, prayer preparation for the assembly
- December 1, 2007: National Communities send any nominations for candidates to the World ExCo are due at the World Secretariat
- January 30, 2008: ➤ Delegates need to be registered (online or with the World Secretariat)
 ➤ National Communities send feedback on Projects 136
 ➤ National Communities send input on the 'graced history' of the community
 ➤ National Communities send any proposed amendments to the General Norms received at World Secretariat
- March 2008: World ExCo sends Projects 2008 following the World ExCo meeting
- April 2008: World ExCo sends information on Candidates shared with national communities
 Portugal Local Team sends further practical information.

N.B. Please start the subject line of any correspondence to the World secretariat and related to the assembly with "GA08". This acronym which stands for "General Assembly 2008", will facilitate data processing at the Secretariat.