



World CLC Day 2008

In the last two *Projects*, we presented our invitation and proposed our theme for our world General Assembly in Fatima 2008. In this issue, we offer a few **suggestions for prayer** with the intention that on our next World CLC Day 2008, we will prepare spiritually for the upcoming CLC General Assembly.

We hope that the whole Community prepares for Fatima 2008 through personal and community prayer, their delegates' attendance, and contributions from their life experiences.

The mandate from previous Assemblies is very clear: **CLC is one World Community – an apostolic body with a common mission.** From this discernment by the world Community, we clearly see the calling of the Lord and, therefore, the direction of our journey.

In Fatima 2008, we hope to present ourselves before God as a General Assembly and ask ourselves if we are living this option with consistency. His light will allow us to see the light and shadows of our lives; it will move us to shorten the distance between what we hope for and what we live, between our words and our actions.

As a way of inspiration, we have taken the following statement from Mark 6:30: "*The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all they had done and taught.*" The Ignatian tool for this work comes from the exercise on the *Three kinds of persons* in the Spiritual Exercises.

We will assess the life of our World Community through the shared experiences from the national communities. That will give us some clarity, but it won't be enough. Above all things, in an **act of truth** and an **act of trust**, we wish to present ourselves before the Light that doesn't deceive and ask God's help to increase the consistency in our lives.

The Disciples performed this act of truth and trust at their community assembly with their Master, even while living a life where they didn't have a lot of time to eat, as the Gospel of St. Mark tells us. It seems that even in those times they had a hectic life.

Nevertheless, the first communities performed an act of truth and trust, after the Lord's Resurrection. Our suggestion for this issue of *Projects* is **a contemplation on the Acts of the Apostles** as a source of inspiration for our prayer preparation for Fatima 2008.

¹ Original : Spanish

The following are some of the characteristics shared by the first communities:

- The freshness of individuals who received, first-hand, the innovative news of the Gospel;
- The radicalism with which they lived and announced the news of the Gospel;
- The capacity to bring the evangelic message forth to all people;
- The questioning that their life style provoked in others;
- The capacity to attract others;
- The way they overcame conflicts that originated in the heart of their community;
- The strong experience of communion, which had a profound impact on people: "See how they love each other!"

Just as the contemplation on the life of Christ moves us to be closer to Jesus (spirituality) and to work with Him (ethics), the contemplation on the life of the early Church can also move us to feel closer to the Church (communion) and to work with Her (mission).

But we have to understand that the act of contemplation is not a mere intellectual activity. It is about involving oneself in the scene, accepting its incitement towards apostolic action.

There are many texts from the Acts of the Apostles that we could offer as examples. We offer you a selection with a few suggestions for prayer. Please feel free to choose some of the texts from the Acts of the Apostles to help enlighten our apostolic body.

First Contemplation: The Ascension

"While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" (Acts 1: 10-11)

The ascension is a colossal apostolic act; Jesus parts from the side of a few to be accessible to all through them. Jesus leaves but the apostles remain looking up at the sky, until they are questioned by those men dressed in white.

Jesus sends us modern angels to provoke us: sceptical or at least suspicious children, co-workers that find us very far removed or too spiritual, youth who accuse us of looking excessively at heaven, society that doesn't understand and asks us, "What are you doing there?"

We would gain much by recognizing the type of angels, not demons, who question and challenge us. As faithful individuals, ecclesial community, or apostles we should not feel that we own the Gospel.

Second Contemplation: Promise and Baptism

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Our Christian life is a promise proven everyday. In our Christian societies, Baptism is often understood as a particular event during our early childhood; but, the great promise in *Baptism is the Holy Spirit* (Acts 1:5). In our Church, we must underscore more emphatically the promise and the desire of Baptism, which transforms us into witnesses and sets us on a spiritual journey to places unknown, even *to the ends of the earth*.

It is not for us to know what the Father will do (Acts 1:7). We believe that we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, who continues to be present in and through the Sacrament of Confirmation as well as in everyday life. Our challenge as a Church is to "democratize" the Holy Spirit and to live the permanent promise.

We ask for the grace of relating to our Father as mature children, as sinful apostles who are open to His power (the Spirit), attentive to his instructions given through Jesus (discernment).

Third Contemplation: The Choice of Matthias

"So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." (Acts 1: 21-22)

A genuine spiritual experience doesn't make us perfect. To follow Jesus until He ascended to heaven makes us eligible as apostles, that is, makes us capable of being *witnesses to the resurrected Jesus*. (Act 1:22)

We may sometimes experience the sense of power that comes from a God who calls us, from the human gifts granted us, from the community support we receive, from the maturity that we acquire throughout our lives. But we may also experience our modesty, frailty or confusion, which many times stops or derails us.

In the Church, we ought to help each other purify these tensions, discard false modesty, be available to be chosen foremost as Matthias was, or to remain in another role as Joseph did. The Church is in need of individuals who are available, some more visible than others, but all apostles. Let us do our utmost for the Church so that it can be said of us: "Here we have men and women that have walked with us... that know Jesus... that are available."

Fourth Contemplation: Pentecost

"And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2)

Pentecost is portrayed as turmoil, an irruption, a blast, a flame. The faithful, including Mary, were meeting together in the same place as was the regular practice. They felt peaceful, although in a state of anticipation. They recalled memories, praised and recognized the signs and promises.

But with Pentecost, the calm was over. The Spirit was publicly disclosed and sent them to encounter others. A question arose: "*What does this mean?*" (Acts 2:12)

Today, we need to emphasize the provocative and amazing quality of the Holy Spirit, and the multilingual quality of the apostles that enabled them to carry their message to different peoples. The text doesn't tell us that all of them remained speaking the same language, but that all could hear the apostles speaking in their own tongues (Acts 2:6; Acts 2:11).

If the Church wishes to be multilingual, it is crucial to develop a "theology of conversation," and not just an academic or magisterial theology. In this area, we, the laity, have a special contribution to make, since in general terms we are multilingual. We speak the language of faith and of the Spirit, as well as the language of science, money, family, sex, work and politics. We need a strong driving wind, a loud blast!

Fifth Contemplation: Peter's Speech

"This Jesus whom you crucified... God has made him both Lord and Messiah.... Brothers what should we do?" (Acts 2:23, 36, 37)

In the Church, we experience continuous interaction. Sometimes we will need to have Peter's assertiveness, speaking clearly, in a firm and challenging tone. This assertiveness comes from the gifts that we ask God for. We are the carriers and recipients of a message that permits us to explain *"what is happening here"*. (Acts 2,13)

Peter's assertiveness isn't always limited to the Bishop, just as having a listening disposition isn't always associated with the laity. Peter's question, "What are we to do?" calls us all to permanent collaboration and discernment. With Peter, we believe what was spoken by the prophet Joel: *"...I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"*. (Acts 2:16-18)

Sixth Contemplation: Cure of a Crippled Beggar

"I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." (Acts 3:6)

We live in a world where results are very important. We are asked to respond to many demands both inside and outside of the Church. Many times, we experience the lack of means and the precariousness of our resources.

"What I do have - I give you", we'd like to say. What we do have is experience, formation, a sense of mission, clarity for seeing and projecting, and organizational skills.

We also have inconsistencies and limitations, weaknesses and inadequacies, similar to Peter. But the power of Jesus Christ can be present in us and, in fact, many times we are the humble agents of miracles. The early Church had few material resources, but they compensated with a great sense of solidarity and common responsibility. Above all, the Church was empowered by the Spirit and with the certainty of wanting to act "in the name of Jesus Christ".

We have abundant gifts that are not always used or shown. The cripple who was able to jump in front of all others showed what he had received.

Seventh Contemplation: Material Goods

"...did it not remain your own?... How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?" (Acts 5:4)

The communion of mind and soul ran so deep in the community that there were no people in need. There were cases of extreme generosity, such as the case of Joseph of Cyprus, who sold his property to give it all to the apostles.

It is in this context, that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is presented: deceiving the community, lying to the Holy Spirit, making themselves recipients of privileges. In a later episode, money is also presented as opposite to the Holy Spirit and salvation. *"May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's gift with money!"* (Acts 8:20) Peter said to Simon, who wanted to buy the power of the Spirit for himself.

The apostles have a firm stance toward money. Consider a modern analogy - the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphira was that they were looking for self-protection, power, their own safety, having the community as something complementary, and keeping God as a guest in a safe space. There was also agreement and conspiracy to sin between husband and wife. They used deceit and lies when trying to hide the truth from the community. In this case it was about a piece of property, but we can also think about other assets: personal talents, knowledge, spaces, time, projects, etc. In the end, we need to avoid the sin of thinking and acting in very individualistic terms without consideration for community and justice.

The project that excites me - is it my project? Or is it a community project aimed at achieving greater justice, and reaching the greatest numbers of people?

It is a difficult episode as both Ananias and Sapphira die due to their sin. Embellishing ourselves sets us apart from others, and in this way we die and deprive others from what they have a right to. In this way, we kill! Death is the consequence of our sins; the resurrection is the work of God's mercy. Thus, being witnesses of the resurrection is being merciful. In today's world, it is especially compelling that we review our relationship with money from this perspective. We also consider the inequities in the institutions of our Church, and act as the disciples of Antioch who determined that, "... according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea." (Acts 11:29)

Many other contemplations from the Acts of the Apostles could illuminate our being Church today: the deacons and the ministers, the martyrdom of Steven, Phillip and the announcement of the Gospel in Samaria or the great pedagogical lesson portrayed in the story of his encounter with the Ethiopian, the apparition to Saul and his conversion, Paul the apostle and Barnabas, the great character of Peter (sometimes engaged in dialog, having visions, incarcerated or healer), Cornelius engaged in dialog, James' death, etc.

Paul's speech at the Aeropagus of Athens could also be inspiring, where he spoke the language of those in the audience. Another uplifting text relates the way in which the community overcomes its tensions in the Council of Jerusalem, for better openness to the world and service of the Kingdom.

All Christians can identify with many of these characters, and by doing so may find some clues to understanding the richness and variety of gifts, charisms, ministries and relationships. It also helps us to see our sin and our disordered affections today, on a personal level as well as on the level as Church.

Let us pray for each other in preparation for our CLC General Assembly!

We also invite you to organize a collection to contribute to the "Solidarity Fund," inviting all members in advance to be part of an act of special generosity.

In Christ,

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