



World CLC day - 2010

Option for the poor in CLC identity (Where are the poor people in CLC?)

At the end of Fatima's Assembly when the final document had been elaborated, some delegates raised a question about an issue they felt had not been deepened enough: "*What is the relationship between CLC and the poor?*" Many began by stating that the relationship is clear from the General Principles. But the debate in the Assembly showed that it may not be that clear. The ideas were grouped around how to interpret the preferential option for the poor. We agreed that this option means they are the priority, but it does not clarify why or how. Two questions summarize the positions: are the poor to be part of our communities or are they to be the primary beneficiaries of our apostolic action? Is the 'option for the poor' a question about belonging to CLC or about the mission of CLC? Both concerns overlap: who we want to be (identity) is intimately related to what we want to do (mission). Our actions define us, we are what we do.

For the celebration of World CLC Day we invite the national communities and their members to go deeper into the implication of a preferential option for the poor in the CLC identity.

Who are the poor?

- From a narrow perspective, the poor would be those who lack economic resources. However there are more ways that define poverty besides being in a state of economic exclusion. We could, in addition fall into the stereotype position that claims that CLC members from an undeveloped country are poor because their income is lower than that of those in developed countries. But this may not be totally certain, because even in poor countries there are CLC members with living standards far higher than most people in their society, while in developed countries there are CLC members suffering economic poverty.
- If one considers a broad perspective, the poor will include all those who lack anything vital such as money, health care possibilities, education, affection, recognition, etc. This understanding of poverty indicates that we are all poor because no one has it all. Any lack or need of ours, even the most superficial, may make us take to self-pity and forget the sufferings of others.
- Unlike the previous two positions, real poverty may be considered to be more concrete if it considers the poor as those who live are in inhuman situation. Such conditions can be said to be anti-evangelical. It is not limited to economic deprivation, but extends to any situation that leads a person to a position of seemingly **social insignificance**. This is poverty hinged on factors such as ethnicity, gender, disability,

age, access to education, migration, etc. It is not as vague as to include any state of unsatisfied desire.

Real poverty would be anything contrary to the will of God for humankind. The Preferential Option for the Poor is at the heart of the Christian message, because Jesus himself identified with the poor (Mt 25, 31-46). To recognize the poor is necessary in order to identify the signs of the times and be attentive to the particular realities of the world we live in. **Who are the poor among us and in our local and international situation? If Jesus lived in my community who would he be particularly interested in?**

Celebration of World CLC Day coincides with the feast of the Annunciation in which God becomes one of us. God comes especially to the poor in several ways. Jesus was born in a humble home and was member of a dominated people. The Annunciation is a further invitation to embodied spirituality, interested in what happens in the world. It moves us to reveal in our lives the God in whom we believe. He invites us to solidarity with those who live in situations that are against the will of God.

There is nothing more spiritual than moving from a desire to a concrete action.

It is not enough to know that the poor are the favorites of God if we continue to consider and treat them foreign to ourselves; if we only give them for assistance or charity without recognizing their own worth, and their own human dignity. If we still consider them as inferiors, limited and foreign to us, is this not a sign that we still need to deepen our understanding and living of the mystery of the incarnation?

We are invited as CLC members to sincerely ask ourselves, **how is my relationship with the poor of our world? Who are they poor in my world? How many poor people do I know by name? How many of them are my friends?** It is worth considering that the closeness that makes us friends leads us to real and genuine commitment to the other.

We can also ask ourselves what we actually are invited to in GP 4 to ensure our communities are made up of men and women "of all social conditions". This consideration may help us be open to desegregation in our communities, by race, education or other factors.

The Gospel says that Jesus specifically moved towards the inclusion of the poor and social outcasts of his time: he ate with them, called them by name, made friends with them, treated them with respect, listened to their needs, shared their life, and **invited them to be part of his community** of disciples and followers.

We suggest the following texts as a contemplation of the attitudes of Jesus to the poor

Lk 7, 36-50 The Pharisee and the Sinner
The Pharisee took care of his prestige and used the occasion to show off his property. Jesus prefers the social outcast who put in all her love with her humble gift.

Mk 10, 46-52 The healing of Bartimaeus
Jesus treated the blind with respect and dignity, calling him by name, listening to his needs, making him feel a worthwhile person. Bartimaeus becomes his follower.

Lk 19, 1-10 The encounter with Zacchaeus
Before Zacchaeus met Jesus he knew and felt himself socially marginalized though he was a rich man. After his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus realized that he had been centered only on his own

needs and discovered that there is real poverty for which he can be responsible and about which he can take action.

Prepare for a new reality

Having reflected and prayed personally and in community over these ideas about the poor in the CLC identity and mission, we invite you in your celebrations for World CLC Day to make a **concrete sign** which reflects the newness you will have found and possibly want to announce, as did the angel to Mary. It is about making an effective symbol, which demonstrates our approach to real poverty, integrating in a concrete way solidarity, sense and action.

Similarly, this measure must be embedded in a **process**; we suggest that the symbol is the beginning of a time to prepare for further light on the journey, as we open ourselves as CLC community in the world, to understand better what the Lord is calling us to with regard to the poor of our time. As Mary carried Jesus nine months in her womb until he was born in a manger in Bethlehem, the communities are invited to begin a process of reflection and action that leads them to mature and create realities of more hope and more life, more signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world.

Finally, we ask you to share news and photos of the celebration. Mail can be sent to: webmaster@cvx-clc.net. With this material we will update the website of the World Community.

God gives us the grace to recognize him in the marginalized and gives us the strength to fight the forces of marginalization!

United in our prayers and service as one world community

Franklin Ibanez - Sofia Montanez
World Secretariat

Daniela Frank
President