Christian Life Community

praying our life
and living our prayer

God works like that!

Louis Paulussen, SJ

An overview of the origins of the Christian Life Community 1540 - 1979

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God Works like That!

INTRODUCTION

I came to cast fire on earth..,[1]

This Supplement is an answer to many requests. Already years ago some friends have asked for it. They especially wanted inside information about the origins of the World Federation. More recently I several times met people who wished to know why and how the Congregatio Mariana (CM)[2] was changed into the Christian Life Community (CLC). Last year The Executive Council of the World Federation asked me to write a *Progressio* supplement on this subject.

Since it is impossible to understand what follows without knowing at least the main lines of a longer history, we have to go back to the origins of the Society of Jesus. The first chapter deals with some essential information about the CM in the period between the foundation of the Society of Jesus and its suppression in 1773. A second chapter gives, as briefly as possible, the most important events of the following years till the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Bis Saeculari* (1948). In the light of this nutshell history, all new developments will become meaningful and clear. This is the content of the third chapter. I tell the facts simply as I have lived them.

The patient reader who finishes this modest pamphlet will understand why I fully agree with Karl Rahner, when he writes shortly after the last session of Vatican II:

In Christian spirituality one cannot divide the old and the new into various parts. The reason is that what is new is authentic only if it preserves what is old, and what is old retains its vitality only if it is lived in a new way.[3]

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[1] Lk 12:49

[2] In English speaking countries, called Sodalities of Our Lady'

[3] Spirtualitat Heute und Morgen, Geist and Leben, November 1966

The delegates of the World Federation who voted in 1967 for the new name and the new General Principles, apparently agreed with this opinion. For in the letter of confirmation by the Holy See we read: "In the desire for better service, the participants of the General Council chose to adopt the name of World Federation of Christian Life Communities, being convinced that this title better explained the reality and the internal dynamism of their association, without removing any of its specific elements."

Finally, one can question why there are so few names mentioned of people engaged in CLC today. It is true that a number of priests, men, women, young people and many Jesuits could have been mentioned. But the list would become too long and in such cases there is always the danger of embarrassing omissions. Everybody will understand me if I recall with deep gratitude only five lay people who have given, each of them in a very personal way, an important contribution in preparing the way for CLC as it is today. They are: José Ignacio Lasaga from Cuba, first president of the World Federation (1954-1959); his three successors, Antonio Santacruz from Mexico (1959-1964) Eric Mathias from India (1964-1970), Roland Calcat from France (1970-1976); and Edith Westenhaver from the USA, first executive secretary (1965-1970).

Louis Paulussen, SJ
Rome, 8 May 1979

A LAY MOVEMENT INSPIRED BY ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA: 1540-1773

THE FIRE OF IGNATIUS

A diocesan priest, Ferdinand Sassen, was the first to put me in touch with the fire of St Ignatius. He was an expert in the history of philosophy and taught international, national and Church history in the high school where I was a boarder. His way of lecturing was fascinating, because he was highly intelligent, burning with enthusiasm and a real master in the art of education. The whole school knew his almost exaggerated admiration for the Jesuits. The time he devoted to them in the Church history class seemed out of all proportion. But all of us found it marvellous and for many boys it was unforgettable. On me he made a deep impression. I even made a decision: if ever I were to become a priest, I would become a Jesuit.

Like all decent schools in the Netherlands at that time, we had a "Mariacongregatie". I was very much surprised when, leaving school, I discovered that this association had been founded by the Jesuits. This fact changed my low opinion about it. As prefect of the senior section I had to write a report in the yearbook of the school. It was my first article on the necessity of renewal.

At the university I again found a CM. This also had nothing to do with the fire of Ignatius. Here I met my old teacher again, now professor in history of philosophy. We worked together to promote philosophical formation for all faculties. My interest in the CM, and even in the Jesuits, became marginal, but deep in my heart my secret decision remained intact. At the same time my early conviction became ever stronger: the Jesuit Order is only for exceptional people; impossible for me.

One day in 1932 - I was in my third year - the chaplain of the university asked my help in finding participants for the annual student retreat. I did my best and with fifteen good friends went on the retreat. Each of the other universities sent about the same number. There it happened. Without having looked for anything, I found everything. It came as the purest gift of my whole life. Suddenly an unbelievable surprise: There was so much light, peace, consolation and liberation that even the slightest doubt disappeared. This certainty about the authenticity of the experience has always remained. God had called me to the Society of Jesus. I had been in contact with fire, the fire of Jesus, the fire of Ignatius, now a contact forever. I

tell this little story because my vocation to become a Jesuit meant practically a vocation to the restoration of the CM. This was not the plan of my superiors. At least three times they had different assignments for me. But always circumstances changed it. God works like that.

In the novitiate I learned the truth about the CM. At its origin, we find Ignatius of Loyola. His secret had always been the infinite love of God: a fire, gently burning, discrete and prudent, but irresistibly conquering. Thus he became the heart of a small community. Thus he tried to form really free people. Free, not only to love and to serve, but free to love and to serve always. Free because they were totally poor and pure. Thus he became the founder of the Society of Jesus. Thus he became the man who inspired the lay groups around his first companions.

PIONEERS

Fire communicates itself spontaneously. What Fr Villaret describes in Chapter One of his book on the first period of the history of the CM is not surprising.[4] He gives examples of how the early Jesuits were surrounded by groups of lay-people. They co-operated with the fathers in the apostolate. These groups had different names but the same spirit. The touch of Ignatius characterised them so clearly that this is often mentioned in historical sources. A contemporary writer affirms: "If you see these men, you infallibly recognize that they are imbued by the spirit of the Society of Jesus." What this means is mentioned continually: selectivity of members, solid formation, meditation and frequent reception of sacraments, flexibility and adaptation to all kinds of needs.

Already in 1540, the year in which the Society of Jesus was established, Peter Faber led a famous group in Parma, also called Society of Jesus. This group produced the first Jesuit martyr. Another companion of Ignatius, Paschase Broet, writes a letter on 1 March 1545 to Francis Xavier, in which he tells him everything about the flourishing group in Faenza. Earlier, Francis Xavier had written to Rome about how he was helped in his difficult mission by a chosen group of young men, on fire with love and zeal. In 1547 Ignatius himself started the Society of the Twelve Apostles in Rome and a year later Nadal began it group in Calabria. He

[4] Emile Villaret SJ, Les Congregations Mariales I Des Origins A la Suppression de la Compagnie de Jesus 1540-1773, Beauchesne Paris 1947, 607 pages. A second volume of the same size, dealing with the second period (1773-1948) was in preparation, but the author could not finish it before he died in 1952. After his death, a manuscript was found of an abridged history of the two periods together. It was published in 1953 by the Centre Leunis in Montreal: Petite Abrege de l'Histoire 309 pages. The Queen's Work translated it into English: Abridged history of the Sodalities of Our Lady, St Louis, Mo 1957, 181 pages.

reports on it in a letter to Ignatius on 10 April 1549.
It is interesting to note that the Jesuits not only started new groups but were also frequently invited to reform confraternities of various inspirations which had lost their original spirit. Sometimes these groups were transformed into new associations which adopted the spirituality of the Jesuits.

The question has been raised whether the CM, in this first period, could be considered a Third Order of the Society of Jesus. It is true that at this time there existed an intimate union between the two associations. The CM had the spirit of the Jesuits and only Jesuits could be ecclesiastical assistants. Nevertheless the CM was never a Third Order, This became evident in 1773 when the Society was suppressed and the CM could continue on its own. What Pope Clement XIV did can be criticized but juridically it was completely correct.

FOUNDATION

On 3 May 1556, a young man of twenty-four, dressed as a worker, presented himself at the Jesuit house, near the little church of the Madonna della Strada. He came all the way from Liege in Belgium on foot and wanted to enter the new Society of Jesus. Probably he had already met some Jesuits in his native town. Ignatius himself and Polanco his secretary examined the new candidate and after some days he began his novitiate. Ignatius died three months later. He had received into his Society John Leunis, rightly considered the founder of the CM.[5]

The story is well-known. In the Roman College, the European formation centre founded by Ignatius in 1551, Leunis gathered a group of students and prepared them to do apostolic work in the city of Rome. He did exactly what other Jesuits did elsewhere. After 1563 his name is regularly mentioned.

A whole network of correspondence existed among the members of the Society. Sharing and communication are normal characteristics for a community which Ignatius meant to be a Society of love. So Leunis knew about the existing lay groups. What he began was certainly not original, but he did it in an original way, thanks to his exceptional educational abilities. From the documents we know that he had a special charism for dealing with young people.

[5] J Wicks SJ, with the collaboration of R Dendal SJ, Le Pere Jean Leunes 1532- 1584, Fondateur des Congregations Mariales, Rome 1951, Inst Hist SJ.

In a few years the Roman College had become famous. It radiated not only solid doctrine and spirituality but also high culture and human sciences: an ideal environment to prepare scholars and artists, saints, martyrs and missionaries. In this environment Leunis, faithful disciple of Ignatius, wanted to do even more.

John Leunis died on 19 November 1584. Only a few days later Pope Gregory XIII established canonically the Congregatio of the Roman College. Moreover, he made the group of Leunis "mater et Caput" (mother and head) of all similar groups. In canonical terms: it became a Primaria (Primary group), having the right to affiliate other groups of the same nature. Through this affiliation all these groups shared in the indulgences and privileges of the Primaria.

Afterwards the Primaria was divided into three age groups called Prima, Seconda, and Terza Primaria. The Prima Primaria represented the three groups together. Since the Prima Primaria stood under the jurisdiction of the Society of Jesus, only the General could grant an affiliation. The intention was not only to communicate spiritual gifts but also to form a kind of unity and to guarantee authenticity.

THE ORIGINALITY OF LEUNIS

In three respects at least, Leunis was original: first of all, in the remarkable way of formulating the aim of the CM; secondly in his effort of promoting lay responsibility and lay activity; thirdly in his practical way of forming community and developing community life.

The Aim

It is clear that Leunis and his workers saw the aim of the CM not as twofold, but as one. They had not in mind (as has been affirmed) to foster Christian life and "also" scientific life. They aimed at unity of life, bringing all aspects of human existence together in one Christian way of life. Since we touch here one of the most fundamental elements of the General Principles, I would like to quote from four different sources in the original text.

The members of the CM of the Roman College write in the rules of 1574 (the oldest we know): desiderosi di far profitto si nelle lettere come nello spirito… (wishing to make progress in both our scientific and our spiritual formation). Further in the same document: "Essendo it fine de quests rostra Congregazione coniungere le lettere con la pieta cristiana..." (since it is the aim of our Community to unite academic formation with

Christian living).[6]

Still clearer is the French expression in the rules of 1575. Here the members of the group in the college of Clermont (Paris), where Leunis was working, also write like this: 'Pounce donne que le fin de notre Congregation est le conjoindre les lettres a la piece chretienne" (same translation as above).[7] We have another Latin text written in 1582 by the same group in Paris. The Preamble begins as follows: "Primum unicuique propositium esse debet ut studia litterarum pietatemque copulet. (The first intention of each one should be to make an intimate unity of learning and Christian life).[8]

The first common rules of Fr Aquaviva, which were valid for almost three centuries (1587-1855), express the same ideal in other words. The original text is Italian: "Perche il fine c... Yacquisito Belle virtue dells pieta cristiana insieme col profitto Belle lettere." (Since the aim is the growth in virtue and Christian life together with progress in learning).[9]

It is almost unbelievable that this long tradition of integration simply disappeared totally in the rules of 1855 and also later in the last common rules of 1910.[10] The General Principles of 1967 have re-established the contact with the authentic inspiration of Ignatius: "Our groups are for those who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith."

The responsibility of lay people

It is a striking fact that the early documents of the sixteenth century are much more in accordance with the teaching of Vatican H on the lay apostolate than is the twentieth century document which was responsible for the typical image of the CM: the rules of 1910. For Leunis it was quite natural that the students of his first group should decide on their own rules, making all major decisions themselves, that they should elect not only group-leaders and officers but also the Jesuit in charge and even (in the years that he was in charge) the Cardinal Protector. In other words, he gave them full responsibility.
The common rules of 1587, prepared by Fr Aquaviva, are less radical than Leunis, but still enough imbued with the spirit of the founder to inspire a

[6] J Wicks SJ, R Dendal SJ, Le Père Jean Leunes, pg 127.
[7] J Wicks SJ, with the collaboration of R Dendal SJ, Le Pere Jean Leunes, pg 31
[8] J Wicks SJ, with the collaboration of R Dendal SJ, Le Pere Jean Leunes, pg 4
[9] Elder Mullan SJ, La Congregazione Mariana studiata nei Documents, Rome 911, pg 25
[10] Elder Mullan SJ, La Congregazione Mariana studiata nei Documents, Rome 911, pgs 146 and 277.

modern reader. In fact, they were a great help in composing the General Principles.

Aquaviva and his advisers, little preoccupied as they were with juridical considerations, sought above all ways to stimulate young Christians, to create a spiritual climate in keeping with the aim of the CM: the formation of lay people, conscious of their personal vocation in the Church of their time. A word like "director", introduced after more than three hundred years into the rules of 1910, does not seem to be in harmony with this climate. The concept of director is alien to the thinking of Leunis and Aquaviva and it is a pity that in translations and commentaries this word is being used. All local rules and the original text of 1587 invariably use the word "father", almost always together with the "prefect" (president), also called "il capo" (the head) or "superiors". The combination of father-prefect appears at times and illustrates the awareness of accentuating their common responsibility, rather than their hierarchical difference.

Community Life

One of the most used Bible texts in our days is: "When two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them"[11]It is the best and the most beautiful text on which community life can be founded and justified. Leunis and the first members of the CM not only used the same text, but they incorporated it into their very name. The Latin text says: "Ube duo vel tres congregate suet...." Hence the name "congregatio". It is not surprising, therefore, that this text is printed on the title page of the oldest known copy of CM rules, drawn up by Leunis and the members of the Clermont group in Paris. The booklet is from 1574 and is now in the French National Library of Paris. The rules of the college of Clermont are similar to those of the Roman College of 1574. In both the Preamble is identical, indicating a strong bond of community: "In common deliberation among ourselves, we have decided to draw up some rules which could help us integrate our studies with spiritual life, in order to be able to live fully in union with God, peacefully among ourselves, thus giving witness to others and disposing ourselves better to receive from his divine Goodness, light, graces and gifts."

Every day these "brothers" went together to Mass. Every day they had their meditation together. Every day they were together to sing a part of the Office of Our Lady and daily they made the examination of

[11] Matt 18:20

consciousness[12] together and prepared the meditation for the next day. In the weekly meetings the officers had to see to it that all members participated in sharing their opinions. In a special rule, mutual love and union are recommended: "All are members of one family and brothers in Christ". The words "each brother" are often used, In a real community everything is done so that each person is given equal value.

AN INSPIRING FRESCO

Was Leunis also the originator of the Marian character of the CM? We have some facts: many of the early lay groups around the Jesuits did not have an explicit Marian character. Of course, as faithful Catholics formed in the school of the Spiritual Exercises, the members of these groups had a great love for Our Lady, but not always a particular devotion like the group of Leunis had. It is also true that Leunis, before he entered the Society, was already known for his intense love for the mother of God.

Another answer is given in the above mentioned Preamble of the first rules: "Since it is a custom that such Communities recommend themselves to a patron in heaven for protection and guidance, from whom they take their name, and since we have, a particular devotion to the most Holy Virgin of the Annunciation, Mother of God, in all humility we dedicate ourselves to her, praying that she may help us in all our actions, especially in the ordination and observations of the rules of our group, which are the following...
The Preamble twice mentions the Annunciation, the name of the Church of the Roman College. Above the main altar was a large and beautiful fresco. It showed not the usual representation of the Annunciation, ie only Mary and the angel, but it depicted the whole inspiring panorama of the Contemplation on the Incarnation in the Exercises: the Holy Trinity, all of creation and humanity, with Our Lady and her fiat in the centre. In this setting Jesus began his life on earth. This fresco was a continual reminder of the highlight of the Exercises. Fathers and students liked this wonderful painting. It became the permanent inspiration not only for one group but progressively for a whole world movement.

Today the fresco does not exist any more. The church of the Annunciation was demolished in 1626 to make room for the larger church of St Ignatius. Only the detail of Our Lady was conserved. Isolated and taken out of

[12] Today we tend to call this "the Examen". A leaflet explaining this prayer, the importance of which St Ignatius stressed very strongly, is available from the CLC office 114 Mount Street, London W1K 3AH.

its context of the wider perspective of salvation history, it is now known as the Madonna of the Prima Primaria.

A black and white reproduction of the old fresco was published in the programme for the first meeting of the World Federation (Rome 1954). The mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation, not mentioned in the rules of 1910, is again the main inspiration of the General Principles.

DECLINE OF THE AUTHENTIC SPIRIT 1773-1948

STRANGE DECISIONS

In a stormy period of unrest and confusion, the supreme authority of the Church, forced by political powers, did something nobody today could have dreamed of. On 21 July 1773, Pope Clement XIV signed a document suppressing the Society of Jesus, all its works, ministries and activities. More than twenty thousand Jesuits were sent home and the General was put into prison. Local bishops had to read the papal decree in all the houses of the Society. This promulgation, essential for its validity, was forbidden in Russia. The Tsarina, Catherine II, who in 1772 had occupied a part of Poland, did not want to upset the Catholics of that country. Therefore the Society of Jesus and all its works, including a very flourishing CM movement, continued to exist there.

Elsewhere, the Society and therefore also the CM disappeared. This was the logical consequence of the papal decision. But again Clement XIV did something that nobody expected. On 14 November of the same year he decided that the CM could continue everywhere without the Jesuits! This was a surprising exception to the application of the suppression decree; instead of suppression, a new dimension... From privileged Jesuit work, the CM suddenly became one of the normal works of the universal Church. With one blow it was cut off from its original inspiration and at the same time exposed to inordinate growth: all bishops the world over could establish the CM. And many did. In the first period (1540-1773) about two thousand five hundred groups were affiliated. This number grew to eighty thousand in the second period (1773-1948). It would have been a miracle if this evolution had not damaged the authentic spirit. By

now everybody knows that. in the course of the years the movement as such changed, simply because the tradition was lost. Where was the fire of Ignatius?

It was not the suppression of the Society which caused the decline of the spirit in the CM movement, but the decision of 14 November 1773. Without this the CM would have been suppressed only to be restored in 1814 together with the Society. To be a movement of the whole Church could have been of advantage, but the movement became vitally changed in its most essential characteristics. It had become, at least in most cases, a pious mass movement, different from what Ignatius or Leunis or Aquaviva had intended.
Of course this is only one side of the coin. Excellent groups were working in many countries, but the movement as such had lost touch with the spirit, the spirit of the founders. No need to say that in its changed form) the movement also did a lot of good, answering needs in many places.

Especially after the dogmatic promulgation of the Immaculate Conception (1854) the CM became even more popular. In the eyes of many pastoral workers it was an infallible means to protect young people from evil. Personally I have known a bishop who decided to start in all his parishes two Marian Congregations, one for boys and one for girls. Systematically they were organized and imposed. For all of them, affiliation with Rome was requested and obtained with out any difficulty. This bishop was certainly not an exception. No wonder that numbers were increasing and that, in terms of numbers, this time has been described as a "flourishing period" of CM history.

How did the Jesuits react? In the mind of a number of them the question arose: Are we allowed to accept the decline of the authentic spirit without trying to do something for its restoration? Was the CM not a child of the Society of Jesus? Is it not part of our vocation, especially since the CM. became a work of the universal Church, to inspire the movement with the specific charism of the "man of the Church", Ignatius of Loyola?

GOOD DECISIONS

In 1922 Fr Ledochowski, General of the Society, convened a meeting of Jesuits working in the CM. It was the first step towards restoration. Forty Fathers from nineteen countries, impelled by a strong sense of responsibility, wanted practical and concrete results. They had a very successful meeting. There were no long resolutions and only one decision: to set up a central secretariat in Rome, a service centre not only

for the Jesuit groups, but for all others as well. It was the first secretariat of this type in the Jesuit curia. Not because the CM was the most important work of the Society, but simply because the CM was the most neglected work and the one most in need of help and inspiration. Today the curia has eight similar offices for other works.

The main argument for founding an international secretariat was the positive experience of some already existing national secretariats. Jesuits from the United States of America and from the Netherlands reported that their national service centres worked very well. Why not apply the same experience on world level?

All this does not mean that the new secretariat was a perfect institution. Far from that! But it has proved that one can work effectively with modest and insufficient means. This international office, which had to serve a world movement whose female members were in the majority, was not even accessible to outsiders, let alone to women. It was a private Jesuit institution, falling under the rules of cloister, in those days strict and severe. Moreover, how to reform an organisation without authority? Since 1773 the CM was, as we have seen, under the jurisdiction of the bishops. Only five groups were established in Jesuit houses. And how to work without the co-operation of qualified lay people? Above all, how to "convert" thousands and thousands of spiritual leaders, everywhere in the world? In addition, among Jesuits there was little knowledge and appreciation of the true meaning and nature of their own creation. They could not believe that the Marian Association, called CM, had anything to do with the Society of Jesus.

A Pope caused the decline of the spirit; another Pope initiated its revival. Pius XII, knowing from personal experience Ignatian spirituality and the original impact of the CM, followed with interest the efforts of the central secretariat. In the year of his election (1939) Fr Emile Villaret was in charge of the office. Between these two men friendship existed and mutual veneration. In 1953, after the death of Fr Villaret, the Pope told me that he considered him to be a saint. Pius XII was certainly the greatest promoter of the CM. He did his utmost to support the renewal with all kinds of references, letters, messages and other proofs of his predilection. Finally, he decided to take an extraordinary step, namely, to proclaim a new statute for the whole Church. He did it in the most solemn and official way, by an Apostolic Constitution binding for the whole Church without any need of special promulgation. *Bis Saeculari* was exactly what was needed; a clear authoritative statement on the authentic identity of the CM, a pressing call for reform, orientations towards the future and some declarations on the lay apostolate in general.

NEW CHALLENGES

The impact of this document was enormous, It is not an exaggeration to say that in some Countries it had the effect of a bomb. This was also true for the Netherlands where I was in a privileged position to observe reactions. In those days I was not only in charge of the national CM office, bill also happened to be acting national chaplain of the Catholic press. On 27 September 1948 I received by special mail (splendid work of the office in Rome and... no strike!) a copy of the Arta Apostolicae Sedis of the same date, with the official Latin text of *Bis Saeculari*. We were expecting something from Rome, but never such an outspoken document like this. Everybody was very much impressed. We decided at once to prepare a release, trying to translate the compact Latin words into modern Dutch. The director of the KNP (National Press Agency) was very pleased to bring off a scoop. On the following day it was the front page news of our three national and more than thirty regional Catholic daily newspapers. From then on the agency's telephone lines became red hot.

The main reason for this shock was the papal declaration that the CM was an "outstanding and particular form of Catholic Action", thus pulling down a solid system of uniform thinking on the lay apostolate and opening the way towards a new and pluriform evolution.

All this is now past history and no longer of great interest. However, there are other aspects of the document which are more important, eg the challenge to live up to an old ideal, the call for reform and renewal, the urgency for a response to be given by a world movement. But the most essential aspect is the stress on the Ignatian character, bringing into focus the absolute priority of the Spiritual Exercises.

A period characterized by strange and good decisions comes to an end. Strange decisions: for the Society of Jesus is forced to disappear while the CM is forced to go on without the Jesuits. Good decisions: the foundation of a central office in Rome followed by the promulgation of a fundamental document of the Church.

God works like that.

TRANSFORMATION INTO CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY: SINCE 1948

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD FEDERATION

Bis Saeculari, promulgated as law for the whole Church, was in a special way addressed to the CM - not to one or more countries, but to the CM as a world movement. Everywhere the same questions were being asked: "And now, what has to be done? What should we do?"

A meeting in Rome, 1950

A first answer came from the Jesuits. The successor of Fr Ledochowski, Fr Janssens, did the same as his predecessor had done in 1922. He convened an international Jesuit meeting, organized by the central secretariat. From 15 to 22 April 1950 the sessions were held in the Jesuit curia. This time seventy-one Jesuits had come from forty countries. I was there together with another Jesuit, representing the Netherlands. It was a heavily scheduled meeting: many talks and long discussions on all different aspects and elements of the CM, but it was also a meeting with too great overtones of respect and was too quiet, reflecting more the status quo than attempting to come to new inspiration from the original sources. Everything was viewed in the light of the 1910 rules.

After a long talk on the "external forms of the CM", I asked why we were spending so much time on external forms, as we all knew that no single external form was actually essential for the CM. One of its most specific qualities was precisely its flexibility and adaptability. I do not know whether all of us really agreed on this point. Certainly nobody reacted except the General. His intervention was extremely kind, but to the point, at least to a certain extent: I had overlooked the juridical forms. Obviously Fr Janssens' idea of the CM differed from mine. After this meeting a great part of the question "What is to be done now?" remained unanswered. All agreed that *Bis Saeculari* should be implemented (we knew that before the meeting) but we had not touched upon how. Did we have the effective means? Did we need new ways?

Moreover, new questions arose. The Jesuits had had their international meeting, but what about lay people? Could only Jesuits represent a lay association? Where were the lay representatives themselves? Where does the

responsibility of lay people at world level come in? What was the opinion of lay people on *Bis Saeculari*, on renewal, on new rules, new structures?

Back in The Hague, I was overwhelmed by the work of our national service centre - about two thousand groups wanted service and inspiration. There was no time for international problems.

A few months later my Provincial called me to his office. He had just returned from a visit of some weeks to Rome. He had something to tell me "in Fr General's name". I was not surprised. Finally, a remark - the Provincial, usually very outspoken, was a bit hesitant: "I have done everything to save you", he said, "but I did not succeed." I said that it was all right. Then he told me: "The General is determined that you will go to Rome to be the head of the central secretariat." Me? I could not believe it. But on 19 February 1951 I arrived in Rome.

On the following day Fr Janssens received me. There was not one word about our discussion, only cordiality and full trust: "Please travel as much as possible, the time to sit at home is over." He also asked me to prepare an Instruction on the CM for all the Jesuits.

A month later, the Instruction was ready. Before beginning my first trip, I felt it urgent to write a memorandum on the need to prepare for a world federation. What were the arguments? The secretariat is not enough. It can never be representative of the CM on the world level. We need a representative body of qualified lay people (there are enough of them) together with priests. Lay people should take responsibility into their own hands. Call it world union, world federation, world community, the name does not matter. It is essential to bring people together. It is essential that they work, deliberate and pray together' that they co-operate with others and serve the Church at world level. Without this simple new structure, the CM does not exist and is not present at world level. Without this new union, the CM cannot live up to its vocation. Without this on-going communication between responsible people, it seems impossible to achieve the restoration of the CM, as desired by Pius XII. Finally, a world federation is the logical outcome of existing national federations, surely indicated at a time when international communication is growing rapidly everywhere. Why do we often come too late?

Fr Janssens studied the memorandum carefully, but he was not yet convinced. We had discussed this subject several times and it was always difficult to come to an agreement. The main difficulty for Fr General was how to reconcile the proposed "centralization" with the traditional "autonomy" of the CM. But is not any federation a freely chosen

unification with many elements of de-centralisation? And is not autonomy always limited and relative, never absolute?

At this time Fr Janssens received a long and strong memorandum against the world federation. The arguments, however, were so weak that he did not pay them any attention. On the contrary, he encouraged me to go on; "but I still don't sec it", he said.

Meetings in Rome 1951 and Barcelona 1952

The first World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, held in October 1951 in Rome, provided a welcome occasion to show the necessity for our world union. The CM, one of the oldest movements of the lay apostolate, could not be invited, because it did not exist at world level! Only due to the kindness and understanding of the organizers could we invite ten members to form our international delegation. The Congress was a good occasion to organize a meeting of all CM members present. We discovered fifteen belonging to different national delegations. Before a group of twenty five (two diocesan priests, four Jesuits and nineteen lay people) I explained the urgency of co-operation on a permanent international basis. All of them agreed but only one or two accepted the form of a world federation. The idea was too new for them and they wanted more time for reflection.

Some days later we had another meeting, This time we were forty delegates from sixteen countries. Cardinal Gracias of Bombay came with the delegates from India. He addressed the meeting, stressing the need for greater selectivity according to the spirit of *Bis Saeculari*. A proposal was unanimously accepted: to have a meeting of CM members during the Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona the following year, 1952. There the issue of a world federation would be discussed again.

In Barcelona everyone not only agreed, but asked the secretariat in Rome to prepare some statutes "as soon as possible" and to go to Pius XII for approval. The vast majority of this gathering was university students, members of the famous CM of Fr Verges. In 1947 they had organized an international congress. I was there with a Dutch delegation. All of us were impressed by the dynamic spirit of these young people. No wonder that it was self-evident to them to establish - finally - a permanent international contact between the groups of the whole world.

Draft Statutes were sent to all national federations and secretariats. We received many expressions of agreement and very few amendments. At the beginning of 1953 the project was presented to the Pope. His first

reaction came very soon: he was extremely pleased and promised to send a letter of approval, which would also insist on some points of general importance. This letter, dated 2 July 1953, begins: "All who know our thoughts about the modem apostolate know too how dear the CM is to us and how concerned we are for its continual spiritual growth."

With this letter the World Federation was officially founded. It was the result of a natural growth-process, the unification of existing realities: federations and communities:

"The World Federation has not been created artificially. On the contrary, it was born naturally. It must be considered therefore more as an organism than an organisation. It should attain its goal with a minimum of structures, inspired by a maximum of Catholic spirit. We are living in a period of real problems, but often we complicate these problems by an excess of organisation. The World Federation must be simple, the spirit of Our Lady is an extremely simple one."[13]

On 13 April 1954 Pius XII named Archbishop Joseph Gawlina Ecclesiastical Assistant of the World Federation. Archbishop Gawlina was chief chaplain of the Polish army during the last war and lived exiled in Rome. He died suddenly on the night of 21 September 1964 while preparing an intervention for Vatican II on the duties of bishops. Archbishop Gawlina was a great and good friend, always ready to do whatever we wanted. He was a strong personality, firm and courageous, but at the same time a wonderful example of simple adaptability and childlike humility. Our Federation gave him little pleasure, certainly no honour but, rather, much work, trouble and suffering. On 17 June 1965, Pope Paul VI named Bishop Rene Audet from Canada as his successor.

NEW GENERAL PRINCIPLES

And now, what will the next step be? How to bring people together?
The answer was not difficult. Several countries had asked the secretariat in Rome to organize a "world-wide congress" on the occasion of the Marian year (1954). It seemed a good proposal and it could be combined easily with the first meeting of the new World Federation.

People together in Rome and Newark

The congress, organized with the help of our Italian friends, was really

[13] Reflections on the World Federation, General Council, Rome 1954

marvellous. It was an explosion of vitality and enthusiasm, a magnificent religious and artistic manifestation, only possible in Rome. It was a great surprise for many people; newspapers spoke of a "historic gathering".

This qualification applied even more to the modest meeting at the Gregorian University where the General Council of the World Federation met for the first time. 'This university is the direct continuation of the Roman College where Leunis began 400 years ago. Could there have been a better place in the world to start the World Federation? It was interesting and comforting to see how these first delegates understood their task immediately. Fully aware of their independence and responsibility, they no longer accepted instructions from the secretariat. In charming disorder and improvisation they planned the meeting and organized the elections for an Executive Council. A start had to be made. This was just a beginning, described in the programme as "a starting point of world-wide renewal".
Newark 1959 was also a combination of a big congress with the General Council meeting. But Newark marked a considerable step forward. Most of the participants were housed on the large campus of Seton Hall University. There were greater possibilities for mutual contact, communication and sharing than in Rome. The five language groups of the congress, subdivided into some seventy small groups, tried to find ways of improving and adapting the CM.

The climate of the General Council was full of promise. A challenging spirit dominated many interventions. Everybody wanted serious and rapid renewal. Leading delegates pursued their aim in all kinds of informal sessions. In one of these meetings, particularly representative, all affirmed their full confidence in the secretariat of Rome and charged them to start preparations for new common rules without delay. It was the first step toward the General Principles.

What Newark wanted was more than justified. Two world wars had fundamentally transformed human society and we still worked with the 1910 rules! Between 1951 and 1959 I travelled a lot and knew the wishes at the "grass roots" only too well. But this was more than just a wish; it was a mandate given by an official body.

I returned to Rome with this mandate, but also with a problem. Until now only the General of the Society had the power to make new common rules. This norm was out of date after the foundation of the World Federation, but juridically it was still valid.

I informed Fr Janssens about the mandate. We did not talk about the

problem since he, an eminent canon law scholar, knew it perfectly and much better than anybody else. But his reaction was (as I had expected), "If all agree, go ahead". Thus he recognized the independence of the World Federation, eight years before the approval of the new juridical structures.

Now we could start with the preparation of the General Principles, thanks to the meeting in Newark and thanks to the great spirit of Fr Janssens.

Especially since the Congress of Rome in 1954, Fr Janssens had become a fervent promoter of the World Federation. Always stimulating, never interfering, he helped us in everything. This became very clear in 1962. Article 1 of the Statutes says that the World Federation has its seat in Rome. In order to assure the desired unity between the World Federation and the Society of Jesus, the same Statutes state that the person in charge of the Jesuit secretariat should be Vice Ecclesiastical Assistant of the World Federation. It was therefore quite normal that the seat of the World Federation should find a welcome home in the Jesuit secretariat. On the other hand this solution was not practical: the problem of the cloister! So we had to find a place, but it was very difficult. Then, unexpectedly, a large apartment with a special entrance, belonging to the Jesuit curia, became free. There were many who wanted it for their office. But Fr Janssens decided that "This is for the World Federation." With the generous help of a good friend the whole interior was remodelled and redecorated under the artistic direction of Fr Noyons. It was an ideal place, close to the Vatican and to the city, providing full contact with the Jesuit curia and its numerous visitors and all kinds of services and facilities at the disposal of the World Federation.

Fr Janssens died on 5 October 1964. His successor, Fr Arrupe, confirmed this arrangement. Not only was the place ideal, but so also was the relationship between the Jesuits and the World Federation!

Not a bureaucratic invention

Historians and papal documents repeatedly tell us that the rules of the CM are the result of experience. The first groups did not begin with rules, but with life. They found their inspiration not in a system but in the dynamic spirit of a new religious order. The groups started in 1540. The first set of rules dates from 1574.

Likewise, the General Principles were not a bureaucratic invention. They are the fruit of living experience - not only the experience of a long tradition, but also the experience of new groups all over the world. All of

them followed the orientation of Pius XII and so there began within the CM movement a complete revival of the Spiritual Exercises, the original source of the authentic CM.

In the USA, revival started with it courageous experiment of the CM at the John Carroll university in Cleveland. In 1951, despite strong opposition, students and young professional people were invited to make a silent eight-day retreat. Until now this had been an exclusive privilege of priests and religious. The results were so positive that the retreat was given every year. The example was imitated throughout the USA and the number of participants grew steadily. In 1959 the Cleveland CM proposed a 30-day retreat for the first time. Again splendid results!

In Europe the revival of the Exercises started rather through study and reflection. In 1951, Fr Hugo Rahner, a famous expert, conducted a series of conferences on the Ignatian Exercises and CM for leaders in Austria. Translated into several languages, these profound considerations had an enormous influence on the renewal of the CM everywhere. One of the results was that in Europe the practice of longer retreats also became widespread.

Travelling around in these years I saw centres of renewal not only in the United States but also in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Mexico, Taiwan, Japan and India. France even had a new national movement, *troupes de Vie Chretienne*; in England and Wales there was the Cell Movement; in Canada the Centre Leunis; and on the continental level in Europe the *Equipe Europeenne* which did very important and original work.

Particularly inspiring and helpful was the 1963 European congress, celebrating the fourth centenary of the CM. Fr Giulani presented his vision on "The Spiritual Exercises: foundation of the spirituality of the CM" and Fr Karl Rahner fascinated his audience by exploring the consecration to Our Lady in depth.

At the end of 1959 the Secretariat in Rome sent out its first "letter to all Federations, Secretariats and Centres". This was the beginning of a written dialogue with a movement fully dedicated to the cause of renewal. This world-wide consultation went on until 1964. There was a continual exchange of experiences, suggestions and proposals between Rome and the CM throughout the world. Little by little the main features of our General Principles appeared. They were practically ready in 1964 and could have been proposed at the General Council in Bombay in December 1964. However, it was clear that we had to wait till the end of

Vatican II in order to present the new Principles in their final form.

After Bombay 64 it had been planned to hold the following General Council in Latin America. But when Vatican II had finished its work and the third World Congress for the Lay Apostolate was going to be convened in October 1967, the Executive Council decided to have our Assembly in Rome, immediately after the Congress. This would be helpful for delegates who had to attend both meetings.

The time between 1964 and 1967 was well used. New consultations with several countries produced new suggestions and proposals. The draft of the Principles became ever better: short, simple and clear. In these years we arrived at a consensus about composition and division into the Preamble and three parts.

The Preamble is much more than just an introduction. It is the centre, the core of everything, the heart of the matter. Here all that has to be said is said in a very concise way. Part I begins to describe how the spirit of the Preamble is to be lived out. It is set around the Preamble, reaching into the practicalities of real life. Part II goes into greater detail, reaching further out into the real, like a concentric circle around Part 1. Part III, the juridical norms, is like another concentric circle, the setting out of the last details. These norms have to be lived in the spirit of the Preamble, the spirit of love.

It is true that the 1967 draft was the result of constant consultation. Nevertheless, the last version was written in Rome. Therefore, the Executive Council decided to invite one delegate from each nation to a meeting prior to the General Council. There the text was studied line by line and revised according to everyone's wishes. After two days the draft to be submitted to the General Council was ready.

In the meeting of the General Council, held in *Domus Pacis*, a hundred and forty delegates from thirty-eight countries had to vote. Among them were sixty-two who had participated in the Congress for the Lay Apostolate. It was - again - a historic event. For the first time in CM history, a world community formulated its own documents. Thirty-three amendments of the draft were proposed and debated and of these ten were approved for inclusion in the final text. GP7, dealing with service, was changed almost entirely. After voting on each single item of the Principles and Statutes, towards the close office third day the Assembly approved the whole draft unanimously. It was an unforgettable moment, moving and full of Joy. A well-prepared and long desired renewal was accomplished - the re-birth of a movement, "almost a new beginning".

Indeed, Rome 67 marked the beginning of a new evolution: new General Principles, new Statutes, a new name for the movement and a new name for the international magazine, new juridical norms recognizing the independence of the World Federation which from now on is itself, instead of the Prima Primaria, the bond of unity and the guarantor of its authenticity.

On 25 March 1968, Pope Paul VI confirmed the renewal "ad experimentum" for three years. On 31 May 1971 the renewal was confirmed definitely.[14]

A NEW NAME

A month after the confirmation by the Holy See, one of the leading spirituality magazines in Germany published an article in which the General Principles were highly praised as an example of aggiornamento. The author, without knowing it, formulated in a new way the main reason for the change of name from CM to CLC. He wrote:

All those who have seen the recently published General Principles will find it difficult to believe that behind them lies the CM. Not only the external form and nomenclature of this document, but the ideas especially are diametrically opposed to the known image of the CM. A renewal of great style has taken place here.[15]

If the image of the CM suggested a reality so completely different from the best groups which renewed themselves in accordance with the original inspiration, then the name CM was no longer appropriate. It created incorrect ideas, misunderstanding and confusion. The name had become an obstacle, rather than an aid to better service. It had to be changed, at least in those places where confusion was created.

This is why in the last thirty years so many groups have changed their name. Even national federations did it. After the foundation of the World Federation the question was discussed at international level: in Newark (1959), in Rome (the 1963 European Congress), and very strongly in Bombay (1964) and during the European meeting of professional people (1965).

[14] The text of the letter approving the renewal is available from the CLC office, 114 Mount Street, London, W11K 3AH.

[15] Georg Mühlenbrock SJ, Auf der Suche nach einer Welt Spiritualität, Geist und Leben, June 1968.

In the General Council of Rome (1967) the same question was again put on the agenda. This time several new names were proposed but did not find a majority. Among the proposed names three involved versions of "Christian Life", a name adopted in France ten years previously and also used in other countries. However, the name Christian Life Community was never used before 1967. It came spontaneously from the floor and immediately gained the deciding majority. Afterwards the Assembly decided explicitly that the new name was the name of the World Federation but should not be imposed on any federation or group. In the Rome meeting thirteen countries voted against the change of name. Today, all of them, except one[16], call themselves CLC.

Sometimes the objection is made that in this new name there is nothing specific, every Christian community can call itself a Christian life community. It is true that the CLCs do not want to practice all kinds of particular things. They simply live the Gospel but in a very special way: totally and radically in the spirit of the Ignatian Exercises. This is certainly a specific characteristic.

There is another, more serious, objection. Some people claim that we are diminishing the love for Our Lady. Such an assertion always makes me sad. It is terrible if you hear: "You don't love your mother with your whole heart". Let me repeat what I have said and written on many other occasions. If it were true that the new name diminished the love for Our Lady or if it were true that we are no longer faithful to the Marian character of our movement, then our entire effort of renewal would be a horrible mistake. A decrease in the love for Mary is desired by no one. What all delegates in Rome wanted was a deeper, more interior, love for Mary. During the preparation of the General Principles many asked for a new inspiration, a more solid orientation. They wanted a warm and profound personal love for their Mother, a love which never decreases but always grows together with love for her Son. All our efforts were aimed at the growth of the authentic, original spirit of our association which is essentially Marian. The new General Principles and their expression in the new name are exactly what the vast majority of our members wanted. In these General Principles Our Lady is present far more than in any of the previous common rules. She is present everywhere, inseparably united with Christ who is in the centre of CLC. She is present as she is present in the Ignatian Exercises, a specific source of the CLC way of life. She is present as she is present in the documents of Vatican II,, not

[16] Probably this refers to South Africa where the national community calls itself "Christian Life Groups". (E&W CLC)

isolated or taken out of context, but integrated into the totality of salvation history. She is present. as she is present in the Gospels, giving precedence to her Son.

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1967

The orientations given by Pius XII in 1948 have proved to be most practical and effective. In *Bis Saeculari* he insisted strongly on the Ignatian charism and on the absolute priority of the Spiritual Exercises. Twenty years ago now, on the occasion of the Newark meeting, I wrote: "The most important fact we see today... is that the CM is considered to be again what it was in the beginning: the continuation and the practical application in daily life of the Ignatian Exercises."

This evolution made continuous progress. With the implementation of the General Principles after 1967 it reached new dimensions. Thanks to personally guided retreats and formation courses, the authentic dynamic of the Exercises was rediscovered. It became clear that CLC members and communities have a very special vocation. They are called to a particular way of life, which opens and disposes them to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of their daily existence. This way of life presupposes, on the personal and on the community level, permanent discernment, total integration and continually being at God's disposal. Everybody who has some experience knows that the consequences of this vocation are extremely demanding. I cannot go into detail here but in the March 1979 issue of *Progressio*, Josh Gsell tells us more about it. Nobody is more competent to write this article.[17]

Some other important facts could be mentioned. First of all, there was a growing presence and activity at international level. This began in 1957 when the World Federation became a member of the Conference of International Catholic Organizations. All these organizations also belong to the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, which has a consultative voice at the United Nations in New York, Geneva, Paris and Rome. On 24 April 1975 the World Federation was granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Another joyful reality was the growing presence of young people. At the 1967 World Assembly in Rome very few delegates were young people. In Augsburg 1973 the number of dynamic young people was striking. In Manila 1976 they characterized the whole Assembly: almost all national delegations had a delegate aged between eighteen and twenty five. These young people asked for a special youth assistant in the World Federation. Last year this assistant was nominated. One final observation is to note the interest and the active presence of many Jesuits on all levels: local, national and international. They appreciate CLC much more than they ever esteemed the CM. This is not surprising. In CLC they recognize

[17] The text of this article is available from the CLC office, 114 Mount Street, London, W1K 3AH.

very clearly their own way of life which was hardly possible in the CM. This growing presence of Jesuits does not mean that they direct CLC. The World Federation is independent of the Society of Jesus. Jesuits assist, help and try to give some inspiration.

And it is also true that today, more than ever before, lay people inspire Jesuits. They understand (sometimes better than we Jesuits) the experience of Ignatius, as they understand so well the attitude of Our Lady's fiat. They have only one aspiration: to grow in faith and in love. They want to grow in seeing the Reality, the divine Presence, working, loving, revealed in all things, inviting us continuously to live - and to live in abundance. They have accepted God's invitation to receive at every moment the fire of Jesus and to communicate it to others.

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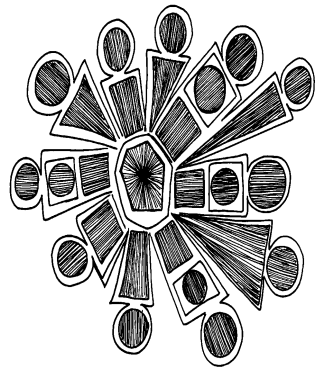
Louis Paulussen, SJ



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