

*European National Communities of CLC
Salesianos,
El Campello, Alicante, Spain
Pentecost Sunday, 31 May 2009*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As members of the pilgrim People of God, we gather from time to time in places like Celje, Nairobi, Lille, Fátima and Alicante, to reconnect with the worldwide community, to experience deeply the love of Christ that unites us, to review our call, concerns and mission, to learn from and to encourage one another.

2. In accordance with the Church's ancient tradition, we are writing this letter so that each one of you may share the experience of this Assembly, just as you participated in the preparations (cf. *CLC in Europe Bulletin No. 49, May 2009*) and supported us with your prayers.

3. We are here in Alicante at Pentecost, when the whole Church remembers its birth as a gifted community of faith, sent on mission, under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Year by year, the significance of Pentecost grows for us, as CLC deepens its understanding of its charism and lives ever more intensely the call to become a lay apostolic body that is also challenged to be prophetic. Pentecost is our lived experience, inspiring, challenging and reassuring us.

4. We began by sharing the gifts that each national community sent to the Assembly. In words and gestures, in documents, objects and experiences, we recognise God's greater gifts to our communities. The things that you chose were both useful and beautiful, representing the modesty and the fruitfulness of our communities, as well as the promise of good things to come.

5. The gifts and stories that we exchanged made us gratefully aware of many signs of hope, growth and renewal within our communities. We were also reminded that some communities, new or long-established, remain vulnerable, uncertain of their future, and perhaps lacking the support of others who are growing, confident and gifted.

6. We often speak about the diversity within CLC Europe, a diversity which reflects the region's history and present-day reality; but perhaps we do not fully appreciate the benefits of this diversity: the opportunities for experimentation that it presents, the challenges of solidarity and coordination that arise, and the difficulties or distress that are often pushed into the background by success. The many instances of excellence in every national community make it a beacon for others. We invite each community to consider how it may share these riches.

7. In short, our sharing, reports and discussions indicate that CLC in Europe is generally committed to an ever-growing range of apostolic initiatives, a clear shift of orientation since the preceding Assembly in Lille, in 2004. Across the region, most national communities have adopted and are working on the recommendations emerging from the World Assembly in Fátima last summer.

Areas of Concern, Discernment and Activity

8. Having reflected on the gifts received, we looked more closely at the concerns that emerged. Each participant chose the three they considered most pressing for CLC in Europe now and for the medium term. Small groups discussed each of the concerns identified, regardless of the extent of the interest expressed in any one of them.

9. The Assembly confirmed recurring concerns in the World Community. “*Finding and training new group guides*” and “*Initiatives for and with young people*” outweigh all the others. A second group of common concerns includes “*Forming new groups*”, “*CLC Commitment*”, “*Common formation initiatives*”, “*CLC lifestyle*”, “*Leadership renewal, formation and support*”, and “*Migration*”.

10. Other areas awaken some interest, but are not (yet) perceived as urgent priorities across the entire region: “*Ignatian advocacy*”, “*Economics and ethics*”, “*Networking among members who share professions*”, “*The feminization and the aging of communities*”, “*Ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue*”, and “*Befriending the poor*”.

11. We are sharing the principal recommendations emerging from our discussions here, organizing them according to the priorities set out in the Fátima Document.

12. Our efforts to increase **membership and community development** must reach out to a wider range of age groups and social conditions. Within Europe, some communities are especially well placed to open their membership to people from other nations whose work has required them to transfer their residence. We could also be bolder in proposing experiences that instil a desire for a fuller experience of the *Exercises*. We consider local cooperation with the Society of Jesus and others involved in Ignatian youth ministry to be a particularly effective means of making CLC known to young people. The “2011 Magis Programme”, preparatory to the World Youth Day in Madrid, is an outstanding opportunity to give young people a foretaste of Ignatian spirituality. We strongly recommend that each and every national community should send and accompany young people in this experience.

13. There is growing recognition of the importance of **CLC Commitment** as a way of strengthening community life and apostolic initiative, and expressing publicly a greater dedication to the CLC way of life. In several national communities, the number of members formally undertaking the commitment has risen significantly, as a result of successful approaches informing, challenging and preparing them for temporary or permanent commitment. However, there is still need for further clarification of concepts and practices. National communities who are doing well in this area have an opportunity to help others who would like to grow in this way.

14. **Formation** remains an on-going concern, challenging our creativity and absorbing much talent, effort and resources. The “Formation Tool Box” available on the website was an excellent initiative that deserves to be more widely known and used. The great effort that went into developing it should now be matched by a similar effort to keep it up-to-date. Translation of the most relevant materials was repeatedly called for as a great help for communities in need of support and others seeking fresh ideas or resources. We encourage every national community to share materials, expertise, experience and other resources, and to extend invitations across borders. In particular, the **formation of group guides** is an urgent priority felt by all. In this highly-specialised and resource-intensive task, the orientations of the World Community, and initiatives at regional level that promote sharing of good practices could help many national communities.

15. **Leadership** is a service without which no community can grow. As we are keenly aware that occasions arise at national, regional and world levels where there are not enough candidates to fill leadership roles, we urge our communities to actively encourage and support members who are committed to CLC and have the required dispositions to assume leadership roles. We also urge national communities to make full use of the opportunities for formation available from other communities or the World Community (e.g. Rome Leadership Course, 2006)

16. The **Migration Network** is a very good example of a common apostolic project operating at the European level. Besides deserving our continuing support, we consider that there are lessons to be learned from the Network's success; it could serve as a model for common initiatives in other fields, such as *advocacy, befriending the poor, networking among members who share professions, and initiatives for and with young people.*

Growing as a region: working together and sharing resources

17. CLC Europe owes much of its growth to the willingness and ability of national communities to reach out to each other, work together, and show solidarity with one another. The Euroteam and the network of Eurolinks is a vital facilitator of such cooperation. We are therefore indebted to the work of the outgoing Euroteam.

18. We also acknowledge the frustration and lack of support that the Euroteam sometimes experiences in its service to the region and its component national communities. This raises questions about our awareness of the challenges of regional cooperation, our attitudes towards the arrangements which enable us to work together and to share resources, and our faithfulness to the commitments assumed at European Assemblies. We invite each national community to examine its record honestly and open-heartedly.

19. Having a better appreciation of the challenges confronting any Euroteam, we acknowledge the need to be more realistic about what the Euroteam and Eurolinks can accomplish. CLC Europe needs to consider how, having been 'sent' on this service, they may be supported in accomplishing what they are asked to do. We also urge each of you to remain actively aware that you belong to the region and to the World Community: this will find expression, among other things, in discerned selection of Eurolinks and appropriate support for them, and a greater readiness to reach out to other national communities.

We end our letter to you by inviting to pray with us the closing prayer of the Lille Assembly: *May the Spirit of Pentecost, blowing like the wind through our Church and our Communities, continue to give life to our efforts and to let them bear abundant fruit.*

Alicante, 31 May 2009