



Link between the Executive Council and the World Christian Life Community.



CLC International Apostolate and Advocacy

Dear friends in the Lord,

Our last World Assembly recommended the nomination of a world coordinator of apostolic initiatives and advocacy. This recommendation, inspired by the apostolic nature of our community, is deeply rooted in CLC charism¹. It challenges us to highlight the apostolic actions already taken in many parts of our community and our presence at the United Nations, as NGO with consultative status. This step the World Christian Life Community Assembly recommends to take coincides with the growing desire of the Society of Jesus to develop its international advocacy work, not only within the Society itself but also in collaboration with other Ignatian bodies, including CLC. In order to implement this recommendation, the World Executive Council (ExCo) presents its preliminary reflection about (1) the meaning of “coordination of apostolic initiatives and advocacy”, (2) some points requiring our attention, and (3) the next steps in the implementation of this recommendation.

1. Coordination of apostolic initiatives and advocacy.

1.1 As Fatima has shown, there are several common burning issues as pointed out by national delegates. The world ExCo would like to encourage communities to share experiences and also act together whenever possible. The coordination of apostolic initiatives aims at encouraging synergies, and exchanges between local groups working

¹ “Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures”. GP 8

“In the spirit of its best tradition, and for the sake of greater apostolic efficacy, the Christian Life Community at all levels promotes the participation of its members in joint projects to respond to various and changing needs. National or international networks, specialised apostolic teams, or other such initiatives may be set up by the Community where appropriate”“ GN 10

« We want to participate in different forums at the national and international levels, bringing to them the voice of the poorest in issues such as the problem of international debt. In different ways all of us are called to active participation in the economic, political and social structures, not only from a critical opoint of view but also through providing solutions. ». (Our Common mission, Itaci, 1998)

on similar issues. It is made possible by activities that can either benefit from an action by the World CLC or generate such an action. Therefore, the coordinator of apostolic initiatives will promote the best answer possible to the desire of collaboration between local or regional apostolic initiatives. In some cases the World Coordinator might stimulate this desire, but will never initiate any network not desired by participants. Additionally, we do not intend to create a new layer above existing apostolic structures, but we wish to set up a mechanism serving the complementary nature of these existing structures.

1.2 The starting point of our advocacy lies in the concrete experiences of apostolic involvement in our national communities, as well as in our convictions as expressed in our General Principles. CLC advocacy will follow the same nature of our community, i.e. Ignatian, lay and international. Our advocacy will be inspired by the Spiritual Exercises, especially in discernment. We will discern not only on actions to take, and on the best way to implement them, but also on the deep desires and feelings we experience in our hearts during this mission. Thus, advocacy opens us to a new working area where our way of proceeding, the DSSE², becomes crucial and a necessary condition for our mission to bear fruits. Advocacy offers us an excellent opportunity to deepen and live the dynamic of the DSSE. Consequently, it indubitably constitutes a precious help for the growth of our community as an Ignatian apostolic body.

1.3 Our advocacy mission will be marked by our condition of lay members of the Church. We commit ourselves in this advocacy work with our way of being present in the world. This mission will therefore be a place where our consciousness and desire to fully live our identity of Catholics serving the Church and all our brothers and sisters in humanity. It is a place to express our creativity and ability to work with others, Christians or not. In reverse, this mission will feed and renew our way of being lay persons in the world today.

1.4 Our advocacy will be international because it will gather partners working at grassroots levels, and in different national or regional contexts. Activities in which CLCers are involved are very diverse. In addition to this diversity in the nature of apostolic activities, we also experience the diversity of contexts in which these activities are done. For example, the water issue is perceived differently according to the availability or scarcity of this resource in the region where one lives. Similarly, regions « producing » immigration and those « receiving » immigration will perceive differently this same problem. CLCers are facing these two issues. Our diversity is a great richness as it gives us a diversified expertise and enables us to develop an approach allowing us to think globally, act locally and also organize an international action. This diversity will largely contribute to give a greater credibility to our public statements and lobbying.

² The dynamic of discerning – sending – supporting – evaluating.

2. Some points of attention

2.1 Advocacy refers to all activities related to dialoguing with decision makers. Sometimes it is opposed to lobbying which refers specifically to pressures on governmental decision-makers. As a result of this distinction, advocacy would defend principles while lobbying would defend specific interests. CLC has not yet made a final decision about issues to advocate for, and decision-making structures to engage when doing its advocacy/lobbying. For this reason, the distinction does not have at this stage practical consequences. In any case, it is important to affirm that our advocacy/lobbying will be marked by our preferential option for the poor. We will act with and for the poor, which stresses the importance to be in communion with their lives. Living this communion will make our mission more authentic and our public statements more credible. Because preference does not mean exclusivity, we stay attentive to those who do not fit in the category of “poor”.

2.2 Sometimes, apostolic initiatives are per se assimilated to advocacy. If apostolic initiatives often give substance to the dialogue with decision-makers, it still remains that some activities can be made with no intent to lead to advocacy, especially international advocacy. For example, an activity could be limited to accompanying and supporting vulnerable persons without the intention to dialogue with decision makers. Therefore, all apostolic activities are not per se advocacy, and should not necessarily lead to advocacy. As we are making a decisive step towards advocacy, we are not completely immune from the risk to devalue, even unconsciously, an apostolic activity made without the intent of doing advocacy. The choice to develop apostolic initiatives without intention to advocate should be respected and protected, as far as it does not hide a “disordered” motivation, like the resistance to collaborate with others. And no one should feel pressured to neither extend its apostolic activities to advocacy nor be excluded from advocacy because of the nature of its apostolate.

2.3 In particular, we will remember that some lobbying activities will be realized only by a small group of persons prepared for this task. This way of proceeding would be required for the efficiency in the mission and would insure an effective sharing of responsibilities in the apostolic body. The mission will still stay a common mission. In fact what makes common a mission is the DSSE dynamic rather than the involvement of all the community in the same activity. The implantation or the realization of a mission by a small group, even one person, does not exclude a mission from being common, as far as this mission is lived in the community’s DSSE dynamic.

2.4 Some of us hardly reconcile advocacy and apostolate of accompaniment and service on the ground. A presence in decision making circles is sometimes perceived as a waste of time and resources, because they are not directly dedicated to the poor for whom we made a preferential option. This impression is even stronger as CLC does not have many human and material resources. The use of resources available, already limited, should be more judicious. In this case, it could mean to limit our presence only to the poor, toward whom we affirm to have a preference. Furthermore, this option seems

attractive as advocacy does not bear fruit immediately and is not easily perceived, even in the long term. This would be a question for discernment, because Ignatian advocacy aims not only at accompanying and serving victims of injustice, but also at working for the transformation of the structures causing and perpetuating this injustice. For this reason, a presence among decision makers bearing the perspective of the poor has the same importance as the accompaniment and the service to the victims. Advocacy is then fed by the apostolate of accompaniment and service to poor. Advocacy will constitute the complement, very often indispensable, rather than a superfluous alternative to accompaniment and service to poor.

3. Next steps.

3.1 After sharing and discerning, the World ExCo invited Guy Maginzi to serve as coordinator of apostolic initiatives and international advocacy for one year. We are happy to inform you that Guy accepted this mission; he will carry it as soon as the transition with Franklin Ibanez, his successor as Executive secretary will be completed. The main task Guy will undertake during this year is to pave the way for the future CLC advocacy work. Concretely and ad intra, he will identify in details CLC apostolic initiatives, promote exchanges among them and explore possibilities to generate international advocacy. Ad extra, he will strengthen as much as possible channels of collaboration with other instances, namely the Society of Jesus and the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs. At the end of this working year, the ExCo hopes to be able to set up a plan of action in this matter. This work is then two fold: ad intra and ad extra.

3.2 You will receive very soon a questionnaire that will help the community to have a complete picture of its resources and potential. This will be the first step, a sort of “composition”, allowing us to proceed with the subsequent work. Thank you for taking the best care possible of this questionnaire, and for answering as soon as you can. We also encourage anyone who wishes to suggest ideas or react to these reflections to contact Guy at the following address advocacy@cvx-clc.net.

3.3 We invite you to encourage your members and all your apostolic structures to participate in this vast dialogue opened by the World ExCo. We have great expectations from this dialogue, and its results depend on the quality of your participation. We hope to clarify some issues like: how can we secure financial stability for our advocacy work? To what issues do we want to give priority in this work? With whom do we want to collaborate and how? Which authorities can we and do we want to engage in this international advocacy? We have numerous challenges ahead. The ExCo will see these as precious opportunities for all of us to discern and contribute to the growth of CLC as an apostolic body serving the Church and the world.

United in our service and prayers,

Daniela Frank
President

Guy Maginzi
Executive Secretary