

Summary of CLC World Day of Prayer Retreat held at St. Paul's College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, March 20, 2010

It is with much gratitude that, on behalf of Prairie Region CLC, I write this reflection of the celebration that took place with the members of our Winnipeg communities for the occasion of the CLC World Day of Prayer. On Saturday March 20, 2010, a small group of members gathered at St. Paul's College, situated in the campus of the University of Manitoba. The theme of our Day of prayer was "Option for the poor in CLC identity and the relationship to mission" and the grace that we prayed for was "to go deeper into the implications of a preferential option for the poor in our CLC identity".

The *Projects 144* which is the letter of communication between the Executive Council and the World Christian Life Community was used for our prayer reflection of this day and also as we prepared in the weeks and days prior to our retreat day. We reflected on who are the poor among us and in our local and international situation? How is my relationship with them? How many poor people do I know by name? How many are my friends? And if Jesus lived in my community who would he be particularly interested in? The following scripture passages were used for our contemplative reflection: (1) Luke 7: 36 - 50; The Pharisee and the sinner; (2) Mark 10: 46- 52; The healing of Bartimaeus; (3) The encounter with Zaccheaus.

We remembered Mary, our Mother who responded to the call of God in her poverty (Luke 1: 26-38). We remembered that on the actual day of the CLC World Day of Prayer, March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation was the date in which the General Principles were approved. *General Principle #4* was referenced in the *Projects 144* and we also used this as a reminder of our call to follow Jesus Christ in the building up of the Kingdom and to bear witness to those human and gospel values within the Church and society which affect the dignity of the person and the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation.

For our morning contemplations, we focused on the poor in our own world. From our spiritual conversation and active listening, in our communal sharing, we heard God's call of salvation in the cry of the poor. We saw poverty in our own selves as well as in the earth, in our own families, our own communities and in our world beyond. We felt called to humility and gratitude as we heard the call to give what we have. We yearned to become more aware of where the poor are in our own lives and to respond authentically to our call.

The afternoon reflections focused on concerns for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. An email was sent by the world CLC President, Daniela Frank to pray and to be in solidarity with our Haitian brothers and sisters and with our French- Canadian counterpart, CVX, and with the Jesuits in Quebec and in Haiti, who form a single Jesuit Province. The tragedy that has struck Haiti affects us all. As regional, national and world communities, we all share our common humanity. When even one of our brothers and sisters is hurting, we all share in the pain and suffering. The afternoon began with a viewing of the video: "Haiti: Killing the Dream", an excerpt of a *Documentary on Centuries of Western Subversion of Haitian Sovereignty*. [http://www.democracynow.org/2010/2/10/killing\\_the\\_dream\\_excerpt\\_of\\_documentary](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/2/10/killing_the_dream_excerpt_of_documentary)

Viewing this together opened our eyes and heart to the reality of the history that surrounds the oppression in Haiti. A communal reading of "Haitian Jesuits plan for the future, urge that local voices be heard" written by Rev. Kawas François, sj, delegate of the Provincial of the Jesuits of French Canada and Haiti, and one of the coordinators of the *Reflection and Action Unit*.

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In our third round, using the dynamic of communal apostolic discernment, we felt called to action through reflection on our connection to our local and international situation, to which we are interconnected. We desire to keep an awareness by sharing information and making use of the communication tools at hand, such the videos and the information on the web sites. Handouts of articles written by Rev. Kawas François and the various web sites that give information on Haiti were made available; we were encouraged to keep the stories and dialogue alive. We were struck by the poverty in our own midst and we feel the cry of the poor and the cry for justice. We desire to be in relationship with the Haitian people and with all those who are poor. We desire to discern more deeply how God is calling us in our own milieu. There were as well some concrete signs which reflect the newness that we found to approach real poverty and to integrate our solidarity with sense and action. These were:

- (1) **Gather more data for discernment.** Action: translating important documents from French to English and to invite input from communities, regions and the Jesuits. Ask regions to help with this.
- (2) **Communication: foster relationship and to listen.** Action: enhance relationship with CVX and Canadian Jesuits International. National support for effective coordination by gathering regional input and sharing with CVX, CLC USA and the Society. Consistent communication to reflect CLC Canada.
- (3) **Prayer and reflection.** Action: common prayer for the people of Haiti.
- (4) **Research the aid organizations already active in Haiti.** Action: regions could do this and pass on the information to others
- (5) **Learning and understanding.** Action: learn about the Haitian people and the role of the Church in Haiti.

In appropriation, we became aware of a greater appreciation of our own poverty and in need of salvation. The concrete sign that we received was courage to move into action for the poor in our midst and beyond.