

## Relive the Fatima Experience

Fatima, Thursday 8/14: Day 3

Today was the third day. It was a day for “raising our eyes to the signs of the times around and beyond World CLC.” It was a day of reflection, of coming back to our inner self to really what are outside.

The day opened with morning prayers with images of the harsh reality of our world today. There are communities of people who make a living by the mountains of trash that seem to be endless. These are disposals from those who like all of us, live in the cities and throw out things every day. From these mountains of disposals, they found things to use for the day, clothes and even food. They shared with each other what they found. And the children! They searched for toys, and they played together with what they found by these mountains of disposals. Strangely, a smile seemed to be so ready on their tired face. And there is a chapel, also next to these mountains of disposals. It has no roof, no walls, no sacristy, nothing. The chapel is marked with a wooden post. When it is time for liturgical celebration, a bell is hung. The toll of the bell gathered people around and the Eucharist was celebrated next to these mountains of disposals, and Christ was fully present in the simple hosts that the priest brought with him, just like He would be in other churches much more comfortable in America. Christ is so ready to be with people, even in this hopeless situation. Am I ready to be with these fellow human beings in their situation? Am I ready to fully embrace them so their hardship and poverty would be mine?

The assembly was invited to be reflective to prepare to “work”, really work, by tomorrow. We were reminded that this was not a vacation. We were invited to live in the spirit and disposition of “Three levels of humility” to reflect on how deep our desire be in our willingness to accompany Christ in His mission.



*Alain Jeunehomme from France in the foreground*

We had 2 guest speakers today. One is a very famous person, Alfredo Sfeir-Younis<sup>i</sup>. He was an economist for the World Bank for 29 years. Since retired in 2005, he has promoted world peace around the world. Mr. Sfeir-Younis' talk was “The Catholic Lam Rim<sup>ii</sup>: A New Exercises for the Twenty-first Century.” I had to confess that I was confused, not really sure whether he was commenting on Ignatius' Exercises because of many references that he made to it, or he was sharing with us a new personal spirituality that he found. Some in the assembly started to become impatient. We had 30' of personal reflection and a Q&A session followed. There were moments of tension during the Q&A; certain questions were too blunt in nature. Again lunch saved us one more time.

The afternoon was on a more familiar realm when Father Eddie Mercieca, S.J. gave a talk on “Three Kinds of Disposition applied in community deliberation.<sup>iii</sup>” The talk confirmed that



*Caminhando como corpo apostólico: a*  
*Journeying as an apostolic body: our*  
*Cheminier comme un corps apostolique* Father Mercieca, S.J.

the Spiritual Exercises is fundamental and foundational to the spirituality in CLC, which were not the case in the early 70s. We have indeed come a long way, although the road ahead is still long with much more challenges. What still stays with me is this message to the assembly: Ignatian Spirituality is a spirituality in action... we are always on the move... the moment that we respond "I do not have....," we decide to stop, stop moving. That moment we will stop living... that we might be deceived by something reasonable on the surface, but they are not the true motive..."<sup>iv</sup> By such a grace that Father Mercieca ventured into the room where I was meditating, and I had a chance to listen him sharing more on Ignatian Spirituality, especially in the context of a lay person. He is definitely passionate about the Exercises and has a very compassionate heart for the laity in the Church of today. I was so grateful of the opportunity.



*View from toward the shrine of Fatima*

Each day, before the Eucharist, the program reserved an hour for the national delegations to gather and reflect. Not by design, but the 3 of us seemed to be very comfortable dispersed into the crowd of the assembly during the day, contrasting to other delegates from other countries; we were rarely seen together. So this hour was actually wonderful for the 3 of us to gather at the end of each day for a check-in, for planning a little for the next day, and sharing on the fruit to bring back to our community. We had Sylvia Schmitt of the New York UN Working Group joining us. Today was special. Angelique told us that the Rwanda delegates expressed their desire of having their community "twinning" with CLC-USA. Wow! Amazing! We were thinking about bringing back the experience of being one apostolic body by inviting someone from their community to our national assembly next year, and apparently they were thinking of CLC-USA too. We were all very happy of this sign.

Mass seemed to embody a special meaning today. People were quieter. It seemed that the afternoon's time for reflection helped all of us examining the movement we felt in the morning.

How easy we were deceived by our fervor and respect for the Exercises to close our eyes and heart to others. Mass was quiet and consoling. It was quite moving to realize that Christ is so ready to be present with us and console us when we realized our way and came back around Him.

The grace of today was not easy for me to see. What remained with me at the end of the day is this: We remain always imperfect, and God is forever Faithful Love!

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<sup>i</sup> The speech given at the assembly is very similar to the one he gave at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. last September. The speech was placed on YouTube by the Zambulin Institute in 3 parts:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaFS3xuVBqI&feature=related>

<sup>ii</sup> Lam rim: a term in Buddhism means the right path.

<sup>iii</sup> See attached the outline of Father Mercieca's talk in PDF format.

<sup>iv</sup> This is not a verbatim quote. It is from my notes.