

Final conclusions CLM Assembly Mellatz 1998

Features of CLM Identity

LAY

1. A Comboni LAY Missionary is a baptized Christian who in an attitude of openness and taking into account a deep experience of belonging to the Church becomes responsible and an active subject within the Christian community and commits himself to promote life in accordance with the values of the Kingdom in his own environment.
2. (The following would be an addition to No. 88 of Chapter Acts) ... in cooperation with all those who actively work for the transformation of our society. (See the letter of the General Council on the laity, 1994, No. 11.1).

As a LAY PERSON the CLM

1. Should be aware and be able to accept and live the values and dignity of what to be a layperson means.
2. The CLM should seek to live as a layperson in a twofold way:
 - a) In a community with other CLM.
 - b) In a close relationship with the Comboni religious community.
3. To achieve the above, we do believe that there should be a physical closeness between the lay and the religious missionaries with due respect for their identity and areas of competence.

MISSION

A CLM is the person who has gone through a process of formation and has taken the decision to leave his or her country to do a work of evangelization "ad gentes".

1. It is essential to leave one's own culture and Christian community in order to live a specific missionary vocation. For this particular reason a CLM ought to be willing to leave his or her own environment in order "to go" toward another people in need of being evangelized. The CLM are sent in a preferential way to the poorest and most abandoned.

2. The above is achieved leaving our own country, but under special circumstances we can find the same missionary situations within our own countries. In other words, a Christian community could send CLM to an area not sufficiently evangelized within the borders of the same country. The responsibility of deciding when and where these situations exist correspond to the Province in dialogue with the CLM.
3. After his or her missionary work comes to an end, the CLM upon returning to his or her home country will get involved in the activities of the CLM.
4. When we speak of sharing with other cultures and communities, we do not understand only to give and work for other people. We mean to receive and to listen in order to be mutually enriched.

COMBONI CHARISM

1. There is a need to be identified with the Comboni charism through our knowledge of the founder, his charism and spirituality.
2. To save Africa with Africa"
 - 2.1 A preferential option for the last ones. This should arise from our faith and be able to influence the world of politics, education, economy, etc. if it is to be authentic.
 - 2.2 Need to become promoters and multipliers of local lay missionaries.
3. Community life: the CLM, from the beginning of their formation, should properly be directed to accept this way of life as something basic in their life. Community life presents various aspects:
 - 3.1 Among the CLM (in the case of the DSP associates they could choose to live within a MCCJ community or with other CLM).
 - 3.2 Close cooperation with the local and provincial Comboni community, making an effort to increase the level of friendship and mutual understanding.
 - 3.3 Apostolic community: with the MCCJ and other pastoral agents.
 - 3.4 To be able to share with the local people: feeling that we belong to them and they are part of our lives.

Comboni sisters at the assembly

Several Comboni Sisters were present at the Assembly, as observers. Among them was, sister Maria Grazia Campostrini, Secretary General for Mission Animation. She said that the Sisters were glad to see that new ways of mission cooperation are being explored among the members of the Comboni family. She regretted that the Comboni Sisters are behind in the field of cooperation with lay missionaries. In spite of all this, she added, there have been very positive experiences of lay people who have come to Africa through some of the Comboni Sisters or the Comboni missionaries. In the last General

Chapter it was suggested to go on with the reflection especially with the CLM. The sisters can, at this point, speak of some steps that they have taken in this area:

1. In Italy, especially in Verona.
2. With missionary groups in local churches.
3. With lay people who have requested to go and work with them.

Beyond these experiences, some of the Comboni Sisters have been in contact with some CLM in the missions and would like to find closer ways of cooperation. In some countries, for example, the Comboni Sisters are already helping in the formation of the CLM.

Relationship between sending and receiving provinces

SENDING PROVINCES

The Comboni Lay Missionary Program:

- Demands from the candidates basic attitudes of faith and Church devotion.
- It's a proposal, a program that helps clarify wrong expectations.
- It demands a community life experience.
- It is considered a journey, a human and spiritual growth.
- In answering to the laity expectations, it offers less clericalism.
- It promotes a lay dimension of Comboni's charism.
- It expects an input from the returned missionaries

RECEIVING PROVINCES

- They perceive an overoptimistic view in presenting the reports to the assembly.
- Each Province has a different formation program.
- They want to verify the programs and decide where the CLM will be going.
- They would like to know more about the personality of the candidates.
- Personal problems should be taken care of before people go to the missions.
- We want to be sure that the Comboni spirituality, that bonds us together, is part of their formation.
- There is need to define a proper life style and live close to the poor.
- It's important to know the local people and have respect for their culture.
- It's important to have a coordinator.
- It's important to keep a close cooperation with the local community.
- The Comboni missionaries would like the CLM to bear witness to Christ and to enable local people to become witnesses.
- They would like to see the CLM more independent as a group.

Proposals for a better cooperation among the different CLM centers.

- Exchange between the different provinces information about formation guidelines, directories and statutes of the CLM.
- Establish the publication of a newsletter among the different provinces to be better informed.
- Collaborate in common projects with the possibility of shared community living.
- Study the possibility of international communities with formation done in common, giving respect to the differences in programs.
- A central committee or clearing house should be formed and delegated to collect and distribute information for projects, data, site possibilities.

Economical Aspect

- Look for the support of NGO's and international organizations to help finance projects.
- Investigate the receiving of remuneration for service done while in mission which would be used to help support the lay community.
- Create a local association which wouldn't go to mission but would support those who do depart.
- Work towards the self-sufficiency of the CLM program, perhaps first at the provincial level and then at the general province.
- Establish an international common fund.
- The central committee chosen by the Assembly could prepare a contract model based on issues brought forth at the assembly.
- The central committee could prepare common re-entry guidelines for all programs.

What do the CLM expect of the MCCJ?

- Patience is important! Most MCCJ's have many years of experience – the CLM program is still in its infancy.
- The CLM asks the MCCJ to give respect and acceptance to the program and have an open attitude to sharing in the life of the community.

- That the MCCJ honor the responsibility they inherited from Daniel Comboni concerning lay participation in the evangelization of Africa.
- That the MCCJ and the CLM work together in harmony according to their different vocations.
- That the MCCJ accept the CLM as part of the Comboni family.
- That the CLM contracts should be honored and fulfilled.
- That the new CLM's be properly be introduced to the local community in a timely manner and be provided with appropriate living facilities.
- Those who have lived longer at the mission site give that orientation, acceptance, support and recognition to the newcomers.
- That the Comboni religious community realizes that the lay community may have different expressions when it comes to witnessing and celebrating their faith, but still have a vocation.
- That the MCCJ's recognize that a less than positive experience with the CLM should not label all CLMs' because each individual has their own ways and the Comboni religious community should learn not only to forgive someone who makes mistakes, but also use that opportunity to help the CLM grow as persons and as lay missionaries.

Election of a Central Committee

One of the final agendas to come before the Assembly was the election of a central committee to work with Fr. Manuel Pinheiro in matters of interest and concern to the CLM.

Chosen by the assembly to assist Fr. Pinheiro were Fr. Anton Schneider (DSP) and Valdeci Antonio Ferreira (BS).

This "Central Committee" will also coordinate with the "Continental Committees" that are still to be formed. The latter committees will be elected in conjunction with the CLM and the Continental Coordinator of the Provincial Superiors.

One of the more important issues to be addressed by this committee will be the creation and publication of an international bulletin or newsletter to be distributed among all CLM programs.