

CLC-CVX Assembly in Beirut. August 2013.

1. **Today I want to share something** that has been recently in my mind.

- On June 25 I had the visit of two Religious. Towards the end of the visit they asked me: “What do you think are the most urgent needs of the Church, the Priorities...?”
- That afternoon I had an appointment with Pope Francisco and we both came to the same point: How can the Society of Jesus best help and serve the Church? –
- The answer had already been given by both in the same line. –
 - Just three days earlier the Pope had met the Rector of the Gregorian University and had told him that he expected the Jesuits to take very seriously **the Intellectual Apostolate**. He had been speaking about the periphery and how important it is for the Church. “But, he added, the experience of the periphery need reflection and study to draw from it the fruits of the Gospel that the Lord wants”. That was the Pope’s reflection.
 - On the other hand we had had a big meeting of Jesuit Universities **in the year 2010** in Mexico. The slogan that caught the imagination of those present was: the biggest danger today is “**The Globalization of superficiality**”. And the message after that has been that we have to aim at **DEPTH** in everything we do. Perfect harmony between what the Pope considers is most needed, and what we, Jesuits, think as well.

2. **Is this different from what we said at Fatima?** Let me share a Biblical reflection that might help us put things in perspective:

- Israel went through three very different periods in its life and for each had a different language.
 - First **the building of the people**, Identity, sense of belonging, pride in being a people... etc. And they developed **the language of history**, epic, heroic and extraordinary acts of God. Thus the People as a result could say: WE ARE THIS PEOPLE, and feel proud about it. Chosen, selected, blessed, etc. ---
 - But **Identity is risky**: it risks manipulation, political narrowness, impurity, exclusion, etc. And the people needed **the Prophets** who came to purify the faith, to broaden the perspectives, to make God free

and with this, make also the people free. The Prophets belong here and every Faith Community needs them if it wants to grow and refer to the Living God. ---

- But then ***the Exile happened***. The people felt betrayed, abandoned, not protected... and lost its faith. Only a few believed: the Remnant. And, surprise! the Prophets disappear. No more. Because when there is no faith, prophetic language does not make sense. Their challenges fall flat and there are no hearts to be moved by them. ***A new language is needed***, and we have it in Wisdom, Sapiential Language that is able to find God in the simple things of every day. This is a language that makes sense to believers and unbelievers alike. Maybe this is the emerging language for today in the world.

3. ***Where are we in the world?***

- The So-called Christian West has lost its faith, greatly.
- There is a growth of agnosticism all over and spreading (especially compared to the recent past in traditionally “Catholic” Countries).
- But we are in transition and we need the three languages:
 - 1. **History** for ***New Christians***
 - 2. **Prophecy** for the ***Community of Faith***. And
 - 3. **Wisdom** for ***Frontier Situations*** and the ***non-Christian*** milieus.

4. ***How to go about it?***

Arrupe had the same question when it came to poverty and the poor in his time. And he thought of a triple response. He said;

- ***ALL*** have to work ***FOR*** the poor;
 - ***MANY*** have to work ***WITH*** the poor;
 - ***A FEW***, those especially called by God or Obedience, have to live and work ***LIKE*** the poor.
- Maybe we can transliterate this classification in our terms, beginning with the few.

- **A FEW**, who have the talent and the capability and chance, are called to do INTELLECTUAL WORK, RESEARCH, INVESTIGATION
 - **MANY** have to become excellent & qualified PROFESSIONALS. And
 - **ALL** have to fill our world with Wisdom through REFLECTION, MEDITATION, THOUGHT.
5. And right here we have the enormous relevance of Ignatian Spirituality and Ignatian Laity in the Church.
- Ignatian Spirituality trains us all for reflection, for meditation, for sorting out the superficial and banal, from the deep and real.
 - Again it is the Pope himself who gave a Meditation on Mary in one of his homilies at Santa Martha, the house where he lives. He gave three key words to understand and to grasp the heart of Mary:
 - **LISTENING**,
 - **DISCERNMENT**,
 - **ACTION**.
 - Father Spadaro in a TV show dedicated to the Pope said that these three words are deeply Ignatian and can express what the Pope himself is doing.
 - He is **Listening** during the Spring,
 - He will be **Discerning** during the Summer, and
 - We expect **Action** and decisions in Autumn and Winter
6. **Summing up** we can say that Ignatian Spirituality is very relevant today for the Church,
- Because it gives us the flexibility to respond to reality as God has done through history.
 - It is never the same and it is never reduced by any kind of ideological vision.
 - It trains us for discovery of reality –
 - for **reflection** in depth –

- for **discernment** of what is most needed and urgent –
- it trains us for **action**, without need to depend on others. All the signs are interior and Directed from God as well as directed to God.

7. Finally, **who are the carriers** of this Spirituality? Without any doubt:

- Whoever opens itself to the Spirit and learns the process of discernment that Ignatius proposes:
- Ignatian Laity, like you are, and, if you allow,
- there is room also for Jesuits
 - to accompany you and
 - to search in this time of transition for the sources of wisdom and God in everything.