



Economic Affairs Commission

May 23, 2004

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Please accept our kind regard. We are now at the end of the Easter season and preparing to celebrate the Pentecost Feast when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and Mary Mother of the Lord and all the disciples. This happened to fulfill the Jesus Christ's promise made to His apostles when He left this world to return to His father.

Today, on the Pentecost Feast celebration, the church invites us all, especially the Claretian Lays to live as the first Christian Communities lived:

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart.” (Acts 2, 44-46)

The Gospel is always new and provokes me to propose a couple of points to reflect and share with our groups and communities. These reflections are crucial to keep our Claretian Lays Movement on motion.

Background

As we all know the Claretian Lays Movement General Council met in Madrid in January, 2004. In a fraternity and pray climate we assessed our movement. We analyzed and shared the Claretian Lays VI General Assembly final document. As a result we outlined a work plan intending to respond all the movement's needs and challenges as well as those from all of us.

One of the main discussion topics was the approval to hire a part time employee to promote the Movement. As Cristina widely explained in her January letter to all groups and communities, after discussing the profile, legal issues, salary and the tax and accounting liabilities resulting from such contracting, it was decided not to hire this part time person because at this moment of time the Movement does not have the needed funding. We hope to improve our financial conditions in the future, so we can meet this challenge.

Our Reality:

Assessing our Movement's financial situation and our Groups and Communities payment pattern we identified some points which we would like to share with you:

1. Some groups and communities are not either paying the annual fee or informing the reasons for their delay. On this issue we would like to kindly remind what we agreed on our General Assembly regarding the payment of the annual fee.
2. Although we agreed that the annual fee should be paid within the first quarter of each year, i.e., not later than March the 31st. our groups and communities pay at any time during the year. Since we cannot anticipate the month when the fees arrive, we cannot project our cash flow based on payments.
3. Some groups and communities pay their annual fee of US\$10 per person. However, some of these groups could pay more than US\$10 per person and help support either the solidarity fund or the communion of goods fund.
4. A number of groups did not pay the 2003 annual fee.
5. Counting only on annual fees the Claretian Lays movement cannot be financially self sustainable.

During our VI General Assembly all attendants showed concern on the financial situation issue. A decision was made to establish improvement of the Movement's financial situation as a top priority for the next four years. On the same topic all attendants discussed the need to rent a space to keep our files and publications currently maintained in the Claretian Missionaries House in Rome. Another issue was the need to hire a translation team which we considered urgent to support translation of all publications and communications.

The purpose of all the discussed proposals was to provide the movement with a solid, effective infrastructure to respond to all needs. However, we determined that reaching our objectives involve the need of a deep reflection from us all to identify probable action courses keeping in mind that, as happened in the first Christian Communities, among our movement's aims are solidarity and communion.

There are two funds in our movement. One called the **Solidarity Fund** whose purpose is to support those groups and regions which cannot send their members to the Movement's general assemblies. The other fund is the **Communion of Goods Fund**. This fund's proceeds come from extraordinary contributions from groups, communities

and regions to support the Movement's general expenses. As we all know, many of us can support the movement and we are not doing it.

Movement's Financial Situation:

At the beginning of 2003 we had a cash balance of **US\$ 52, 152.21**. At the end of 2003 our cash balance was **US\$ 45,524.20**. This decrease in the cash balance reflected an income of **US\$ 25,020.47** and expenses for **US\$ 31,648.48**. This means that expenses exceeded income by **US\$ 6,628.01**. The 2003 year-end-balance included the Claretian Missionaries generous contributions and groups contributions to the solidarity fund and the communion of goods fund. We really appreciate all these contributions to support our movement.

Based on the expense rate and considering some additional information available we prepared the following budget which was discussed during the General Council Meeting in January, 2004.

INCOME	BUDGET
<i>Annual Fee</i>	\$ 12,000.00
<i>Solidarity Fund</i>	\$ 1,000.00
<i>Communion of Goods Fund</i>	\$ 500.00
<i>Publications</i>	\$ 500.00
<i>Financial Gains</i>	\$ 1,000.00
<i>Assignment from the CMF Government</i>	\$ 8,000.00
<i>Grants and Donations</i>	\$ 50.00
TOTAL	\$ 23,050.00

EXPENSES	BUDGET
<i>General Council Members Travel</i>	\$ 4,000.00
<i>General Council Members Meetings</i>	\$ 350.00
<i>Magazine</i>	\$ 6,800.00
<i>Publications</i>	\$ 500.00
<i>Mailing</i>	\$ 1,000.00
<i>Office Supplies</i>	\$ 200.00
<i>Bonuses</i>	\$ 500.00
<i>Communications (Telephone, Internet)</i>	\$ 500.00
<i>Other Expenses</i>	\$ 500.00
TOTAL	\$ 14,350.00

This projection plans a positive balance of **less than US\$ 9,000.00**. However, this small balance allows us to increase the Equity Fund for our movement. Although an equity fund is needed to continue the movement's operations, we currently do not have any.

Work Plan:

To respond to this reality we prepared a work plan. Following is the Economic Affairs Commission portion of the work plan.

Objectives

- To accept the responsibility to financially support the movement.
- To conduct a financial situation survey to assess the annual fee amount to identify if it is possible to raise this fee.
- To identify alternate income sources to help the movement to become financially self sustainable

Facing our Reality:

As you can see, my dear brothers and sisters, our movement's current financial situation is weak and demands an urgent response from us all.

With great happiness we received news from new groups and brothers and sisters who are joyfully starting their path to follow Jesus in the Claret style. These brothers and sisters need a strong movement to ensure periodic visits from the General Council to support their initiation and formation steps.

Once again I call you to reflect on this weak financial reality and ask all groups and communities to provide space to dialog on this issue. I also want to remind you that the Claretian Lays General Council is always prepared to listen to proposals and open to suggestions. Thus, we strongly encourage all of you to creatively participate by proposing solutions.

Meanwhile, we ask Mary to walk with us. We want to pray with Her. We also ask our Lord to send His Holy Spirit over us all. As the first Christian Communities did, we can bravely bring the Gospel to all our friends, relatives and workmates.

Please accept my best personal regards.

Your sister in the Lord,

Nancy Burgos
Economic Affairs Commission