

**Report of the Regional Meeting  
Holy Spirit Missionary Cenacle – Stirling, New Jersey  
February 20, 2015**

Present: Michael Barth (delegate), Aro Varnaba (student delegate), Charley Piatt, Conrad Schmitt, Gustavo Amell, Joe Dudek, Martin Pacholek, Nsom Kindong, Luis De La Cuadra, Ralph Frisch, Ramon Flores, Joe Keenan.

We began in prayer and with some reading of the Conversion document from the previous General Cenacle as a preparation.

**FORMING IN THE CHARISM**

This area garnered a good deal of lively discussion. All 12 members affirm this theme for further discussion at the GC.

What actually is the “Cenacle Charism” we are wanting to instill? Is it more our life and culture? Can we name it? Many felt that one of the issues inhibiting this being transmitted well in formation is that there is no clear structure of formation in the Charism, too much emphasis on the canonical requirement or academic requirements. In addition it seems that this is left up to the whim or style or personality of each formation direction – no curriculum for formation that would be the guide. One stated that this has been “unfinished” for over 8 years – that is a whole generation! Have those in formation ever been asked what would help them in their formation of the charism? Are we preparing men to be missionary religious or diocesan priests? Not enough emphasis on the “religious” aspect of our charism. We should be alarmed more by men who leave us and go to other religious communities – this is clear evidence that our charism is not being clearly communicated – too fuzzy.

Challenges in our Cenacles that can inhibit our charism from being more present are: a realization that this learning goes both ways. The young learn from the old but the old also can learn from the young.

**MISSION**

This area also engendered good and lively discussion. All 12 members affirm this as very important for furthers discussion / discernment at the GC.

It was generally felt by our region that the primary method or model of apostolic formation is the gospel – the joy of the gospel lived and shared particularly through concrete works of mercy. Mission are people, we need to be available to them. Many expressed a need to clarify what “preservation of the faith” means – are we primarily about preserving the Catholic faith? At the same time we need to share the whole of our Catholic faith – especially the area of Social Justice we are often left to the sidelines. It was also strongly felt that we need to see our mission to all – not only Latino’s – to all cultures and that our men need to be prepared to work with all cultures. It was also felt that we need to be in mission on the margins, not only where

there are large numbers – need to be more present in the US especially among the neediest in the central cities. It was felt that we don't need a Mission Committee as much as one person, a Vicar for Mission, who would be attentive to this vital area of our life and would assist us in saying "No" at times to good things which we are simply not able to do. Finally, when doing Mission Plans we should be more open and aggressive in seeing our missions as places of vocations and not only places we "give" to but also invite to participate in our life.

As to the MCA it was felt that we should not have to go around feeling guilty at the state of the MCA. They are responsible, in the end, for propagating themselves and they need the freedom to grasp their own identity without us telling them who or what they should be. New models are needed in relationship with the MCA – while not being responsible for them we need to support them and offer them the spiritual guidance that they need.

Systemic Change: this invites us to look at the world and our mission in a new way. For many this is a difficult concept to grasp – more education needed and some concrete models of how this would look. Is this part of our charism or are we more of a "hands on" group of men? How is this connected to our charism, to social justice? Can we train someone in this who can be a resource to us?

### **SPIRITUALITY**

The discussion / sharing around this was more difficult and did not seem to have the same passion as the earlier ones. All 12 felt that is important for us to continue to talk about this and continue to get clarity on the issue of our spirituality.

It was noted that we are still in a period of transition. Much of our former spirituality and identity in this area focused around devotions, the meditations, our own community prayers, our customs – it was highly devotional but this is now gone – what has replaced it? Many stressed the need to have a personal encounter with Jesus as the grounding for apostolic spirituality and that this is often strengthened by being part of prayer / reflection groups with others – lay, ST and Cenacle members. It was suggested that we define what "apostolic spirituality" really is, to be more specific. Is our spirituality not better called "Cenacle Spirituality" which has an emphasis on the Cenacle virtues and "how" we live. We have to be careful not to divide ourselves in this discussion – now I am praying, now I am being apostolic – need to see that God is in my apostolic service and that is my prayer. My apostolic prayer or witness is as valid a prayer as is benediction.

### **ONGOING FORMATION IN COMMUNITY**

Good discussion on this topic – all 12 agreed that we do not need a team to deal with these issues. Most felt that an active Vicar of Personnel was the best solution – someone or two (language) who have the pulse of each man and where they are – need to know a problem is developing ahead of time and not react all the time to crisis.

It was suggested that local Custodians may need additional skills and direction on how best to develop a trusting environment in each Cenacle so that issues around the differing needs / expectations of community can be openly discussed. Formation certainly needs to address this issue but we all need to be better at these skills as men in community. There was openness to learning these skills but no support for the development of a team.

### **DISCERNING FUTURE LEADERSHIP**

A good and lively discussion – all 12 agreed this is an important issue that needs much more discussion. All felt is not only an issue of how we elect but that we need to take a new look at how we govern. Many felt that we need a new model – use the lived experience of those who have served recently, consider a leadership team model and to realize that leadership does not have to be chosen from those elected counselors – they give council, they do not have to be the leaders in every instance. It was generally felt that we need to de-centralize (as Francis is doing) and re-establish the legitimacy of local superiors or custodians. Could we have a Vicar for Latin America? It was acknowledged that it may be too late to do this for the upcoming GC but it was acknowledged that some new model of discernment is needed so that there is an open discussion of what kind or skills of leadership are needed at this moment and who (not just a single person but as a group) can provide that leadership.

### **OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE EXPLORED AT GC?**

- The issue of vocations is an important one – do we actually have a plan for vocations in the US and other areas? If we do why are we not aware of what it is? Have we abandoned vocations from areas other than where we currently have missions?
- We need to go in mission to places where we are not – we need new life in mission.
- We need to develop local sources of income so that all are not dependent on Silver Spring or the US for funds. This causes dependency and an attitude of a “we” and a “they” which is not healthy. We need to de-centralize in this area and apply our desire for systemic change to ourselves as well as others.

There was some discussion of possible Propositions coming from this Region but they are still being worked on – will have done by March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Barth, S.T.