

NEW YEAR, NEW HORIZON

The year 2005-2006 has to be useful in order to leave behind the “virtual solidarity” and recover the “real solidarity”

Last Sunday July 17th, the active members of “Claim for Dignity” shared a very kind journey in our site at Sant Just Desvern (Barcelona). We could share a nice bath in the swimming pool, conversations, eating together and chatting. It was then when, as it was expected, we had a casual but full of content meeting. Between the 20 members who were there (some of the other members had already announced their absence) we made a revision of the year 2004-2005 and we prepared the objectives for the new already started year 2005-2006.

The revision was mainly focused in the “MaS” project (Madombidzha Special School) and our relationship with the counterpart in Makhado in particular and our friends in Southafrica in general. Almost everybody agreed that we had done less than expected concerning this issue. Some of us used the word “disenchantment” to describe the experience after the working camp that took place in Makhado between June and August 2004. Some people was also disenchanted because the working camp planned for this summer did not take place. There are many reasons that account for this “disenchantment”: the lack of commitment from our part, the difficulty of a coordinate work with the counterpart, the project ambition and the lack of time and livings to carry it out, etc. Anyway, we decided that we had to let the “MaS” project as a second priority – only two of the six buildings planned have already been built and they are operative although some details

editorial

are still pending (we wish we could get the money to finish these two buildings!). However, our relationship with our southafrican friends keeps going on, specially through the bulletin and the possibility to give some scholarships. We are also prepared to work together the murals of Rathidili chapel and draw the Madombidzha plans if we are asked for. We do not discard to organize a working camp for the summer of 2006.

In any case, we all agreed that for the ONG to be “alive” we cannot focus only in one project, mainly if it is thousands of km far away. Therefore, we have decided that the year 2005-2006 has to be useful in order to leave behind the “virtual solidarity” and recover the “real solidarity” through our humble participation in social, cultural and religious projects that may take place in our nearer environment. Our point should not be to do things for doing but to do things with a sharing spirit. In the meeting it was highlighted that if we want to be coherent with our ONG Christian inspiration, the unity as well as the friendship of “Claim for Dignity” members should be two characteristics to identify us as a group. It was also proposed to search the time for us to learn, to become more sensible and to share.

As ONG we do not discard to participate in cooperation projects in other places in the world (Colombia, for instance), but for this to happen it is important to act slowly but doing things well. It is in God's hands.

The Council

PERFORATING BANALITY

It is hard to think on spheres that have remained alien to the colonialism of banality,

Some analysts of Western culture agree when typifying our society as banal, as a world ruled by banality. This thesis seems very accurate, because, in our opinion, banality is always present in the audio-visual sphere, as well as in the educational, cultural, religious and political spheres. In a strict sense, it is hard to think of spheres that have remained alien to the colonialism of banality because not even the intellectual sphere has remained untouched. An intellectual has to wink at banality in order to survive and stay in touch with reality.

It is not easy to determine the meaning of banality, but, as a start, it can be defined as what opposes to seriousness, to gravity. Banality is identified with amusement, with superficiality. One has the impression that there will not be much market for a product introduced into society with the label of seriousness, whereas a product presented within the margins of banality, of amusement, or of ingenuity will have a wider acceptance. The other day a pupil was telling me that existentialism is boring because its thematic core is very grave and serious: anguish, discernment, existence, death, extreme situation, drama of freedom; all seemed unbearable. This same pupil suggested that philosophers do not connect with the world because their outlook of the world is too serious and the world should be taken lightly. Seriousness does not sell.

The empire of banality is not only valid for those goods whose purpose is to amuse, to entertain or to simply liberate consumers from their sorrows, but banality is also valid for political, educative and religious goods. This explains why banality also rules political spheres. In fact, any politician who wishes to have a certain horizon has to constantly make allowances to banality. The cultural creator and even the religious reference must also make allowances to banality. Therefore, one has the impression that seriousness does not sell, that it is not trendy, that seriousness terrifies us and that we want to consume lighter goods, or as currently said in actual language, more light.

Often, in the "sacred" area of knowledge, that is the university, the work of a teacher is positively judged, just because it is simply enjoyable, it makes pupils laugh. The teacher explains curious stories and entertains future social leaders. In a context of this nature, Edmund Husserl or Martin Heidegger would go unnoticed, because the hardness of thinking and the soberness in their expositions were some of their showier features when developing Herr Professor's role. The joke, the outburst, a more or less opportunistic boutade does sell and is desired.

thoughts

In audio-visual communication media there is a multiplication of some figures whose role basically consists on relaxing, entertaining, fighting against tedium, against boredom. Some of them turn into social archetypes and they are invited to book presentations and to bookshops openings. They act as social hooks and their presence guarantees success. If one of these individuals is invited to a university, the auditorium overflows with pupils and onlookers. On the other hand, if we were inviting Plato himself or Arthur Schopenhauer we would have to force pupils to attend. In the bookish sphere, literary, philosophical and psychological works that cultivate banality and stupidity are increasing considerably. Those are best sellers with lack of literary value that will never be classified in the classic category. Nevertheless, while these are being sold, the classics are forgotten a few shelves above.

This is a banal society, a bored society that needs virtual buffoons to escape, to forget about daily struggle. These figures basically play a therapeutic and cathartic role, since they liberate us of the arduous task of meditating, of thinking over the way we live and what we expect. Bourdieu was right when he said that we are already installed in the post thought era.

Neither the newspapers considered as serious escape from the colonialism of banality and have to do allowances to the gallery. They have to fill the pages with loving misfortunes of the famous of the moment, because the reader needs to live other people's lives. The statements of an individual, completely irrelevant from a cultural, social or political point of view but demanded for strange reasons, occupy an expensive space in the paper. It must occupy a very expensive space. It is sad to see how certain politicians have to play the game of banality and make faces (grimaces) and infantile pirouettes that do not make them feel uncomfortable, but that they must do in order to keep the levels of popularity to which they aspire.

Seriousness is ridiculed, it is knocked off with a joke. Serious things hide after curtains of banality. It is not well seen to become very serious in a discussion, it is not necessary to argue passionately either: it seems rather obsolete to defend convictions, ideas, beliefs or spiritual options. Everything fits in the format of a game, of a show, of a pastime.

And, nevertheless, the empire of banality is not invulnerable. When we ourselves live certain experiences, our eyes get opened and we see with a strange clarity things that were concealed in the past. There is no room for banality in emergency rooms, in the corridors of jails, in psychiatric centres or in morgues. In certain places, banality vanishes and seriousness bursts. The ignored dimension of life is much more truthful than any other one, but we insist on concealing.

Francesc Torralba Roselló

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XX WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE

It is not incompatible to be a young and modern person and to follow Christ!

The XX World Youth Conference took place last August in Cologne (Germany). The Holy Pope met with the youth, as it happens every two to three years in a different city of the world since 1986. These world youth conferences were started and first held by the recently deceased John Paul II at the Piazza de San Pedro di Roma.

The main goal of these conferences is laying the foundation of our lives in Christ and achieving an experience of union between the youth, The Pope and the Church; feeling as an active and indispensable part of It; a union or feeling of fraternity with the rest of the youth of the world; a direct and profound interpellation to the heart of each attendant...

Each time, The Pope selects a theme for the encounter which is the center and focus of the conference; the basis for working on and obtaining certain objectives. This past August, the chosen theme was: „We have come to adore Him.“

A group of five of us left for Colonia this year and the majority had gone to such conferences in previous occasions and came back home very very pleased. Once there, after being well received and welcomed to stay at a friend's house, we decided to go for a walk in the city, which was already invaded by thousands of young pilgrims. In the streets of Colonia, everything was backpacks, buses, flags from everywhere in the world, people singing, people praying... The thing is that these journeys last a whole week, from Monday to Sunday, where different talks and meetings take place... to work on the main theme (as previously explained). It is during the weekend that The Pope actually meets with all the young people from around the world. That's what took us there on the first place, so the next day, once our backpacks were ready with the basics for spending the night camping out, we went to Marienfield (Mary's field), a huge camp where the stage was located for the meeting. It took us several hours to get there going by metro, train, buses and long walks.

The organization had divided the space by areas, each according to the assigned batches which had been designated a place that didn't turn out to be certainly respected by everyone, given the number of attendants was above and beyond the number of people which was predicted to assist to the event (there was a forecast of an 80.000 people turnout, which actually turned out to be a total of about 800.000!!!). And the truth is that we all like to see things from as close as possible. Therefore, we ended

experiences

up finding us a small spot where we were able to sleep stretched out, between two groups of young Germans and in front of a giant screen which allowed us to better follow the whole act up close.

The arrival of Pope Benedict the XVI, special for being his first international meeting with all of us, the young people; was also as exciting as with the Pope John Paul the II.

The flags started to wave, we all stood up and raised our hands trying to greet the Holy Father. He, who seemed very excited although maybe a bit more timid, responded smiling and raising his arms up high. At all times, between different programmed acts, the message from the Pope and during the Mass the next day, there were applause, worship songs and flags waved... You could feel such a very special ambiance that it is difficult to explain. How can you define finding yourself surrounded by almost a million young plethoric people from around the world, which have travelled for a cause –all for the same cause– which is wanting to have Jesus as a life-guide and role to follow?

From his speeches, both from the one given the first day and from the second one, we could hardly understand much due to the language barrier but we have had the chance to read them afterwards, once translated, and they are priceless: a continuous catechesis of how to be closer to Jesus each day and the fact is that, as it was said, „it is not incompatible to be a young and modern person and to follow Christ!“

To close, we left from Colonia as we expected: very happy! There are many anecdotes and many experiences all gathered up in a small time frame, which we'll have to cherish and get resolutions out of it to materialize, day by day, the main goal of these World Youth Conferences.

Irma Fañanás
Laura Garcia-Faria



communication

- On July 17th, members of "Clam per la Dignitat" met in Sant Just Desvern (Barcelona) for a very dynamic and productive session (see editorial).
- Since July the fifth, our good friend, Pau Vidal – architect and a member of the Jesuit Order – is in Liberia's international center for refugees, run by the Jesuits (JRS, Jesuit Refugee Service). The JRS has a presence in four different parts of the country, where it will likely remain for two years. We offer much encouragement in this new and exciting stage!
- On July 30th, Ceci and Aleix welcomed their second child into the world: Laura Layola Benet. Laura, welcome to this world... and to "Clam per la Dignitat"!
- Javier Julve recently finished his online database design for "Clam per la Dignitat." This October, he will present his project to the computer technology faculty of Barcelona's Ramon Llull University. We extend a heartfelt thank you both to Javier and his profesor, Xavier Canaleta!
- On Saturday, July 16th, our friends Núria Albareda and Guillem Polinyà were married in Barcelona. Congratulations to the happy couple!
- At the end of September, Diego Carrillo and his wife, Maria Nadeu – friends of "Clam per la Dignitat" – will depart for Morocco, where they will spend approximately two years. Maria hopes to improve her Arabic, while Diego would like to collaborate in any architectural projects where his assistance might be needed.
- From August 15th till the 21st, the Holy Father led the biannual World Youth Day, which this year took place in Cologne, Germany. Several members of "Clam per la Dignitat" attended this remarkable event (see "experiences").
- On August 25th, the Assembly of "Clam per la Dignitat" met in Sant Just. Its members will again meet on Sunday, November 13th, at 11 a.m. in Barcelona. The II Assembly will take place on Sunday, October 16th, in Barcelona (from approximately 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.). All members and friends of "Clam per la Dignitat" are welcome!
- All members please note that your annual dues are to be paid in October.
- On Saturday, July 16th, our German friends, Andreas and Annette Simon, raised 235 Euros for the MaS-South Africa project of "Claim for Dignity e.V" during the liturgical celebration held in their Christian community in Guggenhausen (Germany). A lot of thanks!
- "Claim for Dignity"'s annual Assembly will take place on October 3rd in Neuenhaus/Aichtal at the home of the Schliep family.

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