

## Report on the European AP National Secretaries meeting

September 25 to 27, 2008  
Bilbao, Spain

We met at the Begoña Spirituality Center Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>, beginning with the mass. We were 28 (see list at the end). We worked in three languages, the most popular being French. Translations:

- from English to French, M. Beattie
- from Spanish to French, Frédéric
- from English to Spanish, José Ignacio Vitón, sj, especially invited for this,
- from Spanish to English, Claudio.

That first night we had the visit and greeting of the Loyola Provincial, Fr. Juan José Etxeberría Sagastume. Friday morning we shared the situation and the novelties of AP in each of our countries. We were asked to hand in a written report on this prior to the meeting, that not all did.

Pablo Guerrero, the Pastoral Coordinator for the Castilla Province gave us a talk on Faith and Prayer in the Family. It was very interesting, and we had time to make him some questions, but not for group sharing on how this connects with AP.

In the afternoon, we shared on three questions regarding AP. Here is a summary of the answers, concerning the WHAT (1) and HOW (2) of AP.

### 1 a - Which are the basic contents of AP's spiritual proposal?

- Apostleship of Prayer is giving/offering oneself to God in prayer.
- It is a way of communicating with God through one's daily living and it is also a way of being with Jesus in and through everyday circumstances.
- It is being aware of the Presence of God in one's life by living life simply and intensively and offering it to God. Thus one would not lead a meaningless, boring life.
- It is universal as you can pray to God with other Christians in the world.
- A spirituality in common for all Christians
- In short: a way to follow Jesus
- Living the baptismal priesthood. Offering our lives to the Lord forms the Church.
- Living the mercy of the Heart of Jesus
- It teaches us to pray and give out our life to God
- We live the apostolic dimension of the Church
- It is a way to be open to the world through prayer and the offering linked to the Eucharist
- It is a quest for spirituality and prayer
- It is a spirit of openness to the world that shows a Church connected to today's problems
- Because of its service orientation, it is a spirituality that can be useful for all, even non Christians.

### 1 b - Which of these aspects seems to help people the most and must be stressed?

- Life becomes meaningful and valuable through the daily aspects of living, for example: communicating with one's neighbour.
- AP is apostolic as life itself becomes a prayer.
- Praying, in turn, becomes the first apostolic and missionary action
- It also means that the life of faith is not separated from the life one is living on a daily basis. AP is also open to universal problems and not just to one's personal and individual life.
- Adoration
- The Daily offering
- The Pope's intentions and the service attitude
- The simplicity of this spiritual way based on the daily offering. You only need self awareness, without requiring a specific action
- The First Friday Novenas dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- It gives meaning to life, showing that all are important and necessary in God's plan (especially adequate for the sick and elderly)
- It teaches a concrete way to offer one's life
- It helps to be in relationship with God and to feel useful to others
- It is an expression of faith that can help young people
- It makes us open to other people's problems, not only our own

## 2 - What methodologies can be used for the implementation of AP?

- Being a witness of God in the world through the simple activities of daily life.
- The daily offering prayer
- The Pope's intentions, commented by word of mouth and by writing
- The promotion of Social justice issues that come from these intentions, making use of all the available means of communication.
- Parish groups
- We start by responding to the doubts and needs of the people (even if these are not directly religious matters)(Belgium)
- We teach the awareness that all are called to be missionaries
- It is an invitation to make your life simpler
- Word of mouth and personal contact, preaching in different parishes, together with a leaflet that has the same content of what has been just said.
- Leaflets and articles on magazines
- Witness to God in the simplicity of daily life
- It is also a way of explaining to people their mission/calling in daily life.
- We speak to the parish priests so they may promote AP
- We strive to adapt the language to the audience we must reach
- We speak to the parish priests so as to:
  - Offer the materials we publish
  - Have our spirituality known following the theology of the Daily Offering
  - Proposing prayer groups and Spiritual Exercises
  - Collaborating in the ministry to the ill
  - Animating the existing parish groups to pray together and share the faith
  - Trying to reach people in different situations, that in their loneliness they may share their faith, feel part of a community and reach the capacity to be witnesses.

That afternoon we continued with AP presentations from the countries.

Claudio informed us that the 2012 World Gathering for EYM will probably be in Dublin, linked to the International Eucharistic Congress.

The next day Mons. Ricardo Blázquez, the local bishop, gave us a talk on his diocesan pastoral plans.

Claudio asked us if we were to continue these European AP meetings on a yearly basis or if we should meet every other year. Up until last year, in this meeting we worked on the final list of suggestions for the Pope's General Intentions. From this year on, this will be done through a different mechanism.

The answer to this question was soon connected to another issue, namely, the need to find time for theological reflection on aspects related to our spirituality. This concern came from the National Secretaries of France, Flemish Belgium and Germany, but is of interest to all. We discussed the idea of alternating these meetings, devoting one year to our ordinary matters, as this time, and leaving the following year only for the theological reflection, with free attendance. This option could pose the danger of creating two groups within the National Secretaries, the "intellectual" vs. the others. It seems better that we all reflect together, since it is useful to all. This does not exclude the possibility that in between, in dates other than our Gathering's, those who wish and can meet to discuss issues of their interest.

We also realized we need to add an extra day to our normal yearly gathering, for this year we felt too pushed and were unable to share as we desired. This extra day could be for the theological reflection, at least part of it.

The discussion of this matter took us a long time, in two moments of our meeting, proposing the pros and cons. The reasons that came up:

#### **For meeting every other year**

- The expenses are high, not only for our trip, but for the lodgings that the local province must pay.
- Other apostolic areas in the Society of Jesus meet every two years.

#### **For meeting every year**

- It is good for us personally to meet each other and share, and this is good for the AP. We mention the fact that most of us work without other Jesuits to share or reflect with. Here we find echo on what we are all striving to achieve.
- If any one of us has economic hardships, National Offices with more resources can help them.

We voted in two ways, individually and by countries. In both cases, the yearly option won, but by a close margin. 12 people and 6 countries were for meeting every year, 8 people and 5 countries were for every other year. This showed that opinions were divided in practically two halves, meaning that for an important group the yearly option poses difficulties. This led the discussion to consider as final the option that we could all follow without difficulties, namely, every other year. But this decision contrary to the majority did not seem a good solution. We preferred to postpone our final decision until next year's meeting, taking this year to think it over and exchange our points of view.

**Our next meeting will be in 2009 in Krakow, Poland, from September 24 PM to 27 all day.** We will be able to return home only from Monday 28 on. Since the gathering will probably be at Czestochowa, which is 200 km away from Krakow, we must leave together on a special bus that Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 PM the latest. For this same reason, flights back home cannot depart before Monday 28 at noon, as we need time to get back to Krakow that morning.

For those interested in visiting Krakow (a city worth seeing) we have the chance to arrive the previous day, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>. We sleep that night there and visit the town during Thursday. An alternative to the city tour would be a visit to Auschwitz, that is close by, but we would have to choose one of these options.

Themes suggested for next year, for a reflection we could ask of some specialist:

- Mary (suggested by Dominique)
- Why prayer? Theological bases for prayer. We could add to this theme a report of Catholic practice in each of our countries (suggested by Eckhard).
- The post-modern culture where we are called to act (especially the youth culture) (Claudio)
- Incarnation and scatology, or how to have our mind on God and our feet on earth (M. Beattie).
- We are told we do not want to miss seeing a Polish movie (Eckhard).

Our gathering included a visit to Loyola Shrine Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>. Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> part of the group left for Javier Shrine, and we said goodbye until next year.

*Claudio Barriga D., sj*

Director General Delegate  
Apostleship of Prayer  
Eucharistic Youth Movement

## List of participants

Country	Name	E-mail
Belgium	Ludo Vangilbergen	<a href="mailto:ludo.vangilbergen@kerkenwereld.be">ludo.vangilbergen@kerkenwereld.be</a>
England	Michael Beattie sj	<a href="mailto:rmbeat@dircon.co.uk">rmbeat@dircon.co.uk</a>
France	Frederic Fornos sj	<a href="mailto:frederic.fornos@apostolat-priere.org">frederic.fornos@apostolat-priere.org</a>
Germany	Eckhard Bieger sj	<a href="mailto:e.bieger@gmx.de">e.bieger@gmx.de</a>
Greece	Demetrios Dalesios sj	<a href="mailto:demetre.dalesios@jesuites.com">demetre.dalesios@jesuites.com</a>
Italy	Federica Barchetti	<a href="mailto:mfba@libero.it">mfba@libero.it</a>
Italy	Tommaso Guadagno sj	<a href="mailto:tg@edp.it">tg@edp.it</a>
Malta	Raymond Pace sj	<a href="mailto:rsarria@gmail.com">rsarria@gmail.com</a>
Malta	Josephine Mamo	<a href="mailto:josephine@4inline.com">josephine@4inline.com</a>
Malta	Guido Mamo	<a href="mailto:guido@4inline.com">guido@4inline.com</a>
Rome	Claudio Barriga sj	<a href="mailto:apora@sicuria.net">apora@sicuria.net</a>
Spain	David Fornieles	<a href="mailto:d_fornieles@hotmail.com">d_fornieles@hotmail.com</a>
Spain	Soledad Guillen	<a href="mailto:soledadmedioslaicos@hotmail.com">soledadmedioslaicos@hotmail.com</a>
Spain	Javier G Ruiz de Medina sj	<a href="mailto:javiermedina@planalfa.es">javiermedina@planalfa.es</a>
Spain	Jose Ignacio Viton	<a href="mailto:viton@teo.upcomillas.es">viton@teo.upcomillas.es</a>
Sweden	Berit Calderon	<a href="mailto:berit.calderon@bredband.net">berit.calderon@bredband.net</a>
Sweden	Francisco Herrera sj	<a href="mailto:francisco.herrera@swipnet.se">francisco.herrera@swipnet.se</a>
Sweden	Cristina Ramos	<a href="mailto:cristinaramos@bredband.net">cristinaramos@bredband.net</a>
Sweden	Doris Valck	<a href="mailto:dorisvalck@hotmail.com">dorisvalck@hotmail.com</a>
Sweden	Birgitta Hedjarn	
Switzerland	Dominique Schenker	<a href="mailto:dominique.schenker@hefr.ch">dominique.schenker@hefr.ch</a>
Poland	Ryszard Machnik	<a href="mailto:r.machnik@jezuici.pl">r.machnik@jezuici.pl</a>
Portugal	Dário Pedroso	<a href="mailto:dariosj@jesuitas.pt">dariosj@jesuitas.pt</a>
Portugal	Elías Couto	
Rome	Toni Witwer	<a href="mailto:ece@sicuria.org">ece@sicuria.org</a>
Austria	Michael Zacherl sj	<a href="mailto:michael.zacherl@jesuiten.org">michael.zacherl@jesuiten.org</a>
Switzerland	Johannes Gesthuisen	<a href="mailto:jgesthuisen@suissonline.ch">jgesthuisen@suissonline.ch</a>
Switzerland	Marianne Gesthuisen	