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## Identity and Spirituality of Fe y Alegría at the service of Mission

Document of the 42nd International Congress

*“It is not by chance that our first identifying title is Faith: Faith and Joy, but faith first as the reason and the wellspring of our joy.” (José María Vélaz: “El camino realizado y la tarea futura” [The road traveled and the future task], 1980).*

*“Our mission is to discover Christ in all persons, even in the most humiliated, and to cooperate so that the image of the Lord shines forth in every heart where he has placed it. We need to know how to see him in those who are hungry, unlettered, or marginalized, for in all of them he is hidden, as in living tabernacles.” (José María Vélaz: “Fe y Alegría, Características Principales e Instrumentos de Acción,” 1981).*

*“From our Christian perspective, we understand spirituality as the experience of the power of God working within persons, re-creating them in their particular vocation so that they become transparent to the being and the action of God in Jesus. This experience awakens in men and women the consciousness of being subjects: it prepares them for the mission to be realized in community and in history so that their history is not a history of pain and injustice, of exclusion and violence, but a history of salvation in justice, love, and peace.” (“Educación y promoción social comunitaria” XXXVII Congreso Internacional, 2006).*

### I. IDENTITY OF FE Y ALEGRÍA.

1. Fe y Alegría defines itself as **“a movement** of popular education and social promotion which was born and is impelled by the **experience of Christian faith** in the face of situations of injustice and which **commits itself** to the historical process of the poor and working classes in the **construction of a just and fraternal society.”**
2. This definition expresses the identity, that is, the nature and the mission of Fe y Alegría. Our identity clarifies who we are, where we come from, what our roots are, where we are going, and what our shared life projects are. If in this Congress we treat the theme of Identity and Spirituality, it is not because we consider them to be in crisis or because we have lost our way or because our ideals have become obscured. By no means. We do so because it is required by our very identity as a movement, which demands continual revision and constant questioning, so that we can fulfill our commitment to the most needy with greater coherence and fidelity.
3. The identity of Fe y Alegría grows out of a faith that grows to be life and humanizing commitment. It is not a theoretical, private faith which turns its back on people’s needs. It is faith for mission, for service; it is a faith that affirms the presence of God in Jesus and seeks to accompany him in his mission of establishing the Father’s project for humankind. For that reason, Fe y Alegría does defines itself not as an institution but as a movement, a movement which, **motivated by outrage at the situation of marginalization and exclusion of so many people, makes an option for the most needy and excluded**, to help them live in dignity and become active transformers of the unjust structures of our society.

4. Our name expresses our nature, our identity; more than something which we simply declare, it is something with which we enter into communion. It is what unites us in diversity and keeps us committed to the same humanizing project. We are Fe y Alegría. Ours is the faith in a God who is Father-Mother of all human beings, who invites us to build a world of justice and solidarity. Ours is the faith in all persons and in the dignity of the human person “because all human beings have equal dignity,”<sup>1</sup> because this dignity is absolute in each and every one of us, and because we have dignity simply by being human. This dignity does not depend on anybody or anything. It can neither increase nor decrease. It is always equal for everybody.<sup>2</sup> Ours is the faith that we are all children of God and that those who are poorest, most needy, and most excluded are especially favored by God. Ours is the faith in popular education and communication as a basic means for helping people realize their mission in life and contribute to social transformation. Our faith is a fount of profound joy which flows from within us, which participates in the joy of Easter, the joy of the Risen One, and which fills our hearts with peace and enthusiasm and sends us forth on mission.
5. The identity of Fe y Alegría, in consequence, flows from and become manifest in **an incarnate spirituality** which strives to bear witness in all its doings and in its way of proceeding to the mission and the values that it proclaims. It is a spirituality which sides with the most needy, which feels compassion for the pain of others, and which is committed to transforming the reality that surrounds us. It is a spirituality which presupposes continual conversion – for we recognize that we are weak, fragile clay, but clay enlivened by the Spirit – so that the project and the way of life of Jesus becomes ever more our own.
6. In Fe y Alegría identity and spirituality demand one another mutually; they are as two sides of the same coin, to such an extent that we can affirm that the identity of Fe y Alegría is a spiritual identity and, conversely, that spirituality is the heart of our identity.

### **Identity as a work in progress.**

7. *Identity* comes from the Latin expression “identitas,” which means “sameness” or “the same.” Identity allows us to understand ourselves as unique beings insofar as it points out the characteristic features which differentiate us from others.<sup>3</sup> Identity is always a work in progress; it is expressed in historical evolution, and it requires “creative fidelity” in order to respond to changes in reality and in contexts. Identity is always an unfinished task that requires us – whenever there are changes of contexts, times, or places – to return constantly to ourselves and our characteristic traits in order to affirm them and to be true to them, but without being identically the same that we were in other contexts, times, and places. In the history of Fe y Alegría we can discern three great stages: 1) the foundational, 2) the collective search for identity that culminated in the publication of our set of ideals (*Ideario*), and 3) the establishment of the International Federation, where the themes of the International Congresses and our shared reflections on experiences and proposals have contributed further inputs for the ongoing re-creation of our identity. In the foundational stage we find the roots of our identity, which would later be constantly refined through the many varied influences arising from our reading of the ever changing reality

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<sup>1</sup> **Jacques Maritain.** His intervention in the meeting convoked by the United Nation to create an ethical code for all the peoples of the earth after the Second World War. Cited by **Francisco De Roux** in his paper, “**Fundamentos de Fe y Alegría,**” presented at the 42nd International Congress “Identity and Spirituality at the Service of Mission.” Bogotá, 11 November 2011. Page 4.

<sup>2</sup> **Francisco De Roux.** **Fundamentos de Fe y Alegría.** Presentation at the 42nd International Congress “Identity and Spirituality at the Service of Mission.” Bogotá, 11 November 2011. Page 4.

<sup>3</sup> **Rosana Navarro.** “**Identidad, espiritualidad y diálogo interreligioso**”. Presentation at the 42nd International Congress “Identity and Spirituality at the Service of Mission.” Bogotá, 11 November 2011. Page 3.

## **Roots of the identity and spirituality of Fe y Alegría.**

8. “Fe y Alegría was not born and did not progress because of great confidence in well-backed checkbooks”<sup>4</sup>; rather, it was the natural response of an apostolic outlook motivated by Christian compassion<sup>5</sup> and focused on human misery, injustice, and exclusion. Its founder, Fr. José María Vélaz, nourished his faith commitment at the wellspring of Ignatian spirituality and inherited the tenacious vigor of the great Jesuit missionaries. He had entered the Society of Jesus precisely with the idea of continuing the heroic work of Francis Xavier as a missionary in China. His superiors changed his destiny, sending him to Venezuela, where he would find in Fe y Alegría a means for channeling his apostolic zeal and for continuing, in his own way, the work of the great Jesuit missionaries of the Reductions of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
9. Fr. José María Vélaz was at that time assigned to provide pastoral care to the young students of the recently founded Catholic University of Caracas. Since most of the students came from well-off families, he wanted them to know the other side of Caracas, the slums where hundreds of thousands of people were barely surviving. His hope was that the students, through contact with poverty, would develop a profound evangelical spirituality and faith which would lead them to commit their lives to the service of those most in need. Fr. Vélaz found it inconceivable that Christians could affirm faith in Jesus Christ and still ignore the extreme needs of their poorest sisters and brothers. For him faith, if it was genuine, meant commitment; it was impossible to believe in God without committing oneself to humanizing service.
10. During their apostolic visits to the marginal zones of eastern Caracas, Fr. Vélaz and the young university students taught catechism and prepared children for First Communion. They also provided material assistance to the people, giving out clothing, food, and toys at Christmastime. They would return from their visits shaken, firmly convinced that they had to do something more effective to help alleviate such awful misery. Their faith spurred their sense of commitment: they could not remain idle in the face of a social reality so opposed to the plan of God. The needs of the people were many: housing, health, food, clothing, hygiene..., but the students soon understood, thanks to the great contribution of one member of the base community, Abraham Reyes, that it was necessary to attack all the deficiencies at their root: it was necessary to launch a vast movement which would rescue the poor majority from being excluded from educational opportunities. Only through good education could they be saved from the worst kind of servitude. *It was not a question of giving the people fish to eat, but of teaching them to fish for themselves.* It was not enough to give alms, which still left the poor in their misery; it was necessary to help them attain the training and awareness that would allow them to forge their own future.
11. Abraham Reyes was an unschooled worker whose religious practice was limited to a very simple devotion to the Virgin Mary, but he had an immense capacity for compassion and service and was truly committed to his community. He was the person who made the birth of Fe y Alegría possible by generously donating the use of his house as the site of the first school. Abraham worked hard to convince Fr. Vélaz, who had a difficult time understanding such great generosity: *“If I keep it for myself, then it will be the house of my eight children. But if we make it a school, it will belong to all the children of the neighborhood.”*<sup>6</sup> Abraham not only donated his house, but he gave himself over completely, evangelizing Fr. Vélaz and the young students. *“How often the poor and*

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<sup>4</sup> José María Vélaz. *Valores de Fe y Alegría*. 1978, cited in *Federación Fe y Alegría. Palabras de Fe y Alegría. Citas inspiradoras del Padre José María Vélaz*. Caracas. 2005, Page 48

<sup>5</sup> We understand the term “compassion” in its deepest sense of “suffering with” the other.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Pérez Esclarín. *Yo, José María Vélaz*. Caracas, 2010. Page 120.

those who suffer truly evangelize us!”<sup>7</sup> Abraham later recounted how Fe y Alegría made it possible for him to deepen and expand his own religious life:

12. *“I not only donated the house, but I handed myself over as well. I gave myself completely to collaborating and being catechized. On Saturdays I used to go to catechism classes, where I learned to pray and to know God. When they prepared another group of children for First Communion, I slipped in, and that was how I made my First Communion, as an adult in the midst of children... Since that time I feel very happy. I think that when a person gives himself, it is much more than giving millions, giving material things. Such a heart can never be bitter, even in the midst of adversities and suffering. Such a heart is full of God. People need more of the spirit of self-giving. A person receives more when she gives, when she hands over her life, than when she thinks only of living comfortably... I began my true Christian formation in the catechism of Fe y Alegría. After that I continued to receive training, and I began to go on spiritual retreats. Faith is a continual search for God that ends only with death. I joined the Legion of Mary, and they invited me to the permanent diaconate, to which I agreed. ... I experience Fe y Alegría as a work of the Virgin. I offered them the little house I had built, and they accepted it. I pray the Rosary, the fifteen mysteries, every day, and every day I pray for Fe y Alegría. I tell her: “Most Holy Virgin, rejoice because that is your work.” Every day I thank her because I was able to contribute my grain of sand. Some time ago I made a kind of contract with the Virgin, because I treat her as my mother. I told her: “Look, I am going to work hard in the Legion of Mary, and you will work hard in Fe y Alegría.” Of course, Fe y Alegría got the better part of the deal.”<sup>8</sup>*
13. Many years later, the Latin American bishops, meeting in Aparecida, followed the path they had initiated in Medellín and continued to develop in Puebla; they recognized the great value of popular religiosity as a place of encounter with Jesus Christ. This religiosity was the basis of the spirituality that motivated Abraham. *“The Holy Father called attention to the ‘profoundly rich popular religiosity which reveals the soul of the Latin American peoples,’ and he described it as the ‘precious treasure of the Catholic Church in Latin America.’ The Pope urged the people to defend that religiosity and to protect it. This manner of expressing the faith ... ‘reflects a thirst for God that only the poor and the simple can understand.’ The ‘religion of the Latin American people is an expression of the Catholic faith. It is popular Catholicism,’ profoundly inculturated and containing the most valuable dimension of Latin American culture.”<sup>9</sup>*
14. The apostolic vocation of Fr. Vélaz, the desire of the university students to live their faith more profoundly and authentically, and the simple, practical, Marian religiosity of Abraham and his wife Patricia made Fe y Alegría possible. These elements marked out the parameters of its identity and spirituality: it is a **spirituality incarnated** in the culture of the people for the sake of mission and service, a spirituality committed to following Jesus generously and joyfully.
15. The **spirituality of insertion** that flowed from this incarnated spirituality led many religious women to join wholeheartedly with Fe y Alegría during those early heroic years. Fe y Alegría made it possible for many of them to enter the poor neighborhoods and live their Christian option of service to the most needy. Working with Fe y Alegría, an increasing number of religious sisters began to live the same life as the poor: they shared their fate, their needs, their problems, and their values, and they were also evangelized by the poor, who brought them closer to Jesus’ way of life. Without a doubt, the miracle of Fe y Alegría is incomprehensible without understanding the contribution of the sisters, who poured themselves out in a spirit of service and commitment, thus making it possible

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<sup>7</sup> CELAM. Documento de Aparecida. Quinta Conferencia General de los Obispos de Latino América y el Caribe. Aparecida, 13-31 May 2007. Concluding document presented to the Holy Father for publication. Paragraph 257. Available in Spanish on the internet at: [http://www.uc.cl/facteo/centromanuellarrain/download/doc\\_de\\_aparecida.pdf](http://www.uc.cl/facteo/centromanuellarrain/download/doc_de_aparecida.pdf), accessed 29 December 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Pérez Esclarín. Raíces de Fe y Alegría. Testimonios. Caracas, 1999, Page 10.

<sup>9</sup> CELAM. Op. cit. Paragraph 258.

for Fe y Alegría to extend strong roots into the barrios and the most abandoned localities. The religious sisters were the vanguard of the evangelizing Church of Medellín and Puebla; they were prophetic and clearly committed to helping the poorest of the poor move toward human development and social transformation. The sisters were the hand of God caressing and blessing the simple folk; they were the affectionate, caring word for the humble folk; the bright, friendly smile amid the pain of the poor; the healing presence in the midst of a marginalized people. With their varied personal and congregational charisms, with their closeness to the people, with their feminine tenderness and sensitivity, this sisters also contributed greatly to fashioning the identity and spirituality of Fe y Alegría. Fr. Vélaz always recognized with much respect the great diversity of “charisms” of the religious congregations working with the Movement. He recognized and respected the “diversity of spiritualities,” and he even considered that diversity to be one of the great treasures of Fe y Alegría. He purposely sought the support of the religious sisters and knew how to recognize the enormous value of these consecrated women. Throughout his life he considered them to be one of the essential bulwarks of Fe y Alegría:

16. *“Without the religious sisters, Fe y Alegría would be ten times smaller that it presently is. The efficacy of the ‘consecrated person’ is irreplaceable.”*<sup>10</sup> *“Fe y Alegría has achieved success, but this is based on the sacrifice of many people who are totally consecrated.”*<sup>11</sup> *“Religious consecration, in which the first step is the complete dedication of one’s life, explains the best and the greatest of the achievements we have been able to bring about on behalf of popular education.”*<sup>12</sup>
17. Jesus has also called many lay collaborators to Fe y Alegría, people dedicated not only to a grand educational undertaking, but also to discovering the joy of serving the most needy. Many lay people accepted the invitation of Fe y Alegría and threw themselves into the work. With enthusiasm they committed themselves to this educational and evangelizing labor. They dedicated themselves to popular education even though their salaries were frequently much below those of their colleagues in state schools and even though at first they had no type of social security. Today Fe y Alegría is essentially a lay movement, combining diverse spiritualities but united in its option for the most poor, for social transformation, and for the creation of a more human, more just, and more fraternal world.
18. The identity of Fe y Alegría has various roots: the Gospel, the apostolic spirit of Fr. Vélaz, popular spirituality, the unbounded generosity of Abraham Reyes and his wife Patricia (and of other “Abrahams and Patricias” in different countries), the “founding experience”<sup>13</sup> of the meeting between Fr. Vélaz and Abraham in the marginal barrios of Caracas which made them into “witnesses” of a shared mission, the voluntary work of the young university students, the feminine sensibility and commitment of the religious sisters, and the commitment of countless lay people who found in Fe y Alegría, wherever the movement spread, a way to follow Jesus and a means for living out their vocation of service to and commitment with the most excluded and marginalized populations.
19. This spirituality was born of the personal encounter of our founders and of many members of the Movement with Jesus Christ, and it became “the founding experience” which would continue to illuminate the searching, the discernment, and the options of Fe y Alegría, all of which culminated in the promulgation of our set of ideals (*Ideario*) by consensus in 1984-85. In this statement of principles, Fe y Alegría defines itself as “a Movement of Popular Education born of and impelled by lived experience of the Christian Faith, confronting situations of injustice and joining in the historical process of the poorest

<sup>10</sup> José María Vélaz. *Palabras de Fe y Alegría. Citas inspiradoras del Padre José María Vélaz*, Caracas, 2005, p. 49. “Temario indicativo de material de diálogo y estudio para el Encuentro de los Directores Nacionales de Fe y Alegría en Ecuador,” 1978.

<sup>11</sup> José María Vélaz. *Op. cit.*, p.47. “Fe y Alegría a los once años de labor,” 1966.

<sup>12</sup> José María Vélaz. *Op. cit.*, Pág.48. “Fe y Alegría, red de relaciones humanas,” n.d.

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto Cavassa. “La espiritualidad ignaciana ilumina la espiritualidad de Fe y Alegría”. Presentation given at the 42nd International Congress of Fe y Alegría. Bogotá, November 2011. Page 5.

sectors in the construction of a just and fraternal society.”<sup>14</sup> “To speak of ‘founding experiences’ is to speak of that particular type of experience in which a new style of life and a new manner of living, feeling, and thinking are forged. They are basic experiences which mark the life of a person, and also of a group.” The founding experience is an incarnate event which make those who experience it into witnesses who must share it with others and make it grow.<sup>15</sup>

20. Subsequent Congresses, by bringing together the reflections, strivings, experiences, practices, and collective thought in Fe y Alegría as an International Federation, continued to clarify, update, and identify paths for concretizing and recreating the Movement’s identity, which always appeared linked to a spirituality with definite traits: a **spirituality incarnated** in life and in history; a **spirituality in solidarity** with the poor, the excluded, and the marginalized; a **spirituality of practical and effective love**, which finds God in others, commits to them, and serves them with joy; an **apostolic spirituality**, which is oriented to mission, gives meaning to history, and transforms society; a **prophetic, political, and liberating spirituality**, which denounces and combats all types of domination, discrimination, exploitation, and violence and which seeks social transformation and the construction of the Kingdom; a **spirituality committed to defending life**, all of life, especially that of the weakest; an **ecological spirituality** which considers earth to be a universal mother and a shared home for all creatures; a **feminine, maternal, Marian spirituality**, which emphasizes the tenderness, the warmth, and the great value of women in the history of salvation; an **inculturated and intercultural spirituality**, pluralist and respectful of other cultures and other ways leading to encounter with God; a **spirituality of prayer and discernment**, which always seeks to do the will of God; a **spirituality of contemplation in action**, intent on finding God in all things and in life; a **festive spirituality that celebrates** with the community of faith and with its Creator; a **spirituality of hope and joy** which prevails over the signs of death that surround us and which believes in the triumph of life over death and of love over lovelessness. Of the numerous texts which bear witness to these characteristics of our institutional spirituality, we select just one, which reflects with noonday clarity the spiritual root of our identity:
21. *“Faith is our name, and faith is the basis of our identity. It is faith we have received by the generosity of God the Father, who invites us to follow Jesus and build the Kingdom. It is faith that teaches us to see our sisters and brothers with the eyes of God himself and that moves us to mercy and to service. ... It is faith that urges us to place ourselves at the side of those affected in their living conditions and their lack of opportunities by an oppressive, excluding, inequitable system, so that we can accompany them in their search for a new exodus toward liberation and life. ... For us spirituality is the response to faith in a God who has revealed himself to us in Jesus and who invites us to follow Jesus as a means of attaining human fulfillment. Jesus came to teach us the way to be fully human. ... Following Jesus means continuing his mission by opposing the power of domination and promoting the power of service, which help peoples and allows them to grow. ... The option for the poor and the needy is, in Fe y Alegría, a gift of the Spirit of Jesus for announcing the Good News and denouncing situations of injustice. Solidarity is not only compassion, but action. It is service, effective assistance.”*<sup>16</sup>
22. “Without spirituality it is impossible to understand the history of Fe y Alegría, nor is it possible to understand its future,”<sup>17</sup> states Benjamín González Buelta, who with great

<sup>14</sup> **Federación Internacional Fe y Alegría. Pensamiento de Fe y Alegría. Documentos de los Congresos Internacionales.**

“La Pedagogía de la Educación Popular en Fe y Alegría”. XXXIII Congreso Internacional (2002). Santo Domingo, 2008, Page 11.

<sup>15</sup> **Ernesto Cavassa. Op. cit.,** Pp. 7 and 11

<sup>16</sup> **Federación Internacional Fe y Alegría. Op. cit.** Pp.. 225 and 233.

<sup>17</sup> In 2002, Benjamín González Buelta wrote “Espiritualidad: Donde termina el asfalto”, one of the pamphlets of the Program of Formation for Popular Educators of the International Federation of Fe y Alegría. We think that this pamphlet continues to be a very rich source for nourishing our identity and our spirituality as members of Fe y Alegría. Cfr. **Benjamín González Buelta. Espiritualidad: donde acaba el asfalto.** Colección Programa Internacional de Educadores Populares, no. 3. Caracas, 2002, p. 11.

mastery and fine poetic strokes describes the profound spirituality of Fe y Alegría. It is a spirituality strongly rooted in Jesus; a spirituality that creates communities of service, celebration, and prayer; and a spirituality capable of surmounting mere tolerance and fundamentalism and promoting “religious respect. *It is a respect that takes account of differences, observes them with interest, and accepts them in order to enter into dialogue with them. From true dialogue can come forth growth for all involved. No person is foreign to us because in the depths of everyone burns the fire of the same Spirit and the same God who is Father and Creator of all.*”<sup>18</sup>

23. In light of these ideas and experiences and of all the valuable reflections and proposals in the history of Fe y Alegría, we can consider the following traits (among others) to be essential to our identity: absolute affirmation of the incontestable dignity of every person; indignation in the face of injustice and firm commitment to combat it; radicality in service and commitment; an option for the poor and the needy which lead Fe y Alegría to be present in the new sites of exclusion and in the frontier posts; boldness, optimism, and creativity in always seeking the most efficacious means; austerity and simplicity in our ways of being and acting; an option for popular education and communication as an ethical, political, and pedagogical proposal for transformation; experience of an incarnated faith committed to the construction of a new society; faith in the poor and the humble; respect for different charisms and spiritualities which reflect the God of mercy and love; continual review of our practices; permanent formation; and engagement in dialogue and alliance with other groups and institutions committed to social transformation.

## II. FOLLOWING JESUS IN OUR PRESENT TIME.

24. If we keep repeating that the spirituality of Fe y Alegría consists in following Jesus, we need to begin to ask ourselves who Jesus really is for us and what it means to follow Jesus today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We do not want to be like the disciples of Emmaus,<sup>19</sup> who did not recognize Jesus even though he was walking by their side. They were longing for the Jesus of their dreams and imaginings, the glorious Messiah of their fantasies, not the real Jesus, the truly living Jesus who had defeated death because he had been willing to assume his mission of son and brother in a totally radical, integral manner. Like those disciples, we run the risk of not recognizing and following the true Jesus, but of worshiping instead the Jesus of an inherited faith that we have taken on simply to fulfill certain religious practices, a convenient faith that requires no personal option or radical change of life. We can also be like Peter at Caesarea of Philippi<sup>20</sup> and like many Christians today: rather than following Jesus, they want Jesus to follow them, that is, rather than adapting their lives to the model of Jesus, they propose to use Jesus to justify their present way of life.

### ***A world that needs to be transformed.***

25. It is very important to read the reality of the times in which we live by the light of the Gospel so that we can view that reality with the eyes and heart of God and be faithful and effective in following the living Jesus, who continues to walk by our side and invites us to a profound conversion of heart, to a radical change of values and life, and to carrying on his mission of building a world where we can all live together as sisters and brothers of one another and children of God.
26. If we contemplate our world with the merciful eyes of the Father, we can see that it is radically opposed to his project. On December 10, 1948, when the world was still shocked by the horror of the Nazi extermination camps and the barbarity of the Second World War, which had left entire cities in ruins and introduced us to the destructive power

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<sup>18</sup> **Ibidem**, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> **Luke** 24,13ff.

<sup>20</sup> **Matthew** 16, 21-23

of nuclear weapons, a hundred countries met together in Paris to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights.” Today, 63 years after the solemn signing of that Declaration, we see that the dignity of countless persons is being violated and that the world is becoming ever more unjust and unequal: 20% of the world’s population controls and consumes 80% of the available resources of the planet. Latin America, the most Christian continent, is the most unequal of all, a reality that was valiantly denounced by the bishops at Medellín and again at Aparecida. The bishops urged Christians to live their faith as a commitment to justice and solidarity so as to transform this reality of injustice and inequality.

27. Day by day ever greater numbers of persons are finding it more difficult not just to live with dignity, but even to survive. People who were once just poor, marginalized, and excluded have now become “surplus populations.” Having no employment, they do not even have the privilege of having their labor exploited, for as one unemployed person said: “we have discovered that there is something much worse than being exploited: not being exploitable.”<sup>21</sup> That is why, besides the “legal” forms of exploitation, there are ever more vibrant underground economies of murder, kidnapping, prostitution of adults and children, pornography, and trafficking of persons, arms, drugs, and organs. Every year one million children enter into the hell of sexual slavery. In the last 20 years we have seen the number of children who live in desperate circumstances increase from 23 million to more than 400 million. They are forced to live from robbery, begging, or prostitution; they are forcibly recruited to be soldiers and are obliged to fight and to kill. Others are killed to provide organs for the black market, and many suffer and die in mines and sweatshops.
28. We accept without protest the reality that a famous sports personality earns more in one month, for advertising a brand of shoes, than thousands of workers making those shoes would earn in the whole of their lives, laboring in the neo-slavery of the sweatshops.
29. We contemplate the millions of persons living in miserable hovels or in unsanitary slums, while near the airports of the world’s most important cities there are luxurious hotels for dogs, cats, and the most incredible pets, where rooms can reach the extravagant price of \$170 per night. While a European cow is subsidized to the tune of three dollars a day, some 1.2 billion people in the world have to survive with less than one dollar a day.
30. According to the United Nations,<sup>22</sup> every three seconds a child dies of hunger – 1,200 every hour. Hunger kills daily as many people as died in the nuclear bomb explosion in Hiroshima. If humankind were serious about it, hunger could easily be done away with. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the U.N., modern agriculture is nowadays capable of feeding twelve billion persons, nearly double the present world population. Nevertheless, all the campaigns and proposals for alleviating poverty and destitution in the world have failed miserably because there is no political will and because we fall short in sensitivity, compassion, and mercy. According to the U.N. just one percent of the funds provided by governments to resolve the recent banking crisis would be sufficient to eradicate immediately all hunger in the world. *“The world order is not only homicidal, but absurd, for it kills needlessly. Today there are no longer just fatalities: a child who dies of hunger today is murdered.”*<sup>23</sup>
31. Ever greater numbers of persons are becoming accustomed to accepting as normal this completely abnormal world. There is no indignation when we see beggars rummaging in garbage cans, or homeless people begging at stoplights, or migrants who die before reaching the land of their dreams, or children living and growing up in the streets without home, without school, without affection, without future.

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<sup>21</sup> Viviam Forrester. *El horror económico*. Fayard. 1966.

<sup>22</sup> Antonio Pérez Esclarín. *Educación integral de calidad*. San Pablo, Caracas, 2011, p. 83

<sup>23</sup> Speech of Jean Ziegler (former special U.N. relater for the Right to Food) to the heads of state during the fifth session of the Human Rights Council, held in Geneva June 11-18, 2007.

32. There are entire peoples dying as the result of hunger, AIDS, or any of the illnesses that accompany misery: diarrhea, tuberculosis, cholera, malaria, pneumonia, dengue – all of which can be easily eliminated if we only set our mind to it. While one-quarter of the world's scientists dedicate themselves to military research, there are relatively few who work to find cures for diseases such as AIDS, which is depopulating some of the poorest countries of Africa. A bullet costs the same as a cup of milk, and the more bullets there are, the less cups of milk there are.
33. We do nothing to curtail military expenditures in the world from ascending to more than one trillion dollars a year, according to the U.N. As military expenditures increase, so also does human misery. The manufacture of weapons is the world's most prosperous industry. The price of a modern tank is equal to the annual budget of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. The money spent on a supersonic jet fighter could finance 40,000 health clinics. To train one soldier for war costs annually 64 times what it costs to educate a child.
34. We turn a deaf ear to the cries of our planet. The air, the seas, and the rivers are mortally wounded. The earth languishes and rebels against such wanton violence and exploitation. Only 7.7% of the world's population emits 50% of the gases causing climatic change. The hole in the ozone layer now has reached the size of the whole of Europe. Half of the rain forests which once covered the earth have disappeared. Today, as every day of the year, 50,000 hectares of rain forest will disappear. Every hour an area equivalent to 600 football stadiums is cut down.
35. These hard facts, and many others we could provide, give eloquent expression to the dehumanization of our world and consequently to the need to change it. To the ghastly, frightful misery of billions of persons we need to add the growing human and spiritual misery of those who are well off. Billions of persons are dehumanized by having to live and die in inhuman conditions, while others are dehumanized by hardening themselves against the pain and the misery of others. Whether by commission or omission, we are destroying ourselves. We are all part of what has happened and is happening. We are all responsible.

**Called to be “leaven in the dough” and “salt of the earth.”**

36. In Fe y Alegría we do not resign ourselves to accepting this inhumane world. We do not want to let apathy and a bourgeois lifestyle take control of our souls. Our desire is to be attentive to the whole of this reality that provokes us to indignation so that, moved by that indignation, we reaffirm our commitment and the daily dedication of our lives to the cause of the marginalized and the excluded. We are strong in our Christian hope that it is possible to overcome death with life. Even as post-modernity relativizes all values and denies all principles and absolutes, we still affirm *“that there is indeed an absolute, an absolute that we all share, all women and men, and all peoples. That absolute is human dignity. It is a dignity that is absolute in every one of us because we possess it simply by being human beings. It is an absolute dignity because dignity cannot grow, nor can it diminish. It is equal for all persons at all times. It is a dignity that makes us all equal before the law. Therefore we want to live dignity, celebrate dignity, share dignity, protect dignity, and embrace others within the horizon of a shared dignity. That is why we educate; so that all our students can understand and experience the depth of human dignity and so that all can appropriate it as a constructive force of character and so share it with others.*
37. *“In modernity, the conditions that dignity requires have become subordinate to the civilization of capitalist markets, where dignity is confused with the freedom to consume (which seeks to maximize the satisfaction of the needs for happiness) and with the freedom of the entrepreneur (which seeks to maximize the ambition to accumulate), thus allowing inequality to prevail and exclusion to become consolidated.*

38. *“Furthermore, as followers of Jesus, we affirm that in him our dignity acquires its full value, an absolute value because each one of us is loved personally with an everlasting love and each one of us is impelled to nourish in love, without fear, the happiness of others. That is why the experience of Jesus, even as it affirms the profundity of human dignity, frees us from all selfishness, all vain egotism, all desire of recognition and recompense, and it grounds that dignity in our being loved unconditionally and our being thrust into the dynamic of love of others without expecting anything in return, except the joy that comes from giving oneself to others in a love which becomes the celebration of the dignity of all.”*<sup>24</sup>
39. For the first time in history, scientific and technological development allows us to create conditions where all human being can live with dignity. Accordingly, in *Fe y Alegría* we hold fast to the hope of our commitment, and we continue working with tenacious expectation in the creation of a new humanity which makes God's Kingdom present among us. We believe that God is active in this world and in our history, ever summoning us into action. We therefore accept the great principles of modernity, which under the influence of reason and science, are oriented to seeking progress and well-being for all. But we understand those principles in the light of the positive values introduced by post-modernity: uniting reason and heart, individual and community, science and conscience, bread and flowers, work and celebration, commitment to the future and enjoyment of the present, physical sacrifice and care for the body, spirituality and material wellbeing, meditation and action, faith and justice, affirmation of oneself and respect for others, the great narratives and the little stories, progress and ecology. The values we treasure are the gift of life, the small daily liberations, the feminine, the different, the symbolic, the mysterious, the esthetic. Our goals are to recover festivity without renouncing commitment, to live in the present without neglecting the future, to enjoy the body without degrading or commercializing it, to seek efficiency without forgetting gratuity, to recognize differences without ignoring equality. Accidentally we are different, but essentially we are equal because we all have the same human dignity.

### III. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY.

#### *A dualistic spirituality.*

40. Benjamín González Buelta considers spirituality “a dangerous word.”<sup>25</sup> It is quite possible that “if we seek it on the internet, it will appear linked with the idea of ‘spirits’ to which we can accede through rituals and techniques in order to obtain particular favors. On bookstore shelves it is possible to find books about Christian spirituality mixed in with books that deal with healing, self-help methods, and various types of esoteric theory of doubtful provenance. José María Castillo is quite right when he says that “spirituality is a weak and impoverished concept.”<sup>26</sup> There is therefore an urgent need to clarify the meaning of authentic Christian spirituality.
41. Unfortunately there are still many persons who are trapped in a dualistic conception which opposes soul to body, spirit to matter, spirituality to daily life. In current usage the word “spiritual” expresses what is opposed to the material, the bodily, the temporal. Being spiritual often means avoiding reality, renouncing enjoyment of life and the body. Spiritual persons are perceived to be those who are dedicated to “divine” things, to prayer, to religious activities; they spend their time in church and in worship; they are basically concerned with the salvation of their soul; and they consider problems to be a punishment of God. That is why many people think of a spiritual person as someone who is devoted to religion and seems to live “up there,” little concerned about daily life and the problems of this world. According to this conception, which is unfortunately

<sup>24</sup> Francisco de Roux. *Op. cit.* Pp 4-6.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamín González Buelta. *Op. cit.* Page 11

<sup>26</sup> Ernesto Cavassa. *Op. cit.*, Page 3

widespread, spirituality has little to do with daily activities such as work, teaching, governing, family life, sexuality, education of children, politics, pedagogy, entertainment, or leisure. These are all considered “worldly” things that have little or nothing to do with what is spiritual.

42. These conceptions of spirit and spirituality – as realities opposed to the material, the bodily, and the worldly – come from Greek culture, which we have assimilated as second nature and which has conditioned our whole vision of spiritual life and our pastoral mission. To be on the right path, we must follow the counsel of Lao Tse: *“Do not draw a line between what is spiritual and what is not. If you separate your spiritual life from your ordinary life, you will not be on the Path.”*<sup>27</sup>

### **A Christian spirituality that is integrated and integrating.**

43. For biblical thought, spirit is not opposed to matter or the body; it is opposed to evil (destruction), to the flesh, to death (the fragility of what is destined to die), and to the law (imposition, fear, punishment). In Hebrew the word **spirit**, *ruah*, means **wind** or **breath**. Spirit is like the wind: it can be a light, unpredictable breeze or a powerful, devastating gale. It is like our breathing: whoever has breath is alive! Spirit is not another life, but the best of life; it is what gives us vigor; it is what sustains and impels life. In this semantic context spirit means life, construction, strength, action, freedom. *“All human beings, independently of their culture, religious confession, or social condition, by the sole fact of their humanity, possesses sensibility for identifying and following that which is in their essence as vigor, vitality, liveliness, spirit, and which invites them and calls them to live. In other words, all human beings possess a spirituality or a spiritual life which, given their condition of wholeness, cannot be separated from their corporality. It is a spirituality which relates them to the world and other persons and opens them up to God.”*<sup>28</sup> *“We believe that the human spirit of all persons is open to personalized encounter and dialogue with God ... In Christianity that experience of transcendence means a relation with the God revealed by Jesus of Nazareth as the one and only Father of many brothers and sisters.”*<sup>29</sup>
44. Spirit is not something that is outside matter, outside the body, or outside reality; rather it is what dwells within matter, the body, reality, and gives them life; it makes them what they are; it fills them with force, moves them, impels them; it propels them toward growth and creativity in a throe of freedom.<sup>30</sup> Living in contact with the Spirit of God *“does not lead to a spirituality that prescind from the senses and turns inward, becoming an enemy of the body, alienated from the world; rather it leads to a new vitality of love for life.”*<sup>31</sup> Therefore, a spirituality which puts us in contact with the Spirit of God is a spirituality with deeply contemplative eyes, capable of beholding with mercy the pain-ridden faces of our sisters and brothers; it is a spirituality with gentle hands which give birth to life and which are always stretched out to those in need; it is a spirituality with sturdy feet of solidarity, able to “become neighbor” to those beaten and wounded; it is a spirituality of open ears that are attentive to the cries of pain and the songs of joy in our world; it is a spirituality with a prophetic mouth which denounces injustice and announces that the Kingdom is already in our midst, even if not in its fullness, and allows to feel and to taste the presence of God among us; it is a spirituality with bowels of mercy pregnant with life; it is a spirituality with a passionate heart that beats with every breath of life. It is a spirituality with a sexual body which does not

<sup>27</sup> Lao Tse. *Tao Te Ching*. 6<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, cited in Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Page 5.

<sup>28</sup> Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Pp. 5 and 6.

<sup>29</sup> Benjamín González Buelta, quoted in Ernesto Cavassa. *Op. cit.* Page 4.

<sup>30</sup> Pedro Casaldáiga – José María Vigil. *Espiritualidad de la liberación*, Sal Terrae. Santander. 1992. Pp. 23-25

<sup>31</sup> T. Goffi. *Problemas y perspectivas de espiritualidad*. Sígueme. Salamanca. 1986, Page 401. See Jürgen Moltmann. *Contemplación, mística y martirio*. See also J. Moltmann, *El espíritu de la vida*. Sígueme. Salamanca. 1998

discriminate in its encounters, a body whose skin stretches to include not only the small region of the self but the whole cosmos, which it recognizes as the body of God.<sup>32</sup>

45. Consequently, spirituality is not a way to flee from reality but a way to submerge oneself in it and try to humanize it. Spirituality does not deny life, but gives it its true meaning in relation to oneself, to others, to nature, and to God. **Spirituality is communion with God, with other human beings, and with nature. Spirituality is centered on the Kingdom of God, it is nourished by a God who seeks and desires only to make humankind more just and more happy, and it has as its center and decisive task the forging of a more human way of life.** Seeking heaven means working for earth. Being spiritual is making heaven and earth embrace.
46. That was the meaning of Pentecost: the coming of the Spirit, expressed as wind and fire, as the gift of tongues which allowed all present to understand one another despite their diversity. The Spirit came as an overwhelming hurricane that changed a tiny group of alarmed apostles, filled with fear and hiding behind bolted doors, into courageous witnesses brimming with vigor and creativity. By that Spirit they went forth to proclaim with valor and conviction the Risen Jesus, the grain of wheat that had died to give life, the “Man who came from God.”<sup>33</sup> The Spirit filled them with courage, transformed their cowardly hearts, helped them to conquer fear and death, and made them into a missionary community that ventured out to announce the Risen Lord to the entire world.
47. In *Fe y Alegría* we believe, with Teilhard de Chardin, that *“It is God who truly inspires the search for all the alleviates and all that heals. The more we oppose suffering with all our heart and all our strength, the more we assimilate ourselves to the heart and the action of God.”*<sup>34</sup> Consequently, we adopt a **spirituality which promotes a more decent and happy life for all**, one that invites people to conversion and transformation, a spirituality that encourages people to live their lives doing good, curing pain and fear, and building a more human and therefore more divine world.
48. This conception of spirituality should help us to focus our vision so that we can discover the presence of God in our midst. We witness the growth of a rich spirituality in countless persons and organizations: human rights groups, anti-discrimination associations, organizations of peasant farmers and native peoples, NGOs, feminist and ecological groups, and other religions. Even though these persons may belong to a church or religion different from ours, or to none at all, they do not resign themselves to accept the world we live in as the only one possible; rather, they work diligently, and with ever greater networking, for “another possible world.” They are dedicated to building peace, and they journey toward the encounter with God and with their sisters and brothers. This pilgrimage which we make alongside them, even though by different paths, becomes a great opportunity for respectful dialogue with one another and for approaching together the Mystery of God, which no religion can totally encompass.<sup>35</sup>

#### IV. THE SPIRITUALITY OF FE Y ALEGRÍA

49. In what follows we will sketch out briefly the nine principal features of the spirituality of *Fe y Alegría*. These features are intimately linked, not only with the integrated and integrating Christian spirituality developed above, but with the history and identity of the Movement with its different roots, as we have synthesized them in the first section of this document.

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<sup>32</sup> S. McFague. *Modelos de Dios. Teología para una era ecológica y nuclear*. Sal Terrae. Santander. 1991. Pp. 126ff.

<sup>33</sup> J. Moingt. *El hombre que venía de Dios* (two volumes). Desclée de Brouwer. Bilbao. 1995.

<sup>34</sup> Ismael Bárcenas, S.J. *Espiritualidad en épocas de violencia y miedo*. [www.feadulta.com/z\\_pps\\_33\\_espiritualidad.pps](http://www.feadulta.com/z_pps_33_espiritualidad.pps)

<sup>35</sup> Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.*, Pp. 12 and 13

## 1. A spirituality incarnated in the reality of the poorest and the neediest.

50. The spirituality of Fe y Alegría is a **spirituality incarnated in the reality of the poor and the needy**, and all its activities are oriented toward them, as so many opportunities for encounter with God and for celebration of God's love. Our spirituality means making ourselves neighbors<sup>36</sup> to the downtrodden, the weak, the infirm, the despised, the ones we feel are far from us. It means helping to take down from the cross those who are today being crucified by injustice, oppression, violence, misery, loneliness, and abandonment. They are the blessed ones, the ones preferred by a God of love. In this way we fulfill our mission of announcing *"the good news of the Kingdom to the poor."*<sup>37</sup>
51. Our spirituality involves reaffirming and maintaining the option of Fe y Alegría for the poor and extending this concept to all persons and groups who suffer any type of discrimination or exclusion, such as the indigenous peoples, African Americans, migrants, illegal residents, women, handicapped persons, those displaced by violence and wars, those marginalized because of their sexual orientation, the victims of new and ancient diseases.... Our spirituality should lead us in Fe y Alegría to be permanently alert to whether we have in our own Movement any mechanism of exclusion, hidden or evident; we should examine ourselves to see whether we are truly attending to the most marginal and vulnerable groups, whether we are providing special assistance to those who have greater deficiencies or difficulties, and whether we have the boldness and daring to make ourselves completely available to the mission, keeping one foot in the air, in an attitude of permanent exodus, ready to go to the places of greatest exclusion and to the new frontiers of marginalization.

## 2. Spirituality of liberation.

52. The birth of Fe y Alegría gives good account of the meaning and the features of its spirituality, among which we must recognize a twofold root: Ignatian and Latin American. These are profoundly linked to one another and with two basic traits: contemplation and commitment.
53. The **spirituality of liberation** which is one feature of the spirituality of Fe y Alegría implies the discovery of the social dimension of love which nourishes existence and which is transformed into the Christian way of life. It consists in profound solidarity with the poor and the excluded; it involves sojourning with them in the construction of a just, fraternal society of solidarity. *"The joys and the hopes, the sorrows and the anxieties of the men and women of our time, above all of the poor and those who suffer, are at the same time the joys and the hopes, the sorrows and the anxieties of the disciples of Christ. There is nothing truly human that does not find an echo in their heart. The Christian community is made up of persons who come together in Christ and are guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage toward the Kingdom of the Father; they have received the good news of salvation to be communicated to all humankind. The Church therefore enters into intimate and real solidarity with the human race and its history."*<sup>38</sup>
54. *"In liberation spirituality, love transcends the individualist, particular perspective which prevailed in Christian spirituality for so many centuries. In liberation spirituality, the works of mercy possess a social, communitarian dimension which moves the heart, gives new meaning to existence, and orients us toward a way of being and doing in which not just an individual but a community or an entire people can experience the liberating love of God."*<sup>39</sup> Christian spirituality is inspired by the fount of love which

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<sup>36</sup> We speak of "neighbor" not only in the sense of having someone nearby but of drawing close to the other. For Fe y Alegría, one of the meanings of being a "movement" is feeling ourselves liberated and always ready to draw close to those who find themselves in worse conditions of poverty, abandonment, and exclusion.

<sup>37</sup> CELAM. *Op. cit.* Paragraph 29.

<sup>38</sup> Second Vatican Council. *Gaudium et Spes*. Introduction; cited in Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Page 8.

<sup>39</sup> Camilo Maccise. *Sentido y proyección de la Espiritualidad de la Liberación*. Interview via Skype, 11 October 2011, cited in Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Page 9

allows us to see others as God sees them, and at the same time to see in others the face of God. Being profoundly moved by the suffering and pain of others is the fruit of a spiritual experience which allows us to “recognize” the One who is always among us.

55. As long as there are situations of oppression, injustice, and marginalization, Christian spirituality will act as a liberating presence. God will be experienced in the city streets and in people’s faces as an authentic, “open-eyed” mysticism because “*our methodology is our spirituality. And our spirituality is our way of life.*”<sup>40</sup>
56. For members of the Fe y Alegría Movement, work is a spiritual experience which summons them to commitment to helping the poorest, so that the experience becomes a reference and an impulse for a **liberating spirituality** among the people; they thereby become transformed into “pilgrims” who try to do the will of God by building a world charged with human dignity: the Kingdom. In this way the spiritual experience becomes a mystical experience because it is “*the full experience of life,*”<sup>41</sup> a profound encounter with reality. In a spirituality of liberation, mysticism consists in keeping one’s eyes open and one’s ears attentive to history, in the midst of which God *happens* and in which he invites us to live in plenitude. Those who are passionate for life and for working with the marginalized poor are in reality mystics who know how to read between the lines and discover the irresistible message of the incarnate God.

### **3. A prophetic and apostolic spirituality, committed to social transformation and the construction of a new humanity: the Kingdom.**

57. Jesus revealed that God, who loves each and every one of us unconditionally, has a project for humankind: he wants a new society where fraternity, solidarity, and equality prevail among all human beings. As Mother-Father of us all, God does not want injustice, violence, and exploitation to continue to reign; he does not want his children to go hungry or homeless or without education and health care; he does not want them to be maltreated because of their race, their sex, or their social condition; he does not want them to suffer for having been born in countries or among peoples that have been impoverished and ransacked by the powerful.
58. God desires to reign in people’s hearts and to hold sway in their daily lives, so that we all work together as his children for a new society where there is a true experience of solidarity. What God desires is precisely what Jesus himself did passionately and what Jesus asks of his followers, those who are “pilgrims” traveling toward the encounter with God and their sisters and brothers, building a world that is more human, more just, more fraternal, and therefore more divine. God needs us: our job as human beings is to construct history according to the plan of God, who wants all of us to live as sisters and brothers in solidarity. The Spirituality of Fe y Alegría is **an apostolic spirituality**, oriented toward mission; it is a spirituality which guides history, transforms history, and makes history. It is a **prophetic and profoundly political spirituality** which denounces every type of domination and discrimination and which combats exploitation, violence, and all that damages and impedes life, all that causes destruction and death. The talents and qualities we have received are ours, but they are ours for the sake of service of the Kingdom. The following of Jesus is not a privilege; **it is a commitment**. Following Jesus means making his way of life ours; it means behaving in every way as Jesus behaved, seeing as Jesus saw, hearing as Jesus heard; it means being his mouth to bless and encourage, his hands to help and caress the forlorn, his feet to go to the aid of the wounded and despised, his heart to love without conditions. Most definitely, following Jesus means “following through” with his mission until the day God and his Love truly reign in the world.

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<sup>40</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez. *Beber en su propio pozo. En el itinerario espiritual de un pueblo*. Lima. CEP, 1983, cited in Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Page 8.

<sup>41</sup> Raimon Panikkar. *De la Mística: experiencia plena de la vida*. Barcelona. Herder, 2008, cited in Rosana Navarro. *Op. cit.* Page 10.

59. Making this affirmation should lead us to work with eager enthusiasm in order to make our centers, our programs, and our immediate environment into expressions and seedbeds of the Kingdom, which is even now beginning to germinate among us.

#### **4. A maternal spirituality which loves, celebrates, and defends all forms of life.**

60. The God of Jesus is a God of the living, a God who loves life and who wants all of us, as his children, to have life, and life in abundance. Ours is a **spirituality dedicated to the defense of every form of life**. It is therefore also an **ecological spirituality**, which considers the earth to be a universal mother, a fount of life, and a common home which belongs equally to all those now living and all those who will come after us. Nature does not belong to us; rather we belong to nature. Consequently we should protect, cherish, and care for nature, and we should strive to guarantee that the goods of earth reach all human beings so as to allow them live decently. Invoking our Father who is in heaven means working enthusiastically on this earth so that we can all live as sisters and brothers in a cosmic fraternity and so that we can join our prayers and hymns in a celebration of life and of the God of life.

61. *"Today we find ourselves in a new phase of humanity. We are all returning to our common house, the Earth: the peoples, the societies, the cultures, and the religions. By sharing with others our experiences and values, we enrich and complete one another mutually. ... We are going to laugh, cry, and learn together: we will learn especially how to wed Heaven and Earth, that is, how to combine the ordinary with the surprising, the opaque immanence of the days with the radiant transcendence of the spirit, life in complete freedom with death symbolized as union with our ancestors, the discreet happiness of this world with the great promise of eternity. And in the end we will have discovered a thousand reasons for living more and living better, joined together as one great family in the same common, beautiful, generous Village, the planet Earth."*<sup>42</sup>

62. This spirituality which loves, celebrates, and protects life, which works so that all people may express and celebrate their dignity, is also a **Marian, feminine, maternal spirituality** which defends the equality of women and the implementation of policies and practices of gender equality. Consequently it combats the patriarchal and male chauvinist structures and cultures which are still so prevalent in our society and in the Church herself. This commitment leads us also to review, *within* *Fe y Alegría*, our power structures, our treatment of one another, and our way of proceeding, so that we work to overcome the expressions of patriarchal culture which we still hold onto.

#### **5. A spirituality of practical love shown in works.**

63. Jesus experienced God as Father and therefore became a brother to all women and men, even those who hated him. He dared to propose to us a New Commandment: *"Love one another as I have loved you,"*<sup>43</sup> that is, we are to love with a disinterested, caring, constant love which is willing to give up even life itself so that all may have life and live with the dignity of the children of God. And that love must encompass everyone, even those who are not our friends and do not wish us well, because all persons have the same dignity and because we, as believers, know that we are all daughters and sons of the same Father and sisters and brothers to one another.

64. Jesus taught us to love, to help, to cure, to include, to console, to nourish, to give life. The love which Jesus practiced is a **practical love, a love shown in works**. It is what makes his true followers stand out; it is the "true sign of the Christian": *"By this will they know that you are my disciples: if you love one another."*<sup>44</sup> Most definitely, love is a principle of action; it commits us to change and combat everything that denies or impedes the human life of others.

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<sup>42</sup> Leonardo Boff. *Casamento entre o céu e a terra*. Rio de Janeiro. Salamandra. 2001. Page 9.

<sup>43</sup> Juan 13, 34-35

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

65. Love is transformed into service, which becomes an expression of genuine Christian freedom and the best way to live human plenitude and attain true happiness. In the definitive evaluation of the project of our lives, we will be judged by the works of our practical love transformed into service. Jesus identifies with the hungry, the foreigners, the imprisoned... Following Jesus therefore making taking on ourselves his commitment with the poor, the weak, the needy, the infirm, and with those excluded for racial, sexual, political, economic, social, or religious reasons. In those who are poorest and most needy we find Jesus, and in Jesus we find God: *“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”*<sup>45</sup>
66. The radical thrust of this narrative in Matthew is disconcerting, for all service to those in need is valued as a sign of acceptance as children of the Father, even when those rendering the service do so without knowledge of God or perhaps even while denying God. That is to say, God prefers agnostics and atheists who work for a better world by serving their brothers and sisters over those who consider themselves “Christians” or religious folk but only worry about their own salvation or about “pleasing” God, meanwhile forgetting about their neighbors. Those who are declared “blessed” in the parable are not blessed because they did good in Christ’s name or for religious motives, but simply because they acted out of compassion<sup>46</sup> and commitment to those who suffer. The others are “cursed” because of their lack of caring: even though they may have considered themselves very religious and believed that they were giving their lives to the service of God, they did nothing to ease the needs of others. Faith without works, without caring love, is no use at all. The poor, the exploited, and the disabled are not only blessed themselves; they are those who save others; they are those who make us blessed if we dedicate our lives to their service.
67. *“The essence of the spiritual life is formed by our feelings and our attitudes toward others.”*<sup>47</sup> Spirituality is expressed concretely in our way of proceeding, in our attitudes, values, and patterns of conduct, in our very life. *“Spiritual experience needs to be verified (made truth) in our daily life, in the simplest and most routine situations, which are for that very reason the most meaningful.”*<sup>48</sup> The spirituality of Fe y Alegría, as is evident in that little red heart which identifies and distinguishes us everywhere, is most definitely **a spirituality of practical, efficacious love**: it is finding God in our sisters and brothers, above all in those who are most needy and helpless.

## 6. Spirituality of prayer and discernment.

68. In his continuous, confident prayer, Jesus learned to read reality with the merciful eyes of the Father, and he experienced his sonship in special way. He was the Son, the Firstborn among all his sisters and brothers. He therefore made of his life a permanent surrender to God because God, who is Love, knows only how to give of himself. In Jesus we find a perfect synthesis between contemplation and action, between faith and life, between prayer and commitment. He was a man of God, but he was also a man of the people, a man for others.
69. In his prayer, Jesus nourished his faith, his fidelity, and above all his love for the Father, which is also universal love for all his sisters and brothers and for all of the natural world. If God is Love, we can reach him only by way of the heart. Love seeks fidelity and steadfastness in love, and it must therefore be nourished continually. Prayer is the

<sup>45</sup> **Matthew** 25, 35-36

<sup>46</sup> Again, we speak of compassion in the profound sense of “suffering with” others, taking on their reality and their history and, together with them, trying to transform it.

<sup>47</sup> **Dalai Lama**. Accessed at <http://www.cordobaciudad.com/dalailama/> on 29 December 2011.

<sup>48</sup> **Ernesto Cavassa**. *Op. cit.* Page 10.

nourishment of love; it is an encounter of friendship with God. For that reason, it does not consist in thinking a lot but in loving a lot.

70. To follow Jesus in a radical manner, to reach the ultimate consequences of fulfilling our mission, and to live by giving life and by giving one's life if that is required, we must be vigilant and pray constantly, as Jesus stressed to his friends in the garden of Gethsemani: *"Stay awake and pray, that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*<sup>49</sup> Jesus prayed and emerged with strength to confront those who were coming to arrest him and then take him to be executed. His apostles, who slept instead of praying, decided to flee, and even Peter denied him three times.
71. Consequently, it is not possible to follow Jesus faithfully without prayer – **prayer which transforms life**, which yields fruit, which translates into readiness to change, into strength to follow, into solidarity with others, and with all others. Contemplation should carry us into action. We need to pray much in order to be strong, in order to overcome the temptations to follow ways other than the way of Jesus, in order to reach the ultimate consequences in carrying out the will of the Father and our mission. We need to pray in order to know what God asks of us, the one and only God of all; we need to pray to know how he wants us to live, what he needs us for. Prayer should consist in letting Jesus inhabit our persons and in letting his project, his dreams and desires, his whole life, invade our own projects, dreams, desires, and all our existence. The more we experience simple, humble prayer, the more we are led to love everybody, without any discrimination, and to express that love with life. Prayer which does not move us toward service, which does not translate into solidarity with our neighbor, is sterile prayer.
72. In prayer we should ask above all for wisdom and strength: **wisdom** for discerning the different movements or spirits that clash in our hearts, since evil often presents itself under the appearance of good, and **strength** to keep us firm in the decisions we make.
73. **Discernment** is method for making decisions **that seek in everything the will of God**. It is a way toward true freedom, a method that helps us distinguish between **the good spirit**, the origin of the interior movements that come from God, and **the evil spirit**, which comes from elsewhere and opposes the good spirit. If what I am discerning leads me to act with justice, solidarity, forgiveness, and love, then I am letting myself be borne by a spirit which comes from God. If it leads me to pride, vanity, selfishness, and rancor, then I am being moved by the spirit of evil. Prayer and discernment allow us believers to be "pilgrims" who are permanently striving to do God's will in our lives on the basis of our experience of encounter and dialogue with the Creator.
74. That is why there is a need for us to analyze, both individually and communally, the spirits which are driving our actions and our lives and to judge the fruits of those spirits. Are the fruits peace, joy, generosity, and service? Or are they rather envy, selfishness, violence, and desire for power and prestige? The Spirit of Jesus frees us from all interior chains (self-centeredness, comfort, fears, desires for wealth or power...); the Spirit rescues us from slavery and opens us to the bright horizon of life as children of God. Prayer should lead us to discernment. We need to pray for many reasons: to let ourselves be guided by the Spirit of God so that God orients our lives, to discern whether we really are what God asks us to be, to analyze whether our way of acting reflects the values of the Gospel, and to examine whether our behavior is coherent with that of Jesus.

### **7. Spirituality which lives and celebrates faith in community.**

75. Fe y Alegría was born as a community response to a reality that needed to be transformed. Throughout its evolution and history, Fe y Alegría has affirmed and tried

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<sup>49</sup> Matthew 26, 41; Mark 14, 38; Luke 22, 40

to strengthen its communitarian dimension. Fe y Alegría is an initiative of the community, for the community, and by the community. It seeks to be a true community which promotes and encourages community organization. Consequently, Fe y Alegría is animated by a **spirituality which lives and celebrates faith in community**.

76. The following of Jesus is a collective journey which accompanies the poor and the despised at their own pace, which creates community and leads people from slavery to freedom. It is a journey which stops for a moment or goes out of its way to cure those who are wounded, those who are left helpless, those who have lost hope in the future, those who are faint with hunger or pain, those who are paralyzed and unable to walk.
77. When we work for the Kingdom of God, Christian community inevitably begins to be born. The Gospel creates community, and only from community can we announce the Kingdom of God in our midst. Despite all our grave incoherencies and limitations, we are called to be the community that Jesus desires and to work for the formation of community. We seek a **community of faith and commitment**, steeped in solidarity and joined ecumenically with all those persons and organizations working to humanize our societies. We seek a fraternal community, which reflects the values of the new society we strive for, which shows by its life that the Kingdom of God is already among us. We seek a community where all persons enjoy cordial, gracious, respectful relations, where power is exercised as service, where the authorities stand out for their expertise in humanity, and where the leaders accompany and promote the growth of persons. We seek a community where the style of life is simple, austere, and friendly and where people work to overcome structures that are hierarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal.
78. As an ecclesial community, Fe y Alegría relates itself to the evangelizing efforts of the local churches, and it seeks to bear witness and be a sign of a servant Church which acts prophetically in society; a Church which is an intelligible and credible sign of justice, reconciliation, peace, and love; a Church which announces and works for the Good News and denounces all that works against the Kingdom;<sup>50</sup> a Church which is clearly committed to the poor and the disadvantaged; a Church which strives to transform structures of oppression and injustice;<sup>51</sup> a Church which is truly an assembly of the people of God, with participative structures and fraternal relations, where magisterium is transformed into ministry, where the greatest becomes the least; a Church that is poor, simple, Samaritan, servant, ecumenical, in dialogue with all, free of discrimination, open, respectful, and appreciative of other churches and experiences of faith.

### **8. Spirituality of religious pluralism.**

79. The spirituality of Fe y Alegría must go beyond ecumenical, intercultural, and interreligious respect and dialogue; it must seek and work for genuine community among all human beings, whether they are religious, agnostic, or atheist; and it must always do so in a way that includes and integrates everybody into the love of God. This means adopting a confessional humility which leads us to abandon prejudices, remove barriers, overcome practices or attitudes of self-sufficiency and dogmatism, and begin to recognize that we do not have the absolute truth. God is too great to fit into just one religion. If the God who is approached by persons of other cultures through different religions is a God of love and a God with a human face and a merciful heart, then he is the same God that we also approach, even if we give him a different name. Practicing “humility” does not mean being inhibited or feeling daunted; to the contrary, we believe that spirituality, any spirituality, should be lived in accord with our freedom and responsibility as adults. Only by living our own spirituality with valor and clarity will we be able to dialogue respectfully and engage with other spiritualities. We do not defend

<sup>50</sup> Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium*. Ch. 1, Nos. 1- 8; *Gaudium et Spes*. First Part. Ch. IV, Nos. 40-45.

<sup>51</sup> Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops. *Medellín*. Ch. XIV, Nos. 2-11.

our faith with crusades or with anathemas but by living and practicing the values that flow from it. We live our faith with gratitude, and we seek to share it because it is what gives meaning to all that we do and are. We respect and value other kinds of faith and other spiritualities because we are convinced that our own faith will be enriched by our sharing with those who are different.<sup>52</sup> True ecumenical and interreligious dialogue begins with interpersonal dialogue which recognizes the dignity of others. This genuine dialogue is indispensable for producing the true social transformation to which we aspire: bringing the Kingdom of God into our history, making it present here and now.

80. In *Fe y Alegría* we agree with the Dalai Lama when he says: *“The best religion is that which brings you closer to God, to the infinite. That is what makes you better. That is what makes you more compassionate, more sensitive, more detached, more loving, more humanitarian, more responsible, more ethical...”*<sup>53</sup>
81. We still have a long way to go to purify our spirituality and make amends for so much religious violence. It is said today that there will not be peace in the world if there is not peace among religions and there will be peace among religions only if they dialogue with one another. In that context, *Fe y Alegría* should set an example in its proposals and in the complete respect it has for all forms of religiosity, including non-Christian religions and even atheism, while always seeking the humanization of persons and cultures. This will mean becoming more aware of the respected and loved presence of that greater God who is universal and plural, who has countless names and no exclusive name, and who is always the God of Love, of Hope, of Peace. This **spirituality of religious pluralism** not only respects but also values the manifold paths that humankind has discovered for bonding with its Creator.<sup>54</sup> God becomes greater because he is no longer “my God” but the God of all persons, and especially the God of the poor; he is the one who hears the cry of the oppressed and hastens to free them.
82. Therefore, the option for the poor is not just one of many possible characteristics of the spirituality of *Fe y Alegría*: it is an essential option, and it makes all the difference because it judges not only our religious truth and practice but also our discharge of our mission. The mission of *Fe y Alegría* is not to convert people to Catholicism but to help poor people to understand that the Kingdom of God can be brought closer to our world through a collaboration between them and us in which they become protagonists of history.

### 9. An Easter spirituality of hope and joy.

83. Since the identity of *Fe y Alegría* requires of us faithfulness in serving the poor and the needy, and since we live in this world where death reigns and countless people are denied a decent life, following Jesus necessarily means taking up his cross. We understand faith as a commitment to help take down from the cross all those crucified by misery, by the countless forms of discrimination and exclusion, and by the rejection that comes with poverty. This solidarity with the poor means being ready to share the fate of the poor. Taking the side of those who are excluded sometimes means running the risk of losing the support of the privileged and being viewed ourselves as suspicious. It is not that we seek out the cross. The cross arrives, sooner or later, as a consequence of the faithful following of Jesus; it may even be an indicator of how well our labor fits into the project of Jesus since he calls us to follow a nonconformist path, a path that appears ridiculous to the wise of the world and scandalous to those who want things to continue as they are.
84. But for us the cross is not the last word. It is a passage, a passing over, to the fullness of life. The Father raised Jesus, leaving death and its heralds defeated. Just as the

<sup>52</sup> Pedro Casaldàliga and José María Vigil. “Espiritualidad y pluralismo religioso”, Concilium 2007/1.

<sup>53</sup> Conversation with Leonardo Boff in the course of a roundtable on religion and peace among peoples. On the internet at: <http://calamb.wordpress.com/2011/03/01/cual-es-la-mejor-religion/>, accessed 13 October 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Second Vatican Council. *Nostra Aetate*. Introduction. Nos. 1-5

story of Jesus did not end on the cross on Good Friday, so our life does not end in obscurity. The life and death of Jesus are paths toward the fullness of life. The life of Jesus, like ours, passes through evil, through darkness, through death...., but our life, like his, moves toward light, toward fullness, toward success. That is why in Fe y Alegría we live by a **spirituality of hope**. In the face of pessimistic, defeatist positions which deny the possibility of fulfillment, we passionately affirm the Kingdom, and we dedicate our lives to bringing it closer to our history. Disillusion and fear reveal a lack of faith. The faith which Jesus shares with us is rooted in the paradox of the cross, and failure is impossible. *“Hope is the center of Christian faith,”*<sup>55</sup> and *“hope is the cloth of which our soul is made.”*<sup>56</sup> We cannot renounce our vocation to be builders of history. Popular education involves a militant hope that we human beings can recreate the world in an ethical and esthetic direction different from the present one.<sup>57</sup> Our hope is critical, not ingenuous, and it demands valiant commitment and coherent testimony in order to become concrete history.

85. The spirituality of Fe y Alegría is consequently a **paschal spirituality** characterized by profound **hope and joy**. *“The presence of the risen Jesus is always a fount of joy and peace. Paschal joy is not a naïve, superficial joy, but the ultimate fiber of the reality through which are transmitted a gift and a meaning that are not dimmed by the inevitable historical conflicts. ... Faith and joy are inseparable in Christian spirituality. Joy does not come as the final result of a satisfied accounting of oneself, in which everything adds up, but as an expression of the transformative force of the Spirit of God within us, who creates the new future with us, and most especially with these younger generations, by opening up the way in the midst of all the hostile, threatening forces which fight against us.”*<sup>58</sup>
86. Father Vélaz always insisted that when faith becomes service it is a source of joy. For him, giving one’s life in service to others means finding profound joy and an inextinguishable light. He was convinced that *“the extent of our consecration to the Lord and our sisters and brothers will determine the bounty of living water that will flow forth for those whom the Father has commended to us. ... Those who out of a life of love serve their sisters and brothers in love already experience happiness on earth.”*<sup>59</sup> He understood this well and therefore always affirmed the promise of happiness that Jesus proclaims in his Beatitudes.
87. The Beatitudes constitute the central core of the Gospel and are an excellent summary of all the teachings of Jesus. They express what it means to be Christian; they show how the new man and the new woman can help in building the Kingdom. They replace the precepts of the old law. They are not commandments; they are rather God’s promises to the women and men whom God loves and who strive to follow the way of Jesus. They are not imposed as obligatory commands; rather, they are announced as gifts for those who truly want to follow Jesus. The Beatitudes are also a magnificent portrait of Jesus since he lived all of them before proclaiming them.
88. With the Beatitudes, Jesus gives a new meaning to our deepest human values and shows us how living these values is truly worthwhile. Those whom Jesus calls blessed, happy, and fortunate are the poor, the meek, the pure of heart, and those who seek justice and are willing to suffer to attain it.
89. “Joy” has become part of our name since it expresses our identity and gives proof of the authenticity of our spirituality. Accordingly, our action should be celebratory and festive, our lives should reflect joy, and we should banish all that casts a shadow of sadness or

<sup>55</sup> Jürgen Moltman. *Teología de la Esperanza*. Sígueme. Salamanca. 1965, cited in A. Pérez Esclarín, *Educación integral de calidad*. San Pablo Caracas. 2011. Page 94

<sup>56</sup> Gabriel Marcel. *Prolegómenos para una metafísica de la Esperanza*. Ed. Nova. Buenos Aires. Page 7

<sup>57</sup> Paulo Freire. *Pedagogía de la Esperanza*. Siglo XXI, Madrid. Pp. 46ff.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamín González Buelta. *Op. cit.* Pp. 65ff.

<sup>59</sup> José María Vélaz. “Pedagogía de la alegría.” 1979; “El crecimiento de Fe y Alegría.” 1981.

sows anguish in the soul. We must become “joy-producing”<sup>60</sup> communities. The educators, communicators, and promoters of Fe y Alegría should be persons who are happy, bold, and optimistic. Despite problems and difficulties, they should apply themselves every day with joyful hearts to the stirring task of carrying out the project of Jesus and working for “another possible world.” Their happy, cordial, positive spirit becomes an expression and a proof of our identity and our spirituality.

## V. LINES OF ACTION

90. To guarantee the practical living out of the identity and the spirituality of Fe y Alegría, the delegates of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress, “Identity and Spirituality at the Service of Mission,” made an effort to spell out a series of Lines of Action<sup>61</sup> to help concretize the principles and orientations of the Document of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress. In this way the identity-spirituality that we proclaim will not remain simply a referential framework for the Movement; rather, it will be mediated in ways that lead us toward a transformed and transforming life.
91. Both the identity and the spirituality that give life to the Movement should be practiced and experienced at all levels of the organization: from the team in the main office of the International Federation, through the teams in the national and regional offices, to the staff and the support personnel in our schools. To that end the following lines of action have been proposed.

### **1. Strengthen and invigorate the Federation Program of Education in human-Christian values.**

92. One of the main points of agreement of the assembly of delegates at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress was that there is no way to silence the Spirit of the Gospel that enlivens Fe y Alegría. It is necessary for us to articulate the meaning of our lives with a humility that shares with others what we have found most valuable. The articulation of the Good News should be respectful of other cultural and religious perspectives, and it should be open to learning from them by entering into sincere dialogue based on the values and the message communicated. To that end, the following line of action was proposed, with five strategies:
- Strengthen and invigorate the Federation Program of Education in human-Christian values so that this program is responsible for bringing about the following:
    - Systematization of the experiences of construction and consolidation of our identity and spirituality.
    - Deeper knowledge of the religiosity of the popular sectors.
    - Formulation of pastoral projects adapted to the contexts of the national Fe y Alegrías.
    - Development of proposals for education in values for all levels and all members of the Movement: children, youth, parents, members of the whole educational community, personnel of the international, national, and regional offices, and educators working in the different services we provide.
    - A search for ways to dialogue with youth culture and draw closer to it, by realizing studies of same, engaging young people in the national reality, and accompanying them in that process with full confidence in their potential.

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<sup>60</sup> This term [*felicitantes* in Spanish] was coined by the Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina.

<sup>61</sup> “We understand by line of action the basic referential orientations which allow us to reach the desired horizons. A line of action contains many concrete, specific actions which contribute to the attainment of the hoped for results. In this sense the lines of action are constituted as mediations to reach the horizon.” **Federación Internacional Fe y Alegría. “Educación popular, Comunidad y Desarrollo”, XXXI Congreso Internacional, Lima 2000; Caracas, 2001, Page 132**

## **2. Promote processes of formation for better knowledge and greater love of Fe y Alegría.**

93. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress, as we said before, placed on its agenda the topic of the identity of Fe y Alegría not because of any crisis but because our identity is strengthened to the degree that it is viewed from new perspectives and based on new experiences. Identity is not static, and it cannot be reduced to a set of ideals (*ideario*), as inspiring as these may be. If there is not a corresponding set of practices (*practicario*) which reminds us that our set of ideals is given life only by the constant practice of its principles and values, and if we do not return over and over again to the sources, then we may be in danger of losing that which gives meaning and direction to our daily work. It is important to return continually to the “why” of the task, to reexamine it from the new data provided by the context, and to reformulate it constantly afresh so that it becomes an institutional “memory.” In this way our identity is constantly reformulated with “creative fidelity” to its own “founding experience.”
94. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress confirmed that spirituality is what identifies Fe y Alegría, what “dynamizes” the Movement for its mission; spirituality gives the Movement life, invigorates it, and is at the core of its very existence. In the history of the Movement’s founding, various sources of institutional identity and spirituality were identified. In order to dynamize both this rich history and the well from which our institutional identity and spirituality draw their water, the Congress agreed to implement the following line of action with three strategies:
- **Processes of permanent formation for the members of the Movement so that they will better know and love Fe y Alegría.** By means of:
    - Development of processes of induction of people entering Fe y Alegría, including contact with the reality of poverty experienced by the people we serve.
    - Permanent formation for members of the Movement in Ignatian spirituality, by making use of the Spiritual Exercises as one of the experiences of formation.
    - Permanent formation for members of the Movement in the spirituality of Fe y Alegría, by bestowing a solid sense of mission on the institutional work.

## **3. Promote interreligious dialogue and systematize its significant experiences.**

95. Another emphasis of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress was ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The increasing diversity of religious expression on the continent is an undeniable fact and a challenge for educational practice. On this point the 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress could do no more than open the debate and propose some attitudes that would be appropriate for dialogue. The difficulties that present themselves with some groups that are more sectarian and often aggressive should not discourage dialogue but should help us to define better its objectives: respect for the dignity of persons and collective creation of a world of peace and equality.
96. Interreligious dialogue was understood by the delegates of the Congress not as a possible option but as an ethical imperative to be open to and respectful of others who are different, since God is too great for us to think that there is only one way to be related with him. To contribute to this dialogue, it was proposed that we develop the following line of actions with three strategies.
- **Promote interreligious dialogue and systematize its significant experiences.** To that end the following will be undertaken:
    - Systematization of the experiences of interreligious dialogue.
    - Processes of making the whole educational community more sensitive to interreligious dialogue.

- Creating in the school communities spaces for interreligious exchange and experience.