

The **Encounter** with
Christ in the Life of
Regnum Christi
Identity, Foundation, and
Dynamic



REGNUM
CHRISTI

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“The People of God believes that it is led by the Lord’s Spirit, Who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labors to decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God’s design for man’s total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human.”

Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* n.11.

Presentation

*“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”
(Matthew 18:20).*

These words of Jesus are the foundation of the team meeting that we live in Regnum Christi called the Encounter with Christ. With this essay we want to unpack its value as a means for Jesus Christ, Apostle of the Kingdom, to enter more deeply into our personal lives, teams, and community, making his mystery present in us and through us.

In Regnum Christi we currently find a variety of ways to live the Encounter with Christ. We are seeing different efforts to rediscover and relaunch its fruitful practice. We also recognize that, in some places, it has been abandoned or is being lived as a mere routine, either through lack of understanding or through a certain formalism in its application.

With this document we seek to promote the renewed practice of the Encounter with Christ by going deeper into its essence and offering principles that allow it to be adapted to each team’s circumstances. To do this, we will develop the following themes: the place of this activity in the life of Regnum Christi, its historical development and its relationship to the charism, its Biblical roots, the internal dynamic of the Encounter with Christ, and the meaning of its parts.

Every renewal requires a return to the origins, to the source. For that reason, we wanted to give ample attention to both the section on the historical development and the relationship to the charism, and to the theological-biblical roots of this spiritual/apostolic/formative activity. Through these sections we will dive into the deep meaning of the Encounter with Christ to understand its internal dynamic better and to be able to live it fruitfully.

The contents of this essay are the result of a reflection that began during the process of the revision of the Statutes of the Regnum Christi Federation, combined with the different experiences of members in the different territories in recent years, culminating in several in-person meetings with members of all vocations organized by the Department of Life and Mission of the Regnum Christi General Directorate.

PART I:



The Encounter with Christ in the Life of Regnum Christi: Historical Development and Relationship to the Charism

The team activity called the Encounter with Christ holds a central place for the members of Regnum Christi. In it we experience and live the characteristic traits of our spirituality and mission in first person. We encounter ourselves as apostles who are called, gathered together, and sent by Christ himself to the world and to the people of today in their concrete reality.

The Encounter with Christ is an activity that characterizes the life of Regnum Christi and develops in a climate of prayer. It consists of two fundamental parts: the prayerful reading of a passage of the Gospel, and the apostolic discernment of situations or current events from real life. The members of a team seek to nourish their spiritual and apostolic life with it by helping one another along on the path to holiness, formation, and apostolic action.

Through contact with the Word and a faith-filled reading of the events in our daily lives, the Encounter gradually shapes our way of relating to Christ and facing life situations, not only personally but also as a community. Looking at the world this way does not leave us indifferent. In a climate of prayer as a team, we listen to the call of the Spirit and respond,

to make this world a more worthy dwelling place for the children of God (see RL 4).

Historical development of the Encounter with Christ

The Encounter with Christ is a team meeting that has characterized the life of Regnum Christi since its beginnings as an apostolic movement toward the end of the 1960's. It was introduced into the Legionary communities some time afterward. It has been an important resource in our configuration with Christ the Apostle, sustaining and energizing team life.

The Regnum Christi Handbook from 1969 described the Encounter with Christ's objective as "making the power of the Gospel shine forth in the daily social and family life" of Regnum Christi members. It explained that in the Encounter "the members meet in small groups of companions or friends, examine the methods and results of their apostolic activity, and compare their daily way of life with the Gospel"¹.

1 With these lines, the handbook quoted *Lumen gentium* 35, 1: Christ "made [the laity] His witnesses and He gave [them] understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Rev 19:10)) so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life." It was also inspired by *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 30: "Lay groups and associations dedicated to the apostolate or other supernatural goals, should carefully and assiduously promote formation for the apostolate in keeping with their purpose and condition. [...]. Their members meet in small groups with their associates or friends, examine the methods and results of their apostolic activity, and compare their daily way of life with the Gospel".

As far as the parts of the Encounter with Christ went, the first team meetings of young people consisted in reading and reflecting on the Gospel and discussion of a theme of Christian formation. Toward the end of 1968 the methodology of the “Review of life,” or “case study,” was added², in addition to the review of the Regnum Christi Commitment Card. In this way – as the 1969 Handbook of Regnum Christi states – the Encounter with Christ was made up of a Gospel reflection, a review of commitments, and a case study of a situation in real life. It left the formation theme to the study circle. In the 1971 version of the Regnum Christi Handbook, the review of apostolic commitments was added. From that point on, the Encounter with Christ had four parts: the Gospel reading and reflection, review of commitments, case study, and review of apostolic commitments. The presentation of the parts of the Encounter with Christ in the 1990 Regnum Christi Handbook and in the 2008 version were mainly concerned with methodology and practical details.

2 In the Church, a Review of life is the name for a method of formation and discernment that involves three elements – seeing, judging, and acting. This method comes from the Young Christian Workers movement (YCW), a part of the Catholic Action Movement especially for young workers founded by the Belgian priest Joseph-Léon Cardijn (1882-1967). At the initiative of Cardijn, the Review of life began to be implemented between 1925 and 1936 in France and Belgium and reached its final and current form during the Post-War years. At its base, the method sought to offer young workers a simple method of self-formation as committed Christians that, grounded in the faith and life, would help them to discover their mission in society and become apostles in the secular environment of the factories. From 1948 onward, Guillermo Roviroso Albet (1897-1964) and the priest Tomás Malagón (1917-1984; he joined the effort in 1954) in Spain finished the Review of life with the addition and application of a Cyclical Plan of formation for the members of the *Hermandad Obrera de Acción Católica (HOAC)* that enabled adult workers to continue practicing this method even as they grew older into adulthood.



During the process of the renewal of the Statutes of Regnum Christi the Encounter with Christ was studied in depth, along with other elements of our spiritual patrimony. An updated explanation of it was offered in the appendix of the Working Document that participants used in their discussions called, “The Encounter with Christ: What it is and the significance of each part” (May 2015)³.

The various phases of the renewal process, culminating in the 2018 General Assemblies, recognized that this activity has borne much fruit in the lives of the teams and communities. The different vocations of Regnum Christi preserve the practice of the Encounter with Christ to greater or lesser degrees as a shared means of spiritual growth and to foster a contemplative and evangelizing spirit as a community of apostles. There can be no doubt that it is a suitable means for living and sharing the charismatic patrimony of Regnum Christi. Number 15 of the Rule of Life of the Lay Faithful Associated to the Regnum Christi Federation presents it in this way:

“The Encounter with Christ is the center of team life. In it, the lay members, as a community of faith, by the light of God’s Word, examine their Christian life, discern what the Lord expects of them in evangelizing the reality of the world they live in, encourage each

³ [“The Encounter with Christ: what it is and the significance of each part”](#). Appendix 2, in: REGNUM CHRISTI, Working document. Draft of the statute numbers for 1st and 2nd degree members, Process of revision of the Statutes – Discernment of the 1st and 2nd degree members, May 2015, pp. 52-59.

other in their following of Christ, and enkindle their apostolic zeal.”

An expression of the charism

In the Encounter with Christ, we celebrate our friendship with Jesus and with each other, and we rejoice together that we are loved, called, and sent by him as a community of apostles. We are nourished by the bread of his Word and by the ever-new wine of the Spirit’s action in our hearts. We share an evangelical viewpoint that discerns the signs of God’s action in the world we live in, and we especially share “the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing”⁴. In the Encounter with Christ, when it is lived with freedom and trust, we deepen our fraternal friendships, and we find a special strength to live and proclaim our faith.

If we look at the Encounter with Christ through the lens of the charism, we see it as an experience in which the mystery of Christ that we are called to contemplate and live comes to life, as shown in number 8 of the Statutes. In this activity, Jesus himself goes out to meet the participants. It is he who gathers them together in his name to reveal the love of his heart to them through the Gospel reflection. He forms them as apostles, helping them to apostolically discern the realities in which they live through the case study analysis. He sends them out

⁴ Pope ST. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), n. 80, and Pope FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013), n. 10.

to collaborate with him in the evangelization of all people and of society through the personal calling and response of each individual and of the group, which come out as a fruit of this discernment.

The time given to the Encounter is already an occasion of making the Kingdom of Christ present in our hearts and in society (see SRCF 7, 14). When we gather in faith and love to share his Word and the challenges that life brings us, we experience the consolation and the certainty that Christ truly desires to reign in us and through us, and that he can do this amid the thousand and one demands of life.

The Encounter makes us contemplative and evangelizing, because in it we gaze at Jesus, present in his Word and also in our hearts, in our neighbors, and in the world, and we let ourselves be moved by his desire to enkindle the fire of the Father's love in all hearts (see SRCF 20). In this way, the Encounter moves us to accept spiritual combat as a part of following Christ, going out to address the needs and challenges of life with creativity, apostolic audacity, and the other aspects that characterize the Regnum Christi member's style of self-giving (see SRCF 10).

Finally, the Encounter organically integrates the five elements of the life of a Regnum Christi member: spiritual life, formation, apostolate, accompaniment, and team life (see RL 4)⁵. It is thus a catalyst that strengthens and invigorates our RC identity. In the Encounter these five elements are integrated with each other, and not as separate or compartmentalized boxes.

The Encounter with Christ is not everything. It is not even the most important part of the life of a member, team, or community of Regnum Christi. It can, however, be the axis around which everything else turns and is organized (see RL 15).

⁵ Although the five elements are described in the Rule of Life of the lay members of Regnum Christi, in fact they are common to all the different vocations that make up the spiritual family.

PART II:

Theology of Encounter

When we say Encounter with Christ, we may not fully realize the deep and life-giving truth that the words entail or what they reveal to us about God, about who we are, about the relationship with him that we are called to, and about our mission. In this part of the essay, we enter into the theology behind the Encounter to rediscover its roots and renew its practice.

God, the Friend of mankind

The originality of the God of Revelation is that he speaks. In the countries marked by monotheism, this affirmation no longer surprises us, since it has been repeated throughout the centuries. There is nothing trivial about it. God makes himself known to man; God reveals himself. Those who discovered that God was speaking to them were surprised. God suddenly went from being an idea, oftentimes vague and distant, to being someone alive, real, and near. For them, the encounter with God was and is possible.

The difference between the God of the Bible and the pagan idols is that he is the God of the living, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob (see Mt 22:32). He, the Living One, was not made by human hands like those other gods

that “have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell. They have hands but do not feel, feet but do not walk; they produce no sound from their throats.” (Ps 115:5-7). In contrast to the other gods, the God of Israel is called the “God of the living,” because his Word has the power to give life. Ten times in the story of creation in Genesis 1 God “speaks,” and what he says happens at once. His Word is living and effective (see Heb 4:12). It is the source of all that exists.

Furthermore, this divine Word is also and above all a Word spoken to someone, a Word that can reach each one of us today (see Dt 5:3). The Word that God speaks to us is the proof of the relationship he wants to establish with each of us. This relationship begins at the moment of our creation. By the simple act of creation, God places the human being in front of himself as someone distinct from him. Therefore, Revelation has a relationship as its beginning. The God of Genesis is above all the God who, when he creates humanity, places himself face-to-face before someone he is conversing with. He is the God of encounter. Furthermore, is not solitude the only thing that is “not good” (Genesis 2:18) in the story of the beginning, while every other element appears seven times under the sign of goodness?

Beyond the history of just one people, what is recounted in the Bible is the history of humanity-with-God. When God pronounces his name, he

presents himself as “he who is with.” “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12) he said to Moses, when he dared to ask him his name. “To be with” is his beautiful divine name. In this name the secret of God and his deepest identity is contained. The Son of God has no other name. “Emmanuel, which means God is with us” (Mt 1:23). From the first moments of the Revelation of God until its fulfillment in the Son, the Father presents himself as the one who speaks to and establishes a dialogue with man.

Mankind, the friend of God

This revelation of God to mankind is, at the same time, a revelation of what mankind is, a friend of the living God. We are no longer condemned to search desperately for an inaccessible God, because God does not speak in secret, in darkness, or in chaos (see Isaiah 45:19). It is not necessary to seek his Word in the heavens or beyond the seas, because he is near to us (see Deuteronomy 30:12-14). The Totally-Other becomes the Totally-Near. God makes himself accessible by addressing his Word to us and allowing us to listen to it.

Thus, the great task of man is to learn to listen: “Hear, O Israel” (Deuteronomy 6:4). This is precisely the greatest commandment, as Jesus taught on one occasion to a scribe (Mark 12:28-30).

Will we know how to hear and recognize the friend who knocks on our door to let him enter and dine with us (Rev 3:20)? Will we know how to respond

to the call of God who seeks us? “Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) God asks. “Today will we listen to his voice?” (see Psalm 95:7) the psalmist asks.

The drama of human existence begins precisely when we close ourselves to the relationship with the God who loves us. The hardening of hearts, or being stiff-necked, is a complaint that God himself and his prophets often made to Israel (Exodus 32:9; Jeremiah 4:4). Jesus also exhorted the multitudes by reproaching them for their failure to listen. “Whoever has ears ought to hear” (Mark 4:9) he would say to them.

Nevertheless, although we close our ears, although we do not accept him (see John 1:11), God – who cannot contradict himself – will always search for us, like the father of the prodigal son who waits impatiently for the return of his beloved son, like the good shepherd who was anxious to find his lost sheep, or like the woman who searched for her coin (see Luke 15). The heart of God is restless until it rests and dwells in each person (see John 14:23).

The Encounter with Christ

The New Testament takes this a step further, a decisive and definitive step:

“In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Time and space reach their climax. Time is fulfilled, since after the prophets, the Father spoke through his only Son. Space is fulfilled because the Word became flesh. Christ sums up in his being all the words of the Old Testament. He is, in his human and divine person, the last Word that the Father addresses to us. He himself inaugurated his public ministry after reading a passage from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, with this declaration, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

We read the Bible because it offers us a path toward Jesus Christ and toward his message, because, as St. Jerome would say, “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” The contrary however is also true – knowledge of the Scriptures is knowledge of Christ!

“Christ shines through the text of the Bible like he shone through the flesh of Jesus. His splendor

illuminates the pages of the Book in which he dwells, just as he illuminated all the acts of the mortal life of Jesus” (Henri de Lubac).

The entire Old Testament converges in one way or other in Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel. This is the Christian interpretation of the Scriptures that the writers of the New Testament made. The New Testament, with its four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, all the Letters, and Revelation are, in effect, none other than the re-reading and re-writing of the Old Testament in light of the event of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the door that allows us to enter the books of the Bible.

All of this shows that the witness par excellence of the life and doctrine of Jesus is found in the four Gospels, which gives them a pride of place, as *Dei Verbum* reminds us (DV 18). The words and actions of Jesus, the preaching of the Kingdom accompanied by signs of power, but above all his death and resurrection, constitute the fount of salvation to which all men and women are invited to approach. Thus, the Gospels constitute the privileged witness of the Revelation that God makes of himself through his Son. The encounter with Christ who calls us to follow him, is made possible in a special way through the reading of, meditation on, and the sharing of the Gospel texts. In this way, the attentive reading of Sacred Scripture becomes an opportunity for all the baptized to strengthen their Christian vocation.

The communal dimension of the Encounter with Christ

The encounter with Christ is an ecclesial act since Jesus Christ is the Messiah of the people of Israel and the head of the Church as a body made up of many members. Through his Word, God has called his people together. Through his Word, he has brought forth the whole Church. The communal dimension is an integral part of the life of the believer. This was the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus – together they had the experience of burning hearts when the resurrected Christ explained the Scriptures to them (see Luke 24:27-32). When two or three are gathered in the name of Christ, he is there in their midst (see Matthew 18:20). It is with one heart, all together, that the disciples await the gift of the Spirit (see Acts 1:14; 2:1). Similarly, the disciples are sent on mission two-by-two (see Luke 10:1). This living together, praying together, evangelizing together is an integral part of Christian life.

That said, a privileged moment for growing together in this communal dimension with Christ is the exercise of sharing our thoughts and reflections on the Word together. Like the disciples of Emmaus, we no longer have a physical and direct encounter with Jesus. “He had disappeared from before their eyes,” says St. Luke (Luke 24:31). The privileged means we have for encountering Christ after his Ascension into heaven are the text of Sacred Scripture and the act of breaking the Bread. These are the two foods – Word and Bread – that configure the Church as

the Body of Christ and that are offered to us on the one Table in our Sunday celebrations. However, it is good and recommended that our encounter around the Table be prolonged during the week through meditation and the sharing of the Scriptures in community:

“The Christian life is essentially marked by an encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls us to follow him. For this reason, the Synod of Bishops frequently spoke of the importance of pastoral care in the Christian communities as the proper setting where a personal and communal journey based on the word of God can occur and truly serve as the basis for our spiritual life” (Verbum Domini 72).

Coming together around the Word of God is therefore a very important part of Christian life. Jesus himself invites us to remain in him, that is, to remain in his Word and to keep it. “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (John 14:23). It is a mutual dwelling, we in them and they in us. Frequent contact with the Scriptures, which contain the Word that God addresses to us, is a beautiful way of remaining in the love of Christ.

Finally, the communal aspect of the contemplation of Sacred Scripture is even more important given the fact that no one can appoint themselves up as its sole interpreter. No one person can exhaust the richness of the manifold meanings that the Gospel possesses. Considering this, the best way to interpret the Bible is naturally communal, which

motivates and encourages us to read and meditate on the Word together.

Missionaries of the Word, apostles of the Kingdom

As in the case of the disciples of Emmaus, the experience of the Word of God that echoes in our heart has the power to transform our lives, to the point of turning sadness into joy and making us missionary disciples of the Gospel. “So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem” (Luke 24:33). The book of the Acts of the Apostles develops precisely according to the logic of announcement of the Gospel, which extends from Jerusalem through all of Judea and Samaria, until it arrives in Rome (see Acts 1:8).

For this reason, reading and sharing reflections on the Gospel in community have a direct consequence on our way of living in the world. Each disciple of Jesus Christ becomes a bearer of the Gospel. The Word sends us on our way because it is also addressed to others, to everyone. Every baptized person becomes a messenger of the Word so that the world can hear it, like salt that brings a new flavor or light that must shine for everyone (see Mt 5:13-15). Having listened to the Word, the Church can become its herald:

“All evangelization is based on that word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated, and witnessed to. The sacred Scriptures are the very source

of evangelization. Consequently, we need to be constantly trained in hearing the word. The Church does not evangelize unless she constantly lets herself be evangelized. It is indispensable that the word of God be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity.” (Francisco, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 174)

In fact, the missionary announcement of the Word is rooted in the very nature of the faith. The Gospel of Matthew ends with a clear invitation. “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The missionary disciple’s life is transformed by the Word that dwells in him and gives him life.

“If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!” (1 Cor 9:16)

Paul was aware of the need to collaborate in the proclamation of the Word to the world so that others could encounter the God who had revealed himself. When he went to Athens, he addressed the pagans, saying, “As I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23). In the end, this is what it is all about: that others encounter the Father. The Word we hear leads us naturally to the mission.

Like St. Paul, each one of us is called to be a communicator of the Word that the Father addresses to the world through his Son. Each one of us is

called to participate in the mission of spreading the Word, so that others can encounter Christ and call upon his name:

*“But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring (the) good news!’”
(Romans 10:14-15)*

*Prayerful reading of the Gospel
to illuminate our lives*



For the Kingdom of Christ to reach the hearts of all people, there must be messengers of the Gospel. The divine Word has been given to us to shed light on our life and the lives of all people. It is given to us as a lamp for our feet (see Psalm 119:105).

*Prayerful reading of life in light
of the Gospel: Review of life
(case study)*



We encounter the same Christ in our lives as we encounter in the Word, because by the mystery of the incarnation he remains in all people, his brothers and sisters, and has chosen the world as the place for his permanent revelation. This speaks to us of the importance of our daily lives for the Kingdom.

*With an arrow, join this
paragraph and the previous
one in the margin and write:
discernment and apostolic
commitment*



God appeals to us through the reality of the world, and he trusts in us. He calls us to collaborate with him in the work that he is already doing and awaits our committed response.

The Kingdom is in our midst, even if it doesn't appear so because it has not reached its fullness. Weeds and wheat grow together, and for that

reason we must employ discernment. God is at work, and he appeals to man's freedom, inviting him to collaborate in his plan of salvation.



PART III:

The Dynamic of the Encounter with Christ

Premise

The group that comes together for the Encounter with Christ is a team or community of individuals who recognize that they are living members of the Church united by Christian fraternity, participation in the charism of Regnum Christi, and a shared mission in the midst of this world that needs Christ.

Christian fraternity

The fundamental presupposition for the proper functioning and greatest fruitfulness of the Encounter is that the individuals who have come together foster Christian friendship among themselves. Through this they will have the necessary good will and mutual trust to listen to each other and express themselves sincerely, freely, and charitably. The Encounter itself, lived in an atmosphere of warmth, freedom, and joy, will foster and nourish this friendship which is the concrete expression of Christian fraternity in Regnum Christi.

For this reason, the Encounter is fundamentally intended to be carried out in a stable, natural group like a team or community.

The charism of Regnum Christi

The Encounter with Christ is a means which helps its participants to incarnate and reveal the charism of Regnum Christi. This charism should inspire how it is lived out, making it an occasion for a life-giving, dynamic, and apostolic encounter with Christ, who shares his mission of evangelization with us out of love, and waits with hope for our response of creative and generous love. The methodology of the Encounter will not make it an experience of the charism. Rather, the fact that the participants who are gathered together all believe, pray, and launch themselves apostolically from the Regnum Christi charism that they share will bring this about.

Shared mission

“The Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate” (AA 2). Christ unites the entire Christian community in his name and sends them into the world with a mission. The Church is a mystery of missionary communion (see ChL 32 and EG 23) and for that reason, there is no Christian community that does not have a mission given to it by the Lord.

When we speak of a shared mission, we refer to the mission of evangelization that springs from what the members share and what they know themselves to be called to. This mission is a shared horizon that frames the daily and apostolic lives of the members. To some extent, the different initiatives, activities, and apostolates of the members of a team or

*Write this in the margin:
expressing what the scope or
horizon of evangelization is for
the team or community will
facilitate the proposal of case
studies or life situations for
discernment in the Encounter
that are meaningful for
its life and the mission of
evangelization.*

community converge in this mission. Though their particular apostolates may or may not be the same, the members share a mission.

It will help the team to reflect on and formulate a specific, common mission statement.



The Parts of the Encounter



Opening prayer

Coming together to live the Encounter with Christ presupposes an act of faith that the Lord is present in our midst and that he is sending us out to the world as an evangelizing community. Therefore, we begin this activity with a prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understanding, move our wills, and enkindle our hearts. It is appropriate to add a Hail Mary or other prayer to invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary, since she was the place of encounter between God and humanity. She is the one who gives us Jesus and guides us to him. As Mother of the Church, she prays with us in the cenacle of our team or community, asking for a new Pentecost. The Glory Be and the invocations proper to Regnum Christi seal our prayer by pointing to the goal of all our life and actions – the glory of God – and the driving forces which we trust in to achieve this goal – the Kingdom of Christ in us and the unfailing intercession of Mary.

After the prayer, the person leading the Encounter can give a very brief introduction to contextualize the meeting in the current moment of the life of the team or community.



Prayerful reading of the Gospel

Jesus Christ is the Word of the living God. We seek to encounter him in the Gospel in order to place ourselves in an attitude of listening to the Lord from the beginning of the meeting so that faith and charity will guide our reflections, order our values, and orient our discernment.

The Gospel passage is chosen for the benefit of the participants. The rhythm of the liturgical year, the formation program of the section or community, and the any needs presented by the signs of the times should be considered.

The passage is read aloud, followed by a few minutes of silence for personal reflection on what God is saying through this Gospel to those present there. Then the members share their lights and reflections in a simple way. Finally, the secretary summarizes the reflections.

In light of what was shared in the Gospel reflection, one or more members pray a brief spontaneous prayer aloud. With that, the prayerful reading of the Gospel finishes.

 To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics. Some of the main features of the modern world can be sketched as follows. (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, December 7, 1965, number 4)

Apostolic discernment of reality

God himself speaks to us and calls us to collaborate with him through events of our lives, since he is always present with his Providence, building up his Kingdom even where he might appear to be absent (see Mark 4: 26-29). It is necessary to discern where and how he is building the Kingdom, so that we can better collaborate with him.

Therefore, after we have encountered Christ through his Word, we undertake a communal discernment of what he expects of us as a team or community in the circumstances of life in which we find ourselves. Consequently, we will observe the reality in which we are immersed with the desire to discover the best way to carry out our mission of evangelization within it. It is a community discernment that we make by listening to the Holy Spirit, in the dialogue between faith and reason, and with apostolic charity⁶.

The fundamental question that orients us here is, “God is building up his Kingdom in the environment where we live and therefore evangelize, so how can we collaborate with this growth?” “How can we support the action of God around us?”

⁶ We must remember that there are three levels of discernment: rational discernment, moral discernment, and spiritual discernment; each one has its corresponding method; and each one should presuppose and contain the ones that precede it. Furthermore, with respect to who does the discernment, we must distinguish between personal and community discernment. With respect to the object, matter, or content of the discernment, we can speak of many types of discernment. Thus, we call the discernment of our apostolic work, ‘apostolic discernment.’

We carry out this apostolic discernment in two steps: first, we choose a case study or life situation; and second, we analyze it through the review of life⁷.

1° Choice of a situation or case study:

The members identify some situation, or event, from real life which challenges them and present it to the group. The members vote for which one of the cases they will bring to discernment.

A true situation or event from real life that helps the team or community to discover the message of God for them in their current situation should be chosen. The closer the case is to the lives of the members and the social reality in which they live, the better it will facilitate the apostolic discernment of the team. If the members clearly know the mission that they share, it will be easier for them to find situations or events that engage the team or community in a meaningful way. The important thing is to allow God to challenge us as he speaks from the reality of our life when we approach it with faith and sufficient Christian formation.

In fact, the Review of life begins in the daily lives of the members, when they contemplate the events

7 See José María RUBIO, *Para vivir la Revisión de Vida: Un método para la acción y para la espiritualidad cristiana*, Verbo Divino, Estella (Navarra) 2006, available only in Spanish, for the historical origin, theological principles, and objectives of the Review of life methodology. This book is very helpful for understanding and renewing this method of discernment. Its principles and objectives are also summarized in the appendix that was cited above, "The Encounter with Christ. Its meaning and the meaning of its parts" (May 2015).

It is highly recommended that everyone arrives at the Encounter with some well thought out fact of life to present. This is a sign of their interest in the fruit of the Encounter. It is even possible in some teams to vote on the case or fact before the Encounter, so that the members arrive to Encounter having studied it beforehand.

and situations around them with the heart of an apostle. This attitude makes it possible to come to the Encounter with well-prepared cases that have been thought out even a few days before the meeting, to propose them clearly for the discernment of the team or community.

2° The analysis of the case or Review of Life, is done in three integrated ways: seeing, judging, acting.

- Seeing

First, we want to see the case as God sees it. Above all, faith and love are needed for a Christian discernment of reality so that we can see events and situations in truth, seeking to be close to God and his way of seeing them. It is a matter of learning to observe life with objectivity and depth, with reason and faith, contemplating life and how God is present in it⁸.

We have to consider seeing things externally — an analysis to understand what is happening in the moments that most challenge and interest us as believers and apostles; seeing things internally—trying to empathize with the people involved (who may also be ourselves), understanding why they may act in the way that they did; and a seeing through the depths of faith – observing the actions

⁸ FRANCIS, Discourse to a delegation of Catholic Action of France (January 13, 2022): It is a matter of “perceiving how God was present in every moment.”

morally, in light of the plan of God, with its elements both good and bad.

The questions we ask ourselves are, “what is really happening in the case being presented, what is God doing in the hearts of the people involved and, through them, in society? Does it remind us of similar events or situations? Why did this happen? What are the causes? What elements of good and evil do we discover in it? What are the consequences of the event? Are we ourselves involved in it? To what extent?”



- Judging

After we have become more aware of the presence of the wheat and the weeds in the case study we have chosen (see Matthew 13:24-30), we want to discern how Jesus judges or interprets our presence, participation, or attitudes before this case, and, consequently, understand what he hopes for from us. “It is the moment in which we let ourselves to be questioned and placed in discussion” with the Lord⁹, the moment to open ourselves to a deeper conversion. “It means accepting that one’s own life has crossed the threshold of the Word of God, which, as the Letter to the Hebrews says, ‘is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword ... and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart’.”¹⁰ In this way, judging brings to a close everything that was brought up in seeing, which

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

can then be made concrete by acting.

In essence, we want to listen to Jesus Christ. To do that, we take the elements of good and evil that we have seen during the seeing phase as our point of departure and point out what ethical values or anti-values are behind these elements. But we must take another step. Now is not the moment to simply make a moral judgment of the case itself – which was already done beforehand in the seeing phase (when we asked ourselves about the elements of good and evil) – nor much less is it a matter of judging the persons most involved in the case, since no one is fit to judge the intentions or conscience of another. Here we want to judge ourselves in light of the Gospel.

Jesus Christ is inviting us to follow him more closely in this circumstance. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, “how would Jesus act in our place? What does he expect of us? What requirements does this case bring to light for us if we are to follow Christ as missionary disciples?”

We will find the answer, above all, by going to the Word of God and reading it from the perspective of the case we have discussed. “The key to this phase is the reference to Sacred Scripture”¹¹, particularly the Gospel. “The Gospel judgment is the heart of the Review of Life”¹², the apostolic discernment of reality. After discussing the case, we look for Gospel passages that appear to be the most appropriate to

¹¹ Ibidem

¹² José María RUBIO, op. cit., p. 42.

enlighten us with the attitudes and behaviors that Jesus Christ expects of us. From these passages, we choose one or more to comment on and apply to ourselves in view of this fact. “In the encounter between the events of the world and of our life, on the one hand, and the Word of God, on the other, we can discern the appeals the Lord addresses to us.”¹³



- Acting and apostolic commitment

In the element of acting, we seek to respond to the Lord’s invitation that we received through the Gospel judgment with our initiative in evangelization. The question that guides us is, “how can we collaborate with God in his work of building up the Kingdom in light of this case?” Our role “consists of supporting and promoting God’s action in hearts, adapting it to reality which evolves continuously”.¹⁴ Therefore, we seek to transform reality according to the standards of the Gospel, aware that we must begin by changing ourselves with his grace. Every Christian apostle starts with a personal conversion, since he seeks to share the marvels that God has made us a participants in. This is the moment to choose what actions of conversion and apostolate we are called

13 FRANCIS, Discourse to a delegation of Catholic Action of France (January 13, 2022) . As an example, we can look at how the Pope uses the parable of the Good Samaritan in the second chapter of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. This single passage helps him to discover and formulate the Gospel judgment regarding what God expects of Christians in today’s world, which is so complex, as he described it in the first chapter (seeing), and demands a variety of actions in the many forms that he describes in the following chapters

14 FRANCIS, Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to the delegation of the Catholic Action Movement of France (January 13, 2022).

to, in keeping with what we have discerned that Christ expects of us. We do this in response to his loving invitation to be his apostles.

The members suggest possible actions to carry out with regard to themselves, with the goal of their own conversion, and with regard to the reality affected by the case, with the goal of evangelization. These actions can be individual or collective. Through consensus or a vote, the participants can determine the action or actions they feel individually or collectively called to.

When the chosen case study arises from the apostolic experience of the team, the action naturally results in an apostolic commitment. The team can have a permanent or long-term apostolic commitment that does not change in every Encounter, but which is enriched, refined, or expressed in some new way.



Either based on the acting phase or other particular circumstances, the team or community should focus their discernment into an apostolic commitment. With this commitment we want to bear witness to and spread the Good News of a God who brings about the salvation of the world and asks us to collaborate with Him. In this way we offer our proactive and creative, evangelical and evangelizing, response in light of the situations we encounter in society.



Closing prayer

The Encounter with Christ concludes with a prayer of thanksgiving by one or several members. The prayer closes with the two invocations to Christ the King and the Virgin Mary, proper to Regnum Christi.

Criteria and recommendations for living and adapting the Encounter

Flexibility

The methodology and dynamic of the Encounter need to be adapted with flexibility according to the uniqueness and experience of each team or community, since it is at the service of the life of the team or community (see RL 15). The adjustments to the methodology that prudence suggests should ensure that the Encounter is a formative activity in both the contemplative and evangelizing dimensions.

Frequency and patience

It is necessary to practice the Encounter with Christ with a certain frequency and not sporadically, because its fruit is gradual, progressive, and revealed above all in the long-term. An evangelizing and Gospel spirit cannot be born and mature from one day to the next.

We need constancy and patience to see the fruit of the Encounter. The seed of the Kingdom grows constantly and silently, without our knowing how (see Mark 4:26-27). The more time that is spent living the Encounter, the better the members will be able to perceive the fruits that it is bearing in their lives, in the lives of the people around them, and in the social environment in which they live. They will develop a supernatural, realistic, and

apostolic vision of events and situations, and the free commitment to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Openness of heart and mind in the midst of the world

To benefit deeply from the Encounter, the participants must be open to the Gospel, to the Faith, to conversion, and to commitment. One must have an open mind, humbly seeking the truth, and an open heart, charitable with others. It is a matter of discerning how to collaborate with the action of God in the world around us. For this reason, the members must be willing to put themselves on the line. They must want to put their faith into action in the world through their authenticity, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the commitment to a more just and fraternal world.

Maturation over time

It is recommended that the members grow gradually from helping one another in their personal, spiritual, and apostolic lives – which is already very good – to together praying, discerning, and living the mission that they share as a community for the glory of God and the evangelization of society. In this way the Encounter will become not only a shared experience of prayer and apostolic commissioning, but also a truly communal one, an experience of communion. As the years pass, the community will find ever-new ways of living their mission in keeping with the demands of the changing circumstances, because

it will be part of who they are and not merely an activity they do. The Encounter will help to create a community of apostles who give themselves to the Church and the world as living witnesses of the newness of life that Christ has brought us, activated by the Spirit.

Duration

The members of a team or community decide on the duration of the Encounter. Its duration will depend principally on the number of people that make up that team or community. For between 5 and 10 people, an Encounter of an hour and fifteen minutes could be adequate. For a team of between 8 and 12 people, an hour and a half may be enough time. For more than 12 people, less than two hours might not be enough.

The duration of the Encounter can also be changed according to how often the members have it. If they have Encounter infrequently, it might be better to take more time to ensure it is lived well. On the other hand, if it is held frequently, the members' experience and familiarity with the methodology may allow for a shorter duration.

It is not good for the activity to be too long, at the risk of it becoming tiresome and perceived as burdensome obligation. Nor should it be hurried, because it could end up becoming superficial and irrelevant in the life of the participants.

Duration of each part

Each team or community will have to take more or less time for each part according to what it considers to be the most beneficial for the members. As a suggestion, and to foster a united and developed vision of the Encounter, this division could serve as a reference: the prayerful reading of the Gospel can take about a quarter of the total time of the meeting, and the apostolic discernment of the case can take the other three-quarters of the time.

Review of Regnum Christi member commitments (see RL 17)

The review of commitments that some teams of lay members do after the prayerful reading of the Gospel is not an essential element of the Encounter with Christ. It can be done or left out. If it is done, it must ensure respect for the right not to reveal the judgments of one's conscience to others, the laws of graduality in spiritual growth, and the God-given personal circumstances which are different among all members.

CONCLUSION

In Regnum Christi we seek to give glory to God and make the Kingdom of Christ present in the hearts of all people and in society (SFRC 7). One of the ways in which members find a shared space for this is the Encounter with Christ. As we have seen throughout this essay, which does not intend to exhaust the Encounter's richness, but to encourage its creative and frequent practice, the Encounter has a deep connection with our history and our charism. The members of all vocations of Regnum Christi have had deep spiritual, formative, and apostolic experiences through the Encounter. With the passing of the years, an understanding and living of the common charism that unites us all in the same spiritual family and apostolic body has become integral to the Encounter. The theological basis and foundations of this activity bear witness to its deep roots in Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, where man experiences an intimate bond with God, his friend, who reveals his love to him in the Word and the events of life.

To go out to a world in need of the love of Christ with the charism we have received, we want to continue living this activity with a contemplative heart and apostolic zeal, in teams and communities united in the mission, and with a great sense of human and spiritual fraternity.

Appendix

Guide for how to do an Encounter with Christ

ENCOUNTER With CHRIST



1. OPENING PRAYER

We begin this activity with a prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten our understanding, move our wills, and enkindle our hearts.

It is appropriate to add a Hail Mary or other prayer to invoke the Blessed Virgin, a Glory Be, and the invocations proper to Regnum Christi which seal our prayer by pointing to the goal of all our life and actions – the glory of God.



2. PRAYERFUL READING OF THE GOSPEL

We seek to encounter him in the Gospel in order to place ourselves in an attitude of listening, so that faith and charity will guide our reflections, order our values, and orient our discernment.

A passage of the Gospel is chosen. It could be from the previous or next Sunday, or another passage that is appropriate to the needs of the team.



3. APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT OF REALITY

After we have encountered Christ through his Word, we undertake a communal discernment of what he expects of us as a team or community in the circumstances of life in which we find ourselves. Consequently, we will observe the reality in which we are immersed with the desire to discover the best way to carry out our mission of evangelization within it.

1° Choice of a case study

A true situation or event from real life that helps the team or community to discover the message of God for them in their current situation should be chosen.

The closer the case is to the lives of the members and the social reality in which they live, the better it will facilitate the apostolic discernment of the team.

2° Analysis of the case, or “Revision of Life”, done in three elements: to see, to judge, and to act.



TO SEE

We want to see the case as God sees it, learning to observe life with objectivity and depth, with reason and faith, discovering how God is present in it.

- In relation to this case, what is happening around us? What do we see? What elements - positive or negative - most grab our attention and resonate most strongly in our hearts?
- How is God working in the hearts of the people involved and in their environment?
- Why did this happen? What are the causes?
- What are the consequences of what happened?
- Bridging into the time of “judging,” what signs of good and evil do we discover in this case?
- Are we involved in it? How? How do we react to it



TO JUDGE

After we have become more aware of the presence of the wheat and the weeds in the case we have chosen (see Matthew 13:24-30), we want to discern how Jesus judges or interprets our presence, participation, or attitudes before this case, and, consequently, understand what he hopes for from us.

- What values or anti-values do we see in this case?
- What Gospel passages does it remind us of? What do they tell us about this case? In light of the Gospel, what would Jesus do in our place? What is he asking of us?
- What requirements does this case bring to light for us if we are to follow Christ as missionary disciples?



TO ACT & APOSTOLIC COMMITMENT

This is the moment to choose what actions of conversion and apostolate we are called to in light of what we have discerned that Christ is asking of us. We seek to respond to the invitation from the Lord that we received through the Gospel judgement with our own evangelizing initiative. In this way, we aspire to transform reality with the criteria of the Gospel.

The members suggest possible actions to carry out with regard to themselves, with the goal of their own conversion, and with regard to the reality affected by the case, with the goal of evangelization. In response to the call experienced in the “to judge” element:

- In light of our case analysis, how can we collaborate with God in his work of making the Kingdom grow?
- How can we support and foster God’s action in hearts and in society, according to the changing reality of our environment?



4. CLOSING PRAYER

The Encounter with Christ concludes with a prayer of thanksgiving by one or several members.

The prayer closes with the two invocations to Christ the King and the Virgin Mary proper to Regnum Christi.



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