

PROJECTS: Youth—heirs of the past, pioneers of the future

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Dear Friends in the Lord,

We have the pleasure to address you in this edition of "Projects" about youth, one of our four frontiers.

Young people are a sign of vitality and life. They are the power of today and the hope of tomorrow. On them rests the future of the Church and the world, and of any institution. But we find that on the one hand, many of our members are over the age of youth, and on the other hand, we would like more youth to know about the richness of the CLC way of life.

Youth Commission

For a number of reasons, the delegates to the World Assembly Lebanon 2013 perceived “Youth” as one of the important frontiers to be addressed. These included a concern about the lack of young people in our community and a recognition that our CLC way of life (including Ignatian spirituality) offers young people a way to find meaning, mission and an authentic encounter with Christ in their personal life journeys. Assembly delegates were eager to pass on the fire of the CLC vocation to ever more young people. In doing so, they saw that we are called to:

- meaningfully engage youth in the community, and
- develop a sensitivity in our apostolic work with youth.

It has also been recommended that W-ExCo set up a commission on Youth.

The W-ExCo has responded to that request. A Youth Commission¹ was created, formed of ExCo members and members from different countries. The members of this commission have met virtually and exchanged their experiences and opinions, as well as some materials that will be shared soon on our website (www.cvx-clc.net). We thank them for their time and contribution.

Following exchanges and discussions, we felt that the most important thing would be to share our CLC Charism and Ignatian spirituality with young people, wherever they are committed in the Church and in society, without necessarily adhering to CLC. While we would like to have youth as members, our main focus is to help youth find the right path in life. Our focus is to help them seek and find God. In that process, some of them will also discover a vocation to CLC.

CLC, a vocation

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44).

¹ Members of the Youth Commission were suggested by ExCo members, in order to have someone from each region: Cristina Barredo (Ecuador), Catherine Trottier (France), Loïc Michaud (France), Giovanna De La Mora Gomez (Mexico), Tinnah Dela Rosa (Philippines), Jennifer Coito (Usa), Clare Chinyama (Zambia) And Fabien Majena (Zimbabwe).

Indeed, CLC is a vocation. It is not us who call or attract people to it. *“Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church.”* (GP4) And also: *“Becoming a member of Christian Life Community presupposes a personal vocation.”* (GP10)

But we can encourage this vocation by working especially with certain categories of persons:

- **Children of CLC families:** let us welcome children of our members, reserve them a place in our national meetings, so they can grow up in a CLC atmosphere where they can continue their belonging and commitment.
- **The EYM** (Eucharistic Youth Movement): it is for children and youth 5-18 years and 18-25 years. We sincerely hope that membership in EYM can lead to CLC as in many countries. Many are introduced to Ignatian spirituality thanks to the Jesuits that accompany them. A collaboration with their guides and Jesuits is needed in this area.
- **The parishes:** through their involvement in the parish, many CLC members have the opportunity to introduce CLC to young parishioners.
- **Universities:** the "university parish" offers students adequate supervision. But at the end of their studies, they do not know where to go. This is where the intervention of CLC would be useful.

In all these areas, we can sow, and it is the Lord who will germinate the CLC vocation in the hearts that He chooses to attract in this way. What are we called to do is be visible, and promote an awareness of CLC as an option. We must also have the resources and availability to welcome and support those who become attracted and who wish to discern about this specific lay vocation in the Church.

Needs of youth and achievements

But how do we keep our young members? Obviously, by serving them and by entrusting them with responsibilities. Do not forget that young people need adults who are for them models of love, humility, generosity, patience, and forgiveness.

We might also be attentive to our own CLC young adults - members who start out life after school/education (20s-30s). Let us journey with them in the phase of life where they seek to discern commitments as they deepen their understanding of vocation, through work, and starting families.

In his last meeting with the W-ExCo, our Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr Adolfo Nicolas highlighted four aspects that can characterize young people:

- Having a critical sense,
- Having a symbolic sense: they are more sensitive to symbols than adults,
- Having the experience: they must learn which experiments are better,
- Having a musical sense: they develop a sense of depth and beauty; finding God in words

that resonate as "misericordia" for example.

We recognize the efforts of many national communities with youth. The results of the survey on the frontiers are a good witness (<https://goo.gl/iPVvRI>): eg. through giving of the Spiritual Exercises, volunteer encouragement, extending invitations to conferences and workshops on various topics, encouraging program development for training commitment in the parish, attending camps, providing guidance, and organizing other activities, according to the context and reality of each country.

Recently, members from different countries participated in the Forum of Vocations in which our World Community had been registered, as part of WYD (World Youth Day) in Krakow, Poland (testimonies will be published in our next Progressio). They thus had the opportunity to experience the world dimension of CLC, and talk about our community and our Ignatian spirituality to young people from all around the world. This surely brought some visibility to CLC, otherwise unknown to many. Flyers about CLC were distributed in various languages, with a link to the global website and the various national communities. It was a seed that could germinate one day or another in a particular country, or in a particular national community. We would like to thank the National Executive Councils of CLC who encouraged their members to join the Forum on Vocations.

Conclusion

Finally, we recall the words of the American poet Samuel Ullman on youth:

“Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind; it is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigour of the emotions, a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite, the love of adventure over the love of ease... So long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, grandeur, courage, and power from the earth, from men and from the Infinite—so long are you young”.

Let us be a young Community forever!

We remember that our role is not attracting young people just for the sake of CLC, but transmitting the treasure that we have received and are enjoying so much. It is, at the same time, an urge of overflowing joy and a real responsibility toward our society, i.e. facilitating an encounter with proven tools of discernment for the new generation, the one that will understand the world of tomorrow better than we could do, and fostering the transmission of a spirituality that can accompany the struggles of a rapidly changing world.

And let us be confident. CLC does not belong to us; it is the Lord's work. If He wants it to remain, He will keep it. Let us do what is within our capacity, and rely on Him for everything else.

United in prayer and service,

Najat Sayegh, Chris Hogan and Josephine Shamwana-Lungu

With and in behalf of the World ExCo

