



progressio

Publication of the World Christian Life Community



progressio

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Progressio is the official publication of the Christian Life Community (CLC). It seeks to build community, supplement formation, and promote apostolic works. By publishing stories, reflections, events and opinions, it endeavors to reinforce, challenge and deepen the community's understanding and living of the CLC Charism, Ignatian Spirituality and the gospel values

ABOUT OUR LOGO

We did not go too far to find inspiration for the logo of the Christian Life Community (CLC). Countless books have been written about the Salvation history of CLC and its beginning in year 1563. From that came the Marian Congregations and its symbol (shown on the top right), having the "P" over the "X" (for the Greek Christus) and the inserted "M" illustrates that the Congregations were put under the patronage of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The blue curved line illustrates a movement forward to **one World Community in 1967**; hence the globe. From this new beginning came a new name: Communauté de Vie Chrétienne (CVX) in French; Comunidad de Vida Cristiana (CVX) in Spanish; Christian Life Community (CLC) in English.

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1. Latvia CLC visiting World Secretariat
2. CLC Viet Nam rejoices at its national assembly!
3. The first batch of volunteers for the CLC Italy Migrants Project in Ragusa, Sicily
4. CLC North America with children and religious education instructors at Centro de Evangelizacio y Catequesis "Las Alitas", Valle de Juárez, Mexico
5. Concluding Meeting of the Course Political Dimension of Social Commitment, organized by CLC Latin America in Montevideo-Uruguay
6. CLC Tawain National Assembly 2015

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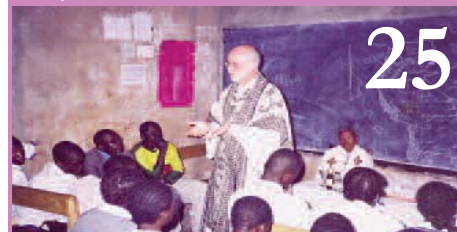
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A Small World



Alwin D Macalalad

What an amorphous choice of frontier-- Globalization and Poverty. Leave it to CLC to rise up to something that it is not able to grasp in its entirety. To take up a challenge that goes beyond immediacy and into a future of exploration. It takes a special kind of courage (and sometimes a sharp and careful craziness!) to articulate that yes- this is a frontier. Somewhat uncharted, fraught with complexity and uncertainty. Most of all, a frontier where there is so much pain and darkness. And therefore, a place where so much of creation is taking place. By saying yes to this in Lebanon, we have committed ourselves to shaping, and being shaped by this frontier.

It's a double edged blade, Globalization. On one edge, there is great potential for sharing, and access to resources. More than ever, a more holistic view of the world is possible- it's a single world. We lead connected lives, no matter where we are. My actions will always affect you, sooner or later. On the other edge is the confirmation of how fragmented we have shaped our little worlds into. This is mine, and there is a wall between you and me. I have shaped my little world and it is not my responsibility why your little world is that way. We are not equal, and it sometimes pains me, but you cannot access the abundance of my little world.

And little worlds can be groups, paradigms / ideologies, even nations. The complexity of it is threatening, and it is quite paradoxical that the more we are able to see how we are living in a single global village, the more we may be drifting away. Or who knows what special awareness is this leading to?

This is what this issue of Progressio is about. It's about our world body immersed in the frontiers. What happens when our lay apostolic body encounters this facet of life's reality?

Here, we will see how the Christian Life

Community in Europe struggles with migration, and how the Euroteam and the CLC Migration Network are slowly laying the groundwork for working together on a regional scale. Through the witness of our brothers and sisters in Syria, we are reminded that it is in faith that we hold each others' hands, and we do this even in suffering and distance. It is our being community that unites us to share in each others' lives even from afar.

We are treated to a glimpse of the French Congress-- how it was conceived, and how the largest national community (6000+ members, and increasing) undertook a gathering that also affirmed our being world community. These interconnectivities grace us-- Thomas Nug also shares how gatherings such as these affirm his vocation in CLC. What is so special about being keenly aware of our lay vocation? We are given a view from the outside as David Harold-Barry SJ sees our role as laity. Terry Charlton SJ, long time EA of CLC Kenya, recounts a journey of mutual growth and gives us a glimpse of what it means to be an Ecclesiastical Assistant. Finally, we meet another member of the World Executive Council- Denis Dobbstein, another witness to our way of life.

We are in the midst of a world where globalization seems to be slowly defining what it will affirm-- structured inequality and greater vulnerabilities for peoples, or a humanity that is united, compassionate and creative? I would like to think that the way we live out our vocations as one world community will have something to say in how this plays out. In this issue is a picture of a lay apostolic body in its various layers- regions, nations, communities, people. There are a thousand more stories in this tapestry we call CLC. I hope this thread gives you a glimpse of how the Spirit is moving our community, and may you live your story even more vibrantly. Together with the World ExCo, I pray for you constantly.





Migration and CLC Europe

Asier Arpide



Asier is a member of CLC Spain and coordinator for the Spanish Migrations Team

With the recent conclusion of the International Day against Racism and Xenophobia held on March 21, along with the tremendous news of the signing of the agreement between Europe and Turkey which further develops the policy of European border externalisation and examines the dual idea that, in exchange for money, others carry out what we do not want to do and that it is much easier to talk about human rights than to defend them, *we wish to ask ourselves, what are we doing in this context from CLC in Europe?*

A Structure for Discerning the European Challenges and Responses on Migration

By the end of 2014 in Europe, CLC Spain adopts, through its migrations team, the mandate of the World EXCO to accompany and promote some kind of European proposal within this context. Since then we have been taking small steps in order for these not to become some circumstantial response to the present time, instead, that they might effectively consolidate a structure, a European Migration Network, allowing us to understand the scope of migrations as a field to which CLC in Europe is especially called, and therefore, one to which it must respond. This means that we can pray, discern and work on the issue based on the awareness of each of the members comprising the same and ask ourselves, what can we do from our Christian perspective, from our CLC vocation worked out in our daily lives and with our vital realities? But also, that as an organisation we must have the ability to position ourselves, cooperate with others, define priorities for action, channel proposals...

In this sense, we have been working with the Euroteam and proposing the need to form a “European Migration Team”, i.e., a group of national communities that have greater sensitivity towards this area, with sufficient experience working therein, which may be established as a small com-

munity for discernment and service that enables the coordination of the European work in this area, establishing a medium-term action plan both towards the European community itself, as well as from the same to its surrounding environment. This includes proposing some priority lines that allow the development of specific projects within a comprehensive understanding and framework for action, with a horizon enabling the evaluation thereof, as well as cooperation with other actors at European level, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). All of which should be collected by the Migration Network, which is the structure that makes it possible to disseminate the proposals made by the Migrations Team to every national community, and from there, to the local communities. To achieve all this would require people who are sent to those workspaces on behalf of their national communities and with the backing from their communities and national councils, who have a sense of our Apostolic body and that, based on those service areas to the European Community, can establish spaces for discernment and decision-making, which are then accompanied and collected by the national communities.

At the beginning of the European crisis (note: not “refugee crisis”), as CLC Europe we have been able to agree on a first position in relation to the response to those requesting refuge. We have drawn up prayer and awareness-raising material to implement in each of the European communities which share a common feeling and sense in relation to the reality of migration in order to respond in a quicker and more acceptable way in the face of different dramatic situations we are witnessing today.¹

This prayer material is pending dissemination and the implementation of the work proposal for the communities.

As of November, we have a meeting planned that will allow us to define and specify a European migrations apostolic plan, as well as the forming of that migra-

¹ For example: The latest news is the eviction of all the NGOs that were involved in Lesbos, thus kicking out, without witnesses, all those seeking refuge who were being attended in the camps on this island and sending them to Turkey.

tions team referred to at the beginning. We will need to continue working on this matter incrementally, given that the draft presented to Euroteam earlier this year seemed too ambitious and we will have to work on simpler ideas that allow us to establish a common and solid base.

Evaluation and Moving Forward

We have just finished the evaluation process of the project developed in Ragusa (Sicily, Italy), a project for the promotion of volunteerism among the CLC to support migrant and refugee people who come to this island in cooperation with the San Giovanni Battista Foundation and a Jesuit community. This was a project proposed by CLC Italy and adopted by the Euroteam for its development at European level, requesting coordination on the part of CLC Spain as a benchmark for the European migration network. Various aspects related to the improvement of an ongoing project considered merged from the evaluation. These aspects are timely and interesting due to their potential for making a European reality evident: the South border, the possibilities of awareness raising, the importance of direct contact with those who suffer, and our Ignatian spirituality as a basis for performing the same. The evaluation is also relevant because of the potential it has in the face of structuring relational dynamics, communication and internal coordination of CLC Europe. With it, we may be able to open doors of potential to the team and the actual structuring of the migration network. This will likewise help define lines of action which can take the form of a specific expression in the form of project that, with a larger frame-

work and a shared understanding of our course of action in CLC Europe, will make its sustainability possible and even the development of other concrete experiences.

Challenges and Hopes

At the present time we still have to overcome many difficulties related to communication, work patterns, priorities that must be established, and the different sensitivities regarding a situation that requires urgent answers. However, despite being Christians with a shared spirituality and vocation, there are those who continue putting forward feelings that give rise to threats, fear, invasion, inability... for attending to the people who are fleeing, who suffer and are in a situation of great vulnerability.

We need to rejuvenate the spirit of a decrepit, self-centred and forgetful Europe; to motivate it with youthful vigour, to awaken again sensitivity for human beings, for the brotherhood of mankind, from the direct, simple, clear and non-demagogic evangelical message of Jesus, which is hard for us to live out with sincerity.

We remain hopeful knowing that it is a process that requires time, which ultimately depends on God and in which, from our part, we are investing everything we know. From CLC Europe, this action must help us consider the people arriving as brothers and sisters, and to commit ourselves to welcoming and receiving them, while at the same time working to change the unfair structures that compromise this possibility and the development of their lives in the countries of their birth.

*Original in Spanish
Translated by Clifford Schisler*



Ignatian Forum concerning the Southern Border

Asier Arpide

"It is good to know that from now on there will be no possibility of rowing in darkness to the other shore except our own, given that freedom to choose unfairly will be forever abolished..." Mario Benedetti

The Ignatian Forum concerning the Southern Border, organised by the Social Sector of the Society of Jesus and the Jesuit Migrations Service of the Province of Spain, was held between April 14 and 16.

I was invited as a member of the CVX Spain Migrations Team and my intention is to present some reflections regarding the same, as well as endeavour to share my experience with you. Other aspects such as

meeting objectives, contents... are available on the blog of CVX Spain and on the website of the Social Sector of the Society of Jesus of the Province of Spain.

The Forum was held in Nador, a Moroccan city which borders with Melilla, only 12 kilometres by road between both places. It is a very pretty natural enclave, with the sea to the North and the city facing it, and can be accessed by a renovated promenade costing a huge investment and includes large tourism projects under construction involving strong economic interests. Facing in this direction, the hills and mountains surrounding the city are behind us, where more than just the beauty, we are moved by the situation of hundreds, or thousands of people living there, in some cases for years, without access to work or other means of livelihood, or to resources found in an urban environment.

One of the things that draws attention in the city is the low standard of living in general, as well as the contrasts found in the same space. This can be seen in abandoned buildings adjoining a luxury hotel, or inhabited houses nearby which have been lacking maintenance for many years. Likewise, public services such as cleaning do not seem to exist, so those in charge of the stores take responsibility for washing down the street section in front of their location.

No police are in sight, there is however no feeling of insecurity and one can calmly stroll through any area; also, paradoxically, everything seems to be under control. In front of the Baraka centre, where we usually met, secret police were constantly present, as well as at the hotel, and even sometimes when we moved in groups there was someone nearby listening or following our every step.





To sum it up, one can perceive an attempt to give the city a facelift by using large investments which currently are not generating any redistribution of wealth, as well as tight control over any non-governmental socio-religious projects and activities.

The presence of the Migrations Delegation and its accompanying health care project is accepted, but the same is not officially recognised. There is a sense of uncertainty in the air. Under these circumstances, diplomatic tensions may give rise to pressures outside regulations and laws. Much care is taken "not to enrage" local authorities due to the effects this may have on the project. This includes official bodies such as the consulate, given the effects that this may have on other areas of foreign policy. Specifically, this means that at the last minute, permission from the local public authorities was not obtained for the subsequent Forum on spirituality and border that was to be held between Melilla and Nador, which gathers more than 300 people. The reason: There is no border. Morocco does not recognise Melilla as belonging to Spain and therefore the existence of the border, but paradoxically it manages existing border crossings with an iron grip.

It is a "game" strategy which ignores the effect of the situation on the people and establishes a give and take mentality.

From a macro and structural understanding regarding the border, control and power relationships are established over the people and resources that ultimately respond to the eco-

nomie interests of a few. Natural resources, business agreements, flow control, etc., are achieved in collusion between large corporations and political powers that are more concerned with their own private interests than the benefits of the citizens they represent.

Realities of structural injustice are established with government approval, which finds support in a confused Spanish population that fails to distinguish between rights and privileges. A society capable of supporting and justifying the limitation and restriction of access to universal rights such as health, education... on the part of a whole population resident in their country, yet, accept an unsustainable life style as a right which certainly is not applicable universally.





What we fail to fully understand in Europe is that when a person has to flee their country leaving everything: family, friends, belongings... or when a person leaves their town or city due to livelihood issues, with promise and hope for those who remain, there is no turning back. Turning back is not an option.

It is the profitability of the fear factor in which a majority of the population understands that it must fend off a threat, so that others can actually continue to obtain great benefits from the same. This reality allows, accepts and perpetuates the continuity of these unfair structures of which we all are abettors with different levels of responsibility.

Amid all this, today a young sub-Saharan from the Delegation not more than 30 years old, attempted to jump the border fence. He walks like an elderly person and needs help to take one step after another. Wincing in pain, his jaw is broken in three parts. He is broken. They have not only broken his bones, but also his spirit. He will have to travel 130 km to find physical treatment. How

far will he have to travel in order for his spirit and hope to be reborn again? For weeks he will be eating soup and mashed potatoes with a straw, time to return to the forest, but without a doubt, he will try to cross again.

In the afternoon two more young people arrive on crutches and with legs in a cast. They are people and their lives depend on whether they can cross or not. Family, money, expectations... all these are side effects for the governments of Spain and Morocco who currently are fighting about investigations of a judge, or the rescue of three mountaineers. What we fail to fully understand in Europe is that when a person has to flee their country leaving everything: family, friends, belongings... or when a person leaves their town or city due to livelihood issues, with promise and hope for those who remain, there is no turning back. Turning back is not an option.

People live under harsh conditions in the mountains, exposed to the weather and without resources. They rely on the assistance and care of other people, which are usually organisations such as the delegation accompanying the health services, which helps them organise and deal with health care issues and prevention, handing out kits for cold weather: blankets, socks, gloves, hats and jackets. Likewise, food and sometimes shoes are given when available. Local people also facilitate drinking water from their own homes and sometimes they donate a bit of money. However, their presence in the city is not well received and they certainly have no access to any work.

Two great realities exist in the mountains: insecurity and fear. Fear of the police or auxiliary forces and fear of the Mafia. Nevertheless, this is a place where one lives from hope, the hope of crossing next time.

The border is a place of tremendous contradiction. The contradiction of a local population that does not want to see them, yet

they provide help according to their resources. The contradiction of fear and hope.

It is a theological space of intense humanity where people are looking for dreams, hopes, illusions, with an absolute dependence on other human beings to cover the most basic needs (water, food, clothing...)

And yet it is an extremely dehumanised place because of the Border States, for whom the people are the least important compared with the diplomatic strategies for establishing beneficial relationships serving their own purposes, which are not always in tune with the needs of the citizens they represent.

And while in Europe there is still no response, hundreds of people die every day along the Italian coasts. Stop and think for a moment. Hundreds of people are not words.

We would do well to remember the words of Pablo Neruda: "I do not know who is suffering but it is one of ours."

It is time for hope, Christian hope. As CVX we are called to the borders, not only to

these borders but including these. As Christians we are called to build the Kingdom here and now, along with others, all of this from our daily life, family, work, service...

The vast majority are located at the base of the iceberg, as Franklin said, which is not a comfortable space from which to live our Christian and CVX life passively and routinely, or to be committed with reality only in our free time. It is a call to make an analysis of our lives, a call to review our lifestyle, our consumer mentality, who we vote for, who we live with, who we relate to, what values we convey, it is a call to involve our common and 'hidden' lives in building the Kingdom, from and with our families. A call to overcome the comforts, routines and acquired lifestyles, to be present at uncomfortable, destabilising and contradictory borders from our day to day reality.

All of this, trusting in what Galeano said: "*Many small people, in small places, doing small things, change the world.*"

*Original in Spanish
Translated by Clifford Schisler*





CLC Syria: In Faith and Plight



CLC in Homs

Abed Rayess

I have no desire or will to identify the exact name for this political conflict (revolution, civil war or just a conspiracy), because as soon as you make an identification you may set one face to the complex conflict and, in a sense, that will make me a part of it which I do not want. Thus what I am actually concerned about is what the Biblical name is.

When God asked Cain: Where is your brother? God wanted to awaken in Cain his brother's image, but then Cain answered: am I my brother's keeper? At that moment, he killed his brother again by his apathy and deafness and became the first isolated, strange, homeless refugee human being in the world.

Thus, both the Bible as well as the series of events in Syria clarify how such a terrible reality could become *non-evangelic*¹, and is continuously producing a series of terrible news and events, so that the glory of God does not exist in heaven because of the war on earth and the misery and sadness inside people.

From an Ignatian view, I can recognize the angel of light. So to destroy a country and make its people kill each other you can begin with a subtle seduction: you are in injustice and your brother is taking all the blessings and gifts, so if you murder your brother, the danger will vanish. The other (the brother) is hell itself. If he disappeared, hell will disappear and heaven comes within reach. With such seductive and evil messages, the catastrophe started in my beloved country.

Those messages originally came from international news channels which are employed for the benefits of their funders. They just poured the oil above the fire and let it blaze. They did whatever they could to get this crisis so far till there was no way back.

Like the angel of light disguising as lambs hiding behind sympathetic speeches and bright, flashy titles and headlines such as democracy – freedom – nationalism and independence. Under these headings the civilians pushed to kill each other in my country.

¹ Not rooted in the Gospels



This does not mean that Syria had no political, social problems ready to catch fire at any time. But what I mean is that what is non-evangelic in my county is rooted in and interacts with the (non-evangelic) atmosphere of the world as a whole: purpose, results, beginnings and endings. In other words maybe it's not in fact the crisis of Syria but the Crisis of a world distant from the Gospel.

If we take a tragic and pessimistic comprehensive vision for this crisis, then we will just find a refugee, fleeing people driven as herds like in August Caesar's statistics. On other hand the meditative and observable eye will be able to see a small simple group experiencing a different, deeper and optimal reality like the shepherds in the childhood gospel. I confidently express that CLC Syria members have experienced, especially last year, a spirit of hope, preaching, renewal and inspiration, mainly in our general meetings. We are living a time of grace in war time.

The way of CLC was not without obstacles before this war, we complained about the absence of the sense of vitality, losing the feeling of growth, the lack of projects. Now, in spite of the fact that we lost many great priests (because of death, murdering, kidnapping or travelling), and in spite of losing some of the members of CLC because of the bad living conditions, we do not feel orphaned but are united, more than any time, with praying, faith and hope as a group with one heart, living somehow similar to the first apostolic Church.

This similarity lies in that –just like when the apostles were remembering their mem-

ories about travels and experiences with Jesus Christ - we remember our creative experiences with the Jesuits, our CLC groups, including the spiritual exercises, and in the other Jesuit activities.

So with these experiences, we recognize that we really lived the gospel and we still want to carry on with such living experiences even deeper.

So how could we continue with the crucial lack of priests? Again we have here a similar point to the apostles community to when they were gathering and asking the guidance of Holy Spirit in the absence of Jesus.

In the last year, I personally experienced the spiritual effectiveness of a lay community which recognizes the Spirit's guidance. The lack of the Jesuits transformed into a gift. It forced us to look for the consoler, and He existed generously

We continued with the rest of remaining priests with the spiritual exercises and activities, asking the help from the available ones, depending mainly on our own initiative and creativity.

At the present time, CLC Syria is a growing community, composing more and more of new groups. It is an attractive community gaining new members; a rooted community since many members present themselves for serving and accompanying the new groups, an emissary community shining its spirit to the others as we have had the opportunity to open our door for the others, including Muslims. in many activities, in addition to many

Below from left to right: Pilgrimage in Old Homs where residents have expressed their desire to live through drawings on the walls destroyed by war; Gathering of members from CLC Homs in the Jesuit Convent in Homs, where Fr. Frans Van der Lugt was martyred; Morning prayer in the chapel of the Jesuit convent in Homs, during a pilgrimage in August 2015



members participating in relief works specially that with the Jesuits.

So, what is running in our minds is, how could we blow an evangelic spirit in a world which is isolated and estranged from the gospel? We have felt and appreciated the sympathy and supporting of the universal community emotionally and materially. This

support yielded a real means which contributed in the success of our community activities.

We wish not just the continuity of support, or your sympathy, but also sharing our sense of enthusiasm. We are aware of being one community with an essential responsibility which is to tell the world good news!

CLC in Aleppo

Samar Asmar

With the onslaught of the war in Syria, my country, in the shadow of the difficult circumstances that we are going through-- the destruction, death and suffering in which we are living-- I ponder on several questions: on the meaning of my life and the aim of my existence; on the meaning of suffering, of sadness, of death; on the meaning of the anguish and fear that we feel, awake or asleep.

Why is God exposing us to this difficult ordeal?

It was clear that diabolical forces were playing with us, with our existence, our destiny, our present, our future, but equally with our minds, our perceptions, and the principles upon which we have grown up in for long decades: coexistence, peace and charity. Why does God allow all this? Why has the whole world suddenly

dropped us? Consoling voices are weakened and blurred, not overcoming evil and death.

In these circumstances, in the shadow of all this questioning and with regard to the demands of daily life, the lack of resources, the absence of a prospective vision of our lives, I was searching, reflecting and meditating on the presence of God in my life. I have felt His presence touching me and how strongly He supports me. And this presence gave me joy and awakened in me a strong desire to open myself more to Him and to allow Him more room. I offer Him what I expect to experience, I examine all my thoughts before Him and I leave Him the possibility of choosing in my place.

And I feel in some situations and circumstances that what





Above: Closing evening of a retreat in Homs, with young people from Aleppo, Damascus and Homs, in september 2015

seems to come from me is not from my nature, or my wisdom.

Dangerous occurrences have begun to multiply and get worse in my country. A bullet struck my husband; amazingly, I survived three shells that landed near me, and our house has suffered damage from exploding bombs. The problems now are no longer limited to the absence of the means for subsistence (such as electricity, water, communications, petrol, food, or the scarcity of an income), but our very existence itself is increasingly in danger. All this happened in concert with what the region around us endures, like the murders and kidnappings of Christians at Mosul in Iraq, of Assyrians in the province of Haskaké, and the throat cutting of Copts in Libya, as well as the targeting of people in different regions of Syria because of their belonging to certain political, ethnic or community groups.

At this particular time, we began to ask ourselves more urgently to make the choice between leaving or staying.

On the personal level, I was beginning to ask myself questions about the goal of my life on earth. It is only a bridge leading me to eternal life with God. As a consequence, it matters little whether it is long or short, easy or tiring, the important thing for me is to accept my sufferings and offer them to God as my participation in glorifying His holy name.

And on the family level, my husband and I have searched together to understand our mission as Christians and as a Christian family in the society that surrounds us. What ought we to do? Do we stay here, or do we migrate to another country? God, what do you want from us? Where does He want us to bear witness to Him? Are we ready to bear witness to Christ until death? What is our duty to our children? How to protect them and do our best for them?

To answer these questions and distinguish God's will from our own is no easy task. Today, I feel with my husband that our mission consists in striving together to stay in our society, with our own people and those of them who are still here. We think that our presence here as Christians in this part of the Orient is the fruit



of the constancy and martyrdom of the first Christians, our ancestors, who endured much, were exposed to persecution and

fought against evil in order to witness to Christ in the land where He was born.

*Original in French
Translated by Patricia Kane*



CLC in Damascus

Nada Sarkis

The situation in Damascus

In Damascus, as in all the towns, some have decided to leave to find safety. This is not possible for everyone, because the cost of travel is high. Others have had to sell their house and their goods to escape death, they have said their goodbyes to their friends and cousins, without knowing if they will see one another again one day. Still, others have stayed, not because they do not have the means to leave, but from a personal decision, a wish to remain, to share and to live.

Difficulties

On the economic and social levels :

The question that each person asks is : do I stay or do I go ?

Several reasons urge us to consider leaving: to escape the bombs and explosions that happen at any time; to get away from the high cost of living; the hatred as a result of the war; the lack of the simple essential needs of daily life, like water, electricity, fuel, etc.

Young people have no future here.

Families experience dangers and insecurity.

The region is heading for total destruction.

On the spiritual level :

Since the beginning of the crisis, the question keeps being repeated : where is God?

The answers are different, according to the experience of each person, and the journey before and after the crisis:

- ✓ God the avenger and the combatant,
- ✓ God who works miracles,
- ✓ God who does not intervene,
- ✓ God who walks with His people, who works through us, who is with us.

With the pursuit of the war, some people have developed spiritually because of the difficult situations; others have lost some of their faith because of the difficulties they meet, such as the loss of dear friends or a family member. In this case, our community tries to understand the circumstances and that uncovering the suffering in the heart of each person helps develop a better spiritual life. It also allows us to find the presence of God in the life of each one of us, to see how He deals with each of us. If we truly want to live with Him, He will not abandon us, but He will act in His way, not ours. So, our role often consists in listening with compassion to the expressions of suffering.

The challenges

The real challenge is to ask myself constantly: what is the meaning of my presence here? What can I do? Those who have chosen to stay are taking on their responsibility in society for themselves, and for their families. The meaning of life for them has expanded: they are leading a deeper spiritual life. They are seeking to survive, in spite of the exterior hardships and the lack of security. They face several challenges:



1. The loss of someone, be it by death or by emigration.
2. The fear that goes with this loss, fear for others, fear of loneliness, fear of the shells that no one knows when or where will fall.
3. Discouragement and desolation: our goal and our dream is to live life to the full, but we are often discouraged by seeing the misfortunes of others : siege, hunger, sickness, lack of means of transport. We are worried about them, and for the future of children facing the most cruel situations. We feel powerless. We content ourselves with praying for them, especially when we hear the bombs heading their way.
4. Faith in living together, Muslims and Christians, not being carried away by what leads to division, for we are all Syrians, and God has chosen this way of life for us.
5. Transport and its difficulties in view of the transfer of several companies to Damascus, believing it to be more secure than Homs and Aleppo and other regions.
6. Influence of weakened spirits on physical health during the war.
7. No clear horizon ahead for our country, our only hope lies in God, who alone is all powerful.
8. Absence of our dear priests, Father Frans, assassinated, Father Paolo, kidnapped, and also Fr Michael, now deceased, who gave much of his time to CLC.
9. The lack of spiritual guides, who not only taught us to meditate on the Gospel, but also to live it in all its details.

Role of the World Community

The compassion of the World CLC has deeply touched us. We thank all the members for their sharing and their prayers. Their financial support helped us to:

- ✓ Experience the spiritual dimension by making the Spiritual Exercises at Touffaha (a peaceful region);
- ✓ Have the opportunity to take on a mission that allowed us to feel the importance of our presence for others in the midst of the difficult situations that we are experiencing.

We feel that we were like Bartimaeus the blind man, sitting at the edge of the road... and after his shouting and the call from Jesus, everyone around him told him : take courage, get up, the Lord is calling you...

With the blind Bartimaeus, let us pray: Lord, let us walk with You along the road.

*Original in French
Translated by Patricia Kane*

Below: Meditation during a retreat at Touffaha, near Tartus, with CLC members from Aleppo, Damascus and Homs





Come you all to the Well of Encounter

Marie Antoinette Jamin



The French congress

The French CVX Congress is a national gathering which is held every five years, one year after the Community Assembly meeting (where national orientations are discerned; held as well one year after every CLC World Assembly). The Congress is the only opportunity for the entire French community to meet, and a preferred occasion to go back to the World Assembly orientations, translated into National orientations.

So how was the venue selected? After asking several cities that appeared, in our opinion, to be territories where the motto “from our roots to frontiers” seemed to apply, we easily converged on Cergy-Pontoise, a diocese both rural and urban with a wide diversity of cultures and origins. The local team showed a real enthusiasm to welcome the community, and this enthusiasm never wavered during the preparation of the Congress. The French ExCo appointed a team to prepare this event two years in advance, and gave them recommendations on the form and the substance.

Choosing the theme

The Congress Preparation Team took ownership of the orientations of the Commu-

nity and of the recommendations of the ExCo in order to feel the pace the French Community would be invited to keep up with. “Come to the well encounter”: this theme arose after the team discerned on the Samaritan woman gospel, which was (mistakenly) read at the mass attended by the preparation team. Inviting members to “go to frontiers” isn’t this simply meeting Christ in our everyday lives, getting in touch and dare to share what deeply moves us. CVX members joined the congress after they had prepared the Congress with a support booklet. Yes, strangely, hearts were “prepared” for this unlikely encounter.

Graced by attendees

2500 adults and 300 children gathered during three days, as well as 100 guests from other countries (coming from 34 different CLC national communities). Conscious of the particularity of the French community – its large size – and of the importance to take into account the worldwide reality of CLC, we proposed to the CVX members of France to invite friends from other countries where CLC is present. This was achieved by appointing members which showed interest for international links. This is a mutual gift for CLC. Each Congress implements new experiments. At Nevers in 2010, Congress at-

Beside: Presentation of the ExCo members; On the following page: Above Jean Fumex, Jean-Luc Fabre and Anne Fauquignon members of the National ExCo; Below Mauricio Lopez, World CLC president; Luke Rodrigues SJ, World CLC Vice-Ecclesiastical Assistant
On the next pages: Images and scenes from the Congress; At the center of the pages: Mgr Stanislas Lalanne, Bishop of Pontoise



tendants were lodged in local families – believers or not, because the local hotel capacity was not sufficient. This experience was repeated in Cergy Pontoise and these opportunities were precious: they were the origin of unlikely encounters through the attention given and received, the exchanges that arose. 1200 people were lodged by local people.

Glimpses of the Congress

The specific point of this gathering was the **Well of Encounter** on Saturday, with a focus on the diocese and local life. Each well had a specific purpose, a specific space and them of encounter. They were sharing spaces, immersion spaces, creation spaces. Wells placed people who did not know each other before, from 9 AM to 3 PM, with the challenge to live and share something together, allowing each one to be moved and touched by what one did not know. 50 wells took place in the city in connection with local organizations and the diocese, and 120 wells were proposed by the members themselves. How rich and diverse!

Let us quote a few examples:

The CLC workshop « foreigners » animated 10 wells on the question of immigrants and the path they follow once they arrive in France.

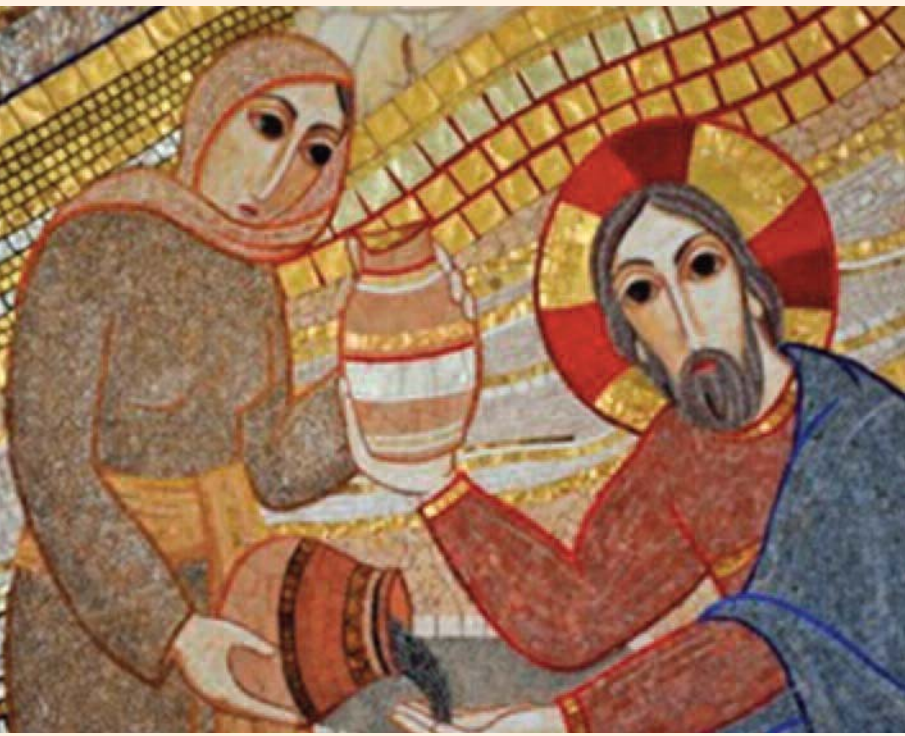
A Well allowed to share feelings and opin-

ions after listening to the testimonials of homosexual persons.

A Well consisted in sharing some time on the barge where Tibetan refugees are taken cared of.

The Community has started to pay attention and welcome **young people** two or three years ago. A large number have never had the opportunity to live such a gathering. So, proposing them a 3 day meeting in the mid-





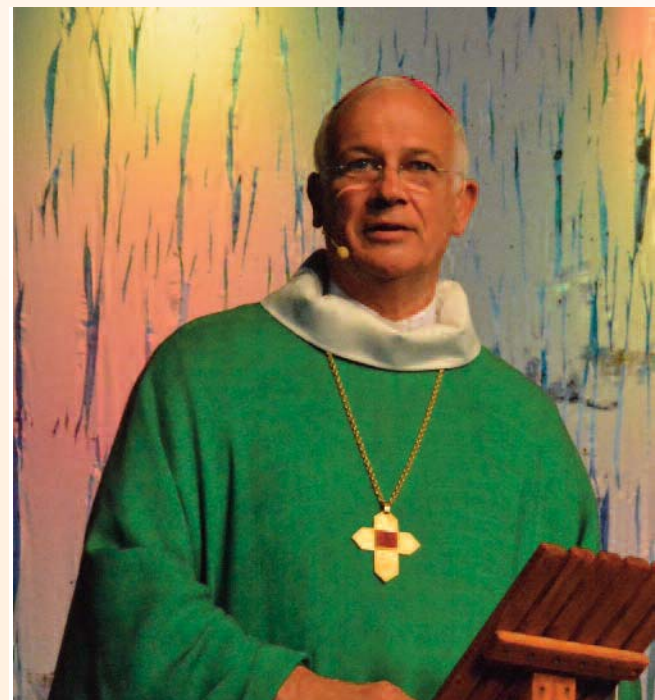
dle of summer vacation with a deadline for registration of 2 months before the meeting, was simply not feasible. We finally created a flexible 24 hours schedule within the Congress frame and we gathered about 15 young Christians – CVX members or not. It was a fruitful time co-animated with Luke Rodrigues SJ and Mauricio Lopez. This experience taught us that it was good to find « flexible » solutions within a fully structured event.

The Bishop's welcome, and his emotion: a very peculiar gift was the warm welcome by the bishop, including the champagne served to a small team that gathered in the garden of the bishop's residence. Yes, this period of time was really an opportunity for communion between CVX and the local Church community. This reinforces us in the presence to our land area, each one where we live and following our own missions



Music: We experimented with musical creation for this Congress. Again a team set off, prayed, worked and produced a CD *with 12 songs*, which was a first output. *(More to come)*

Meals' organization: This topic is more present in our national gatherings: how can we hear and take care of economy and ecology in our meals? Many reasons why – especially the number of people - would have led people in charge of giving a sense to meals organization to throw in the towel. But in France, food is important!!! Eventu-



ally, preparing meals for 2500 people with local products happened to be feasible.

Fruits for the National Community

The World Executive Council's presence: Mauricio and Luke's speeches gave a real coherence to the invitation heard from our Pope Francis to go to the peripheries. Feedback received *after the Congress* showed that these words moved the members. Moreover, they were fully consistent with the French ExCo message.

Our French Community identified spiritual support as a mission for the Community. This awareness is strong and is a root on which everyone can stand to discern and act at the fringes/frontiers that call us to mind in our daily lives.

Right now, it is too early to measure the graces and fruits received. This gathering gave a true momentum to each of us in particular and to the service teams of the regional communities – which are starting their service at the end of the congress.

Likewise, we are witnessing that international experiences continue to be lived and innovate (for example German companions invited Parisian companions to spend a week end in Köln and will come for a retreat in France)

*Original in French
Translated by Jean-Mary Thierry*





If you only knew the Gift of God

Thomas Théophile Nug Bissohong



The 2015 CLC-France Assembly and me

I have decided to make a solemn celebration of my baptism into the Roman Catholic Church for a whole year starting on 27th February last year until 27 February 2016. Among the sources of inspiration that have fashioned me are the provisions and promises from God as set out in this text: “This fiftieth year shall be for you a jubilee year [...] The jubilee will be holy for you [...] Each one of you will return to your heritage” (Lv25, 11- 13). Halfway through my journey of thanksgiving to the Lord for the gift of his life received in Christ, one of the blessings that I was able to enjoy greatly is my participation in the National Assembly of CLC-France, a gathering of nearly 2,700 people, held from July 31 to August 2, 2015 in the city of Cergy-Pontoise.

The theme proposed by the organizing team was “Come to the well of encounter” recalling the Gospel scene where Jesus, a Jew, converses at length with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob (Jn 4: 1-42).

With the benefit of hindsight, in the light of the conference theme and my life experience it seems clear to me that my acceptance of the invitation to participate in this Assembly has confirmed my faith in this way: our human wish to encounter God and others drives us to trust his Beloved Son, who is “the Way” (Jn 14: 6). Jesus has in-

deed led my extended stay in France, throughout the month of August 2015, to a crossroads of the most unlikely interpersonal encounters, both providential and richly life-giving.

Everything points to the fact that they were destined, in this time of the Golden Jubilee of my baptism to lead me to revisit my Christian commitment and to nourish it with a special momentum of Gospel-inspired openness allowing myself to be loved more, so that in my turn, I love more and in an authentic fashion.

So I want to give witness that the grace-filled acts and the various people encountered have collaborated in the work of God who has provided for me, in this year 2015, an especially rewarding apostolic stay in this country “the eldest daughter of the Church”.

Sharing life

During the Assembly, I was impressively struck by the personal warmth and spiritual zeal of all participants I came in contact with. Meeting several of our colleagues from France and elsewhere in the world, it was a time of reunion bringing back memories of one or other of the four CLC World Assemblies that I had the grace to participate in: Hong Kong, China (1994), Itaici, Brazil (1998), Nairobi, Kenya (2003), and

View of the Congress



Beirut, Lebanon (2013). Further encounters with memories and catching up of CLC and / or Ignatian meetings at national or international level which I animated in Douala and Yaoundé, Cameroon (1993, 1997, 2011), Bouaké and Abidjan in Ivory Coast (1996, 2009), Harare, Zimbabwe (2001), in Antananarivo Madagascar (2003), Debra Zeit, Ethiopia (2007), Rome, Italy (2009), Lubumbashi Democratic Republic of Congo (2010) etc. This renewed immersion in the global dimension of our community that the Assembly made possible by bringing together colleagues from long time ago and from various continents, internally confirmed my call to live the universality of my baptism during the Jubilee celebration.

With other new friends discovered in Cergy-Pontoise, we were all invited, individually and collectively, to “travel with Jesus in the trail of the Samaritan woman,” as at the wells of the Gospel. This spiritual exercise involving the going out of oneself towards the Stranger, the Unknown, the Other or the Different, consisted here in “bearing witness to what we live, to welcome the testimony of our colleagues and friends, to experience together an encounter with men and women committed to serving others, with great witnesses, with the local Church”. In the context of the local community of the Assembly (CLC) which I experienced, I was able also to listen to the sharing about all practical aspects of the life of the people. The truth, the depth and the strength of Apostolic questioning of what was said, with ease and simplicity, have aroused in me a very particular admiration. I understood that we were benefitting from the fruits of a carefully planned spiritual and communal preparation. It is the same atmosphere— one at the same time serious, friendly and relaxing— I found with other members of my “well”. It was precisely one of the planned spaces to “experience an encounter of participants of the Assembly and representatives of local life or members of an association, to experience a different reality from ours “ so as to “re-position our bearings, to question our prejudices.” I continue to savour the example that I saw here of two French CLC members involved with other people of different nationalities and religions, in the creation and promotion of a co-operative restaurant in Montpellier. We were very touched by the way they described the project and the aim pursued: joint action for more solidarity in creating more employment and support and to fight against isola-

tion. They managed to make us understand the steps and contents of their initial and daily discernment, questioning and enriching our own daily affairs.

Both in the “wells” as in the Hub of the Local community’s for the Assembly, the encounter meeting between myself and others took place in the midst of a living and surprising Christ, when I dared to share aspects of my celebration of the anniversary of my baptism. As I had done in my first families and my community in the Church of Cameroon, I had to welcome and manage the increasing expressions of astonishment, curiosity, among my listeners. The reactions were the same when I asked them to pray with me for my country victim of numerous suicide bombings by the Islamist group Boko Haram, building on the text of the Act of Consecration of Cameroon to Mary Queen of Apostles, text inherited from 125 years ago from the very first Catholic missionaries, German Pallotine fathers.

I was so pleasantly surprised when some CLC members from France accepted my prayer request and their recall of the dramatic events and killings that took place in early 2015 at the premises of the magazine Charlie Hebdo. They too rediscovered and reflectively recalled the official edict published in February 1638 and by which King Louis XIII also consecrated their country to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the context of the fidelity to our common mission in our two respective countries, as in others where CLC is established today, we finally realised the truth of these remarks that the President of our World Executive Council, Mauricio Lopez, spoke in Cergy-Pontoise:

“We must urgently put the tools of Ignatian spirituality at the service of the world and

Thomas Nug (seated, left) and members of his "Well" during the Congress



take them to the ultimate limits, because, faced with the signs of the times of the present, their timeliness and relevance is unique. This implies that we need to go to new mission destinations without abandoning those important ones [we already have] “

In this regard, the testimony of those who with or without their spouse, form the Network of Deacons for Ignatian Spirituality in France (RDI) who, by the way, had a stand at the Assembly venue, seemed to me to have an exemplary apostolic value. Across the country, CLC members who are Permanent Deacons show clearly and significantly “the presence of the Church in everyday life, side by side with lay people baptized or not, for the service of men and women of our time and especially the poorest”. I am profoundly convinced that the Ministry of CLC-Deacon, which I have discovered with joy, has today the potential to inspire and provide an effective basis for the social and political commitment of our communities in Africa and elsewhere.

The aggiornamento of the terms of the Apostolic alliance

Following the Assembly and in its aftermath, it is at the well of an eight-day retreat

that the Lord desired to meet me and talk to me during my trip to France. Naturally, in the context of my celebration of the Jubilee, my initial desire for my retreat was to search and find out how, today, I can better live, especially as a baptized person, the reality of my personal vocation in the Church and in Society.

The gospel contemplations gradually sent me back to my baptismal vocation to follow Christ and be with him, “Priest, Prophet and King”. I then felt a strong inner call to open up radically to the priestly dimension of my being a child of God, and to the more ardent realization of the prophetic and royal dimensions. This experience opened for me the memory, the understanding and feeling for the link that exists between the baptismal commitment and Eucharistic life, such as Xaviere Marie-Anne Aitken and the Jesuit Thierry Lamboley express it: “At the heart of your weaknesses and your limits, make of your life an offering to God and to others. Keep repeating a simple yes to life. That will give you confidence in yourself beyond the doubts that may assail you. That will give you confidence in others who accompany you on your way!” (To better live the Mass, Paris, Editions SER, 2015, p.72). The smart response, it occurred to me, ought to be to readjust aspects of my life of prayer and my attitude to the authority of service, whether I exercise it or when it is ministered to me.

For the rest of my stay, I had the opportunity to conduct activities that guided me to overcoming the weaknesses and limitations in the history of my baptism and that the retreat had brought back to mind. I realized more clearly, and as I had not done so previously, that the attention I am used to giving to the sick undoubtedly comes from the awareness of six months’ premature birth and in the accompanying suffering: a condition that necessitated my urgent baptism at the hospital by a religious sister who was a member of the medical team on the same day when I came into the world.

The Spiritual Exercises, always make me susceptible to remembering the dead. I am convinced that the death of my mother at my birth, that of my twin brother 40 days later and the context of the annual prolonged face-to-face with the Lord have the effect to refresh in me, in a certain way, the inclination to believe that my survival and my apostolic life carry in them, the requirement of a holy remembrance of the loved

From top to bottom:
Alwin Macalalad,
Executive Secretary of
World CLC, Analucia
Torres and Thomas
Théophile Nug;
Nug Thomas at the
Congress with Mr. and Ms
Diego (CLC France),
Adelaide and Denis Talom
Tchuenta (CLC Cameroon)



ones who have made it before me to the house of the Father. My desire to honor the memory of our deceased manifested itself differently after my retreat. First in the southwest of France, at Cahors, where a young and long-standing friend and Cameroonian CLC friend died peacefully. His younger sister whom I met during the Assembly, herself a CLC member, led me to the place where our brother is buried and we took comfort in praying together near his grave. In the house of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Chevilly-Larue where I stayed for a few days thanks to a introduction by a priest from Douala, I consulted the archives in particular for a publication on the life and work of the first known Catholic Cameroonian, Johann Ludwig Andreas Maria Kwa Mbangue, baptized January 6, 1889 in Germany and who died in Douala on August 16, 1932. I was not loath to take the opportunity, at the time of the celebration of the “Centenary of the Holy Ghost Fathers’ Mission in Cameroon” to go to the corner of the cemetery and take some moments of reflection at the graves of many missionaries of the congregation who have worked among us.

Finally, after I was accompanied to Paris Montparnasse cemetery to pray to God at the grave of the French Jesuit Eric de Rosny, I also, with and at the home of one of his relatives, initiated a conversation around his life and work. CLC Members, the colleagues from the University of Douala staying in Paris, some nuns from the Community of Xavières and other interested in the subject actively took part in that conversation. My need to remember him, who in his adopted country of Cameroon took the name of Dibunjé, is largely due to the fact that for several years I had worked closely and effectively with him. He was Ecclesiastical Assistant for CLC-Cameroon as well as a specialist in anthropology of African Health and member of the Ignatian group of Yaounde where together and frequently we guided spiritual retreats.

Overall, therefore, before, during and after the Assembly of Cergy-Pontoise, within all the events and encounters, here and there in France, I felt confirmed in a particular vocation of the Church. It is a call of living out for myself and for others, the charisma of the Baptismal gifts that CLC promotes, in particular, to help to find God in all things and to bear witness to His fidelity for all time: the listening, the discernment and the



Congress attendees

review. I derive my crucial principles in this context generally but also, together with appropriate training, from the way in which others have variously identified and / or accompanied my weaknesses and my limitations as a child, a teenager or an adult. In this context, it seems undeniable that my re-discovery of the pedagogy of the Mother of God, as highlighted during this year in the two days I spent in Lourdes will remain for me an important point of my spiritual renewal. Guided meditations made this pilgrim return to Douala, with these thoughts:

“Mary [...] does not focus the attention of Bernadette on to her, as she continuously invites her [the girl] to enter inside the Grotto, where she points her to the source, that is to say towards Christ [...] Mary will lead Bernadette to the maturity of her Christian life, her [personal] vocation. It is in this way that from a religion of rites and rules, the young girl will come to meet a person [...] Mary, the Mother of the Savior who communicates with another lay person: Bernadette. Bernadette delivers the message, first to lay people, most of whom are women [...] This is the way, we receive this testimony, a treasure which is our heritage.” (Extract from the Pastoral Theme of Lourdes 2015: The Joy of the Mission).

For the celebration of the anniversary of my baptism and together with all other joys of the journey and stay, these words are already, in my eyes, an imperishable and beautiful gift: it will always be both evangelically and mercifully explosive in the context of the prevailing clericalism!

*Original in French
Translated by Patricia Kane*



Consecrated Life is for Lay People too

David Harold-Barry SJ



In Catholic circles we often witness, or at least hear of, people being ordained priests or making their religious profession or commitment. It is different from marriage but contains the same element of a permanent gift of oneself.

But when did you last attend a profession of commitment by lay people? For me the answer is, *'yesterday, at Kasisi in Zambia!'* It was without all the trappings of an ordination or profession but contained the same atmosphere of promise and joy.

They were professionals, men and women, who have practiced a life in the Spirit for some years and now wish to permanently commit themselves to a way of life based on the gospels. You might say, *"well, we do that already without making a public show of it!"* No doubt, you do and many others too. But the public commitment – as in marriage or anything else – focuses minds and provides method and structure. And those who witness the commitment now know that they have a task to support the ones making this choice.

The eight who made this lifelong promise are members of the Christian Life Community, a world community based on the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Ignatius' way was not just for Jesuits but opened up a path for anyone wishing to live the gospel more closely.

I was struck by this simple ceremony because it focuses attention on a movement in the Church which is as transforming as leaven in flour. I have lived long enough to have seen packed seminaries and novitiates on every continent. We were seventy novices when I entered the Jesuits in the days before Vatican II. Many left in the 1960s and '70s and few came in the 1990s and '00s. Today numbers are a fraction of what they used to be but we are not panicking. Quietly, we are trying to understand what is going on.

One conclusion shouting at us from the evidence is that lay people are taking a far more active role in the Church than they ever did. I can foresee a day when the Vati-

can will be staffed by lay men and women with only the odd cleric here or there. This is already happening in diocesan offices. Catholic schools that were once almost exclusively staffed by religious – that was my experience at St Ignatius College in Zimbabwe when I arrived in 1966 – are now entirely run by lay people. Religious are still there and we will come to that in a minute.

So, lay people have taken over schools, hospitals, radio stations, social centres and similar works that used to be run by priests and religious. But the question we are facing is; are they running them as competent professionals only or do they also see themselves as missionaries of the gospel?

There should be no contradiction between these two attitudes for the truly 'professional' approach will always be in harmony with the gospel. But when I make this distinction here I am referring first to those who see their work as satisfying basic expectations laid out in their job description. Yet living the gospel defies job descriptions. Jesus used parables, not descriptions, because living according to the gospel opens up boundaries and sees no limits.

My experience is that lay co-workers are touched by gospel values and do wish to live them in their service of the Church as well as in their own lives at home with their families. But it is often hard to grasp what exactly it is to be a disciple of Jesus unless we have a way of discovering who Jesus was and what was his message. This cannot be got from books or training courses.

This is where the Christian Life Community comes in. They present a way of life which takes us into the heart of the gospel message. First, CLC is a community movement. The members meet regularly, often once a fortnight, and share their experiences in a context of prayer. They help each other to understand the meaning of their experiences and they encourage each other to face challenges. They also enjoy each other's company and build warm friendships.

Secondly, CLC uses the tool of Ignatian spirituality, that is, the dynamic of the Spir-

One conclusion shouting at us from the evidence is that lay people are taking a far more active role in the Church than they ever did.

itual Exercises which comes down to a method of understanding (discerning) the motivations which dominate my own heart. How do I act and why do I act the way I do? These exercises are not training sessions, such as footballers and athletes go in for, though they have something in common in the sense of developing attitudes and honing spontaneities. The Exercises of Ignatius open up the person to pay attention to God who is at work in their heart. They do this by helping the one making the Exercises to see themselves as they really are. Like a doctor's diagnosis this can be frightening. But unlike a doctor's diagnosis there is always a remedy. The one making the Exercises follows Jesus through his proclamation of the kingdom, the cost of this to him in his death and the bursting forth of new life in his rising from the dead. The CLC member goes through this journey and draws on it for his or her own life.

And this is where we come to the third pillar, or hearth stone, of CLC: mission. Having come together as a community of friends and having journeyed together through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are – like the disciples in the early Church – ready for mission. CLC sees four ways in which this can be done but I would like here to focus on the first way. The four ways are:

- ♦ The mission of living the gospel in daily life
- ♦ Individual works, salaried or voluntary, by which one serves the people
- ♦ Corporate works which several CLC run, e.g., a school (as in Nairobi)
- ♦ Advocacy work, e.g., at the UN where CLC has a voice

Living the gospel in daily life is what every follower of Jesus is called to do. But for many it can be rather general and unexamined. It is a general attitude of being a 'good guy' and 'doing the right thing.' But that can be a little fuzzy.

I spoke of the leakage of priests and religious in the 1960s and '70s but at the same time the Second Vatican Council was put-



So the mission of CLC, is first of all, to live the light of the gospel in those “places and circumstances” where only I, if I am a lay person, can make my contribution

ting a new emphasis on the mission of the laity. There are a number of striking passages in *Lumen Gentium* (#31, #34 and #36) and *Gaudium et Spes* (#36) but let me just quote one:

The laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstance where *only through them* can she become the salt of the earth (*LG* #33).

Jesus gave the Church a mission and this has primarily been understood as the preaching of the good news and the ministry of the sacraments. All other works – schools, clinics, work with refugees, etc. – are expressions of this announcing of the good news which is the love and compassion of God for his people. But now, in the twentieth century, the Church has understood that these are not enough. God wishes also to reveal himself right in the heart of

ordinary life and work: the fisherman at his nets, the mechanic at his lathe, the sales checker at her pay counter. They have to ‘announce’ the kingdom in a way in which it can be done *only through them*. This means all sorts of things, for example, integrity, imagination and attentiveness to the environment. A preacher on a Sunday morning can suggest to his listeners how to be honest. But there is no way he can suggest to them how to be imaginative. Yet imagination is part of the good news. We would never have advanced God’s creation, as we have, without it. So, living the gospel is not just a matter of being patient with your wife or husband; it is also seeing work as the place where I forge my contribution to the building up of the community of God’s people. Work may often seem rather dull and routine. But the joy is to strain from it all the brightness that I, as an individual, can contribute.

So the mission of CLC, is first of all, to live the light of the gospel in those “places and circumstances” where only I, if I am a lay person, can make my contribution.

A huge boost to this way of thinking was given by the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who died in 1955 and whose thinking influenced some of the bishops at the Council a few years later. Teilhard, a French Jesuit, went back into history as a palaeontologist studying the origins of life on our planet. Over the years he developed an understanding of evolution as a force in creation that strained forward towards what he called the Omega point, that is, the point where all creation achieves its goal.

For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. (I Corinthians 3:21-23)

Teilhard’s thought can be glimpsed from one short quotation:

Right from the hands that knead the dough, to those that consecrate the bread, the great and universal Host should be prepared and handled in a spirit of adoration.’ (Le Milieu Divin p 67, Fontana edition).

All nature, all matter, was charged with seeds of divine energy and the task of men and women everywhere is to bring those seeds to fruition. Lay people have the primary task here.

All nature, all matter, was charged with seeds of divine energy and the task of men and women everywhere is to bring those seeds to fruition. Lay people have the primary task here.

I have briefly described the call to the laity but where does this leave us, priests and religious? In what I have said I might be accused of downplaying our role as though we have become as redundant as former colonial officials! No, this will not happen. There is an essential role for priests and religious. In the language of CLC they are ecclesial assistants (EAs), or chaplains, although for some reason this last term is no longer used. What has happened is that roles have shifted. In the past the EA did virtually everything in terms of running the communities. Now he or she does not have to do all the administration and logistics and can concentrate on the *quality* of his/ her service in “opening the scriptures and breaking the bread” (Luke 24:32). Across the board – in schools, parishes and social centres – priests and religious can leave all the administration to lay people and concentrate on “serving the word” (Acts 6:4). Priests, religious men and women, bishops and popes are becoming freer and freer to devote their time to teaching the word and animating the community. In this way EAs and CLC members complement each other. This is one small model of the future Church. Our sisters and brothers who made their commitment at Kasisi on September 27, 2015, gave a striking witness to this.



Being EA¹: Graces of a 20-Year Journey in Facilitating Growth



Terry Charlton SJ

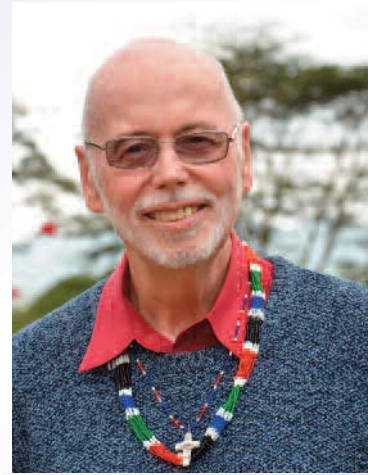
I am so grateful to the Editor of *Progressio* for inviting me to reflect on my 20 years as Ecclesiastical Assistant for CLC-Kenya from 1990 to 2010. It is a great pleasure to reflect upon one of the great blessings of my life. Though no longer EA, I think I could not live without CLC being a part of my life.

Let me say a little about myself. I managed to attend high school as part of the first graduating class at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School in my home town of Indianapolis, Indiana, USA in 1966. I joined the Jesuits, right after high school, in the Chicago Province. Eventually, I earned a Doctorate in Systematic Theology from Boston College with my dissertation on a very Ignatian topic, “The Incarnation in the Thought of Teilhard de Chardin”. In fact, the Teilhardian perspective has greatly informed my worldview and, indeed, how I conceive my ministry. During doctoral studies, I caught the African bug and was blessed by superiors who sent me to Africa.

Abruptly “invited” into CLC

I came to Nairobi in September, 1990, after having worked for three years at a spirituality centre in Kumasi, Ghana; that was my

first mission in Africa. My new mission was to lecture at Hekima College Jesuit School of Theology in Nairobi. One of the few things I was sure of, when I arrived in Nairobi was that, if I was going function well at a continental school with very few East Africans, let alone Kenyans, in attendance, I must have a connection with the local Church. I was hardly in Nairobi a week when then Scholastic Gerry Whelan, S.J., approached me and explained how, a year earlier, he had been invited by the CLC World Secretariat and the Jesuit Provincial of Eastern Africa to begin CLC in Nairobi. Gerry was entering into his last year of theological studies in Nairobi and wondered if I would work with him in shepherding CLC during the year ahead and then continue on as EA into the future. He invited me to a gathering of the 30 or so CLCers who had joined over the course of CLC-Kenya’s first year in existence. Of course, I said I would come with him to experience CLC-Kenya in order to have a basis for discerning whether the Lord was inviting me to work with CLC-Kenya. When we arrived at the venue of the meeting, I had several minutes to chat with CLCers as they arrived. When the meeting was called to order, Gerry, a typical Irish, good at getting his way, introduced me as the one, taking over from him as the Jesuit who would journey with CLC-Kenya. Well, I



Below from left to right:
First CLC National Assembly
at watakatifu wote - 1995;
Hekima College Chapel



guess it was a first-time election. Despite my little experience with CLC in general and these people in particular, it seemed so right, like a marriage made in heaven, so I did not object and the journey began.

Finding a Place in Fertile Grounds

CLC Kenya was greatly blessed by some wonderful gifts that enabled it to develop quite well over its first years. I have always named three in particular: (1) an extraordinary number of talented members who really took to Ignatian spirituality and dedicated themselves to living the CLC way and to working for the development of CLC-Kenya; (2) the support of a good number of Scholastics studying Theology at Hekima College, who were able to guide groups and accompany CLCers in the Spiritual Exercises; and (3) my organizational ability; I have always been pretty good at seeing the steps needed to get from Point A to Point Z. This helped, for example, in such areas as drafting the Constitution of CLC Kenya and Procedures for Temporary and Pemanent Commitment.

If I could use one word to speak about how I have seen my role as EA, it would be “facilitator”. I see facilitation as bringing out the best in persons, in organizations and in situations.

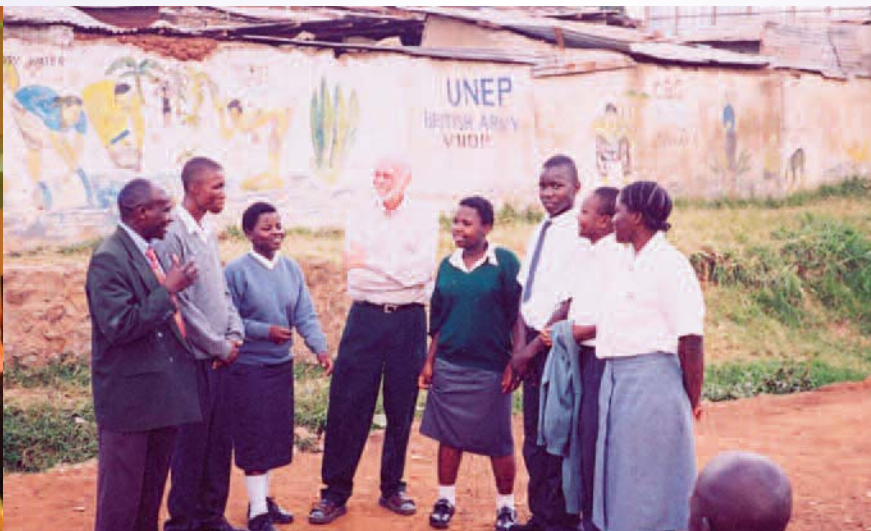
Beginnings: Facilitating Leadership Growth

To make CLC all it can be, much work has to be done to facilitate the potential for members to lead in a whole variety of ways. We can speak about this in terms of group

coordinators and group guides. We also worked hard to develop the ability of members to be able to give effective presentations to groups about aspects of CLC and of Ignatian spirituality. Spending time helping a member with outlining a presentation and practicing giving it before me and perhaps a few others would be time well-spent before the time would actually come to give the presentation. Feedback on what went well and what went not so well is always important for presentations, but it is also important for evaluating the whole meeting or the formation weekend or whatever is involved. We did really well with this kind of development in our first years. But we relied too much and too long on the same presenters and the same leaders. And we did not give the same attention to grooming and preparing well the next generations of presenters and leaders. If we are going to succeed well with continuing to build a vibrant organization and well-formed members, we have to keep forming new presenters and leaders. The same obviously is true of guides and coordinators of small groups. As the national community grows, the EA can certainly turn more of this work over to others who have already been formed but the actual attention to development of new leaders cannot be slackened.

Facilitating the health and development of the organization is, of course, also essential. Most importantly, this means the national organization. Our national leadership group, which eventually developed into the National Executive Council (EXCO) has been key. Integrating new members after national elections or when this or that person needed to be added

Below from left to right:
Fr. Charlton with guest at a
Fundraising Gala Dinner;
Meeting people at
Kibera slum



through a resignation was important. This needed to be done by bringing these persons into the Ignatian culture of discernment and decision-making. It was also important for me to distinguish “my” way, Ignatian as it might be, from other Ignatian ways. Such new ways coming from the insight or experience especially of a new national president needed to be nurtured and fostered. At times I was clearly being called upon to let go of a certain control or from becoming set in a particular way of doing things.

What I’m calling facilitation at times could mean that I had to take a strong initiative. I remember one point when we were approaching elections of national leadership for CLC-Kenya, and I did not see persons who could at that time lead effectively in the role of President coming forward. I realized that I needed to bring how I saw the situation to the attention of a very gifted and very busy CLC member and ask this person to make the sacrifice to accept the nomination for President. At real personal sacrifice and after some negotiation with me about how the responsibilities of office might be ensured to be manageable, the person accepted nomination and was rather overwhelmingly chosen as President by the membership.

A Decade in: Recognizing how Giftedness and Identity Flows into Apostolic Initiative

There are so many ways in which I might speak of facilitation of situations. Let me say a few words about situations that eventuated in what became our two national mission projects of CLC-Kenya. CLC was still less than a decade old in Kenya, but already I thought I could recognize a special giftedness among Kenyan CLC members as a group in appropriating Ignatian spirituality. I began speaking about this observation, and a desire on the part of a good number of members to share Ignatian spirituality with others emerged. Certainly, there was an interest in bringing others into CLC, yet we recognized that membership was not for everyone. Discussions expanded to involve Jesuit leadership and leaders of other Ignatian congregations. Eventually, founded in 2000, we began a collaborative effort under



the leadership of CLC with the Jesuits and other Ignatian congregations participating that founded The Zaidi Centre for Ignatian Spirituality. *Zaidi* is Swahili for “Magis”. The Centre is a non-residential centre, with a non-exclusive focus on laity serving the laity, by bringing elements of Ignatian spirituality to them in a variety of ways from retreats and accompaniment in the Exercises to environmental programs with the hallmark of discernment.

Beginning in 2001, as their mission, some CLC members began visiting persons living with AIDS in Kibera Slum (arguably the largest slum in Sub-Saharan Africa); this was certainly work that was at the cutting-edge in a time when there was still tremendous stigma and isolation endured by the persons living with AIDS. Those who associated with them could be shunned as well. These CLC members became friendly with them and listened to their concerns. Paramount among these concerns was the future of their children because these people expected to die young. The children’s future was about education. All secondary education in Kenya is for a fee, and these sick parents could not come up with even the small fees for a modest high school education. These members of CLC approached me, and we were able to raise a small amount of money to send 12 of their children to Form I in 2003. Based on the evaluation of this experience at the end of the year, the members involved wanted to do more. They approached me with the idea of starting our own CLC high school for AIDS-affected youth. I was approached because of being

EA but, no doubt, also because they saw me as having fund-raising potential as an American Jesuit. My immediate reaction was, "There is so much potential for good here. I don't know if we can succeed, but we have to try." This initiative has been blessed by what has been named St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School. Our program has developed into accepting 35 boys and 35 girls each year for Form 1 on scholarship and taking them through the four years of high school, followed by six months of supervised community service and then sponsorship for college or university. This CLC mission has become a great success, clearly beyond our initial imaginings. Recent and new initiatives have included accepting additional fees-paying students and initiating a boarding facility to ameliorate the devastating family and living situations of our scholarship students in Kibera slum.

Fruits for my vocation

Of course, I have gained so much from my mission as EA for CLC-Kenya. I can begin with this wonderful opportunity which has

been an integral part of my Jesuit mission and with so many friendships that will last a lifetime. It has helped me to continue growing and taking up the challenge to be Jesuit by interacting with CLCers as they

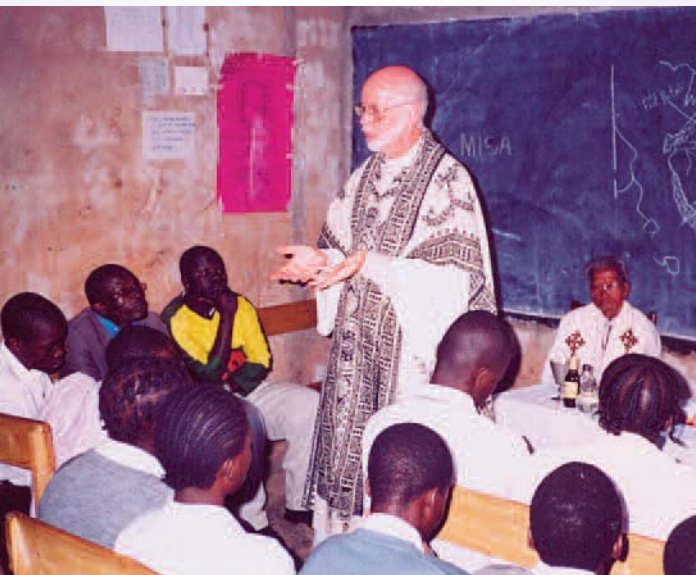
It was also important for me to distinguish "my" way, from other Ignatian ways. Such new ways coming from the insight or experience especially of a new national president needed to be nurtured and fostered.

live their lay Ignatian vocations. Of course, I have been heartened by the opportunity to share Ignatian spirituality, which is at the centre of my vocation, in CLC. But much more, I have been challenged in living my Jesuit vocation by sharing our experience of being Ignatian with CLCers in such a variety of situations, beginning with Uzima,

my small group of 25 years. Might it even be that we EAs as well as other Jesuits involved can learn about how better to be Jesuit through CLC? I think, for example, that we can learn much about how we Jesuits are called to be together in mission as we reflect upon our participation in the DSSE (discern, send, support, evaluate) cycle of common mission in CLC. I am so grateful about how CLC has called me forth as a Jesuit. I pray that the blessing of this journey may continue for many years!

Fr. Charlton celebrating mass and teaching in the slums

¹ This Progressio Column on being a CLC Ecclesiastical Assistant is both a recognition and a sharing of the grace and challenges of the role. In the upcoming issues, you will know more about EAs around the world, as they accompany the different CLC groups in their growth as a lay apostolic body.



Meet the ExCo



Denis Dobbstein

Who are you, Denis, briefly?

I was born in Belgium, a small country in the heart of Europe, crossroad of Latin and Germanic cultures.

I grew up in a family where love is stronger than the wounds of life.

I have been married to Marie-Claire for 25 years. Our son Antoine is 24. Camille, our daughter, is 22. They've left the family nest, and we're proud of them for that.

I live and work as a lawyer in Brussels, a cosmopolitan city where more than 125 different languages are spoken.

What attracted you to CLC?

Perhaps some of you think I discovered CLC through my mother, who was president of the national community. But in fact, my parents discovered CLC after I did.

Others might think it's because my brother is a Jesuit. But he's younger than I.

Did I discover CLC thanks to my wife? On the contrary, we met thanks to CLC. And our history as a couple is deeply linked to our commitment to serve the community.

In fact, I joined my first local community in 1980, when I was 14. I participated in my first worldwide congress (Loyola) in 1986, and it was dazzling. I had the impression that I was discovering the whole world, at fast-forward speed. But over and beyond the enthusiasm sparked by this event, I especially received confirmation that I had found "my" faith community. Already, Ignatius spirituality was making me grow. At Loyola, I had the privilege of fully contemplating the treasure of our spirituality, which bears fruit in very different cultural contexts. From this founding experience, I received the certitude that there was something right and true here, a universal treasure pertinent for taking on the XXIst century.

Since then, I've filled just about all the roles possible in CLC, with periods where I gave priority to my family when necessary. I was CLC president of the French-speaking part of Belgium from 2006 to 2012. I've been a member of the worldwide ExCo since the Assembly meeting in Beirut (August 2013).

Could you say a few words about the graces you have received in CLC?

Different Jesuits progressively showed me ways to enter into personal dialogue with The One who is infinitely over and beyond us, through Holy Scripture and the Spiritual Exercises. This is my "vertical" axis. And on the other hand, through my local communities, I discovered the second axis of encountering God, the "horizontal" axis.

Each and every one of us is created in the image of God. Each one of us offers a partial and yet pertinent reflexion of Christ's face. The experience of sharing in a local community has allowed me to encounter God far beyond the limitations imposed by my own history, or my vision of the world, or my sin. This encounter is not simply the fruit of the multiplication of individual testimonials. Community is not only a space for encountering God; it can also be God's presence (Mt 18, 20).



Denis et Marie-Claire on their 25th wedding anniversary



I was fortunate to be part of the first generation of Belgian lay Ignatians, called by the Jesuits to be their partners. They had the courage to entrust us with responsibility, although some of us were very young. From this, I was given the conviction that we prepare the future through the intuitions, energy and even the wisdom of the next generation. I'm also filled with gratitude for the implicit message: we are allowed to make mistakes, even when they seem avoidable to those who have more experience. Life is a risk that needs to be taken.



Denis' Parents on their 50th wedding anniversary

At CLC I was called to be a trainer... before being trained. (This is another Belgian folly.) But in fact, through my contacts with the Jesuits, Ignatian sisters and lay theologians in our efforts to construct a set of adequate programs, I received unimaginable training. And once again, there was a decisive, implicit message: we are all seekers of God in a world that's in evolution. Some people have the talent for training others, but they continue to seek. My "masters'" humility was a grace for me and a strong signal for all the CLC.

Since becoming a member of the world ExCo, I am able to measure the apostolic force of the CLC better, thanks to the relevance of community discerning and the effective determination of some national

communities. I look on this as a personal grace, as well as a shared responsibility.

communities. I look on this as a personal grace, as well as a shared responsibility.

What is your role in the world ExCo?

First of all, I strive to do the same thing as all the other members. But each of us uses different words to express this, in function of our personal story and the context we're working in.

I would say that our first responsibility is to contemplate the community. At Fatima, Father Nicolas invited us to see, hear and sense the world as God does, as a fundamental preliminary to attempting a prophetic word. Mutatis mutandis, this is what the CLC can expect from the members of the ExCo: that we know the community interiorly, that we look beyond appearances, that we look at what is best and spaces which call the community to growth. Then, humbly, we can invite the community to new thought from time to time, not in our own name, but in reflecting what it already is in other places. Sometimes we speak for the CLC, but it's important that the community speak for itself, in acts more than in words.

An important part of our service consists of visiting our region's communities. We don't go as tourists, but as "bees", hoping to pollinate just as a bumblebee deposits the pollen collected on a previous flower almost by accident. This is the force of a community of worldwide dimension: there is such wealth that all the communities can benefit from the vitality of the others. One community has a long history, rich in experience

From left to right:
The Dobbelstein Family
The Local CLC 1997-2013
The Local CLC 2015



and even in expertise, another has the vitality and thirst of youth, yet another has wisdom or creative intuition or an apostolate which generates enthusiasm.

There is a permanent challenge to our world CLC service and that is to carry both concern for communities that are new, fragile or ageing with our ambition for growth, service and apostolic appeal. Our community has many members, and everything isn't always pertinent or possible all the time. Our community is renewed incessantly through the integration of new members, but nevertheless it's growing in maturity and the desire to assume responsibilities compatible with our 50 years of history and our secular roots.

Personally, I consecrate time and energy to subjects as diverse as the language of wisdom, the boundaries of the family, updating the General Principals and General Norms...and finances. Believe me: all of this is incredibly passionate, including the finances, because through all these subjects I'm able to see all that CLC has the capacity to undertake throughout the world. But, I have to admit that I'm particularly interested in the language of wisdom. First of all, this challenge crosses all the dimension of CLC's mission and I strongly sense that we owe this particular service to our world which is in profound mutation. Secondly, this language of wisdom will not be written in Rome or in Brussels, but rather by all of us within our local cultures.

To serve the worldwide CLC community is a "reasonable folly", it's beyond our own force and yet it's desirable. I invite each one of you to regularly pray to the Holy Spirit for the ExCo.

What is your dream for CLC?

Sometimes I dream of a worldwide community which is more visible, more recognized. I find myself looking for a single priority, a slogan, an image that can be associated to CLC et help us to grow in numbers. But then I sweep this idea away; it's only an easy temptation.

Four pertinent frontiers were identified at our meeting in Beirut. It's not easy to present a community with engagements in several fields. We live in a world where everything moves fast, but our community proposes discernment and action which respects the diversity and the complexity of our world. And this is precisely what I dream of for CLC: that we offer to the world and the Church our specific manner of discerning, deciding, and committing ourselves. I recall the words of a Belgian bishop who came to a regional meeting in Belgium. He was surprised at all the people he knew and said "Now I understand where you find your strength. I'm not asking anything new of you; simply continue to offer your wisdom and your capacity for discernment in the apostolic missions in which you are already committed."

*Original in French
Translated by Cecilia McPherson*





Readers' voice

Hello

Thank you very much for the 2 copies of Progressio that we've received. Are fees included in our annual dues or these two subscriptions are a gift to share? How it was intended and communicated to national teams?

Thank you for your answer!

United in our common spirituality

Martina Fäh
GCL/CLC in Switzerland

Dear Martina,

Each Member National Community of CVX receives three print copies of Progressio: 1) For the president 2) for the Secretary (or Secretariat, if present) and 3) for the EA. These copies are given for free. Members can also subscribe to the printed version Progressio by paying an annual fee. The digital copies of Progressio are free and downloadable, and shareable in our website (see <http://www.cvx-clc.net/l-fr/progressio.php>).

Each year, the World Secretariat normally publishes two issues of the Progressio Magazine and its more serious cousin—the Progressio Supplement. The magazine usually includes snapshots of CVX life all over the world, reflections on living out our lay Ignatian way of life, and advancements in our mission and formation. These are contributions of our members from all parts of the world. The Progressio Supplement is usually a themed collection of reflections, formation materials, and scholarly takes on the Communauté de Vie Chrétienne.

It would be great if you can encourage members to read Progressio as a way of participating in our life as a World Community, and enriching CVX moments. This also means that we would really like to get your feedback, and ideas on how Progressio can become more relevant to your life as a community.

Thank you for writing! Please give our regards to the CVX Switzerland. Cheers,

Alwin



Progressio is published twice yearly, additionally one Progressio supplement provides thematic material on our spirituality and formation. If you desire to subscribe, please download the subscription form at: <http://cvx-clc.net/l-en/progressio.php> and send to progressio@cvx-clc.net.

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- ✓ cheque to PROGRESSIO and mailed to: World CLC Secretariat, Borgo S. Spirito 4, 00193 Rome, ITALY
- ✓ transfer to CLC account at Banca Popolare di Sondrio in Rome (Agenzia N. 12) Italy:
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**Be part of Progressio.
Share about the CLC way of life**

If you feel that you, your local group, or your national community has something you would like to share with the world community readership, let us know. We are open to original contributions or reprinting articles from your CLC publications. We accept stories, reflections, formation guides, artwork, poetry, prayers especially in the following areas of our CLC life: apostolic and formation endeavors in the four frontiers, wisdom language, collaboration, and lay Ignatian identity. Send your contributions or intent to: progressio@cvx-clc.net, Subject: Contributions

Tell us what you think!

You can tell us about what struck you about the articles and the magazine. We thrive on your guiding voices, comments and suggestions! Send your letters to progressio@cvx-clc.net, Subject: Readers Voice. Submissions may also be published.

Remember!

- Don't forget to inform the World Secretariat when there are **CHANGES**:
 - ❖ in the composition and contact details of your National Executive Council
 - ❖ your national community's statutes
 - ❖ in the national community's mailing addresses
- Check out CVX - CLC on Facebook
- You can download digital copies of Progressio in our website: www.cvx-clc.net

Repetitio: The road to the CLC 50th Year Jubilee

Liturgy and Receptions during the 1967 Assembly in Rome

Bishop Audet was celebrant at the opening mass at Domus Pacis.

The second day delegates journeyed by bus to the Jesuit Curia where Fr. Pedro Arrupe, General of the Society, was chief celebrant.

Father General was guest at a reception in the International Sodality Office after the mass. He later met informally for an hour with Bishop Audet and other members of the Executive Council.



At the reception in the International Sodality Offices (left to right): Manuel Larrea and Fr. Juan Caballero SJ (Ecuador), Fr. Arrupe SJ, Fr. Paulussen, Manuel Benedict of Ceylon, Fr. Jose Salavarría SJ (Venezuela), Andrée Grignon (Canada), Yolanda Poggi (Argentina)

*Extract from Progressio
N.1 Winter 1968*

