



progressio

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PHOTOS FRONT COVER
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- CLC Malta National ExCo
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- Retreatants from Chiapas with Maria Magdalena Palencia (Mexico)
- Levi Matseshe (World ExCo)

PHOTOS BACK COVER
From up-left to right:

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- John and Purple Kwong (Hong Kong)
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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 Christos) 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.

Dear friends,

In these weeks, we are full of memories of the living (and dying) of Pope John Paul II. In all dimensions of his life up until his death, Pope John Paul II gave us an outstanding testimony to how we are called to live as Christians today. It was during the time of his Pontificate that the Pontifical Council for the Laity confirmed our revised General Principles as approved by the CLC World General Assembly in 1990 in Guadalajara. Pope John Paul II was clearly committed to the Laity and he was convinced that lay people have an important role to play – both within the Church as well as in our world – as Christians deeply rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ. May the confidence he held in us lay people continue to be a challenge and encouragement for us. John Paul II was an outstanding advocate for the social responsibility of Christians, fighting for human dignity and life, for justice and peace. We are invited to follow in his footsteps in this commitment.

At the same time, we wholeheartedly assure our new Pope Benedict XVI of our continuous support and prayers that he may guide our Church according to the will of God. May the Lord bless him with joy in his service, strength and an open heart and mind.

The parting of Pope John Paul II and the election of Pope Benedict XVI reminds us in a special way of our being in and with the Church – sharing with her and with all who assume responsibility – the joys, the hopes, the wounds and the suffering of our Church and our world.

In Nairobi, we “felt confirmed in our call to become a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church” (see Recommendations) and in the world. During

the last two years, through many contacts, we learn that communities have caught fire in responding to this call of becoming and acting as an apostolic community. We all live in diverse contexts and each local group, each national community has to discern carefully how they put this call into daily practice and implement the necessary steps. The experiences and personal testimonies collected in this issue of *Progrèssio* is a way to share the richness of life in our world community and to encourage one another in our journey.

We are looking forward and we are looking back. In these weeks, we also remember the end of World War II and in my part of the world this is firstly identified with the capitulation of the German Nazi regime. Among its many victims, there were also committed Christians – Catholics as well as Protestants. One of them, the Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, reflected a lot about the Church. When he writes about the Church as the ‘body of Christ’, as ‘Christ existing in community’, he reminds us that we can only live truly in Christ when we live in this concrete community of our Church with all her dimensions: all her joys, her shadows, her history.

To further develop our being an apostolic body, rooted in the spirituality of St. Ignatius, necessarily implies our being Church with all who walked before us and with all who will follow us. Let us support one another as we grow in our sensitivity and readiness to respond to this call with open hearts and minds so that we may be more and more able to share the mission of Christ in our daily lives, according to HIS will ■



Daniela Frank
WCLC President

Daniela Frank

The matching of two promises: microfinance and social responsibility

A new frontier in the "preferential option for the poor"



Leonardo Becchetti
CLC Rome

Leonardo Becchetti is professor of Economics at University of Rome Tor Vergata. He is married and has one daughter. He serves CLC as member of the Italian ExCo, the Euro-team and the World ExCo Financial Team

The goal of current socioeconomic action: tension and common consent among different perspectives

The dominant focus of international development institutions on economic growth, which appears to absorb most of their intellectual energies and to be the final goal of most of their normative suggestions, may not be easy to understand by those who are not strictly involved in these activities. More specifically, from a religious perspective, there seems to be a stark difference between that focus and both the "common good" goal of the Christian social doctrine and the preferential option for the poor which is at the core of Ignatian Spirituality.

In recent times, even the non-Christian reflection on the goal of socioeconomic action inspired by the human rights doctrine advocates, not without reason, that the target of economic growth does not coincide with broader and more generally accepted ones such as those of human development and happiness, given that the latter depend not just on individual wealth but also and mainly on nonmonetary components such as individual capabilities and functionalities and the quality of human relationships.

In most recent times, this focus on broader targets is becoming common in reports of international institutions (even though much less so in their current practices). To illustrate this, a simple scheme, included in the 2003 World

Bank report, integrates the traditional "reductionist" consumption-output channel fuelling individual well being with other channels in which the direct enjoyment of human, social and environmental resources is independent from productive considerations. This World Bank example witnesses also the partial but still not satisfactory reduction of the gap between the "reductionist" anthropological perspective of most contemporary social sciences and the goal of "common good" defined by Church social doctrine as the creation of those conditions which make easier individual self fulfilment.

However, a deeper inspection at the close relationships between these non immediately productive dimensions of individual flourishing and personal income clearly reveals that economic growth, or the creation of economic value at the aggregate level, is still important as being the source of resources to invest in education, health, leisure and preservation of environmental goods. Hence, economic growth remains a crucial factor also for the development of the other nonmonetary and spiritual dimensions of individual happiness mentioned above.

A possible further synthesis of the tension between these different goals is in the most recent growth theories showing that it is quite clear, at this stage of economic development, that equality (and above all equal opportunities) is beneficial for growth. More specifically, the full potential of one's country development is achieved when access to education and credit is available to everyone and therefore equal opportunities for the development of their talent are available to the overall population.

A common agreeable consent on the equal opportunity platform is therefore emerging as a

strategic goal for these different views on human well being. Recipes for the realization of equal opportunities and growth potential are well known. The research of the last decades clearly indicates that the fundamental ingredients are quality of institutions (from the minimum of absence of war to a maximum of a fully integrated and corruption free system of institutional check and balances), education, access to credit, access to IT technologies and good social capital, or high value of human relationships which fuels reciprocal trust being at the basis of all human transactions.

The role of microfinance

The question is therefore why, if recipes are broadly known, it is so difficult to apply them. The easy answer is that the willingness to apply them is deficient. Or, in the language of economists, a "global planner" (or global institutions) with full power and with the goal of fostering economic development at the world level does not exist. This is because globalization has been more rapid than our capacity to create global rules to govern it and because the various existing international institutions having the mission of fostering economic development are riddled by conflicts of interest, or by differences between the goal or mission of the institution itself and the personal ones of its representatives and organized bureaucracies.

In this framework, what is emerging as an interesting remedy and as an element of stimulus is the capacity of the civil society and of the private sector of filling some of these governance gaps with its bottom up action. It is very important to interpret such action, not as a demonstration of the uselessness of governance and rules, but as a subsidiary and vicarious action which creates awareness and international policy consensus for the creation of

more equitable rules and is therefore a form of active advocacy.

One of the most promising examples in this field is microfinance. The crucial role of microfinance is the extension of access to credit to uncollateralized poor borrowers which cannot obtain loans from the traditional banking system. It is well known in fact that credit is available only to those which can provide collateral of equal or larger amount than the demanded loan. Taking the words of what has to be considered the founder of Microfinance, Mohammad Junus, saying that the poor cannot get access to credit is like saying that those



who have not wings, such as human beings, are unable to flight. Quite to the opposite! To remain in the metaphor, microfinance is the airplane which allows the poor to access credit markets.

The diffusion and coverage of microfinance of the world poor is impressive and growing. A recent World Bank report estimates that in Asia 30% of the poor have now access to credit, thanks to microfinance institutions and that, overall, almost 100 millions of those below the 1 dollar per day (in purchasing power parity) threshold have a chance to exit from poverty thanks to microfinance institutions. In this perspective, microfinance is realizing part of the fundamental mission of financial system (matching those with productive ideas and those with the financial resources needed to operate them) which traditional banks were not able to realize. By helping each individual to realize its productive potential (and to invest in education of the new generation) microfinance is today playing an important role in the promotion of equal opportunities. The key determinants of success have generally been identified in:

- ① dynamic incentives of progressive loans,
- ② group lending schemes with or without joint liability and
- ③ microfinance institutions' ability to monitor borrowers.

The rationale of point ① is the provision of small progressive loans, which reduces the borrower incentive not to repay, in order to avoid the penalty of not having the following loan instalments. The rationale of point ② is that, by providing credit only to self selected groups of borrowers which are jointly responsible for each other, the bank overcomes the informational gap and exploits the capacity of the borrowers to choose good companions. Furthermore, it also creates among the borrowers the incentive to help and monitor each other in order to avoid the cost of repaying the loan of the insolvent groupmate. The rationale of point ③ is that the microfinance institution has a quite different attitude with respect to the traditional bank (covered by the collateral) as it invests in the growth of entrepreneurial ca-

capacity of borrowers providing them in many cases with consultancy and "business angels" services.

The historical performance of microfinance institutions has been generally excellent (average solvency rates are higher than 90 percent) but heterogeneous depending on:

- ⇒ the different capacity of local microfinance institutions in monitoring groups of lenders,
- ⇒ differences in competitive and geographic scenarios which may affect alternative credit choices and the incentive to repay,
- ⇒ different levels of "peer pressure" and "social capital" which fix the amount of social sanctions and the level of deterrence for borrowers violating their debt obligations.

Microfinance and social responsibility in savings as a "magis" in the preferential option for the poor

One of microfinance outreach limits is that the activity of providing training and business support services and that of monitoring investment projects is extremely costly for the bank. As a consequence, lending rates of microfinance institutions are remarkably high and many potential projects which would be otherwise profitable cannot be supported because of the too high cost of loans. A recent promising channel which is going to reduce the problem is the matching between microfinance and socially responsible savings. More and more investors in the North are choosing to deposit their money into "ethical banks" accepting a return on their deposit below the market rate (up to zero) in return for the possibility of channelling their funds to support microfinance projects. In this way, microfinance insti-

tutions, financed by the voluntary bottom-up action of the civil society, have the opportunity to lower loan rates thereby extending their outreach to the poorest.

The matching of microfinance and social responsibility in savings is today a *magis* in the preferential option for the poor in several respects.

First: It is probably the most efficient way of using monetary resources since the amount deposited fuels a multiplied amount of loans (banks can take as reserves up to only 10 % according to different country regulatory environment of their loans) and conjugate an efficient use of solidarity with the responsibility of who receives the money. Furthermore, if the poor who can potentially stand on their feet are correctly identified by the microfinance institutions, the success of their projects may create resources needed to support their neighbours or relatives who are in those categories (elderly, disabled, etc.) which cannot stand on their feet and can live only on solidarity.

Second: Social responsibility in savings involves personal choices, the use of money and individual lifestyles and is therefore a concrete way of expressing one's own solidarity and support for the poor in everyday choices.

Third: This solution is capable of generating important imitative action on behalf of other financial institutions. Once the traditional banking system realizes that even a minimal share of savers makes their choices on the basis of solidarity and social values, it will try to conquer these savers by imitating in part the social responsibility of microfinance institutions. This leverage effect of socially responsible savings has already been demonstrated by scientific models and by the evidence of several traditional banking institutions which have start developing their own microfinance divisions.

As Christians and CLC members, our support to microfinance institutions by investing part of our deposits in banks which provide resources to microfinance institutions is, therefore, not just a valuable action. It is also a significant political gesture with which we can be "salt" and leaven contributing to the direct success of the capacity of the microfinance institution in reaching the poor and to the indirect imitative action of other financial intermediaries.

The recent compendium of church social doctrine outlines, as desirable and consciously chosen poverty, the feeling of dependency and creaturalty which leads the person to love and thank Gods for what He gave as a gift. We are all aware that economic development may sometime be in contrast with this feeling of gratefulness and creaturalty which is at the basis of the richness of humanity's spirituality and at the root of their full happiness. We nonetheless know that material poverty still leads a consistent part of humankind to starvation, and prevent many more from having a decent life and deciding their own life style. We therefore find that social responsibility is a crucial instrument with which civil society, with its bottom up action, may address the existing inequality and promote social justice ■

By investing part of our deposits in banks which provide resources to microfinance institutions is, therefore, not just a valuable action. It is also a significant political gesture with which we can be "salt" and leaven

*Leonardo Becchetti
CLC Italy*

"Another World is Possible"



Raquel Aguilera

Since two years Raquel Aguilera joined a CLC group called Ajaka, which means "Basket" in Guarani, the second language of Paraguay. She collaborates to "SerVos", a Non-profit Organisation working for victims of social exclusion in Asunción

This past January 26th, a group of Paraguayan people, some coming from a distance of almost 22 hours, attended the 5th Social World Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Each had different objectives and experiences: some were craftsmen, others politicians, others religious and some were laypersons from CLC; all different but all similarly hopeful and expectant of this "other possible world" we speak of so often.

Once there, this diversity multiplied immeasurably with people of all ages, races and beliefs from many other places who, until that moment, were unknown to one another. All congregated under the same motto. For five days, these differences became but variations of one real world which, instead of pushing us apart, united us and made us unique, bold and strong. This was a world in which all had a single flag: the richness of our

cultures, of our creativity, of our love for our world and of the struggle for inclusion and diversity so that this world we live in may become a world of justice and equality.

In all, we were about 200,000 participants with about 4,000 dissertations presented. Indeed, reports were given by persons with high academic and intellectual degrees: by persons in spirituality with a vision of the cosmos such as Leonard Boff or Saramago, by rulers such as Hugo Chavez and Ignacio Lula Da Silva, by exponents of new horizons and economic currents such as the LASES Network (Latin American Network of socio-economic Solidarity) or CEAS (Episcopal Commission of Social Action Peru). These were distinct visions based on the world economy called Economy of

Solidarity or Social Economy. We listened to several other institutions and international organizations committed to: fighting for the natives and peasants, in defense of human rights, against wars (arms and camouflage), in assisting the disenfranchised, in solidarity, openness and dialogue supporting the struggles of the poor and excluded. These organizations included AMERINDIA and CARITAS INTERNATIONAL.

Exponents of ecological and agricultural movements reminded us of the incalculable value of our natural resources, particularly that of water, sensitizing us and encouraging the active participation of all the inhabitants of the earth in the fight against the illegal appropriation of natural resources.

The artistic program also gave an important call acknowledging the place of beneficial creativity and by its presence opening the way to a more universal expression. Believers in the possibility of a different world included musicians, workers in plastic arts, artisans and craftspersons, actors, and writers such as Gilberto Gill and Ricardo Flecha among others.

Personally I found that the Forum came to two important conclusions:

Another world is already lived among us.

I was touched by the good fortune of sharing with people whom I knew at a distance and whom I could get to know better on this trip. On the other hand, there were those I got to know during this time and who left their mark on me. Along with all these people I came to realize that we already live in this *other world* on different levels, perhaps daily. No less important, this *other possible world* leads to

ways, words and coexistences. Those daily fighters succeed in summing up an ideal. I really have felt blessed by God in having had the unique opportunity to know and to meet once again friends in the Lord and to be involved in the ideology of knowing we are inhabitants convinced that we can have a better world.

Now all I have left is the unknown: are we able to be inclusive, tolerant and respectful even when injustice may not be affecting us, but rather aimed at others who we believe don't deserve it? The answer can only be given by each of us with the personal option of remembering our Creator in our lives and mirroring his pedagogy and his truth.

Another world to build

For the rest, I was left with the positive impression that *another world is possible*, but only if we move away from our old stereotypes of society, economy and spirituality making the effort to think of the richness of diversity and practicing tolerance in the face of differences in order to promote respect and harmony between different cultures and beliefs, continuing however to sustain a single faith. It is achieved by joining individual and community struggles and fostering the inclusion of the more disenfranchised in this exclusive system where there are almost no possibilities for the poor.

We face the challenge of passing from an illusory stage to one of action, practicing solidarity in what we believe about human nature made in the image and likeness of God. We need to make a new commitment to rethink the image of a God who gave us a world extensive enough so that every inhabitant could have their own space to live, develop and grow freely and with dignity.

I hope that all will have an opportunity in the future to participate in these forums. The experience holds a wealth of spiritual and intellectual growth which, thanks to CLC, I have had the good fortune to experience ■

*Raquel Aguilera
CVX Paraguay*



CLC Members at WSF

CLC SOUTH AFRICA

AND MISSION

Before CLC South Africa started, there were many CLC groups for students and young people. Patrick O' Sullivan and Jose Gsell came out and helped to lay the foundations for CLC. Then it was twinned with Germany. CLC was further promoted by Greg Lourens who started CLC first in Johannesburg, then in Grahamstown, and then moved on to Cape Town where he then became the full-time Worker for CLC.

At present there are 98 full CLC members from the three regions of Johannesburg, Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. The others are still in "Welcoming" groups.

Since Nairobi we have really become more and more aware of what our CLC members are doing as far as Mission is concerned and it really does make a difference to us when we know that we ARE being sent, supported and are able to evaluate together. Two of our members, Thelma Josephs and Luiza Rigutto, accepted to share their apostolic Experiences.



Thelma Josephs joined CLC in 1995 through attending the monthly Days of Prayer. When a new group started, she asked to join. She made her Temporary Commitment in 1999 and is now preparing for Permanent Commitment.

She started a group in 2001 and is at present the Group Leader of the group she joined. Thelma has been a widow for many years and has always been active in the Church. Initially she taught catechism and prepared the little ones for their First Holy Communion. Now she helps the Sisters of Charity with the HIV Aids patients and the Schoenstatt Sisters with the Literacy Programme, as well as being a Minister of the Eucharist, Reader and Sacristan in her local parish.

Luiza Rigutto is still a member of the "Welcoming" group and at present is only able to be present at the meetings when she is home as her work takes her all over South Africa and sometimes even beyond. She was fortunately able to attend the Paul Vaz Healing programme with us.

Veronica Miller
CLC South Africa ExCo member

A Prison Ministry Experience

The current Catholic Church Prison Ministry in Cape Town had its conception in November 1996, when Father John Houston, having visited some of his parishioners in Pollsmoor Prison, identified the need. He knew he could not cope alone and was particularly concerned about the number of inmates who were H.I.V. Positive needing special care on a one to one basis. He phoned Sr. Marie Brady, a Loreto Sister involved in spirituality work in Cape Town, and asked if she would be interested in becoming part of a prison visiting team. Another sister, Sr. Broadly from the Caring Network, undertook to get a team together and people from different language groups responded to her ad in the Archdiocesan Newspaper.

They took as their model for ministry, Jesus walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus - two people discouraged and feeling hopeless about their situation. Jesus comes and walks with them. He listens to their story. He gets them in touch with their feelings. He draws them out: "Why are you so downcast?" Finally he explains the scriptures to them and restores their hope and courage.

Listening is at the heart of our Ministry. Listening allows the other person to 'be': enfolds them in a safe place, does not judge or offer advice but communicates support at a level deeper than words.

I became involved in this Ministry through a friend who was interested but did not want to go alone. So I found myself on a training course in 2001 and here I am!

I've learnt what it is to just listen - to be there. I did have one bad experience when one of my inmates died tragically in prison and I felt I could not carry on. But the Prison Care Ministry sent us on a healing programme and I was able to continue. The work is taxing. Even today (9.9.04), I had the very emotional experience of attending a memorial service for 3 in-



mates who died tragically in a fire. One is confronted each time, with overcrowding, gang life, sad stories from the past etc. Fortunately, once a month we meet as a team in order to support one another and share our joys and difficulties, insights and experiences.

I thank the CLC Muizenberg group for their support, especially when we meet on Wednesday afternoon and they ask: "How was your morning at Pollsmoor?" I thank CLC Western Cape for their prayers and encouragement. And of course above all, I am grateful to the Holy Spirit who works in and through me.

Thelma Josephs

Bake for Profit



Luiza Rigutto

My name is Luiza and I live in Hout Bay, Cape Town. I am married with one child, Dino, who is 12 years old. My husband, Giordi was born in Italy but came to South Africa when he was 2 years old. My father was an Italian prisoner of war and he met and married my mother who was born in South Africa of Italian immigrants. As a qualified Home Economics teacher, I have been

working as a project manager for the Snowflake Bake for Profit skills programme for the past 5 years. Prior to that I worked as the Home Economist for a flour company and whilst working for them, I developed a course to teach women from the townships how to bake and to sell their products to make money.

I still don't know how I became involved in such work and how my idea developed into a project of such magnitude but it has and that is

what is important. I realise how privileged I am to be able to do this work which has been my passion and love! I love baking and cooking and watching people's lives change through gaining dignity and self-confidence because of the skills we share. From a very small marketing project within a well-known flour company, this project has grown into a Section 21 Company with the backing of the National Skills Fund and the same flour company.

Twice, I've left the project for various reasons but somehow it keeps coming back! Why? I don't know but throughout my journey I have felt that this is what God is calling me to do. God, in His mercy, has sent me so many wonderful people to guide and strengthen me to cope with many difficulties and has made me stronger to face the many challenges of our times in South Africa and in this type of work.

The most significant part of my journey began when I was asked to be a Eucharistic Minister at our parish in Hout Bay and was invited to join a CLC group. This was very significant as it was then that I started to have a personal relationship with Jesus and began to see Him in everything that happens in my life no matter how small and insignificant it may seem.

In all my trials and difficulties, I have been blessed to have the support of Jill and the CLC Hout Bay Group. What a loving God we have who takes care of all our needs, if only we would open our eyes, ears and hearts to receive His love and mercy. God Bless you all! ■



Luiza Rigutto and her colleagues

Luiza Rigutto

My CLC Journey

My CLC journey began at school in 1953 when I belonged to the Sodality. I was easily drawn into the way of life which combined spiritual growth and action and which kindled the desire to be an Apostle of Jesus. This became more and more valued so that when I left school and began work, I looked round for an adult group so that this call to Ignatian Spirituality could continue in the context of the wider society in which I found myself. The Sodality Cell group I joined was very prayerful and very active, writing regularly to newspapers and the media to promote the Christian viewpoint and being involved in justice issues in a practical way.

After I married and moved away to a country parish in Kent, there was no CLC for me to join but there were several young married couples around who were hungry to find some spiritual support in their lives beyond attending Mass on Sunday. We came together with others in the parish and CLC (clm) Meopham was born. We continue to this day and, although a small group now, we hope we continue to influence the world in which we live.

Because we lived in a parish with a church and no priest – we were attached to a nearby town parish whose clergy supplied us with Sunday Mass - CLC soon developed a leadership role in the local setting, making the forming of community, both socially and spiritually, our mission. We were very active in these areas promoting opportunities for prayer and spiritual events and also engaging with issues relevant to our time. During this period when we had a large and flourishing community, we arranged a holiday for a group of children from Northern Ireland to give them a much needed break. We welcomed the Ugandan Asian Refugees. We arranged days for families when the children could be cared for and

given a fun day while the parents enjoyed the opportunity of talks, prayer, sharing with each other and other parents facing similar issues. The highlight of these days was the Mass and renewal of marriage vows. We ran many fundraising events for a missionary we knew in Peru, the Simon Community for the Homeless, and other worthwhile needs. Usually these events were centred around socialising and eating together in some way, such as turkey suppers, strawberries and cream mornings, and so on. We became known for 'trying to eat our way to heaven', but many people were always happy to join in!

During this time, we were being drawn deeper into our Ignatian spirituality even without realising it. We joined in regional events when we could but, of course, our primary mission field was our family. We valued the spiritual oasis of prayer, support and encouragement from our regular CLC meetings. As the family grew older and more independent, I became more free to give time to other aspects of CLC outside my group experience and for a while served as a regional representative for the south of England. This was my first taste of working at the executive level, too, and I must admit I could hardly wait to escape from those meetings! My interest in the intricacies of group dynamics led me to take part in a training session for group guides from which I was offered the opportunity to train in Spiritual Direction and giving the Exercises. Many years before I had heard a member of CLC talking of his experience as a spiritual director and I can remember at the time thinking what a marvellous thing it was to be able to do, and now I was being offered the same opportunity. God at work, planting seeds of desires within us to



Rita McManus

come into growth at the appropriate time! My training in London has not been wasted and I have been able to use my gift both inside and outside the Christian Life Community.

When I was asked to agree to my nomination for President, I was adamant in my refusal but eventually I began to reflect on the place CLC had in my life and began to realise that perhaps it was time to say thank you and that I should

tated. How would we be able to continue? I really felt we had come to the end of the road and that CLC England and Wales would be no more and that I would go down in history as being the president when CLC EW died! It had been suggested we could find expert help useful in looking at our organizational set-up so we engaged the help of a business management development consultant. Because of his Ignatian background, he was sympathetic to

our ethos so helped us to relate how we practised CLC in our executive meetings. Deep and respectful listening was obviously the key, together with deepening our understanding and tolerance of each other. This was achieved by becoming more open and honest with each other and this was often challenging and painful but little by little we learned how to express ourselves without tak-



Rita and her family

place myself in God's hands. I did become president and promised to give myself wholeheartedly to my new mission. It was very hard at first and I had a lot to learn. I felt I had moved into something intense and rigid and felt chains around me from which I struggled to break free. I even began to regret the step, but God had plans.

We were very fortunate to have had the good services of a paid Development Worker who worked hard for the community. This was largely funded by the Society of Jesus so, when they made the decision that they would no longer fund this experiment, we felt devas-

ing or giving offence, having a mature relationship with each other as equals and not as parent/child or teacher/pupil. There were difficult moments but we learned how to work through these situations to achieve a positive outcome. The other significant action was to do away with the table. The added advantage to this was the reduction of the paperwork. We learned how to communicate more simply but more effectively and felt less overwhelmed. We discovered we were bonding as an executive and becoming friends, sharing the responsibility of serving our community well. We learned about strategic planning, naming our priorities and setting out an action plan.

During this time, we were improving our communication with the community too, and have discovered that communicating is a two-way operation - *communicating and listening*. This responsibility lies not just with the executive but with the whole community. The best communication is always achieved at a personal level rather than just relying on the written word, so personal involvement is important. We realised another priority was to nurture our groups and enable them to grow and many ventures were undertaken to further this. We already have a very good formation programme in our Meeting Plans but these were implemented with other resources which groups could use freely by themselves or with other groups, even outside CLC, thereby building community as well as deepening our understanding of our spirituality and loving service. We realised that we were always talking about our spirituality being rooted in the Spiritual Exercises but many people did not have an immediate understanding of them. So, we presented an ambitious programme in London looking at the dynamic of the Exercises and how they actually could be lived out in ordinary life. A series of talks from people in various walks of life, followed by an exposee of which element of the Exercises was being lived out by an ignatian 'expert', proved to be very popular, especially with our young adults and their friends. We offered information as to how to access the Exercises as well as details of CLC, which did result in the forming of other groups and, we hope, to more people trying out the retreat experience.

When we went to Nairobi, we felt encouraged greatly by the expressed desire to become an apostolic communities as we felt we were already travelling that road. We were expressing

our charism of community, spirituality and mission in very positive ways and were learning how to share this responsibility. Our Development Worker experiment had been a great boost for the community but we know now that we had become dependent and complacent.

I finish my term of office in June and feel ready to hand over. We are still on our journey and I know nothing could have been achieved without the goodwill and co-operation of our whole community. We have built on what was handed to us and I hope we have provided a good foundation for those following on. The regions now have become the immediate experience of wider CLC for most groups and these are very active in dealing with support, outreach and making us visible as well as working to develop our charism.

My CLC way of life has provided me with a thread of strength over the years and I continue to appreciate our spirituality, rooted in the Exercises, which empowers me to find God in all things: to discern the way of co-operating with Jesus to build the Kingdom and all for the greater glory of God. All these are dry words if not motivated by and acted out of love! ■

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Rita McManus
CLC England and Wales

The Spiritual Exercises and My Journey



Ramez Ghazal and his wife Camille

I have been asked to share the way that led me to join the World Christian Life Community. Since my childhood, I was a member of the Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM) (Mouvement Eucharistique des Jeunes - MEJ). When I was about 13, I felt that the MEJ brought me closer to God and that this was really the way to get to know the Lord better. Thus, for a long time, I journeyed with the Young Witnesses of Christ (Jeunes Témoins du Christ), a branch of EYM, which profoundly marked my spiritual life. The meetings of the "Jeunes Témoins du Christ" were accompanied by Father Lécuyer at the Jesuit College of the Holy Family in Cairo. When I was asked: "Why are you part of EYM?" I always replied: "I want to get closer to God and get to know him better."

As CLC was a continuation of EYM in our eyes, our apostolic group moved on to CLC after our secondary education. Although we were part of different faculties, we met twice a month for our CLC meetings. My faculty was divided into two factions: the fanatic Muslims, completely self-centred and the fanatic Christians, equally self-centred. This did not exactly correspond to the way of life I had been accustomed to at my previous school, nor to the habit of thought I had acquired at EYM. Together with my comrades, we founded a third group, neither fanatically Christian nor fanatically Muslim. At the same time, I continued to serve the EYM as "JK" (jeune cadre), which is the title for a group leader.

At that time, I did not feel at ease in my CLC group and I joined a prayer group with my elder brother. We went out together and had a splendid time after our prayer meetings. I felt more at ease in this group. Then, this prayer group decided to join CLC, and its members started to become more involved with CLC, and to participate in CLC events, so as to feel part of one body. I took part in these events, too, because I wanted to meet "my CLC group", of which I was still a member.

There I noticed that some people around me talked of the Spiritual Exercises. Some members of my group took part in retreats and came back very satisfied. I was a bit afraid to spend 5 days in silence, and I wondered if I would be able to endure this! Finally, I decided to try it and went on my first retreat.

At the beginning, I plodded along rather slowly and heard absolutely nothing during the meditations. God was shrouded in silence, too. I was not sure what I was supposed to hear: I put myself in God's presence, I asked for the grace and I reflected on the text, but God still did not speak. On the third day, out of breath and out of patience, I broke the silence after dinner. I told my Spiritual Father (who accompanied that retreat) that I could not go on any more, that I did not hear anything and that I was thinking of giving up.

After dinner, the proposed prayer for the evening was the Colloquy with the Crucified Lord. That night, God talked to me. He told me he had endured all this for me... the pain, the humiliation. I felt how much he had suffered and that all this had been for me, a human being unworthy of such a sacrifice from his God. I felt how much I, so feeble and weak, was loved by God! It was an incomparable sensation, unforgettable, and I cannot describe it.

This retreat completely changed my inner being. It did not metamorphose me into an angel; I still had my weaknesses. Yet, from that moment, all I was doing changed. My mixed friends' group at the faculty became a means for me to testify to how Christians and Muslims can be friends. At the EYM, being a JK was no longer a job I enjoyed doing nor something I did to satisfy my ambition, but it became a means for me to show to the group the importance of having a relationship with God. At that moment, being a JK was no longer a goal, but rather a means to fulfil the will of God.

I started to approach the larger CLC and my brother's CLC group at the same time. I was becoming more involved in the larger CLC while my local group was going through a crisis. I was thinking of leaving that group and of joining my brother's group instead, and talked about my plan with the group supervisor. He reminded me of the times when I had been far away from CLC and from my local group and how the other members had supported me and not sent me away. How could I leave them now that I was more involved and they were undergoing a crisis!

Among the members of this group, there were some who did not know really what it meant to be CLC and others who did know. Some of the latter knew that CLC was not appropriate for them, but still they would not leave a group where they could meet their friends and share their lives so honestly and open themselves to others so simply. I decided to dedicate myself more to this group and to help bring forward the changes that would help us to live the CLC spirit better in our meetings. My dedication to CLC has deeply rooted in me a quest for *magis*, a better way to help people around me and a better way to build the reign of God. It

was then that I felt God's call to work at the Executive Bureau in Cairo. I worked there for three years with three other members of CLC Cairo and an ecclesiastical assistant. We were a very homogeneous group and we really felt God's spirit with us all the time.

My engagement in CLC led me to ask questions about the future: shall I marry? Have I got a religious vocation? What is the better way for me to follow God; what way will help me most to get closer to Him? This was constantly on my mind. Therefore, I went on a



Ramez and his CLC group

first election retreat. It was not very fruitful owing to events that were trying for me: the death of my mother and military service. I needed a second retreat at the end of which I decided to marry. The retreat had enabled me to become fully aware of my feelings for Camille, a woman who had worked with me at the Executive Bureau in Cairo. We were becoming closer and decided to marry.

Today, we still practice the same method of taking major decisions in our married life and we still ask ourselves the question: what we are living now, is it really what God wants from us at this moment? Even with decisions concerning my career: I still bring them home and we reflect together according to the same method. More-

over, I present my preoccupations and decisions to my local CLC group, which helps me evaluate the situations and supports me in the decisions I take. They accompany me in these decisions thanks to our sharing in the group. They also know my weaknesses and support and encourage me in this respect, too.

In the end, I can only thank God who overwhelms me with His gifts; He has always been giving me more than I deserve. I am grateful especially for His extreme love and for His

forgiveness despite my weaknesses. I also thank Him for my wife, and for a child who was not yet born when I started to write this testimony, and who is with us now! I am grateful for a family who love and support me, for friends who love and support me, for my CLC group that supports me in this style of life, thanks to which I can connect everything IN the Lord and find Him in every thing ■

Ramez Ghazal
CLC Egypt

The Gift of CLC



Andreja Schwarzbartl
CLC Slovenia

When I was asked to write about my CLC experience for our magazine, I was at first quite surprised that anyone might be interested in my CLC experience. But then I was inspired by Veronica's (Villegas) article in *Progressio* in which she so beautifully writes that everyone of us is a piece of the Master, and that everyone is precious in God's eyes.

I first met CLC in 1993 when I was 23 years old. The CLC in Slovenia was then already a member of world CLC. I was drawn to CLC a year after I experienced the Spiritual Exercises for my first time. I can say for myself that I was reborn during those Exercises. Never before had I felt so loved by God and so forgiven by Him. I ultimately fell in love with Him. After the Exercises, my Spiritual Guide proposed

that I join a group of Christians, who tried to live more closely to God. So I met with the Slovenian CLC. At first, for me, the focus was only on CLC Slovenian. Soon, I also discovered the world dimension of CLC. But everything did not go so smoothly. When I read our General Principles for the first time, I was astonished, surprised and frightened. I was actually terrified especially by the 8th point of GP - to become apostolic. I was quite unhappy with this discovery because all I wanted was to be good and faithful to God. And now I should go out on street to proclaim to everyone that God loves them? This really wasn't for me! But, the conversation with my Spiritual Guide confirmed that this is not exactly the only possible way in CLC.

I was in CLC for only one year when I first attended an international CLC meeting in Rome (1994 I believe). It gave me a very deep experience of what the World CLC really is. Although I knew only the Slovenian participants

at the beginning, I began to feel very soon that we are all of one Spirit and I also had a feeling that I had known everyone for a very long time. That is what inspired me mostly at that time. I couldn't notice the differences between us any more; I only saw our common wish to follow Jesus Christ.

I returned home full of CLC enthusiasm and soon CLC became the focus of my daily life although I was finishing my medicine studies and starting my internship. My life was never the same. I tried to put Christ first and see what He wanted me to do. However, I was not always successful in doing so. I attended the Spiritual Exercises yearly and it did, and still does help me for in making every day's decision to follow Christ.

I also had a great opportunity to attend two General Assemblies: in Itaici and Nairobi. Soon after my arrival in Itaici with our Ecclesial Assistant Fr. Milan Bizant, I became ill with a high temperature and fever. Although half of my baggage was medicines, no drug was efficient enough to help me. I was not left alone at that time. Especially Martina Zupanic from Croatia and both delegates from Japan helped me and consoled me during my illness. Fr. Milan brought Communion to me to my room every day and soon a doctor from Argentina provided me with the right antibiotics. Soon afterward, I recovered enough to join the Assembly again. Then I realised how much I was connected with every one all the time. I recognize that everyone was praying for my health and I discovered again the great connection between us.

I tried to be a CLC member in my daily life. I wished that the CLC way of life would permeate every moment I lived in my apostolic way of life. I have become the Eurolink for CLC Slovenian. After the General Assemblies Metka

Hajsek and I (Metka was also the Slovenian participant in Nairobi), try to be national promoters for a world dimension for CLC Slovenian.

About six years ago I first met Andrej, my future husband. He is also a Christian, but he is not a member of CLC. At first I was a little sad about the fact that Andrej is not such an enthusiast of CLC or the Spiritual Exercises as I am. However, he was never opposed to me being an active CLC member. During the past few years I have found the fact that his non-membership can also be an advantage since he sees things in CLC differently and from a little distance. He is not so emotionally engaged with the community and many times helps me to see the things in another way. Sometimes he also attends our local group meeting and we all appreciate his sharing with us.

But life is not always easy or without problems. God also sent us a trial. My husband and I can't have children - at least for now it looks like so. At first I accepted it with great sorrow and pain but, with the understanding and comfort of my husband, God made me slowly realize and understand that the children are His pure gift and that we don't have a right to request them. They are given to us, or they are not. We are not less loved by Him irrespective of what gifts He sends us. I'm very thankful to God that He granted me the faith that we all are in His hands and love. We realised that we still can do something about the children. We became godparents to two children in Africa.

I know that the CLC way of life had a great influence in my life and that it still will have. I see it as a precious gift that I have to develop and use even more. I pray to God that we, altogether, can really become one apostolic body with a mission to proclaim God's Reign on Earth ■

Andreja Schwarzbartl

Three Questions to Our Ecclesiastical Assistant



Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach SJ
WCLC Ecclesiastical Assistant

Progressio: Which particular points of the magisterium of Pope John Paul II do you wish to share with the CLC?

Father Kolvenbach: One quite distinctive focus of the magisterium of John Paul II concerned the faithful of Christ who are the laity in the Church. After the holy death of this great pope, many have focused on this effort to encourage the laity to assume their proper responsibilities in the Church and for the Church.

During his pontificate, John Paul continued to stress that it is not only members of the clergy and religious men and women who have the responsibility of the people of God. The Church is also in the world thanks to the men and women who there announce the Christ by being other Christs and who proclaim the good news by an authentically Christian life. Everywhere, to some degree, in the parishes, in the base communities and above all in the foundation of so many ecclesiastical movements, the laity have reacted positively to the call of the Pope and have become involved with a truly apostolic dynamism. In spite of a certain reticence, John Paul II encouraged this blossoming of new movements, recognizing there in a sign of the Spirit who also contributes in this manner to the vitality of the Church. The magisterium of John Paul II confirmed the CLC's rich tradition of time-honored service and supported the appropriate innovations to deepen its original contribution to the Church and spread its apostolic dynamism to the four corners of the world.

Progressio: Among the current challenges to the universal Church, which do you wish to call most particularly to the attention of the CLC?

Father Kolvenbach: By his travels, publica-

tions and preaching, John Paul II wished, in season and out of season, to make known the current challenge to the universal Church. Rather than remain modestly or diplomatically silent about the forces of death which in our day threaten human life from its origin to its earthly end, the Holy Father took advantage of every occasion, of every encounter, to defend life in the name of God. He supported the cause of peace among peoples constantly threatened by war and violence, human love in its exacting beauty, the promotion of justice without end, the ministry of re-conciliation, this gift and this forgiveness of which we all have need. Without doubt the unique and unequalled testimony of John Paul II roused and summoned the CLC. For the Pope speaks in vain, if you who live in the full reality of everyday life, of familial and professional life, do not spread his word. And so, here you have a clear orientation for your life as you face the challenges that confront the universal Church, and that the Pope has called out to attention with such eloquence and insistence.

Progressio: In the light of the orientations that emerge from the first teachings (discourses) of Pope Benedict XVI, which messages does the international Ecclesiastical Assistant wish to send to the CLC?

Father Kolvenbach: By the election of His Holiness Benedict XVI, the cardinals have opted for continuity in line with John Paul II. The program which the new pope has adopted closely resembles that which the CLC wished to adopt, following its discernment. In his homily during the inaugural mass of 24 April, he declared: "My real program of government is not to do my will, not to follow my ideas, but, with the whole Church, to dispose myself to listen to the Word and the will of the Lord, to let myself be guided by him, in such a way that it may be he himself who guides the Church in this hour of our history." This, then, is the message I wish to send to the CLC ■

CLC COMMON MISSION

What Do We Mean by It?

Ask a CLC member what mission means or implies and the usual response will be in terms of some specific actions he or she is doing. Mission will often be explained in terms of concrete gestures of service done in the spirit of Christ-like love. But there is a broader, deeper and much richer sense of mission spoken of in CLC documents, a sense that complements the understanding of our personal mission and puts it in the context of Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom or Reign of God and St. Ignatius' meditation on the Kingdom. It is absolutely vital for the spiritual development and maturation of us CLC members that we have a good "feel" for and consciousness of this broader sense of mission.

Not to see this leaves our groups being simply communities of apostles, groups of individuals doing different things, all of which can be spiritually significant but little more than that. The various world Assemblies of CLC, especially the one in Nairobi, Kenya in 2003, have underscored the fact of CLC being engaged in a mission common to all of its members. To this end the Nairobi gathering asked all CLC, beginning with the local groups, to modify our way of conducting our meetings; so that our way of sharing, of being together, and of living out mission would use the four-step process of:

1. Discerning
2. Sending
3. Supporting and
4. Evaluating.

World CLC names these four steps "cornerstones" of the specific identity of CLC in our Common Mission. World CLC understands this way of proceeding in CLC gatherings at

all levels, from local to international meetings, to be the way in which the Spirit of the Risen Christ will transform us all into becoming one apostolic community (a World Community at the Service of one world, as the 1979 World General Assembly in Rome said; One world community on mission "to bring about justice," as the 1982 World General Assembly in Providence, R.I. said; an international community "at the service of the Kingdom, to go out and bear fruit," as the 1990 World General Assembly in Guadalajara, Mexico said; and An apostolic community or "letter from Christ, written by the Spirit, sent to today's world," as the 1998 World General Assembly in Itaipu, Brazil said.)

The critical piece in this new emphasis is a hoped-for growing sense of our common mission, which will come through our **sharing responsibility for the mission each member of the group has received from the Spirit of the Risen Jesus.**



Fr. Bernard Owens SJ

Fr. Bernie Owens has been a Jesuit since 1959 and Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Nick Rieman-Great Lakes Region of CLC in the USA since 1992.

In the early 1980s, he wrote a dissertation for his PhD degree in Christian Spirituality at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.; a sociologically based study of the lay adult members of the CLCs in the USA and their lived Spirituality.

From 1981 until 1994, he taught theology and Christian Spirituality at the University of Detroit Mercy, led a Spirituality center there from 1988 until 1994, and then moved to Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Since then, Bernie has co-led a two year ministry training program called Internship in Ignatian Spirituality and led a reading seminar on great books in Christian Spirituality.

Besides leading a few individually directed retreats, 19 annotation retreats, discernment workshops for diocesan seminarians, leading pilgrimages and providing some individual spiritual direction, Bernie loves to work his 45' by 45' garden for vegetables and flowers plus his berry and rhubarb patches. Occasionally he bikes, cross-country skis and swims.

What, then, is the mission common to us all in CLC? Do we have a sense of what is the common thread in all our actions, in the way we are in the world that together constitutes the One Mission we are serving in the Name of Jesus? The four-step way of proceeding in our

The four-step way of proceeding in our CLC meetings with its concrete ways of sharing responsibility for the mission of each member is supposed to give us all a sense, an intuitive "feel" for this One Mission common to us all

CLC meetings with its concrete ways of sharing responsibility for the mission of each member is supposed to give us all a sense, an intuitive "feel" for this One Mission common to us all. My conviction is that this four-step process will be very important for our growth, but something additional is needed to come to this consciousness, something more than just our experiencing in community discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating. I believe it will make a major difference in our on-going formation as men and women trying to live Ignatian spirituality and particularly in our trying to be open to the Holy Spirit

making us into one Apostolic Community if we pray intently over and study/discuss with each other what the Kingdom is, according to Jesus, and how the Beatitudes are descriptions of attitudes of those who are in the Kingdom, the center-piece of Jesus' mission.

What I offer, then, is material for study, meditation, contemplative prayer and community sharing. To probe this material is to enter the Heart of Jesus, to find in that sacred place the focus of much of what He longs for us to

know: namely, to experience as His sisters and brothers the joy of friendship while we share with Him the work of carrying out the one mission Abba Father gave Him: the building of the Kingdom of God, with its beginnings being realized here on earth.

We have to encourage each other toward study, prayer and community sharing so that together we will grow into this vision of there being one mission and one community at the service of this slowly emerging reality, the Kingdom of God. It will be to see globally, even cosmically, the way St. Paul saw, the way Teilhard de Chardin saw, the way Jesus saw. It will be to see as God sees and to begin to feel as God feels; it will be to take on the Heart of God and be blessed with the intimations of no longer being just our own self but to experience what St. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I live, no longer I, but Christ in me". This vision fostered in our membership will assure our growing into being contemplatives in action, with an habitual sense of our being one apostolic community.

Meditation on the Common Mission of CLC

1. Make an act of presence, centering on Jesus, intent in how lovingly He looks on you.
2. Context or Composition of Place: Moving from being communities of apostles to becoming an apostolic community; *Projects #120* and the Nairobi World General Assembly Recommendations
3. Grace to be asked for: I will ask that the Holy Spirit bless me with a deeper knowledge and understanding of the mission of Christ Jesus; also to under-

stand better my own individual call and mission IN THE CONTEXT OF this all-encompassing mission; and then, with trust and love to follow Jesus in sharing the work and friendship, the joys and struggles involved in fulfilling this one and only mission: helping to bring forth the Kingdom of God.

Now, in the presence of the Spirit of the Risen Christ

1. Read prayerfully, reflectively the page listing the four key characteristics of the Kingdom of God and then the three pages that list the eight beatitudes as qualities of the kind of community that reflects what the kingdom, in a beginning sense, looks like.
2. Then list the activities of your day, the work you are paid for, the favors you do, the hobbies you engage in, the ways you relax, the services you do for free, the TV and newspapers you consult, anything related to eating, praying, communicating, verbal sharing, also the things/events that "happen" to you, that are "put on" you, responsibilities

you have, etc. Make this in the form of a list or column.

3. After many of these items you have listed, jot whatever from the list of Kingdom characteristics and beatitude-values those characteristics and values your time and efforts help realize. In what ways are your daily life and specific actions and happenings expressive of your mission and your part of realizing the mission of Christ to bring forth the Kingdom, initially here on earth and fully in heaven? In what ways do you better appreciate how the CLC group you belong to serves this one mission and has the vision of this global, cosmic vision?
4. As you finish this listing and reflecting on kingdom values being realized in your efforts, give thanks for any blessing or grace received, and note where you perhaps need conversion of understanding and choice to live better your own mission. Ask, as well, for a conversion of understanding of how the CLC group(s) you are part of are or can become an apostolic community.

Conclude with an Our Father.

Characteristics of the Kingdom and the Anti-KINGDOM

The Anti-Kingdom: Society Structured according to the Values of Satan 1. Accumulate money and possessions as a primary goal of life and career choices. Riches are seen as a means of security.	The Kingdom of God: Society Structured according to the Values of Jesus 1. Live with a spirit of simplicity regarding money and possessions; being ready to share because people are the center of my life, not things or my own self.
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So... RICHES versus SIMPLICITY OF LIFESTYLE

2. Seek prestige and status based on personal achievements, family reputation, wealth, etc.	2. Being free from insecure fears, from the need to feel superior to others. This means becoming "as a child" in the sense that Jesus means being as a child where one's sense of personal worth is rooted in his/her being loved and accepted by God and other people
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So...HONOR and PRIDE versus TRUTHFULNESS AND HUMILITY

3. Foster human relationships, friendships, social and business contacts that are exclusive and discriminatory; being prejudiced for various reasons: national, ethnic, religious, racial, sexual, age-groupings. Exclusivism. 'We' versus 'They' ways of relating.	3. Being all inclusive; living out of the conviction that a universal brotherhood and sisterhood is the only form of community worthy of God's people: no 'We' versus 'They' spirit, no outsider and no intended exclusion of an enemy.
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So...PRIDE versus TRUTHFULNESS, MERCY and FORGIVENESS

4. Use power in a dominating way; assert my own sense of prestige, status, and exclusive importance by carrying out my responsibilities and using whatever authority I have in a dominating, maybe even a harsh, oppressive way.	4. Because God and people are the center of my life, I carry out responsibility and authority in a way that serves the freedom of others (thereby helping to bring about the kind of community Jesus calls the Kingdom of God.) The power I have serves to foster the values of #1 - #3 in this right-hand column.
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So...PRIDE, MAINTAINING the STATUS QUO versus HUMILITY and LOVE through SERVICE

NOTE: It is God who brings about the Kingdom. God is the power that brings about the transformation of human hearts that leads to structural, social changes, to a more just society.

Yet, God has so chosen in His divine freedom to depend on us for the coming of this Kingdom, this way for us to live together. There is in us a power (God's own Self) that we can choose or not choose to bring to our families, cities, nation, church and world. To release that power from our hearts is what we call faith; to hold it back is called fear. The primary expressions of faith are listed in the right-hand column. It is especially compassion, forgiveness or mercy leading to healing that brings this transforming power of God to human societies ■

The Richness of CLC

Although the crowd made it impossible to see the paralytic of Capernaum, and his friends had to lower him through the roof, Jesus said to him: *Arise take up your bed and walk.* (Mk 2:11).

Do I believe? Do I believe that Jesus could truly heal this paralytic? Free him from his limbs? Enable him to walk again?

Jesus asked the two blind men of Jericho: *What do you want me to do for you?* Touched by their faith and moved with pity (He) touched their eyes. Immediately they recovered their sight... and followed him. (Matt. 20:32,34).

Do I believe? Do I believe that Jesus could make them see again? Is it necessary to look at the reality, the other reality, the enlightened reality... to follow him?

Do I believe that Jesus was the Son of God so awaited since Abraham (Isa 42:1-7) cited in the Prayer of the Church on January 9, 2005? The One of whom it is said: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to release prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.* (Luke 4:18)

Do I believe?

Can Jesus help me in my life journey? Can He enable me to start again? Can He help me to

see and above all to see beyond the ordinary, to see the enlightened reality? Do I believe this? Do I believe enough to follow him, to understand and to have a better view of reality?

Conversion lived by Ignatius of Loyola over 500 years ago led to faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, whose Word is active since the creation of the world until the healing of all. Convalescing after his terrible accident in the war, Ignatius discovered the tenderness and the grandeur of God's love for him. His process of frequenting this God of love radically changed Ignatius and touched him so deeply that he wanted to share this experience. With time and the repeated requests of his companions, he decided to write in order to share and to better accompany other persons in this journey. Thus was born the Spiritual Exercises, which became the riches of CLC and the heart of its identity.

It is not surprising therefore that our national, regional and international meetings¹, as well as our publications², place an emphasis on the Spiritual Exercises. In fact, the Spiritual Exercises with personal accompaniment allow us not only to discover CLC as a vocation but also to sustain us along the resulting journey. In this way, the national communities have the responsibility - thanks to the appropriate structures such as the formation teams - to lead CLC members to experience the Spiritual Ex-



Dominique Cyr

¹ A workshop was held in September 2002 on the Spiritual Exercises during the North American Assembly at Guelph in Ontario which brought together communities from Canada and the United States. During the World Assembly in Nairobi 03, there was a question of how the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises are the specific richness of CLC, referring above all to the General Principles of CLC #36.

² *The General Principles of CLC* #36 and #38-39, *The Mission of CLC* #41, *The CLC Charism* #56. Also in the CLC Questionnaire 2004 and *Projects* #128, November 2004.

ercises. To be a member of a Christian Life Community requires that "we consider the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius as the specific source of and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality." (*Supplement #36, G.P. #5*) The CLC is more than a simple group following the Ignatian Spirituality: there are many of these. CLC offers the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, this inestimable tool, as a means of living as Christians in the following of Christ, to serve as best possible the coming of the Kingdom of God. This permits us to listen to the call of Christ, to discover our per-



sonal mission, to evaluate it regularly, and to work with others for the humanization of our planet.

For us, members of CLC, the Spiritual Exercises are not an optional experience to take or leave, or one that we can relegate to the attic after making them³.

To live the process of the Spiritual Exercises is a privileged way of really discovering our particular identity, our authentic place in the heart of God. Through this, we grasp our proper role, our personal mission in and for the event of the Kingdom of the Father among the millions of excellent humanitarian actions to be done on Earth. To live the Ignatian election and to harmonize our lives with such an election, permits us to live more peacefully, happy, with energy, and respecting our own limits. It is for his greater glory that God wants each of us to be happy and fully alive.

Mary our mother said "yes" to the request of God (Luke 1:26-38). This Word was active to the point of giving birth to He who became Christ, the Savior. Through her prayers and because she held all these things in her heart (John 2:19), she was able to act in his time (The wedding of Cana, John 2:3-5) and be the support and strength for the apostles after the death of Jesus (John 29:26-27) and after his resurrection (Acts 1:14). Her faith in the promise and the Word of God and her compliance with it are an example for following Christ.

It is impossible for us to speak of Love for others if we have never experienced the love of God in all its dimensions within ourselves. (Fr. Yvon Samson, o.s.s.t.... "A Personal Word" Evangelization 2000, January 2005)⁴.

³ *Progressio Supplement #56*, December 2001, taken up again in *Projects #128* of November 2004.

⁴ Canadian Religious Television Broadcast (TVA Network) in Canada, St. Pierre and Miquelon and Tahiti

Do I believe that Jesus healed humanity 2000 years ago? Do I believe that He has continued to do it in the world since his resurrection? Do I believe that He could do it for me now? The CLC offers a means par excellence to be healed, liberated, put back on the right path, with a vision of reality enlightened by the God-Trinity's love for his creation at the summit of which he chose to place human beings as co-creators. *"Lord you wanted to take on our humanity to transform it and we lack the strength and courage. Lord have mercy on us."* (Prayer of the Church, January 2, 2005⁵).

Pope John Paul II desires that this year 2005 be the International Year of Peace. Let us draw near to the Prince of Peace through the Exercises. This year is also the Year of the Eucharist, the sacrament par excellence for nourishing the experience of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. May we become more and more visible and credible witnesses of God's love manifested in the incarnation of the Son, sustained and enlightened by the Spirit's action in the life of each person who is converted ■

Dominic Cyr
CLC French Canada



⁵ Editions Novalis, University of St. Paul, Ottawa, Canada.

A Letter from Peru

Dear CLC members of the Latin American National Councils¹:

After more than a year since the World Assembly in Nairobi, the CLC Peruvian Executive Council would like to share some reflections on our way of proceeding in the Latin American CLC.

Many of you were present in this Assembly (July-August 2003) and remember that, as a Latin American community, we talked about



Peruvian National ExCo: Franklin Ibanez, Pilar Romani, Guillermo Valera, Jairo Rivas and Carmen de los Rios

our organization. We decided to form two sub-regions (North and South) to improve our communication and, after some months, to consider a possible meeting of National Councils. Concerning this matter, we would like to comment upon some limitations and advances concerning our integration; in addition, we will offer some proposals.

Our e-group cvxla-subregionsur@gruposyahoo.com has begun to be used². We have taken advantage of it especially to exchange greetings and general information. As shown below we have had some valuable dialogues:

- After a tragic fire in Paraguay (July 2004), deep reflections and some gestures of effective solidarity circulated by e-mail.
- CLC Venezuela shared its participation, questions and hopes during the complicated electoral process (in which the Venezuelan people decided to confirm President Chavez in his post).
- CLC Ecuador and CLC Peru took some steps toward a real international integration: they shared apostolic tasks (Peruvian CLCers as volunteers in Guayaquil), Spiritual Exercises, and several visits during 2003 and 2004.
- We also have shared information concerning National Assemblies in Chile and Brazil, and encounters. We have also shared some documents.

We have asked ourselves if what we are sharing is significant. Perhaps it is little compared with all that we have lived. We probably could take better advantage of our e group. For example, we felt the absence of messages about national processes (this was one of the main objectives), including the ways in which we are trying to implement the task received in Nairobi; to help our national communities and the Latin American region to grow as an apostolic body.

¹ This article is an adaptation, in February 2005, of a letter sent by the Peruvian ExCo to Latin American National Councils in September 2004. Mutatis mutandis, reflections made in this article might interest other CLC Regions

² Some of this news also circulates by the e-group cvxla.magis2@grupos.com.br, created by the Program of Formation *Magis II*.

Perhaps, as National Councils, we should assume more initiatives and protagonism, and not overload the sub-regional coordinators.

These reflections are meant to stimulate dialogue: How are we growing in our integration as a Latin American apostolic body? How are we taking advantage of our electronic group? We also want to propose, as examples, some topics that could be treated and to initiate a dialogue on them.

Integration – Communication

CLC Ecuador and CLC Peru are living a very important process of kinship. We have shared in the following ways:

Apostolate: Several Peruvian CLCs participated in a voluntary service in Guayaquil, Ecuador (February 2004) organized by SIGVOL (CLC Ecuador's NGO)

Spiritual Exercises: In Chiclayo, Peru (August 2004), most participants were Peruvian but also there were Ecuadorians, and the director was Francisco Robalino (CLC Ecuador, sub-regional coordinator for the Mission).

Several visits: Peruvians CLCers have participated in a CLC Guayaquil Assembly, and Ecuadorian CLCers have done the same in meetings organized by CLC Peru in Piura and Chiclayo. In addition, a Peruvian group was in Ecuador to participate in the Magis Program.

What we are learning and how we are growing through this special bond that was born spontaneously is a gift of God! We invite other na-

tional communities to promote similar international experiences or to share with us their experiences on the matter.



Peruvian CLC Members

Formation – Spirituality

Many of us participated in the Magis Program (July 2004). It has deepened our formation and promoted our integration. Now, we are called upon to follow up this program and share its fruits with our national communities.

Ada Cabrera (CLC Paraguay) has shared several times concerning the formation of CLC guides. She realized consultations on national communities' processes of growth with regards to CLC identity. These subjects are good opportunities to interchange materials and experiences.

In Chile, a new Mini-Manila encounter took place in January of 2005. Such encounters have always been very significant as a way to

integrate young CLC members from several countries by means of the Spiritual Exercises and joint formation programs.

During the past two years CLC Cana (Madrid, Spain) has been economically supporting some activities for the formation of the Peruvian community. We invite interchange how

We have grown much, but we are called to grow more in the love of God for the good of our peoples and communities

others CLCs obtained financial resources. Furthermore, economic solidarity with the formation and other activities can be an excellent opportunity to grow as a universal community.

Many national communities have well developed processes of formation that we could use, trying to not duplicate efforts that already are being undertaken.

Mission

SIGVOL (CLC Ecuador) is supporting the consolidation of SERVO (Paraguay). Both

NGOs (national CLC apostolic works) are dedicated to promoting voluntary service. Might we be able to think in terms of a similar service on a bigger scale? SIGVOL has proposed something concrete for February of 2005.

Ten CLC members from six countries participated in the Social Forum of the Americas (Quito, Ecuador, 2004). They elaborated a report including recommendations for the ExCo. It would be good to share this report. Perhaps we could speak of our presence in the last Social Forum (Porto Alegre, Brazil, January, 2005). The magnitude and importance of the global and continental problems require our presence in those forums as a national and international apostolic body.

We have grown much, but we are called to grow more in the love of God for the good of our peoples and communities. We hope to have initiated dialogue by means of these reflections.

We pray for you all ■

*Jairo, Guillermo, Carmen, Pilar,
Franklin and Javier sj.*

CLC Peru National Executive Council



Our Way since Nairobi

In this article we would like to offer you the most outstanding stages of the way that has been followed by our Community since the last General Assembly of Nairobi in 2003. We sincerely hope that the experiences which, in all humility we will share with you below, may be of use to other national communities. When we returned from Nairobi, so keen to put all we had lived through there into action, we set about forming a work plan which would serve as our guide along the way. Although we prepare an annual work plan, we have to present it and approve it at the National General Assembly which is held each year. The work plans of 2004 and 2005 have no significant differences and for this reason we will refer to a single work plan which covers the two periods.

Two Lines of Action

Our National Community, after a communal discernment process which was carried out between the months of April and June of 2002 and in which all the groups took part, identified two lines of action which were a response to the reality of our Dominican society from our CLC Charism and Ignatian Spirituality perspective.

Those two lines of action offered our National Community the possibility of journeying towards a common mission as a single apostolic body. In this regard, we presented to the National Community the line of Spirituality and Faith, which we quote below:

Line of Spirituality and Faith: CLC is called to form lay men and women who are able to accompany other lay persons in the Spiritual Exercises. As a result of the experience of the Ex-

ercises and with the Grace of God, some lay persons will come forth in communities whose mission will let put them in the path of those who are working to bring about the changes which are needed to deal with the profound needs of our country. With this spirituality we will be able to take part in the evangelising work of our Church.

The second line of action approved by our National Community was that of apostolate and justice as we quote textually below:

Line of service and justice: All members of CLC are called to make a special commitment in favour of the poor in those projects where the poor themselves are the protagonists in an effort to promote their own needs and aspirations. We believe that those projects which have to do with the family, education and health should have priority. Our special preferential option for the poor does not exclude any sector and springs from the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth.

With these two lines of action as our points of reference, we set out, on our return from Nairobi, to put together a work plan for our National Community which would reflect what had been lived out in Nairobi and the subsequent recommendations. We put together the work plan outlining objectives in the area of organisation, formation, spirituality, apostolate and finances. The activities which were set out in the plan had a general aim as the 'slogan' of the work plan, namely that of achieving a National Community which was lively, united and which had received a good formation.



Mario Bergés

Area of Organisation

With regard to organisation, two processes which we had established in the work plan and which we were able to carry out with great success should be highlighted - the 'Link Meeting' and the 'Community Debate'.

The 'Link Meeting' is a base community meeting in which a member of the National Executive Committee takes part and this

The 'Link Meeting' is a base community meeting in which a member of the National Executive Committee takes part and this serves to maintain and strengthen the ties between the base community and the National Executive Committee

serves to maintain and strengthen the ties between the base community and the National Executive Committee.

The 'Link Meeting' commences with a time of silent prayer. Immediately after this, but keeping the prayerful atmosphere, information from the National executive Committee is passed to the base community and

vice versa - information is passed from the base community to the Executive Committee. This information in its two directions has two dimensions:

- ⇒ Objective information about how the base community and the Executive Community are doing in the areas of organisation, formation, spirituality, apostolate and finances; it also mentions dif-

ficulties that might have arisen and what the future looks like.

- ⇒ Information from the subjective dimension of the Spirit: where is the Spirit moving us and to what do we feel we are being called.

Each base community has two 'Link Meetings' per year.

The 'Link Meeting' has proved to be a unifying instrument and one which generates a leadership which is able to enliven the entire National Community. The flow of information between the Executive Committee and the base community is a very rich source of experiences and guidelines which help us in the process of discerning God's will in our lives.

The second process which we deal with in the area of organisation and which we would like to highlight is that of 'Community Debate'. Twice a year a national topical question is proposed for discussion in all the base communities. As a follow-up to this a discussion session, a seminar or a debate is organised in which all the base communities participate and a speaker who is experienced in the area may also take part.

This makes us stay close to day-to-day reality and to search for God's will at every moment and follow it.

The year 2004 was a year of national elections in our country and it was also a year of great economic crisis. Within this framework, we had a community debate which had as its theme 'The Crisis of the Dominican Economy; The Challenges which the New Government Must Face'. On that occasion, we invited an experienced speaker on that topic and we had a very useful debate.

Formation

As far as formation is concerned, our work plan proposes the preparation of a basic formation programme for the entire National Community. In this formation plan, a process which will provide initial formation for new communities should be highlighted but we have also suggested to the already existing communities the time to put this into operation. When a community is in its initial stages, it receives four sessions of a formation programme which has been set up using Power Point and this makes it attractive and easy to follow.

1. Saint Ignatius of Loyola
2. The CLC Charism
3. The CLC Lifestyle
4. Discernment

Each presentation lasts for about 30 to 40 minutes and then there is a time for debate and questions about what has been shown. The entire session lasts for no more than one hour and a half and the programme is completed in four consecutive sessions with one session per week. This process guarantees that those who wish to form a new community start on their way with clear ideas about CLC Spirituality, Charism and way of life.

These Power Point presentations can be downloaded from Internet from the web page <http://www.cvx-rd.org/Pagina%20formacion.htm>

Spirituality

‘The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius are the very best of Ignatian Spirituality, a gift of Our Lord to His Church, approved by Popes, appreciated by our Bishops, of proven fruits and point of encounter of all Ignatian people...’

This is how our work plan begins with regard to spirituality, highlighting the importance which the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius have for us. To be consistent with this degree of importance and turning for support to the Society of Jesus, we offer the Spiritual Exercises throughout the year in their different forms:



CLC Dominican Republic National Assembly 2005

- ⇒ Two cycles of the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life - one from February to May and another from September to December.
- ⇒ Each year in June we offer the Spiritual Exercises in 8 days.
- ⇒ Finally we offer three weekend retreats - one in April, another in October and another in August for youth.

Also in the area of spirituality, we should mention a process which we put into practice in 2004 and which we call 'Prayer Night'. This is a special meeting which takes place in the late evening or early night and it deals with how to pray using the Scriptures. After explanations have been given, those participating have the opportunity of about 30 minutes of personal prayer/Ignatian prayer in silence: at the end of this time of personal prayer they evaluate this prayer asking themselves, 'What did I feel?' 'What did I discover?' 'To what do I feel called?'

When both the personal prayer and the evaluation are over, those present come back together and they share their experiences - if they so wish. We have also run these Prayer Nights with great success in schools and amongst par-



Elections of New ExCo

ents, for example, and these in turn have brought about the founding of new CLC groups.

Apostolate and Justice

In the field of Apostolate and Justice, we have directed our efforts to the following:

1. To identify specific areas of need where

we might be able to work on behalf of the most needy.

2. To identify projects which already exist and which might benefit from the collaboration of some of our communities.
3. To obtain a true knowledge of the missions in which the various communities are engaged and how these could best give support to each other.
 - a) To create 'The CLC Mission Bulletin' to spread information to all the communities about all the various activities which are being carried out.
4. To establish a mechanism which will ensure an effective participation of our communities in the event of any crisis at a national level.

It is appropriate to point out that our National Community has been very active in defending the line taken by our Bishops which has been expressed in pastoral letters; this concerns the appalling situation of social, moral and economic deterioration which we have been experiencing and from which we have not as yet emerged.

Finances

In the area of Finances, our work plan has been limited to the establishing of means to secure financial autonomy, ensuring that the communities assume their financial commitments with a sense of maturity.

It should be noted that in the forming of the work plan, the base communities were clearly and definitively against the possibility of receiving government funds through a funding programme for NGOs which the Dominican government employs. The base communities

argued that there are other endeavours which have greater needs and, in addition, if such funds had been accepted, freedom of action could, in some way, have been curtailed.

We have given you a brief overview of some of the salient points of our work plan and we have also indicated some of the major points in our journey since the General Assembly of Nairobi. All that now remains for us to do is to mention that in February of this year (2005), we had our own General Assembly during which the new members of the National Executive Committee were elected for the next two years.

Another special feature of that February General Assembly was that approval was given to call the Committee which, up to that time had been known as the Executive Committee, the 'The Santa Maria of the Annunciation Community'. So last February, members of 'The

Santa Maria of the Annunciation Community' were elected and these are Alexis Mercedes, Maria Esther Valiente, Antonio Rodriguez, Rosa Pichardo, Camila Redman, Maria Isabel Pou and Quilvio Cabral.

We now have a presence in Santo Domingo, Santiago and Dajabon. The Ecclesiastical Assistant for Santo Domingo is Fr. Manuel Maza, S.J., and for Santiago and Dajabon the Ecclesiastical Assistant is Fr. Prudencio Pina, S.J.; this team of men and women have, from the time of their election and for the next two years, the responsibility to help us all to find the will of God in our lives so that in all things we may love and serve. ■

Mario Bergés
Past President of 'The Santa Maria of the
Annunciation Community'
CLC Dominican Republic





World Youth Day 2005

"We have come to worship him"

(Mt 2:2)

XX.
Weltjugendtag
Köln 2005

[' m a g i s]

This word is the motto of the World Youth Day 2005 which will be held August 15th-21st in Cologne (Germany). Around 1 million young Christians between the ages of 16 and 30 are expected to participate. The church in Germany prepares itself to welcome guests from all over the world in its dioceses during the days of preparation. The Jesuits as well as the CLC and the entire Ignatian family offer days of preparation. The ['magis]-project is a combination of pilgrimage and group retreat (spiritual exercises in a group): 3000 youth and young adults from over 40 countries and languages will be split up into 100 international groups for a week (August 8-15, 2005).

Sabine Krienien, completed studies in theology and psychology and has been a member of CLC Germany since 2001. She has been working for young adults since 2003.

The name of the project ['magis] refers to the desire to live more closely with God, and to get to know him more intimately.

The Holy Father points out in his *message to the Youth of the world on the occasion of the 20th World Youth Day*: "It is important, my dear friends, to learn to observe the signs with which God is calling and guiding us".

The Ignatian experiment¹ are meant to be a practise to learn the language of the signs of God. They pick up the essential points of Ignatian Spirituality: Experience – reflective prayer – looking ahead. The experiences made possible by the ['magis]-experiment, are how to deal with cultural boundaries, language limitations and the challenges of the group.

The participants in ['magis] will evaluate their shared experiences in an Ignatian fashion, in

order that spiritual fruit can be drawn from what is experienced: the experience of God. CLC members from all over Germany are engaged in the ['magis]-project as experiment leaders.

Following the experiments, all experiment groups will meet on Saturday, August 13th at the rocks of the Loreley, on the Rhine River, to spend the day together, to get to know the other participants of the Ignatian family and to celebrate mass.

From the Loreley, our guests will travel by boat to Cologne, to take part in the main program of the World Youth Day (August 15-21, 2005). The Jesuits, jointly with the CLC, have established their meeting point and spiritual centre at St. Alban's Church in the centre of Cologne.

More information can be obtained from the following homepages: www.magis2005.de and www.wyd2005.de.

We invite young Christians between 18 and 30 years of age, who are in contact with CLC or other Ignatian organizations and who are open for Ignatian experiences, to take part in the ['magis]-project.

Above all, we would like to invite all of you to accompany the World Youth Day with your prayers and to pray the *World Youth Day Prayer* for all the young people who set out on this pilgrimage in search of God: "Lord, we pray: Bless the young people around the world. Reveal Yourself to those who are searching for You." ■

*Sabine Krienien
CLC Germany*

¹ N. d. t. : Ignatian Experiment: term taken from the vocabulary of the Jesuit noviciat and freely resume by the french-speaking organizers of the Project ['magis]; to designate the small program which will be proposed in every group.

Dong Hanh joins CLC USA

On the weekend of 22-25 July, 2004, the Dong Hanh (Vietnamese Companion of Christ) members attended the National Assembly of Christian Life Community of U.S.A (CLC USA) at Barry University, Miami, Florida. At this gathering, CLC USA formally accepted the Dong Hanh movement into CLC in the presence of the world CLC Vice-Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr. Alberto Brito, S.J., and the world CLC President Miss Daniela Frank. This was worth remembering for everyone in Dong Hanh as it was a history-making event.

The event of Dong Hanh joining the CLC USA has brought a new beginning and many changes in me. Beginnings and changes have sometimes been challenges that bring me to a standstill, and I have quickly found a hiding place within Dong Hanh. However, joining CLC has also been a call that helps me grow in the grace of God

A New Beginning

At the end of the Vietnam War, Vietnamese people lost faith in regaining their freedom and left their place of birth, their culture, with the hope of a new beginning. In the early 1980s, the sharp increase of Vietnamese refugees settling in North America and Europe led to the establishment of the Dong Hanh Movement. To this present day, Dong Hanh still exists and functions within the Vietnamese Catholic communities. Through Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, many people regained their faith, found peace and discovered new meaning for life in a new place. In the Dong Hanh groups, many of us saw, felt and experienced friendship in Christ. Many others grew to cherish and accepted the Dong Hanh way of life.

For over twenty years, while living in the United States, I have served my brothers and

sisters in a very familiar environment of Vietnamese culture and language. Like the apostles, though experienced fishermen, they often came back ashore without a good catch. Joining CLC was an instance when God called me to open my eyes and venture outside of Dong Hanh, further into deeper waters, where he told me to cast my net out to CLC, a not so familiar place, just like He told the

apostles to cast their nets to the right side of their boat (John 21; 6). Maybe my fear of uncertainty and my inclination to cling on to my past successes caused my hesitation and the impulse to step back. I heard a whispering voice within me,

"Dong Hanh has a solid structure that provides a host of good services. Why do I have to try harder? Why do I have to let go of myself and leave my comfort zone (of my native tongue and culture) to share, contribute and

collaborate with the brothers and sisters whom I have not met?" I also heard inviting words saying, *"Isn't that enough that I seek God, follow Christ within Dong Hanh? Why do I have to try harder? What is better for me*



Trung Pham

Trung Pham was born in Vietnam and came to the United States in 1980 as a "boat people" refugee. He has been with the Dong Hanh (Vietnamese Companion of Christ or VCCt) since 1981. Trung has served as a formation guide to many local Dong Hanh communities in Southern California since 1984 and also as the Regional Coordinator for the Southeast Region of Dong Hanh. Recently, Pham completed a three year training program to become a SEEL (Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life) director with the Seattle/Tacoma SEEL organization at Seattle University. Trung is now serving Dong Hanh as the Treasurer and Vice-President of Dong Hanh. Professionally, Trung is a System Administrator of the Information Technology Department of the Anaheim Union High School District. He lives in Westminster City in Orange County, California.

to embrace World CLC?" On the contrary, when I reflected back on the short history of Dong Hanh, I realized that many generations before me have bravely believed, trusted and allowed themselves to be led by God to an unclear destination in order for Dong Hanh to exist today, Mr. and Mrs. Ta Dac Cuong had tirelessly knocked on so many doors to find an Ecclesiastical Assistant to help the young adults of Vietnamese Catholic refugees. In the time period of ten years, Father Julian Elizalde S.J., had crisscrossed all over the United States

proud and will bravely receive the calling to continue the footsteps of those before me to step out of my comfort zone of Dong Hanh, ready to jump into the unknown destination where I know I must be humble, give more and strive further.

I recognize my challenges, but with Christ by my side, I'm elated to emerge myself into the World CLC.

The Calling to Open My Heart

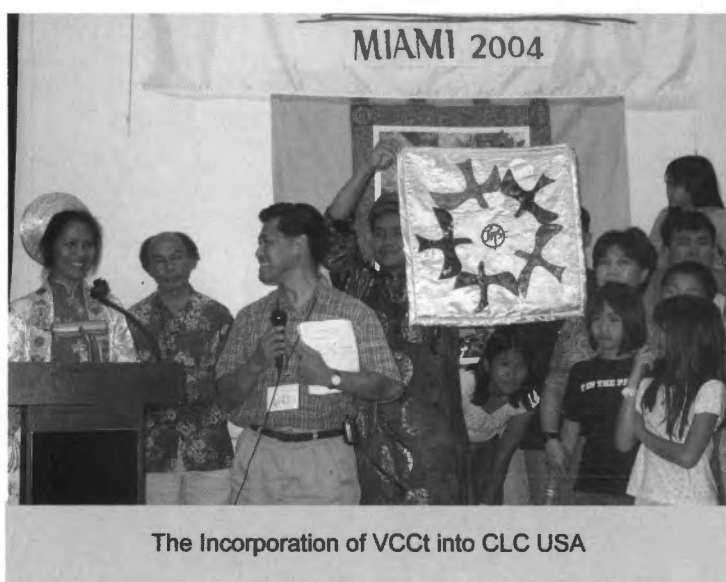
When I entered the World CLC family, I gained many brothers and sisters of different nationalities, languages and cultures. I gained brothers and sisters from Korea, Philippines, Cuba, Mexico, America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria, etc. All of my new brothers and sisters share a common Catholic faith and a CLC way of life originating from Ignatian Spirituality. We share a yearning to follow Jesus in our every day life. From now on, I will be able to journey together with *all* my brothers and sisters in CLC through regional and national activities/gatherings.

My services are no longer limited within the Vietnamese Community. I am called to extend my arms, expand my heart, spread the love and connect with my brothers and sisters in CLC. This reflection brought me back to God's words, "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50)

The Calling to Be Humble

"...no town or house divided against itself will stand." (Matthew 12:25)

Christ also asked me to open my heart and get closer to other organizations in my local parish



and Canada despite snowy ice or the desert heat in order to bring the Spiritual Exercises to different Vietnamese Catholic settlements. So many men and women, clergy and religious, sacrificed their summer vacations each year to provide the Spiritual Exercises. In addition, many brothers and sisters continued to sacrifice to build Dong Hanh groups at local parishes so that I could have a Dong Hanh family. Today it is my turn to be called to continue on to a different unknown destination, so that God's grace may be channelled to my brothers and sisters of different nationalities, languages and cultures. After contemplating the short twenty-year history of Dong Hanh and the significant 400 year history of CLC, I am very

such as youth, Kairos, choir, the Eucharist Crusaders, Cursillo, etc. Perhaps not to find out what I can do for them, or what I can learn from them, but just to bridge the gap, to empathize, to create harmony and unity, to work together for building His Kingdom. Through the event of joining CLC, God reminded me to get closer to my Vietnamese brothers and sisters so that I can nurture my origins, my roots can reach deeper into the Vietnamese heritage in order to bear fruit for the Lord. Through the event of joining CLC, I also heard Him reminding me to support my Vietnamese brothers and sisters.

The Calling to Social Justice

"Give and gifts will be given to you [...]" (Luke 6: 38)

Upon joining the CLC, I also heard the calling to share the financial responsibility. When I first heard of it, I perceived it as a challenge and thought, *"Why must I pay an additional \$55 dollars to CLC USA annually? What will I receive in return for contributing annually to the office of CLC USA?"* Indeed, I received this calling as a burden instead of as an opportunity to share the responsibility as a matured citizen. In the past, the United States openly welcomed me—a refugee with neither fortune nor future—unconditionally, to share with me the inheritance of what its ancestors have fought and bled to build. I received freedom, peace and wealth.

Today, I have an education, a good job, a steady future and, even more, convenience and

luxury of which I had dreamt when first setting my feet on this land. Today, as a grown up son in a family, it is time for me to give a hand, to take on the responsibility like an adult.

And finance is one of those responsibilities. Furthermore, after careful examination, I have gone from surprise to embarrassment because a large portion of the yearly fee is sent to the global office of the World CLC in Rome to help pay numerous expenses and especially to aid other CLC in poor Third World countries. So when donating the yearly fee, I am helping



Offertory according to the Vietnamese Liturgy

and sharing the responsibility with my CLC brothers and sisters in other countries. When I fully understood, I saw myself being called to start contributing to create social justice through sharing the financial responsibility with my brothers and sisters who are poor and in need in Sudan, Lebanon, Nairobi, Mexico and Cuba. In humility, I realized I have begun to accomplish social justice from this small contribution.

The Calling to Serve

"Give them some food yourselves." (Luke 9:13)

Christian Life Community originated from the Sodality of Mary forty years ago. The young members of yesteryear are retired or near retirement. Decades ago, many people sacrificed and contributed to build Christian Life Community (CLC) so that we can be under the



A Vietnamese statue of Our Lady

same roof in harmony with them. When attending the CLC USA Assembly of 2004 at Miami, Florida, I saw more elders than youth. In contrast, Dong Hanh consists of many generations—grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters as well as children who follow the Dong Hanh's way of life. Dong Hanh focuses on serving family and the youth in order to

maintain continuity. Many of us grew up in the era of modern technology, which enables us to be proficient and productive as we communicate via e-mail, the internet and getting information via web pages. I am called to contribute these technical skills along with my experience in organizing Spiritual Exercise retreats, training and conferences. In serving my new brothers and sisters in CLC USA, I also heard God's call for me to share the beauty of the Vietnamese tradition and culture and my experience in incorporating the good values between two cultures. Through the calling of opening my heart to partnership, to learn and to serve, I further understand what Jesus taught his disciples when He said, "Give them some food yourselves." (Luke 9:13)

Back then the Apostles perceived Jesus' invitation to feed five thousand from five loaves of bread and two fish as a huge challenge. At last, all they had done was to contribute food and to collect the leftovers. Jesus took care of the most challenging task.

Today, I am called to share with my new brothers and sisters my experience of encountering and following Christ; to share my time, wealth, comfort, my personal convenience and my family, despite lacking skill in their languages and my unfamiliarity with their cultures. It can be a huge challenge. But with God among us, I let Him remove those hurdles and follow His command. In addition, God also calls me to let others recognize His face through my own brokenness, mistakes, emotional wounds, physical pains and all of the imperfections that are still within me.

The event of Dong Hanh joining CLC is no longer an obstacle but a call for me ■

Trung Pham

CLC – A life of invitations and changes

Guy has recently asked me to write an article about myself for Progressio. This, I have to admit, is one of the more difficult things I can ever be asked to do, so, here I go. I am Maltese married to Roberta and we have 2 little girls (Alison and Christina). In my professional life I am Head of IT (Information Technology) in a local financial services group of companies. This means that my job brings me in close contact with the world of investments, profit and consumerism. Trying to be a committed CLCER in this daily environment is far from easy and requires a constant reminder of who I am and my beliefs. I am also a member of CLC Malta and a convinced member of the world community. My most recent involvement with the world community is serving as a member of the Ex-Co from the Nairobi Assembly.

My journey in CLC started many years ago with a very simple invitation from a friend to join a group of friends at a prayer meeting. Little did I know at the time where this invitation was going to take me and how it was going to change me and my outlook to life. This simple invitation has had a radical effect on my life. It was the first major turning point in my young adult and adult life. At the time and for quite a number of years following this invitation the highlight of the year was a month's experience with a group of other youths working with the Sisters of Mother Teresa in an area called *La Kalsa (Palermo, Sicily)* or with the Brothers of the Missionaries of Charity in *Noto (Siracusa, Sicily)*. At that time I did not realise how profoundly these experiences were changing me and forming me. I came in close contact with people's real suffering, with society's injustices and victims of crime. Accepting the invitation year on year to go and live these experiences was making me more sensitive to the real issues of the world. Then, in the spring of 1993 when I was already set up to go and spend another month in *Noto* I received another invitation that was going to open the

doors to the international community of CLC. I was invited to form part of a group of 10 young Maltese CLCers who were going to *Chantilly (Paris)* for a European Youth CLC Meeting. On returning home from this Youth Meeting I was asked to become the Maltese CLC Eurolink. The role of a Eurolink is described in what is today known as the "European CLC Operating Procedures". (These can be found on the website www.clceurope.org.) The Eurolinks meet every other year and this gave me the opportunity to start meeting other CLCers of much more experience than myself. I started living the life of the international CLC Community at first hand.

At the time CLC Malta was also living a time of great faith. The Leadership Community of CLC Malta took a decision to invite and host the European Assembly in 1995. I think this was a leap of faith for the leadership and the Maltese National Community. The Assembly took place and more people in CLC Malta started to get involved with the international Community. More people realised that CLC Malta was part of a much larger and vibrant World Community. Then in 1996 I received another invitation. The Euroteam elected in Malta the year before asked if I was ready to accept being co-opted onto the Euroteam. Up to this point whether I accepted an invitation or not effected only myself but this time accepting the invitation was different. I was 4 months away from my marriage and from now onwards accepting or declining an invitation would be a joint decision and not mine alone. After reflecting and praying on this decision we decided that I should accept the invitation given to me by the Euroteam. Working on the Euroteam brought me in close contact with the life of CLC in various countries in Europe. The life I saw energised me to be of greater



Chris Micallef

service to the national communities. Then, in 1998 I was invited to participate in the World Assembly in Itaici as an observer of the Euroteam. This Assembly was my first experience of a CLC World Assembly.

In 1999 I was nominated for the next Euroteam elections. This time accepting the nomination had a different meaning for me. It had to be a family decision since Roberta and I were expecting our first child, Alison. Working on the Euroteam at the service of the Euro-



Micallef family: Christina, Roberta, Alison and Chris

pean National Communities and with the experience of Itaici I learnt how important the support of the family, my local and national community were in this work. I learnt also the importance of evaluating my work while keeping all these aspects in mind because the next time I would accept an invitation I would accept it with the knowledge and lived experiences of the past.

My last invitation came in early 2003 when I received a few nominations for the ExCo. Accepting this invitation was probably one of the more difficult ones. It was far from clear whether or not I should accept the nominations and this time I decided to involve the leadership community of CLC Malta in this decision. I wanted this decision to be seen, felt and understood as a sending of the community. The implications in this are that my work, my service on the ExCo is therefore supported not only by my family but also by the National Community. If the community is sending me then it is the community's responsibility to support and later evaluate with me my period of service.

I have now been serving the World Community on the ExCo from the Nairobi Assembly and it has been a great learning experience. It is an experience of service towards the World Community which is bringing me closer to world realities that are having an effect on our lives.

Looking back at the invitations I received I realise how my life has been changing and being reshaped as I accept or decline the invitations received. With every invitation there is an implied invitation to change and to grow in the love of the Lord. I have been free to accept or decline each invitation and it is in exercising this freedom (with an Ignatian Indifference) that I start to experience the Lord and His great Love for me.

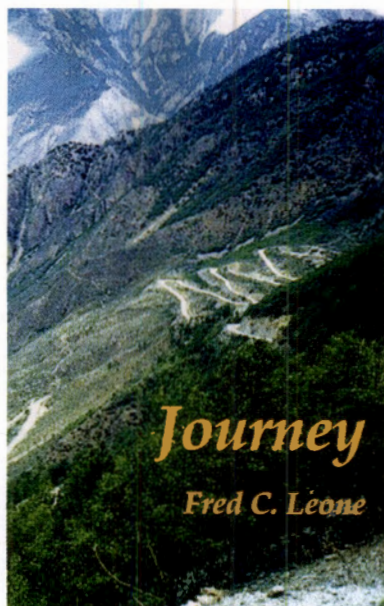
My CLC experience/vocation has shown me very concretely how the Lord works with people, life situations and open hearts. My journey in CLC has been a journey of Love. My prayer to our Lord today is that He gives me the courage to continue exercising the freedom He gave us to accept or decline the invitations He will continue to present to me ■

Chris Micallef
CLC Malta

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please do not forget in your prayers the following events:

- **The North American Conference**
October 7- 10, in Chicago, USA
- **The African Encounter**
October 8-14, in Johannesburg, South Africa



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