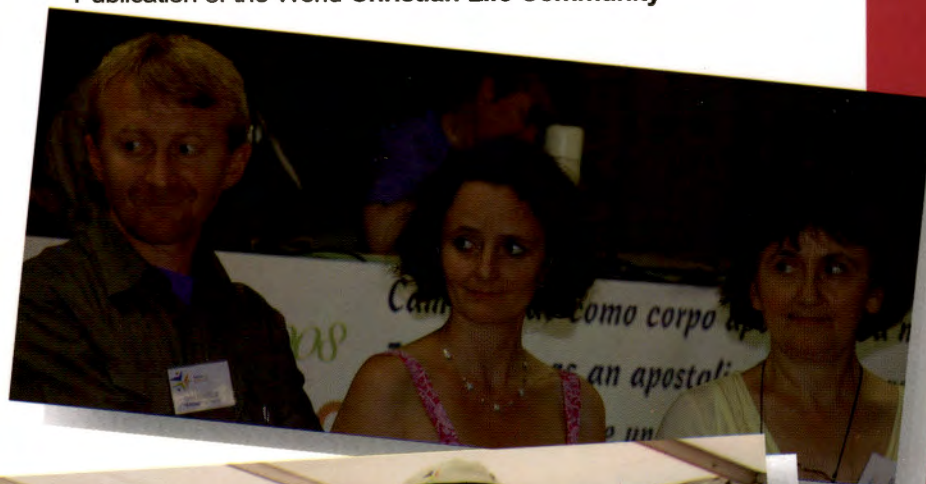




progressio

Publication of the World Christian Life Community



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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.

The CLC, a way of life

The CLC is a way of life... It is through this brief phrase that the CLC was introduced to me by one of its members. I had just taken part in the first CLC meeting of my life. And the phrase has been effective in introducing the novice that I was to the identity of the community. Twenty-three years later – already - this phrase resonates strongly in me on reading this issue of *Progressio*, for it opens up important aspects of our identity.

Nowadays, the question of identity is both sensitive and crucial. Sensitive, for our world, which constantly reduces the distance between peoples, accepts uneasily the assertion of identity. The risk of intolerance and rejection of anyone who does not share my identity is never far away when the pursuit of identity becomes too vehement. Paradoxically, the gradual discovery of the difference of the other seems to invite a better knowledge of myself. So discovering who I am becomes imperative for a dialogue with the other and for building a mature relationship.

The CLC vocation lies at the heart of our CLC identity. As our Lord and Master gives us the grace to know Him better, this vocation becomes clearer to our spirit and more and more precious to our heart. José Reyes shares his experience of the journey as a couple, speaking of this vocation which is born and grows through desolation and consolation.

What place would commitment have in this vocation? What form would it take to become a bearer of significance as much for those making a commitment as for the community? There are so many questions

for those of us who have acknowledged the CLC as our special vocation in the church. A sharing by CLC France helps us place the steps of commitment within our CLC journey, by stripping away in particular the possible shortcomings of a hidden identity.

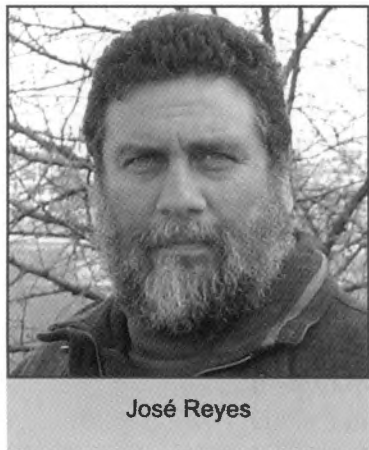
Formation is one of the keys for discovering and deepening the CLC vocation. A return to the experience of the Latin American *Magis* programme reminds us of this. A beautiful consolation, as is the birth of every new community. The city of Kisangani in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is another place where the CLC presence is developing.



Our presence is not only geographic, it is also 'apostolic', as is witnessed by our presence in the United Nations, our participation in the now-defunct conference of international Catholic organisations, and in the new Catholic-inspired Forum of NGOs. That is our CLC identity, too. That is the CLC too, a way of life.

Guy Maginzi
World CLC Executif Secretary
Translated from French by Patricia Kane

The CLC vocation: an evolution



José Reyes

I have been asked to reflect on how the CLC vocation evolves in the different stages of life, acknowledging that through the years it grows from an intuition or hunch into a permanent and stable style of life. This work has already been done in several documents, particularly in our “*CLC Charism*” and in the plans of formation of each national community. Perhaps the Spiritual

Exercises are the best model for understanding our growth from the loving initiative of God passing through contemplation to reach love, going through purification, the election and transformation.

Nevertheless, I dare, as a kind of complement, to meditate on the matter from another perspective. I have taken up some old notes and re-edited them from this point of view. The method that I follow is analogical, since I appeal to my own evolutionary experience in the relationship of a couple, and I try to establish a parallel, looking at the CLC vocation as a relationship that keeps on growing, passing through crises, sometimes inconvenient, seeking greater fullness and maturity, advancing toward stability and fecundity. It is an adventure that is expressed in different forms of commitment. As in marriage - an appropriate image when talking about the Church and the community according to Saint Paul - we live different moments of growth in the relationship, now no longer between a man and woman, but between each one of us and the community. This exposition pays much attention to the affections and, according to how they develop, necessarily moving toward the election and commitment. Permit me then to propose some stages of growth toward a mature and stable vocation, using my personal experience which I suppose is still incomplete.

Initial attraction

CLC presents itself to me as something attractive, there is “something” in it that fascinates me, something that moves my affection and my desires. That “something” is sometimes vague, diffused. There is a bit of “premonition” in this, and little intellectual knowledge. There are “waves” in the air; it is a “physical-chemical” problem.

The attraction moves me first to one encounter or step which inaugurates a series of other encounters through which a relationship, a process is developed. The first encounter supposes a sense of risk, because things are not clear. The difficulty in accepting the risk is at the basis of much affective and spiritual stagnation.

As in human love, this first stage is somewhat romantic and irresponsible, but it is foundational and it will mark the whole relationship. It is not centered in the fulfillment of the needs of the other, but rather in satisfying my own needs in this relationship. The other appears somewhat idealized, and I, somewhat irresponsible.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be of a good and joyful humor but diffused. It will allow me to be comfortable in CLC, where I will only take what gratifies me or what I find attractive.

“Sir, Where do you live?”

“All remained in admiration”

Progressive knowledge

The contours begin to be clarified; I begin to identify and express the elements of the initial attraction. There is a need for time, coexistence, the expression of one’s own feelings, desires, ideas, etc. We need long conversations and walks in order to know one another better.

I also know what was not present in the initial attraction, including less attractive aspects. In this stage, the "I" continues to be protected. We seek to discover more knowledge of the other and are not concerned with the exposure of ourselves. There is an attitude of observation, critical, reserved, although interested and expectant.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will lead to me to actively seek a greater knowledge. I will want to know more clearly why I find the person attractive, and for that, I will visit her periodically; I will have long walks and conversations.

"He stayed with them"

Alteration of oneself

In the relationship of a couple, if we get through this first stage, the other begins to enter my life, to inconvenience me: Why didn't you come yesterday? Can you come to get me? At what hour are you going to arrive today? It touches my personal time, my vacations, my likes and preferences of programs, etc. The inconvenience begins to be invasive: questionings, mutual demands, fraternal correction, search of definitions, etc.

The alteration of oneself includes the two senses of the word alteration: *"to change"* and *"be bewildered"* (*"descentrarse"*)

"Are not you able to watch with me?"

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be in the line of a discernment: Do I really want the other in my life? Do I recognize in the other an opportunity, an invitation from God? I will use the means characteristic of discernment: prayer, accompaniment, the revision of life in community, the examination of conscience. Perseverance is the key. I will allow myself to be bothered: I will pay the quotas, I will respond to the letters, I will make the Exercises, I will come to the Masses, I will sell tickets for

the raffle, I will go to the *"formation Thursdays,"* etc.

Crisis of the relationship

The crisis is an experience of contradiction: I want to or I don't want to; I am able to and I am not able to. In relation to the past, the crisis is experienced as a nostalgia of lost freedom: I didn't have to give an account to anyone. I did what I wanted, I had more free time. The idealization of the past and the exaggeration of the present difficulties.



In relation to the future, the crisis is experienced as a fear of the radicality of the commitment. I sense that I am risking my whole life. What more can I do?

In the present, the crisis is expressed by setbacks, self-defense, protection of my weakness, exaggeration of my powers.

The relationship can end at any stage, but obviously in this stage the rupture occurs with more frequency. If the relationship doesn't break up it continues on to the successive stages.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be deep and discreet, (prayerful). I will seek the source and separate myself from what is accidental. I will center myself in the quality, in the depths.

Growing intimacy

One of the signs of the overcoming of the crisis is that the barriers and the protection that I have built around myself begin to fall. I accept and I feel that I am accepted, the crisis of identity is overcome and enters into the dynamics of intimacy.

It no longer bothers me to have the other in my life; on the contrary, I like to think of a common project, think of life in two-- in the case of a couple, in several- in the case of CLC. The encounters are deeper and less possessive, with greater richness of expression and capacity to listen.

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the case of CLC**

There is a basic trust in the other, a certainty of their presence in my life, that permits intimacy even if there are physical separations.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be one of availability: I will offer myself to the other, I allow her to make use of me. At

the same time, I will have the freedom of saying no, but without frivolity.

Fecundity

Love circulates and begins to touch others, it is a sign. The intimacy explodes into fruitfulness. In the case of the couple, the most obvious fruitfulness is the children.

There is an unconditional support for the other, so that their vocation be alive. There is a common project, that is developed with realism and perseverance. A style of life is generated in common that touches all spheres of life.

There is a social and ecclesial role of "shaping," which includes accompanying

others, the children, other couples, communities, etc.

I distinguish, for the moment, four phases in this stage of fecundity, and I associate them with my four children:

1st son: spontaneous and hopeful fecundity.

2nd son: conscious and wanted fecundity.

3rd son: the realistic and persevering fecundity.

4th son: the surprising and renewed fecundity.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be creative and productive: visible and attractive before the other, able to propose and execute new ways, encouraging one another, laying foundations and bearing witness, able to write, to rise to new possibilities, open to the universal, free in order to serve.

The death of parents

In full maturity and with the assumed awareness of the children, one is able to set the stage for the departure of the solid references that preceded us. They could be our own parents or our formators, or those who invited us to start out. The sensation is experienced of having no one ahead of us, of being the first in line. Previous figures and securities have left: we are now the parents, and we experience the weight and the responsibility, but also the trust and the faith. We experience fatigue, we see the problems and the successes with more clarity.

We center more on God, we ourselves become relative. We recognize the love of God that remains in us and move towards others in spite of our limitations.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be of fidelity and donation: unconditional giving to the project, testimony of gratitude, perseverance, hopeful lucidity, greater amplitude and gratuity in our relationships (intergenerational, international, the welcoming, the leadership, the humble services done with maturity and freedom)

The departure (or the rebellion) of the children

What we saw being born and grow, what bears our imprint, is made free and different; it evolves and changes, taking different directions and options. We experience confusion, we question ourselves on the path we have taken. We idealize the past, we distrust the new. We feel attacked, displaced, lacking value or being used.

We live an expressive, affective and intellectual ambivalence. On one hand admiration, on the other hand distrust. On one hand happiness, on another nostalgia. In short, we don't know, we are not sure, but we trust, because we have known how the Spirit works.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be transparent and discreet, sometimes a reflection of the emotional ambivalence: being and not being, contributing and allow to give, differing and supporting, offering... even accepting to be set aside.

These stages are to be understood through a wide and dynamic approach, without establishing divisions or rigid successions. Also, they must take into account individual differences. What is clear is that the CLC vocation, as any authentic vocation and as human love, has internal movements and many points of inflection. It is always manifested in a commitment that remains but that take the forms characteristic of the stage that is being lived.

*José Reyes S.
CLC Chile*

For the CLC Uruguay

Translated from the Spanish by Theresa Cademartori



CLC Commitment

How does the CLC Way¹ lead to an explicit commitment?

- ♦ *God is the first to commit to an unceasingly renewed Covenant.*
- ♦ *Persons, united by the same spiritual experience of a personal encounter with the Lord through the Spiritual Exercises,*



form a community in union with the Spirit and dispersed throughout the world for the service and building of the kingdom.

♦ *A body formed to bring the vocation of each member to its full dimension, to aid and encourage each one in their mission; a body "constituted" and "instituted" to transmit a charism.*

This can be the starting point of our reflection on receiving the invitation to an explicit commitment in CLC: why then commit oneself in this way?

1. It is first of all a personal response to the Lord who has first committed himself

There are three bases for this commitment in CLC (cf. The CLC Charism #168-170):

a. an anthropological foundation, as has just been mentioned. A person is created in a manner that in order to build his/her identity and truth he/she needs to express it in a sensible and visible way that fosters life, love, faith, and deep values. Thus, one can be specific in this domain, able to affirm it in a precise place, at a precise time, to have a **word** of one's own that is an explicit **response** to the **Word** which one day set him/her on this path.

Therefore, what the commitment wants to express is an explicit and deliberate choice of love of Christ, lived in CLC as a reference of one's personal history and a constitutive element of one's identity.

b. a theological, Trinitarian foundation, also mentioned above. The root of our commitment is not found within ourselves but in the Trinitarian Project, the project to which God first of all was committed in a visible, permanent way, throughout our history. From the beginning, a Faithful God proposed an irrevocable Covenant continually renewed after each failure and definitively inscribed in our hearts with the Incarnation of the Son, who tirelessly solicits a response from our liberty.

The Christian Life Community's choice of March 25th for its world feast day, the day the Church celebrates the Annunciation, expresses this invitation made to all its members to remember this Covenant coming from "the tender mercy of our God" (Luke 1:78) and to respond "with courage and generosity" as is recommended in the Exercises (Sp.Ex. #5:5th annotation).

c. a communitarian, ecclesial foundation.

The commitment also wants to signify that our spiritual way is not reduced to an individual relationship with God but, as happened with all the great figures of the Bible from Abraham and Moses to the Virgin Mary, the

¹ See also in appendix: "The CLC way" adopted by the N.A. 1 CVX-France on May 13, 2017

call heard by each one could only be heard in the heart of a People and for a People. It is within the spiritual growth of the Community, by it and for it, that each can deepen their personal vocation in the service of Christ and His mission and work *"for the good of the whole Body."*

This community *"of friends in the Lord"* does not exist only to bring mutual aide, as essential as this might be, but it is also *the place* where the Spirit works and imparts grace. It is thus natural that this solemn affirmation of the way to which we feel called be understood, received and appreciated by the Church community.

This presence of the Community is also the manifestation of our fidelity to the heritage of the Christian Life Community which, since the World Assembly of Guadalajara in 1990, has insisted on the General Principles and the General Norms and again in Itaici in 1998 on the importance of this commitment. Undoubtedly, we must personally rediscover the intuition and inspiration of those who voted on and confirmed these reference texts and clarified their meaning.

*"The lived experience reflected in the General Norms is not the experience of a particular country or region but rather the fruit of a reflection on numerous present and past experiences. The General Principles and the General Norms do not pretend to confirm an experience or a way of seeing in particular but rather to orient and stimulate each experience, leaving room for creativity in the diversity of our realities."*²

It is a question of bringing about today that which our predecessors themselves experimented and verified without however setting it in stone.

2. It is also to give "coloration" to one's baptism, within the dynamics of the Exercises.

The sacraments, gifts of God, precede us in the Church. They are the visible manifestation

of God's commitment towards humankind. At the basis of everything, there is *baptism*, the primordial sacrament. Baptism is the first commitment. It enables us to adhere to Christ and to become disciples of Christ with others. It gathers us together into the Body of Christ; it commits us and makes us interdependent. The Christian Life Community can be a means of living our Christian commitment, of giving it *color, material or flesh*. The choice of this community as a means for better living one's Christian life is a spiritual choice (the election is a spiritual choice received).

It is not a matter of choosing Christ because we already expressed this choice by our baptism. It is rather a question of choosing a better means to carry out one's vocation.

"To commit oneself is therefore to make an 'election' according to the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises source and instrument of our spirituality: within the Exercises, Ignatius consecrates a large dossier to the election: a choice, a decision which commits us for the future (Sp.Ex. 169-189).

The biblical term of election was preferred to better signify that the decision is not only the fruit of personal reflection, but that it is received as a feature of the covenant between two partners. On Sinai, God elected a people and commits to them insofar as the people ratify the covenant by choosing their God and committing themselves to obey God's law" (Ex. 19:1-8).

The lived experience reflected in the General Norms is not the experience of a particular country or region but rather the fruit of a reflection on numerous present and past experiences

Thus, the Exercises are not only a retreat where one comes to be nourished in silence and prayer. Their aim is to lead us to choose with a clear awareness of reason and by a free choice what God has already chosen for us. The rereading of the experiences of consolation and desolation for the duration of

² GP of the CLC - ProgressioSupplement N. 36 January 1991 - Help for reading the General Principles p.25

the exercises faithfully accomplished, ordinarily, is enough to see where the desire for our encounter with God is leading us."³

The commitment in CLC is, in some way, the election of the Church and of the companionship to which I am brought by God's desire for me. "There is an election if there is renunciation; there is renunciation if there is shared love; there is shared love if there is shared poverty," clarifies Philippe Lécrivain s.j. It is also a better way of understanding the desire for a "simple style of life" proposed by the General Principles (GP #12b)

3. It is equally accepted to "be an apostolic body" with others who are given to me as "friends in the Lord".



Apostolic Body

1 - Body

Coming to CLC, those who have already experienced the Spiritual Exercises, indeed the full Exercises, seek to join a group where they can share this same experience and

continue to live it permanently. Those who have not already made the Sp. Ex. discover them progressively and verify that it is in this way that they are moved in their desire to meet and follow the Lord.

Jesus said: "*When you are gathered in my name I will be there in your midst.*" In his well-known discourse on the diversity and complementarity of the members, the apostle Paul clarifies this when he speaks of the community of Christians: "*Now you together are Christ's Body.*" The body needs each member and each member needs the body. It would be profitable to reread and meditate on the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12) in the perspective of the process of commitment.

The Christian Life Community is a community of the Church which unites lay Christians having in common the experience lived in the Spiritual Exercises and who consider them as "*the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.*" (GP5) It has a history woven from the threads of meetings, world assemblies, national assemblies. The members of CLC and the national communities recognized the call to be a body on the way, to constitute one world community, (and not a federation) and to become an apostolic body. It is a gift to receive.

2 - Apostolic

The Spiritual Exercises have no other aim but the apostolate, as was insisted upon in the 2006 Jubilee of Lourdes. It is not only to decide to follow Christ, but ***to let oneself be sent*** where the Lord calls us. For we laity, without exception, it is ***where we live...*** however seeing ***differently*** with a ***larger vision, innovated*** by the breath of the Spirit ***without locking ourselves into the places and methods*** which were chosen ***earlier.***

At the 2003 world General Assembly of Nairobi, ***four verbs*** were proposed to the members of CLC to help them personally, in the midst of their local communities, to stimulate their apostolic commitments: ***to***

³J-C Dhôtel : *La spiritualité ignatienne – points de repères.* Supplement *Vie Chrétienne* n. 347 p 38-40

discern the spirits with attention to interior movements, *to send* or to let oneself be sent, that is to say *to confirm* or be confirmed in the mission where one feels called, *to support and to evaluate*. This way of sharing individual mission is a way of making common the mission of each one.

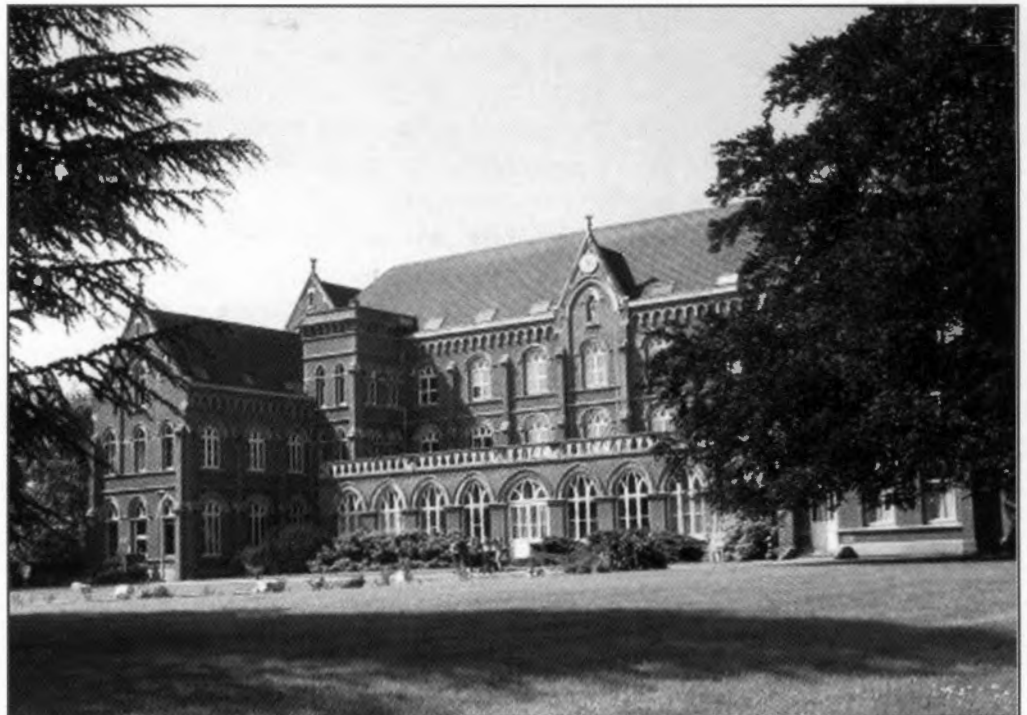
3 - But the body itself is invited to be apostolic, even beyond its members because certain calls or needs cannot be taken into account by individuals or small groups. In order to respond to them, we need the support of a larger body, a more credible body which can sustain its action and its commitment *for the duration and its stability beyond the individual*.

Ignatius invites us *to discern* calls to the mission according to *three criteria*: the most urgent, the most universal, and where no one else is. It is this last criterion which conducts us to *"the frontiers"* in an individual way supported by the community or in a collective way on the community level which needs the support and the commitment of its members.

The tutelage of the spiritual centers of Hautmont and Biviers, the publication of *La Revue*, participation in the CISED of St. Denis, and in the Ignatian Youth network in partnership with the Jesuits and religious are usual works for CLC France. The decision to commit CLC France to these missions was taken with these criteria in mind and after discernment with the national committee. In many regions, we can say that the Spiritual Exercises retreat proposed each year, spread out over numerous weeks and open to all, derives from the same common mission put into effect by a partnership of CLC with the Jesuits and/or religious on the local level.

But the harvest is abundant. By reason of its charism, CLC France is regularly called upon

to respond to mission calling for the body and not simply for individual members of the body. The Jesuits ask us to develop a greater partnership, some dioceses call upon us to put our methods of proceeding at the service of the formation or spiritual animation of parishes. The MEJ hopes for greater institutional sharing. At Lyons, in the dynamic of the jubilee of 2006, Jesuits and Ignatian Religious want to develop a social project with which CLC could be associated. *These eventual partnerships require from CLC a foundation, a stability and a greater credibility to commit for the duration of long-term missions.*



Spiritual Center of Hautmont

Today it is difficult for those responsible to commit the apostolic body along with other partners to a project, giving their word for the duration, if the apostolic body has not been supported previously by *a word of commitment which binds the members of the body in time*. It is a question of realism and incarnation. It is a major challenge.

Today it is difficult to accept many members if the apostolic body does not find members willing and committed to be formed to become guides of the Spiritual Exercises. *Our apostolic dynamism is a function of the interiority of the spiritual life of the*

members. In being well formed, in a spiritual and pedagogical way, the members of CLC commit themselves to give to others what they themselves have received. *To be committed to forming an apostolic body, to give one's word for the duration* is to permit the body, in an incarnated way, to commit itself to respond to the calls of the Mission of Christ.

The Christian Life Community is an ecclesial community canonically recognized (Canon Law art. 312 and following) as a public international association of the laity, of pontifical right. One is committed in the apostolic body of CLC even beyond the personal journey, which this approach represents, sending us out to follow Christ, and which also constitutes an approach having a community character which permits us to:

- ♦ *give one's preference for CLC as the community of discernment*
- ♦ *make this preference known to the body so that it can be taken into account*
- ♦ *commit oneself to examine and discern all calls of the Body (ad intra or ex intra) without prejudging a priori its response in one sense or another.*

**The Christian Life
Community is an
ecclesial community
canonically recognized
as a public international
association of the laity,
of pontifical right.**

In no way is it a question of CLC conscripting its members, binding them into insupportable restraints, or causing them to renounce their lay character and their own liberty. It is rather a question of our giving, within a community structure, a sense of our liberty, and fullness to our baptism along with

other "*friends in the Lord*".

4- Why a public and explicit commitment?

A good number of CLC members could feel "*committed*" without having expressed it publicly. In many ways, the services that they accept and

their availability can seem sufficient to show it: responsibility for a group, animation of a session, a position in the Church, in associations etc. In other words, companionship lived in actions without mincing any words. Nonetheless, it appears necessary to take into account the "*person*" in his/her globality. It is words and actions - both the words which describe and define and the actions which authenticate. "*To be committed*" is inseparable from giving one's word and ratifying it. We give meaning to our words by our actions.⁴

*"A personal act, the formal commitment to the service of God adds nothing to our baptism and confirmation; it simply manifests our agreement to better live the commitments of this baptism in the specific manner of CLC. It is neither a vow, nor a promise. It essentially deals with fidelity to the Christian life as such with the sole concern for greater perfection. This personal act is made in a specific community."*⁵

Therefore, why publicly? Because:

- ♦ it is in the midst of the CLC group that I ask the Lord for the grace of being able to give this generous response to God's fidelity
- ♦ it is before the community to which I ask to be witness that I make this journey. I ask also its assistance and the prayer of the one accompanying me throughout the journey. (CLC Charism #197)
- ♦ it is a way that I have chosen to remain faithful to something which is important at this given moment and which I feel will remain. Through it I help myself and the community helps me
- ♦ it is the community which needs to understand explicitly my personal request, to accept it and to give me the necessary means to respond in a regulated manner
- ♦ it is to make a founding action of the community and become one body with it.

Resulting fruits

The observations received on different occasions, notably during the meeting of Hautmont or in other GVEs⁶, are quite telling.

⁴ Remi Potvin in Progressio n. 1.

⁵ Charles Le Dû, Comité consultatif - Nantes 1990

⁶ See Veronique Forge's report on the meeting GVE of February 2006: available at the CLC Secretariat

The fruits received are unexpected or unknown graces for the members as well as for the community. Essentially, it seems rather difficult to transmit or communicate them until we ourselves have experienced them. We cite here some extracts from an anthology of responses of “committed members” from the survey of October 2004.⁷

For the committed person:

- ◆ Recognition of what was given and received, and an opening without fear towards the future
- ◆ Pure and profound joy, one that is simple and durable in spite of the surface waves
- ◆ Response to a call received and understood
- ◆ Coloration of one’s attachment to Christ, a specific orientation in a charism or spirituality
- ◆ Word which frees, gives sense and acts
- ◆ Receive companions “*It was my place, I wanted to be with them; without the others I am nothing, I wanted to let them know*”
- ◆ Recognition of an identity and the revelation of a vocation in my role as laity: **with the word of commitment CLC distinguishes doing from being.** It is rare and precious in the present world to be able to make and live this distinction. CLC offers the possibility to all its members without exception, to be fulfilled and recognized not for the services given, not for the “doing” but rather for the “being” of each one through the words spoken. Not for their activities and merits but for the simple *desire* to live as much as possible as a Christian according to the proposals and charism of CLC.
- ◆ Unification of one’s life
- ◆ Anchorage or better, ballasting (keel of the

boat). “*No longer fear of where I am going.*”⁸

- ◆ Incarnation (with a time and place) which makes one accountable and permits us to leave behind all that is confused.



For the community:

- ◆ The commitment of the members “establishes” the community as an apostolic body.

Having a charism is essential and that can only be ensured by an institution, a community because it is the institution alone which can assure duration. For this reason, the institution itself is a commitment beyond the individual persons and the promise of vitality beyond the limited means of its members. The community ensures permanence and fraternity. The community provides a place of incarnation. The one making the commitment chooses it, or a priori maybe does not choose it, but commits him/herself to a transcendent value which imposes itself on him/her. It is here that one believes there is hope, a promise of life. To commit oneself is to hope.

⁷ See Booklet C: Anthology of testimonies of engaged CLC members

⁸ To specify the marine metaphor, one of the participants pointed out that anchoring immobilized the boat to a fixed “dead-man”. To this image, he preferred that of the **skittle** of the boat which has, as function, to counter balance the force of the wind in the veils. The skittle allow the boat to heel so that the veils take the maximum of wind allowing the boat to advance more quickly without capsizing. Engagement is like this skittle which makes possible to dip to collect the maximum of the breath of the Spirit and to advance with large broad “out of deep water”. Beautiful precision.

- ♦ Before being a body which progresses, the community can also be an educative and instructive way. It has need of committed members to act as markers along the way. If not, these riches can become devitalized or lost.
- ♦ The community needs its members, members to whom it can retransmit the calls which it receives as an institution: for the transmission of the charism, for the collective missions which await it - there where there is no one else. It knows that these calls will always be taken into consideration and discerned, even if they cannot in the end be answered. The word spoken to others by a committed member leads to understanding "*you can count on me to examine and discern together*".
- ♦ ***It is the word which gives and makes flesh.*** The prologue of St. John's gospel is luminous: "In the beginning, was the Word... and the Word was made Flesh." If the vocation of CLC is to form "*an apostolic body*" this body can only come about by the words of its members, and not only by their

activities and their availability, no matter how generous these are. CLC can never be a fully apostolic body, a living community, if we do not propose to all members of CLC to pronounce after a certain time a word of recognition, a word which "*unites hearts and permits the body to support the dispersion*" according to the formula of Philippe Lécrivain, s.j.

- ♦ ***Only an established body*** made up of committed persons can take lasting responsibility for apostolic works whose dimension and amplitude go beyond the actions and the initiatives of individual generosity. For Ignatius, the dimension of companionship is essential for acting apostolically. Without this

body of committed companions, there are no concrete apostolic works.⁹

5-When and for how long? Temporary or permanent commitment?

This is up to each one to decide, aided by his or her guide or the members of the community based on the experience and the proposals of the Community. The reading of the texts of the World Community especially chapter III of the document "*The CLC Charism Revised*" can give reference points (they are furthermore taken up and developed in the booklet B III-3, pp. 10-11).

For CLC France, it is vital that the proposed process not be confused with religious vows. They must retain the specificity adapted to lay members committed in the world. Whether they are temporary or permanent the form should be kept, and correspond intimately to what is lived by the members who commit themselves on the personal level and in regard to the community, neither more nor less.

Some wait 8 to 12 years to pronounce a permanent commitment without previously pronouncing a temporary commitment. This was done in France until 2005. Others want to pronounce a word earlier, but not before 3 to 5 years, going through a temporary commitment. In no case can the permanent commitment be subordinated to the obligatory antecedence of a temporary commitment. This was done with much flexibility, December 3, 2006 for the 40 commitments (10 of which were temporary) pronounced in the region of the Mediterranean Province.

Some years from now, with the renewed practice of the commitment, based on the experience acquired, there will be time to clarify whether or not it is necessary.

6 - To what the Community commits itself¹⁰

If the members pronouncing this commitment say before the assembled community that they

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⁹ See Maurice Giuliani: chapter 3 of "*L'accueil du temps qui vient*" entitled "*Compagnons de Jésus*" taken from an article published in *Christus* n. 4 - October 1954

¹⁰ See also the Booklet C pp.28 to 30

wish to request the assistance of their companions in their local community to clarify their decisions, particularly regarding the apostolic mission, the Community cannot be satisfied merely to receive this commitment, whether it be temporary or permanent, without furnishing the means for living it.

Help in living the Exercises

*“As a world community, CLC is to actively support all its members by providing the means and resources to fully experience the grace of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, in offering them models that are dynamic, progressive and continuous. Since all Ignatian sources are integral to our spirituality, we wish to read them all from a lay perspective. In this spirit we support the attempts to adapt the Spiritual Exercises.”*¹¹ This was recalled from the letter of Itaici in 1998 in the call for Means for Mission. It is the first means.

Composition and re-composition of the local communities

The function of the four words, discern, send and support, evaluate¹², is central; this was summarized at the World General Conference of Nairobi in August 2003. So that this be done under the proper conditions, the regional service team must be concerned with the composition or re-composition of the group in order to allow each person to find in their local community whatever they need at each stage and in their particular situation. This implies a good knowledge (and a good transmission) of the desires of the persons and their evolution.¹³

Continuing formation

Formation is not only reserved to those who are discovering the community or who serve it. The community also has the task of allowing its committed members to continue

*to be formed.*¹⁴ For example, the regions can organize or urge the members to create or frequent places of formation on subjects such as the Exercises, the Bible, spiritual growth, different forms of prayer, apostolic commitments, etc.

Listening and availability

This (listening and availability) is an equally important function that the members of the regional service teams fulfill, collectively or individually, whenever necessary with the help of resource persons such as the committed members of their region.

7 - Some questions which continue to be asked

We must understand the reservations and fears of those who hesitate or refuse the commitment. They have much to say to us about the spiritual combat “before the election”. Let us propose some elements for reflection regarding some of these questions:

⇒ Is the word commitment adapted to this process?

Maybe not when we consider the resonances and negative connotations that it carries with it. But what word can we find? (The Spanish have the same problem with the word “compromisos”) If the word frightens people and gives people a real fear of broken or failed covenants, then it requires us to enter into a struggle where we trust an Other in order to have the strength to fight and to endure. It means seeing things differently than we saw them at first glance... Like Peter besides the lake: what a journey between the first call and the sending after the resurrection!

Since all Ignatian sources are integral to our spirituality, we wish to read them all from a lay perspective

¹¹ *Our Common Mission* (Lettre d'Itaici) -1998- available on www.cvxfrance.com dans rubrique: *World documents*

¹² *Projects* n°120 June 2002: before Nairobi - available on www.cvxfrance.com in: *World Letters*

¹³ See the work of CVX-Massif Central Est in 2003 on « *Composition et recomposition* » in the booklet C

¹⁴ See GN -11: “Likewise, in the same tradition and in view of the formation of its members and of other people, the Christian Life Community at all levels promotes workshops, seminars, courses, publications and other such initiatives”.

⇒ ***Would such a process not create a two tier CLC?***

We have heard this fear expressed a great deal during a certain period (especially between 1968 and 1973) when in order to conform to the law of 1901 our statutes had reserved the quality of the member, and therefore the right to vote, only to those “consecrated”. The problem seemed to have lost much of its importance after the procedures for voting were applied more and more within the reality of more restricted groups, notably the national committee and the general assemblies, essentially composed of “those committed in fact”.

Elsewhere, it was clearly affirmed more than once that the commitment did not confer any particular rights and this is the lived reality.

The fear of this risk (we must dare to name it: comparison, jealousy) is evoked regularly and it really puts a brake on all progress. We know the historic reasons but this trap is particularly subtle and efficacious, because in reality, the project of the apostolic body advances very little and stumbles over it. To consider it carefully, is it a risk to create a two tier CLC when we try to live a CLC on 6000 tiers, as many tiers as there are members, wanting to accept each one “where they are”. Let us consider rather that the moment to pronounce such a word is different for each one.

⇒ ***To what criteria of needs must those who are called to pronounce a word of recognition and commitment respond?***

Here also the trap is subtle, because it is not a question of fulfilling needs but of understanding the desire of the members who adhere to the CLC project, who have begun to live it and who want to live it more deeply with the help of their companions. Let us not confuse needs and the verification of the desire which is necessary to prevent illusions. It is that which made Father Pierre-Marie Hoog s.j. say that it was “**an impossible commitment**” if it was to be the result of our will instead of the welcoming of a desired grace.

The problem seems to be situated on another level, in a difficulty encountered by human communities made up of members not having the same statutes or the same degree of commitment in the larger sense, since the commitment is at the heart of the project: among permanent members, militants and adherents (unions and parties), among volunteers and salaried persons (associations) etc. There also exist, among members of the Community, sensible differences on the level of desire concerning the profound adhesion to the CLC project. Beyond the concrete management of the coexistence of these persons in the same local communities, this poses two questions:

- ♦ on the one hand, how can we discern in the midst of the groups the level of desire of each one and above all distinguish between what is a simple shift in time (persons who haven’t yet considered it...) and that which is a choice, as we might want to define it, of a simple resource group?
- ♦ On the other hand, what attitude should we have towards those members who, after many years, indeed many decades, do not appear to consider joining “an apostolic community” one day?

⇒ ***Aren’t some attitudes or silences worth talking about?***

Undoubtedly some speak more easily through acts than through words. Certain actions speak even more than misleading words. Like Jean Sullivan¹⁵ we can be prudent and wise: “*Words are fragile bridges. I believe we have learned to say I love you too much. We innocently decide that we have arrived, that the project is accomplished when we have only begun. The people that I’ve met usually say nothing about what is essential, speaking of other things. We can but love what Jesus loves: heal the sick, raise the dead, hunger and thirst for justice, change our way of seeing, spiritually invert the order of things. Yes, it can be fatiguing to hear that Jesus is this or that. As if prudence in lieu of modesty should not be the same as in his time, when he told his disciples to say nothing. But then one would be quiet. Because how can*

¹⁵ Jean Sullivan: *Itinéraire spirituel: Matinales* p.79 - Ed. Folio essays - 1976

we dare proclaim his words when we do not accomplish them except in our imagination or in rites within a cultural circle, without getting caught in our lies?"

Nevertheless with the experience of our sharings in the local community and our encounters with our guides during the retreats, we know that a word, even one difficult to pronounce, is always possible and that it always surprises us by the energy that it sets free, the life that it brings to birth. We just need to be patient and to know how to wait. We need to know also that it is possible that some really do refuse to pronounce it. We have to have accepted this eventuality from the beginning and respect the liberty of each one, with its consequences on the way of living together in diversity.

⇒ ***Who can propose and receive this process?***

It may seem surprising that those responsible for the service teams have not yet pronounced the proposed commitment, yet receive the word of other members who make the commitment. However, they exercise this service not in their own name but as representatives of CLC. They can be helped if they so desire, by members who are already committed, preferably from their region or neighboring regions.

⇒ ***Does the given word apply to a specific status, particular rights and duties in CLC?***

Once again in this question, a wrong interpretation can be given. The response is evident: of course no, no more than before. It gives no privileges, no power. We may venture to say that it is simply the gift of more **liberty** for those on whom the Spirit has breathed and who accepted to be guided. We can cite Genevieve de Gaulle Anthonioz, of ATD-Fourth World: "*We do not alienate our liberty by committing ourselves; rather we renew through our commitment the sense of our liberty*". Also "*It is a profound commitment. Something which allows a person to be touched in the depths of their being and, unless one is completely unfaithful*

to what could be the very best of themselves, something they will try to follow for better or worse." In other words the commitment is not a juridical question but a spiritual one, an interior process.

It expresses the desire to be deeply animated by the Spirit, inhabited by his dynamism, marked by his creativity. Those who are committed have no specific "*rights*" but an explicit function: that of being in the Body with those who are in a constant search for what CLC should be today and above all tomorrow.

⇒ ***Is it a question of a commitment in CLC or a commitment to follow Christ from within CLC?***



Certainly along the lines of baptism and confirmation, we are committed to following Christ and to participate in his Mission. The institution comes second in regard to Mission. St. Ignatius always said that he would not hesitate more than fifteen minutes to suppress the Institute (the Society of Jesus) if the Mission demanded it.

To conclude: Heirs, Founders guided by the Spirit

To commit oneself to CLC is to live our baptism as Christians in the tradition of a founder, Ignatius, with the companions who

are given to me. It is to accept and recognize the place which is given me to incarnate my baptism and to live my personal vocation. It is not without consequences for me and for the community in the way we live the Gospel together.

To return once more to the words of Philippe Lécrivain, S.J.¹⁶ and what he said on the subject of religious can apply to members committed to CLC desiring to become together founding heirs. *"If all people have the right to choose who they are, they would not choose to be just anyone..."* T. Radcliffe expresses it like this: *"In Christianity, there is no identity without vocation. Christians are 'invited subjects,' persons called to discern their conformity to Christ in the multiple decisions which mark their history, at the crossroads between what is permanence and change... But this identity cannot be discovered except during the meeting [...] of a 'live memory' sending one back to a past which is not static, and to an imagination which, coming from the order of desire, must open to newness. However, a just equilibrium must be maintained. We must not shrink from the space of experience; the past must always be reconsidered neither too open or too closed, 'the horizon of expectation' — too much utopia or not desperate enough for action...the constitution of a Christian identity*

consists [...] in the unveiling of a common history worked by founding narrations."

Christians read the present by remembering the past. They anticipate the future in the sharing of a same hope; they express their identity in a common narrative. To live the Gospel together in the manner of a founder, this is the commitment which religious take on with their profession. It is also that which gives their communities a singular physiognomy, by making them *"laboratories"* where they work to become brothers and sisters and believers, to discern the personal and community missions, to produce in a new way the testament received.

Isn't that which is valid for a religious also valid for all Christians who desire to live their faith according to the Gospel and the Church?

In his way, Cardinal Martini summarizes it in these words: *"We must allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit that is to not repeat in an absolute manner the facts and words of Jesus, but to let the Holy Spirit who is given by the risen Jesus raise up in us joy, courage, and the creativity to see what it means to live these words of Jesus today."*¹⁷

CLC France

Translated from the French by Theresa Cademartori

Official texts of the Christian Life Community

1. *General Principles and GN: extracts concerning the commitment*
2. *The CLC Charism Revised: III - the commitment in CLC (§164, §200)*
3. *The interior rule of the CLC France - article 3.*
4. *The CLC way (CLC France 2007 version 2)*

¹⁶ *Etudes* – april 2005 pp 515-517

¹⁷ Cardinal Martini – *entretien au Jour du Seigneur/Croire aujourd'hui* 40 april 2006

The Formation Programme

CLC Magis

The formation programme called 'Magis', that has been taking place in Latin America in the last ten years, has just started on its third stage. It deals with training of those already 'advanced', that would like to go further forward.

The results have been pleasing and encouraging. Much had been asked and much has been achieved. In various countries of the continent, CLC has been strengthened through those who participated in 'Magis'. There has been new ways of Latin American integration, more heart warming through friendship.

As one who attended all the courses held to date, I want to invite the World CLC to reflect a little on the history of Magis, its process and some of its successes. Maybe it would inspire some others.

A little history

In November 1995, there was a meeting in Rome of an international study group that had been asked by the ExCo to develop a long term formation programme for CLC members.

What had motivated ExCo to set up this working group with this mission was the realisation that the training of Christian lay people in CLC lacked a long term and coherent plan that empowered the members to give basic answers to today's world. There was no advanced training that responded seriously to the new challenges of our society.

The need was felt to develop through CLC formation many good lay people. The desire was to have more mature members and communities. There was an urgency to offer them a 'plus-value' that would meet their requirements.

At that meeting in Rome it was not possible to reach an agreement but Latin America was asked to try and proceed with a project.

The Fifth Assembly of Latin American CLC Delegates was held from the 7 to the 11 August 1996 in Buenos Aires. Responding to the request of ExCo, it was decided then to set in motion a '*Latin American Programme of long term Formation*'. Thus there was now a specific '*mandate*'.

A team was set up to clarify, specify and implement a programme and to offer it to CLC in Latin America.

On the 16 September, 1996, Maria Clara Bingemer, then world vice-president, sent a first draft of the project. She suggested a meeting of the team named in Buenos Aires for November of the same year.

That meeting took place in Santiago, Chile, from the 27 November to the 2 December. On the last day the first circular letter was drawn presenting to the National Communities the plan for the Magis Programme.

The team that had reflected and formulated the programme was made up of Maria Clara Bingemer (Brazil), José L. Caravias (Paraguay), Josefina Errázuriz (Chile) and David Martinez (Mexico).

The intensive two-week courses of this **Magis I** with 57 participants were held in the following venues:

- ♦ Lima, Peru in January 1998
- ♦ Santiago, Chile, in January 1999
- ♦ Rio de Janeiro in January 2000

In total the participants wrote 84 individual essays.

At the Sixth Latin American Meeting of the CLC National Leaders that took place in Montevideo, between the 14th and 18th of July 2000, after a positive evaluation of the



José L. Caravias SJ

Programme 'Magis', it was decided to launch the second stage, having approved the way the first version was implemented.

For economic reasons it was decided to hold it in two regions:

North: Central America, Caribbean, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela.

South: Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.

The intensive courses for **Magis II**, with a total of 62 participants, were the following:

- ♦ *Southern region: 4-17 January 2002 in Asuncion, Paraguay*
- ♦ *Northern region: 5-18 July 2002 in Merida, Mexico.*
- ♦ *Southern region: 3-16 January 2003 in Florianopolis, Brazil.*
- ♦ *Northern region: 4-17 July 2003 in Caracas*

Both Regions together: 2 to 15 January 2004 in Quito

In total there were 106 essays.

A meeting was held in Bogotá in February 2006 (12-19) to present and share the relevant essays at the conclusion of Magis II. There were 15 delegates. The essays were well structured and researched. Some of them were:

- *'Lay people: Do we take them seriously?'* by Franklin Ibanez (Peru);
- *'Children: an experience to get closer to God',* by Ma. Carolina Sanchez (Colombia);
- *'Non-violence'* by Maria Asuncion Hernandez (Mexico);
- *'Light, darkness, light',* a Powerpoint by Andreia Bichara (Brazil);
- *'Ignatian Lay people called to bring about the Church in Christ',* by Mauricio Lopez (Mexico);
- *'Lay men and women: Christian educators',* by Rosario Martinez (Guatemala);
- *'I, you, Him: discernment in tandem',* by Angelica Laneri (Paraguay);
- *'Vortice (Vortex?)',* by Eder Pena (Venezuela);
- *'Faithfulness',* by Clara Burguez (Paraguay).

During this meeting a number of groups were set up to explore the possibility to move forward to another Magis, with the explicit support of ExCo. Mauricio Lopez from Mexico took on the assignment to carry out an evaluation of the second programme over its whole four year-period. Another commission, headed by Eder Pena (Venezuela) and Franklin Ibanez (Peru) made suggestions and observations on the content of the course.

The newly appointed co-ordinating committee was : Clara Burguez, co-ordinator of Magis III-1, Jose Luis Caravias as a guide and assessor, Olga Benavides of Colombia for the finances and David Martinez as a general co-ordinator of the process.

Magis III

As a result of the planning in Bogotá, the first intensive course was prepared and has already been given once:

- ♦ *14-26 July 2007 in Asuncion, Paraguay*
- ♦ *July 2008 will be in Lima*
- ♦ *And the third course is being planned for Lima.*

The team preparing the second meeting is made up of Guillermo Valera, Pilar Romani and Franklin Ibanez.



Participants attending the courses already completed in the three phases

	2000	2004	2007
Argentina	6	5	2
Bolivia	2	0	3
Brazil	7	6	1
Chile	7	3	0
Colombia	3	4	5
Dominicana	0	0	1
Ecuador	4	8	8
US	0	0	1
Guatemala	2	5	5
Mexico	3	9	3
Nicaragua	2	0	0
Paraguay	4	8	9
Peru	5	5	5
Uruguay	5	0	3
Puerto Rico	0	3	0
Venezuela	2	4	2
Total	57	62	49

spokespersons in society and in the Church, pioneers of the new evangelisation. It is a programme devised for members who desire something more. That is why it is called Magis.

Magis is not a course, much less a series of given isolated moments. It is a programme that tries to give the participant the opportunity to integrate in his/her life the four dimensions of Ignatian formation: spiritual, intellectual, communitarian and apostolic.

Over three and a half years the participants alternate between intensive phases all linked to longer periods lived by each one in his/her own respective national community.

Before the first intensive course, the participants are asked to have six months of preparation in their own countries. They are asked to update their knowledge, especially to acquire a modern approach to the Bible.

Methodology of CLC Magis Programme

Magis is an Integrated Training Programme, conceived as an answer to the signs of the times and to maintain alive and growing the Ignatian sense of those who have elected this way of life.

It is addressed to lay people who cherish their desire to grow and to get to know God better. They are people who are ready to lead their actual daily life in the service of Jesus and from an authentic Ignatian perspective. That is why it is vital that they would have experienced the complete Spiritual Exercises or at least they are in the process of completing them.

The programme aims to raise the quality of formation in CLC. Because of this, right from the start it was drawn up in close reference to the principles of formation that were being developed. It is about training for the mission; a complete training; one that desires to form men and women so that they are discerning people, apostles, qualified

The first intensive stage focuses on **Christology**. That forms a strong nucleus. Nevertheless there is a process to link the five days of reflection and study on the mystery of Jesus Christ. This consists in a day of re-living the Spiritual Exercises, two days on the Bible and the Spiritual Exercises, two days of Anthropology and two days on the analysis of the world and daily life.



The second intensive stage is concentrated on the mystery of the **Church** as a community of

the baptized that follow Jesus Christ. Therefore the main block is on ecclesiology, but there is also an opening day on the Second week of the Exercises, a block on Fundamental Morality and another on the Sacraments (Reconciliation and Eucharist).

The third intensive stage concentrates on *lay spirituality*: the place, identity, vocation and mission, of the lay Christian in the Church. This is made up of a day on Discernment Rules from the Exercises, a more substantial block on the theology of the people of God and the mission of the lay people, one about faith and politics, another about sexuality, marriage and family and on the socio-political discernment and mission.

The intensive stages are not linked independent blocks that start and finish in themselves. They are a launching pad for a process that extends throughout each year. The participants who had been introduced to contents of the intensive stages, continue to go deeper, studying more deeply and trying to assimilate it better, not just intellectually but as part of their daily spiritual, communitarian and apostolic life.

**A close atmosphere of
friendship is created
among the participants,
which is witnessed by
the frequent exchange
of studies, news and
work via the Internet**

During the intensive stages, the participants are supported by the tutors, their national community, their spiritual directors and their own groups.

Each participant takes a short bibliography on the subjects covered. It is very important that the tutors encourage and

help them to keep to the commitment of an average of five hours study a week. They also need to keep in touch regularly and frequently so that they can help them assimilate the contents throughout the year. The tutors must remember that it is not a question of helping them to assimilate the independent items of knowledge, as much as to help them integrate all the elements of the contents.

The participant must present a certain number of assignments to the leaders of the

programme: Firstly, halfway through each intensive stage, a review on one of the main themes in the bibliography. Secondly, at the end of each stage an essay on the central theme of each year (Christology, ecclesiology, Lay Spirituality), that must be completed with the help and correction of the tutor.

The community dimension is essential for the programme to give all its benefits. The participants must be active in their national communities and work towards building communities at all levels: local, regional and national.

The travel expenses and those of the course are shared equally among those attending. For each participant \$600 is required, partly paid by the individual, partly by their community and even in some cases by the Society of Jesus. If this is not enough to cover all costs an appeal for outside help is made.

In many countries the longer part of the programme is being carried by others who cannot attend the intensive parts. This is very successful in some national communities like, for example, Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay.

From the second block, the programme is open to those with an Ignatian Spirituality, but who are not members of CLC:

The quality of the essays submitted is evidence of the new type of laity, aware, creative and committed to the reality experienced. For them, Ignatian Spirituality is fundamental.

A close atmosphere of friendship is created among the participants, which is witnessed by the frequent exchange of studies, news and work via the Internet. E-groups and web pages have been set up to make the contact easier.

Many 'magis' are seriously committed in the formation of their local and national communities. The majority of them recognise that 'Magis' has helped them tremendously to mature in their faith and in their commitment.

José Luis Caravias SJ

CLC Paraguay

Translated from the Spanish by David Formosa

Put out into the deep

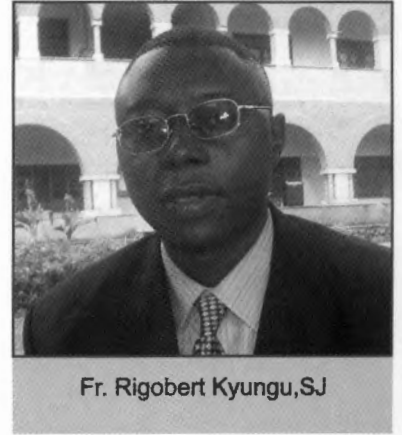
It will soon be two years that we have been talking about CLC in Kisangani. In 2006, two delegates came from Kisangani to fully experience the CLC in Kinshasa. The two were Mr. Hilaire MISSAY and Mr. Nicolas MOLAMBO. On their return from Kinshasa, they tried as well as possible to establish and quicken the budding CLC of Kisangani. In fact, each of them is responsible for a community known as 'pre-community' in 2006.

Hilaire is responsible for a group of lay persons associated with the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of St Méen-le-Grand [Brittany], a French Order that follows Ignatian Spirituality. Some Sisters of this Order knew CLC in Europe. Hilaire's group saw a drop in activity in 2006 owing to the president's candidacy for the provincial deputation. Nicolas' team was made up of several members of Christ the King Parish (a Jesuit parish). The two groups decided to meet together to follow the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life [19th Annotation] under the supervision of Father Rigobert Kyungu. Meetings and weekends of recollection were organised.

In February 2007, the SpEx in Daily Life were officially launched by a team of guides composed of Fathers Martin Bahati sj, and Cyrille Kazwala sj, and two Religious, Sisters Cadieu and Thérèse Gaultier. Sister Eugénie MASIKA, of the same Order, and Father Rigobert Kyungu sj, were also part of this team. The two CLC groups joined forces for the beginning of the SpEx in Daily Life.

Afterwards, each member began to meet with a guide. Obviously, each person found their rhythm and their own pace and continued to meet with the guide regularly. It was more or less agreed that the First Week would be evaluated after finishing it. And the same was done for all the rest. As for the guides, they met regularly to evaluate, discern, consult one another and plan. The experience of this team of guides was very fruitful. It was practically December 2007 before the official end of the long retreat in daily life was marked. For all sorts of reasons, several members were unable to go beyond the First Week. Others did not even get so far. But a handful was able to go right to the end.

Father Martin Bahati left Kisangani in August 2007, but the internal arrangements were able to be completed. At the beginning of 2008, the two teams came together again to evaluate the experience and consider what actions to follow after the departure of Father Rigobert to Kinshasa. Father Cyrille showed a willingness to continue as guide, perhaps also Father Raymond NKONGOLO, the new curate at Christ the King. As for the Sisters, they were more than ready. The leaflets for the SpEx in Daily Life were already prepared from the experience of the previous year. This experience has also shown that a Biblical formation and an introduction to a prayer life must be initiated before launching into the complete Spiritual Exercises. This is part of the plan for this year.



Fr. Rigobert Kyungu, SJ

Fr. Rigobert Kyungu, SJ

Translated from the French by Patricia Kane



CLC and the UN



Mikaela Hillerstrom

During last months, CLC participated in the meetings of the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs based in Rome and attended the 7th Session of the Human Right Council.

The Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs was organized last year (30 November – 2 December, 2007) with the aim of finding

and developing ways to improve the impact of Catholic NGOs in the United Nations and in other intergovernmental structures, and to improve the collaboration both among Catholic-inspired NGOs and between them and the Holy See. During last year's Forum, it was agreed to continue the work of the Forum.

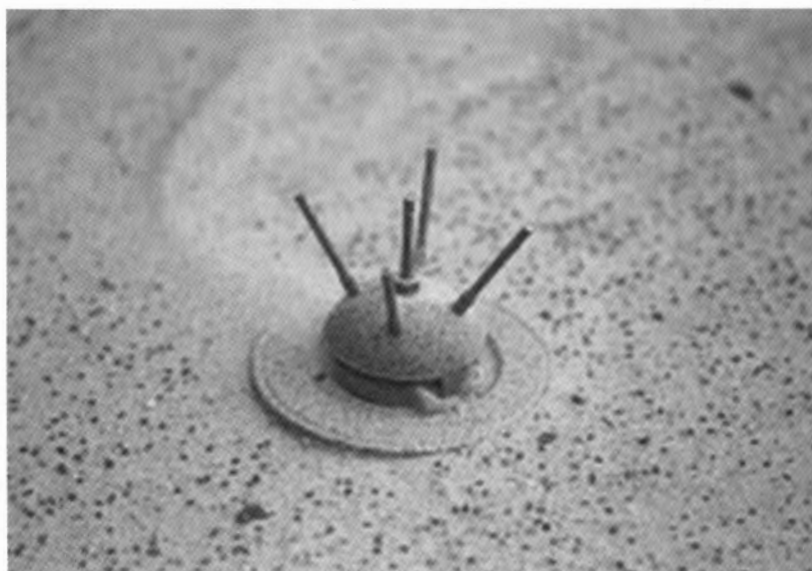
After the Forum, the International Catholic Inspired Organisations based in Rome met in February and decided to work together on a document for the FAO *"High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenge of Climate Change and Bioenergy"*, that was held in Rome on 3–5 June 2008. A number of meetings were organized in March, April, and May and these NGOs came up with a

"Statement by Christian, faith-based organizations and other NGO's to the High-level Conference" that has been supported and signed by 270 organizations from around the world.

This has been a first important and concrete achievement, because, although we had a very short time to prepare it and to organize its circulation, we have been able to produce a common document. And this was itself a great achievement, as it is not easy to agree so quickly on this kind of statement. After the FAO Conference, we met again on June 17th and we decided to better organize our group to work together on UN issues. Another meeting will be convened at the end of September to discuss a draft program for our work. Guy Maginzi and I, Mikaela Hillerstrom, participate in the meetings.

Since 1975, CLC has *"roster"* status in ECOSOC (UN Economic and Social Council), and the Community was quite active in the UN, especially on the former Human Right Commission (the HR Commission has been replaced by HR Council). Now, we have two UN Working Groups, one in Geneva (focused on the immigration issue) and one in New York (focused on the water issue). As a member of CLC Geneva UN Working Group, I attended the 7th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva from 10 to 15 March.

First of all, I made some contacts and tried to understand how the new Human Rights Council (HRC) works. An interesting new mechanism created by the HRC is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), under which the Council is required to review the fulfilment of Human Rights obligations and commitments by all UN member states. If UPR works and the NGOs are able to supply information from the grass roots, maybe some steps in the right direction can be taken by the new HRC.



I attended the works of the HRC during my stay in Geneva¹. As well, I attended different “side events” (conferences organized by NGOs on hot topics they want to call attention to), in particular: “*Children of Prisoners*” organized by BICE (International Catholic Bureau for Childhood), “*Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: The Rights of the Poor*” organized by Caritas Internationalis, Franciscan International and Pax Romana, “*Dignity of the Person and Human Rights*” organized by BICE, Heart’s Home, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, OIDEL, New Humanity, CCIG and Bureau of International Solidarity of the Marist Brothers.

In the evening, the Geneva International Catholic Centre (CCIG) organized a meeting with International Catholic organizations in Geneva, that was more

like a conference with Mr. Gabriel Nissim OP (President of the “*Human Rights Committee*” of the ONG Conference of the Council of Europe) as speaker, who delivered a beautiful lecture on the “*Dignity of the Person and Human Rights*”.

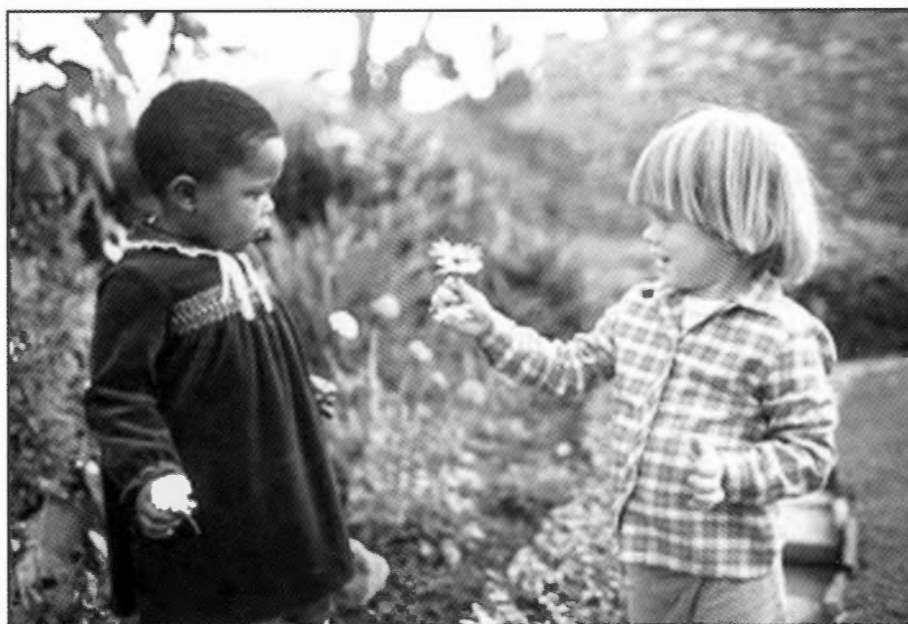
It is very important that Catholic NGOs work together at the UN in defending some basic human values, which are too often brought into question today, and to face problems from a spiritual-ethical perspective.

During the next months, we will have to continue our work with the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs and the UN, especially in the HRC. Therefore, we are waiting for guidelines from the next World Assembly, to be held in Fatima in August, for the involvement and service of CLC in UN organizations.

Mikaela Hillerstrom

CLC Italy (Rome)

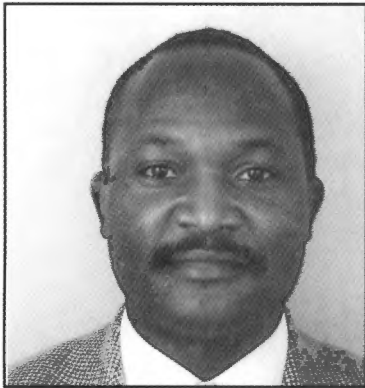
Member of CLC Geneva UN Working Group



¹ It is possible to find a daily update of the Human Rights Council Sessions and other interesting information on the web site: www.ishr.ch (bottom: Human Rights Monitor; Council Monitor ; Daily update)

Forum of Catholic inspired NGO's

Rome, November 30 - December 02, 2007



Guy Maginzi

The main objective of the meeting was to foster greater collaboration and communion of Non-Governmental Organizations, among themselves, and with the Holy See. The *Forum* should bring together Catholic NGO's or Catholic-inspired NGO's present on the international scene, open to uniting their efforts to those of the Holy See. It does not intend to create a "*Catholic block*", but

encourages freedom of initiative and responsibility in due respect for legitimate associative autonomy. This cooperation should serve the good of all people and the whole human person. Participants therefore are those NGO's that have, or intend to have, consultative statutes, are active in international intergovernmental organizations, engaged in *lobbying* and *advocacy* on important international questions.

To this end, the work has been accomplished in two steps:

- an analysis of the international situation and the difficulties and challenges that it presents both to the Holy See and to Catholic-inspired NGOs (CINGO);
- a discussion by language groups to get a clearer view of aims and forms of future cooperation.

The Holy Father, Benedict XVI received participants on Saturday 01 December.

About 85 organisations were presents, and several representatives of Pontifical Councils (Migrants, Social Communication, laity etc.). I was happy to meet five other members of the Ignatian family : *Fr Peter Balleis SJ*, International director of the Jesuit Refugee Service, *Fr. Frank Turner SJ*, director of OCIPE, *Fr Jorge Cela SJ*, General Coordinator of FE Y Alegria, *Maurice*

Rieutord SJ, Institut Robert Schuman pour l'Europe, *Bernard Aumonier*, administrator Centre Catholique International de coopération avec l'UNESCO. Bernard is a French CLC member.

I. What did I perceived from participants?

The Forum was useful principally because it:

- allowed informal networking between and within themes,
- brought together many dicasters of the Roman Curia, and NGOs,
- contributed to build relationships and understanding between NGOs and with the Holy See.

Some "common objectives"

- ☐ Keep catholic principles based on Catholic social teaching, as common ground,
- ☐ Need to share common understanding of what effects change at
 - ◆ country level,
 - ◆ regional level (where international diplomacy is playing an increasing role),
 - ◆ global level including how/why/what/ where to be accredited. Not ignore the role of transnational companies,
- ☐ Coordination with and support to papal representatives at inter-governmental organisations,
- ☐ To have an impact on policy, including the need to be more professional,
- ☐ Capture all lessons learnt from the past (positive and negatives).

What should be avoided:

- ☐ New structures and architecture,
- ☐ Presenting ourselves as a "Catholic bloc",
- ☐ Thinking we can create a common agenda on all themes,
- ☐ Networking without purpose or impact.

A big wish: Work together at all levels

This concretely implies:

- ☐ Follow up on themes and regional groups,
- ☐ Commitment to facilitate and exchange information between Holy See and NGOs,
- ☐ Catholic centers will have to play a key role as meeting places of formation for NGOs representatives present on site, and also information centers for national Conferences of Bishops, for the thematic networks of other associations that do not have a consultative statute, and for the Dicasteries and Permanent Missions of the Holy See,
- ☐ A support to a future Forum (eventually based on themes) in two years time, i.e. 2009.

II. Further Steps

After the Forum, a Working Group was set up, while NGOs were encouraged to network and collaborate on thematic and regional basis. The terms of reference for this Forum

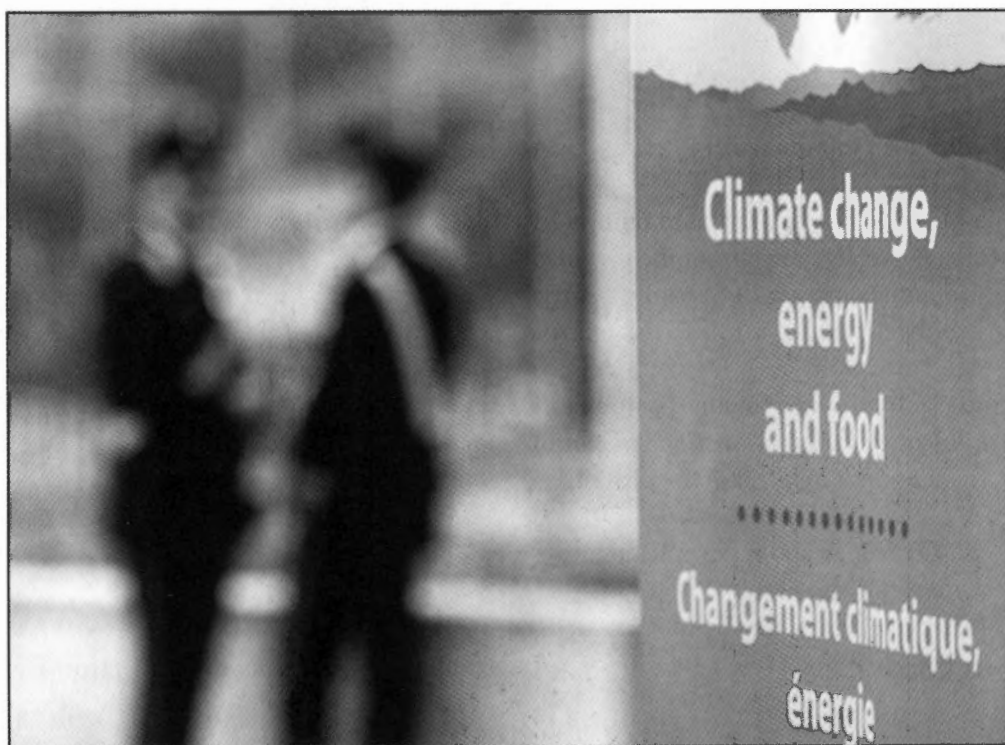
Working Group which clearly is not a new, heavy, institutional body but rather, and for the time being until the next Forum, *a preparatory committee* to prepare the next forum and to reflect upon mechanisms, dynamics and processes meant to enhance the collaboration amongst the organizations, participants in the forum. This minimal structure works on a merely voluntary basis whereby the Forum itself and the work of the thematic groups remain of the essence.

In Rome for example, some organisations, including CLC, met after the Forum to work on a statement for the High Level Conference on world food security and the challenges of climate change and bioenergy organised by the FAO in Rome from 3 to 5 June 2008. The statement was signed at the moment of the Conference by about 270 faith based organizations¹.

Similar initiatives are taken in other places.

Guy Maginzi.

World CLC Executive Secretary



¹ www.fao.org/foodclimate/hlc-home/en/

CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS (1927-2008)

PARIS, June 19th, 2008.

The extraordinary General Assembly of the Conference of the International Catholic Organisations, held on 19th June 2008 in Paris, decided on the institution's DISSOLUTION.

The decision was voted by a special majority of more than two thirds of its members following a general policy debate, concluding a one-year process of multilateral dialogue.

The decision's main object is to allow for the new Forum which included an additional 100 Catholic-inspired NGOs, and held its first meeting in Rome in November 2007. This was initiated by the Vatican Secretariat of State.

This platform favours network exchanges that renders more effective the presence and response to global challenges, in the framework of the United Nations and other intergovernmental authorities.

In a world in constant evolution, the implementation of a response more adapted to our time, henceforth allows to bring together the community of both public and private international Catholic associations of the lay faithful as well as religious congregations, with international statute in regard to intergovernmental authorities, around objectives and common witness to evangelical values and those conveyed by the social teaching of the Church.

This is the fruit of co-operation between the permanent observers of the Holy See, the members from different dicasteries, international Catholic centres, around themes considered to be a priority at the service of humanity.

Our Communal History

We are Daniel Coughlin, Barbara and Peter Peloso, Crystal and John Sullivan, and Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah. We are members of the Christian Life Communities of English Canada. For 18 years, starting in November of 1987, we, together with 7 of our 9 children and Father John English, SJ, formed a CLC, referred to as the Family CLC, in Ontario, Canada. The 14 of us met regularly for week-ends and generally stayed in the same home for two days and two nights.

We live in 4 cities, one being approximately 300 km from the other three, so that our meetings involved long drives. Recently, we have gained Daniel Coughlin and lost John English. Gathered below are our memories and reflections of our communal life for almost two decades. We recall the graced history of our family CLC and share a recent, communal expression of the Contemplatio.

We wrote this at the request of Leah Michaud in the hope that our own experience as a family CLC group may benefit others. The seven children who were members are Andrea, Matthew and Robert Peloso, Clare and Francis Sullivan and Shanti and Joseph Zachariah. They ranged in age from 5 to 12 when we started.

The Early Years

In 1988, we made three important decisions about our meetings.

- ♦ The first was to meet once every six weeks for the weekend, at the home of each family in rotation.
- ♦ The second was to develop a set of Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for families, following the dynamic of Annotation 19. Each exercise would have several components:
 1. a time of prayer together to focus on the exercise,
 2. an activity that all participated in, which focused on the exercise,
 3. a grace to be asked for and
 4. a time for sharing our reflections on our experience.
- ♦ The third was to bring family issues to meetings for communal discernment.

We found this last decision difficult to implement so that most family decisions were made without CLC discernment.

Our first Spiritual Exercise was the Principle and Foundation and we asked for the grace of true spiritual freedom. We made boats with the children from scrap wood for sailing on the Peloso's pond and watched the wind blow them where it would. The boats were a

metaphor for the Holy Spirit in our lives and our willingness to listen and be guided by the Spirit, even if it took us to places we did not want to go.

Another Spiritual Exercise on the Principle and Foundation involved each member, adult and child, sharing our dreams and deepest desires. This exercise was done in July, during a day spent on land that the Zachariahs had reforested that spring. There had been no rain for 8 weeks and the tiny, drought-stressed seedlings that were surviving despite the lack of rain were a symbol for the life which is in



CLC Family, 1989

our deepest desires. The significant desire expressed at this meeting seemed to be the desire, as creatures of God, to form harmonious relationships with each other and God's living creation. It seemed to us that all

the world may come into being. This is no metaphor; and it is much more than poetry."

At the end of the year we had a three day evaluation meeting between Christmas and the New Year. This became an annual event. We held it at Loyola Retreat House, which was empty during the holidays. We called it Father John's house. The children loved it because it gave them plenty of space to run around and an infinite number of hiding places for long, exciting games of Hide and Seek. Jack Milan facilitated our early evaluations. While compiling this history, we found a comment by John English from 1988 that we were starting to discuss and discern the CLC mission in a "scientific culture".



Loyola House, Guelph, Christmas/New Year meeting, 1990

creation has an orientation which favours the formation of harmonious relationships among living things. The desire to "*do what is more conducive to the end for which we are created*" is, perhaps, the highest expression of this orientation.

We remembered the words of Pere Teilhard de Chardin: "*Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that*

In one exercise we divided into two groups both of which had a mix of adults and children. We rode the city bus and looked for signs of communal sin, such as pollution, homelessness, litter, etc. We recorded what we saw, and after coming back to the host home, we discussed our experience. On another occasion the families took a walk in a conservation area and collected litter. Later, we discussed our "collection" and had a reading from St. Francis. For the Kingdom Exercise, we asked what the kingdom of God would look like on Earth and asked for the grace of a better understanding of God's Kingdom. This Exercise was the focus of a longer summer meeting of three days.

In this year we wrote some standard operating procedures for our meetings. We started the meeting on Friday night with a simple prayer and informal sharing with everyone together. We started the family Spiritual Exercise with a scripture reading as a way to focus. Mass was celebrated on Saturday or Sunday



CLC Family, 1990

morning. We attempted to integrate the focus of the meeting with the Eucharist. At supper on Saturday evening we reflected on the day's activity and brought up issues for communal discernment. Sunday morning was set aside for adult sharing and evaluation of the meeting.

In September of 1989, we did a history line of our community, that is, we identified the significant events in our community's history and why they were significant. We asked for the grace to deepen our understanding of our community history. We performed skits of the best or worst things that had happened to us in our community and asked ourselves why CLC is important to us.

At the beginning of 1990, one of our member couples separated for some months. This was a great sorrow for them and for us. There was pain and confusion about the separation. Nevertheless, we carried on with our efforts to write and use family Spiritual Exercises. We developed several exercises for the Two Standards. We used Tolstoy's short story, *"Where God is, Love is"* to illustrate the standard of Christ, drew pictures to illustrate our own images of the Two Standards and shared our thoughts about them. In a repetition of the Two Standards, we discussed the deception in our lives and asked how we are deceived in both large and small issues. This exercise included family skits on values.

The parents made a concerted effort to support our children's activities and to involve the children in the meeting to a greater degree. We attended children's hockey games, went roller skating, had picnics, carved pumpkins for Halloween, went on family hikes, spent several days together at Lake Huron where we swam, had picnics cooked meals together, sat around campfires, and helped the children with some of their decisions.

Kuruvila's mother died in September, and at our meeting a few weeks after her funeral, we had a moving spiritual exercise on the Communion of saints, where we wrote letters to those loved ones who had died. Also, by September our couple had reunited which was

a healing experience for all community members. In October, we revisited our First Week materials and gave the children some teachings on listening skills. The adults, as a group activity, attended our first Enneagram



Six of the seven children, 1998

workshop. In 1989, three adults completed the qualifying course to administer and interpret the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Our exposure to both the Enneagram and the MBTI was helpful for us in discerning group dynamics at our meetings.

The Middle Years

The years 1991 - 1998 were characterized by a growing maturity in our CLC community, in both the adults and the children. There were joyful, consoling experiences as well as experiences of desolation, tension and questioning. *"We made our way by going."*



The celebration of the 65th birthday of John English SJ, 1989

We had turbulent meetings, where some of the adults questioned the traditions of the Christian faith while others felt such questioning was an energy drain. Our daughters found meetings quite powerful because they were carefully listened to as they questioned their faith. There was a growing ecological awareness in the group and our family Spiritual Exercises for the Second Week moved more towards Ecological Exercises.



The three young ladies, 1991

As we continued, our meetings were characterized by a growing separation between the activities of the children and those of the adults, as the children desired more independence. Our three daughters continued to deepen their friendship. Our sons, while remaining friends, never developed the close bonds that the three girls had. All however, wanted to have their own activities, separate from the adults. The children's involvement in discerning family decisions stops, which becomes a frustration for the adults. We experience changing images of ourselves, our world and God.

In 1993, our community took two trips. One was to Anderson Lake, a Jesuit Retreat Centre on Manitoulin Island. The centre and the parish at Wikwimikong serve Canadian First Nations people. We went with members of the Jesuit Farm Project. The other trip was to Prince Edward Island for one week in the

summer. These extended times together were experiences of communal consolation.

The increasing divergence of adult and child interests and activities became a constant tension and concern over the next several years. Our sons spent more time playing computer games at each meeting; an issue we never resolved. Our daughters wanted more time to themselves. However, there were times when we could all act together in a meaningful way. For instance, our three daughters felt they could discuss other theologies, especially feminist, and be listened to with care and respect. We extended the Eucharist, always celebrated by John English, to include the family supper. For some meetings, it was the only time when parents and children were together in a meaningful way.

An important Spiritual Exercise for us was the decision that each family, parents and children, would write a family Creed and share them at a meeting. This exercise gave us much spiritual energy because each family shared its images of God, world and self.

In 1994 the children start to absent themselves from the community. The eldest child in the group, Shanti Zachariah, graduates from high school in 1994, and joins the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, which takes her to the Northwest Territories and the east coast of Canada for the next two years. Matthew Peloso takes a year off from school to join Katimavik, a program run by the Canadian Federal Government, which sends students to various parts of Canada as volunteers in community projects. These four years are characterized by questions and a sense of frailty. What is the purpose of our group? What will happen to us as our children continue to strike out on their own journeys? Why are we canceling meetings? Will John English still be part of our community now that he has been moved to Winnipeg, thousands of kilometers away? Where is God calling us? Why won't the children interact with their parents in a deeper, more consistent way during our meetings? We seem to be the only family CLC. Who will help us find direction? We adults are so diverse; is there any unity in our diversity?

How can we help our children develop a sense of social justice? Can we develop a new vision and regain the energy that we once had? Why do we find it difficult to bring family decisions to the community for discernment?

At the end of this phase, we reflect on the state of our community. We agree on four things. First, our sharing continues to be a source of deep consolation. Second, we have lost our focus and need to revisit our vision, goals and objectives. Third, we are bringing Ignatian Spirituality into the Church and our culture in the areas of ecology and the communal. Fourth, CLC calls us to a life of prayer and asks us to be aware of God's Spirit directing our lives.

The Later Years

The later years of our community (1999-2004) are characterized by change and transition. The children finish high school and university, find jobs, take on challenging volunteer work, and form relationships with significant others. Clare and Francis work as volunteers in Ghana and India respectively. Andrea, Matthew, Shanti and Clare graduate from university. Joe, Robert and Francis graduate from high school and find jobs. John English suffers a protracted illness of many months and dies in June of 2004. A new member, Dan Coughlin, joins our community in 2002.

John English is in Winnipeg, so we no longer meet as regularly. We decide to share between meetings via email. Some of our children take time out from studies, travel and work to email us their reflections and current experiences. This is a good decision because it keeps us in touch and encourages us to focus on what is really significant in our lives. We begin to reflect on what the future of our community will be, since the children are no longer with us. Parental lives are changing also. Two couples have taken early retirement and are now involved in various activities with volunteer agencies, the parish and CLC.

We parents and John English decide to create a book of memories and give a copy to each of

our children to celebrate our years as a family CLC. Each adult wrote each child a letter. These letters, as well as pictures, a brief



Supper together, 1992

history of our CLC and Spiritual Exercises for all four Weeks of the Exercises were included in our book. Here is a paragraph from the introduction. *"During these years our Family CLC group has had a deep effect on our lives. In this group we enjoyed the closest friendships of our lives, a deep feeling of being loved and sincere mutual respect. Because of these experiences together, we had moments when we felt we were one family in Christ, not four, and so were able to listen with care and acceptance, to each others' stories and thus were able to discern the Spirit's action in our lives. This listening is the greatest of all life skills because it is the*



John English SJ receives a honorary doctorate, Regis College, University of Toronto, 1997. With Chris and John Sullivan

foundation of friendship and helps us to better hear God's call....We also received in our group, a great education about the things that

really matter in life...These letters are a celebration of the end of a CLC season of growth and a symbol of your passages from childhood to adulthood."

The parents wonder if we should continue with our CLC. Not for the first time one of our young adults, Clare, challenges us to continue, even if our original reason for coming together, i.e., our children, no longer applies. We ask Sr. Ann MacLoughlin, csj, to facilitate a process which will help us decide. Through this process we discern, to our surprise, that we will stay together. We write a short manual for experienced spiritual directors.

These years are overshadowed by the deteriorating health of John English. In the spring of 2003 the three couples and our daughters fly to Winnipeg to have a weekend CLC meeting with John. The hospitality and care of CLC members in Winnipeg is a tremendous support to us. This is the last time our daughters will see him. The three couples fly to Winnipeg at separate times in 2004 to spend a few days with John, who dies in June of 2004. We recall his lively spirit at every meeting and feel that he is with us; we are continuing to evolve the work he initiated.

CLC Family



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