Structures for a Just Society
Note! The new phone number for the National CLC Office is: 314-633-4628. Items can be faxed to: 314-633-4400. Be sure to indicate that the fax is for NCLC.

Visit our web site: www.clc-usa.org.
“We are called to act with justice,
we are called to love tenderly,
we are called to serve one another,
to walk humbly with God!”

David Haas’ hymn, *We Are Called*, which paraphrases the prophet Micah’s words(6:8), seems to be a Christian Life Community axiom. We have often been drawn to it in our efforts to be a prophetic voice in our own personal societal circumstances.

CLCers have not shirked from this task and today we are faced with many courses of mission by which we might bring justice to others; issues of human life and dignity, respect for others, whether it be the poor, the marginalized, the migrant worker, the immigrant, the condemned criminal, those in danger of becoming victims of genocide. And what of practicing as well as promoting the reverencing of the beauty of God’s creation? The list could go on and on. Certainly each one of these is part of the ‘seamless garment’ of life issues—from valuing the unborn to the dignity of all human life, even those who are terminally ill or in what is now called a persistent vegetative state, until natural death. How can we effectively make a difference?

Let us think of ways by which we adhere to General Principle #4, “…bearing witness to those human and gospel values which affect the dignity of persons, the welfare of the family, and the integrity of creation.”

This issue will give you some idea of how our own members are meeting this challenge of bringing loving service and justice to others—

“We in CLC are called to both the work of justice and the work of charity. It is specifically the work of the laity, our work in CLC to change the structures of society—locally and globally.

Visioning can help us to clarify the greatest and most essential needs and how new essential structures would complement one another and work harmoniously together.

Do I love others so much that I’m willing to examine and re-examine any structure that may be oppressing human persons or causing deterioration of the earth?

For visioning such a future for our planet is a key essential to bringing it about.

We found anger reduction to be the most evident behavioral change of the students receiving our forgiveness materials…we are introducing our model into both prison ministry and alcohol rehab…

Ostensibly a “course,” JustFaith has provided us with an opportunity for much prayer and spiritual reflection on key social justice issues…this cloud of unknowing is I believe necessary for growth in faith and love and as such I count it as a gift from the Holy Trinity.

Creation of a just society, in short depends on us as a starting point…In CLC and other Communities, such as JustFaith, I see individuals who are working to develop within themselves, through the guidance and grace of God, the qualities of justice and promotion of the common good. In the final analysis, this is the key to creation of a just society.

In our threefold way CLC way of life guided by the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spirituality, we have the opportunity to ever deepen our being in intimate touch with: our most loving God, our real companionship with each other as genuine friends in the Lord; and our compassionate generosity in reaching out and touching others (and being touched by them) who are most in need.”

We are also fortunate to have available two presentations from last Fall’s Mid Atlantic Regional Meeting. Each deals with the role of laity in the Church.

Two members of our graced history of CLC here in the United States are also being fondly remembered: Mary Bialas, who was so dedicated to CLC in the New Orleans Region; and Jean Horton, a leader in the Missouri Region and a past president of National CLC. I had the privilege of being in their company at my earliest ‘convention’ experience and was appropriately impressed by each of them as well as by the esteem in which they were held. We wish those good and faithful servants, Godspeed!

Taking some more phrases from *We Are Called*,

“Come, live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
...hope for the hopeless,
God will reign and we’ll walk with each other
As sisters and brothers united in love!”

Spring 2006 / 3
Remembering Mom

Jess Bialas Palazzolo
Atlanta, Georgia

Always, she was a woman of dignity, grace, kindness, and spirituality. To these qualities, add courage, strength, wisdom, and humility.

From my earliest memories, Mom’s influence in my life was monumental. As a girl, she was “My Right Hand Pal”; as a young adult, she was my source of good counsel and advice; and as both she and I grew older, she was my greatest friend and never ceased to provide comfort, love, and steadfast support to me, no matter how foolish my choices or how faulty my judgment.

Growing up in a close-knit working class neighborhood and church parish in the 1950s in New Orleans, from an early age, Mom taught me the value of honesty, fairness, integrity and hard work. By her example, she lay the foundation for me about how to live a good life, about what’s important, about how to frame events in a way that identifies things correctly, and about how to pray. In short, her lessons inform my life in ways that are too numerous to tally and too profound to convey.

In all walks of life, she epitomized grace, elegance, and goodness. In our home, she was sole provider, my father having met an untimely death at age thirty-three — while Mom was just thirty-one. She worked hard and made a comfortable life for my brothers and me and our paternal grandmother.

Goodness was easy for Mom—a part of her nature. Being a good mother to her children; being a good Christian not only to those who were good Christians, but also to those whom she barely knew or didn’t know at all; being a good friend to her friends; and being a good colleague among her co-workers. She was all of these and more. Her faith, her active participation in our parish life, and her determination to do the best she could enabled her to find the strength and courage necessary to meet the formidable challenges she faced.

And her spirit of kindness and her active participation were there to the end of her days. While living in St. Margaret’s Daughters Nursing Home for the last two years of her life, she was a “presence.” Selected to serve on the Residents’ Council, she brought their concerns and issues to the administration’s attention. Always the organizer, she coordinated a cook book project, gathering recipes from residents, and gave the cook book as a gift to the staff of the home at Christmas time. She earned the Resident of the Month award more than once. All these good works testify to her desire to lift the spirits of those around her even as hers were sometimes waning.

Some years ago, Mom was asked to write a reflection on the meaning of Mary in her life. She chose as her format a prayer. Her prayer captures the beautiful spirit that she always embodied, and, more than any reflection I could share, perfectly describes her life and her soul.
MARY: THE LADY OF THE MOMENT

By Mary A. Bialas

Virgin, Mother, Queen, Intercessor, Model, Confidante… Who is Mary to me? She is the Lady of the Moment; her litany of beautiful titles lets me pick and choose as the need arises; she plays the role in which I need her at any particular time.

My children are ill or in distress? I am at the foot of the cross… “Mary, Mother of Jesus, pray for me, but what is my sorrow compared to your sorrow?” ~ I am in a time of crises; I need help fast!…Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to my aid.” ~ With joy I crown Mary’s statue to honor her during the month of May… “Queen of the Angels and Saints, pray for us.” ~ I hear a siren… “Hail, Mary, full of grace. Mary, comforter of the afflicted, pray for whoever is in trouble at this time.” ~ The night is long after I awaken at 2:00 a.m. I chat with Mary through the rosary, offering it for all those who are standing the night watch with the seriously ill… “Queen of the most holy rosary, pray for us.” ~ I am in line to receive the Eucharist… “Lord, I am not worthy; Mary, Spiritual Vessel, pray for me.” ~ I am faced with a decision; how do I react in specific situations? What would Mary do?… “Mother of Good Counsel, guide and direct me.” ~ I hear her name; she is my patroness. She is approachable, the simple Jewish maiden hearing the angel; the busy housewife making a home for Jesus and Joseph; above all, the loving mother of Jesus, who gave her to us as our own mother.

When I am sorely tried, or too distracted, or just plain forget to pray… “Mary, please take over and do my praying for me. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”

MEMORIES OF MARY BIALAS

Ken Buddendorff, S.J.

Back in New Orleans in the 60s and 70s, one of my first adult friends in Sodality/CLC was Mary Bialas. What a delightful person she was! Besides being a leader among her peers, we worked together in the transition from Sodality to Christian Life Community.

Mary was instrumental in getting diocesan priests involved. Her inspiration and encouragement led Fr. Bill Reed to become the New Orleans Diocesan Moderator of Sodality/CLC. In addition, Mary was always telling me, “We need more young people.”

Whether it was the Summer Schools of Catholic Action or hosting a national Sodality/CLC in New Orleans, Mary was always there to be one of our leaders. All of us in CLC are grateful to Mary for the growth of CLC in New Orleans.

Maryanne Rouse

All of my memories of Mary are wonderful! I especially recall the tremendous support that she and her CLC members from various parishes all over New Orleans gave to the CLC Convention in 1977. I was the Program Chair and the special plans and local hospitality that they provided were terrific.

One event that stands out for many still was a very economical evening of dinner and boat riding with CLC having rented the entire boat. What fun!

One other memory to mention is that convention after convention Mary organized a busload of New Orleans CLCers for a trip to the convention by caretaking a process of monthly savings for the next trip! All of this with a group of women who charmingly made the transition from dedicated parish Sodalists to energizing members of CLC!

What a privilege to have known and loved her!
Tribute to Mary Bialas

Fr. Bill Kidwell, S.J.

Just as Mary, the Mother of God, said ‘yes’ to Jesus in the Incarnation, in bringing Jesus into our world, so Mary Bialas said ‘yes’ to Jesus often in her life, in bringing Him into her world. Just as Mary was the model of Christian life for all around her, so Mary Bialas was the model of Christian Life Community for all of her associates in CLC.

She was that model at every level of Sodality/CLC.

She was first a stalwart Catholic Christian, firm in her faith, secure in her hope, ardent in her charity. She was pious, dedicated to prayer, especially her daily Mass. That spirit was the fount of her pouring out her love to family, friends and CLC members.

She was a very warm and hospitable person. You did not come to New Orleans without a gracious invitation to her home, or to one of her favorite little French restaurants, or to both.

Her Sodality/ Christian Life Community activity began with her parish, where she and her parish members of CLC were supporters of pastor and parish activities. Her parish group was a member of the New Orleans Federation of Parish Groups of Sodality/CLC. Their union met frequently and chose as their mission the support of the Jesuit Mission in Ceylon/Sri Lanka. When one of the missionaries returned to the United States, he was treated with gifts from the CLC to take back to Sri Lanka. Mary was the leader in all of this.

When the old Sodality turned into the new Christian Life Community, Mary led the way (unlike some other Sodalities), to a smooth transition into the new General Principles. Thus the New Orleans parish groups were probably the largest array of parish-based CLCs in the country, maybe even in the world.

Next was the regional area. Mary was every bit the guide and inspiration of the Southern Region CLC, in its golden age—the 70s, 80s and into the 90s. There were regional meetings every other year, when no national convention was held; several regional retreats, a popular regional newsletter called, Splash, which usually appeared every other month; and maybe, best of all, the regional formation gatherings, which studied and tried to put into practice, the famous Cycles, leaflets centered around key topics of CLC life, for example, the Spirituality Cycle, the Foundation Cycle, the Mission Cycle.

The gatherings had representatives from all of the several CLCs in the region—from Houston, Texas, and Shreveport and Monroe and New Orleans in Louisiana, from southern Mississippi, from Mobile, Alabama, from Pensacola and Tampa in Florida. Mary was always present with words of wisdom and practical suggestions.

At national conventions, when the assembly broke up into discussion groups according to regions, it was largely Mary who skillfully kept a business-like progression of discussion going; avoiding long, drawn-out arguments and leading to sound, practical conclusions.

Coming next to the national level, Mary held various offices at that level and was a constant consultant on national issues. Her opinions were sought and valued.

But her never-to-be-forgotten national activity was her bringing the large New Orleans delegation to each national convention. During the many years of these famous bus excursions, Mary’s group from New Orleans was, except for the local host group, always the largest delegation. This large participation was a great inspiration to all who attended.

As soon as a convention was over, Mary began in earnest to prepare for the next convention, two years away. She would plan some sightseeing on the way to the convention, and more on the way back home, usually adding three or four days to the convention time. She would calculate the price of everything, divide that by the number of months until the next convention, and inform prospects of how much they should pay each month. It was an easier, attractive way to finance the trip, and usually thirty or forty people signed up. For this enormous contribution to our national CLC for so many years, our entire movement owes Mary Bialas a great debt of gratitude, and it enshrines Mary as one of our national heroines.

Even during her declining years, and as the passing of so many of her fellow New Orleans members caused their groups to decline in membership, Mary continued her interest in CLC. She was the main financial support of the much smaller, struggling Southern Region. She was Co-Presenter of a large packet of materials advertising CLC and sent to nearly one hundred southern parishes and school leaders.

While we look on with sadness at Mary’s leaving our presence, we can imagine the joy of the angels and all of the CLC people in her groups who preceded her into heaven, at her presence with them. We can imagine her organizing excursions from the east side of heaven to the west. At the celestial conventions she, along with the other Mary, is leading a continual chorus of “yes” to Jesus, sung in a CLC melody.
I am privileged to be given this opportunity to share the gratitude that two communities feel for the presence of Jean in their midst, Christian Life Community and Bridges.

The greater testament to how she has touched us is in the number of people present here, and many others all across the United States who are with us in spirit and have journeyed with Jean during these past few weeks. One example of this connection came in an e-mail I received from a member of the National Formation Team, which met a couple of weekends ago. She shared that during the weekend, those who knew Jean were reminiscing about her and the wonderful friend she was to them when they stayed at the CLC House on Westminster Avenue here in St. Louis.

Both CLC and Bridges are grounded in Ignatian Spirituality. An important dynamic of Ignatian Spirituality is the life-long discovery of our authentic selves and living out of that awareness in response to the situations in our daily lives. As I reflected on Jean’s life, and in particular her involvement in CLC and Bridges, it became clear that Jean lived this awareness fully.

Jean’s journey with CLC actually began as a Sodalist here at Christ the King Church. In the early 70s when Sodality was transitioning to CLC, Jean was president of Sodality here. While the parish group never fully made the transition to CLC, Jean resonated with the new spirit of CLC and so joined with others looking for a more authentic expression of CLC in forming Discipleship CLC, of which she has been a member ever since. While other members have come and gone, Jean has stayed.

In typical Jean fashion of seeking and responding to the greater good, she became involved in CLC not only locally, but also nationally, becoming president of NFCLC from 1989-1991. This was a painful time in CLC’s history and Jean’s gentleness and graciousness provided a healing presence in our movement at that time. She often referred to the verse from Jeremiah describing this time: “You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped.” This was evidence of her openness to responding to the needs before her.

About the same time, 1989-1990, the Bridges Program was being revived under the leadership of Joan and Jim Felling, and Jean again responded and became a part of that effort. She has been an important part of Bridges ever since, finding in it both a source of nourishment as well as a means of ministering as a prayer guide. Several of her retreatants continued to meet with her after the Bridges Program.

She also attended Prayer Companions every year up until this current year to deepen her understanding of the Exercises and her role as guide. An example of how integral a part of Bridges Community she is occurred at the February meeting of Prayer Companions on the 19th. Aware that Jean had not been well recently, several people were concerned that Jean had not returned phone calls in the past couple of days, which was not like her. We realized that no one had heard from her recently. After some investigation by one of the members we discovered she had been taken to the hospital the Friday before.

One of her gifts to Bridges was a talk she gave every year on suffering which was scheduled during Lent when the retreatants are accompanying Jesus through His Passion. She was scheduled to give that talk tomorrow at Bridges at the Webster Groves site. Although she can’t be there physically, they will be using a tape of her talk made in previous years — evidence of her continued presence in Bridges.

That continuing presence was felt this past weekend. From Friday evening to Saturday evening, Bridges held a Marketplace Ministry weekend given by Bernie Owens, S.J.
Jean died about the time that we were gathering for this weekend. It seemed that since she couldn’t be there physically, she wanted to be there in spirit. As part of that weekend, the participants pair up with a partner to share with during the weekend. I personally felt Jean’s presence when I found that the person I paired up with was Jean’s retreatant! Since we hadn’t known each other previously, it seemed that Jean brought us together to be there for each other that weekend.

In our Discipleship CLC, she shared her struggles and difficult times as well as her joys. In the past few years, she shared her pride and joy in the person her son, Chris, had become; she rejoiced when Christy, his wife, entered his life; and was totally delighted with the arrival of her grandson, Blake. For me personally she was proof positive of the power of a mother’s prayer as I journey with my own twenty-one-year-old son.

When Jean’s eyesight made it difficult for her to drive at night, our CLC members took turns picking her up and bringing her to our meetings. She seemed a bit bewildered that her presence was that important to us. But it was.

Our Discipleship CLC was scheduled to meet at Jean’s on Feb. 24. By that time she was at St. Sophia’s. We had been reflecting together on a book by Sr. Joan Chittister, In Search of Belief, a reflection on the Creed. We were to discuss the last chapter of the book, entitled, AMEN. So instead of gathering at her apartment, we gathered around her bed for our final meeting with her, and shared with her our reflections on that chapter and how she lived that out. I would like to share with you a bit of that chapter which I feel describes Jean’s life.

“Those who have lived well for their own time have lived well for all times,” the proverb teaches. The point is clear: Not only do we die into resurrection ourselves but if we have lived with respect for life, for the living, we leave resurrection in our wake as we go. The way we live ripples across time, touching people we never see, changing places we never went, singing a sound that never ends. To see the individual life as insignificant is to dismiss the meaning of life itself...

Life is gracious and gifting. Its value, its impact, its beauty depend only on the things we say “amen” to as we go. It is what we believe that sculpts and guides us. It is the quest for meaning that leads us to eternity now and the now of eternity.

This morning as I was pondering what to say, I asked Jean what she would want me to say about her, how she wanted to be remembered. The answer came through loud and clear. “Tell them I love them.”

We can honor Jean’s life best by sharing with others the love, the divine spark that she has shared with each and all of us. 🌸
Some Reflections on CLC, our Mission and Working for Just Structures

Tom Bausch

The Mennonite author Wally Kroeker recently wrote on a theme very important to me. He noted that lay people have “a sense that people who are truly committed (to God) go into full-time Christian service, while those who run a business or hold a job are second-class citizens.” Many Catholics tend to believe “that ministry happens (only) within the bounds of the congregation (or parish). Little attention is invested in the Church dispersed.” Russell Shaw notes that Vatican II, “made it overwhelmingly clear” that a lay person’s responsibility “is primarily an apostolate that carries the Gospel out into the World.” As Our Sunday Visitor recently emphasized, we the laity have “the right and duty to participate in the mission of the Church on the job, in our homes and families, nuclear and extended, and in the neighborhood”. I believe that if we do not work to bring all things to God, we do not believe in the fullness of the Incarnation in which Christ, in becoming one of us, limited Himself to a time and place.

Yet in the Incarnation Meditation we find the Trinity looking at the whole world. How do we reconcile Christ becoming fully human and limiting himself, and saving the entire world? The reconciliation is in the profound truth that both you and I are called in an era and place to be Him in, and to bring him into, every single human circumstance imaginable. We in CLC are called to both the work of justice and the work of charity. It is specifically the work of the laity, our work in CLC, to change the structures of society – locally and globally. It is also our work, with the institutional Church, to help those hurting right now – whose needs cannot wait for structures to be changed.

Pope Benedict XVI makes these same points about our call in his first encyclical. (Which all of us must read, contemplate and make part of our CLC meetings. Once, when Nick Rieman, S.J., discovered I had not read a recent encyclical he said, “Tom, if you are too busy to read a social encyclical, you are too busy!”) Benedict joins us in tying our sense of mission to Mary. We in our Ignatian Christian Life Communities are called to be “out there” joining Mary in bringing The Kingdom to each of our worlds. As we proclaim in GP 9, “Mary is the model of our own collaboration in Christ’s mission.” The final words of Benedict in Deus Caritas Est, a recapitulation of eros and agape, invoke Mary in a way dear to us who desire to change structures in service to the poor:

Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.
Teach us to know and love him,
so that we too can become
capable of true love,
And be fountains of living water
In the midst of a thirsting world.

CLCers are contemplatives in action. On the Second Sunday of Lent I was struck by what Christ did not say, but did do at the Transfiguration... When Peter offered to set-up tents, Christ did not even respond, rather He left with the apostles as they went down the mountain and back to work. This is very Ignatian as we remember that Ignatius had to discipline himself to pray less so he could do the will of God, that is study. The other two readings for the Second Sunday of Lent are very Ignatian as the story of Abraham and Isaac teaches us about indifference and Paul proclaims one of the most robust of the Ignatian themes, “If God is for us, who can be against us!” Yes, as disciples of Ignatius we in mission are called to do God’s will, not our will for God; to be contemplatives in action, and to trust that when God calls us to do something, He will provide the means. Yes, we can change structures.
For all of us in CLC the truths of our lay call to the marketplace and the public square are at the very core of who we are as part of the Ignatian family grounded in the Spiritual Exercises. G.P. 8.a reads,

“Each of us receives a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places and situations.”

I ask all of us to focus on the following points as we contemplate the theme of this issue of Harvest, “Structures for a Just Society.” (I also, in a general sense of first principle, believe that each of our communities should spend at least one of every four meetings every year contemplating our core CLC documents.)

First, the work that Christ has called each of us to do with Him is in our families, our education and work as a student, our workplace, the public square, leading the Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop, in all of these places where we are the Church. Our work in these places where we are Christ must, in most cases, be our highest priority. This is where we have been sent by God to take His Son to redeem all that is. (I have a bias; I am pure Chardin on this point.) However, and this is what is specific to CLC, we are sent into our family, hospital, office, farm or whatever, as persons on common mission with all in our community and out of our communities to serve and to save souls. We are never alone! In our community we discern, send, support and evaluate with each other, while never violating the radical freedom each of us has to choose to be the unique person God has in mind. We believe, in a deeply spiritual and Trinitarian sense, with our African brothers and sisters that, “A person becomes a person through other persons.”

Second, the concepts of sending and supporting go way beyond the members in our local CLC communities. The Incarnation Meditation and others emphasize “the entire world” and the brothers and sisters of our community are in about seventy countries. We must support every single CLCer in all of the countries, and not just with prayer, although it is the foundation. We do not have the luxury of only an internal and at home focus.

Third, we are interconnected. The story of the butterfly flapping its wings in North Dakota and eventually causing a tropical storm in Africa is very true. Every time we buy a gallon of gasoline, cup of coffee, new pair of running shoes or automobile, we speak to our support of or desire, or lack thereof, to change structures.

Fourth, each of us is a “holon”, unique and precious as self, but part of a system of systems interlocking all of creation, that is all that God created, in a beautiful manner.

Fifth, in addition to our individual work, each of us is a social being and, as we state in GP 8.b:

“We exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organizations and efforts.”

Sixth, we have a special call “to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor.” (GP 9.c)

Seventh, we are called “to do all of this in an ecumenical spirit.” (GP 8.c) And to this I would add inter-religious.

Eighth, and a point that ever more jumps out at me as something very special as we work to change hearts, “We wish to contribute to the evangelization of cultures from within.” (GP 8.c)

Ninth, in a very special way we are called to collaborate in the works of the Jesuits. Unlike a group like the Ignatian Associates, this is not our particular charism. And this is the charism of the Third Orders of some religious groups or families. But it is our history and grows out of our common bond in Ignatian Spirituality.

Tenth, changing structures in Africa must be a very special priority as we exercise the option for the poor core to our GPs.

How Does CLC–USA and CLC in the World Measure-up?

Because of lack of space, let me just mention seven points that are on my mind at the moment.

As I learn about what all of you in CLC–USA are doing all I can say is — WOW! Yes, we could probably be doing a lot more and be better focused and, and, and! We do a poor job of telling our story, for most of us know that God knows and His love is our reward. But do we do enough to exude the joy of working with Christ and Mary, not to pat ourselves on the back, but rather to attract others to work with Him and Her? Is it not an obligation in justice to provide the incentives and opportunities for others to become who God wants them to be? “The person is the subject of his or her work.” (JP II)

I know best what the members of my community do and who they are, and I know the work of many of the other CLCers in the Milwaukee Cluster. I also know some of the burdens they carry quietly, but heroically. They have effectively and with great sacrifice of preparation committed themselves in “bearing witness to those human and gospel values which affect the dignity of persons, the welfare of the family, and the integrity of creation.” (GP 4) Every time I visit our communities elsewhere in the USA I get more insights into what other CLC members do.

The generous financial response of CLC members to the two solidarity campaigns as well as to the Katrina Fund has been first rate.

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I will never forget when in August 2004 I stepped across the open sewer to visit St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School, a school for AIDS orphans in the Kibera Slums in Nairobi, Kenya. I was immediately entering a place of Christian Hope in one of the worst slums in all of Africa, an environment of absolute poverty. I was in a cluster of very basic buildings housing the school and filled with joyful, disciplined, engaged students and absolutely committed faculty and administrators with very little to work with other than the love of the Lord. I have been an educator all of my life and I instinctively feel it when real learning is taking place. The AIDS orphans who are the students were learning, despite all of the odds and they engaged me in great conversation when I visited the classrooms. The school reflects the power of CLC at work!

St. Aloysius is the outcome of the commitment and hard work of our brother and sister CLC members in Kenya. They had committed themselves to supporting the efforts of AIDS affected youth who were seeking an education, but they were very disappointed in the results of the experiences in various schools where they were paying tuition for the students. In December 2003 the CLC members decided “We must begin our own secondary school!” and about six weeks later they opened their doors. Can you imagine opening a school in our USA culture? Today they are halfway to their projected enrollment of four hundred twenty students and attempting to raise $1 million to build a building of their own as they also work to raise the money necessary to operate on a day to day basis. Their audacious hope flows from those powerful words of St. Paul, “If God is for us, who can be against us!” and they know they are doing God’s work.

The school accepts students who have lost both parents to AIDS or one parent with the other sick with the disease. Kibera is the largest slum in Sub-Saharan Africa. Students of all faith backgrounds are served in this Catholic school providing a college preparatory education and the help needed to overcome the deficits of the environment. It has some of the aspects of the successful Cristo Rey schools in the USA and they are working now to include the Corporate Internship program that is so important in this model.

The school needs the help of all of us in solidarity with our CLC brothers and sisters in Nairobi. CLC-USA has contributed $1,000, a token of our support that will cover tuition and other costs including books, uniform and meals for one student for one year. Father Terry Charlton, S.J., from Indianapolis and a man who has worked with CLC in Africa, currently in Kenya, and England for years, and is currently working to develop the school, was in the US in March fundraising for the project and participated in World CLC Day in Detroit and met many of us during his stay in the country.

I have had the privilege of teaching and knowing some of the CLCers involved, and they are inspirational persons. Am I proud to be a member of CLC with all of them! Some of our members have already contributed to the school. If you are interested in making a contribution, please send it to Jesuit International Ministries, 2059 Sedgwick St., Chicago IL 60614 4790 and mark it for St. Aloysius School Fund. The phone number is 773 975 2042. If you want to talk to me about the project, please call at 414 771 2533.

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Our teams at the UN in both New York and Geneva makes a difference.

One of the most exciting CLC projects at the current time is St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School in the Kibera Slums of Nairobi, Kenya. It is a school to serve four hundred twenty AIDS orphans.

Our CLC groups, especially from our colleges, have been very active in protesting the School of the Americas.

The pro-life activity, well beyond anti-abortion, is outstanding.

Do I have a disappointment as I look at how we work at mission? Yes! Members of CLC may not be active enough in politics at any level. In conclusion – mission flowing out of Ignatian Spirituality and community makes for exciting changes of structure!
I have something worth millions, billions, trillions of dollars. Indeed it’s priceless! I’m sure all of you have one too, a vision, a dream.

In 1540 St. Ignatius of Loyola and eight fellow students at the University of Paris dreamed of an innovative religious order. An integral part of their spirituality was the freedom from domination by inner insecurities, a freedom to have eyes wide open to what’s really happening, a freedom to think new thoughts, a freedom to dream, a freedom to “make believe.” Today followers of St. Ignatius strive for that same inner freedom, freedom from domination by addictions and negative drives, a positive spiritual freedom to imagine a world with structures different from what we now experience.

In the gospel of Luke 4: 18, 19 Jesus has a vision of a fresh start for each human person and for our whole human family. Jesus wanted a world in which each one of us is a winner. Trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, let me share a dream with you, a vision not of a perfect world but a better one, a world more in accord with God’s Word. I’m not so presumptuous as to think that the dream I present is a dream Jesus dictated to me. But I have meditated on Scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church and of other Churches for a long time. I have read, studied and taught the social teaching of the Catholic Church and of other religions. I have had many experiences and dialogues. I think the basic outlines of the vision I have at this time is the vision of Jesus for our peace. The way of Jesus is the way of non-violence, justice, and love. The details of my vision are the result of my experience and insights.

I invite everyone who feels energy around visioning to dialogue with me and search together how the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola can interface with the creation of a peaceful world. Because of original sin, I think our present vision of the world is murky and cloudy. Perhaps together and with the help of the Holy Spirit we can get our vision of where we want to go back in focus. We need “a sustained interdisciplinary dialogue of research and reflection, a continuous pooling of expertise. The purpose is to assimilate experiences and insights according to their different disciplines in ‘a vision of knowledge which, well aware of its limitations, is not satisfied with fragments but tries to integrate them into a true and wise synthesis.’” (Pope John Paul II, Address to Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, May 5, 2000, n. 9 cited by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.,in an address to twenty-eight Jesuit Colleges and Universities, Santa Clara University, Oct. 6, 2000.)

To get order into our world we establish structures; government, corporations, schools, currency, traffic signals, etc. Because early drivers were colliding at intersections, someone decided to put up a sign that said STOP. This was the externalization of the desire to prevent accidents by creating some form of orderly traffic flow. Structures become the “way things are, the way we do things here.” We need structures to function in an orderly way.

But structures become part of us and can take on a life of their own. Our values, attitudes, ways of thinking are internalized. From time to time we need to analyze the structures by which we have organized society and our thought patterns to examine whether our external and internal structures need restructuring.

The whole idea of visioning world structures may seem daunting and overwhelming. But following solid Catholic tradition, I never underestimate the will and power of God for good. The establishment of the International Criminal Court, the European Union, the culture of human rights in our world have been nothing short of miracles. With one another and with God’s help, starting small, we can go forward with a vision of peace. Perhaps one part of our vision appeals to us more than others, and we want to develop and work, say, for non-violence.
“When I dream alone, it remains a dream; when I dream with others, my dream becomes a reality.” Christian Life Community.

What does the world need? Visioning can help us to clarify the greatest and most essential needs and how new essential structures would complement one another and work harmoniously together.

Perhaps I want to start with a vision of life closer to me. What is my vision of my family life? My school? My work place? Is my emphasis on changing others or growing myself?

I have a strong and deep passion for peace and justice, which began with my experience as a member of the 86th Infantry Division during World War II. This passion has grown and deepened imperceptibly over the years. My long years of study and prayer have not dimmed it nor lessened the passion. Indeed my relationship with God has moved me outward toward my neighbor and the earth. The commitment of my religious order to faith and justice thrills and energizes me. Since I have come to Xavier University, my involvement in peace and justice activities has further deepened my passion. Despite my pain at what I perceive as the needless suffering of so many, I feel that my commitment to peace and justice has been a grace.

I think I need to serve others with my hands, love others with my heart, but also use my mind to study the causes of war and injustice and my imagination to vision a world of peace with justice. I strive for a revolution of consciousness, a critical mass of awareness that will push the human family forward. As Victor Hugo has said, there is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.

When I started to study and work for a peace with justice so many immediate peace and justice emergencies crowded upon me, I couldn’t see the forest for the trees. I decided I needed a long-range vision to give me perspective. Once I had a vision, I could prioritize appropriate steps toward the vision. Without a vision I found it hard to decide where to begin or what to do next. Without a vision, I found my agenda was often determined by the agenda of the principalities and powers. The U.S. invades Iraq. So I react to what those who have an opposing vision want. I may be able to fit my positive vision with current events if only to contrast what is happening with what could and should be happening. But I don’t let current events distract me from my positive vision.

Reality includes structures graced by God such as the family and faith based communities like Christian Life Community. There are also sinful structures in the wasteful violent culture all around us. Social sin is the atmosphere of a community that compels us to kill each other in order to solve disputes. Social sin is an atmosphere of selfishness and arrogance. In my vision there are five major pieces, or pillars, that we need to focus on to build a world with just structures.

There are many blank spaces in my dream. Perhaps you have a completely different dream. I just hope that you will vision structures you think we need to make this the beginning of a civilized world. My dream needs as a minimum a world ethic; non-violence, basic human rights, economic democracy, a democratic world authority. Care of the Earth is part of each pillar above. Each structure would include sub-structures such as the nation state, ways of being effective citizens, corporations, ways of being effective stockholders, labor unions, churches, etc.

History is the truth of the past. I think we need to assimilate our past to be more genuinely present and make decisions in the Spirit for the future. Although it builds on the past, utopia is the truth of tomorrow. By utopia I do not mean heaven or perfection but the beginning of a humane, civilized world.

Utopia is a vision of the future. St. Thomas More’s Utopia in 1516 built on Plato’s Republic around 400 B.C. “Restrict this right of rich individuals to buy up everything and this license to exercise a kind of monopoly for themselves.” Thomas More advocates laws that limit the amount of land and income an individual may have. Utopia leaves time for citizens to be human. Time is to be set aside for intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

God’s peace is more real than anything we know. I’m glad I, like many others, have had the grace to reach out toward a peace with justice and try to bring that peace to the “real world,” a world of war, violence, injustice, lack of freedom, self-deception, oppression, narrow-mindedness. The struggle for a peace with justice is not always easy, requires study and analysis, spiritual discernment, and a sustained commitment. God’s peace is really real. The world of war, violence, secrecy, and injustice is a world of shadows.

The first act of the US Revolution began in 1776. I think it remains for us to write the second act and perform it. This second act would truly bring liberty and justice for all, for each human person, created in the image and likeness of God. The second act would be non-violent, courageous, imaginative, and comprehensive.

For forty years the US was enslaved by the bad idea of mutually assured destruction. Now we are imprisoned by fear of terrorism. With the help of the Spiritual Exercises of St.
Ignatius of Loyola we can develop enough spiritual freedom to let our courage and hope prevail over our fear and apathy.

I find looking ahead and forming a vision of structures we need for a livable world integrates my education and gives purpose and a goal to my study and research.

I think it’s valuable for each of us to form a vision for the structures we think our world needs to make it more in accord with God’s Word. It can lift us out of the present and the past and move us together toward a world more in accord with God’s Word. Not that study of the present and the past isn’t valuable for forming a vision of the future. The vision of economic democracy of Dr. Gar Alperovitz builds on what is already present now in germ. Once there were kings and queens, now we have democracy. Once women couldn’t vote, now we have the League of Women Voters. Once we had slavery and de facto segregation. Now we have civil rights laws.

Especially students can begin to form their vision of the future and their place in implementing that vision. Thus visioning can help to integrate education. It gives education a purpose and a practical goal. Keeping a record of our insights and experiences are helpful in this process. Part of our experience should always be hopeful, positive, and loving.

I developed my own vision over the last fifty years and corroborated it during my doctoral dissertation by fifty extended interviews with those committed to faith and justice. In my vision there are five major pieces, or pillars, that we need to focus on to build a just world.

The first pillar of a new world order is to develop and begin to live a global ethic. Religions are exploring today what they have in common. We need to establish world-wide moral guidelines as we move together toward a common future of peace. The World Parliament of Religions has declared we are all interdependent. “Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole….We consider humankind our family.” Shouldn’t we acknowledge ourselves as citizens of our country, but also as citizens of the world?

We add the second pillar of a new world building when we create a culture of non-violence, healthy and positive relationships, persuasion rather than coercion. If we are treated unjustly, we can strike back violently or we can be prudent and simply keep quiet. Imaging a third alternative, active non-violence is an historic development on a par in the evolutionary process with the breakthrough to intelligence. It will change our future in a radical way. Non-violence has many components, education, conflict resolution skills, appropriate laws, intelligent and reflective voting, prayer and meditation.

The third pillar of a new world structure is promotion of a culture where basic human rights are second nature. God did not create us to be essentially frustrated. Natural human rights are pleas to one another for our basic material, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. The new Constitu-
When we see injustice we need to ask “why?” We need to do research and social analysis. “Who is making the decision? Who is benefiting from the decision? Who is paying the cost of the decision?” We pray at Catholic Mass: “Keep the church alert in faith to the signs of the times and eager to accept the challenge of the gospel.”

We need to engage in theological reflection, having the values of Scripture and the churches interface with the world in which we live. Jesus became man that all of us might have life and have it more abundantly.

Writers as far apart ideologically as St. Ignatius of Loyola and the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre agree that we need to be honest with ourselves. St. Ignatius has developed skills in discerning positive drives within us from negative inner movements. Christian Life Community embodies this process today.

Small religious communities need to make decisions for social action within a definite time line. None of us can do everything. All of us can do something.

We need to evaluate how faithful we have been to the process. We will not always experience immediate external success.

To sum up, I came back from my time in the 86th Infantry Division during World War II with a passion for a peace with justice. I felt there had to be a better way. I decided becoming a Jesuit priest was how I could best pursue a peace with justice. Over the years so many worthy causes clamored for my attention I often was overwhelmed, bewildered, and confused. I couldn’t see the forest for the trees.

I decided to get a long-range vision not just for what I wanted to do personally, but where I wanted our world to be, ignoring all obstacles. Gradually over the years I decided the structures of a new world would have at least five pillars: a culture of basic human rights; an atmosphere of non-violence; some form of economic democracy; democratic world order; and a global ethic.

I also developed a way toward my vision: getting in touch with my light and dark graced story; doing research and social analysis; working at theological reflection; making a decision for social justice rather than social service for a definite time-line; evaluating how I was following the process.

My vision helped me to prioritize. What is the most difficult part of my vision to understand, accept, and achieve? What are my strengths that would move others to think about and dialogue concerning different parts of my vision? How could I best move toward my vision? What groups are allies of my vision? What are the chief obstacles to my vision?

A vision of hope doesn’t plan for heaven on earth, but does vision the minimum structures that we need to make this a livable world.

We don’t have to wait until our full vision is implemented. We can begin now to take small steps toward our vision. The more we read, study, and discuss, the more refined and developed our own vision will be. We can also develop our vision with others in small groups.

If we have a vision, it can help us to prioritize what we are doing now. I hesitate to let my priorities be determined by those who are going in the opposite direction. I don’t want to react just to what the current mode of thinking is, but be free to think new thoughts and take new approaches.

When we vision, we ignore all obstacles. Obstacles can be noted but dealt with later. If a young couple is drafting plans for a home, they want at least heat in the winter, shelter against rain, and so on. They don’t begin by saying they’ll never have enough money to get the minimum.

A global ethic has care of our one planet as a whole, a global ethic recognizes that we are one human family. Pope John XXIII thought that a democratic world authority was a moral imperative. Moving all of us together toward that part of a global ethic is a daunting challenge but one that is absolutely necessary. If we believe that a democratic world authority is essential for a peace with justice as I do, then we will join an active practical group like Citizens for Global Solutions. We will study the story of the International Criminal Court and work to have all nations, especially our own, join the International Criminal Court. All the sections of the vision or fingers of the hand are inter-related. One won’t work without the other.

Questions to begin or continue visioning—

Do I strive for a positive spiritual freedom? Do I have excessive fear of change?

How can individuals and CLC groups develop an integrated vision of structures our world needs to be more in accord with God’s Word? Is it useful to record one’s main insights and experiences?

Do I have a vision of my family life: My workplace? My church community?

Do I love others so much that I’m willing to examine and re-examine any structure that may be oppressing human persons or causing deterioration of the earth? Who is making the important decisions in our community and in our world? Who is benefiting most from those decisions? Who is paying the cost of those decisions? Are important decisions being made in an open, democratic way?

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Might Dreaming Make It So?

Maryanne Rouse

I have been at several meetings with Fr. Ben Urmston, S.J., whose life and ministry have been framed by a passion to vision a different world order of peace with justice, since his experiences in World War II. I’ve been intrigued by what that could mean, and you can see what this means to him in the article immediately preceding this one, entitled, “Dreams.” This summer I was challenged to reflect on what this might mean for myself and my life when the idea for this issue of Harvest was born.

This is not an easy task, and I invite you to do the same. For visioning such a future for our planet is a key essential to bringing it about. I have decided to share the following in hopes that you may find encouragement to join in the dreaming of such a peaceful world with justice. I admit I am just beginning.

I recall a rather remarkable example of such visioning in my past, and I remember the experience today as if it were yesterday. It occurred several years after I was introduced to Sadhana: a Way to God, Tony de Mello, S.J. in what I believe is his first published volume.

Sadhana is a collection of prayer exercises that call on the pray-er to visualize many things. In Exercise 44: the invitation is to imagine come to fruition, our most holy desires.

“Place before God the desires you have for each one of the people you wish to pray for…See each one of them, in imagination, as having the things you desire for them…You need not make an explicit prayer for them…It is enough to expose God to your holy desires…and to see those desires fulfilled.

What you have done for individuals do now for families and groups and communities…”

At this point I pictured that the area around our office was freshened, houses spruced up, yards cleared of junk and lawns maintained. I also included the basketball court, completely renewed and full of laughing children of various ages.

I finished the prayer session, but I was compelled to return to it as it is very life-giving and delightful, as Tony himself describes it in the introduction. One future day I looked out and there were people on the court; pulling weeds, mixing concrete, and straightening the fences. Not long after that, there were indeed children and adults actually using the court again! I certainly do not take credit for making this happen, but I believe I did have a hand in it by uniting my holy desires for the place with the vision that God had always had, I suppose,

Another example is the practice of intentionally sending positive energy(prayer?) when someone pops into your awareness, be they friend or foe. In this way, we are sending a positive spark to join other positive forces. Who of us can understand the mystery of all this? But I have heard it said more than once that we are always emitting either positive or negative energy. We can practice a mindfulness that allows us choice about this. It could become a part of our daily consciousness examen, for example.

People with whom I am having difficulty come to my awareness a lot, often more than I would like, and I used to think that there was not much I could do with my thoughts about them—in the middle of the night, for example, when I found them disturbing a sound sleep. Now, rather than let them sit there in my consciousness, tempting me to some ill thought.

(continued on page 17)
that leads to frustration, irritation, or anger, I try to remember to send a message of good will, something simple like “May all be well with you, and may you recognize God’s many gifts.”

What I have experienced is that this approach changes me and how I am willing to approach them in “real” life. I can only be hopeful as to how such thoughts may be helping them.

I encourage you to let Fr. Urmston’s story roll around in your mind and heart. What about his ideas may be intriguing? What resonates? For me, I was prompted to share these two examples. I know that I have just begun to imagine what could happen if more of us were committed to this kind of visioning and belief.

And if not we who are committed to the CLC Way of Life, then who?

(“Might Dreaming Make It So?” continued from page 16)

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you usually incorporate breathing exercises into your time for contemplation?

2. Can you recall an instance in your own prayer life, when your own personal dreaming and visioning seemed to enable that dream/vision to become a reality?

3. Does your own CLC take purposeful time for Visioning? Why/Why not?

(“Dreams” continued from page 15)

What are my talents, strengths? What do I like to do? Where are my passions, desires, and ambitions?

Will an integrated vision help me to love God, my neighbor, myself and the earth?

How can I prioritize and feel at peace with what I am doing? Can I sometimes do more by doing less? How much time do I take for reflection and prayer?

How can we take strides toward an integral peace and freedom?

What will help to make my experience hopeful, positive, and loving?

Let us reflect on St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 1.17. “May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you a spirit of wisdom and insight to know him clearly. May the Spirit enlighten your innermost vision that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the church, and the immeasurable scope of his power in us who believe. It is like the strength the Father showed in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in heaven, high above every principality, power, virtue, and domination, and every name that can be given in this age or in the age to come. The Father has put all things under Christ’s feet and has made him, thus exalted, head of the church, which is his body: the fullness of Him who fills the universe in all its parts.”

For where my own vision is at this time see my web-site http://www.xu.edu/peace/ben.htm
Or go to Xavier’s web-site
Mission and Ministry, Peace and Justice

Questions for Discussion

1. How can individuals and CLC groups discern what they want to do with their time and talents on a short-term and long-term basis?

2. What will help to integrate your insights?

3. Do you agree that a vision of essential structures complement one another and work harmoniously together? What sub-structures do we need?
Forgiveness—A Path to Peace

Dick Larsen

I received an invitation from a friend, Mary Kellner, to hear and meet Dr. Robert Enright, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the Educational Psychology Department. He had been working for fifteen years on the subject of forgiveness, and had established a course of study at the UWM, leading to a doctorate in the subject. The day I met and heard Bob has turned my life in a new direction, one of which I could not ever have conceived in my wildest dreams.

Bob intrigued me with his work and before long I was deeply involved with him and the organization he had founded a few years earlier. The International Forgiveness Institute, IFI, for short.

One year later, I was on my way to Oxford, England, representing IFI at a peace conference, dealing with Northern Ireland, South Africa, Guatemala and East Germany. That conference turned out to be an experience of a lifetime. There were over two hundred people there who had as their present purpose in life the promotion of peace and reconciliation among the people of their countries. We all lived together at the college that week and shared meals, stimulating discussions, ideas, experiences and reinforced a sense of hope for peace in this World of ours. I personally observed that many of the efforts related seemed to come to a stumbling block that prevented or at least made it very difficult to complete the process: no one had a method by which individual people could come to a satisfactory reconciliation with atrocities perpetrated against them by such entities as secret police, an army, a dictator, an opposing religious group, a government, etc.

I came home to Bob and suggested that we consider moving to the next step in his now proven method of forgiveness on an interpersonal level, to providing a means for dealing with the aforementioned entities. We brainstormed this idea and came up with a peace program for children in Belfast, Ireland. A source of money was found and a friend in the person of Michael Cullen agreed to introduce me to peace activist Anne Gallagher on a trip we made together to Ireland. A process of contacting schools in the most violent area of Belfast was undertaken. Approval from the paramilitary organizations was essential to allow this program to exist. Curriculum was written and with many other efforts we were off and running.

We are now in our fifth year of what has become a very successful effort. In Belfast there are over twelve hundred students receiving our forgiveness studies. It has also been introduced in Drogheda in the Republic of Ireland as well. The children are in Protestant, Catholic and Irish schools (where the Irish school is not affiliated with a religion).

In January, we were invited to a meeting with the Catholic Bishop over all of Ireland, who is located in Armagh. He has been so impressed with the reports he has received on the school program, that he would like to have it incorporated in all the Catholic schools in all of Ireland. We hope the Protestant bishops will share his enthusiasm and do the same.

The success of the program, based on the research conducted by UW over the past five years, led us to proposing the same program for inner-city Milwaukee schools. In the classroom, anger is known to be a major obstacle to teaching, and subsequently to the opportunity of the students to have a good learning environment. We found anger reduction to be the most evident behavioral change of the students receiving our forgiveness materials. We received one hundred and fifty thousand dollars from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (involved in community philanthropy) to have a research-based effort in six Milwaukee schools.

Our first year results are in, and demonstrate what we had already experienced in Ireland—a major reduction in anger, greater respect shown their classmates, less violence in
the school and on the playgrounds, increased respect shown to teachers, and in general an improved environment for learning. Six first grades were our initial group, with six others as the control group. They represented a total of one hundred and fifty students. This year we will be in twenty-eight classrooms, with more than seven hundred students involved. In addition, we are currently working with the head of schools in Colombia, South America, to bring the Forgiveness Program to one million students there.

Probably the most exciting possibility is to bring this to six schools in Jerusalem that are integrated with both Muslim and Jewish children. An effort to raise funds out of the Milwaukee Jewish community is underway for this peace project.

The forgiveness model is also being used to improve the conditions in families that are adopting or being foster parents. We received a grant for $1.5 million over a period of five years from the US Health and Human Services for this research project. The consortium working on this grant includes the IFI, Adoption Resources, UW Madison, Marquette University, Milwaukee Catholic Archdiocese, and the ELCA Lutheran Milwaukee Archdiocese.

As I write this today, we are introducing our model into both prison ministry and drug and alcohol rehabilitation, with the sole purpose of anger reduction. I can truthfully say this journey of my life, which began after I sold my engineering business eleven years ago, has been the most rewarding and spiritual experience of my life, outside of my family, of course.

There is one point I absolutely must make in closing. The presence of the Holy Spirit has been present in all that we have been able to accomplish for the children and others to date. There is no way we could ever have drawn up and executed a business plan to create the results we have witnessed in these few years. As a result, both Bob Enright and I have been truly humbled by this experience, and continue on our journey as pilgrim people—with the hope that our World can be better tomorrow than it is today.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you identify with people who have the promotion of peace and reconciliation as their prime purpose in life?
2. Do you think that ‘visioning’ was a catalyst in this program’s success? Why/Why not?
3. Does your own CLC have a vision/dream project that might benefit from learning about the progress and success of this Forgiveness Program?

The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between the rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelization of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, prepared to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians. Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ. — GP #8c
Howard R. Engel entered CLC through Annotation 19 of the Spiritual Exercises, which he followed from Fall ‘99-Spring 2000. He is grateful for this opportunity to the Trinity and one of his former high school teachers, Fr. Eric Jensen, S.J., who was serving as pastor of St. Ignatius Parish, the main Jesuit parish in Winnipeg.

His community-in-formation began in the Fall of 2000 and since then he has led this CLC. The community found the name by which the Trinity is calling them, Diakonia, through a community discernment process, in preparation for CLC Canada’s National Assembly in 2004. Diakonia looks forward to its next community discernment on its formation journey as it approaches the end of the JustFaith course.

Howard, an active member in his local congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Christ Lutheran Church, works as a library technician for Red River College and lives with his lovely wife, Esther G. Juce, an Orthodox Christian, in their modest suburban bungalow in Winnipeg. Esther looks forward to once again occasionally attending CLC in her self-declared observer capacity as well as sharing her unique Orthodox-trained theological perspective with the rest of the group.

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My friend and editor of this fine journal, Dolores Celentano, invited me to share about my communal experience of the JustFaith course, which I am currently taking with my Christian Life Community, Diakonia, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada(See the JustFaith Website at http://www.justfaith.org). This course focuses on Catholic Social teaching, its roots in the institutional church and its practice in our everyday lives. The course makes this teaching come alive through bordercrossings, i.e., opportunities for growth in faith active in love that go beyond our comfort zones. These bordercrossings are designed to drive home the point of the course: to nurture the fruit of Catholic Social Teaching in each one of us and help us put it into practice through encountering and serving the other much as Jesus did during his public ministry(For more details on JustFaith and CLC, see also Kathy Hubbell Domning’s article, “JustFaith: A Thirty Week Immersion in Catholic Social Teaching in Harvest, v. 38 no. 1, Spring 2005, p. 8-9). I believe our experience of JustFaith as a community would be best understood in the context of, as the late Fr. John English, S.J., would call it, our “graced history”(see pp. x-xi & 261-273 in his book Spiritual Freedom, 2nd ed. 1995 Jesuit Way, imprint of Loyola Press, Chicago, ISBN 0-8294-0823-1).

After the death of our beloved mentor, priest and friend, Fr. John English in June of 2004 (see the reflections and thanksgiving, including my own, for Fr. English’s life in Harvest, v. 37 no.2, Summer 2004, p. 33-35), Diakonia CLC undertook to discern our next apostolic mission. Our regular weekly visits with Fr. English, beginning in the fall of 2003, shortly after his final hospitalization, had constituted our first apostolic mission, one which inspired the discernment of the name by which we feel the Trinity calling us: Diakonia. This name can be broadly interpreted as “servanthood” or service for others, deriving its meaning from the commissioning of the seven first deacons of the Church, appointed to serve widows and orphans so that the apostles could focus on their teaching and preaching(Acts 6:1-6). We also take our cue from Our Lord Himself as He washed the feet of His disciples and, by this example of love showing us that He came “not to be served, but to serve”(Matt. 20:28). The symbol of our community is therefore a ceremonial towel, a traditional sign of service.

Fr. John’s departure from this life created something of a crisis in our formation as a very young Christian Life Community(we first started meeting in our earliest incarnation as “graduates” from following Annotation 19 of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in the fall of 2000). We felt an acute challenge to address this crisis, even as we know Fr. English accompanies us still by his familiar encouragement, “You can do it.” As leader of our group, I proceeded to present a number of potential opportunities for apostolic mission including healing ministry, refugee work and even sponsoring a foster child overseas during the theme part of our meetings. With the permission of the others, I took the time to briefly introduce one ministry per meeting, often accompanying the presentation with written information, e.g., brochures. I invited everyone to take the following week to pray over the opportunity with the intention to come to a discernment whether or not to pursue it more formally. These particular ministries did not just fall from the sky. Rather, they arose organically because some of us had experience with them as individual “apostles in mission.” After all, as Mother Theresa advises those who may be too quick to drop everything to enter a life of voluntary poverty, “Do what is in front of you.”
One of the apostolic opportunities brought forward by one of the members of Diakonia, long before we could investigate it, included Micah House, the Catholic Centre for Social Justice for the Archdiocese of Winnipeg (For more information, see Micah House’s Web page at http://www.archwinnipeg.ca/pastoral/justice/index.html). Upon receiving a copy of the brochure from Coordinator Sr. Johanna Jonker, we discovered that Micah House actually represents a number of ministries, such as helping ex-offenders reintegrate into the community, supporting people with mental illness, raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and offering the JustFaith course (I understand that Micah House provided the first offering of the JustFaith course in Canada). From about ten people in its initial year last year (2004-2005) in Winnipeg, Micah House has expanded to three sections of the course held in as many parishes for about thirty people in Winnipeg this year (2005-2006). Sr. Johanna has plans to extend the course outside Winnipeg, into rural Manitoba parishes next year.

In its own CLC formation, Diakonia has reached about halfway through A Manual of Formation for Christian Life Community, Phase II (a.k.a CLC Canada’s Manual 2), which focuses a lot on social justice issues that constitute the “theme and content of the meeting”. For a number of reasons, e.g., preparation for the CLC World Assembly and then the CLC Canada National Assembly, reviewing our graced history and whether we felt continued to be called as CLC despite dwindling numbers, discerning our name, discerning our first apostolic mission, we had interrupted our progress through this manual. Yet, we felt a strong need to resume our formation in preparation for our second apostolic mission. Manual 2, which after fifteen years is about to undergo major revision, does not offer enough background or training in this area to a fledgling community such as ours. Once we learned about JustFaith as a systematic and guided approach to these issues from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching, we undertook a formal discernment process using the four column approach as outlined by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, i.e., the advantages and disadvantages of saying yes and no to JustFaith, while always keeping in mind the principle and foundation of our existence—to love God, our neighbour and all of creation, to co-operate with God in the ongoing work of co-creation and salvation and thus to accept God’s gift of salvation for our souls.

Probably the chief advantage to taking JustFaith is that it promises us with the training in Catholic Social Teaching that seems tailor-made to our need to confidently discern as a community our next apostolic mission. In this it definitely answered our prayers for guidance and direction in our movement toward apostolic mission. After considering a number of possibilities for apostolic mission, none of which moved us to enough consensus to even discern formally as a community, we began to feel like we were floundering a bit. JustFaith provided the anchor we needed.

One of the chief potential disadvantages we identified about JustFaith for us was the time commitment and that we would have to forego our weekly seventy-five minute CLC meetings for one hundred-fifty minute CLC meetings for thirty weeks, and thereby give up a whole year’s worth of meeting as a Christian Life Community. Clearly, we knew that we could not do both, i.e., take the JustFaith course and continue our CLC meetings, since all members of our group still work full-time and half are also parents with at least one child still at home. I expected to encounter quite a bit of resistance to JustFaith on this point, since we already found it difficult to keep to the weekly seventy-five minutes, let along doubling the meeting time, not to mention the comparatively extensive reading required. However, to my considerable but pleasant surprise, members felt like they were ready to make this commitment, with the Trinity’s help, for the sake of our growth as a community.

Whenever we come to a decision through community discernment we have learned to also pray to the Trinity for confirmation that we have indeed made the right decision. We have felt this confirmation right at the outset and we even still continue to experience it in different ways. The Micah House brochure that Sr. Johanna initially shared with us described a process of “Pastoral Circle”, comprising four steps:
"1. experience (describe the reality, identify the problem);
2. social analysis (Why do the problems exist? What are the causes: historical, political, economic, cultural?);
3. theological reflection (lessons from scripture, Catholic Social Teaching);
4. action (what should we do?)"

As an alumnus of both the Jesuit-led St. Paul’s High School and St. Paul’s College, this Pastoral Circle sure sounds a lot like Ignatian pedagogy to me (albeit sans the all-important step of evaluation)! In case there would be any doubt, these steps are enhanced by a couple of quotes from a Jesuit, Fr. Fred Kammer. For me, this leads to a direct connection to the Ignatian Spirituality we attempt to live out as CLC. This revelation constituted an early confirmation to which the others in Diakonia concurred.

Another confirmation, pointed out to me by another Diakonia member, arose from some resistance to our decision from other CLC members in our region, including the president and even our spiritual guide, all out of love and concern for our well-being as a Christian Life Community to be sure! These felt that our sacrifice of meeting as CLC would be too great and that we risked falling away from the CLC way of life. Now that we have reached week seventeen in the thirty-week program, we have felt quite the opposite. While we have indeed missed our regular faith-sharing, we attempt to meet as CLC whenever we can, which has alas, proven quite seldom so far. We have met as CLC a week before beginning the course last September and once again this past January 15 (when the photo accompanying this article was taken), followed by a regional CLC meeting on Jan. 20-21. We intend to meet again as Diakonia sometime in mid-March and with our Prairie Region gathering for World CLC Day on March 25.

In spite of this, not only have we not fallen away from CLC, we have felt as if our community has grown three-fold, from our usual four members to the twelve taking our section of JustFaith. When Sr. Johanna asked me to lead an evening that she would be away, I thus jumped at the chance to use our CLC-format meeting, complete with hymn, opening prayer, scripture reading, faith sharing theme (based on a bordercrossing on a local housing issue that we had just experienced for the previous week’s meeting) and evaluation. Of course, not wishing to force the issue, I did not proceed without ensuring I had a consensus to do so first (the alternative being simply to lead according to strict adherence to the JustFaith materials for that week). I thus used this session to provide a fore-taste of what CLC meetings would be like (including the fact that they would be much shorter than our JustFaith session) and I am confident that at least one or two will take us up on the invitation to continue with us in CLC.

Through JustFaith we have already experienced much growth even as we willingly sacrificed our comfortable weekly CLC meetings. In this it has truly offered us a bordercrossing experience accompanied by new pilgrims on our journey toward a fuller expression of our as yet unknown apostolic mission. The tension provided by this cloud of unknowing is I believe necessary for growth in faith and love and as such I count it as a gift from the Holy Trinity Thanks and praise be to God!

Questions for Discussion

1. Is the ‘prayer and discernment’ mode an accurate description of your own CLC gatherings?
2. Can you identify a ‘watershed’ experience within your own CLC that has energized your group “... with an opportunity for much prayer and spiritual reflection on key social justice issues”?
3. What recent bordercrossings “…opportunities for growth in faith active in love that go beyond your comfort zones” have occurred recently within your own CLCs?
Live Justly

Steve Pehanich
CLC Western Region

Having raised four children, justice was a big concern at home. Every Christmas, for example, my wife and I would count gifts to make sure no child was slighted.

As the kids grew, equal numbers failed as a measurement – a bicycle is not worth the same as socks. And a lot depended on which child you were considering.

Each values items differently. To further muddle the waters, one wants to “live simply,” so he’d rather receive nothing at all.

A family is a microcosm of the world and where we learn about right and wrong, love and forgiveness, justice and fairness. In our home, justice demanded that six people receive their due.

The world has six and a half billion, so justice is bit more complicated.

Creating a just society has been the subject of political philosophy since Plato set reed to papyrus. Somebody always seems to get more than the other guy.

“Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics,” says Benedict XVI in his first encyclical, Deus Caritas Est.

I don’t want to get sidetracked on politics as practiced today in the United States – that would just result in a long tirade.

Nor would it be productive to suggest that everyone think the same way. Besides being very boring, such a system ignores free will. This gift from our Creator means there will always be room for differences.

The creation of a just society does not lie with democratic, socialist, philosopher-king or any particular type of government. We live in the longest running democracy in history, for example, but the framers still could not deal with slavery and completely excluded women.

Given the presence of evil in the world all forms of government will create injustice in some way. Some safeguards are absolutely necessary to protect the vulnerable and promote justice.

These safeguards or rights are derived from natural and revealed law: “Authority must recognize, respect and promote essential human and moral values. These are innate (and) do not have their foundation in provisional and changeable ‘majority’ opinions, but must simply be recognized, respected and promoted as elements of an objective moral law.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Sec. 397)

The Holy Father was very clear in Deus Caritas Est: “A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church…The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society…is proper to the lay faithful.”

Benedict XVI is at once very liberating (“I don’t have to save the world”) and challenging (“I need to live justly.”).

Creation of a just society, in short, depends on us as a starting point. As a start, then, here is a sample of the types of questions we might want to ask ourselves:

- How does our family life mirror justice for ourselves, our loved ones and our various communities?
- Given a grave concern for human life, how does that translate to women in crisis...
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pregnancies, the death penalty, stem cell research and other life matters?

- Has the value Americans place in pluralism caused us to conveniently “forget” the
  moral and ethical teachings of the Church because it offends someone?
- How is a concern about pollution, oil politics, or Middle East tensions reflected my
  choice of cars or my transportation habits?

Some of these may result in direct action, some may result in a better examination of
conscience and some may not speak to us at all. The important thing is that we listen and
discern. God calls all of us to prayer, and then some of us to teaching, advocacy, direct
service or other works.

In its teaching role, the Church has over the last one hundred plus years has provided
an excellent blueprint for social justice. (For a list of themes see www.usccb.org.) Based on
current events, I just highlight some of the following which speak to me —

**Human life** and **dignity** must be respected in a just society. All other human rights are
derived from being alive in the first place. Without life, no other rights are conceivable and
all are secondary. One of the challenges of political life in the United States – and a much
larger topic – is just how to live and promote this view without being preemptively dis-
missed from the public policy debate as a fanatic.

A just society must be **flexible** to allow for free will, prudential judgments and evolving
morals and ethics in the world. For example, Constitutional amendments eventually began
to address slavery and women’s rights. (Human nature being what it is, we still haven’t
dealt with the implications of both of these inequities.)

A broad consideration of who is my **neighbor** is essential. Is it being neighborly, for
instance, to have U.S. subsidized corn sold for less than local Mexican-grown corn? Or is it
neighborly to brand all undocumented people as criminals, not deserving of assistance?

**Religious freedom** is central. In the 21st century United States, that is often interpreted
as freedom from religion, not of religion. Some insist that their interpretation of religion
must be imposed on all. In other cases, some attack religious exemptions or conscience
clauses as an assault on civil liberties, instead of a religion’s honest objection to societal
trends.

In CLC and other communities such as JustFaith, I see individuals who are working to
develop within themselves, through the guidance and grace of God, the qualities of justice
and promotion of the common good. In the final analysis this is the key to creation of a just
society.

And, even more encouraging, other denominations have “discovered” the richness of
Catholic Social Teaching and have been incorporating it in their public pronouncements and
spiritual development.

We will not achieve a just society in our lifetime – it is God’s work. That is why we
will receive the graces, strength and tools we need to make it happen. And that is the most
encouraging news of all.

**If there is cause to hate someone,**

**the cause to love has just begun.**

African Traditional Religions. Wolof proverb (Senegal)
“Does A Just Society Take A Crash?”

John LeVecke, SJ

In our last issue of Harvest as a prelude to Lent, we reflected on the challenges we face in our common thirst for water, as a personal, national, and international concern for us all. In Jesus’ solidarity with us, His last words on earth include an anguished cry for drink. And so, our call to CLC mission identifies us with all who still thirst, that all needs may be one and through that intimate solidarity, these needs be made just.

This challenge continues on for us now as an “Easter people” founded in the Fourth Week of the Spiritual Exercises. We pray for the grace of Pentecost now anticipated--that with greater openness and unity of minds and hearts, the Spirit can empower us all the more to love in the everlasting and unconditional way in which God loves us all.

In this year’s acclaimed film, Crash, we are alarmingly moved to reconsider our shared human reality (which I think might be ever much as true beyond, not just in my beloved L.A.… in that, “moving at the speed of life, we are bound to collide with each other.” One of the movie’s characters, Graham, agonizes, “It’s the sense of touch…In L.A., nobody touches you. We’re always behind this metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other, just so we can feel something.”

This stark perception of human reality cries out for a more just society rooted in greater solidarity. As CLC companions, the Good News we celebrate in this Easter Season is that we’re not about a crash mission! The Discussion Draft of 12/03/05 for our Jesuit U.S. Assistancy Apostolic Priority reminds us that.

...each of us has heard the call of Jesus to know him more intimately, love him more passionately, and follow him more closely. Acutely aware of our own sinfulness, yet drawn by Christ’s invitation to become his companions, we preach his good news to draw all people, especially the least among us, into an all-embracing unity with the life of the Trinity at its center... Our service of the Gospel today, therefore, must respond to the call of Christ, the urgings of our Church, and the realities of our nation and our own places within it. Trying to respond to the promptings of the Spirit in this process of apostolic discernment, we provincials have asked ourselves two key apostolic and evangelical questions:

1. Whose needs most call upon our generosity and evoke our love?
2. How can we preach the Gospel for the sake of those most in need, for those who can effectively expand our efforts as companions in ministry, and for all men and women?

The approaching Easter Season graces us to open ourselves anew to be inspired, led, and challenged by the Spirit. In our threefold CLC way of life guided by the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian Spirituality, we have the opportunity to ever deepen our being in intimate touch with: our most loving God; our real companionship with each other as genuine friends in the Lord; and our compassionate generosity in reaching out and touching others (and being touched by them) who are most in need.

Committing ourselves more creatively and courageously together, along with the Society of Jesus, and the entire universal Church, we can and dare must find ways to systematically change the societal conditions which force any of God’s beloved people to thirst in such a vitally deficient way that they feel so out of touch with the Pentecost promise. For women and men invited by the Trinity into the intimate company of Jesus Christ, it is a mission which should not and need not take a Crash...
The Laity: Challenged by our History

Carole Burnett
Delivered at the Mid Atlantic Regional Meeting
October 2005

As the church embarks upon its third millennium, an era in which lay Catholics are outnumbering the clergy and religious in ever-increasing ratios, it is necessary to ask ourselves how we should channel our energies in accord with God’s will, as well as how we should interact with our ordained and consecrated brothers and sisters, who have in the past often been regarded as more involved in and more dedicated to mission than we have been. In this opening session of our conference on lay missions, my task is to set our topic in its historical context, that is, to present a retrospective view of lay people in the church as a preparation for a weekend of examining our roles today and in the future. Hopefully, a vision of lay spirituality and action will emerge as we journey through the past—a vision that may fuel our creativity or warn us of pitfalls in setting our current course. I am dividing this material into three parts: (1) the New Testament church, (2) the patristic church (that is, the church in the time of the Roman Empire), and, finally, (3) a conclusion linking the ancient historical material to the insights of the Second Vatican Council.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

It is not uncommon to read or to hear present-day church reformers rhapsodizing about what they imagine to have been the friendly egalitarianism of the first-century church, about a Golden Age that must be restored, that was entirely free from clericalism, in which lay people and clergy worked side-by-side as equals in the mission of evangelizing all nations. Unfortunately, however, this ecclesiastical utopia that allegedly blossomed at the dawn of Christianity is merely legendary. A careful reading of the New Testament reveals a quest on the part of some early Christians for superiority over others, even during Jesus’ lifetime. In the Gospel of Mark, the first gospel to be written, dating from around the year 65—that is, about thirty years after Jesus’ crucifixion—James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are seen in a ploy for the top position among the disciples as they ask Jesus whether they can sit at his right and left hands when he comes into his glory (Mark 10:37). Jesus responds by telling them that whoever wishes to be first among them must be the servant of all. What is conveyed to the earliest readers of these gospels is a rebuke of those who are jockeying for power and prestige within or among the Christian communities that produced these writings. This competitiveness could apparently be traced back to the very roots of the churches, that is, to the apostles.

Moreover, the letters of Paul were written earlier even than the earliest Gospel, and in them, especially in the letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians, there are indications of power struggles among Christians. First Corinthians, Chapter 12—that inspired vision of the Body of Christ with its component parts, united and all equally cherished—is prescriptive, not descriptive. By this I mean that the Corinthian Christians, whose contentiousness is alluded to repeatedly in Paul’s letters to them, have obviously been vying with each other for superiority, thus evoking Paul’s exhortation to them to respect one another’s dignity and importance. Paul is telling them how their community should be, not how it is. Also, a heated controversy arose over the issue of whether Christians newly converted among the Gentiles must undergo circumcision and obey the Jewish laws. This controversy appears in Galatians, Chapter 2, as well as in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 15. I will say more about the Letter to the Galatians in just a moment. For now, however, we can infer that the church was never a utopian community free from competitiveness and self-promotion. It was not a group in which everyone, so to speak, wanted to sit in a circle on the floor, join hands, and resolve conflicts by reaching a “win-win” solution.
It is obvious that Paul had to struggle to win the same credibility with church members as was accorded to the original twelve apostles (including Judas Iscariot’s replacement). It is clear both from his letters and from the stories in the Acts of the Apostles that the earliest church in Jerusalem had put the apostles in charge of decision-making. Paul, however, had not been one of the inner circle who had surrounded Jesus and was not one of the twelve apostles who had founded the Jerusalem church. Nor was he related to Jesus’ family, as was James, the “brother [or kinsman] of the Lord.” Paul was compelled, therefore, to find some other basis for the respect and the credibility that he wanted to elicit for himself for the sake of teaching the faith among the Christian communities that he had founded and to whom he wrote. Whereas Peter is regarded as the first Bishop of Antioch as well as the first Bishop of Rome, and James, the “brother of the Lord,” served as the first Bishop of Jerusalem, Paul has been perceived neither as a bishop of any place nor as an appointee of any bishop. Called to mission on the road to Damascus by the Lord Jesus himself, Paul appeared to others to be a self-appointed leader with no official standing.

Listen to what Paul writes at the beginning of his Letter to the Galatians:

Paul an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father. . . . I would have you know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. . . . When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. (Gal 1:1, 11-12, 15-17, RSV)

Here Paul is characterizing his one-on-one relationship with the Lord as independent of the Jerusalem “inner circle” consisting of the apostles. It is on the basis of this individual spiritual relationship, and on no other basis, that he claims for himself the authority to teach the gospel to the inhabitants of Galatia.

Paul states later on in his letter that after he had been engaged for fourteen years in his mission of converting the Gentiles, his innovative, unheard-of policies bypassing some of the Jewish laws were questioned by members of Jerusalem church—the center of ecclesiastical authority at that time—whom he describes as “those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me, as God shows no partiality)” (Gal 2:6). He had been observed by “false brethren secretly brought in to spy”; “to them,” says Paul, “we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved” (Gal 2:4-5).

Despite the defiant tone of the letter, Paul’s actions at the time of the dispute were not defiant: in fact, he dutifully traveled to Jerusalem to explain his mission. For, although he maintained his spiritual independence of the Jerusalem hierarchy, he acknowledged the need to be in good standing with them. His self-defense was successful: the apostolic leaders of the Jerusalem church were convinced that he was divinely inspired, with the result that James (that is, “the Lord’s brother”), Peter, and John gave him “the right hand of fellowship” and full authority to do what he had already been doing—preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. This authorization for Paul to preach was in parallel with Peter’s commission to preach to Jews, but was not in any way a usurpation of Peter’s mission and authority.

In applying lessons gleaned from the New Testament church, I would like to offer to this assembly here tonight the following challenges:

- Do we dare to imitate Paul’s boldness?
- Does each of us, like Paul, have an individual relationship with Christ that takes precedence over all other relationships and that empowers us to undertake radical, arduous, and risky tasks with confidence?
- Does each of us, like Paul, dare to claim for himself or herself the authority to spread the gospel in this increasingly secular and selfish world of ours, using methods that we ourselves have creatively and prayerfully devised?
- Does each of us, like Paul, dare to organize new communities of faith on his or her own initiative, driven and empowered by God’s grace? These may be CLC groups or communities of some other type, perhaps as yet unforeseen by us today.
- And, finally, does each of us, like Paul, have sufficient humility and a communal spirit strong enough to maintain a harmonious relationship with the ecclesiastical authorities that stand in the apostolic succession?

In regard to the last question, I would like to add this cautionary note: as we boldly enter a new phase of Christian history, the third millennium, which is being called “the Age of the Laity,” we must not distort or mutilate the Catholic Christian faith that has been preserved for two thousand years. I refer here to the Holy Scriptures and the time-tested tradition of the church. The First Letter to Timothy includes the following injunction: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith” (1 Tim 6:20-21). The Scripture here is urging us to exercise conservatism in the sense of conserving the essential teachings of the faith.

The content of “what has been entrusted” to us Catholics, often called “the deposit of the faith,” sometimes comes under siege by well-intentioned people with benevolent agenda.
For example, a few years ago, some Christians wished, for the sake of gender equity, to alter the names of the persons of the Trinity—“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”—by substituting the gender-free labels “Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.” In the 1980s a few baptisms were performed with the invocation of these three names. Actually, however, the idea of identifying and characterizing the Three Persons of the Trinity by means of the activity that in our own minds is most conspicuously associated with each one (such as creating, redeeming, and sanctifying) was soundly rejected by the church within the first two centuries of its existence. The early church labeled this idea as “Modalism” or “Sabellianism,” and early interpreters of Scripture made it clear that the fullness of God, namely, all three persons of the Trinity, acted together as a unit throughout all of human history.

My point is that, in considering a doctrine of the church that has endured for centuries, no Christian, whether belonging to the laity, the religious, or the clergy, should blithely assume that we can substantively alter ancient teachings to suit our own purposes. If doctrines are to be redefined in order to become more comprehensible to contemporary Christians, and in order to incorporate relatively new insights that have been gained in recent centuries, such a process of redefinition and clarification can be undertaken only with gravity, reverence, and, above all, prayer. As the Age of the Laity dawns, and with it our bold eagerness for new, creative manifestations of the gospel, let us also preserve our identity as Catholic Christians by maintaining intact the ancient faith that we have inherited.

THE PATRISTIC CHURCH (THE FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH)

Consideration of the antiquity of our faith leads us now to embark upon an examination of the role of the laity in the patristic church, that is, the lay people among the fathers and mothers of our church, who lived on earth during its first five centuries. Such a task is not easy because the historical evidence is not as abundant as we might wish. It was the educated Christians who left behind the written documents now in our possession, and many of these were members of the clergy. We are of necessity confined to examining the writings of educated lay people and to looking at descriptions of lay people who did not write themselves but whose lives made an impression upon the minds of those who wrote about them.

I will present three areas in which lay people made a difference in the development of the ancient church. There are undoubtedly many more, but to discuss the topic thoroughly would require a book-length exposition. It is therefore necessary to restrict myself to the following areas:

1. Development of Christian doctrine;
2. Spreading the faith through public witness in suffering;
3. A counter-cultural lifestyle.

(I should note parenthetically that I am not including the religious in this discussion because to do so would be anachronistic: not until the fourth century was Christian monasticism with its various forms of organization even in the process of coming to birth.)

With regard to doctrinal development, let us define “doctrine” as the content of what the Christian community has agreed upon as necessary to be taught. The continuous, ongoing process of defining doctrine, and of subsequently “fine-tuning” the details, entails disputatious, often feisty, interactions among believers. The primary way in which the process is spurred onward occurs when people ask questions. Sometimes it is members of the clergy who instigate discussions within their own ranks, and these discussions are then made public. At other times, it is lay people who raise the questions.

For example, in the third century an Egyptian lay theologian and preacher named Origen, who was later ordained a priest, pointed out that, while the church adhered to a baptismal creed that set forth basic truths about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there were several matters on which church authorities had not yet made any pronouncement. One of these was the origin of the human soul: does God create a new soul every time a child is conceived in the womb, or were all human souls created a long time ago, even before the beginning of time, and now come from some other realm, one by one, to inhabit newly conceived bodies? And what about the ultimate fate of evil powers? Are they forever beyond the reach of God’s all-powerful love? It was Origen, a highly educated and well-respected lay person, who stimulated the officialdom of the church to address his speculations over the course of the next few centuries. Yet he did so with a genuine love of the church and a dedication to learning. His attitude was not one of rebellion against church authorities, but rather he defended the church against its enemies and pursued his quest for truth within the framework of the beliefs that the church had already established in his lifetime. There is a saying: “Challenge authority, but first raise your hand.” This is, so to speak, what Origen did.

Other lay people, too, braved the possibility of rejection by stating their views. Pelagius, a lay teacher and spiritual director, raised questions about free will and human perfectibility. Sometimes such people brought down the fury of church leaders upon their own heads, and their reputations were damaged for centuries to come. Origen himself was officially condemned at a church council three hundred years after his death, and the name “Pelagius” has been spoken with scorn in the western (but not the eastern) church for centuries. But if the church had not spawned such independent thinkers with the courage to inquire and to theorize, there would have been no motivation to study, to debate, and to resolve the issues. There would have been no reason to assemble church councils. Theology would have remained stagnant, a dead body of words and sentences to memorize, incapable of interaction with the vitality of living minds.
Early Christians contributed not only their minds to the life of the church, but also, during the three centuries prior to the accession of the Emperor Constantine, they gave their bodies as well, by undergoing torture and death in the public arena. Many people here this evening learned in Catholic schools about the sufferings of Christian martyrs under the Roman Empire, and others have read about them on their own. Some of us here tonight come from countries on other continents where martyrdom and torture are still occurring, or have recently occurred. I will not dwell on the gruesome, shocking details of these events. What I would like to point out is the effect of public martyrdoms on the life and growth of the church by citing early Christian writings on this topic.

First, there was the bonding, uniting, and equalizing effect of martyrdom on the relationship between clergy and lay people; after all, there were no distinctions of rank in the arena, where the tormentors held all the power and where it was only faith and courage that mattered. This equality can be seen in the martyrdoms of Blandina, who was a slave girl, and her companions, both lay and clergy, around the year 177 in Lyons, France. The account has been preserved in a letter written by the Christian communities to which the martyrs belonged. The writers comment on Blandina’s sheer physical endurance as she underwent a succession of excruciating ordeals, and, more significantly, on her loving serenity in encouraging her fellow martyrs to persevere and not to surrender their allegiance to Christ. In fact, the writers even say that in the person of Blandina, as she suffered while tied to a stake, her companions saw with their own eyes Jesus himself. It did not matter that she belonged to the lowest stratum of society, being a female and a slave. She represented the Savior vividly and graphically, serving as a flesh-and-blood recapitulation of him; it seemed at the time that Jesus had returned to earth in her. In other martyrdom stories, too, we see lay and clergy together, united in a shared ordeal. Even catechumens, those preparing for baptism, were fully included in this blessed company—for example, Perpetua and Felicitas, both catechumens in North Africa, one an aristocrat and the other a slave.

The conspicuous heroism of these champions of the faith attracted more followers and contributed to the expansion of the church in its early centuries. In the story of the Egyptian martyr Potamiaena, it is her unbending determination mingled with gentleness that converts her prison guard to the faith, and he is later martyred. Moreover, scholarly Christian writers of that time who were defending the faith against its pagan detractors remarked repeatedly that the heroic steadfastness of the martyrs attracted ever-increasing numbers of new Christians. Those of you who graduated from Catholic schools probably memorized the saying, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” The original saying, which comes from an early Christian writer, was “The blood of Christians is seed”; nevertheless, the meaning is the same. This meaning is that people who witnessed the inner strength of the martyrs—and strength cannot be exhibited until it is tested—wanted to attain the same qualities of character themselves. Thus lay and clergy were equally responsible for evangelizing in the midst of a pagan society by exercising personal strengths that are linked not to ordination, but rather, as in the case of Paul’s ministry, to the individual’s relationship with Christ.

We today can show to the world the empowerment that Christ gives his followers when we are willing to undergo peril and hardship of any kind for the sake of our beliefs. Today’s equivalent of the bloody arena may be serving others in a physically dangerous part of the world. Or it may involve bearing heavy burdens here at home for our work, our families, and for charitable and social-justice causes. We may risk our health, our freedom, our property, our personal relationships, and our reputations. We may suffer ridicule. Whether our hardship comes from sacrificial financial giving, from hard work and sleepless nights for the sake of a mission in which we believe, from telling the truth or asking difficult questions in confrontation with a hostile audience, or from any other mode of action, the world will, sooner or later, see our dedication and gain inspiration from it, as we work in partnership with equally dedicated clergy and religious.

This thought about Christian living leads me to my final observation regarding the ancient church: that is, the Christian lifestyle was radically counter-cultural. Early Christian writers made this point again and again. In contrast to other inhabitants of the Roman Empire who sought thrills in watching the bloodshed of gory gladiatorial combats, Christians, clergy and lay, were expected to stay away from these soul-polluting spectacles, thereby incurring the resentment of their neighbors, who deemed Christians to be anti-social. In contrast to other inhabitants of the Roman Empire who found it socially acceptable for a married man to engage in sexual affairs with women other than his wife, married Christian men, clergy and lay, were expected to practice marital fidelity. In contrast to others who limited their family size by placing unwanted babies out in the wilderness to die, perhaps to be eaten by wild animals, many Christians, clergy and lay, not only welcomed children into their own families, but even rescued and adopted babies whose families had tried to dispose of them. In contrast to others who abandoned their friends and family at the onset of a dangerous epidemic in their town, many Christians, clergy and lay, stayed behind to care for the sick, risking and losing their own lives while doing so.

Repeatedly the ancient defenders of our faith pointed proudly to the exemplary conduct of ordinary Christians. In particular, it was the care that Christians gave to one another, providing out of their own pockets for the poor and the sick, that sent the loudest message to the pagan society. “See how they love one another,” the pagans said about us, according to a Christian source. And it was not only Christian writers who remarked on this admirable behavior, for even one of the Roman emperors, one who hated Christianity—an emperor named Julian—urged the priests of the pagan religion to imitate the Christians (“the Galileans,” as he called us), because,
he said, they “support not only their own poor, but ours as well.”

In summary, I offer a few challenges to CLC communities today, based on what I have said about the fathers and mothers of our church—

- Do we pray for the courage to ask challenging questions of the church’s leaders, thus stimulating the progress of theological thinking, even when such questions cause pain?
- Do we pray for the courage to undergo hardship and to persevere in it, when called to do so by our Lord?
- Do we pray for the courage to pursue a lifestyle based on the Gospel only, and not on the values promoted implicitly or explicitly by the advertising industry, the government, or the entertainment media, even when our Christ-centered living subjects us to scorn—sometimes even scorn from our own families?
- Do we pray for the courage to live our Christian life and express our Christian beliefs openly, not secretly, thus letting our lights shine before the world?

**SCRIPTURE, ANCIENT TRADITION, AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**

We are indeed shining lights, and that is why the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is entitled *Lumen Gentium*, or “Light of the Nations.” It is this document that in the 1960s brought to our attention the phrases with which most of us have now become familiar: “the priesthood of the faithful,” “the pilgrim church,” “the people of God,” and “the apostolate of the laity.” In my view, it has captured the spirit of the early church in its high expectations of lay people. It states, “The laity . . . are given this special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that it can become the salt of the earth.” What a challenge! A lay Catholic Christian is expected to penetrate boldly into any situation in which he or she has an opportunity to bring about positive results. Perhaps because of our livelihoods or our family relationships or other circumstances, we as lay people have access to workplaces and social settings that are outside the scope of the ministries of many of the clergy.

The document *Lumen Gentium* challenges us to transform the society in which we live, and in so doing, as it says, “to remedy those secular institutions and conditions which are an inducement to sin.” We are to exert ourselves so that, as it says, “the goods of creation may be developed for the good of everyone without exception, . . . and these goods may be more equitably distributed among all men and women.” This mission is an extremely daunting task in a world that largely accepts greed and exploitation as an inevitable component of human nature.

What this mission entails is that, like Paul, who traveled throughout the Mediterranean world, we too must embark on pioneering journeys to places where we have never been before; that is, we must always be ready to move beyond our normal, comfortable habits—“out of our comfort zone”—in confronting adversaries. And like Paul and other early Christians during those first few centuries, we must risk experiencing rejection, and sometimes even harsh persecution, at the hands of non-believers. We must create initiatives, inventing and testing innovative approaches that have never been used previously, in order to achieve seemingly impossible goals. Thus it is clear that lay mission is not for the faint of heart.

In bringing about the transformation of the secular society, says *Lumen Gentium*, the ordained clergy should “recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the church” by “encouraging them to take on work on their own initiative” and by “consider[ing] attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions, and desires proposed by the laity.” At the same time, however, after having voiced our opinions and asked challenging questions of our leaders, “the laity should, . . .” it says, “accept in Christian obedience what is decided by the pastors.” This last statement may remind us of Paul’s relationship with the Jerusalem church: he created and pursued initiatives on his own but acquiesced when summoned to Jerusalem to explain himself. Moreover, he did not protest against the division of the mission between himself and Peter, when he was commissioned to employ his policies only with Gentile converts, leaving the Jewish mission to Peter’s authority. He accepted this division of tasks, content to work in collaboration, not in competition, with the Petrine ministry.

I should mention that *Lumen Gentium* contains a paragraph with which my talk tonight has not been in harmony. The document places Paul in the ordained hierarchy of the church, and compares lay people to the “men and women who helped” him. Tonight, however, I have compared lay people to Paul himself, and I have identified the church hierarchy with Peter, James, and John, who were the leaders of the Jerusalem church because they had belonged to the circle of Jesus’ close friends and relatives. Naturally, since no metaphor or comparison can be stretched beyond its limits without collapsing, there are aspects of Paul’s ministry that differ from our own; for example, he administered baptism, whereas we lay people do not. Nevertheless, we should not shrink from identifying ourselves with such a renowned saint of our church. We should spend time contemplating his spirituality and his actions, and appropriate them as models for ourselves. As he dared to claim apostleship for himself, so must we do also, as we embrace our apostolic mission.
CLC – Lay Mission in the Church

Dante Figueroa

INTRODUCTION

The following are reflections prepared for the MAR Regional Meeting held on October 29, 2005. The theme was CLC Mission in the Church.

Hence, I would like you, the reader, to place yourself, for the most part, into the role of listener and participant at the Regional Meeting.

I want to thank Fred Leone and Carol Zieba for the opportunity to present some reflections on the theme of CLC’s mission in the Church today. I come before you as one of you who, like you, seeks the truth and is convinced that in the Church’s teachings, as revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we have been redeemed from sin.


The reflections are presented keeping in mind that the greatest commandment that Our Lord gave us, for our own salvation, is to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as oneself.

THE QUESTIONS OF THE CHURCH, THE LAITY AND CLC’S MISSION

The main topic to be discussed today is “CLC’s lay mission in the Church.” Therefore, these reflections will analyze the following sub-topics: (1) who is the laity?, (2) who is the Church?, and (3) what is CLC’s role? When pertinent I will make a direct quotation to José Reyes’ assertions.

I. Who is the laity?

As I was thinking about this presentation, the phrase “pray, pay, and obey,” which has been hammered on Catholics with a negative connotation, came to mind. I will make an explicit reference to my understanding of the concepts involved in this phrase later during this presentation.

The concept of laity has been understood in some circles as something separated from the Church itself. There is a certain idea of something close to the notion of autonomy that surrounds the definition of laity advanced by some fellow Catholics.

In my search for a concept of laity, I came across the Catechism of the Catholic Church (published in 1997 by the USCC, the “Catechism”). Canon 897 teaches that “[T]he term ‘laity’ is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World.”

In simple words, the Church teaches that the laity include all of the Church’s members who have not been ordained or belong to a religious order. This is a comprehensive definition that has been defined in a negative sense, that is, by excluding all the baptized in the Holy Church who do not belong to the classes in question. As I did more reading, I found not a single conflicting view of this definition among Catholics. I also raised the question with the audience during my presentation and, not receiving any different approaches to the concept, I therefore settled with the definition provided by the Catechism.

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II. Who is the Church?

After reading José’s articles, I realized that it is possible to recognize the two dimensions underlying his thoughts: the Church as the mystical body of Christ, instituted and willed by God-self through Our Lord; and the Church “as the community of believers [as it] is built up and expresses itself through an apostolate which is made up of groups.” (“The Mission of the Laity…,” at 52)

Throughout his remarks, José makes references to concepts such as laity, community, and Church. After a careful reading of his reflections, it becomes clear that he has an understanding of the laity as Church, and that there is also another sort of Church, which seems to be composed or represented by the hierarchy. Thus, I perceive this dualism of hierarchy-laity broadly present in his articles.

Assuming, as José proposes, that: (i) there is something such as a Church of the Laity; and (ii) this church of the laity is something separated, without implying intrinsic opposition or conflict, from the “hierarchical” Church (“The Church of the Laity”, at 37) “I do not wish to establish any kind of opposition between the hierarchy and the laity”), there are several logical consequences arising from this dualism—

1. First logical consequence: the apparent initial distinction between what José calls the Church of the laity and the Church of the hierarchy did not necessarily lead me to interpret that dualism as if in José’s view these two churches were instituted separately and run somehow in a historical and eschatological parallel. Thus, I kept reading to learn more about this perspective.

As I read along, José’s perception of the dualism became more real. For example, he asserts that “[M]embers of CVX –CLC– should have no problem in saying that the ecclesiastical authority which is sending us out is the World Christian Life Community.” (“The Mission of the Laity…,” at 57). So, I came about with a couple of preliminary conclusions concerning José’s statements. First, in his view there is something called, or relating to, or possessing a sort of singularity as, the “Church of the laity.” Second, this Church of the laity would have an authority to send laypersons in missions. Third, the World Christian Life Community would be an expression of this “Church of the laity.”

2. Second logical consequence: the Church of the laity has the authority to issue its own theology. As José points out explicitly, “[A] new way of being Church is coming into being but we have not yet formulated the theology which will sustain it, in particular the theology of the laity which lies as its very base.” (“The Mission of the Laity…,” at 59).

What this assertion tells us is that: (i) this church of the laity possesses a theology that sustains it, or rather, that “will sustain it;” (ii) “we the laity, do have our own teaching.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 37) and (iii) that this “theology of the laity” has yet to be “formulated.” Namely, the container exists, but the content is non-existent, at least not yet at the time of José’s articles.

3. Third logical consequence: the church of the laity issues teachings. He states that the “Church of the Laity [in capital letters] means the appearance or recognition of lay teaching.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 37).

The next step in José’s reasoning is to determine what the relationship is between the “[T]he teachings of the Church [as distinct from] the teachings of the Laity”, as José puts it (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 39). He presents as a rule of interpretation that lay teachings are “complementary to the teaching of the hierarchy, enriching it, and bringing it closer to life.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 37). He seems to provide a golden rule of interpretation when he asserts that, “[F]idelity is more important than infallibility.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 39). About this proposition, I will come back later during these thoughts.

Examples of the dualism proposed by José

I did not have to go very far in my search for examples that would illustrate the dualism between the teachings of the Church and the teachings of the laity advanced by José. I found several examples in José’s own writings. For instance, he proposes that “it is permissible to look at the notion of Sunday duties in a different way for young people; it is sometimes hard for them to go to Mass and get anything out of it.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 38).

Another example is found in his statement that, “[I]f at times we feel distanced from or cold in our relationship with the Church it may be because the Church has not led us closely enough towards Jesus.” (“The Church of the Laity…,” at 35).

An additional example is the contention that, “... we [the laity] are aware of certain contradictions, exaggerations, excesses of authority and dogma, etc.” (“Helpers of Christ...,” at 46) stemming from the teachings of the Church.

Yet another illustration is the assertion that as far as “the sinful side of the mother and the children is concerned, mother and children will pardon each other and this forgiveness will rise up in a spontaneous and a never-ceasing way.” (“Helpers of Christ...,” at 46).

Disentangling a thread of confusion

What I perceived in all these affirmations is confusion. I sought to clarify these confusions by searching responses in three sources: the Gospels, the Catechism, and in St. Ignatius’ teachings.

At this point there came to my mind the phrase: “pray, pay, and obey.” After dwelling on whether there was anything to be contested in the “pray” part of the phrase, and with the help of the audience, I concluded that nothing was there to be objected. With respect to the “pay” part of the phrase, the sound addition “with accountability” was inserted by the audience and so I agreed to that addition.
It became clear to me at this point, that the real problem was with the “obey” part of the phrase. I sensed that in determining what is the real meaning of the concept of “obedience” one can see the core of the dualism church of the hierarchy-church of the laity proposed by José.

The softest meaning of obedience is that of “loyalty.” No good Catholic would hold anything against the concept of loyalty. We believe and try to adjust our conduct so that it is loyal to our spouses, families, friends, and even toward our pets and worldly preferences. We are even loyal to our sins as we go back to them over and over again. Therefore, nothing adverse to the notion of obedience understood in its “light” definition as “loyalty” toward our church/es (hierarchical and of the laity, as proposed by José) was to be found among good Catholics.

What seems to be troubling was a more “extreme” or “hard core” concept of obedience, when this entails a connotation of “forceful allegiance” to a set of ideas or orders imposed against our own will. The psychology of obedience leads us to understand that “obedience” is something to be resisted when it is against our preferences, wishes, or simply when they—the ideas or orders—come from something foreign to us, or have been born without our involvement or participation. Humans would have no trouble if somebody—a person or an institution—exerting authority over us commanded us to “breathe air,” or “to feed ourselves,” or to “clothe and teach our children,” or even to “strive to be joyful.” Even if any of these commandments or orders came from somebody foreign to us we would have no problem following them. We would probably show indifference or even scorn for those orders because they touch on issues with which we are in absolute communion, or are aimed at things that are logical and advantageous to us. At most, we would call those orders repetitive.

Accordingly, we come to find a clear relation between the concepts of obedience, authority, and communion. Obedience presupposes authority. Without authority the source of obedience is removed. Authority has different expressions, e.g., parental, in the workplace, in society, etc. We know from Our Lord that all authority comes from God, as our Lord Jesus told the weakling Pilate. What comes from God is the power to bind others, and not the way or the content in which humans exert this authority. In other words, God gives the authority and gives us the freedom to choose how we use that authority, whether for good or evil. We all agree that without authority there is no order possible. Therefore, there is an inner disposition in all of us to follow authority.

This disposition to follow authority is deeply rooted in our conviction that authority is to be used for the communal and personal good. Simply put, we follow authority because we trust that it is better for us at the personal and societal levels. If we believe this to be so, how much should we not believe that what God’s Church teaches us is for our own good, knowing that the teachings of Our Lord, the Holy and Eternal One, are revelations given to us as gifts, not as goals or truths that we have attained by our own merits or efforts.

For us Catholics, the concept of obedience can be only understood in the context of communion with the Holy Church. “The” Church? But wasn’t José speaking about two different versions/approaches/definitions of Church?

Now I come back to the sources of the Gospels, the Catechism, and St. Ignatius’ teachings to better understand José’s proposed church of the laity-church of the hierarchy dualism.

### a. The Gospels and the concept of obedience

We read in Matthew 28:18-19, that Jesus told his Apostles, “[A]ll power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Mark, in turn, reports that Jesus told the apostles (16:15), “[G]o into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Several comments can be extracted from these readings. First, Jesus had—and has— “[A]ll power in heaven and on earth.” The equation here is simple: we either believe that when Jesus said this He was telling the truth or that He was lying. As we believe in our hearts that Jesus is the truth and that nothing false, misleading or sinful ever touched His heart or lips, when He said that “all power in heaven and on earth” was given to Him, He was saying the truth. Therefore, Jesus had the authority to give commandments, to appoint agents—the apostles—and to determine the scope of their “agency.” Second, the commandments or orders Jesus, the Christ, gave to his disciples were good, that is, their final purpose is that all humanity, those existent and those to come after the historical Jesus, may save their souls and meet God in His Kingdom upon the Parousia or Second Definitive Coming. Third, the response of the disciples to Jesus’ commandments was obedience. This obedience finds its ultimate source in the eternal communion that Jesus created with them and with us through His death and resurrection. Fourth, obedience to Jesus’ commandments means salvation; without obedience to His teachings there is no salvation. And fifth, this obedience is founded in the supreme intention of God-self who instituted His Holy Church by means of Peter and the other apostles, who are the first bishops of His Church.

### b. The Catechism and the concept of obedience

The concept of “particular” churches has been explained in the Catechism. Canon 833 instructs that, “[T]he phrase “particular Church,” which is first of all the diocese (or eparchy), refers to a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession.” Canon 834 states, “all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior’s promise, the gates of
hell have never prevailed against her.” Canon 835 teaches us that, “[L]et us be very careful not to conceive of the universal Church as the simple sum, or… the more or less anomalous federation of essentially different particular churches. In the mind of the Lord the Church is universal by vocation and mission…” Moreover, the Catechism teaches us in Canon 837 that, “… the Church of Christ … rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops.”

Canon 862 also teaches that “the bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and him who sent Christ.” Still Canon 882 states, “[T]he Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, ‘is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.’ For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.”

Such is the communion wished by God through our Lord Jesus Christ that as Canon 883 teaches, “[T]he college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, as its head.”

Several conclusions can be drawn from the Catechism with respect to the concept of authority and obedience within the Church: (i) the Church is one, and only one; (ii) the Church has one and only one Head, which is the Pope, the Vicar of Christ; (iii) the communion with the Pope is a divine mandate not to be modified according to time, geography, or historical circumstances; (iv) unity or communion within the Church is a divine mandate, because, “the gates of hell have never [and will never] prevailed against her;” and (v) all of these aspects constitute divine mandates.

c. St. Ignatius’s teachings and the concept of obedience

In a letter sent to his fellow Jesuits in Portugal, dated January 14, 1548, Ignatius states, “[I]t is quite certain that, where there is no question of a thing’s being sinful or so obviously wrong that it constrains the intellect, genuine obedience subjects to the superior not merely the work but also the will, and not merely the will but the judgment as well. Then unity is rendered firm and lasting, and under this holy and sweet yoke, peace and tranquility become in a certain sense (so far as our present wretched state allows) unshakable.” (Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works, page 343). He also goes on to quote St. Bernard (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, born in 1090, at Fontaines, near Dijon, France; died at Clairvaux, 21 August, 1153), who wrote “[A]nything done without the will and approval of the spiritual father will be booked to vainglory and not to one’s credit.” Ignatius complements this while saying “[A]nd how much more so, if it is done in contravention of his [the spiritual father’s] will! What greater pride is possible than to place one’s own will and judgment above that of the person we have acknowledged as superior in the place of Jesus Christ our Lord?” (Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works, page 345).

Ignatius set quite exceptional grounds for questioning obedience. He also calls obedience a “holy and sweet yoke.” The concept of obedience, according to Ignatius, arises before us as a notion in tune with divine mandate. It also emerges the view of pride as opposed to obedience. Canon 1866 counts pride among capital sins “because they engender other sins, other vices [which are] pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia.”

Moreover, among the “Rules for thinking, judging, and feeling with the Church,” Ignatius instructs that “to have a genuine attitude which we ought to maintain in the Church militant, we should observe the following rules: [353] The First Rule. With all judgment of our own out aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church.”

A few comments are worth mentioning at this point, (i) the hierarchical Church does exist; (ii) it is the “true Spouse of Christ our Lord;” (iii) we ought to be “obedient in everything” to our hierarchical Church. Ignatius, the soldier and the rebel, inculcates this latter point explicitly in Rule [365]. “The Thirteenth. To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it. For we believe that between Christ Our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Spouse, there is the one same Spirit who governs and guides us for the salvation of our souls;” and finally, (iv) pride is the source of disobedience (Baruch, 10:6).

We can soundly conclude that “the Ignatian way is the Church’s way,” and obedience is an essential part of this way.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE HIERARCHICAL CHURCH AND PRIDE

“Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!” (Ecclesiastes, 1:3).

Our Church teaches everywhere that there is virtue in obedience. Jesus above all came to fulfill God’s plan, not Jesus’ own will. Being God-self, Jesus is the supreme obedient servant of the Almighty. Disobedience is and has been the very source of schisms and apostasies, which have brought much suffering to our Church.

Now that we have clarity that the concept of obedience to our Church is neither foreign nor despicable, we must turn to the objects of obedience. Obedience may relate to two objects. First, is the obedience to the Doctrine of the Holy Church. As already stated, this obedience to Revelation means salvation for us all, hierarchy or laity. Second, with respect to obedience to specific instructions from our hierarchical Church, Ignatius is clear in his instructions. Rule [362] states “The Tenth. We ought to be more inclined to approve and praise the decrees, recommendations, and conduct of our
superior than to speak against them. For although some of these acts are not or were not praiseworthy, to speak against them either by preaching in public or by conversing among the ordinary people would cause more murmuring and scandal than profit.”

**Consequences of our Communion with the One and Only One Church**

As consequences of our belonging to our Holy Church we ought to follow her teachings. There is not such a thing as “teachings” of the laity, or “theology” of the laity. This idea is not opposed to the wealth of theological reflection advanced by the laity throughout the millennia in our Church, which have become, in so many occasions, a part or served as the basis for Church-sanctioned doctrine and theological teachings. The Church’s teachings have been handed down to us by means of Revelation, and thereafter in perfect communion with her divine Founder.

Therefore, when, for example, we are told –whether or not it was intended to be a “teaching of the laity”—that “it is permissible to look at the notion of Sunday duties in a different way for young people; it is sometimes hard for them to go to Mass and get anything out of it;” it is imperative that we turn instead to the teachings of our Holy Father who teaches us that “[I]t is good that today, in many cultures, Sunday is a free day, and is often combined with Saturday so as to constitute a ‘week-end’ of free time. Yet this free time is empty if God is not present. Do not be deterred from taking part in Sunday Mass, and help others to discover it too. This is because the Eucharist releases the joy that we need so much, and we must learn to grasp it ever more deeply, we must learn to love it.” Also the Holy Father teaches us that, “the Eucharist must become the centre of our lives.” (Apostolic Journey to Cologne on the Occasion of the XX World Youth Day. Eucharistic Celebration. Homily of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Cologne—Marienfeld, Sunday, 21 August 2005).

Or when it is proposed to us that as “the sinful side of the mother and the children is concerned, mother and children will pardon each other and this forgiveness will rise up in a spontaneous and a never-ceasing way,” we are commanded to bear always in mind that being the Body of Christ, the Church as such is incapable of sin. Individual members do sin. To understand otherwise is to bring confusion and to take private paths from our Church. As the Holy Father, again, has said, “[T]he spontaneity of new communities is important, but it is also important to preserve communion with the Pope and with the Bishops. It is they who guarantee that we are not seeking private paths, but instead are living as God’s great family, founded by the Lord through the Twelve Apostles.” (Apostolic Journey ...).

Still when we hear that “[A] new way of being Church is coming into being but we have not yet formulated the theology which will sustain it, in particular the theology of the laity which lies as its very base,” in communion with our Church we must understand that, “religion often becomes almost a consumer product. People choose what they like, and some are even able to make a profit from it …” [and] that “religion sought on a ‘do-it-yourself’ basis cannot ultimately help us. It may be comfortable, but at times of crisis we are left to ourselves.” (Apostolic Journey...).

Therefore, we must always see what our Church teaches us first and then strive to preserve communion by all means with her.

**The Importance of Lay Involvement in the Church**

Laiety is posed by our Lord with a sacred duty: to be saints. As our Pope teaches us the “true star which points out the way to us [is] Jesus Christ! Let us seek to know him better and better, so as to be able to guide others to him with conviction.” (Apostolic Journey...).

In the individual dimension, we laity must always remember that “[E]ven though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but ‘in body’ not ‘in heart.’” (Catechism, Canon 837).

At the communal level, “[T]he initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church.” (Catechism, Canon 899). Or as our Holy Father instructs us farther “[T]oday, there are many forms of voluntary assistance, models of mutual service, of which our society has urgent need. We must not, for example, abandon the elderly to their solitude, we must not pass by when we meet people who are suffering. If we think and live according to our communion with Christ, then our eyes will be opened. Then we will no longer be content to scrape a living just for ourselves, but we will see where and how we are needed.” (Apostolic Journey...).

We, the laity, have been blessed and redeemed by Our Lord, they Holy One, and in humbly acknowledging that redemption and fulfilling His commandment to love God and one another, lies our joy and life.

So let us keep praying, paying, and obeying in active and full communion with our Holy Mother, Jesus Christ’s Church!

**Conclusion**

There is but one Church founded and willed by God through our Lord Jesus Christ. CLC’s mission will produce many fruits “in” the Church, and no lasting fruits “outside” Jesus’ Holy Church. Obedience to the Church is an act of love and makes us free. Free from ourselves, free from our pride, and closer to Jesus Christ, the humble One, who laid out His life for us in obedience to His loving Father.

The articles by José Reyes referred to in this article can be found on the CLC-USA web site: www.clc-usa.org.
KOREAN CLC

The sixth teleconference call was held on February 19, 2006. Of special note, President-elect Hae Ja Rhee (Bibiana) participated and was introduced to the KCLC Exco members. She will be officially installed as the new KCLC president on April 1, and will take over her duties in June. For the past several years, the KCLC president had been appointed by the EA. However, this year for the first time, we, the KCLC, elected our own president. We congratulate Hae Ja Rhee on her election, and expect that she will lead us to a new direction.

Atlanta, Georgia Area

The 6th Ignatius Spiritual Silent Retreat was held on Feb. 8-12 at Ignatius Retreat House. The Retreat was led by Rev. Seog-chil Seo, S.J. (Korean Martyrs Catholic Church), with two guides from New York, along with local KCLC members. There were twenty-eight participants for this retreat.

Houston, Texas Area

We in Houston are still in our baby steps. Since 2000, under the spiritual direction of Father Benedict Kim, S.J., Regina Kim has been giving the Spiritual Exercises to eight persons, with the 19th Annotation. Currently the Exercises are in progress with two people. Four members have been meeting in Ignatian prayer life with the prayer material, Walk with the Christ. We are in the process of contacting Father Seo, S.J., in Atlanta, to make the CLC commitment. The schedule for the 2006 retreat has been set.

- 5/25/06-5/29/06 with Father Park from Wisconsin, this would be our third retreat in Texas.
- 4/23/07-5/2/07 A planned ten days of retreat with Father Yu Sichan, S.J.

Washington, D.C. Area

The Washington area KCLC held a New Year’s party on January 5th. About forty-five members attended. There was good food, fun, and games.

In January all guides were rotated to the different communities.

On January 28th, we held a regional Rexco meeting with all nine team coordinators, service team staff members, and Fr. Benedict Jung, S.J. At the meeting, we discussed many topics for the upcoming year under the new direction of Teresa Young Sook Kim, who became the new regional president.

New York Area

Installation of EA for Metro NY Korean CLC: We celebrated the installation ceremony of Fr. Daniel Suh as EA for Korean CLCers in the Metro NY region during Mass on the Day of Epiphany party, January 7th. Fr. Dan Fitzpatrick (EA), Debbie Curran (President of Metro NYCLC), Ann Marie Brennan (NCC Rep), and Nicholas Kim (President of Metro NY Korean CLC) blessed Fr. Suh during the ceremony. Fr. Suh has supported the establishment of Korean CLCers in the USA for the past ten years by giving St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises, directing silent retreats, as well as providing formation programs.

MISSOURI REGION

Our Regional Rep, Mary Ann Mennemeyer, has been busy working on several different projects. She joined a team that gave a silent weekend retreat to thirty St. Louis University students. This should give CLC some visibility among the students. During the first semester, Steve Fowler of SLU’s Campus Ministry worked to attract a number of upper class students to CLC in order to train them for the role of guide. He now has about six. At the same time, he joined a CLC peer group of Jesuit scholastics. There are now four acting as guides. So with the two groups, students and scholastics, there are about eight guides available.

At the beginning of the second semester, the CLC DVD was shown and two “come and see” meetings were held for students. In all, about fifty students showed up. Mary Ann gave a brief history of CLC, they had a short prayer session with sharing of their response to the scripture and then were invited to attend six sessions to discern if they wanted to be involved with CLC. Steve was also asked by a men’s fraternity to speak with them about CLC. So SLU’s Campus Ministry has organized a well thought out beginning. Experience on other campuses indicates that the students in CLC will be the best way to attract other students.

Steve has also developed an attractive brochure about CLC for Youth and Young Adults.

At Rockhurst University, Bill Kriege, Assistant Director of Campus Ministry, has about seventy-five students in the discernment stage and commented that it looks favorable for their becoming more involved.

At Regis University, Erin Saunders has been working with CLC. There are an equal number of students involved but Erin, a campus minister, has so many other duties that development is not going as well as we would hope.

Mary Ann also met with Mrs. Thuy Nguyen in Kansas City, just to hear about how the Vietnamese CLC is getting along, and to tell her about the plans for World CLC Day. She was invited to attend. Mary Ann plans to visit Denver before the end of the semester.

The Missouri Region also has a new updated web site at: www.clc-usa-mo.org and a new brochure. Photos of the Missouri Regions World CLC Day Celebration are on the web site.
NEW ORLEANS REGION

Members from three Vietnamese CLCs (Manna, a youth group, Nquon Song, a singles group, and Emmaus, a family group) met with our Emmaus CLC recently in Plano, Texas. It was an enjoyable time in which to get to know each other. Plans are currently underway to gather these communities again for World CLC Day on March 18th at a local park.

Longtime Sodality and CLC member, Mary Bialas, of New Orleans, went home to be with the Lord last June. Mary was an extraordinary supporter of CLC, known best for coordinating travel to the National CLC Conventions—complete with well-planned side excursions to and from the conventions by bus and a pre-financing plan. We are most grateful to the Lord for Mary and her inspiring contribution, as noted in the tributes in this issue.

NEW YORK REGION

Five Jesuit scholastics at Ciszek Hall have been working with five small CLCs on the Fordham Campus in the Bronx. There is one CLC for graduate students; the other four are for undergrads. Even though they have only begun to meet this year, this is an encouraging sign of hope for the future.

On March 11th, Fr. Daniel J. Fitzpatrick, our Ecclesial Assistant, gave an outstanding presentation entitled, The Road Not Taken: The Spiritual Journeys of Three Pilgrims: Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber. The program was sponsored by the New York Archdiocesan Center for Spiritual Development and was very well attended.

Looking for books—

The New Orleans Public Library is asking for any and all hardcover and paperback books for people of all ages in an effort to restock the shelves after Hurricane Katrina. The staff will assess which titles will be designated for its collections and the rest will be distributed to destitute families or sold for library fundraising.

Please send any new and used books you can spare to:

Rita A. Trigs,
Public Relations
New Orleans Public Library
219 Loyola Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70112

(If you tell the post office they are for the library in New Orleans, they will give you the library rate, which is slightly less than the book rate for postage.)

For more information and photos, check out >http://nutrias.org/

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

On March 17th, Carmen Santamaria and Angelique Ruhi attended the Jesuit Secondary Education Association Campus Minister’s Conference in Baltimore. They made several presentations/workshops to promote the creation of more CLCs at the high school level. About sixty campus ministers were present at the meeting.

At present, at least fifteen Jesuit colleges and eight Jesuit high schools here in the US have CLC programs within their campus ministry departments. About one thousand students are involved.

SOUTH FLORIDA REGION.

After several months of prayer and discernment the by-laws for the South Florida Region were approved by its thirteen communities. They were sent to NCLC ExCo for their ratification.

We are busy preparing for the celebration of WCLC Day on Saturday, March 25th at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. The program will consist of watching and discussing a documentary prepared by the Jesuits for the Ignatian Jubilee Year, reflection and discussion of Projects 130, Friends in the Lord and, during the celebration of the Eucharist, three members will make their permanent commitment to the World Community.

They are:

Carmen and Alejandro Santamaria, from Alas de Cristo Y/A CLC, who will pronounce their commitments family style, with their three month old daughter, Monica; and Elvirita de la Guardia Herold, from Mensajeros de la Luz.

Lunch will end the celebrations of the day.

We continue to gather new and used items of clothing to be sent to the Dominican Republic in collaboration with the project “Solidaridad Fronteriza” of Fr. Regino, S.J., to help seven hundred single mothers who sustain their families with the sales of such items.

(Continued on next page)
Another ongoing project, in collaboration with the Sisters of Charity, is sending clothes, food, medicines, wheelchairs, walkers, etc., to Cuba for their works with the needy.

The San José Clinic continues to be staffed with volunteers from different members of our CVXs, who pour not only their time but also their love and care for the immigrants who arrive at our area constantly, and who need medical help.

The Exercises in Daily Life, started last August, are about to end in March and we are praying and hoping that some of the participants who have shown interest in our life style (“The Fifth Week”) will start pre-CLCs. Keep them in your prayers, too!

For the sixth consecutive year, Mensajeros de la Luz and El Peregrino, from the Regina Mundi cluster, will organize a Seder (Last Supper) on Holy Wednesday, following the readings and ceremonies that Jesus did on that special day and will have a traditional Jewish meal: matzo ball soup, Passover sweet potato tsimmes, spinach squares, and the traditional lamb (cooked Cuban Style) along with several Jewish desserts. We invite family and friends to the celebration and usually fifty to sixty people gather at Marcia Iglesias’s home.

Looking forward to continue organizing our region, with elections for officers and a Formation program.

**RIEMAN GREAT LAKES REGION**

We are blessed to be connected to the World CLC movement through our regional days of reflection, such as our own Nicholas Rieman Great Lakes Region. Our last day of reflection was held on November 2, 2005, at St. John’s Jesuit High School in Toledo, Ohio.

Marie Schimelfening, our facilitator for the day (a member of Nick Rieman CLC Guides Community and a guide of the Companions CLC, both in Detroit, as well as a member of the New York UN Working Group) announced that the theme of the day was “water.” Then began, as we always do, with the Liturgy of the Word. Deacon Stan Gogol led our liturgy.

After the completion of this part of the service, we began the main portion of our meeting.

Marie had invited our CLC members to bring in water from places that were special to us. We brought waters from fresh streams, from city taps, and from rural wells. Marie brought water that was from the CLC North American Conference (NAC) meeting which was held in October, 2005 in Chicago. Consequently, the water we brought was intermingled with water from Mexico, Canada and all parts of the United States. After all of this water was placed in a common bowl, the assembly, led by Deacon Stan, blessed it. This water became a reminder of our baptismal commitment and was used in the Sprinkling Rite of the Communion Service. Our beginning prayer already reminded us of how much we are one with each other, one of the many blessings that is a part of belonging to Christian Life Communities.

The topics of the NAC gathering were Formation and Mission. It was noted that much of the information given at both our meeting and at the NAC came from our CLC Non-Governmental Organization committee of the United Nations in New York City. While new ways of doing formation always are evolving, the basic tenets remain the same. There are levels of pre-community, community, and deepening. All of these levels stand on the three pillars of spirituality, community, and mission. In addition to the topics of Formation and Mission, there are two topics that are specific to mission: immigration and the ecology of water.

At our international level of CLC we have two working groups on the United Nations, one in Geneva and one in New York. For several years now these two working groups have been meeting and discussing the important issues we as CLC members around the world can be in mission together. The issue that the Geneva Working Group chose is immigration; the New York Working Group chose water. Both issues come under the umbrella of: multicultural respect and advocacy.

Our Nick Rieman group’s reflections and sharing contributed to the “Water Story” project. As a part of the World community, our shared prayer focused on how water has become a justice issue in our time.

Jesus met the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (Jn 4:4ff). As a contemplation on the story, we consider the public access both Jesus and the Samaritan had to the well. Even though her peers did not accept her or her life style, they allowed her to be refreshed by the water. Even the marginalized need to drink, to be cleansed, and to be refreshed.

The water Jesus offers her is also available to all regardless of their ability to pay. It is even more life giving than the well water, yet it is free.

Today, although 80% of the earth’s surface is water, only 1% of it is usable for human consumption. This fact prompts the question, “Who controls access to this 1% of water?”

It is reported that the traditional distribution of water in India allows for 70% in use by agriculture and households, with the other 30% used by industry. Currently, these numbers are being reversed. As time goes on, Indian economic advisers will need to address water distribution. Who will win access to the limited supply?

In Bolivia there is now a movement to privatize the water supply. If this happens, everyone will be expected to pay for water. In a nation with such a gap between the poor and the wealthy, it is most likely that the poor will have to go without water while the rich will be able to use it unsparingly. In addition, the lack of clean water in Bolivia contributes significantly to diseases among the poor.

Is access to clean water a human right? If so, how can this right be protected?

Our final report is from the Philippines. There is a strong push toward the privatization of water in this country. Again,
this will mean that clean water will go to those who can afford to pay for it. Again, the poor will go without while wealthy citizens will have enough water for themselves, their pets, their plants, lawns, pools and the like. Is there justice in this?

Reflecting on these stories, we realized how hard it is for us, surrounded by the Great Lakes, to fully appreciate water scarcity. The discussion certainly raised our awareness and understanding of water access as an issue of justice. Thankfully, the NAC has made it one of their goals to help prevent the privatization of water.

Mission has always been a crucial part of Christian Life Community, as it was for St. Ignatius and his companions. The issues have certainly changed. Often we feel that there is so little we can do individually to relieve the world of so much pain, and injustice. CLC meets in local communities to share in the individual missions of its members and to share a common mission. The local communities became part of a regional, national and international community. Together, with Jesus as our model and our heart, we might make a difference. Laboring with Christ, we take on the mission of healing, and of creating greater justice in our world.

We cannot do this alone. We are in mission together. Together we pray, share and work for the common good.

We mourn the passing of James Farrell, S.J., brother of past National EA, Walter Farrell, S.J.

**NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

The North Central Region of CLC-USA covers the same territory as the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus. This far-flung area includes the states of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Wyoming. The distance from one end of this Region to the other would be about 1,200 miles. At present there are 28 adult communities in the Region, though none in the Dakotas or Wyoming. Travel between Omaha and Milwaukee or the Twin Cities requires a rather full day’s drive.

In the past the communication among members of the Region has been accomplished primarily by four means: a quarterly Newsletter, an annual weekend retreat/meeting, a Regional Coordinating Council, and the travels of the Regional Assistant. The latter wanderer, advanced in age though not in his dotage (he’s the one writing this description), hesitates to brave the winter travels in sometimes frigid and frightening winter weather conditions. Also, it has been difficult to enlist volunteers for the Regional Coordinating Council.

For these reasons, the Region has recruited volunteers to form a new North Central Region Executive Council (ExCo), members from the various parts of this territory to “meet” regularly with the Regional Assistant by teleconference, normally six times a year. This arrangement is similar to the ExCo of CLC-USA. This communicating should enhance the exchange of information, foster wider consultation, suggest decisions and actions, and result in the more effective sharing of ideas with the rest of the membership.

The members of this initial ExCo are the following:
- Eileen Burke-Sullivan: Omaha, Nebraska
- Dennis Dowd: Omaha, Nebraska
- Judy Longdin: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Jane Lord: Beaver Dam, Wisconsin
- Pat Rusch: Twin Cities, Minnesota
- Jeanne Sieger: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Barb Traxler: Mankato, Minnesota

Although this entity is new in the Region, it is hoped that the regular contact among these members of CLC will achieve greater participation from all clusters of CLC without a great investment of their personal time. The first such meeting in early February was lively and raised ideas and concerns which will hopefully promote the health of the Region.

**WESTERN REGION**

Beti Leone, of Brotando CLC in Fresno co-presented a workshop at the National Association for Bilingual Education in Phoenix, AZ. Presentations helped to illustrate Freirian themes: transformation at the personal, interpersonal, institutional and societal levels, in order to effect a more respectful, just and inclusive world. Students might then develop their own special talents which would allow them the ability to perceive their own freedom to become involved in current issues, to respond to what might be their calling in life, or to become “agents of change” in their society.

*God has shown you what is good.*

*What does Yahweh require of you,*

*but to act justly,*

*to love mercy,*

*and to walk humbly*

*with your God.*

*Micah 6:8*
New England Region

Once again we came together as New England CLC, including our most recent members of New Hampshire CLC, on January 28, in part to share hopes and dreams for 2006. A special event was to hear from Fr. Tom Frink, S.J., about his previous experiences and the call to return to serve the poorest of the poor in Kingston, Jamaica. He will be returning shortly (as soon as the visa comes through!), so the event also was a celebration of the gifts he has brought us during his time in New England, and a prayerful sending of him on his renewed mission. In addition to continuing to pray for Fr. Tom and his work, we plan to remain in active solidarity with him through a section of our web site devoted to his work in Jamaica (stay tuned!). This will smoothly complement our ongoing involvement with Mustard Seed Communities, also of Kingston, Jamaica, which we also continue to support through their local satellite in Lowell, MA.

Pictures from this regional meeting may be viewed on our website (http://www.clnewengland.net). We have planned several upcoming regional meetings: to coincide with World CLC Day in late March; our annual retreat in May; and again in June. We will draw on the particular experience of our various members for a series of reflections on the different ways in which we each live out Christ’s call to serve the Kingdom, and to maintain our Ignatian lifestyle.

Outreach for New Members

In addition to our gatherings for current members, we have begun to more actively seek new members. Our communications contact, Clarivel Marin de Dragas, has put together an artful and attractive brochure that we will distribute to our various parishes and nearby retreat centers — especially the Campion Center, where Ignatian retreats are regularly held. The brochure may be viewed on our web site as well. In addition, we are experimenting with small information meetings to follow up such retreat experiences. The first of these, held on March 5th, attracted a small group of very interested people. We would welcome any input from those of you in other regions who may have found certain methods of outreach to potential new members particularly effective in your experience.

May the Spring and our celebration of Christ’s resurrection inspire new life and peace to our world, and in each of your souls.