Economic JUSTICE
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Economic Justice Revisited

A troubled economy is as common a topic for discussion as the day’s weather forecast. A quick glance through my daily newspaper touched on many economic concerns:

- Austerity won’t energize Europe.
- Doubts emerge on minimum wage hike.
- Four in ten Long Island households have less family income than needed for necessities.
- There is a changing definition of poverty – the poor, near poor and new poor.
- Federal poverty guidelines are unfair.
- Facebook shares sink.
- MTA project is nearly one billion dollars over the budget.

All of the above were from one daily paper. The economy affects each of us in more ways than we would think possible.

For many years the Church has recognized the plight of the poor and the marginalized. It has called us to give a preferential option for the poor. In these days of instant communication we have seen first hand tragic living conditions of many third world nations. We have seen the poor in our own land, sometimes in our own neighborhood. Have we experienced a change of heart? Do we avail ourselves of the opportunities to become informed and involved? How do we handle the challenges before us?

In November 1986, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy. The letter was a “personal invitation to Catholics to use the resources of our faith, the strength of our economy, and the opportunities of our democracy to shape a society that better protects the dignity and basic rights of our sisters and brothers, both in this land and around the world.” The bishops proposed a “New American Experiment” to implement economic rights, broaden economic power and to bring more accountability for the common good when economic decisions are made. #359 of the pastoral stated that the letter was only “the beginning of a long process of education, discussion, and action; its contents must be brought to all members of the Church and of society.” In response to this directive, Locust Valley CLC in the late 1980’s discerned an action to be offered to all parishes of the diocese of Rockville Centre. The proposal was an all day educational forum on the contents and implications of Economic Justice for All. The Locust Valley CLC invited all parishes to send representatives. The CLC hosted the day and obtained outside expert speakers for the major presentations. Although the number of attendees was fewer than hoped for, all who came were enriched and informed by the experience.

In 1995 the bishops issued another pastoral letter, A Decade After “Economic Justice for All:” Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges. They reiterated the following, “Our letter was not an economic blueprint, but a moral challenge and call to action.” They felt that we Catholics needed to hear the message again and to respond to the continuing and new challenges. Below are some of those challenges:

- Speaking for poor children and working families
- Reducing deficits
- Reforming welfare
- Reshaping foreign assistance
- Reordering priorities
- Overcoming discrimination in economic life
- Assessing the work ethic, consumption and lifestyle
- Protecting workers’ rights

And the list goes on…It is important to note that this pastoral message was released in November of 1995 when the U.S. economy was thriving.

In the fall of 2011 a Vatican document was issued by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Toward Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of a Global Public Authority. This
Harvest is a response of the Church to our present day unjust economic system. The document points to the moral failure of economic life and cites, “behavior like selfishness, collective greed and the hoarding of goods on a great scale” as part of the problem. The document calls attention to present structures and envisions new, creative solutions especially a world public authority to be called upon when local and national efforts fail. Acceptance of this document has been mixed among Catholics, often following conservative or liberal lines. Liberals appear to embrace the concepts, while some conservatives point to its not having full support of the Pope.

In 2012 we are aware that the global economy affects life in these United States as well as the places of origination of the problems. More than ever we are conscious that foreign economies influence ours whether from France or Greece or Japan or China. The three documents mentioned above present a framework for study and discussion. They should encourage us in our fight against injustice and support us in our efforts to make a difference.

*Within This Issue*

**Madam President, Hang Nguyen**, begins her column with a summary of advances made on our journey to becoming one apostolic community: the completion of the members’ survey; the expanded representation on NCC; and the revised nomination/election process. She also comments on the efforts and dedication of the members of the Working Group. Then Hang reflects on the six moral principles found in *Economic Justice for All* and connects them to CLC’s *General Principles*.

**Rick Kunkle** gives us an update on the Working Group.

“Poverty, Hunger and Health” by **Theresa Mierswa** touches on many of the concerns mentioned in the bishops’ pastoral letters. Her presentation is informative and provides suggestions for many areas of action for CLCers.

In her article, “Center of Concern: Speakers Offer a Framework for a Renewed Economy,” **Sylvia Picard-Schmitt** reports on a presentation and discussion given by Sister Maria Riley, OP, and Julie Wartenberg of the Center of Concern. Of interest to me, was the concept of the “Care Economy,” an example of economic alternatives - “in seeing the world anew.”

The recent *Western Region Newsletter* includes an article, *Casa Building,* about an immersion experience for CLCers. This program aims at cultivating relationships across borders by means of a construction project.

**Dennis Cummins**’ “Pope John Paul II’s Call for a New Evangelization” has many references from the Church’s writings on social justice. His article leads to the recognition that our love of neighbor, our works of justice and our sensitivity to human dignity can be a response to John Paul’s call for a new evangelization.

In “From the Eyes of the Poor,” **Argelia Carracedo** reminds us that it is not study alone, as important as this is, that will help us understand economic justice. Identifying with the pain of the poor and seeing with their eyes will give us a better grasp of economic justice.

**Maggie Kribs** writes of her recently deceased husband’s simplified life style and generosity in working toward the alleviation of poverty. Read “Living for Giving, Robert Kribs Style.”

**IN MEMORIAM**

Rev. Howard Kalb, S.J., Robert Kribs, Martha Simmons

**Diana Hanger,** in “CLC at Santa Clara University,” tells of her experience in CLC as the campus comes alive with 16 communities. She praises the presence of Father Manh Tran, S.J. on the SCU Campus Ministry team and she writes that the program is helping CLC members discern their personal vocations.

In their article, “Ignatius and Infertility,” **Carmen Santamaria** and **Angelique Ruhi-Lopez** share their story of writing, *The Infertility Companion for Catholics*. Their book will serve as a valuable resource for infertile couples.

A review of *The Infertility Companion for Catholics* is included.

Reports from the Missouri, Metro NY and North Central Regions tell of activities which point to the health of CLC in some parts of our country.

**Conclusion:**

“...We have been created to share in the divine life through a destiny that goes far beyond our human capabilities and before which we must in all humility stand in awe. Like Mary in proclaiming her Magnificat, we marvel at the wonders God had done for us, how God has raised up the poor and the lowly and promised great things for them in the Kingdom. God now asks of us sacrifices and reflection on our reverence for human dignity – in ourselves and in others - and on our service and discipleship, so that the divine goal for the human family and this earth can be fulfilled....

(Economic Justice for All, #365)

In the peace and love of God,

Dorothy M. Zambito
Before I touch on the “Economic Justice” theme of this Harvest, I would like to take this opportunity to give an update on how CLC-USA is doing on the transformational journey of becoming ONE apostolic community. The transition into a “new way of being together” has already begun. Since the June 2011 Leadership Assembly, three very important events which engaged the whole community have occurred: the members’ survey, the expansion of NCC, and the communal discernment process to nominate national leadership positions. At the 2009 National Assembly, we heard the invitation, “Moving forward from this point is the work for the entire community. Every single member of CLC-USA has a position in this enterprise, in this effort to become a prophetic lay community” (Reflections on our Apostolic Journey – An Open Letter from the NCC to All CLC-USA Communities). The invitation is now reality!

Let me briefly touch on each of these events:

1) The members’ survey was conducted during the December 2011 – March 2012 period. This survey was to gather information on members and local communities. 660 members have participated. Results were reported in the previous Harvest. The data allowed us to update our membership database as well as to identify trends and gaps that we need to address.

2) At the 2011 Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh, the NCC approved the expansion of its membership to give adequate representation to the sectors of CLC-USA that were under-represented. Eight new members from DongHanh-CLC and KCLC were added to NCC, which brings the NCC membership to 24. We look forward to meeting the expanded NCC at the upcoming 2012 Leadership Assembly.

3) In the 2012 nomination-election process, the whole community was invited to exercise participative leadership. 35 local communities were engaged in a communal discernment about who might be chosen to serve in the national leadership positions. 29 members were nominated for the 3 ExCo positions (President-Elect, Treasurer and Secretary). The discerning circle that was formed at the Pittsburgh Leadership Conferences and at the National Assembly was broadened here to embrace more of our members in the process of communal discernment.

In the same spirit of moving CLC-USA to one community, the Working Group (WG) continues to “labor” very hard to put together the details of the reorganization framework around the governing body and the communities’ organization to be used for the June Leadership Assembly’s communal discernment. The WG members took on this task with dedication and love. Together, more than 2,000 hours have been spent in face to face meetings, teleconferences and preparation work. If we count the D&O (Diversity & Organization) committee too, the total time invested in the reorganization work to date is more than 4,000 hours since 2005. If we add the 5 leadership assemblies, 30,000 hours have been invested in this effort. Without being rooted in love, we would not be able to be where we are now. We express our deep appreciation to the D&O committee, the Working Group, and the Leadership Assembly leaders for their love and sacrifices. May God continue to help us spread this fire of love and unity to the whole community.

Now, on the theme of economic justice.

In November 1986, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy (http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf). The letter invited us to live out our faith in the world, to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of
our complex and powerful economic world. The six basic moral principles as listed in the letter are:

1. Every economic decision and institution must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person. [13]
2. Human dignity can be realized and protected only in community. [14]
3. All people have a right to participate in the economic life of society. [15]
4. All members of society have a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable. [16]
5. Human rights are the minimum conditions for life in community. [17]
6. Society as a whole, acting through public and private institutions, has the moral responsibility to enhance human dignity and protect human rights. [18]

Twenty-six years after Economic Justice for All, we need to hear the pastoral message again and respond to its challenges. Much has changed in our world since 1986 with technological advancement and market globalization. But much remains the same. There is still too much poverty and not enough economic opportunity for all people. The economic issues are not confined to the U.S. alone, but are global as well. Look around us. Many workers’ net income and sense of job security continue to decline. The unemployment rate remains high. Many businesses cut jobs to maximize bottom line profits. The gap between rich and poor is broader. It seems that we are still a very long way from “economic justice for all.”

The principles for a fair economic system as stated in the pastoral letter are still valid. We are challenged not simply to think differently but also to act differently. The letter is a moral challenge and a call to action. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reaffirms the Church’s teaching that economic life must be directed to the service of persons and is subject to the limits of the moral order and the demands of social justice [CCC 2426]. As members of CLC, what is our call regarding economic life?

To find an answer, I have turned to our General Principles:

In the preamble of the General Principles, we are challenged “to see our serious responsibilities and to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work together with the entire People of God and all those of good will for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people” [GP #2]. As members of CLC, we aim “to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation” [GP #4]. As members of CLC, “our life is essentially apostolic” and

“the field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures” [GP #8]. Each of us is called to make Christ present in our family, workplace, public square and market place.

Our General Principles gives the same message found in the pastoral letter, the same basic principles. Economic justice must start in our individual choices, in our families, in our community, in the working place and in the market place. The moral principles must be applied, in the way we conduct our business life, the way we invest, the way we hire workers, the way we set benefits and policies. We are called to work for an economy more respectful of human life and human dignity. Indifference to the need to build a more just and open economy is not an option. A couple of weeks ago, a DongHanh-CLC member and a good friend of mine told me that she had resigned from a secure and highly paid job because she could not tolerate the injustice in the organization. She felt exploited and disrespected by the leadership team that only wanted to please the shareholders and neglected the employees’ dignity and benefits. Leaving a secure job and facing unemployment was a tough decision, but she felt at peace because that was the right thing to do. Many of us have been or currently are in similar situations. Do we challenge organizational policies and stand up for human dignity and respect? Many of us are managers, business owners, leaders. How do we make our decisions according to the values of the Scriptures and the moral principles of the Catholic Church? 2012 is a presidential election year. As a Catholic citizen, how do we exercise our responsibilities in political life? Let us continue to advocate for people who are poor and vulnerable in our communities, in our nation and in the world. The current economic crisis has been going on for many years now and it seems that we are still a very long way from economic justice for all. At the same time, it is a wake-up call and it is an opportunity to re-shape our vision, as said by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical Caritas in Veritate:

The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future.

Together, as a community, let’s make a new commitment, and set a new vision so we can live out the spirit of love and respond to the call to follow Christ in his mission more wholeheartedly.

United in prayers and service, Hang Nguyen
Casa Building is a weekend adventure that connects people and communities through home building. “Home” is more than a physical place. It is a web of relationships whereby we are loved and accepted as we are, without condition, without having to deserve, gain, or earn love. From these relationships we can be our truest selves, and live with meaning and purpose. Thus, Casa Building is about constructing “home,” physically as well as relationally.

Each of these immersion experiences creates space for participants to serve alongside other CLC members and friends, immerse oneself in another culture, and be in solidarity with God’s poor. The weekend includes a combination of serving alongside a community in Mexico on a building project, visiting an orphanage as well as a shelter for migrant men, and learning about border issues. Most of all, this is an opportunity to build friendship and relationship across borders and put oneself outside of one’s comfort zone in order to learn and be open to God’s grace in new, life-giving ways.

The weekend is an opportunity to live more simply with and learn from God’s poor. On the weekend trips, participants spend one night in a home in San Diego before crossing the border early Saturday morning into Mexico and spend Saturday night in the secure community center in El Florido (Tijuana, Mexico). Accommodations are simple, but every available security measure is taken. Carpools are arranged from both Los Angeles and Orange County to San Diego for each trip and the group is accompanied by an experienced guide from the local community who has been coordinating these trips for 25 years with the solid Build A Miracle Foundation. Casa Building is a great way for CLC members of different ages and backgrounds to live out our three pillars of spirituality, community and mission in an integrated way.

“Ignatian service is a loving relationship, a companionship…” – Paul Coutinho S.J.
Poverty, Hunger and Health

Theresa Mierswa

The World Bank reports that 1.29 billion people lived below the poverty line on less than $1.25 per day in 2008. The University of Michigan’s National Poverty Center estimates that this number has grown to 1.4 billion in 2012. Pope Benedict in his 2009 World Peace Day proclamation spoke about the need for concrete economic, social and political actions to combat poverty. “Every form of externally imposed poverty has at its root a lack of respect for the transcendent dignity of the human person.” Poverty is typically a political issue that is expressed in economic terms.

One cannot speak about poverty without talking about the hunger crisis. When people cannot find work, they cannot purchase food. One sixth of the world’s population suffers from hunger. It is not surprising to read UN Food and Agricultural Organization reports which indicate that Asia and Africa have the greatest percentage of hungry people. While poverty isn’t the only cause of hunger (other factors include inefficient agricultural methods, war, famine, drought, diversion of land use to non-productive use, poor crop yields, etc.), challenging systems that foster the reliance of poor countries on more developed countries encourage a redirection of their budgets towards programs such as better food production, health care and education. These in turn raise the standard of living.

Emergency food lifts are critical for assisting in times of famine. However, people will continue to remain hungry if they are provided only with altruistic food distribution. Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) such as OXFAM, Jesuit Relief Services and Bread for the World praise efforts that put money into development programs aimed at assisting countries to become self-sustaining.

“Give someone a fish and they eat for a day. Teach someone to fish and they eat for a lifetime.” – Chinese Proverb

Pope Benedict stated in his address last October during World Food Day that “liberation from the yoke of hunger is the first concrete expression of the right to life.” While critics call for more flexible guidelines, there have been some U.S. programs such as Food Aid, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), and Child Survival and Health that have provided an avenue for the poor to survive in many developing countries. This year’s Bread for the World campaign seeks a continuation of these programs aimed at improving nutrition, particularly for women and children.

There also is a link between poverty, hunger and health. Anup Shah, writing for Global Issues notes, “The direct medical cost of hunger and malnutrition is estimated at $30 billion each year.” World Health Organization (WHO) research indicates, “Poverty creates ill-health because it forces people to live in environments that make them sick, without decent shelter, clean water or adequate sanitation.” Hunger affects a person’s physical capacity to work. Pregnant women are impacted by poor nutrition throughout their term and during lactation. Additionally, when children do not receive sufficient nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life, their physical growth is stunted and their mental development is delayed or retarded, further perpetuating the poverty cycle.

For those for whom poor health has contributed to their poverty, often a choice must be made between paying for medical care and purchasing nutritious food. Doctors cite the greater likelihood for a poor person without a healthy diet to contract disease as well as the difficulty in sustaining a cure when the patient is weakened by hunger.
“My hunger pains were stronger than the pain which resulted from my illness,” states an African AIDS patient.

The current economic crisis has impacted poverty levels in the United States, as well. Forty-six million Americans live below the poverty line. Of these 16.2 million are children. This is an increase of 27% since the recession began.

Initial presidential budget proposals maintained the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) benefit levels. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) were restored at earlier levels and funds were allocated for the Hunger Free Communities program. Recent Congressional budget debates however, have put existing nutrition intervention and social safety net programs in the spotlight as potential areas for implementing funding cuts.

As a result, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) drafted a letter to the House Agricultural Committee regarding “the moral implications of their proposals.” They noted, “Cuts to nutrition programs such as the SNAP will hurt hungry children, poor families, vulnerable seniors and workers who cannot find employment.” Their letter reiterated the call that other Christian leaders have made, “At a time of great competition for agricultural resources and budgetary constraints, the needs of those who are hungry, poor, and vulnerable should come before assistance to those who are relatively well off and powerful. With other Christian leaders, we urge the committee to draw a ‘circle of protection’ around resources that serve those in greatest need and to put their needs first even though they do not have powerful advocates or great influence. The moral measure of the agriculture appropriations process is how it serves the least of these.”

Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good have added their voice to the call for political sensibility saying that cutting these programs “destroys the existing federal safety net that the poor and suffering rely on to make their pain and poverty marginally easier to bear.”

In the Gospel of Matthew 25:34-40, we are reminded that whatever we do for the least we do for God; specifically included are clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. Spiritual discernment for the bishops’ recent letter to Congress and the Alliance comments come from a long history of Catholic Social Teaching and Biblical writings. The 2005 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace called for a preferential option for the poor. Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 wrote about the relationship between unemployment and poverty in Caritas in Veritate. Following the Encyclical letter, the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food stated, “The primary goals of agriculture policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad.”

Awareness of the growing number of families who are struggling to balance food, housing and health needs amidst unemployment and frozen salaries has been catalyzed by the media. Food Network specials on hunger and children, conferences by social service and economic experts pulled together by notables such as Tavis Smiley, numerous PBS documentaries on unemployment, homelessness, hunger, and the relationship of poverty and health have helped to highlight the growing number of families who are moving from the middle class into poverty.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development has created a short video entitled “Living in Poverty” to bring attention to the financial difficulties of those at the poverty line. Moving through a typical budget for a family of four with income of $22,000, the film shows that at the end of each month, after expenses have been paid for housing, transportation, day care, food, and health insurance, a family finds itself with a negative balance.

The relationship between poverty and health in the United States is explored in a recent PBS special now on video “Unnatural Causes.” The first episode (In Sickness and in Wealth) reveals that the single strongest predictor of health is our position on the class pyramid. Not surprisingly, those with more income, schooling, or a more prestigious occupation live longer and healthier lives. As reported in the documentary, “The Whitehall II Study” undertaken under the auspices of the Department of
Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London, found that people who are in the middle income bracket are almost twice as likely to die earlier, and those who are at the bottom of the income scale, those in poverty, have a four times greater likelihood of dying earlier than high income cohorts.

The documentary points out that “people who are middle to lower on the class pyramid are exposed to more health threats (material deprivation to chronic stressors) and have less access to the opportunities and resources needed to control their destinies.” The constant stress of worry and hyper-vigilance required to hold their lives together wears down vital organs and thus raises the risk of chronic and life threatening disease.

How can CLC make an impact on global and national poverty and hunger? One example is found in the Metro NY region. The apostolic mission for 2011 and 2012 has been to spend a day at a local soup kitchen in New York located in the Park Avenue Church. It is the ongoing apostolic mission of the Faber Group, who volunteer there every month.

Education is another avenue where CLC members have taken a role. As part of the Church of the Presentation Justice and Peace ministry in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, this CLC member has helped plan a series of programs for parishioners and community residents on poverty issues. This has included a viewing and discussion of the film mentioned above, ”Unnatural Causes,” followed by a panel presentation (Hunger is Not A Game) by those involved in social service and food support programs. The effort will culminate in letter writing to Congressional leaders under the umbrella of Bread for the World’s Expanding the Circle of Protection campaign in September.

As discussed in this Harvest, other CLC members at Xavier Church in New York have sponsored a program with the Center of Concern to highlight issues in global poverty. Additionally, Metro New York’s longstanding role representing the CLC NGO at the United Nations has provided a voice for discussions in areas such as the impact of poverty on women and children around the world.

There are many ways that CLC can be a voice for those who live in poverty and hunger. Using our Ignatian tools for discernment, a CLC group can choose the issue that brings consolation and best fits the abilities of its members. The Campaign for Human Development plants these seeds for consideration as you decide what you and your community can do:

* Think and live poverty for a day – calculate your expenses and limit your spending within a poverty budget (http://old.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/index.htm).

* Educate yourself about existing programs that combat hunger and provide a circle of protection for the poor (http://www.globalissues.org/issue/2/causes-of-poverty).

* Write an Op-Ed letter to a newspaper about your experience or about your thoughts and observations about inequities that create and foster poverty.

* Write your Congressional representatives and urge them to sponsor and support legislation and budget allocations that provide a safety net for the poor.

* Show respect for those who work at jobs that are minimum wage.

* Review how you talk about those who are poor to ensure that you are not inadvertently using discriminatory language.

* Take public transportation as often as possible so that it remains an option for those who have no transportation choices.

* Plan a helping vacation or volunteer to assist those whose circumstances have brought them to poverty.

* Share these ideas and others that you discover with your neighbors and family members.

The designation between middle class and poor is an emergency away. It is with God’s grace that we sit on one step of the pyramid or another. In these times of global and economic distress, we all have a responsibility to be part of the circle of protection that gives a preferential option for the poor. As CLC, that call is even louder.

**Forty-six million Americans**

**live below the poverty line.**

**Of these 16.2 million are children.**
“Our economy is broken.” That’s a refrain that we hear from politicians and pundits, the unemployed and the under-employed. Especially in an election year, people want to point fingers and assign blame for the collapse of the housing bubble, the decline of investment portfolios and a job market that has left too many without decent work. Some people want a quick fix, maybe even a return to “irrational exuberance,” but at the same time, thoughtful people are asking hard questions about the economic principles and practices that brought this current crisis. People of faith are raising questions about how religious values should inform our economic choices – not only at the household level, but at the national and global levels as well.

Among the Catholic organizations working on economic alternatives, the Center of Concern (CoC) is one known to many in CLC. An international center that studies issues relating to development, justice and peace from a Christian perspective, the CoC was formed as a joint initiative of the Society of Jesus and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). It is familiar to many in CLC not only because of its Jesuit connections but also because of the quality of its research into justice issues and the resources produced by its Education for Justice program.

In February of this year, when two CoC speakers came to New York City, a number of Ignatian communities gathered to hear them discuss “Seeing the World Anew: A Framework for a Renewed Economy.” This presentation was hosted by the Church of St. Francis Xavier, a Jesuit parish in Manhattan, but it was co-sponsored by Metro NY CLC, the N.Y. Province of the Society of Jesus and Xavier High School.

Maria Riley, OP, and Julia Wartenberg came to present the Center of Concern’s research on economic growth and development. Their work examines the priorities of the market-based economy in light of Gospel values and the key principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Rather than simply trying to explain the current economic crisis though, Maria and Julia asked what kind of economy we should be advocating as we move forward. To put things in perspective, they quoted Albert Einstein, who said, “No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew.”

Seeing the economy anew gives us the opportunity to reassess the wisdom of an economic model whose growth depends on consumers buying more and more products - luxuries, novelties and disposables. Only a small percentage of our global population participated in the consumer frenzy that drove the economy before it collapsed. That was the reality long before we started hearing about the 1% versus the 99%.

An economic model that benefits only a few stands in stark contrast to the fundamental principles of CST, where the life and dignity of every human person are given priority. The key principles of CST may be familiar to many, but it’s worth looking at them again in the context of economic principles.

The seven key themes of CST are:

1. Dignity of the Human Person
2. Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
3. Common Good – Family, Community and Participation
4. Rights and Responsibilities
5. Option for Those Living in Poverty
6. Solidarity
7. Care of Creation

Our current economic model can be critiqued in light of any one of these principles.

In addition, Maria and Julia discussed the concept of the “Care Economy” – a recognition that every economic model depends on care work. Whether we are talking about the care of children, households or the elderly, women are the primary care workers around the world. Their labors provide the economic and social foundation of all communities, but care work is almost always undervalued or invisible. Women’s care work is taken for granted until a crisis hits and that work is disrupted. The lack of respect or value for this essential work is something that must be addressed in a renewed economy.

Care for creation is another important aspect of a renewed economy. Much like the resources of women, who often work until their energies have been exhausted, the earth provides resources that drive our economies. In our current model, too little care is taken to protect those resources and use them in sustainable ways. Earth’s resources are exploited for the benefit of the few rather than for the common good, and the cost of environmental impacts is not entered into balance sheets or factored into many business plans.

This presentation generated a good deal of discussion among the attendees. Besides the Ignatian communities named above, we were also joined by members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and representatives of Occupy, Catholic. After the presentation and Q&A, the group moved into the Xavier Jesuit residence and continued debating and networking until late in the evening.

The substance of Maria and Julia’s presentation can be found in a short version in the latest CoC newsletter, Center Focus. It’s available online at: https://www.coc.org/coc:center-focus-issue-191-winter-2012. A more extensive treatment can also be found on the CoC website. The research paper on which the presentation was based: Seeing the World Anew: A Framework for a Renewed Economy can be read in its entirety at: https://www.coc.org/node/6539.

Either would be good reading to share with your CLC group. We will likely be participating in many discussions about economic policies – especially during this presidential election year – so it makes sense to take a thoughtful and prayerful look at these proposals.

Working Group Update
Rick Kunkle

This brief summary describes the Working Group’s activities over the last couple of months since our last update in Harvest.

The Working Group held its second in-person meeting in Houston April 12-15. The primary focus of our meeting was to work on the details of members, communities, and how communities are organized and served. We also reflected on the feedback from CLC leaders on the Governance Working Document and made revisions to our ideas on CLC governance. Another key task at our meeting was reviewing and refining our ideas for the transition from our current reality to the vision we are proposing. We concluded our meeting with a plan for our work leading up to the Leadership Assembly.

At the end of April we shared one of the results of our Houston meeting, the Organizing Communities Working Document, with CLC leaders. This allowed CLC leaders to read and reflect on our ideas and provide feedback using an on-line survey.

The focus of our work in May was preparation of the Leadership Assembly materials. These materials included the information we wanted Leadership Assembly participants to consider in the discernment at the Assembly. To prepare these materials, we organized and clarified the ideas contained in the two working documents we had developed. These materials were sent to the people who will attend the Leadership Assembly to read and reflect on and share with their communities.

I met with some of the members of the Executive Council in May to plan the agenda and process of the Leadership Assembly. The Working Group provided input for this planning meeting. It is our hope that the process we have developed will allow us to come together in Pittsburgh as a discerning body open to the movement of the Spirit.
We have a crisis – economic, social, political and environmental systems are failing globally. As a result thereof, people are losing savings, jobs, homes and their security. With this comes depression, resentment, isolation and alienation. What is the expectation for those people suffering these losses to contribute to the common good?

According to the Vatican II document, *The Church in the Modern World*:

All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God’s image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men and it must be given ever greater recognition. Undoubtedly not all men are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design….Furthermore, while there are rightful differences between people, their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace [29].

To give an example of basic inequality, economic and other, I refer to the CIA (strangely enough!), which included a survey of economic equality for 140 nations in its *World Fact Book*. How does the United States fare? We are 30th from the top in basic economic inequality and moving up. If we compare ourselves to democracies like ourselves, we are in 42nd place. Ireland is 96th, Canada is 106th, Austria is 133rd and Sweden at 140th is the most equal.

How does that play out in the U.S.? A survey done a few years ago showed that almost 50% of all income went to the richest 10%. Put another way, it is estimated that the bottom 40% (the less rich) holds only 9% of the wealth in this country. A recent graphic in *USA TODAY* shows the top 25 grossing executives receiving total annual incomes ranging between 16 million and 43 million dollars, including stock options and bonuses. As recently as 4/17/12, *The New York Times* had an article highlighting the extremism of economic inequality in the U.S. which, according to two award winning economic professors, is nearly as acute as it was before the Great Depression. Would you, the reader, say that these preliminary facts could be interpreted as a scandal or as denounced by the Vatican Council document quoted above? Back in 1996, the *Harvard Business Review* said we might be headed for an apartheid economy. This could lead to class antagonism as well as social instability.

If the above weren’t bad enough, now we, as ordinary citizens, have to cope with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) (smart?), funded by our big corporations. What does it do? It writes out specific laws regarding union busting, less environmental oversight and, curiously, privatization from schools to prisons. It is said to be a move toward limited government but now their projects will come from taxpayers’ pockets. Exposure to publicity might slow down or curtail their march to corporate
domination. As it is now, many U.S. corporations have headquarters overseas to avoid taxation and oversight.

If this trend continues, who will have the funds to buy the goods manufactured overseas by our multi-national corporations? Will our economy function if the 40% mentioned above (the poor and the not-so-poor) cannot participate?

In 1986, the American Bishops created a document, Economic Justice for All. It listed six moral principles:

1. People have dignity.
2. We live together.
3. Everyone participates.
4. The poor must be protected.
5. Human rights must be protected.
6. Government has a role.

**Dignity:** Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical Rerum Novarum said, “man …is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself.” Pope John Paul II in the encyclical Centesimus Annus (CA) reiterates this and continues, “God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man, conferring upon him an incomparable dignity, as the encyclical frequently insists. In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person.”

**Community:** We do not live alone, in isolation either physically, mentally or spiritually. “To be a Christian is to join with others in responding to this personal call (follow me) and in learning the meaning of Christ’s life” Economic Justice #46. “Sharing in this same resurrection faith, contemporary followers of Christ can face the struggles and challenges that await those who bring gospel vision to bear on our complex economic and social world” Economic Justice #47.

**Everyone Participates:** According to Pope John Paul II in CA, a person deprived of his right to participate in the economy comes to rely upon the social machine and those who control it. This makes it difficult for that person to recognize his own dignity as an individual.

**Protect the Poor:** Throughout CA, John Paul II stresses that true social justice should create a base upon which the poor can stand. “Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ Himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. …For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies.”

**Protect human rights:** Pope John Paul II, in CA identifies the most important human rights upon which a democracy must be ordered.

1. The right to life (and CA points out an integral part of this is the right of the child to develop in the mother’s womb from the moment of conception)
2. The right to live in a united family
3. The right to live in a moral environment (conducive to the growth of a child’s personality)
4. The right to develop one’s intelligence and freedom (in seeking and knowing the truth)
5. The right to work (and from that work to support oneself and one’s dependents)
6. The right to freely establish a family (to have and rear children through the responsible exercise of one’s sexuality)
7. The right to religious freedom (understood as the right to live in the truth of one’s faith and in conformity with one’s transcendent dignity as a person)

Government has a role to further the individual’s right to dignity in the work place. John Paul II would require the State to:

1. Guarantee individual freedom.
2. Guarantee individual property rights.
3. Ensure a stable currency.
4. Ensure efficient services are provided.
5. Create conditions which will ensure job opportunities by:
   a. stimulating those activities where they are lacking
   b. supporting them in moments of crisis.
6. Intervene when monopolies create delays or obstacles to development.
7. Exercise a substitute function in a crisis. This, however, must be as brief as possible.
8. Avoid excessive engagement to the detriment of both economic and civil freedoms.

John Paul II also states that the free market is the most efficient instrument for using resources and responding to needs. “But there are many human needs which find no place in the market. It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish....Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists something which is due to man because he is man, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required “something” is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity.”

If we as individuals are to engage effectively in the economy, these principles from our present Pope in his encyclical Caritas in Veritate should be followed. He has outlined seven defining principles for what “decent” work is:

1. It expresses one’s essential dignity.
2. It is freely chosen.
3. It enables respect and freedom from discrimination.
4. It allows families to meet their needs and provide for their children’s education.
5. It permits free organization of workers.
6. It “leaves enough room for rediscovering one’s roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level.”
7. It guarantees retirees a decent standard of living.

John Paul II emphasizes that there is an ownership that is just as important as property and savings: a person’s know-how, technology and skill. These must be protected, enhanced and preserved.

What also must be preserved is our earth, our world, our resources. We must guard against excessive consumption. We have received a gift from our Creator. We are fiduciaries. We have a duty to care for our gift. Our development must always consider that the availability of this gift is for everyone to share and share alike, both now and in the future. Do we abuse this gift? Stop and reflect on our lifestyle.

What is being highlighted by John Paul II in CA is the extent of consumerism in modern society. Consumer attitudes and life styles are being practiced which are damaging to our physical and spiritual health. There is a great need for both educational and cultural work to be done to encourage more responsible use of our power of choice. It is necessary to create life styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and unity with others are factors which determine consumer choice.

Catholic Social Teaching is neither on the right nor the left of the political spectrum. It is neither conservative nor liberal in its approach. While those on the right will latch onto the endorsement of free markets by CA which can promote affluence, unbridled affluence will lead to excess consumption to the detriment of the poor. On the left, over emphasis on government action would lead to the welfare state.

Charity is a gift of ourselves and our means. It is a theological virtue. It is love of neighbor. It is commandment. Soup kitchens, clothing drives, and collections for the poor are all acts of charity. On the other hand, social justice deals with the substantial restructuring of our culture, our environment and our society. John Paul II called this a new evangelization. While charity is a guide, the aim of this goal is the elevation, bolstering and sustaining the dignity of all of God’s creation. We are being asked to reform our conscience, to be sensitive to the dignity of all people. We are asked to participate in improving a culture that does not consider the common good of all and does not follow the commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If this new evangelization is neglected by the leaders of our economy, it will come as no surprise that they will be guided by criteria alien to the Gospel.
Universal economic justice is a utopia, but so is the Lord’s command “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). In both cases the word “utopia” doesn’t mean anything that is completely impossible, but rather something towards which we should be committed – a goal we must put all of our efforts to achieve, though realizing that it will never be completed or accomplished. Once we have realized this is the way to proceed, it would be very helpful to remember that we should be careful not to approach our goal of economic justice from an idealistic perspective. Setting our goals inside realistic parameters will prevent us from being too romantic, and thus it will spare us from the dangers of falling through the cracks of not so well intentioned positions. It is true that sometimes it is very difficult to choose between two possible solutions, and we must venture into the game of choosing the greater good.

Bearing all this in mind, I would like to leave the philosophical approach and try to find a better way of focusing on this issue. First, of course, we should study and abide by the teachings of the Church. Being well informed is a must if we want to be responsible Catholics, but it is only from the eyes of the poor that we could ever get a better understanding of what economic justice means.

Actually I could read and study all sorts of documents, but it won’t be until I identify myself with whoever is suffering the consequences of an unjust situation that I will feel compelled to act. In the end, it is a matter of prayer and being a real contemplative in action.

I could go on and on telling countless stories (true stories) of selfless generosity. Most of the time, believe it or not, they come from the poor themselves, and they are based in a deep sense of true sharing. We all know, of course, very generous Catholics who are certainly not poor, but I could venture to say that if they cannot be considered the exception, they certainly are not the majority. There must be something in being poor that opens our hearts and clear our eyes. Should we all then become poor? All I know is that when dealing with issues of economic justice we should all see with their eyes.
Alleviating poverty is an honorable and ethical aspiration for anyone to hold; yet for my beloved Robert, doing so was the essence of living. Since his death just a few months ago, I have had the privilege of discovering how deeply Robert lived out his longing to alleviate poverty. This new task of managing our finances as his widow has revealed a way of life that both empowers and motivates me to go on in his footsteps, making everyday choices that make a difference.

Throughout our marriage, and especially since his diagnosis with cancer in July of 2010, Robert and I lived simply. We had everything we needed, and lived out our life of love in comfort and joy. Robert was the “hunter-gatherer” of our home and sought the best deals on groceries. The luxurious sedan he drove in the past was exchanged for an economical model and our budget reflected the savings that resulted from our mindful spending. We often celebrated when we found a way to reduce the expenses of daily living. Robert and I lacked for nothing, and expressed our gratitude for that by sharing our abundance with those in need.

Robert believed that careful spending allowed grateful giving. In his retirement, my husband donated over 40% of his income to Charitable Organizations that support the needy among us. I remain awed and inspired by how he lived so simply in order to give so freely from his open and generous heart. It is my prayer and promise to follow his example as I continue honoring his generous spirit in my life by living minimally and giving liberally. Won’t you consider how you might do the same?
Ignatius and Infertility: What the Pilgrim Saint Has Taught Us about This Journey

_Carmen Santamaria and Angelique Ruhi-Lopez_

“Fifteen years ago, we sat on a bus and chatted nonstop during a four-hour ride home in the middle of the night after our high school’s senior class trip. Little did we know that this conversation—in which with youthful idealism we talked about our families, our plans for the future, and our common Catholic faith—would change us from acquaintances to lifelong friends.

Though we were companions on a different kind of journey at the time, God providentially cemented our friendship as he knew we would share in many other journeys together: graduations and celebrations, first jobs and first dates, breakups and breakdowns, weddings and funerals, and vacations and vocations.

Of all of our shared life experiences, it is perhaps infertility that has been the most complex and formative for us, not only as friends, but also as Catholics. We are eternally grateful to God for giving us the gift of each other as spiritual companions on this life-altering journey of infertility.”

Thus begins the book that we co-authored entitled, _“The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples,”_ which was just recently published by Ave Maria Press and is the first book of its kind to offer medical, emotional and spiritual support from a Catholic perspective to help couples bear the cross of infertility.

Another companion we have both had on the journey of infertility and in writing this book is St. Ignatius of Loyola, who we both encountered through our involvement in CLC and our experience of the _Spiritual Exercises._ Our book was heavily influenced by the spirituality of St. Ignatius, and in it, we share how his spirituality helped us grow closer to Christ as we carried this cross. Below are excerpts from _The Infertility Companion for Catholics_ that demonstrate how Ignatius, the pilgrim saint, was instrumental in helping provide spiritual fruit for the journey of infertility:

_The Principle and Foundation_

St. Ignatius of Loyola begins his seminal _Spiritual Exercises_ with what he calls the Principle and Foundation. This is the starting point of the Exercises because, in order to make wise decisions and follow Christ, St. Ignatius felt we first needed to understand our purpose. Like Genesis, the Principle and Foundation points to being created in God’s image.

The Principle and Foundation can be studied in great detail and meditated upon for hours, but let’s focus on the first sentence: “Human beings are created . . . .” St. Ignatius wants to emphasize our creaturehood and, as such, remind us of the fact that we are not God, despite our desire to become like God (Gn 2:16–17). Because we are not God, we cannot create on our own accord. So when we conceive a child, we co-create with God and could not do so by any other means. “In [God’s] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind” (Jb 12:10). This foundation is critical to the infertility journey since being well versed and grounded in this reality of...
our creaturehood and purpose illuminates the decisions and challenges infertility brings.

**Freedom and Indifference**

In the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius says, “As long as we are allowed free choice, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things” (SpEx 23). Indifference does not equal apathy. According to St. Ignatius, indifference means standing “as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other” (SpEx 15).

Similarly, the Principle and Foundation says we should not “prefer health to sickness” - or, in this case, fertility to infertility. As difficult as it is, we should make ourselves indifferent to whether or not we have a child. We should pray for God to grant us the grace of indifference so that we may be open to the outcome toward which God is guiding us.

**Discernment**

The word *discernment* is often considered synonymous with decision making, and though discernment does facilitate our decision making, it is so much more than simply making choices. In the discernment process, we are drawn closer to God by choosing to do his will. Discernment is a choice between two courses of action, both of which are morally good.

We have learned from the time we were young that we should never knowingly choose wrong. So in the case of infertility, a proper discernment cannot be made, for example, between Catholic treatments, which are licit, and in vitro fertilization, which is illicit. The Christian may only choose between two (or more) good, moral options. We are called to the *magis*, a Latin term that St. Ignatius often used that loosely means “the greater good.”

In the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius said we are created by God to praise, reverence and serve God. Thus it follows that, in any decision, we must consider the praise, reverence and service of God above all so that our decisions help us attain this goal for our lives. And that’s why it’s so important to make good decisions. In the end, discernment can be simplified by asking the question, “What is the more loving or life giving thing to do?” Having the tool of discernment was critical to our infertility journeys and allowed us to make prayerful decisions along the way. Using this tool does not mean that the decisions are easy, however.

**Challenges to Discernment**

A friend of mine used to say that holiness lies outside of our comfort zones, and sometimes stepping out of what
The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples
by Angelique Ruhi-Lopez and Carmen Santamaria
Ave Maria Press; Notre Dame, Indiana; 2012.

After fifty-two years of marriage, six children and twelve grandchildren, why would I have an interest in reviewing a book on infertility? When I first heard about Angelique and Carmen’s book, I was pleased for their effort but not especially interested in doing the review.

But, I had the time and so I decided I’d give it a try. What happened as I began to read was the return of memories of my early years of marriage when, I too, experienced a period of infertility (about 3+ years before baby #1 and another 3+ years before baby #2).

The authors describe their feelings, hopes and disappointments and their expectations to build a family with biological children. These emotions mirrored my own those many years ago.

Angelique and Carmen describe the various tests, procedures and medications used in the present day to diagnose and treat infertility, some in keeping with Church teaching and others not, e.g. in vitro fertilization (IVF). Many of these were not options in the 1960’s.

Throughout the text, the authors incorporate their practice of prayer and their reliance on and trust in God along this journey. Using examples from Scripture and experiences from Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises helped these women when infertility for them was a suffering they had to endure.

The authors also included the scientific terms related to infertility and the procedures related to its being addressed. This section was informative and did not alter the flow of a very readable text. I don’t remember having this sort of resource available to me fifty plus years ago.

The book is written for a Catholic audience as it points to strictly following the Church’s teaching. Even acknowledging this, I am aware of couples who try very hard to live out God’s will for them, who prayed and tried using Church approved methods and failed to become biological parents. These young people conceived and delivered healthy babies after using IVF. Their choice of method did not come easily, but I am not here to judge them.

Angelique and Carmen have provided us with a valuable resource for Catholic couples who are struggling with infertility. The book even includes a chapter written by Alex Santamaria, “A Male Perspective on Infertility.”) The authors deal with adoption as another avenue open to childless couples. The book has lists of agencies, websites and literature to assist those couples in need of help. The information can be a resource to physicians and counselors, as well, who are in positions of aiding infertile couples who wish to be in line with Church teaching. I commend the women for their offering and would recommend this book for its up-to-date information, its prayer and reflection examples and its sharing of personal experiences.
This winter, Christian Life Community was introduced to Santa Clara University. Rooted in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, the program’s launch has been highly anticipated at this Jesuit institution. I was surprised to discover that, according to some archives, CLC groups were present at Santa Clara University as early as 1893. Back then, these groups were known as Sodalities and became the largest on-campus organization in the 1960’s. After a respite in the late twentieth century, Christian Life Community has been reintroduced with a strength and vigor that had an immediate presence on campus.

After spending six years facilitating a highly successful program at Loyola Marymount University, Fr. Manh Tran, S.J. was recruited to join Santa Clara’s Campus Ministry staff in the fall of 2011. Besides organizing graduate student service opportunities, Fr. Manh’s main vocation is to rejuvenate Christian Life Community at Santa Clara. After touring the prolific CLC program at Loyola Marymount University this spring, I was overwhelmed by the community’s presence, visibility and vibrancy. At LMU, there are nearly 600 active CLC members; that’s roughly ten percent of the undergraduate population! As the Christian Life Community intern at Santa Clara, I feel inspired by the success of CLCs at other Jesuit universities, including LMU, and recognize the potential this program has to nurture lifelong friendships, a deeper faith and a heart of service in my college peers. As my mentor, Fr. Manh frequently speaks of CLC as a lifestyle rooted in the notion of *cura personalis* (that is, care for the entire person, viewing others as God sees them) and has mentioned that it may take a few years for the culture to catch on. Nevertheless, as the Christian Life Community intern, I feel that the program is off to a great start, attracting a diverse student body and inciting change in those involved.

Father Manh’s spirited personality has been a welcome addition to the SCU Campus Ministry team. Filled with energy and passion for youth, he can frequently be seen in the Benson Memorial Student Center promoting CLC to students. His vigor and enthusiasm have undoubtedly infused the CLC Executive Council with similar energy. Abbreviated as ExCo, this leadership group is comprised of 10 student leaders responsible for brainstorming events, monitoring the health of the small groups, and planning service, social and spiritual activities. A dedicated and energetic bunch of students, the ExCo is determined to launch a successful and fulfilling program that meets the needs of the SCU community. ExCo President Michael Davission, a sophomore math and political science double major, is excited to have such a powerful role in this transformative organization. He believes “that this opportunity has been a lesson in my life, part of something that affects a lot of people’s lives and allows them to rediscover their faith while bringing out a different side of them.”

So far, the reception of the Christian Life Community program has been favorable among the student body. After a whirlwind 3 weeks of recruitment, the program attracted 30 student leaders who work in pairs to facilitate 16 small groups that meet on a weekly basis. There are three main “phases” of CLC, with each phase focusing on the needs of different age groups, namely freshman, sophomores and upperclassmen. Group leaders are ultimately responsible for designing their meetings. However, a thick handbook offering suggestions for topics and activities is distributed to every leader. Based on the successful CLC program at LMU, five years of planning and editing have been invested in the CLC handbook, and the process of revision is still underway. Although meetings are expected to follow the same rough guideline for each phase.
(freshmen, sophomores and upperclassmen), the individual groups have taken on their own personalities, especially considering different group dynamics. For instance, sophomore group leaders Phillip Peralez and Meghan Richey invite their freshman members to participate in “game night” after their structured weekly meetings. Playing different board games after faith-sharing sessions allows the members to get to know one another in a more light-hearted setting.

Currently, the CLC program at SCU has attracted 150 members and continues to grow every week. For an organization that was introduced to our campus a few short weeks ago, I believe that CLC groups are off to a promising start. The ambitious Executive Council has planned a number of weekly events that have exceeded my expectations in both the level of success and turnout of participants. Social activities including bowling and a trip to Sky High have been fun and wholesome, while the service immersion and spiritual reflections that occurred last quarter have offered opportunities for CLC members to reflect on their calling in life. Rooted in an attitude of loving service, CLC offers a service immersion experience for students to participate in twice a quarter. For instance, a group of nearly 30 CLC members spent a February afternoon volunteering at Sacred Heart Community Services Center, an organization dedicated to alleviating poverty in San Jose. Students helped assemble roughly 700 kits filled with provisions to be distributed to needy families in the area. This spring, the service squad has planned a trip to the San Francisco Tenderloin to distribute warm socks and hot chocolate to homeless and economically disadvantaged individuals. Next year, weekly service opportunities will be available for all members.

As part of SCU’s Campus Ministry department, spirituality is an essential focus of Christian Life Community, and winter quarter events such as Taize Prayer and Yoga Meditations have provided opportunities for students to pray and reflect. The most successful spiritual program last quarter was undoubtedly a personalized Stations of the Cross in which students shared individual reflections. More spiritual events planned for the spring include “Peanut Butter and Prayer” and a year-end mass. Although CLC is grounded in a Christian (and specifically Catholic) tradition, a wide variety of students who practice different faiths have participated and found value in last quarter’s spiritual events.

What I believe makes the CLC program so infectious is the value given to each individual. Confidentiality and support in the small faith-sharing groups contribute to a sense that each member’s opinion and presence are important. Large group events facilitate a sense of community and purpose for members that many other clubs on campus fail to produce. Furthermore, I believe that the most essential focus of CLC is the attention attributed to uncovering each member’s personal vocation. Many college students long to discover their true calling; the combination of action and reflection that Christian Life Community offers allows participants to find their place in the world. My only hope is that the program continues to grow, enabling the SCU student body to recognize God’s dream for them and truly transform them into people for and with others.
Metro New York Region

We have been blessed with two new communities that are exploring the CLC way of life, one in Jersey City, New Jersey and the other in Woodbury, Connecticut. At St. Aedan’s parish in Jersey City, Lourdes de Castro and Steve Macy from Loyola CLC have been guiding a group of 25 parishioners through an introduction to CLC. In Woodbury, Marie Seeger has been doing the same with a group of about 9 interested people. What has been an added grace and really wonderful to see is that both groups have received the support of the Metro Region. Members from several CLC groups have taken the initiative to attend meetings and support Lourdes and Marie in their endeavors. As a result, this new life has truly become a regional project where many have embraced the responsibility to help the Region grow and develop.

As part of their program this year, Faber CLC took as a communal apostolate to serve at the Park Avenue Christian Church Welcome Table. Faber opened this up to other CLCs in the area as a regional apostolate. Two communal apostolates were undertaken by the North New Jersey CLC and the San Lorenzo CLC as they sponsored and ran Days or Evenings of Prayer to share Ignatian Spirituality.

The Metro Council and the Leadership Seminar have encouraged all to stretch themselves and ask what it means for us to be a Prophetic Apostolic Lay Community. We focused on this at our two Days of Prayer in Advent and Lent led by Fr. Bernie Owens, S.J. The KCLC has been part of this new life and growth as they have had new members make their First Commitment at the Advent Day of Prayer. After Easter KCLC had a beautiful Eucharist and ceremony for nine members who made their Permanent Commitment at Mt. Manresa, Staten Island. The region is in the process of going through an Introductory Program for people in San Lorenzo CLC and Faber CLC. Hopefully there will be more ceremonies of commitment in the year ahead.

For all this life in the region we should be grateful to God. Let us thank God and ask that we have the grace and courage to move on in our attempts to be CLC and to further our apostolic outreach in new and imaginative ways.

Missouri Region

This past Lenten season contained special inspiration for local CLC members in the form of a daily E-mail scripture message from Fr. Robert (Cos) Costello, S.J. The messages were most welcome and offered additional reflection during this holy time.

On March 24, we celebrated World CLC Day at St. Francis Xavier College Church located on the campus of Saint Louis University. Sixteen of us were led through a discernment exercise planned by the members of Discipleship CLC. The day began with prayer and a call for one member of each local CLC to present the Mission Statement of his/her respective community. This stepping off point gave the focus for the rest of the day with small group sharing, a scavenger hunt, pot luck lunch and reflection. We closed the day with Fr. Cos celebrating Mass. A huge thank you goes to Discipleship CLC - Sr. Mary Ann Wachtel, Judy Szot, Pat Carter, Sr. Pat Hottinger and Jack Shannon.

Our newest CLC arrived at choosing the name of Peter Faber, S.J., the first of Ignatius’ companions. He was also the first to be ordained to the priesthood. His early life was spent as a shepherd before he went to Paris to study. It was here he met Ignatius. The new CLC group has been meeting for almost a year with six members, Joan Felling, Mary Mondello, Thomas Simon, Marian Love, John Shaughnessy and Fr. Robert (Cos) Costello, S.J.

In late winter, Yvonne and Don DeHart put the finishing touches on the school supplies and t-shirt project for St. Aloysius High School in Nairobi, Kenya, established by African members of CLC. After packing the boxes, Yvonne and Don sent them out, winging their way to students who love their school. You can see pictures of the students on Facebook and at the school website.

We are looking toward more ways of being together. Plans are in motion for a summer gathering of local CLC members.

North Central Region

After almost two decades of service as Treasurer of North Central Region, Bob Smith has decided to retire. The region is searching for Bob’s replacement. CLCers from the Omaha area celebrated the anniversary of Father Jack Zuercher’s passing with a Mass at Elwood Tower. This was followed by telling “Z” stories and a display of “Z baubles.” Prayers are requested for the sick, Father Pat Malone, S.J. of Remnant CLC and Mickey Dodson of Quest for Metanoia and Ruth CLCs.
Your contribution can make a difference in faith formation, building community and promoting the Ignatian charism.

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