VATICAN II

AND

THE YEAR OF FAITH
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The calling of Vatican Council II in October of 1962 came following developments in scriptural and liturgical renewal. There was increased awareness of the global family. There was a recognized need for reform in the Church. The affairs of the world in post-World War II – the Cold War, Communism, threats of nuclear destruction – were beckoning the Church to be involved.

The fifty years since the opening of Vatican II have gone by faster than I care to admit. The pre-council days of Catholicism for me spanned my youth and the first couple years of my marriage. The Church meant a great deal to me, and I endeavored to live by the rules laid down - abstaining from meat on Friday, the midnight fast before receiving Holy Communion, and ‘avoiding scandal’ by not associating with Protestants or attending their places of worship, to mention a few. I remember, too, crowds of worshipers at Eucharistic adoration and the Stations of the Cross. It was the time of looking at the backs of priests during the Eucharistic celebration and being attentive to their words with a “Yes, Father” mentality. The ‘universal-ity’ of the Latin Mass was embraced especially if one used a daily missal so that the Latin could be understood. The Church’s emphasis prior to Vatican II was on personal salvation, not one concerned with relationships and the world beyond oneself. Speaking about sex was pretty much taboo even among married couples. It was a time I heard little or nothing about peace and non-violence, equality and opportunity. Living through those years, I remember thinking that the Church had all the answers, and there wasn’t room or need for me to enter into the discussion.

Having said all this, husband Ray and I found ourselves in a very advantageous position in the years immediately preceding Vatican II. We had joined the New York Professional Sodality. From 1957 to the opening of the Council, we were being prepared by our formation program for the deliberations about to start in Rome. Our moderator, Father Francis K. Drolet, S.J. had traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe. In these travels he experienced beginnings of liturgical renewal and had contacts with laity and clergy who shared visions and dreams of a future church in which dialogue among clergy and laity was the rule, not the exception. It was a church where lay people would be prepared to take their place in the world. Father Drolet believed that “…a competent professional person, a Christian steeped in the mind of the Church, spreads ideas in his/her field to influence not only individuals but whole segments of society.”

Although I can’t remember the exact moment of the Council’s opening, I do recall that we were filled with hope for something even greater regarding our involvement in the Church and the world. We believed we were all called to holiness. We looked forward to greater participation in the Mass. (As Sodalists we were already having dialogue Masses and shared homilies.) We were thrilled to be able to open our Bibles and read and reflect on the text for ourselves. We were pleased to share with members of other faiths our common bonds. As part of our ongoing formation in Sodality, we were reading and discussing all the news coming out of Rome. People were getting involved in their local parishes. Others were pursuing the world outside, especially in concern for the poor, in ecumenical endeavors and interracial activities. There were new and exciting ways to serve our God. Our minds were expanding as was our field of mission. How exciting it was to say, “We are the Church!”

What happened to the dialogue, collaboration and collegiality promised by the Council?

My participation in the liturgy today, reflects the influence of the Council. I can be found serving as a lector, an EM, a greeter or even an acolyte. I can add petitions to the Prayer of the Faithful. I lift my hands in the Our Father and extend a greeting of peace. Outside of Mass,
I bring the Eucharist to the homebound and to patients in the hospital. Who would have thought in the 1950’s that this would come to pass? As positive and rich as these experiences are, I have also been ‘shut out’ of parish decision making. More than once at a parish council meeting or liturgy meeting, I have been ‘put in my place’ being reminded that the pastor was “the canonical head of this church.” What happened to the dialogue, collaboration and collegiality promised by the Council?

The Council raised our hopes and many advances were made. However, the work of the Council is not complete. Equality of women in the Church, for example, is not a fact. (Women religious have been taken to task. On another level, a local parish refused to include women in the Holy Thursday washing of the feet.) The laity are on parish councils, but their suggestions often are ignored. The use of Latin is coming into favor again. (Why?) Even the new translation of the Roman Missal seems a step into the past.

We Catholics are aware that the Church moves slowly. We are also aware of conservative actions that are being reintroduced. Keeping these in mind, there is good reason for us to revisit the documents of Vatican II, study them and make them our own. Then we need to take responsibility for speaking up for the truths they contain. CLC should use the resources they provide as part of our ongoing formation.

I believe the Year of Faith being celebrated in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II can be served well by revisiting the accomplishments of the Council and by rededicating our efforts to live by the vision and spirit of it. The Council opened our eyes to the treasure and gift of our Scriptures. It led to the gift of the healing ministry – a ministry made possible through the eyes of faith. It reminded us of the need for good works in addition to our profession of faith. It helped us join with other Christians in proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Within This Issue

Our President, Mong-Hang Nguyen, tells of the changes on our National ExCo, especially introducing President-elect Rick Kunkle and Treasurer Sophie Nguyen. She announces the upcoming CLC-USA’s participation in the 450th Jubilee of Ignatian Lay Communities. Hang also includes a few comments on Vatican II and the Year of Faith.

Bert Thelen, S.J., is Ecclesial Assistant for the Wisconsin Province and guest EA for this issue of Harvest. Read his upbeat reflection, “Vatican II: A Backward and Forward Glance.”

The editorial team is pleased to include an excerpt by Joan Chittister, OSB, “Vatican II - 50 Years Later.” We welcome her remarks as she shares some insights on the Council from the viewpoint of a woman religious.

Next we present reflections by four CLCers on their experiences from the opening of the Council to the present day Church: Maryanne Rouse, “Reflections on Vatican II;” Dr. Thomas A. Bausch, “Vatican II – An Affirmation at the Beginning of Marriage and a Professional Career;” Daryl P. Domning, “Vatican II: 50 Years and Still Unfinished;” and Susan Mountin, “A Reflection on Vatican II.” Many of their comments resonated with my own experiences. Read on to see how/if you were touched by them.

We depart from the present Harvest theme to bring up-to-date information on the recent Leadership Assembly. President-elect Rick Kunkle presents an in depth look in “Overview of the 2012 Pittsburgh Leadership Assembly.” Consider using this material with your local CLC. “Letting God” by Frank Vuong, “A Reflection on the Leadership Assembly” by Steven Macy and “The Fifth Leadership Assembly” by Marie Schimelfening will add to your understanding of what transpired there.

The second theme of this issue is the Year of Faith. Sophie Nguyen’s, ”A Heart’s Journey” tells of her discernment to become CLC-USA Treasurer. It serves as a testament to the faith she professes and practices. Matthew Juliano’s immersion experience is reported in “A Nineteen Year Old’s Experience with Homelessness.” His reliance on God during his challenging moments is another witness to the power of faith.

Please take note of our current Financial Report by Sophie Nguyen and news from the Missouri Region by Mary Wescovich.

In the peace and love of God,

Dorothy M. Zambito
Dear CLC Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings from Houston! As I sat down to write the highlights of the national community’s events, the word “TRANSITION” came to my mind. We had a busy first half of the year with significant changes in the national leadership. Clare Maing finished her term and Christine Kim was elected to be the new KCLC President. Kim-Anh Vu also completed her term as President of Dong-Hanh CLC and Hoang An Mai was elected to take her place. Christine and An, best wishes to you in your new roles. Also, the National Coordinating Council (NCC) welcomed eight additional new members from KCLC and Dong-Hanh CLC as part of its expansion to give a better representation for the cultural groups. The expanded NCC has twenty-six members. Two new members of ExCo were elected: Rick Kunkle (President-elect) and Sophie Nguyen (Treasurer). We said farewell to three ExCo officers: Liem Le (Past President), Paula Burgan (Secretary) and Kitty Gray (Treasurer). We owe them more than just gratitude. They have served CLC-USA with dedication and love. We will miss Liem who catalyzed the reorganization process with his vision of “CLC-USA as an organic body,” where all the components need to be fully functional and to be fully connected in order to give life to the body and to each other. We will miss Paula who has served as Secretary for seven years. Connecting people virtually, keeping up with the regions and dealing with hundreds of pages of meeting minutes are not simple tasks. But she did them! We will miss Kitty who generously accepted again to take on the treasurer role when Clarence Markham had to leave ExCo due to his health. Kitty has kindly offered to continue assisting the current treasurer in the accounting and finance work.

Welcome Rick and Sophie to ExCo! Many of us have known Rick Kunkle for many years at the last three National Assemblies and the last four Leadership Assemblies. Rick is from the Northwest Region. He and his wife, Anne, live in Olympia, Washington. They are blessed with two children, Aaron and Claire. He joined CLC in the early 1990’s and has served in various leadership roles: Northwest representative on the NCC from 1998 to 2003, CLCNW Regional Chair in 2004 and re-structuring Working Group co-chair. Rick has also been involved in several national committees including the communications committee, the temporary membership committee and the temporary financial resources committee. I had a chance to work closely with Rick in the re-structuring Working Group, and I am always touched by his deep love for CLC and his strong leadership skills.

If you attended any of the past five Leadership Assemblies, you would remember Sophie Nguyen who organized the “Pittsburgh by night” events. She is full of energy and has a special gift of bringing people together as one community. Sophie joined Dong-Hanh CLC in 2004 in the Dong-Hanh CLC Southwest Region. She has served in several leadership roles in the Region (Secretary, Assistant Coordinator, SEED Organizer, and on the Formation Team). Sophie and her husband, Trung Pham, (member of the WG, D&O committee) live in Huntington Beach, CA and are blessed with 3 children, Chris, Mark and Catherine Trinh (currently coordinator of a pre-CLC youth community).

Another important transition: the June Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh was the last of the five Leadership Assemblies. Eight years after the National Assembly in Miami, we begin transitioning into a “new way of being organized and served as a national community.” At the June meeting, the WG presented the proposal of a new framework for the CLC-USA organization with details on organizing communities and the governing body. The leaders and NCC members prayerfully entered into communal discernment during the whole weekend. Many grace-filled moments were experienced!
There was fear of the unknown and there was hope for the new organization. There were joyful tears of being together and there were painful tears of letting go. There were love and care for one another. There was the desire of becoming one in our diversity. We humbly faced the challenges on our journey of becoming one. More details are found in Rick Kunkle’s article in this Harvest issue.

Looking ahead to the rest of 2012 and to 2013, CLC-USA is joining with the World community to prepare for the 450 years of Ignatian Lay Communities Jubilee that will start March 25, 2013 (Projects 152). We are called to reflect on the role of the lay Ignatian communities in the Church and in the world. We also reflect and celebrate our 450 years of collaboration with the Society of Jesus and the numerous fruits produced from this collaboration. It is worthwhile to note that we celebrate this jubilee during the same time our Catholic Church celebrates the Year of Faith which begins October 11, 2012 – the 50th Anniversary of the beginning of Vatican Council II. CLC and Vatican II share some historical moments. The General Principles was practically ready in 1964 and could have been proposed at the December 1964 Bombay General Assembly. However, the Executive Council decided to wait until the closing of Vatican II (1967) before presenting the Principles in its most up-to-date form. In 1967, the World Executive Council decided to hold the Assembly in Rome immediately after the Congress for the Lay Apostolate to allow those delegates who participated in the Congress to attend both events. 62 out of 140 Assembly delegates participated in the Congress.

Pope Benedict XVI has announced a Year of Faith to help Catholics appreciate the gift of faith, deepen their relationship with God and strengthen their commitment to sharing faith with each other. The invitation is a call to all of us to live out our Christian vocation by deepening our communion with God, deepening our union with the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, and by participating more effectively and ardently in the mission of Christ through the Church. The invitation is spelled out very clearly in GP#4:

“Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church. 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.”

By living out our charism, we are responding to the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI for the Year of Faith. To celebrate the 450th Anniversary of Ignatian Lay Communities, let’s remember our graced history, prayerfully review our charism, and seriously live out the CLC way of life to which we are committed. May God lead us into the Year of Faith with renewed enthusiasm and hope.

United in prayers and service,
Mong-Hang Nguyen

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
Vatican II: A Backward and Forward Glance

Bert Thelen, S.J., Ecclesial Assistant Wisconsin Province

It’s hard to put into words the sheer surprise, the powerful impact, the astounding energy, the amazing gratuity, the sudden grace of Vatican II. In the parlance of the 1960s, it was not so much a meeting, but a happening. It was like a hurricane, and the tidal wave it caused is still changing the landscape of the Church. It was Pentecost déjà vu. A mighty wind swept through the halls and cathedrals, the chanceries and offices, the nooks and crannies of Roman Catholicism.

Personally, I was right in the eye of the storm, right in the middle of the long formation process of a Jesuit. I began the study of Sacred Theology preparatory to priesthood just as the Council was being convoked. During my years of study at St. Mary’s College and St. Louis University, exciting news of a renewed church was drifting down to us on the plains of Kansas and in the streets of St. Louis. Remember, this was before computers and e-mail and cell phones and the Internet. We didn’t see or hear much that was going on in the Holy City. And we were still being taught the time-honored theology of old manuals, treatises and syllogisms. Almost no Sacred Scripture. There were some stunning exceptions. I, for one, discovered Karl Rahner. This forever changed the way I thought about and related to God and the People of God.

June, 1968. Time to be ordained in a country that was going through its own storms in a world-wide Church in the throes of conversion. Though we had learned how to do it, most of us did not ever have to say the Latin Mass of our youth. Our first Masses were said facing the people, in their language, with a real dialogue. Participation, not just observation. For me it was terrifying, but liberating. I literally shook when I got ready for Mass! I prepared homilies for hours.

But even in the process of my personal adjustment to a new way of being Church, I was aware of something stupendous going on – not just within me, but all around me and far beyond. It was the coming to an end of some belief and the beginning of a new age of the Spirit. It was Resurrection – the recovery of the original global Christianity – a flaming, flaring, pouring forth of a Pentecostal flame, a new fire that burned down walls and could not be extinguished, despite so many efforts over the past 50 years. Gone and, hopefully, gone forever was Church at its core as hierarchical patriarchy. Now it was the fulfillment of Jesus’ dream of the new people of God and Paul’s insistence of Church as the One Body of Christ. No longer could we Catholics envision ourselves as superior to and separate from our Eastern and Protestant sisters and brothers, or even our Jewish and Muslim cousins. We were, all of us together, One Holy People of God.

Holiness was no longer the province and expectation of only the ordained and vowed members of the Body. It was the call to all members, female and male, single and married, gay and straight, non-Christian and Christian.

No monopoly on authority. The Holy Spirit is present, active and vocal in everyone – diversity of gifts, oneness of Spirit. The Bishops, when they were to speak, were to speak in concert, as a college, and even the Pope needed to listen to them and to the voices of the faithful.
We were so excited! So grateful! So inspired! So hopeful! So joyful! It felt like it must have felt for those first communities of disciples after Jesus rose from the dead. We were one in the Spirit, one in the Risen Lord, and every form of unity was about to be restored!

Yes, that was 50 years ago. But it’s still here! We’ve only just begun! In fact, we’ve hardly yet begun living this new way of being God’s Holy People. Lots of going backwards. Lots of re-trenching. Lots of forgetting. But, like the Big Bang and Pentecost Sunday, the Spirit is a-movin’ all over the land! It’s out there now. It cannot be stopped. It will survive and even flourish. The Spirit of the Living God is moving and throbbing and engendering and re-shaping us into a radically New Creation in Truth and in Unity and in Peace and in Harmony.

“Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your divine love!”

Fr. Bert Thelen, S.J.

Born in Milwaukee in 1933, I grew up in the company of six sisters, all of us raised by our paternal grandparents. After 18 years of Catholic education, after one year of graduate school at Marquette, I entered the Jesuits in 1956. Following the usual formation program for Jesuits, I was ordained a priest at Gesu Church in 1968. My first assignment was setting up a Theology Department and Pastoral-Retreat program at Creighton Prep in Omaha. There, too, I was invited by Maryanne and Tim Rouse into a CLC group they initiated, which I benefited from greatly. Then I was sent to Marquette University to be the Director of Campus Ministry in 1977 after a Sabbatical year at Harvard in 1976. After only two years at MU, I was invited by the provincial, Fr. Joseph Labaj, to join the Province staff. During my tenure as provincial, I started an experiment in lay association with the Jesuits called “Ignatian Associates.” So, when I attended GC34 it is not surprising that I was instrumental in producing the document, “Cooperation with the Laity in Mission.”

In some ways, this is the defining passion of my life: the empowerment of the laity to be the primary evangelizers and the Ignatian presence in the Church and world today. That is why I so eagerly said “Yes” to Fr. Jack Zuercher when he invited me to carry on his work and presence with all of you. I just finished a sabbatical after 14 years as pastor of St. John’s at Creighton, my favorite apostolic assignment because it enabled me to put my vision of an engaged laity into practice, as well as to preach the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I am adamant, persistent, passionate, even relentless, about fulfilling the prophetic words of Pope John Paul II: “The Church of the 21st Century will be the Church of the laity.” I believe CLC is one of the best structures to make this dream come true, and God only knows how urgently this reform is needed. My other passion, dream, commitment is to eco-spirituality. We have to get back to the garden if we’re going to heal our planet. I look forward to reconnecting, praying and celebrating with all of you.
As Vatican II ended, I was just about to begin doctoral studies in communication theory and social psychology. I didn’t know a lot about either subject at the time, but, with one foot in religious life spawned by the Council of Trent and the other in a religious life awash in Vatican II, I knew that anthropologists and social psychologists were missing the academic news of the century. Right in front of their eyes, a subculture was about to unleash its own cultural transformation—by design, with impunity, and in toto. It was a human undertaking of massive proportions. It added a great deal to religious life, but it exacted a cost as well. Or, as Robert Hooker put it over two centuries ago, “Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.”

Of all the church, the people most mobilized for change were women religious. Mandated to hold renewal chapters and write renewal constitutions, groups retrained their entire memberships in the theology of Vatican II in anticipation of what would of necessity be a community project. Change was impossible without the support of the entire group. Groups suspended their Vatican I constitutions and instituted experimentation in every area of religious life.

It was an exciting time. It was also a dangerous time, a time of great personal tension and deep spiritual struggle.

The truth is that religious life had been formed in the spirituality of the virgins and martyrs, of sacrifice and perseverance—virtues men had traditionally required of women—when what Vatican II called for was the spirituality of priests and prophets, of community-building and witness. It was, then, on the deepening, the broadening, of both personal development and spirituality that the transition to Vatican II religious life really depended. To bring the church into the modern world, it would take women committed to risk and with courage for the unknown. But prophecy and risk are not the hallmarks of large groups. It was not the large groups who started religious life, and it is not large groups that will renew it now. Religious life must travel light into the future, burdened by nothing of its successes of the past, held down by none of its past goals but fresh in direction, vital in its meanings for the people of today.

A movement that loses its creative edge loses its vision and its reason for existence. A movement that is only radical can lose both its popular base and its stabilizing foundation. The continuing task of Vatican II is to sharpen the edge of religious life again. What religious did for past generations, they must now do for the forgotten peoples of our own generation. A whole new global population must be carried beyond the limitations of their lives, become visible to those who see them not, be heard by those who are deaf to their tears.

Conformity is no longer the major religious virtue, togetherness masking as community, and the fear of change is no longer the agenda of religious life. Renewal of spirit, openness to new needs and depth, if not necessarily length, of personal commitment has become the new norm. “Why did you come here?” I asked a new applicant. “Because this is the only group of women I have been able to find that cares about exactly what I do—community, the gospel of Jesus, and a commitment to peace and justice,” she said simply. Interestingly enough, I couldn’t help but think that her answer sounded to me exactly like what Vatican II wanted from religious, too: that they would examine their life from the perspective of the “charism of the founder, the needs of society, and the gifts of their members.” But if that’s the case, religious life is not only new again, it is also a long way from being over.

Joan Chittister is an internationally known author and lecturer on topics which include justice, peace and equality in the church and the world. She is a recognized and highly respected voice in contemporary spirituality. She is a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania where she serves as Executive Director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality.

Reflection on Vatican II

Maryanne Rouse

When Vatican II began I was a senior at Creighton University, preparing for graduation in June and my first English teaching position in a girls’ high school here in Omaha.

My recollection about that time is of a great deal of excitement in conversation and in the religious and secular press, though I must admit that the duties of teaching English to about 150 students with hundreds of paper to correct, and my pending marriage to Tim in June, 1963 did not seem to leave a lot of room for consideration of the activities and decisions happening in Rome.

However, I vividly recall my first personal experience of a move toward the vernacular and away from the Latin that Vatican II heralded. It was Holy Thursday; my dad and I were at Mass and there in the program was the announcement that thanks to changes to the Liturgy due to Vatican II, we would ALL be saying the Our Father in the Mass in English!

This is also the first time in my memory that my father accompanied me to Mass and to Holy Communion. It was a different era and though I stewed about being the only one in my family to receive the sacraments, I never asked nor knew the reasons. I do know the precipitating cause for his return and it was for me.

Tim and I were inviting the congregation to join us in Holy Communion at our wedding, something you had to arrange and note in the wedding program—if you can imagine! My father told me in response to the look of shock on my face that he had decided that my wedding would be a “good time” to take this step and he wanted to join me in this special aspect of Tim’s and my “big day.”

The blessings of Vatican II and my Dad’s gift remain inexorably linked for me.

In the following years, I and others were to learn about the many other blessings that Vatican II made possible for us: an enhanced role as lay people in the church’s ministries, the possibility of home Masses, the legitimacy of worshiping with non-Catholics, and the Church’s relationship with Muslims and Jews. Of special note, the Church as “the People of God!”

In the late ’60s, spurred by the spirit of Vatican II, two of us headed an effort in our parish to hold a home Mass in each of ten districts into which the parish had been divided for this purpose. Before each Mass, there was an evening of catechesis about the Mass, its history and the privilege of bringing its celebration into homes. Wonderfully attended, this experience is one of my highlights as a minister in a parish. Since then, thanks to my CLC gift in large part, we have participated in numerous meaningful Masses in homes.

Vatican II opened the gift of the Holy Scripture to all who could read and study. Before that, I didn’t even own my individual Bible. Years later, with a number of Scripture studies under my belt, my own now dog-eared and lovingly underlined Bible is available for prayer and reflection on the printed texts and my hand-written additions.

As I write this, I join others who fear about the future of the Vatican II legacy. It was often heralded as an “opening of windows” and a welcome of the freshness of the Holy Spirit’s gifts for all of us. In radical contrast to this, I now sense a turning back in the activities of some of the Church’s officials to a time of inherited privilege, secret dealings and exclusion.

It is a temptation to allow others to bury the gifts that we have experienced; it is our right and duty to remain true to the legacy of Vatican II that we have embraced. These are some of the reasons that our CLC call to community is to be cherished and used to support us in this type of commitment to the truth through Vatican II that we have seen and tried to live.

Maryanne and Tim Rouse are original members of QM CLC in Omaha for over 40 years. They have both been in leadership for CLC in a variety of roles; both were National Presidents, but not together. Maryanne currently is Co-Chair of the North Central Region and guiding a new community, Remnant. Maryanne is a part-time student advisor for the College of Business at Creighton University. She facilitates a leadership development program for undergraduates in which they serve using their “business skill” in the Omaha community. Tim and Maryanne are parents of three, grandparents of seven and great-grandparents of four.
Nineteen sixty-two was a most eventful year for Bernie and me. We were married. We made the decision to make the directed Exercises for 30 days and began preparation. We also made the decision to return to Indiana University so that I could earn a PhD in International Business. Of greatest importance, we fully opened our lives to children and to date have been blessed with the gifts of 8 children and 16 grandchildren. The dignity and purposefulness of all of these decisions and actions flowed from the goodness of God directly to us through our vocations as laypersons, not through doing the work of the hierarchy. This is not a criticism of the hierarchy because they, for the most part, were faithfully living out what they, like us, had been taught.

Although in 1962 and 1963 we did not know it, the affirmation of us as laypersons was core to the teachings and spirit of Vatican II. All of these decisions and actions were affirmed by Vatican II or, as some say, “The Council on the Laity.” Exciting changes were for the most part very positive. On the other hand, we the laity were like teenagers discovering their identity and we did some stupid things. (How many of you my age can remember that first Mass using Wonder Bread?) We did not remember who we were, but we knew we were not the slaves of the hierarchy!

Five teachings of Vatican II had a great influence on us. Vatican II said yes to us as married laypersons in which, including through sex, Bernie and I were called to holiness. We the laity were making our own the tools, like the Exercises, necessary for holiness. It was very clear and comforting to me to see the work for which I was preparing as a vocation would serve God and his people directly, and not just to do the will of the hierarchy. It was wonderful to know that if I devoted four years of my life to earning a PhD, His will for me, I would be able to use my skills and talents to do his will in building the kingdom of God. My work as an expert in International Business was not something that would get in the way; it would be the way I would serve God.

Finally, something I do not think is understood by those who did not live through the changes, the renewal of the liturgy brought new and dynamic life to all of us.

What I am writing here is focused on the years just before Vatican II and during the first year of the Council. To a great extent for us, Vatican II affirmed where we were and provided a firm grounding for what we believed, the language necessary to explain it to others and challenging horizons for the future. I know this was not the journey of many others who found all to be new, radical, nothing but change, or on the other hand, saw the change as a new experience, little more than a fad.

Bernie and I had been greatly blessed with an excellent education, she with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Corondolet and Dominican fathers at St. Catherine’s College in St. Paul and I by the Jesuits at John Carroll University. One of my Theology Professors was a doctoral student under John Courtney Murray, S.J. I was introduced to Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. by that great promoter of CLC, Father Nick Reiman, S.J. In preparation for marriage Bernie and I read Three to Get Married by Bishop Fulton Sheen. Bernie and I had been blessed by great teachers who led us to good material and prepared us to accept something as rich as Vatican II. As I look back at the Council and my experience, I ask two questions. Have we cheated the younger generations out of excellent preparation in the faith? Second, do we have sufficient intellectual content in our CLC formation programs?
Bernie and I made the *Spiritual Exercises* in a small, rural retreat house in the Diocese of Toledo even though we and most of the other retreatants were living in the Diocese of Cleveland. The bishop of Cleveland had decreed that laypersons were not to make 30-day retreats in his diocese. They were only for priests and religious. Vatican II blasted this type of thinking out of the water and proclaimed, “It is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank and status, are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”

This statement was exciting, for it led to my thinking about my work as vocation and, as John Paul would stress, the fact that I am the subject of my work, I become who I am through my work. Or again, in the words of *Lumen Gentium*, “Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and work through charity.”

One of my great disappointments since Vatican II is the relative lack of interest in promoting laity for eventual canonization. I have been tangentially involved with the promotion of the cause for an Argentine industrialist, Endrique Ernesto Shaw and have found it very difficult to develop interest, even among Catholic business groups. We do need models.

As I reflect on the fifty years since Vatican II, I wonder if the laity has failed to embrace the universal call to holiness. I certainly know many persons who lead a very rich spiritual life that leads to action or acceptance of suffering, persons who take advantage of the rich resources that have become available. I am very grateful for the many women and laypersons doing spiritual direction, something quite new after Vatican II. On the other hand, there are many who have left the Catholic culture that people my age knew. This was a culture of statues and pictures of the Sacred Heart in the home, life focusing on the parish and “Father”, and a life where reminders of the fact of being Catholic were present all the time. Today many of these folks never become a part of the community of a parish, attend Mass only on Sunday, and eventually leave to join the second largest religious group in the US today – former Catholics.

What happened to the spirituality of those in Sodality/CLC? I found, as did most of my sodalist friends that Vatican II fostered the proliferation of new materials and speakers that enabled our spirituality to grow. As I look at CLC today, fifty years after the Council, I have some doubts about the robustness of CLC spirituality especially in regard to the Exercises. How many of us are making a five or eight-day retreat on an annual basis? I think we all ought to be asking ourselves similar questions in regard to the elements that go into a CLC spirituality as spelled out in our *General Principles and General Norms*.

A monk was walking through the countryside when he came across three masons laying brick. He asked them what they were doing. The first answered, “Making money.” The second responded, “I am working so that I can support my wife and children and meet my responsibilities to my church and community.” The third replied, “As I lay these bricks, I am building a Cathedral that will give honor and glory to God.” This little story captures one of the gifts to all of us from Vatican II for it captures the dignity of human work. It was an exciting concept that I did not fully understand at the time, but the Council unleashed extensive thought, research and writing over the years and there is now a vast body of literature on work. (A wonderful newsletter tracking all of this work as well as action is published by the National Center for the Laity in Chicago.) All of us as a society have a long way to go in creating a culture where all persons, as is their God-given right, can achieve the dignity that comes with having purpose, that is, building their cathedral to the greater honor and glory of God through their work. If we are employers, managers or supervisors, we have very direct responsibilities. If we are a customer, co-worker or in some other non-supervisory role, we must always treat others with dignity.

For many of us the most exciting word coming from Vatican II was vocation. We grew up having been taught that the only vocations were to the priesthood or religious life. With Vatican II, we had to work with and understand that we all had a vocation, primarily to the married life or as single persons, but also applying our God-given skills and abilities to all sorts of work as a vocation.

My generation certainly did not get everything correct; we probably blew many aspects of Vatican II. One that troubles me is an overemphasis on apostolate within the Church rather than apostolate in the public square, the marketplace, the world. This was a teaching of Vatican II that excited me. It certainly stressed that the call of the laity is normally to the world in and through all of our activities in the world. I do not mean to undervalue in any way the great work being done, often under difficult conditions and with low pay, by lay persons who work full time for the Church. I am worried about the undervaluing of the vocation of the laity in the world. One of the roles of the parish, CLC, and other groups in the Church should be to support those with a family and those working in the world. We are the presence of Christ in the world.

Vatican II truly called all of us to be the presence of Christ in the world. This was a heady idea in 1962 and it is a heady idea in 2012. Most of us in 1962 were gung-ho. Do we have that same enthusiasm today?
Daryl P. Domning

At the end of the Second Vatican Council, someone said we would need at least 50 years to understand its meaning for the Church. That certainly describes the place it has had in my own faith journey.

Growing up before Vatican II as a cradle Catholic in Biloxi, Mississippi, I experienced the Church as devoid of problems. I liked Latin, and didn’t mind my short stint as an altar boy serving at the Tridentine Mass. There were no sexual or financial scandals (that we knew of). There were plenty of religious vocations, represented by the Sisters of Mercy and the Holy Cross brothers who taught me (hardly any lay teachers in those days), and by our pastor Monsignor O’Connell and our other priests imported directly from Ireland (since Mississippi is officially mission territory). Bishops were reputed to exist, but were almost never seen in Biloxi, 170 miles from the diocesan seat in Jackson. About the only impact one ever had on my life was the school holiday we once got in honor of the installation of a new auxiliary. Black Catholics had their own church and school in a different part of town. All was calm.

Vatican II began when I was in high school and ended when I was in college. I didn’t much notice it, until things started to change, solving problems we hadn’t realized we had. Mass in English? OK – come to think of it, the Greek and then Latin had just been vernacular translations of the Aramaic that Jesus and the Apostles spoke. The sign of peace, Communion under both species, and all the rest likewise seemed perfectly logical, and welcome. We were oblivious to the behind-the-scenes struggles in Rome that it had taken to accomplish these reforms – to bury, for example, the idea that “error had no rights,” making clear that people besides Catholics should have freedom of religion and that church doctrine could develop through time. There was even something called the “hierarchy of doctrines” that the Baltimore Catechism had never told us about: limbo and fish on Friday were not, as it turned out, of equal weight with the Trinity and the Incarnation!

But the struggles were far from over. As the noted canonist Fr. Ladislas Orsy, S.J. pointed out in a talk a couple of years ago, the main failure of Vatican II lay in not making the practical, structural arrangements that were needed to support the reforms it enacted in principle, such as subsidiarity and collegiality of bishops. National bishops’ conferences and synods came into being, but were quickly emasculated; the reactionaries in the Curia saw to it that the bishops could never again seize the reins as they had at the Council.

Pope Paul had brought Pope John’s Council to fruition, but he wasn’t ready to accept birth control or a married clergy, so he took those items off the Council’s agenda and reserved those decisions to himself. The turning point for the Church came three years later, with Humanae Vitae (1968).

By then I had studied ecological concepts like carrying capacity (how many individuals of a species a habitat can support) and exponential population growth. As a student of paleontology and biology, I understood the reality of resource limitations and extinction. Long before it manifested itself in human-caused climate change, the catastrophic potential of human overpopulation was obvious to me as to others – but not, it seemed, to Pope Paul. I read his encyclical and found it divorced from reality. That was what first awakened me to the necessity of ongoing reform in the Catholic Church: the Church simply carries too much weight in global affairs for its influence.
to be placed on the wrong side of the balance, especially when the survival of civilization itself is at risk.

The train of church reform had left the station in 1965 and had already picked up a lot of speed. But then, with the engine still at full throttle, the conductor back in the caboose started setting the brakes. The stresses that put on the train were immediately and loudly obvious. Paul VI, followed by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, nonetheless kept braking, even reversing, reforms that the consensus of the faithful demanded and the Council fathers had overwhelmingly approved. “Creeping infallibility” continues. Theologians and nuns are subjected to inquisitions. Liturgical texts are being re-Latinized. “Pelvic issues” dominate Rome’s moral theology, at the expense of social justice. And the issues of birth control and clerical celibacy still fester unresolved, now joined by women’s ordination and other concerns that were not even on Vatican II’s radar.

St. Ignatius, who had problems with the Inquisition himself, laid down “rules for thinking with the Church” that go so far as to say we should hold that white is black if the hierarchical church so decides it. But before Ignatius, Jesus had a more compelling rule for thinking with the church: the parable of the Good Shepherd. For Jesus, the sheep have the last word, discerning whether those who present themselves as pastors truly speak with the voice of the authentic Shepherd. “They will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” (John 10:5)

The Vatican still maintains an office devoted to coaxing back into the church the tiny right-wing schismatic Society of St. Pius X (the Lefebvrist), who reject the reforms of Vatican II. But no comparable effort goes into reconciliation with the far more numerous progressive Catholics who never left, or the many who did leave in despair of future reform. Some leaders of our church have even suggested that we would be better off with a smaller, more “faithful” church. In other words: “Those sheep that strayed? We’re better off without them!” Is this the voice of a good shepherd, who leaves 99 to seek out the one sheep that wanders off? (Matthew 18:12)

As we celebrate 50 years of the Council’s fruits, we must ask: in another 50 years, will Vatican II be just a footnote in history books, or a living witness to the Holy Spirit? We are the sheep who will decide.

**REGIONAL REPORT**

**Missouri Regional Report—Mary Wescovich**

Summer has come to a close and the school year has begun. We look forward to Fall and renewed activity with our local CLC groups. Some take a break from meetings over the summer or have lightened activities such as a day outing or picnic type of get-together. In midsummer, friends from all around gathered at one of St. Louis’ city parks to celebrate with Pat Carter on the occasion of her birthday. There were CLC members along with members of St. Cronan Parish where Pat is a parishioner and a Pastoral Assistant. One highlight of the afternoon was a songfest which featured several of Pat’s friends dressed in cow costumes to promote a micro financing endeavor to raise money for families or communities in Africa to own a cow. In addition, we took the opportunity to spread the word concerning CLC inviting others to get acquainted with CLC by attending a meeting or local gathering.

At DeSmet Jesuit High School, located in suburban St. Louis, Fr. Robert (Cos) Costello, S.J. presented a retreat at the request of the pre-CLC students. It was a great experience for all.

As a result of the June Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh, our President, Hang Nyugen and ExCo decided that a fall in person meeting will be held to continue working on initiatives from the assembly and to give our new representatives the opportunity to get to know members of ExCo and reps of the other regions. This meeting will be held in St. Louis at the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Motherhouse. The dates are October 4 to 7. On Saturday afternoon, we will be joined by local CLC members for Mass, dinner and an evening social.

John XXIII CLC will have its annual retreat October 19 -21. Retreat director, Sr. Carolyn Sur, ssnd, will present the theme, Everyday Mystic.
A Reflection on Vatican II

Susan Mountin

Fifty years ago when Vatican II opened, I was in seventh grade. The good Sisters did what they could to prepare us. I will never forget the long memorized choral reading we performed publicly for the adults in the parish proclaiming that John XXIII had called for an “ecumenical council.” We said that phrase with exclamation marks! As the daughter of a choir member, I recall many conversations at the dinner table about the vernacular and the loss of the beloved Latin Gregorian chant and hymns. But the dismay at the changes in the liturgy did not last long in my small world. English prayers and hymns opened up a new world of participation and more importantly understanding about the Mass and Eucharist as well as other sacraments.

If the liturgy was the external manifestation of Vatican II, other developments were more systemic and spoke of the identity of the Church. The window John XXIII opened stretched a world of relationship with other Christians. The possibility of Christian unity captured imaginations. The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) and the Progress of Peoples (Progressio Populorum) brought the profile of the Church into stark relief with the concerns and issues of the developing world.

It is my hope that this anniversary will allow God’s people to recapture the fervor of those exciting but sometimes scary days. Vatican II drew us outward as a People of God. More contemporary events have drawn us inward. I am grateful for the global spirit of St. Ignatius and his early companions who were missioned throughout the world to see, smell, taste, feel and touch the experiences of others as they explored the mystery that is our God and creator.

IN MEMORIUM

After a longer than expected journey, Mickey Dodson, CLC member of Quest for Metanoia and Ruth communities in Omaha, died of cancer. Mickey had been at home in hospice care for several months and had moved to Hospice House.

In addition to long commitments to her communities, Mickey had served the region outside her own communities in a variety of critical ways: as Co-Convener, as Guide to the Oasis community, as retreat facilitator to a Sun Prairie CLC, to name a few. She also chaired a couple of successful celebrations of World CLC Day that included adults, high school and college CLC members. She served on the Steering Committee of the Gigi Cannon Annual Retreat in Daily Life sponsored by Omaha CLCs. She was a sensitive and supportive spiritual director.

Jim, Mickey’s husband, died when the youngest of their six children was a toddler. She raised her family by returning to school and becoming a special needs teacher. She taught at Madonna School for Exceptional Children in Omaha for over thirty years. After her retirement, she embraced fully the plight of the foster child and worked with organizations that seek to improve their lives through advocacy. Funds were collected and used to enhance the lives of foster children, e.g., the ability to get Senior Class pictures, obtain a Prom dress, or go on a class trip – things that could not be covered in their foster family’s budget.

Mickey died comfortably surrounded by family and dear friends.

Dr. Ralph Del Colle, a member of Gesu Companions in Milwaukee, died July 29 at age 57 with family and friends at his side. Ralph had been a theology professor at Marquette University since 1995. He is survived by his wife, Lee Coppernoll, children Josh and Zoe and his sister Flavia.
The Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh June 28-July 1, 2012 was the last of the five Leadership Assemblies and the beginning of the next steps in our transition process to “a new way of being organized and served as a national community.” This discernment journey has its roots in the growth of CLC in our ethnic communities in the period leading up to the National Assembly in Miami in 2004. Following the Miami Assembly, the National Coordinating Council (NCC) identified a key initiative: to develop the relationships and structures to better support our multi-cultural and multi-age reality. This led to the formation of the Diversity & Organization (D&O) Committee. In discerning the path forward, the committee realized that we first needed to build our relationships as a community and bring our leadership together before addressing our structures. So the D&O Committee (with support from the Formation Committee) organized the first Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh in April 2008.

The five Leadership Assemblies have brought together 50-70 leaders from the CLC-USA Regions and Cultural groups to build relationships among leadership and discern how we are called as a community to live the CLC Charism. One outcome of the first Assembly was the invitation to CLC-USA communities to create their graced history journals. At the second Assembly we discerned how we are being called to apostleship and leadership and identified three priorities for CLC-USA: formation, communication and resources. The third Leadership Assembly considered a set of Guiding Principles for the re-organization process and the NCC gave the mandate to form a Working Group to develop a framework for how CLC-USA should be organized.

The Working Group presented a draft Framework to the fourth Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh in June 2011. At the end of the Leadership Assembly, the NCC gave the Working Group the mandate to continue to develop the details of this Framework and propose a transition plan. The Working Group presented the fruit of its discernment to the fifth Leadership Assembly in June 2012. This Harvest article gives a brief overview of what was presented and the next steps discerned by the Assembly and the NCC.

Our Current Reality

One of the key steps in the Working Group’s discernment was a review of the current reality of CLC-USA. This was presented at the beginning of the Leadership Assembly to provide a context for our proposed vision. CLC-USA has become more multi-cultural in the last 10 years. Much of our growth has been in the Korean and Vietnamese communities. This has brought a new energy to CLC-USA that was reflected in the Miami and Washington, DC National Assemblies. This growth has resulted in some changes in the CLC-USA structure. The ten regions were expanded to add KCLC, Dong Hanh and the South Florida Regions. At the 2011 Leadership Assembly, the NCC discerned to expand itself to better represent the KCLC and Dong Hanh communities.

The NCC is the Governing Body of CLC-USA, with one representative from each of the regions, and now several from the cultural groups, and with one “Young Adult” member. In the current National Statutes, the Executive Council is described as “the administrative arm” of the NCC. It consists of the CLC-USA President, President-elect or Past-President, Secretary, Treasurer and National Ecclesial Assistant. Committees have been created to assist with various aspects in the life of CLC-USA – Formation, Communication, Apostolic Action and Advancement.

CLC-USA today is a federation of 13 “quasi-independent” regional and cultural groups. Each of these groups has its own structures and leadership groups. The experience of CLC varies significantly across regions and cultural groups. Some are fairly vibrant while others are almost non-existent. Some have formation programs that support new and existing members and communities, while others have none.

The national leadership of CLC-USA that exists in the NCC, Executive Council and committees has limited resources and capacity to administer and manage the functions of CLC-USA. This includes such things as knowing who our members are. CLC-USA also has limited ability to deliver services to support members and carry out basic functions like formation and communications. The committees have narrow and sometimes unclear mandates to carry out specific tasks or they tend to function in more of an advisory role. They do not have a leadership base for ongoing guidance, coordination and collaboration in their various service roles and in some cases lack members to do the work.

One of the key findings in the CLC-USA member survey was the aging demographic of our members. More than two-thirds of our members are over 50 years old.
Most of our young members are part of Dong Hanh and most of our new members are in KCLC and Dong Hanh.

There are many positive signs of energy in CLC-USA in our experiences, ministries and apostolic services. However, there are also parts of our organization structure that do not seem to function very well in supporting our mission. We need to reflect on this reality and what it means for CLC-USA as a national body.

The Proposed Vision

The proposed vision for CLC-USA presented by the Working Group at the Leadership Assembly lays out a way of moving forward with our re-structuring process. It proposes elements for a new structure and transition steps for the process. It is not a detailed implementation plan. What is proposed will need to be lived into. Many details will need to be developed as part of the transition process. Progress will need to be evaluated and adjustments made. The discernment process will need to continue. Everyone in CLC will need to be part of this journey together.

The General Principles and General Norms of the Christian Life Community guide our discernment. They express the CLC vocation. They are the vision for CLC as a world community and they are the foundation for the proposed vision for CLC-USA. Our discernment is about what is needed to support living the General Principles.

A central goal of the proposed vision is becoming one prophetic and apostolic body. Our structure needs to develop bonds of community that extend from the local community to the National and World community, to the whole Church and to all people of good will (General Principle 7). We are many parts, but all one body. Our vision strives to bring together the energy of our many parts while recognizing and supporting our diverse needs.

The proposed vision consists of two primary components: community relationships (including membership) and the servant leadership network (services). Relationships connect members and communities and support them in living the CLC way of life. Servant leadership provides direction and a service network that supports community life.

Community Relationships:

In this vision for our future we need to be clear about who is a member, and the processes for membership need to be clear and reflect the CLC General Principles and General Norms. Temporary and permanent commitment is part of CLC membership. Membership includes financial co-responsibility.

Likewise, how a community becomes a member community needs to be clear and needs to reflect the CLC General Principles and General Norms. As described in the General Norms, each community should have a guide and a coordinator – this is something to strive for.

The Delegate Assembly (the NCC in our current model) and the Executive Council are responsible for membership processes. This includes developing guidelines and requirements for formation and acceptance processes. There will be a service network to support these processes.

Clusters are the most basic grouping of communities and are a key element in the re-organization of CLC-USA. Clusters already exist in some parts of CLC-USA. In our proposed vision, all local communities need to be part of a Cluster. Clusters are where members experience being part of a larger community. They provide opportunities for communities to develop relationships that can lead to apostolic action, ministries, and a sense of shared mission. A fundamental role of Clusters is member and community support (formation processes). Clusters select the Delegates for the Delegate Assembly. These Delegates set the direction for CLC-USA and choose its leaders. CLC-USA supports and empowers clusters to carry out these functions through the CLC-USA service network. This is illustrated below showing how Clusters are the source for the leadership in the service network and are supported by that network while also reaching out beyond CLC.

It is important that our structure supports the diverse needs of our communities. Clusters can form as a result of interest, age, culture, or life experience (Affinity). In addition to Clusters, informal networks or groupings of communities can form that support the diverse needs of CLC communities in growing and living the CLC way of life. Service Centers will serve the needs of Affinity Groups. CLC-USA leadership is structured to reflect our diversity.

Servant Leadership Network:

There are two things to recognize in the servant leadership network. First, the servant leadership network extends from National Leadership to the local communities. This network consists of the Delegate Assembly, Executive Council, National Service Offices, and Service Centers and extends into the Clusters (Guides and Coordinators). Second, it is all one team working together to serve the needs of the CLC-USA community.

Conforming to the General Norms, the Delegate Assembly is the ultimate governing body of CLC-USA. It meets every three years. Delegates are discerned by Clusters. The Delegate Assembly aims to represent more fully the body of CLC-USA and more effectively engage local members in the governance of CLC-USA.

The Delegate Assembly selects most of the members of the Executive Council. The Executive Council carries out the policies and directives of the Delegate Assembly and provides leadership for CLC-USA as the ongoing governing body between Delegate Assemblies. The number of members on the Executive Council has been
expanded from its previous size so that it more fully reflects CLC-USA membership and is more capable of carrying out its functions. As a discerning body, the Executive Council communicates and consults with CLC-USA leadership throughout the national community. The Executive Council collectively manages and collaborates with the National Service Offices and works through these offices and the Service Centers that these National Offices support.

The National Service Offices organize and facilitate the services that support the functioning and growth of CLC-USA (Formation, Communication, Mission Advancement, Apostolic Action, National Programs, Ecclesial Assistants Team, Administrative and Financial Services). They support the Service Centers. Service Centers provide the services (particularly formation) that support Clusters, Affinity Groups and local communities. They are the service arm of CLC-USA.

It is important to recognize that many elements of this vision already exist in one form or another in CLC-USA. These include membership and formation processes, Clusters, services and support delivered by Regions and Cultural Groups, various committees, the Executive Council, and the expanded NCC. The challenge in the transition process is to build from where we are and to bring together the various elements into one apostolic and prophetic community. This will require engagement and transformation of our membership from where we are to where we are called to be.

Next Steps

The Working Group presented these details of the vision for a new CLC-USA structure at the June Leadership Assembly in a series of Exercises that included presentations and personal, small, and large group sharing. This discernment process surfaced pros and cons along with the leanings of each small group. This provided the basis for creating a set of proposals considered by the NCC. The seven proposals approved by the NCC at the Leadership Assembly outline the next steps in the transition process to a new way of being organized and served. These proposals are briefly summarized as follows:

The NCC directs the Executive Council to form a committee or task force that will prepare Guidelines that formalize what constitutes membership in CLC.

The NCC directs the Executive Council to form a committee or task force that will define the norms for what constitutes a CLC community.

The NCC directs the Executive Council to prepare, with the assistance of others in the National Community, a plan to address the great need for well-trained Guides throughout the National Community.

The NCC directs the Executive Council, in dialogue with the current committees/teams, to “move ahead” in establishing National Offices. Priority is to be given to the issues identified by the second Leadership Conference in March, 2009: formation, communication and financial co-responsibility.

The NCC directs the Executive Council to prepare a proposal for expanding the number of members of the Executive Council, to be submitted for the agenda of the Fall NCC meeting.

The NCC directs the Executive Council to prepare a proposal to address the great need for leadership training, including the actual training, mentoring, choosing of leaders, and support of leaders after training.

At the time this article was written, the CLC-USA Executive Council and NCC were preparing to meet in St. Louis at the beginning of October. One of the primary objectives of this meeting is to reflect on the Leadership Assembly and begin working on these proposals. As you read this article we will be taking the next steps in the transition process. You will be hearing more about this. We ask for your prayers and for your participation as we journey together.

For more information: CLC-USA has created a website for the reorganization: http://ForOneUnifiedBody.CLC-USA.ORG. It contains documents, presentations, prayers, and other information from the last two Leadership Assemblies, background on the mandate and working group, and other resources. This page will continue to be updated.
Letting God

Frank Vuong

When I was invited to the CLC-USA Leadership Assembly 2012, I had an initial sense of excitement. “Me? A leader in Dong Hanh…in CLC? That’s right! I am the chairperson for the National S.E.E.D Ministry! That’s why I was invited!” Little did I know what I would experience, and I kept it that way. I had little knowledge about this Leadership Assembly, so I did not create any expectations for myself. Up until several weeks before the assembly, I did not know what I would experience in Pittsburgh. Will it be just a gathering? Will I learn to be a better leader? Will I even know anyone there? Most of my questions were answered at the teleconference that helped prepare us, as well as the documents that were sent to us. The CLC-USA Leadership Assembly is almost exactly what it sounds like…an assembly of leaders! However, for what reason? For what purpose? After reading through the documents and being on teleconference I knew we were being called for a momentous task, a meaningful purpose, a discernment process for the greater glory of God.

I learned that all the cultural and regional communities of CLC were to unite in the near future to become a unified body, one body in Christ. We have been called to be a Christian Life Community that would see no boundaries nor abide by any former differences to become one in faith. Yet, in this community, we will retain our unique personalities, ethnicities and cultural flavors that add to a beautiful mix, unified by a single faith and spirituality to serve God and His Church. This was one of the most difficult tasks for me during my weekend in Pittsburgh. It was a realization that struck me swift and hard, but to this day it still has somewhat of a sting that reminds me of the beauty of communal discernment that I experienced at the Gilmary Catholic Retreat Center.

Arriving at the Pittsburgh airport, I had a strong sense of excitement. Traveling has always given me a sense of peace and awe for God’s wonderful world that beckons to be explored. Coming into the retreat center and settling down, I quickly gained a sense of home and community. Without truly knowing, I sensed that the Gilmary Center had a lot of history and had been for many communities a place to discern. Although it was my first time being there, meeting and introducing myself as well as reconnecting with those I already knew gave me a sense of home, a type of home I have become very familiar with through the CLC way of life.

The exercises, triad, small group and large group sharing and discussions were very insightful. I was blessed to experience and witness God’s work through the community discernment about the restructuring of CLC-USA. Listening to what everyone had to say had brought me an even greater appreciation for the collective wisdom that the participants had to offer. I was witnessing individuals who have made permanent commitments to the CLC way of life. This was my opportunity to tap into their wealth of experience and wisdom by engaging in conversation during the breaks and meals. I learned a lot about different cultures from different regions of the country, especially what their thoughts and concerns were about this new embodiment of CLC. It was a pure pleasure to hear stories and life experiences that were shared through dinner conversations and just passing by in hallways and meeting rooms. I felt like the new kid on the block who had so little time to take advantage and learn all I could before going back to my small hometown to spread the news. I am certainly the youngest person who attended the assembly this year, and I was glad to be there to represent the youth as well as the ministry known as SEED.

Frank Vuong is an active member in CLC-USA Dong Hanh. He first encountered the CLC way of life through Mustard Seeds (Hat Cai), a Vietnamese Catholic Prayer and Support group at the University of California Irvine. Frank was recently elected as SEED National Chair, including responsibilities of leading and coordinating the newly formed SEED Ministry spanning coast to coast. SEED is an adapted Ignatian Spirituality retreat catered for children and teenagers ages 6-18. Currently, Frank works as a Behavioral Interventionist, helping children with autism. He plans to attend graduate school to earn a Master’s Degree and become a successful educator.
The moment that remains most in my heart was on Friday night. Meeting with anh/chi in Dong Hanh would be one of my favorite times during the day because I love to check in and hear what was on everyone’s mind. That Friday night after check-in, anh Liem drew us a diagram of the restructuring of CLC and for me it hit home. Although I have been more active in the Dong Hanh family within the past couple years, I felt this was a family I would be part of for the rest of my life. Simply put, Dong Hanh has become a family for me over the years, and I have so much to learn and be part of as I still feel rather new to it all. Still, I love the Dong Hanh family and am so proud to be part of it. It has become part of my faith and spiritual upbringing within my most transformative years. When the moment of realization came that Dong Hanh as we know it would be no more, it was devastating for me. I felt disturbed and very uneasy. I felt that I had lost something I only recently gained, a treasure given to me for only a short time. Thoughts raced through my mind and I kept trying to think and come up with another way that this CLC restructuring could work. Those hours of the night and into Saturday morning, I felt that I was losing an identity that I had only recently come to embrace. The only way to sort these emotions out were through prayer, and that was exactly what was needed to become free and gain a clarity to see through God’s eyes once again.

Through praying about this realization in the chapel, I felt the strong compelling urge to draw and map things out on paper. I decided to draw out Dong Hanh’s current structure and then the new structure for CLC-USA. I compared both models and was able to really see the difference, yet put trust in God that the new way will be the best way to serve His Church. I had to let go of my insecurities and my fears of the unknown. Those were the things that would always keep me from growing, especially keeping the community from growing. It is truly sad that it appears Dong Hanh may be losing a certain specific identity in the process of restructuring, but through freedom and clarity I was able to sense that there was so much to embrace, grow, experience and become through the restructuring. Yes, there is so much unknown, but through prayer and trust God can reveal these unknowns to be blessings and graces for our community.

The rest of the weekend was filled so much more with peace, clarity and freedom of will as I continued listening to the discussions and witnessing the election process for the Executive Community. By the end of the Leadership Assembly, I had gained more insight, knowledge and graces than I could ever have imagined. I came out of it knowing the aspects of the potential future of this God given gift, a community united by our faith as Catholics in service of the Church. I rediscovered how powerful it is to let go and let God. I felt my trust, reliance and dependence on God renewed. I have been gifted and graced to be aware of the path of Dong Hanh coming into the CLC-USA family along with our brothers and sisters from all the other groups. I have a clearer sense of what this vision is, and now have more to pray for and support in ways that I have learned and am still learning from my anh/chi in Dong Hanh. This is an identity that will never cease but only evolve and grow to something that will sustain and give life. It is like a mustard seed, so small in its nature, that can grow into the largest of trees and extend branches for all life to find shelter. The CLC-USA Leadership Assembly was a blessing for me, and I am profoundly thankful to have been part of history in the making.
A Reflection on the Leadership Assembly

Steven Macy

A few weeks following the leadership gathering in Pittsburgh, I found myself in Hawaii with my 11 year-old daughter Alexa for some mid-summer R & R. The laid back easy change of pace of life in Polynesia enables one’s mind to drift and easily embrace a mode of reflection and quiet contemplation.

One day we made an excursion to the remote north shore of the island of Oahu, including a stop at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Encountering many native Hawaiians, I was touched by the warm welcoming spirit of hospitality they offered to all visitors. One young man that we met told us that his was the 175th generation of his family in Hawaii and that his ancestors had been here for 2000 years.

As he shared part of his life story, I tried to envision the changes he and his family have encountered and the range of emotions they must have experienced as their island’s lifestyle changed and became more diverse as new and different cultures came to call Hawaii home.

To some extent the changes buffeting CLC in the United States are commensurate with those experienced by native Hawaiians during recent generations. CLC in the U.S. has become richly diverse as new cultures joined our national community. The energy and vibrancy engendered by these changes are just some of the many fruits of this diversity.

In consequence, we have been discerning how we can best go forth as one community in our service to the Lord. We have pondered a host of new organizational structures. Some of these embrace totally new concepts and others are similar to methods used in the past. In June we gathered in Pittsburgh for the fifth Leadership Conference and continued to struggle through this discernment process. We were able to affirm decisions on some segments of a proposed reorganization process. However, we were unable to reach consensus on other significant parts of the proposal.

Rather than say that we failed to make progress, I would instead offer that the lack of consensus is in fact progress. That is, in and of itself, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Rather than rush into changes now, perhaps the Spirit is directing us to go more slowly in implementing some organizational changes. The Spirit could be telling us that we need to let the other proposals wait and undergo further reflection, prayer and discernment.

Our New York CLC Region is to some extent a smaller model of the very components that embody CLC nationally. We are comprised of many local communities with a culturally diverse member profile. Some communities and members are mature and have been a part of CLC for many years. Conversely, some of our communities are very new and are comprised of members with a very short tenure in CLC. The range of ages is broad, from 18 to over 90. Suffice to say we have encountered our share of growing pains throughout the years and, in fact, some of these are ongoing. On more than one occasion, especially when some of our growing pains were reaching a peak, our EA, Fr. Dan Fitzpatrick, S.J. prudently counseled us to recall a favorite saying of CLC that “we make our way by going.” In other words we go forth to answer Christ’s call as individuals and as one united community with the knowledge and faith that the Spirit will lead us organizationally in a manner abetting our desire to answer His call and faithfully serve in the vineyard.

This may be exactly where we are on a national level. Perhaps we need to “make our way by going,” so that over time we truly achieve clarity – clarity about changes that might be needed as well as clarity about what parts of the current structure are in fact working well. Moreover, we should not be surprised if that clarity also tells us to leave things unchanged.

Our lack of clarity may be a grace telling us that we should place less emphasis on looking internally and instead focus our vision outwardly by asking ourselves how we are to be Church for others. A renewed focus on ministry rather than internal administration and organization may be the best means to the end. By laboring together in the vineyard, our differences engendered by culture, age, geography and so forth and our perceived needs and pressures may dissipate. Our working together may give us an entirely different and possibly enlightened perspective of what we should or should not do.

On a personal note, I feel very blessed to participate in the process. The outstanding effort and dedication demonstrated by the Working Group through the two-year process has been a source of inspiration to all of us. We are indebted to them for this endeavor. They have inspired as well as challenged us. CLC-USA is better because of that. As we go forward let us continue to pray that we may make our way by going wisely, compassionately and inspired by the love that is Christ.
Marie A. Schimelfening has been a Sodality/CLC member for over fifty years. She made her Permanent Commitment in 1963. She was President of the Detroit Federation (1965-1968) and on the CLC Board of Directors (1967-1971). She served as CLC Executive Secretary (1971-1975) and as Executive Director (1975-1980). Marie was a delegate to several World assemblies and was World ExCo Secretary (1982-1990). She co-founded the National CLC Center (1976) and the Bridges Program (19th Annotation - retreat in daily life) with Tom Swift, S.J. She served as Executive Secretary of the Detroit Cursillo Movement (1965-1968) and of the National Cursillo Movement (1968-1971). She worked for the Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus, in Communication and Development (2001-2009). She has an M.S. in Social Sciences and serves as a CLC NGO representative to the United Nations in New York. She is a member of the Nick Rieman, S.J. Guides CLC and a guide for the Companions CLC, both in Detroit.

The Fifth Leadership Assembly

Marie Schimelfening

It is hard to believe that the Leadership Assembly finished its fifth meeting this past July. So much was discussed and happened at the last meeting. Some familiar themes arose once again. What is commitment to CLC? When is a community official? Some of these themes are quite repetitive and yet have to be reviewed again and in some ways revisited.

The assembly was encouraging, with close to 70 people in attendance. Challenging for the future? Indeed. Hopefully our new way of being will give us new life and awareness that our CLC Way of Life calls us more and more to be discerning people in our individual lives and to be strong discerning communities.

The assembly again brought to me the awareness that Christian Life Community has many gifts to share in our Church and in our world. Our two major gifts are the living out of the Spiritual Exercises within the context of community and a deeper understanding of discernment. We can continue to use this wonderful tool as we make very important decisions. It will affect our whole way of being committed members of CLC.

While we all worked hard during our time together, our prayer and Eucharistic celebrations were very moving. Having a commitment ceremony where two members made their permanent commitments and one a temporary commitment was powerful. To have our World President, Daniella Frank, present to accept their commitments was truly a joy.

Music with dancing and singing was also a highlight one evening. The celebration of Fred Leone’s 90th birthday was a great event. Happy Birthday was sung in English, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, German and Polish. I can still see the smile on Fred’s face when the cake was rolled in and the birthday wishes were given to him.

Much work is ahead of us. We are called to be faithful and prayerful people and encouraged to use our gift of discernment especially by Discerning, Supporting, Sending and Evaluating (DSSE) as we move forward.

People in My Life by Fred C. Leone

Fred Leone fulfilled his dream of completing this book by his 90th Birthday. Fred tells of many of the people who affected his life and the lives of others. Of special interest is his chapter on CLC friends.

To obtain a free copy of People in My Life:
1. Send an email to Fred: btleone2@gmail.com
2. Two links will be sent to you (PDF and Word)
3. Click on the link you wish.
If you encounter a problem email (above) or phone Fred, 301 598-3348.
A Heart’s Journey

Sophie Thanh–Dung Nguyen

At the beginning of April, I received the invitation to discern about the CLC-USA Treasurer position. After the initial “indifferent” reaction, I ran away from the call. The roles, responsibilities and expected capabilities of the treasurer intimidated me – they seemed overwhelming, time consuming and extremely heavy. I did not feel qualified for the “job” and I did not have any intention to accept more commitments due to time constraints. My plate was quite full, and I was at peace with the various ministries and responsibilities I had within and outside of Dong Hanh.

One day, on my way to work, when I was reflecting on the nomination, I heard the Lord asking me: “Dare you love to the end?” That voice was familiar to me. I recognized my Beloved and was joyful. The question came so unexpectedly, and whenever I heard my Beloved’s voice, I could not hold back but cry. I felt that the Lord did not expect an immediate answer from me but wanted me to dwell deeply into the meaning of what it meant to love to the end. I was aware of my great love for my Dong Hanh family. I treasure CLC, and during the preparation process for permanent commitment, I discovered my deep desire to belong to CLC-USA and World CLC. I hesitated with the answer, even though my whole being drove me to say ‘yes’ to the Lord. This incident happened around the same time Mong Hang asked me to pray about the nomination. Now I could no longer run away. I knew that I had to do further “headwork” to find out what God’s plan was for me.

The following Friday evening I had a teleconference with Kitty Gray and Kim Anh, whom I asked to guide me through the discernment process. Kitty spent an hour explaining to me all the details about the treasurer’s role and responsibilities. My heart was filled with gratefulness and love for Kitty as I listened attentively to her sharing about her grace-filled experience during the past 12 years serving CLC-USA as Treasurer. This freed me from my fear, and I felt a great sense of relief as Kitty promised to continue performing the “accounting tasks” and to dance with me until I became comfortable with the required responsibilities. My headwork was concluded. A heavy weight was lifted from my shoulders, and I felt free to continue with my heart work. I involved my husband and daughter, asking them to seriously discern the call with me. This was the third time within the last six months that I had asked them to discern with me. The first was about my being nominated for the Dong Hanh Vice President role, the second was the Dong Hanh National SEED Ministry Chair, and the third was the CLC-USA Treasurer position. Our family knew the drill. Each family member understood that my saying yes to any of the positions would mean certain sacrifices and support on their parts. St. Ignatius’ Suscipe prayer served as my main praying material during this time.

As with Peter, the Lord tenderly asked me to confirm my love. On the night I received the news from Mong Hang that 27 out of 29 nominations for various ExCo positions were declined, I felt the Lord’s immense sadness. My heart ached, for I sensed the Lord’s unspoken pain and loneliness. As I prayed that night, His eyes were telling me “You can leave me too, and I will understand.” This sense of immense sadness and close intimacy with the Lord filled me for the next few days. During this time, I also felt that the Lord offered me total freedom – freedom to walk away and reject the treasurer role or to remain at His side and serve Him in this capacity. I was
very certain that my Beloved would bless me either way. The Lord’s immense sadness and my heart-felt interior freedom led me to desire His will even more. I felt deep compassion for the Lord and an unexplainable understanding for all those who were not able to accept the nominations. As I continued to reflect on this experience, the image of a CLC family surfaced. In this CLC house, the parents were old and fragile. This old CLC couple was blessed with gifted grown up children by the names of South Florida, KCLC, Dong Hanh and Regions. Each of the children was uniquely gifted and successful. They lived their individual lives and were busy minding their own families’ businesses. The parents rejoiced in the successes and happiness of their children. They have been trying ways to unite them and bring them together, desiring them to share their talents and nurturing one another. The parents also needed someone to take care of them and be the unifying force. As I continued to pray, my heart desired to remain by the Lord’s side, to take care of the aged CLC parents and to unite the children.

My desire to love to the end and to remain by the Lord’s side was confirmed by various communal discernments with my family, local community and Dong Hanh leadership. All encouraged me to take on this new challenge. Each one promised full support.

Before I attended the Leadership Assembly, I went to confession to prepare for my permanent commitment and to be in close union with God. As the Leadership Assembly progressed, along with other Dong Hanh leaders, I had to wrestle with Exercise #5 about Service Center, National Offices, Delegate Assembly and ExCo structure. For the first time, I was faced with the dilemma of potential loss of the National Dong Hanh Leadership in the new CLC-USA structure. For years, this National Dong Hanh Leadership was the heart of Dong Hanh, representing Dong Hanh identity, uniting all four Dong Hanh regions (Northeast, Midwest, Southwest and overseas Dong Hanh communities in Canada and Europe). This leadership coordinates National Dong Hanh assemblies/gatherings/summits. It offers formation to grass root level communities, leaders, and companions, providing a loving and empowering environment for new young leaders. It strengthens Dong Hanh’s national ministries such as Light Works, SEED, Marriage Renewal Workshops. The members of this leadership body were chosen and supported by grass root level members. I was torn because the proposed re-organization structure did not offer a mechanism for National Dong Hanh leadership to be part of ExCo. The thought of losing my Vietnamese Dong Hanh identity and the dissolution of National Dong Hanh Leadership drove me and all Dong Hanh leaders into deep desolation. After several prayer sessions and communal discernments, the Dong Hanh leaders emerged with amazing grace, experiencing interior freedom, and desiring to do God’s will even at the cost of giving up the National Dong Hanh Leadership body. One by one, the leaders expressed their willingness to sacrifice the National Dong Hanh Leadership that they so treasured and do whatever God asked of them. The leaders expressed their ultimate desires to fulfill their CLC vocation and to become one apostolic body with CLC-USA. Despite the uncertainty of the new structure, the leaders chose total surrender to God’s will. I witnessed with amazement my own and others’ interior movements, changing from desolation to interior freedom, faith, trust and hope. This intense experience reminded me of Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his only, beloved and promised son Isaac. Abraham must have shed a lot of tears like the Dong Hanh leaders. The grace that I received from this Leadership Assembly was the felt knowledge that no one had greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s beloved.

The colorful Pittsburgh by Night offered every one a taste of CLC beauty and richness. It brought forth the members’ talents, synergy, unity and interdependence. CLC members did not only tolerate diversity but embraced and celebrated it.

As I continue to reflect and sift through my feelings about the Leadership Assembly, I feel a deep desire to proclaim the greatness of the Lord. Little by little, I have come to realize that God, again, has done marvelous things for me and our CLC-USA family. I can still feel His presence and active involvement in my personal choices and our reorganization process to become one apostolic body.
A Nineteen Year Old’s Experience with Homelessness

Matthew Juliano

Hopefully the title grabbed your attention. I am a nineteen year old sophomore in college. Last October (2011) I had the opportunity to feel what it is like to be ‘homeless’ for forty-eight hours in Washington, DC. All through high school, I participated in midnight runs with my church’s youth group. For those of you who don’t know what a midnight run is, it is basically a soup kitchen and clothing drive on the run; we bring used clothes and bagged lunches to the homeless of New York City. Midnight runs have many names and occur in most major cities. On these trips, I had the chance to talk to some of Big Apple’s inhabitants. With each conversation, my heart was touched and opened to the soul of the impoverished person, especially the homeless. As a part of my heart softened for them, I wanted to know more about them. I had done four midnight run trips; conversation can only go so far. I wanted to understand the hunger ache they feel and the loneliness, and I wanted to know what it is like to put all of my faith in God for food, protection and anything else I needed.

Early in my freshman year, I found out about the “Urban Plunge.” The National Coalition for Homeless, located in Washington DC, created this program to give college students a chance to see what it is like to be homeless. My school, DeSales University, just happens to be one of the few schools that organize a trip for students to partake in the Plunge. Once I heard a sophomore’s witness to his Plunge experience, I signed myself up two months early.

Just to give a little more background, the Urban Plunge is a 48-hour experience during which participants eat, sleep and beg as a homeless person. The student needs to beg for money to eat, and if they don’t find any money, they go hungry until they do find a generous soul. The homeless make do with what they have. That means that the participants sleep and make their living in the same place, the streets. Before we left our school, my classmates and I were informed of the difficulties we would face during the challenge.

Fast forward two months; it is the second weekend of October 2011. All of the residential students of DeSales University are going home for the first break of the year, all of the students except eight brave souls who dare to be plunged into Washington, DC as ‘homeless’ persons. That Saturday, October 15, our journey began.

To ‘look the part,’ I let my facial hair grow for a week, and my hair was not washed for about five days. My pant legs had rips at both knees along with dirt stains on them. My t-shirt was a faded green color with washing machine marks and my flannel shirt was about two sizes too big. I had my guitar on my back and a black garbage bag with a journal and my Bible in it.

After a three-hour drive from school to DC, eight students became eight helpless ‘homeless’ in search of money and food. My buddy, Claire, and I set out to find a place to beg for money. Soon we found a busy intersection and planted ourselves in different parts of the crossway. Claire attracted attention from many people. I barely had people make eye contact with me. That didn’t surprise me. After about what felt like two hours, we relocated to a place where we thought people would be willing to give to the homeless, the White House.

I couldn’t have been more wrong. On this particular day and in this particular location, no one talked to me unless they wanted something from me. When families passed by, the parents pulled their children closer to themselves. Three hours in and I already felt so alone and helpless. The only thing I could do was say my rosary. I did. That gave my heart

Matthew Juliano, 19, is the second child of Mary (Zambito) and John Juliano from Warwick, NY. He is a sophomore Physician Assistant major at DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. He is a Resident Assistant at DeSales and Vice President of the Colleges Against Cancer Club. In his free time, Matthew enjoys exercising and playing the drums with Christian band, Full Armor, www.fullarmorband.com (Matthew is Dorothy and Ray Zambito’s oldest grandson.).
strength. Soon after finishing the prayer, my tummy needed some filling! Claire and I went to the nearest McDonald’s. By this time, I collected only $1. I couldn’t afford to buy myself something to eat off the dollar menu at McDonald’s! I felt embarrassed to ask Claire for a nickel.

Exhausted from the day, we decided to relax in a park near where our group was going to meet up for the night. For the first time that day, I had the chance to talk to someone, Claire. We shared the struggles of the day and common observations about how people reacted to our being there. As we shared with each other, a tall black woman approached us. I could tell she wasn’t homeless because she only had one layer of clothing on and she was carrying only one plastic bag as opposed to four or five. “Ya’ll from ‘round here?” she asked us. We said yes and that we were homeless. “Would you like something to eat?” “Yes!” I exclaimed as my mouth began to salivate over the ham and cheese sandwich. The woman even gave me a huge hug. She made my night. I couldn’t stop smiling because she gave me love in a Ziploc bag.

That night, four students and our homeless guide slept outside Macy’s. That was our room. My bed? It was a few pieces of newspaper. My door? I didn’t have a door to close behind me to escape the life around me. I also didn’t have control of the light that shined right in my face from the Macy’s overhang. Worst of all, I didn’t have control over the fierce cold of the night that made the stone freezing and made my entire body into an ice cube. I don’t mind being cold, but there was no escape from it; it was unbearable. I was helpless and close to being hopeless. That night I slept four hours and woke up four times. All I could do was pray to God for help and read my Bible. That is all I had the strength to do.

Eventually, I gave up trying to sleep. It was 4:30 in the morning. I continued to read my Bible, pray and pace the area to try to stay warm. Around 6:30, I decided I should try to beg for some money because I was completely broke. I went down the street to the nearest McDonald’s where the homeless were welcome to sit even if they couldn’t afford a meal. I hung around the McDonald’s as I kept an eye out for any person that seemed willing to give me a few bucks. A few minutes after I arrived, a generous man gave me a five-dollar bill. As the money hit my hand, I felt guilty. At that moment, I remembered a man that I had passed when I entered McDonald’s. I walked back outside to find him still standing in the same place. He was about 5’6”, an African-American. He wore an oversized black winter jacket, dirty, ripped pants and a broken ball cap. I asked him if wanted any breakfast. He replied, “Yeah.” He spoke as if it was difficult to form words, as if he had never done it before.

One person behind the counter because this homeless man could barely mutter the words ‘coffee’ and ‘sandwich.’ I could tell he knew how to speak; he just seemed so terrified to do it. Once he received his food, I returned back to my sleeping friends. I had $1.51 remaining in my pocket, which meant I couldn’t give myself a real meal. The funny thing is as I walked away from McDonald’s, I was no longer hungry. I felt satisfied. From then on, I decided that I wanted to feed another person with every meal that I ate for the rest of the trip.

At 7 AM, everyone rose and we ate breakfast. After the entire group went to a soup kitchen, Claire and I decided to go to Mass because it was Sunday. We did not know what time it was, when Mass was or where the church was. Still, we started our journey in the general direction that we thought the church was located. About twenty minutes later, we entered St. Stephen’s Church right as 11:00 AM Mass was beginning. This church shares its name with my home parish. I find this significant because Mass was the first and last place that I felt at home on my entire trip.

After Mass ended, I suggested to Claire that we go to Georgetown because we might find generous people there. We made our way over to that part of the city and picked out our spots on the sidewalk where we wanted to beg. I sat across the street from Claire in the opening of an alley and started to play my guitar. As I played, I realized that people didn’t know what I was going to do with the money that they might give me. Hoping to educate my benefactors, I took my pen and wrote on the bottom of my guitar ‘help feed 10 hungry people.’ That was my goal: to feed ten hungry people. After I inked my guitar, passersby started to give me strange glances and stare at me as they walked by. A few minutes after I sat down, a very tall man came around the corner and asked if he could use the alley to have a smoke. I invited him in and for that he gave me a dollar. I asked about why he was in Georgetown and he asked the same of me. He also asked whom I was feeding that night. I just told him I was helping to feed anyone who looked like they were hungry. Not thinking anything about what I told the man, I went back to playing my guitar and looking for people who would be willing to give money. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the man reach back into his wallet. “Here kid, don’t put this in your guitar case.” With that, he handed me a fifty-dollar bill. I could not believe my eyes and I was unable to speak. With the words that I could form, I thanked him as he left.

I signaled over to Claire that we should leave. When we met up, she had this proud, ‘you’ll never guess how much money I just made’ smirk on her face. “$23.” I replied, “$52.” “What?! Matt, you’re pulling my leg, right? You’ve got to be joking.”

But I wasn’t, and that night, with the help of two of our other friends, we fed ourselves and ten homeless people that night with a burger and coffee.

I do not tell this story to boast about what I decided to do with my money on this trip. I tell this story to show that God’s grace is enough, and when He is depended on, He will provide. God did provide, enough for me and 10 times me.
We are partway through the year and your generous financial support has allowed CLC-USA to continue to make progress on many important initiatives.

Service to Others

- The Apostolic Advocacy & Action Team held its first in-person meeting immediately preceding the 2012 Leadership Conference. This provided an opportunity to foster deeper relationships and allowed time to explore, discuss, plan and align future strategies with those of CLC–USA’s national efforts.

- The CLC Leadership Fund continues to support the education of a graduate of St. Aloysius Gonzaga School, Nairobi, Kenya, now attending Loyola University in Chicago.

- As part of the World CLC, our national dues help support the building of God’s kingdom throughout the world and provides for active participation at the United Nations.

Benefits to CLCers

- CLC–USA’s web site has been updated and now provides for CLCers or visitors to ask questions, post comments and inquire about CLC presence around the country. Some parts of the virtual “National Office” are still a work in progress, but the framework is there to grow as the national community grows.

- The fifth Leadership Assembly was held in Pittsburgh in late June and culminated with the National Coordinating Council (NCC) prioritizing several initiatives: preparation of Guidelines that formalizes what constitutes membership in CLC and what constitutes a CLC community; movement toward establishment of “National Offices” with emphasis on formation, communication and financial co-responsibility; and development of a detailed plan around “Clusters” including functionality, purpose, resources and how Clusters will relate inside and outside of CLC–USA.

- Youth & Young Adults plans to launch a new web site with reference materials for college CLCers and meeting resource tools for post-college young adults. The planned launch is scheduled to coordinate with the start of the new school year. Work also includes leadership development through Cura Personalis and other university collaborations.

Need for additional funding

- Supporting our CLC–USA mission through ongoing big or small contributions is a way for the national community to be more visible in its apostolic witness and service, and to ensure the success of the following programs:
  - Lightworks Ministry – a 14-week Ignatian home retreat program with weekly group reflection focused on coming to know Christ through prayer
  - Marriage Renewal Workshop – an Ignatian-based program which focuses on renewing and strengthening the marriages of participants
  - S.E.E.D. – (Search, Embark, Experience and Develop) is an Ignatian weekend retreat program for children ages 6 – 18, accompanied by their parents, to find God in all things
  - Formation for Mission – brings together the Apostolic Advocacy & Action Team with other CLC leaders to assist in discerning and planning priorities for communal apostolic actions as a national community

- Through regional dues, CLC–USA is able to produce Harvest, host and participate in leadership gatherings which help set strategic directions of the organization, and connect to the larger Church through meetings with the USCCB and Jesuit Conference.

- CLC Leadership Fund continually looks for assistance in providing support for breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the quality of life through education.

Financial Summary:

Based on seven months actual and projected revenues and expenses through December 31, 2012, CLC–USA is expected to incur an unrestricted net deficit (expenses exceeding revenues) of $23,016. This is slightly higher than the net deficit budgeted for 2012 of $21,522. Payment of the $20,000 contribution to the World Accommodation Project discerned by NCC in late 2011 was the main factor in the budgeted and actual net deficit for this year.

The dues projected for the last five months of 2012 are estimated at $18,954 which, combined with the dues received through July 31, 2012 of $14,046, total $33,000, slightly higher than the 2012 budget. Regions/cultural groups’ dues are self-assessed. National recommends $71.50 per CLC member. This support is vital for CLC–USA to carry out its mission and to participate fully as a member of the World Community.

If you have any questions, regarding dues, finances, etc., please contact Sophie Nguyen, CLC–USA Treasurer at treasurer@clc-usa.org or your regional representative.
Your contribution can make a difference in faith formation, building community and promoting the Ignatian charism.

Even a small contribution can make a huge impact over time...

For more information write us at

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