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Next Issue: Fruits and Challenges of Assembly 2014

Cover art for the National Assembly by Aaron Kunkle.

REGISTER NOW!

The Twenty-fifth National Assembly of CLC-USA will take place July 10-13, 2014 at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Register online at http://assembly2014.clc-usa.org or see page 27.
A Living History

As the Twenty-fifth National CLC Assembly approaches, we are asked to reflect on our roots in Christian Life Community and examine how they inform our identity as Christians and specifically committed CLC members.

“Every time I reflect, a new insight will strike me. …In the eyes of faith, one can see the work of the Holy Spirit.” (Cardinal Timothy Dolan after the Inauguration of Pope Francis.)

Cardinal Dolan’s remarks can be echoed on the lips of many of us. Who has not been enlightened after re-reading a familiar Scripture passage or after meditating a second time on a point from the Exercises? New insights from the familiar can be life-giving, inspirational and challenging. I borrowed these words of the Cardinal because they speak of my experiences as I look back on over fifty years as a Sodalist/CLCer. Belonging to Sodality/Christian Life Community has been a living, growing journey that continues to the present day. It is one that began with a conversion - a new way of living the faith, a new way of being community and an expansive challenge to continue the mission begun by Jesus himself. Through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, my eyes are opened continually to see where the Lord wants me to be. Especially through the Examen and with the presence of the Holy Spirit, I am reminded (as all of us are) of the universal call to be holy as the Lord is holy. This holiness is accomplished when you and I do the Word of God in our lives.

Through my formation in Sodality/CLC, first in my local group and later on the regional, national and world levels, I have lived with a sense and reality of community that goes beyond the comprehension of so many in today’s world. Gathering at CLC assemblies is a good example of this kind of community. Whether we travel to St. Louis, Miami, Los Angeles, Beirut or Nairobi, we experience the common heritage that is CLC. We share with joy our successes. We ponder together how to overcome obstacles. We worship as one, and we celebrate with gusto. It is truly a family affair! Again, this is a manifestation of a living and growing organism. In these times of togetherness, I found wonderful human beings who were/are dedicated and inspiring workers/co-workers for the harvest. These workers include both the ‘lay and Jesuit giants’ in our history. They are models for us and continue to urge us to do more and do it better. At our upcoming assembly, we will explore further the frontiers (areas of mission) to which we are called. Some of these frontiers have been identified from the World Assembly and others will derive from the particular needs of CLC-USA.

Within This Issue

Marie Schimelfening, in her article, “National Assemblies and Our CLC Identity,” will take us on a portion of her Sodality/CLC journey using past CLC conventions/assemblies as her method of travel. Marie has surpassed most of us by far in attending twenty-two out of twenty-five of those gatherings. Reflect on the themes of the past national meetings. How could anyone deny that our history is alive and active?

President Rick Kunkle in collaboration with the National Assembly Planning Committee presents several important articles that are pertinent to the upcoming assembly. Beginning with the “President’s Corner,” Rick identifies the theme of the Assembly, invites us to be present in St. Louis this summer and shares his personal experiences of Assembly’99 in New York. Hopefully, this will entice all to consider attending the 25th National Assembly. In “From Our Roots to the Frontiers,” we are asked to examine our graced history (roots) to recognize our identity in CLC - what characterizes and grounds us. We are called to focus on the frontiers (of mission), those identified by the world, but not limited to them. In “CLC-USA National Assembly Program Process Overview” the Planning Committee informs us that this Twenty-fifth Assembly will be a continuation of the national discernment process to see where God is calling CLC-USA at this time. Suggestions are given for all CLC groups to prepare for the Assembly. Pre-Assembly Community Reflection Exercises are included with the directive that all local communities complete them prior to the gathering in St. Louis. The results of these exercises will be shared at the Assembly.

Included as well are condensed versions of two articles written by members of the World CLC ExCo. Chris Micallef, Vice-President at the time of the Beirut Assembly, wrote “A Lay Apostolic Body.” In the paper, Chris shares his thinking about expressing our way of life as an apostolic body. Among the points for our consideration are Commitment, Financial Co-Responsibility, Simple Life Style, Apostolic Availability and Apostolic Call. Following this, we have Franklin Ibanez, World Executive Secretary, writing on the topic of “Challenges for the CLC Mission.” Franklin focuses on different Levels of Mission: Ordinary Activities, Apostolates, Institutional Presence and International Actions. He poses challenges for us to consider at each of these levels.

Rick Kunkle continues with an article on the “State of CLC-USA.” He describes this as the current reality of our National Community. In it, Rick, with input from the Assembly Planning Committee, presents ‘positive signs of energy’ in
CLC-USA and the areas presenting challenges. The needs were identified at various leadership meetings over the years. Among the needs were the lack of guides, an aging membership, a declining availability of Ecclesial Assistants and diminished numbers of new groups. Rick concludes with “CLC-USA Discernment Journey.” We are reminded of growth in ethnic communities and the ongoing development of relationships and structures to support this diversity. The article reviews the Leadership Assemblies that were convened to assist in that support. The NCC then conducted discernment exercises in response to the proposals which were approved at the Fifth Leadership Assembly. This brings us to the present as we proceed to the Twenty-fifth National Assembly. It is hoped that this gathering will be “a formative experience that continues the communal discernment of the National Community.”

“Guidelines for Discerning, Sending and Supporting Members Attending the National Assembly” are given to assist local groups in this discernment process.

Registration Forms are included for your convenience. Please review these forms, complete them and prepare to come together as a National Community at Washington University in St. Louis, July 10-13, 2014.

In closing, it is fitting that we recognize the members of the National Assembly Planning Committee for their efforts in preparing the materials to assist us in contributing to the work of the upcoming meeting. Our thanks go to: Rick Kunkle, Fr. Jim Borbely, S.J., Clarita Baloyra, Pat Carter, Christine Kim, Sophie Nguyen, Hang Nguyen, Helen Seol and Hung Vu.

In Christ’s peace,
Dorothy M. Zambito

The liturgy is being celebrated. Shown are Fr. Paul Kenney, S.J. (outgoing NEA), Fr. Alberto Brito, S.J., (World Vice-Ecclesial Assistant) and Fr. John LeVecke, S.J. (incoming National Ecclesial Assistant).


Children of Dong Hanh members present the offertory gifts during the liturgy.
Dear CLC Companions and Friends,

The Twenty-fifth CLC-USA National Assembly will be held in St. Louis, July 10-13. I will share some thoughts with you about it to help us prepare and participate in this experience.

I attended my first CLC-USA National Assembly in New York in 1999. I qualified as a “young adult” at the time. This Assembly was my first experience being with the wider CLC-USA community beyond the Northwest Region. Mary Nolan, the World CLC Vice-President from Australia gave the keynote address. This was my first exposure to someone from the World Community. It was also my first experience of communal discernment on a large scale using the process of input, personal reflection, small group sharing, large group sharing and responding to what was heard.

I mention this because the New York Assembly was an important moment in my journey as a CLC member. It expanded my understanding of who we are as CLC and what it means to be CLC. It allowed me to begin to understand what it means to be one world community. I began to appreciate CLC not just as a gift for me and my local community, but as a gift to share more widely. In many ways the experience of the Assembly in New York began the journey of expanding my understanding of CLC beyond my local community.

The National Assembly is also part of our journey as CLC-USA. We will be sharing our experiences as local, regional and cultural communities. Leadership will be sharing its experiences as well. Previous National Assemblies and the Leadership Assemblies provide input and context for the St. Louis Assembly. Our National Assembly also provides an opportunity for us to reflect on the experiences of the World CLC that were shared at the World Assembly last August in Beirut. The National Assembly only occurs every five years and is the only time we come together as a national community to reflect and discern on the different aspects of our life as one community. National assemblies are opportunities for us to be together as community, share our experiences, celebrate and discern where the Spirit is moving us.

In previous communications, we have shared that the Twenty-fifth Assembly will be a communal discernment about who we are as CLC and how we are called to respond. We will reflect on our roots, our current reality and the frontiers. We will be following a process of input, personal reflection, small group sharing, large group sharing and response. All attendees will be active participants in the discernment. Our National Coordinating Council will be meeting after the National Assembly. The input of the Assembly will be important to their discernment of future directions for CLC-USA. In fact, we can view this as one continuing discernment process with the NCC responding to and confirming the discernment of the Assembly.

You may be asking why we are having an Assembly where the focus is on communal discernment rather than more of a convention with workshops, presentations and other activities. The Assembly Planning Committee discussed this and discerned that the Assembly should provide “an opportunity for CLC members to come together for a coherent formative experience and to capture the life of CLC.” The committee wanted the Assembly to provide an experience of being one community that was “deliberative/discerning” with time for reflection and sharing. Another way to look at this is that the Assembly is attempting to live out what we are called to be. Communal discernment is at the core of the CLC charism. The Assembly will provide an experience of doing this. The importance of communal discernment was reinforced at the World Assembly at Nairobi where the model of Discern, Send, Support and Evaluate (DSSE) was offered as a model for our way of proceeding.

What needs to happen for this communal discernment to occur?

• We need to consider that we are called by God for a common mission. At a fundamental level our common mission is living the CLC way of life. It is our

Rick Kunkle
President
awareness of belonging to CLC that unites us in our discernment.

• We bring our desire to search for God’s will for us. We search within ourselves, each other and our lived experience. In cooperation with the Holy Mystery of God we seek transformation and new possibilities.

• We are not seeking uniformity. Our diversity is a gift. Our different experiences of CLC and different perspectives and ways of doing things enrich our way of life and help renew our charism. We bring this diversity to our discernment.

• We need to be prepared to work and pray. It takes work to bring together, review and analyze information. It takes reflection and prayer to seek the light of the Spirit and interior freedom. It takes attentiveness to the movement of the Spirit.

• We bring commitment to the process along with patience. We should not expect miracles or instant results. We must be open to God’s timeline, not our own. The fruit of a communal discernment is not dependent on us and our methodology. It is grace.

So how do you feel about the National Assembly? Are you excited about the Assembly and what is being planned? Or do you have other feelings? Do you have a desire to participate or not? What are behind these feelings? As we journey toward the Assembly, your feelings may change. You may find it helpful to stay in touch with these feelings. We come to this discernment as we are and it is important to be aware of that.

The Assembly communal discernment process has already begun. We have provided guidance for local communities and their leadership to affirm who from their communities will attend the Assembly and how they can support them. Those attending the Assembly carry the “spirit, hearts and minds” of those in the local communities. The Pre-Assembly Exercises provide the input for the Assembly discernment, help prepare those attending the Assembly and are an opportunity for the whole CLC-USA community to participate. This issue of *Harvest* contains the pre-Assembly reflection exercises along with information about the Assembly process. It also contains articles with input from the World Assembly, the CLC-USA Leadership Assemblies and NCC meetings and reflections on our history and identity. More information is available on the CLC-USA Assembly webpage (http://www.assembly2014.clc-usa.org/).

I encourage everyone in CLC-USA to take advantage of these different opportunities to be part of the Twenty-fifth National Assembly. For the communal discernment of the Assembly to reflect the movement of the Spirit in the body, all need to participate. Only you can share your experiences of CLC, your hopes for CLC and our frontiers. I invite you to consider how to contribute to and be part of this experience.

I would like to conclude with a personal reflection. In the waking hours this morning I became aware that what I had written earlier did not capture all that was in my heart. As I write this in February, I am looking at a long list of things to do. In our planning for the Assembly this is where the rubber meets the road. We need to complete many of the details for the Assembly so that we can get the information out to the community so you can prepare to participate. I feel a need to march down through my list of things to do and knock them off one at a time. There is a sense of urgency and a desire to try and do more and more and more. Don’t we experience this need, even pressure, to do more? This can be true in all aspects of our lives, including CLC. But as I reflected this morning I am reminded of the invitation of Fr. Nicolás at the World Assembly to go deeper, to live and share our Ignatian Spirituality. We are not being asked to do more and more and more, but to go deeper, to seek the *magis*, to seek how we are called by God. I find this invitation to be challenging, yet very freeing. So I pause from my list of things to do this morning to pray and reflect on the Assembly and where the Spirit is guiding us in our plans. In doing this I shift from *my* plan to being open to God’s plan. Likewise, this Assembly is a time for us to pray and reflect and come together as community to seek the *magis*.

In the reflection this morning on the jesuitprayer.org website, there was a quote from Pope Francis that I will share: “It is necessary to seek God to find him, and to find him in order to seek him again and forever….It is this restlessness for God that is apostolic, that prepares us to receive the gift of apostolic fruitfulness. Without restlessness we are sterile.”

As we seek God together on our journey as Christian Life Community, I ask for your prayers as we prepare for the Assembly.

Blessings,
Rick Kunkle
National Assemblies and Our CLC Identity

Marie A. Schimelfening

I remember being in the living room of my home in Detroit in January, 1961, reading the Michigan Catholic, the Archdiocesan newspaper. I said to my mother, who was in the kitchen cooking dinner, “Mom, the Sodality is having a National Convention right here in Detroit!” It was then that I first learned that the Sodality Movement was a National Organization. When I entered the hotel where it was being held, I was amazed at the number of people there. This was the Third National Convention and the first one for me. This year, 2014, will be my twenty-second of what we now call a National Assembly and our 25th Assembly.

What made these assemblies so thrilling, encouraging and challenging? The thrilling part was to walk into the Assembly and to see so many folks that you had not seen since the last assembly. The encouraging part was to be able to share the many experiences that we had in each of our communities since the last time we were together and to listen to the speakers’ presentations. The challenges were there once again to say “yes” to our CLC way of life and to deepen our commitment to our National and International Mission.

I wish I were writing this article at Marquette University in Milwaukee where our archives are stored. I hope I can do it justice relying on my memory and with the materials I have in front of me. While I always found every convention/assembly inviting and challenging, I will highlight some of them with more detail while mentioning others with the theme. HERE GOES!

The Fourth National Sodality Convention in 1963 in Cleveland was preceded by a five-day Formation Course. This made a difference on how we participated in the Convention. Moreover, those who attended brought the formation process back to their respective areas. I know it made a great difference for us in the Detroit area. We understood more of what it was to be called to this way of life and to the call of commitment to CLC. Individually directed Spiritual Exercises began in the USA around this time and quickly grew.

The Fifth National Sodality Convention in 1965 in New York gave participants the opportunity to meet at the United Nations while Pope Paul VI was there. It was quite an experience to hear his presentation on Peace and carry that message back to our Convention.

The Sixth National Convention in 1967 was held at Creighton University, Omaha. This was the first National CLC Convention.

The Seventh National Convention in 1969 was held in St. Louis with the theme, “Christian Life Communities - Builders of the Human Community.” We were challenged to look at the racial issues plaguing our country. In these early years we as a movement adopted resolutions that we would carry out in our groups. The convention delegates adopted the following resolutions: 1) Condemning racism and calling on each National Federation of Christian Life Communities (NFCLC) member to “renounce racism and discrimination in words and deeds”; 2) Directing CLCs in the United States to focus “special attention at the local and national level on the problems of racism, poverty, understanding underemployment and communication between age groups.” At this convention, Dorothy J. Willmann, Executive Secretary of the National Office, was presented with an award citing her forty years of service.

The Eighth National Convention in 1971 was held in Philadelphia with the theme, “Toward Life - Challenge and Action.” How fortunate I am to have in front of me remarks presented by the new President of CLC, Dr. Raymond Zambito! I wish I could give you his entire talk, but focusing on a few areas that Ray presented will spell out the outcome of this Eighth Convention. He quoted our new Episcopal Moderator, Bishop Maurice Dingman, who wrote to us before the convention and called us all VIPs. VIP stood for Vision, Involvement and Prayer. Ray said, “This Vision of over 400 years has brought us to this point in time. It is a vision of total dedication, in a commitment to Christ, we discussed this weekend. ...the one word distinguishing Christianity for me is HOPE. Discouragement is non-existent in my vocabulary and should not be existent in our vocabulary. ...Involvement has contained within its meaning, discernment in choosing. ...When we consider Prayer I can ask ...Who can maintain a spiritual vision in a secular society without prayer?” Ray ended his remarks by calling all of the participants to consider...
making the *Spiritual Exercises*. He said, “Over the past four-
teen years that I have been making the *Spiritual Exercises* and
receiving spiritual direction, I have developed what I consider an
Ignatian Spirituality, ...It asks me each day, ‘Will you do more
and will you do it better?’”

During this convention CLC Awards were presented for the
first time. They were the Development of Peoples Award, named
after the encyclical by Pope Paul VI and the CLC Development
Award. These awards have been given at every Convention/
Assembly since 1971.

The **Ninth** National Convention in 1973 was held in Iowa
City with the theme, “New Communities for Christians: An
American Response.” At this convention we were introduced
to group discernment led by Fr. Antonio Esquivel, S.J. A young
adult CLC from the New England area put on a concert for all
attendees, “Followers of the Way.” After a Eucharistic celebra-
tion a hunger meal took place, to remind us of the plight of those
who had less than we in the U.S. and around the world. The
money saved from this simple meal was given to a development
program.

The **Tenth** National Convention in 1975 was held in
Amherst with the theme, “Reconciliation and Liberation through
Christian Community.” Just prior to this convention an eight-day
directed retreat was held for approximately forty people who
came from across the country.

The **Eleventh** National Convention in 1977 was held in
New Orleans with the theme, “Gifted in the Lord: Minister in
His Kingdom.” Over five hundred CLC members attended this
convention. The gathering was preceded by an eight-day
directed retreat and a two-day Leadership CLC Training
Program.

The **Twelfth** National Convention in 1979 was held in
San Francisco with the theme, “The Cry of the People Has Come
to Me.” We prepared for this convention for about 1-1/2 years.
Some of you may still remember meeting at our CLC Center in
St. Louis for a long weekend in the summer of 1978 and then in
the spring of 1979 prior to this convention. Between forty and
fifty CLC members gathered to put together this convention. Prayer,
sharing and creativity brought the theme of the conven-
tion to life. During this time we organized several insertion
experiences which included the Catholic Worker House and the
Northside (St. Louis) Neighborhood Project. This group worked
closely with the Lutheran Family and Children’s Services, a
ministry that involved a food pantry, distribution of clothing,
visits to the poor and working with banks to obtain better hous-
ing in neighborhoods. We became convention presenters by
putting together workshops and sessions that would make our
theme come alive. Insertion experiences were also made avail-
able in the San Francisco area prior to the convention. Some
helped in areas with the poor in San Francisco while several
even visited the San Quentin prison. Bishop Thomas Gumbleton
from Detroit was one of our speakers as well as Ms. Jose Gsell,
then Executive Secretary of our World CLC Movement. The title
of her presentation was, “Our Hearing the Cry of the People as
a Christian Life Community.” It truly was a gifted Convention
especially for those involved in the process.

The **Thirteenth** National Convention in 1981 was held in
St. Louis with the theme, “Seeking God’s Will - Finding Our
Way.”

The **Fourteenth** National Assembly in 1983 was held in
Washington, D.C. with the theme, “We Make Our Way by
Going.” We changed the title from National Convention to
National Assembly. Structures of clusters within regions were
established at this meeting.

The **Fifteenth** National Assembly in 1985 was held in
Cleveland with the theme, “Community.” The speakers included
Evelyn and John Whitehead and Jack Milan.

The **Sixteenth** National Assembly in 1987 was held in
Omaha with the theme, “Rooted Within - Reaching Beyond:
Ignatian Spirituality for a Mission People.” I would say that at
this assembly we deepened our understanding of what it means
to be an Ignatian Community. We heard presentations on “What
is Lay Spirituality?”, “How does the theme relate to our CLC
foundations in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius?”, “Why is
mission essential to Ignatian Spirituality?”, “What is the place
of community in the lives of Ignatian-formed persons?” and
“Why is Ignatian Spirituality an apt vehicle for ‘mission’ in the
future?”

The **Seventeenth** National Assembly in 1989 was held in
Santa Clara with the theme, “Walking Against the Wind: People
of God in a Changing World.”

The **Eighteenth** National Assembly in 1991 was held in
Scranton with the theme, “Discerning Hearts for Servant
Hands.” At this assembly we had the privilege of having as a
presenter, Jose Reyes, the Executive Secretary of our World
Community. Jose and his family moved to Rome in 1986 from
Chile to take on this position for five years. Jose’s presentation
was entitled, “At the Service of the Kingdom.” He opened up for
us the theme of the Eleventh World Assembly that was held in
Guadalajara, Mexico in 1990.

The **Nineteenth** National Assembly in 1993 was held at
Marquette University in Milwaukee. The theme was, “Finding
God in All Things.” Featured speakers included: CLC Episcopal
Moderator Bishop Kenneth Untener, Eileen Burke-Sullivan,
Timothy Rouse, Ecclesial Assistant Bernie Owens, S.J. and
Dr. Monika Hellwig, Professor of Theology at Georgetown
University.

The **Twentieth** National Assembly in 1995 was held at
John Carroll University in Cleveland. The theme was “Called
and Sent.” Major presenters were: Executive Secretary of World
CLC Roswitha Cooper, Jacqueline Bergan, Sr. Marie Schwan
and Shane Martin, S.J. Roswitha spoke on “Mission: World Perspective.” She pointed out that the depth of our involvement was connected with our degree of love. She also said, “In mission we become instruments of love, clay in the potter’s hand.” Roswitha called us to ‘savor’ the words: called and sent, action, service, mission. She asked us to reflect upon the relationship of our personal spirituality in the context of the world in which we live.

The Twenty-first National Assembly in 1997 was held in Los Angeles with the theme, “We are Many Parts: Faith and Culture Transformed by the Mission of Christ.” At this assembly we had Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer from Brazil, the World CLC Vice-President. She spoke to us about the new formation documents that were being developed at the World CLC level. Another speaker was Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., who described his work in Los Angeles with young men and women in gangs. He had appeared on “60 Minutes” just a few months earlier and showed us a portion of that program. He told us how the young men he was working with responded to the limo that showed up for their interview. It was quite a scene. I remember Fr. Greg saying, “Just show up and know their names.” What a difference that has made in how I approach people and situations to this very day. A CLC leader from Japan spoke about CLC in his country. He was able to give the number of CLCers who had made a temporary commitment and how many had made a permanent commitment to CLC as their Way of Life. In all of our discussions about formation and commitment, I have never forgotten that and how I wish we would one day be able to make that proclamation in our CLC-USA.

The Twenty-second National Assembly in 1999 was held in New York with the theme, “Our Hearts are Burning - Our Common Mission: CLC - A Letter from Christ, Written by the Spirit, Sent to Today’s World.” The World CLC Vice-President Mary Nolan of Australia gave the keynote address. She reflected on common mission as it developed at the World Assembly in Itaiici in 1998.

The Twenty-third National Assembly in 2004 was held in Washington, D.C. with the theme, “Called to be a Prophetic Community.” The process of open space was developed for the first time at this Assembly. Members from the Rwandan CLC shared their heart wrenching story of genocide in their country and their response to it as CLC members.

The Twenty-fourth National Assembly in 2009 was held in Miami with the theme, “Becoming an Apostolic Body.” Dong Hanh was officially incorporated into CLC by affiliating with CLC-USA as one community.

The Twenty-fifth National Assembly in 2014 is to be held in St. Louis with the theme, “From Our Roots to the Frontiers.”

The past National Conventions/Assemblies helped form our identity as CLC today. The themes, the speakers and the actions point to an ongoing development of the CLC Charism. Often we reflected on growth within ourselves and within the local groups. We sought opportunities for community on all levels. We were urged to be people of mission and later on apostolic and prophetic communities.

In conjunction with these national gatherings, we have had formation teams to assist in the development of formation courses and materials. These led to a deeper understanding of our CLC Charism, an authentic identity.

I would be remiss if I did not mention our affiliation at the United Nations. Being an International Movement we have had status at the UN since 1973 as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). In many ways our General Principle #8 calls us to this identity. “The field of CLC Mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world.” To be at the UN and establish a presence is one expression of our reality as a world community. The challenge is the coordination of our worldwide grassroots experiences, concerning Multi-cultural Respect, Advocacy and Dialogue. Thanks to Joan Woods in New York who keeps us informed and challenges us to move forward in this direction.

Last but not least, our identity has been strengthened and has become vibrant because we do stand on the ‘Shoulders of Giants.’ I am privileged to have known many of them, and I recall with gratitude what they have done for us as we strive to deepen our Way of Life. I hope to see many of you in St. Louis this July as we celebrate our Twenty-fifth National Assembly - a Silver Jubilee for our CLC-USA.

Betty Leone, CLC-USA President Dolores Celentano, World CLC Vice-President Mary Nolan and Fred Leone at the National Assembly in New York, 1999
The theme for our National Assembly is “From Our Roots to the Frontiers,” the same theme as that of the World Assembly. Our National Assembly is a year after the World Assembly. We do not try to repeat the World Assembly format and agenda, but we bring the experience of the World as input into our discernment as CLC-USA.

The World Executive Council stated in Projects 153 prior to the World Assembly, “With this theme, we intend to bridge the time from our inception as a lay Ignatian community till the present time - and our 450th Anniversary – which we will celebrate in 2013. We will reflect on the journey we have travelled together, especially since Nairobi, 2003, during which we confirmed our identity as a lay apostolic body. In addition, we affirm and explore our desire to respond to the signs of the time, ready to cross borders and touch new frontiers.”

The CLC-USA Executive Council along with the National Assembly Planning Committee reflected on the theme as we discerned the plans for our Assembly. Starting with our **Roots**, we did not see this merely as a reflection on our graced history. Rather, we felt the important question for our communal discernment at the Assembly is, “what can we learn about what it means to be CLC from our history and our lived experience?” Our history and lived experience give us a unique identity. When we speak of our **Roots**, we are speaking about our identity – what characterizes and grounds who we are.

Prior to the Assembly, the World Executive Council used input from the National CLC groups to identify three **Frontier** areas: Globalization and Poverty, Family and Ecology. A fourth area was added during the Assembly – Youth. These areas reflect shared interests and activities across the World Community and provide opportunities for collaboration. We are invited to consider our own experiences in these areas for CLC-USA.

However, in our planning for the Assembly, the CLC-USA Executive Council and National Assembly Planning Committee recognized that our **Frontiers** are not limited to these four areas. As stated in the Final Document from the World Assembly, “CLC members may be involved in personal apostolates, and CLC as a body may have an institutional presence or engage in international action. But the ground of all these levels of mission is the foundational call of every CLC member to live their Ignatian lay vocation in daily life. This means being contemplatively active and present in the home, in the family, at work, in civil society, in political and cultural life, and in living a simple lifestyle. If we are not living out our mission at this level, then whatever we seek to do at other levels will be a ‘house built on sand’.”

Thus, bringing our spirituality into our everyday lives can be considered our first frontier. In fact, living the CLC vocation in our western culture today is a frontier for us. From this broader perspective, our **Frontiers** are, “Where is God calling us to live the CLC Charism more authentically in our reality?” This becomes the key question for our communal discernment at the Assembly. We begin with our **Roots** – what can we learn about our identity from our history and lived experience? We reflect on our current reality in light of our identity. We consider where God is calling us to respond – our **Frontiers**.
The 2014 National Assembly will continue the national discernment process that included Leadership Assemblies in Pittsburgh and that engaged us in reflecting on our diverse graced histories in CLC-USA. The NCC sees the necessity to engage the broadest possible participation of members in our effort to see where God is calling CLC-USA at this time.

The Twenty-fifth Assembly will engage us in a communal discernment about who we are as CLC and how we are called to respond to the challenges and opportunities that we encounter today. During the discernment process before and during the Assembly we will reflect on our roots, our current reality and the frontiers where God is calling us.

In the months leading up to the Assembly, there will be a number of reflection exercises for all to provide the content for the communal discernment that will take place at the Assembly. Thus, it is important for everyone to participate in this pre-assembly discernment process. This is particularly true for those who will be attending the Assembly since they will be bringing the input from the “pre-assembly activities” to the Assembly discernment. These activities also provide the opportunity for CLC members who are not able to attend the Assembly to participate in our discernment process. The first task of local communities is to reflect on “who will share our contributions” from the pre-assembly work at the Assembly.

- Communities should devote meeting time to the pre-assembly reflection exercises, which will focus on the following points:
  - What is the ordinary content or agenda of your community meetings? What do you share about?
  - In what ways has being a part of the larger CLC community enriched your CLC life – cluster, region, national, world?
  - What attitudes do you find among yourselves towards contributing your abilities and financial support to the broader CLC apostolic community?

These reflection points will not merely ask for a report of what is happening in our communities. Rather they will invite communities to reflect on how they can go deeper in living their community life. We will consider our current reality in our local communities in the light of our identity as CLC.

These pre-assembly reflections will provide the content. Each will include the following elements:
- Input
- Reflection
- Small Group Sharing
- Large Group Sharing
- Responding to What Was Heard

There will also be a special session at the Assembly where we will gather to obtain a clearer understanding of the whole spectrum of apostolic life in our national community. We will provide a format for gathering and sharing this information (see the National Assembly website [http://assembly2014.clc-usa.org](http://assembly2014.clc-usa.org)).

We hope this whole process will help us to see more clearly where God is calling the entire community at this time and will provide the context for the NCC action plan for the years ahead.
**Overview of the 2014 National Assembly Process**

The 2014 National Assembly will continue the National discernment process that included Leadership Assemblies in Pittsburgh and that engaged us in reflecting on our diverse graced histories in CLC-USA. The NCC sees the necessity to engage the broadest possible participation of members in our effort to see where God is calling the national community at this time.

The St. Louis Assembly will engage us in a communal discernment about who we are as CLC and how we are called to respond to the challenges and opportunities that we encounter today. During this process before and during the Assembly we will reflect on our roots, our current reality and the frontiers where God is calling us. The content for our discernment at the Assembly will come directly from this pre-assembly reflection exercise. The experience of living our CLC life in our local communities will be the input for the discernment sessions at the Assembly. You are being invited to contribute reflections from your community by spending time with this exercise.

CLC-USA ExCo and the National Assembly Planning and Design Committee are asking all the local communities and leadership communities to use at least one of their regularly-scheduled meetings before mid-June 2014 to use the pre-assembly reflection exercise presented here. This is particularly true for those who will be attending the Assembly since they will be bringing the input from the “pre-assembly activities” to the Assembly discernment. These activities also provide the opportunity for CLC members who will not attend to participate in our discernment process.

**Instructions for the Reflection Exercise**

The reflection exercise is a “review of community life.” It includes two steps: first, to personally reflect on the experience of your community in light of the CLC way of life and how that relates to being a CLC community; and then, to share in your local community the fruits of the personal reflection. There are points for reflection and points of reference to guide this process in the community reflection exercise meeting format that follows these notes. The points of reference from CLC documents offer an ideal to reflect on. They are not provided to show the right or wrong way to live our community life. As CLC members, we are striving to discern how to live the CLC way of life in the world today. It is appropriate for us to review our community life and consider how it is life giving and how it reflects our CLC charism.

The reflection exercise can be done in one or more community meetings. A community may find things coming up in their sharing that they want to spend more time on or they may find that one meeting is adequate. This reflection is an invitation for us to consider how we can deepen our community life.

In order to provide adequate time for each person to enter into the discernment process, we strongly encourage each individual CLC member to give some “quality time” personally during the weeks before the local community meets for prayerful reflection on the materials provided. Community members might also find it helpful to review the *General Principles of Christian Life Community* (Principles 1-14) as well as other articles in this current issue of *Harvest* (Vol. 47, No 1 2014).

At the conclusion of the community meeting, one person in the group should record the fruits of the community’s discussion on the reflection points. This will be used by the person(s) from the community attending the Assembly. If no one from the community is able to attend the Assembly, the community is invited to share their input for the Assembly with someone who is. Clusters of communities are welcome to collect community input in some way.
A Scriptural Composition

Jesus appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus… “And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us?’ So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, ‘The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!’ Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”
(Lk 24:30-35)

The grace to be asked for

To be present to our community life experience in light of the CLC way of life and to see clearly how that relates to being a CLC community.

Points for reflection and sharing

Individually, to prepare for sharing in the local CLC

1. In a time of quiet reflection, allow God to bring to light a clearer understanding of your community life experience. Consider the following reflection points:
   • What is the ordinary content or agenda of your community meetings? What do you share about?
   • In what ways has being a part of the larger CLC community enriched your CLC life – cluster, region, national, world?
   • What attitudes do you find among yourselves towards contributing your abilities and financial support to assist the broader CLC apostolic community?

2. What thoughts and feelings do I find in myself as I reflect on the above points in relationship to the call of CLC as described in the points of reference listed on the next page? What is stirring in me?

3. Take a few minutes to consider what to share with my CLC group…

When the local CLC meets

After a brief communal prayer for the graces desired:
   • In a first round of sharing, allow each one to share from his/her individual prayerful reflection…
   • Allow a few minutes for silent reflection on the manner and content of our sharing…
   • Reflect together in a second round of sharing about what these thoughts and feelings may mean or what you are hearing (you may add a third round of sharing to gain clarity)…
   • Decide what our local community wants to share as the fruits of our communal discernment at the National Assembly…

For leadership communities

In addition to reflecting with their local CLC groups. Leaders are invited to reflect on the following points and share them with their local leadership community:
Points of Reference

Reflection point #1: What is the ordinary content or agenda of your community meetings? What do you share about?

- We recognise particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things. [General Principle 5]

- The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the “review of life” and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life. [General Principle 8c]

- It sees itself not only as a community of apostles, that is of persons more or less committed to their own individual missions, but rather, it is an apostolic community in which the members, although dedicated to their own different tasks, share together their lives and the way they each carry out their mission. They also discern together the object and content of each other’s mission. They are sent by the community and, with its help, evaluate how they are following Christ who was sent by the Father. [The CLC Charism 132]

- The core of our community is built around small communities, called local groups. In these we share our lives and our faith centered on Christ. We have a guide and a spiritual companion/director who helps us in our daily discernment, helping us to remain faithful to Christ even in the difficulties that we face. This is the place where the practice of communal discernment starts, sharing responsibility in mission. It is the place where our dynamic of Discern, Send, Support and Evaluate takes root. This is where we practice DSSE. Healthy local groups create a healthy community! [Beirut World Assembly presentation on CLC – A Lay Apostolic Body]

Reflection point #2: In what ways has being a part of the larger CLC community enriched your CLC life – cluster, region, national, world?

- To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we assemble people in community who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism. [General Principle 4]

- Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will. [General Principle 7]

- The more deeply we live our faith in Jesus, the deeper will be our desire for communion with all men and women going beyond the small community in order to reach “all persons of good will” as the Trinity did in Christ. [The CLC Charism 155]

Reflection point #3: What attitudes do you find among yourselves towards contributing your abilities and financial support to the broader CLC apostolic community?

- Our Community continues to need leaders who facilitate the communities’ processes of discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating our personal and communal mission. The capacities we seek in them include:
  - Leadership skills (both as individuals and when working in a team);
  - Spiritual growth through grounding in the Spiritual Exercises;
  - An awareness of their own limitations and gifts as human beings;
  - A willingness and ability to work collaboratively.

- The above implies that the people chosen to fulfill these roles will be able and willing to “order their lives” (Spiritual Exercises #21) so that they may be able to offer quality time to the community, irrespective of the level at which they serve. [“Recommendations from the Nairobi World Assembly to Christian Life Community – Sent by Christ, Members of One Body”, session on Leadership, p.2]

- Collaboration in the mission of the Church. Having received its mission in the Church and from the Church, CLC, in accordance with its directives and its pastoral priorities, brings to the people of God and their pastors the gift of its apostolic service and its rich and original charism in a spirit of discernment and shared responsibility. [The CLC Charism 162]
World Assembly Input: CLC – A Lay Apostolic Body

One of the central themes of the World Assembly was “to deepen our self-understanding as a Lay Apostolic Body.” Chris Micallef, the Vice President of CLC at the time, gave a presentation at the World Assembly in Beirut on “CLC – A Lay Apostolic Body.” He described our journey of discovery in recognizing the call to be a lay apostolic body and in understanding what that means for who we are and how we live our lives. This article provides summary points and excerpts from what Chris presented at the Assembly. The full article is available on the CLC-USA Assembly website as well as Progressio Supplement #70.

Background

The Fatima World Assembly (2008) acknowledged that “it is not (yet) possible to give a clear description or definition of a “lay apostolic body”, because ours is a new way of being in the Church.” As a result, the World CLC ExCo established an internal working group to reflect further and deepen our understanding and meaning of CLC being a lay apostolic body in the Church and in our society.

Tracing Our Roots to the Call to Be a Lay Apostolic Body

The first important transformation of CLC was moving from a federation of communities towards one world community. A second transformation becomes clear in our World Assemblies, beginning in Loyola (1986), where CLC starts to refocus on its service and mission. This was clearly received in Nairobi (2003), where we moved from one community of apostles to becoming one apostolic body in the Church.

A Lay Identity in the Church

CLC is called to be a Lay Apostolic Body in the Church. The Second Vatican Council documents highlight the dignity of all baptized, religious, and lay and restore the co-responsibility we all have in the mission of Jesus Christ today. The apostolate of the laity is very broad and includes specific contexts such as Family, Profession, Politics, Economy, Society, Culture, etc. As lay Christians, CLC members’ mission falls in this pattern – bringing the presence of Christ and discerning His presence in all the spheres of our daily lives. The priority of CLC mission is in these spaces and areas.

The communal dimension of CLC is also a sign of the presence and invitation from God to build a world of justice, peace and integrity. From this standpoint, the call to live as a Lay Apostolic Body in the Church acquires greater urgency.

Our Place in the Church - Lay and Ignatian

CLC is a member of the body of Christ, the Church. What is our particular vocation in the Church? It begins with love for and in the community. We do not live our vocations in isolation, but are shaped and shape the communities of which we are part. Ignatius also teaches us about the Love for the official Church and how to deal with it. The Church itself has many faces, including the hierarchical or teaching authority of the church (which we need to learn to interact with in a healthy, discerning way) and the prophetic face of the Church. As a lay community, CLC is called particularly to this prophetic universal Church. To be prophetic as a lay community in the Church, we need to know the world, our context, be rooted in our society, understand well the teachings of the Church and integrate these in our ongoing reflections on signs of the times. GP6 states, “Union with Christ leads to union with the Church … Sharing the riches of membership of the Church … This sense of the Church impels us to creative and concrete collaboration for the work of advancing the reign of God on earth, and includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand.”

While it is important to underline that when we say Church we mean the Roman Catholic Church, we also embrace the ecumenical nature of the Church drawing our membership from all facets of our Church. This paradox of living in greater unity while remaining open to the diversity of the Church defines our CLC vocation as a new
way of living the life of the Church today and we are still discovering what this new way really means to us and the Church.

Our Way of Living Community

CLC has developed its own way of living as community, one world apostolic body:

- The core of our community is built around small communities called local groups. In these we share our lives and our faith centered on Christ. We have a guide and a spiritual companion/director who helps us in our daily discernment, helping us to remain faithful to Christ even in the difficulties that we face. This is the place where the practice of communal discernment starts, sharing responsibility in mission. It is the place where our dynamic of Discern, Send, Support and Evaluate takes root. This is where we practice DSSE. Healthy local groups create a healthy community!

- Our small communities gather together as a national community in which we also have a national leadership team and a spiritual companion (in the form of an Ecclesiastical Assistant). Here too we practice communal discernment and share responsibility for the life and mission of the community through the DSSE dynamic.

- Our national communities (and therefore every member of CLC) gather themselves as members of one world community. Here again the same dynamics of the small groups are followed. We have a leadership team in the form of the World ExCo and spiritual companions in the form of the World Ecclesiastical Assistant and the Vice EA. Here too we practice communal discernment sharing responsibility for the life and common mission of the community, using the DSSE dynamic.

A Few Important Expressions of Our Way of Life as an Apostolic Body

Commitment

We have a whole range of experiences with commitment: communities that have adopted an expression of commitment very clearly in their national community life, communities who are only starting to embrace this expression, and others who have not even started to deal with this. Our collective experience today shows us that “commitment” is first and foremost to God – His unconditional love for us can only open our hearts and minds to humbly commit ourselves to Him in return. The expression of this commitment is done in CLC through its way of life as a landmark experience (in a ceremony) in our life.

In undertaking an expression of commitment we need to be mindful to remain open to “the whole Church and all people of goodwill” (GP7). We must resist, at all costs, a tendency towards exclusivity! As we deepen our reflection and understanding on the meaning of commitment in CLC, we realize that we also need to deepen our understanding on another important and related issue – membership. As we grow into being a lay apostolic body we need to know the people we can count on to undertake our mission, those committed to the CLC way of life in its totality. This is not only a privilege of those who have expressed their commitment to God in CLC, but it is an open invitation to all who consider themselves to be members of CLC, all those who are walking with us in our local groups!

Financial Co-Responsibility

From the last Assembly in Fatima (especially) there has been a collective realization that as our world community finds its place in the world, reaching financial independence is an important milestone. This is not an aim in itself, but gives the community the chance to dream and explore new avenues. In the case of CLC, reaching this financial independence is one very clear way of expressing our solidarity with each other, of feeling responsible for each other. It is also a means that will help us work towards “changing oppressive structures” (GP8).

A Simple Lifestyle

If CLC is a lay apostolic body, it must strive to seek simplicity in life that will leave it open to the quiet voice of God. We do this, for example, by exercising a preferential option for the poor (GP4) in some of our choices for ministry. Such a choice expresses our freedom to befriend “the poor” and to take prophetic stances and actions in favor of, and in solidarity with the poor, whoever they may be in our society. Our choice of simple lifestyle also expresses itself in the review of daily life. We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life (GP8c).

Apostolic Availability and Initiatives

Our apostolic call is characterized and takes form in many ways. Our mission is vast and knows no bounds. We are called to be with the individual, but also in our social and Church structures. Signs of our apostolic nature are seen through our apostolic works and advocacy initiatives. All our mission assumes the character of ‘bringing the freeing power of Christ to our social realities.’

Deepening Our Apostolic Call

As CLC lives this grace of growth and transformation we are invited to re-order or re-orient our lives and our priorities. This means living a change that will have deep rooted implications both for ourselves as individuals and for our community. The CLC of the future will not be the same CLC we know today!

This transformation is essentially a call to be in the world as Christ is in the world, to be real witnesses of Christ. As our apostolic community feels, hears and sees the suffering of God’s people the way God does, and as our Apostolic Community responds, then, and only then, does CLC become a prophetic voice in our world.
Franklin Ibanez, World CLC Executive Secretary, gave a presentation at the Beirut World Assembly on “Challenges for the CLC Mission - What can an Apostolic Body be and do concretely?” His presentation outlined the four different levels of CLC mission. These levels can be viewed as the ways we live the CLC vocation in our world. They reflect different dimensions of being a lay apostolic body. In this sense, Franklin’s presentation is a continuation of what Chris Micallef presented on deepening our understanding as a lay apostolic body.

Here we present a condensed version of a much longer article Franklin prepared for his presentation. It contains the language of the original article as much as possible. The complete version of Franklin’s article is posted on the CLC-USA Assembly Website and also can be found in the most recent Progressio Supplement (#70) on the World Assembly.

Introduction

We will present some challenges to CLC Mission. For that, we will consider two points: (1) An approach or methodology about what may be considered as CLC Mission and (2) the state (success or failure) of that mission. Humbly I think our mission is going very well. At every moment, something good occurs somewhere in the world by the grace of God acting through CLC. But ... being conscious of the fact that God acts through us, this challenges us to do more and do better. It’s all about affirming our works in order to challenge the Mission of CLC.

Mission Level (a) “Ordinary Activities”

Summary (Daily Life): The primary mission of the laity is to encounter and reveal God in and through the daily activities of family and work. All CLC members are called to this mission, which we achieve through fidelity to our Faith and our CLC vocations. A challenge here might be a particular mentality (even within part of the Church) which still considers this type of mission (‘invisible’ to some) to be something of inferior value. We know otherwise.

• On the first level (a) we find the ordinary, day to day activities. We need to emphasize these because many of the misconceptions and negative images of CLC (or other lay associations) begin here. Many times, lay associations or missions are seen in a bad light – it is easy to say that they don’t do very much, if anything at all. I think this is a mistake.

• Let’s begin with a well know phrase “Gloria Dei Vivens Homo” or “God’s glory is seen in a person fully alive” (St. Irenaeus). The better a human being lives – the greater will be God’s glory. Every person’s life is a valuable project in God’s eyes. God wants every man and woman to live fully. This phrase, understood in depth, can be viewed as the basis or theme of all lay missions or apostolates: To live life fully, this is our mission!
• The Second Vatican Council wanted to rediscover the mission of the laity. It states: “the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life”.

• Therefore, the mission of the laity is to be concerned and committed to the ordinary things like everyone else, but the layperson should do it in a different way, the Christian way. In other words, they are asked to live in the world according to the Gospel. Finding God and revealing God in their ordinary, day to day lives.

• In many cases these ordinary life missions use up all our energy. I know many members who have a demanding job, small children, and besides, have to study to be competitive in the workplace. They can’t dedicate only a small portion of their day or their week to the raising of their children. Children require both quantity and quality time. In these cases, what “free” time do they have? For laypeople, their fundamental mission is (a).

**Challenge One:** To rediscover and value the ordinary activities as the basic mission of lay people. To live our daily lives with apostolic intensity.

**Mission Level (b) “Apostolates”**

**Summary (Apostolic Services):** At this level of mission, members are involved in diverse services and ministries, e.g. in the social, pastoral, educational and ecological spheres. We estimate that 70 percent of CLC members offer their time and talents at this level of mission. Often, institutional works of the Society of Jesus (schools, parishes, retreat houses, social institutes etc.) are the places in which this mission is lived out.

• When we speak of CLC missions, level (b) is usually the level to which we give more attention. It’s the type of mission we know best. For apostolates of this type, we mean those activities unpaid and outside of our working hours. Traditional apostolates are usually of a pastoral or social nature. Pastoral apostolates include catechism classes in parishes, schools or Christian spiritual centers. In the case of CLC, many members are spiritual companions in the Spiritual Exercises and also in everyday life. Social apostolates are services for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), volunteering in social work projects in schools, in hospitals, etc.

• At times, it is said that the world community or some national communities don’t have much of a presence in this type of apostolate. I made a personal calculation using the information and contacts which we had in the Secretariat in Rome and estimated 30-40% of CLC members had this type of apostolate. Recently, in the process of preparing for this assembly, we did a survey and, found almost 70% of members have this type of apostolate.

• It is important to have missions of type (b). Every member and every community in their different levels should ask themselves and answer honestly (e.g. through the process of DSSE) if, at this moment in time, they are doing what they can and what they should. But (b) is not better than (a) - they are both missions, but of different kinds. It is also important to recognize level (b) missions are not always possible for everyone. By contrast, every member is called to live mission at level (a) intensely. This isn’t an option, but what we should always do.

• Another observation: Apostolates of level (b) aren’t very visible, but more visible than level (a). Level (b) apostolates seem invisible because most CLC members serve in level (b) apostolates that are not CLC works, so the credit goes to the project itself and not CLC (e.g. if a CLC member serves in Jesuit Refugee Service (JSR), it will be said “the Jesuits do a lot”). It’s not that we have to compete for recognition, but this is a fact, and it deserves reflection.

**Mission Level (c) “Institutional Presence or Mission”**

**Summary (Institutional Works):** In recent years, a growing number of CLC national communities are taking on the administration or establishment of apostolic institutions (e.g. schools, retreat houses, a center for migrants, a home for orphans etc. – and often in collaboration with the Society of Jesus. There are also examples of shared areas of mission or activities. These are works of CLC. This brings some visibility and strengthens the sense of CLC “common mission.”

• Level (c) is characterized by its emphasis on institutions. In levels (a) and (b), the presence of CLC is through individual members, but in level (c) CLC has an apostolic presence as an institution. This type of mission is easy to understand when we talk about works or projects. In levels (a) and (b) our members work or volunteer in institutions which don’t depend on us, but on the State or other private groups like the Society of Jesus. Level (c) refers to the works of CLC: schools, NGOs, migrant centers, etc. These works are the property of CLC, are inspired by CLC, or CLC participates as an institution together with other groups to manage them.

• In the 80’s and 90’s, there were only a few institutions or CLC projects like these. Some pioneers were France, which took over a retreat house run by the Jesuits, and CLC Hong Kong, which was asked to take charge of a school, Marymount, that had been run by a community of religious sisters. In the 2000’s, there seems to have been an “explosion” of institutional works. On the current list, we have fifteen national communities involved in approximately forty projects.

• Institutional presence, what some communities call “national common mission,” can be expressed in three ways:
• Works or Projects: We have talked about projects and know examples. This type of mission requires a high level of responsibility of the community, given that the works have a life of their own, and they demand financial and legal commitments which are permanent.

• Subjects/Themes: The second way of institutional presence is to identify areas or fields of mission. All members are asked to do something in relation to this subject. For example, CLC Rwanda decided some years ago that its common mission would be the issue of HIV.

• Activities: The third way of being institutionally present is by participating in one activity or action. Participation is for a particular activity and for a limited period of time.

• Are we called to have an institutional presence? Maybe in some cases yes, but it isn’t about promoting this type of mission simply to gain more visibility. Visibility is the medium for the mission, not its objective. In CLC we should promote the institutional presence only if we sense the call of God inviting us to do more and better in that particular direction, not so people will say “look how many works CLC is involved in” or “look how many things they do.”

• If we feel called to take this step, we must ask ourselves “what type of institutional mission is right for us?” One can’t answer this question in general terms. It has to be in regard to concrete situations. What does the context require? What is the situation? Many factors come into play: What financial resources are available? How big is the national community? What are the urgent needs of the country? Are most of the members enthusiastic about a common subject?

**Challenge Two:** Review to see if our understanding of the apostolic body is inviting us to new institutional presences centered on common missions.

**Mission Level (d) “International Actions”**

*Summary (International Cooperation): The world community, as some national communities have done, can have a WHAT as a “global common mission.”* There are examples of the World Community doing this when we act together, pray together and share resources together. Advocacy at global levels also occurs through the UN Working Group and other networks.

• Let us deepen our understanding of the challenge presented by an institutional presence on a new level, i.e. level (d). Since Itaici (1998), World CLC has spoken of the “common mission” which was identified in three wide areas: Christ and social reality, Christ and daily life, Christ and culture. In the Nairobi Assembly (2003), we took it one step further and discerned the common element of the mission doesn’t depend on WHAT is the mission, but on HOW it is lived out. The HOW is a simple methodology – DSSE which stands for four very Ignatian verbs (Discerning, Sending, Supporting, Evaluating).

• In the Fatima Assembly (2008), it was seen that the world community had adopted the dynamic of DSSE and was committed to developing it even more. Every member of the world community ideally should live out the DSSE and so be able to say that the mission of each member of the national communities is shared by the world community. The WHAT is still very general and open.

• Nevertheless, the story doesn’t end there. The world community, as some national communities have done, can have a WHAT as a “global common mission” as a priority activity that lasts for a certain time. This is not done to gain visibility but to gain apostolic efficiency and is part of our call to be a world community or an apostolic body. I believe that we are going in that direction, even if we are not always aware of it. The fact that many national communities opt for some common “WHATS” shows me that the world community is called to walk in that direction also.

• The common WHAT helps to flesh out the meaning of the word “community.” Some examples include:

  • The 4% Education Campaign in the Dominican Republic: CLC led the international campaign and finally this year the Government of the Dominican Republic accepted the 4%. Moral: We are one body when we act together.  

  • The March 2011 earthquake that struck Japan: In response to some CLC members wondering, “how can we show solidarity with our Japanese brothers and sisters?” CLC Japan shared their reflections and proposed a novena of prayer. At least six thousand people took part in this chain of prayer. Moral: We are one body when we pray together.  

  • The “Accommodation Project” between 2011 and 2012: The campaign to buy an apartment in Rome for the people who work in the Executive Secretariat of CLC was a success. The money that was spent on rent can now be spent on the Apostolic Fund. Moral: We are one body when we share our resources.

  • In our international action, the CLC group present at the UN in New York also plays an important role. A short time ago we started a group in Rome in order to do advocacy and represent CLC in the FAO. These groups represent us in a permanent way on the world level and are an expression of the world body.  

**Challenge Three:** To discern our apostolic potential with missions that involve the world community.

**Collaboration with Jesuits and Others**

I would like to go on to one last important point: Collaboration for the mission. The challenges for the CLC mission do not depend on us alone, because the mission is greater than our efforts alone. We have many collaborators, both actual and potential.

In the first place, of course, is the Society of Jesus. When CLC lay people and Jesuits start to talk about collaboration, we frequently do it from the perspective of levels (b), (c) and recently (d), as if collaboration only started with “(b).” This isn’t
correct. A lot of collaboration occurs at level (a), but when we don’t recognize level (a) as a valid mission of lay people, we don’t recognize the collaboration that exists there either. In a true vision of collaboration we include every level, from (a) to (d). In (a) Jesuits collaborate with the ordinary projects of CLC lay people as individuals. In (b) the lay people, as individuals or in groups, collaborate in works of the Society. It seems that only in levels (c) and (d) we collaborate as two institutionalized bodies, e.g. when both share institutionally the management of a project or campaign. But we should remember that collaboration between both bodies starts in (a).

A lesson which we can learn from the Society of Jesus is the broadening of our collaborative horizons. In CG 35 Jesuits talk frequently about collaborating “with others,” considering even those non-Christians who are nevertheless people of good will. In fact, CLC also does this on various levels, in many parts of the world. In every level of mission, we can be witnesses to examples of collaboration with others.

Challenge Four: To propose different ways of collaborating, starting with a fair understanding of the components (levels), might become a model of apostolic effectiveness and fraternity.

Final Summary

I have upheld mission at level (a) as something valuable, something where CLC already does a lot. What we need to do is to intensify the commitment to and experience of everyday living which is the principle mission of laypeople. It would be great if people recognized us by our special way of doing things. Imagine if our work colleagues for example, were to say to us “where do you get your vitality and dedication from?” How we bring God into our daily activities determines how attractive we become, so that others are captivated by what has captivated us. The treasure we have in our Faith and Ignatian spirituality should shine through us in our daily lives so that others will want to drink from the same ‘well.’

The DSSE is a method by which each person’s mission becomes a common mission. Above all, “support” or “accompaniment” can make the common mission practical and concrete. Community action or corporate action is obvious especially in levels (c) and (d), but sometimes in (b) and even in (a) in the ways we help and accompany each other.

When we consider these four levels, one on top of another, it could give the impression that what is on top is the ultimate mission or that it is of more value. I don’t believe this. I have upheld the priority of (a). Instead of seeing the graphic of the four levels as an ascending pyramid, we should see it as an iceberg. An iceberg is a huge mass of floating ice. We only see a small part of it, the part that is above the water and just under the surface. But the largest part of its bulk is under water – hidden, invisible. Even so, it holds up the part which is seen. So it is with the mission of CLC, or other lay associations. It is as if level (a) is condemned to remain invisible. Part of the (b) apostolates can be seen, but not very clearly. In contrast, the institutional presence (c) is seen more clearly and international action (d) is also. But there would be no iceberg without the great mass of (a).

Footnotes

1] Lumen Gentium  31,2
2] In the Vatican Council documents (Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Apostolicam Actuositatem) we find expressions like “temporal affairs”, “ordinary activities”, “daily life”. In the text I assume that it refers to the same: the common activities or normal life of any person
3] Of course, on level (b) we should also include all the internal CLC services that our members do, e.g. serving on the National Council or on the Formation Team. That is to say, many CLC members serve CLC in their free time and free of charge: “Serving CLC behind the scenes so that CLC is more apostolic outside,” this is also an important apostolate!!!
5] In Spanish, the word “accompany” sounds better than “support”. To accompany seems closer to the Ignatian meaning.
As we prepare for the National Assembly we are entering into a process of communal Examen. This Examen of our community life provides the content for our communal discernment at the Assembly. Each of us has different experiences and perspectives that we bring to this discernment. In this reflection, the Executive Council offers some input on our current reality as CLC in the United States. This is not intended to capture everything that is happening in our community. We cannot include everything in this brief reflection, nor are we aware of everything. Yet, the Executive Council does have a unique perspective on our community life that we would like to share with you.

There are many positive signs of energy in CLC-USA – places where we see life and a desire to live the CLC Charism. These graces are examples of being a lay apostolic body.

- S.E.E.D. ministry, which offers retreat experiences for children and teens, expanding nationally from its roots in the Southwest.
- CLC/CVX groups have become actively involved in supporting the ministries at retreat houses in Miami and Houston.
- At the invitation of the local bishop, Marriage Renewal Workshops is training lay couples in Vietnam to offer these workshops in Vietnam. CLC-USA members are supporting this ministry.
- The Dong Hanh community is offering Lightworks in some parishes with support from the local bishop. A couple of CLCs may form from the initial Lightworks groups.
- CLC-USA is the Godparent for CLC Vietnam as it journeys towards becoming a National CLC that is part of the World Body (the Dong Hanh community is carrying out this responsibility).
- CLC members are involved in different ministries that offer the Spiritual Exercises such as Bridges and the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (SEEL).
- Communities in different parts of the country have participated in communal discernment workshops to deepen their understanding and practice of discernment in their community life.
- The Formation Team completed the last of a series of Guides Workshops that introduced the role of guides and provided a starting point for further work in this area.
- The 450 year celebration task force created an e-newsletter that shared news from our communities.
- Over the last several years, the presence of CLC at Jesuit universities has grown significantly. Some small, but hopeful steps have been taken to develop relationships between the universities and the broader CLC community.
- The National Coordinating Council has been growing together as a discerning leadership body. The NCC has expanded to better reflect the life of the community, has been applying discernment processes to its meetings (DSSE) and is taking more ownership of its leadership responsibilities.
- In 2013, for the first time in several years, CLC-USA assets increased. This was a result of a very good response to the dues request by regions and cultural groups. There were some generous contributions from members, particularly the gift from the estate of long-time CLC member John Bellamente.
We are also aware of the many ways we are each apostolic in our everyday lives – in our families, jobs, communities and ministries.

We also have challenges. 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. There are clear needs for support in our community that we are being invited to address.

- There are 3 regions with less than 5 communities. Several other regions have less than 10 communities and most have less than 15 communities.

- We do not have community guides for most of our communities, nor is there a good understanding of the role of or need for guides. Related to this is a lack of support for many existing communities to grow in the CLC way of life.

- In many regions we are not seeing new groups being formed or younger people becoming members. This is partly because of the lack of guides.

- We do not have a good understanding of who our members are and what it means to be a member.

- Members tend to identify with their regional or cultural groups rather than with CLC-USA and the World community. There is a lack of connection to each other or the means to support stronger connections.

- The availability and presence of Ecclesial Assistants to journey with us have declined in recent years for a variety of reasons, inviting us to reflect on their role in our community life.

These needs are not new. They have been identified at various CLC-USA leadership forums over the years. We understand the need for formation, communication and resources. We can see the consequences of not addressing these needs as the presence of CLC fades in some parts of the body. We are invited to reflect on this.

We tend to look to leadership to address these kinds of needs in the body. ExCo would like to offer some perspectives from our experience in CLC-USA leadership.

- ExCo is supported by an Administrative Secretary and an Assistant Treasurer. These relatively new staff positions have been helpful, but they are the only staff for CLC-USA.

- CLC-USA has limited ability to deliver services to support members and carry out basic functions like formation and communications. A few committees exist in some form, but are not very functional, have limited (and sometimes unclear) mandates to carry out specific tasks or functions, and often they play more of an advisory role. They lack a leadership base for ongoing guidance, coordination and collaboration in their various service roles.

- Leadership exists throughout CLC-USA at the local level and in our regions and cultural groups. However, this leadership is very fragmented. We tend to view leadership in terms of “national” and “local” (us-them) rather than as one leadership body working together.

- We demand much from our leadership. This is not limited just to ExCo. Leaders throughout CLC-USA serve in multiple roles and devote a great deal of time to serving the community and living the CLC charism.

Many good ideas are proposed for the National Community, but there are few people to act on them. Leaders are asked to do more and more and more to serve the needs of the community. Yet, they cannot possibly do everything they are being asked to do. Their efforts fall short and they feel that they are accomplishing very little. This can lead to burn out and frustration among leadership. It can distract leaders from taking the time to discern how we are called by God to go deeper. As leaders, it is not a question of doing more, but how we provide guidance and direction to the community to be a discerning body. It is not all up to leadership. We all share responsibility for the life of the community. We all have leadership roles and we are all asked to support the leaders in our communities. The National Assembly is an invitation for all CLC-USA members to engage in this shared responsibility.

“The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “he has loved us first” (1 Jn 4:19) and that he alone “gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.”

(From Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, 2013)
As we have shared in other articles and communications, the Twenty-fifth Assembly is not a four-day event, but includes pre-assembly preparation exercises in the months leading up to the Assembly. The Assembly communal discernment continues our CLC-USA discernment journey. Decisions already made by CLC-USA leadership provide important context and input for the St. Louis Assembly. The Assembly is an opportunity to engage the broader CLC in our discernment journey to clarify, re-focus and deepen what has been discerned in response to God’s invitation to us today. This article reviews our discernment journey and the decisions that have been made by CLC-USA leadership.

We begin our reflection on the discernment journey of CLC-USA with the growth in our ethnic communities in the period leading up to the National Assembly in Miami in 2004. The Korean Community was less than eight years old at that time, but they had many people in CLC groups. The Vietnamese Community (Dong Hanh), which had been thriving for over 25 years, formally entered CLC-USA during the Miami National Assembly. The Hispanic Community in South Florida shared their desire and commitment to CLC by hosting the Assembly in Miami. There were also conversations with the Young Adult Community in Miami.

Recognizing the significance of these changes in our structure and makeup, the 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 creation of the Diversity & Organization (D&O) Committee. In discerning the path forward, the committee realized that we needed first to build our relationships as a community and bring our leadership together before addressing our structures. The NCC decided there should be a series of Leadership Assemblies (initially two) and the D&O Committee (with support from the Formation Committee). They organized the first Leadership Assembly in Pittsburgh in April 2008.

There were five Leadership Assemblies in Pittsburgh that brought together 50-70 leaders from the CLC-USA Regions and Cultural groups. The following points briefly describe each Assembly:

1. **Leadership Assembly I, April 2008** – Discovering How God Is Leading Us: We seek to experience the grace of our diversity, and to open our minds and hearts to how God is forming CLC-USA into one Apostolic Community. CLC leaders from each of our regions and cultural groups came together for the first time to get to know one another, develop relationships, share our histories and pray with one another. We learned about communal discernment, leadership and conflict awareness/resolution. **One outcome of this Assembly was the invitation to CLC-USA groups to create their graced history journals.**

2. **Leadership Assembly II, March 2009** – Discovering How God Is Leading Us into/ as One Apostolic Body. We continued seeking the grace of the first Assembly. We reflected on the collective Graced History Journal from all of our communities. We discerned how we are being called to apostleship and leadership and **identified three priorities for CLC-USA: formation, communication and resources.**

3. **Leadership Assembly III, June 2010** – Principles That Will Guide the CLC-USA Reorganization: May our love increase ever more and more in knowledge and every
The Assembly considered a set of Guiding Principles for the reorganization process that had been developed by a Program Committee prior to the Assembly. These principles drew on the experience of the previous assemblies and a summit of CLC leaders in Houston earlier in the year. The Assembly provided clarifications to the Guiding Principles and the National Coordinating Council gave the mandate for a Working Group to develop a framework for how CLC-USA should be organized.

- Leadership Assembly IV, June 2011 – A New Framework for CLC-USA. The CLC-USA Working Group presented a Framework for organizing CLC-USA. The Assembly discerned to accept the Framework in principle and the National Coordinating Council asked the Working Group to continue to develop the details of the Framework along with a transition plan. The NCC also approved a motion to expand its membership to represent more adequately groups that are under-represented. A committee was formed to act on this decision.

- Leadership Assembly V, June 2012 – A New Way of Being Organized and Served as a National Community: To be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and trust that God is leading us. The CLC-USA Working Group presented a vision for moving forward with our re-organization process that proposed elements for a new structure and transition steps for the process. In response the NCC approved seven proposals to provide further clarity or act on various elements of the proposal. The NCC also approved the creation of a part-time administrative secretary position and ExCo was asked to develop the job responsibilities.

The NCC met in October 2012 in St. Louis to follow up on the proposals approved at the fifth Leadership Assembly. The NCC went through four discernment exercises that led to the creation of a set of task forces to address five of the proposals from the Leadership Assembly (two proposals were deferred). These five proposals included: membership, communities, guides, national offices and clusters/service centers/delegate assembly. In addition, two other task forces were created: 450 Year Celebration of Ignatian Lay Communities and the 2014 National Assembly Preparation Committee to pick the specific site. The NCC approved St. Louis as the location for the National Assembly.

The work of the five proposal task forces provided the input for the 2013 NCC meeting in September in St. Louis. The NCC discerned that issues related to membership, community and guides cannot be compartmentalized. The NCC unanimously chose to provide resources, direction and support for developing and implementing consistent national guidelines and processes for membership, community formation and group guides. They also decided not to devote time to further defining the details of clusters, service centers and the delegate assembly at this time. Thus the NCC confirmed earlier decisions to focus on formation as a priority.

The NCC also agreed that the National Assembly is to be planned as a community building and “formation” experience, and all CLC members are strongly encouraged to attend. This is the direction on which the Assembly planning committee acted. As we continue our journey toward the St. Louis Assembly, we encourage our members in this communal discernment process to deepen our call as a lay apostolic body.
Guidelines for Discerning, Sending, and Supporting Members Attending the National Assembly

Introduction

The CLC-USA National Coordinating Council is inviting local leadership and communities to begin discerning who should attend the St Louis National Assembly in July. The Executive Council has prepared these guidelines to help you in this process. We hope this will provide the opportunity for many members to participate in the communal discernment process at the Assembly. We do not intend this process to limit attendance, but to make it possible for everyone that has the desire to participate to attend the Assembly.

Washington University can accommodate a large group of people and we would like to fill every available spot, but we recognize that it is a significant expense and time commitment to attend. For this reason, we believe it is important for local communities to send and support members to be at the Assembly. The input from communities will come from people attending the Assembly. Therefore, we hope at least 1-2 people from each community will attend. World and National Leadership have been reflecting on how we are being led to live even more deeply the apostolic life of our CLC charism, but it is important for the voices of membership to participate in this discernment.

The St. Louis Assembly will engage us in a communal discernment about who we are as CLC and how we are called to respond to the challenges and opportunities that we encounter today. In the months leading up to the Assembly there will be a number of “reflection exercises” for local communities and leadership. These exercises will provide the content for the discernment sessions that will take place at the Assembly. Thus, it is important for CLC members and CLC Leadership to participate in this pre-Assembly discernment process. This is particularly true for those who will be attending the Assembly since they will be bringing the input from the “pre-assembly activities” to the Assembly discernment. The first task of local communities is to reflect on “who will share our contributions” from the Pre-Assembly work at the Assembly. A process for discerning this is provided on the following page along with some suggested criteria to consider below.

Assembly Participant Criteria for Consideration

- Belong to a CLC-USA local community
- Have the desire to participate in the communal discernment process of the Assembly
- Have a collective understanding of local CLC community life
- Recognize that they represent diverse points of view from their community and not principally their own point of view
- Have interest in the experience of CLC community beyond the local community
- Be available to participate in the pre-assembly reflection exercises and in the communal discernment process at the Assembly
Meeting format for Discernment

The grace to be asked for

To be guided by the Holy Spirit so our decision is made with interior freedom, love, and generosity.

A Scriptural Composition

At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, “It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a man filled with faith and the holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Guidance for process

- Pray for grace
- Reflect on the Scripture
- Acknowledge the challenge for someone attending the assembly to go beyond their personal point of view and share what comes from the whole community
- First point: Discernment of members attending the assembly
  - Members of the community review the assembly participant criteria for consideration above
  - Members of the group confirm they see these characteristics in some people in the group
  - Invite people to offer thoughts on who might be sent
  - Hear from those being invited

  Note: Be careful not to rush the process or lean on a particular person or outcome; let this rise out of the group

  Notice if there is interest and energy for more than one or two people in the group to attend

- Second point: Support
  - How to make it possible for these people to attend
  - How the group supports and sends this person so this is a responsibility shared by the community (collective responsibility to enable people to go)

- Closing
  - Meeting evaluation: How is God present? How do you feel about the exercise?
  - Closing prayer: Our Father
CLC-USA National Assembly
From Our Roots to the Frontiers
2pm July 10 - 2pm July 13, 2014
Washington University
1 Brookings Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63130

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

CLC Group Name ____________________________________________________________
Region/Cultural Community __________________________________________________
First Name ___________________________ Last Name ______________________________
Gender:  ____ Male  ____ Female
Age Group:  ____ Adult  ____ College Student  ____ Teen (13-18)  ____ Youth (6-12)  ____ Child (5 and under)
Address ____________________________________________________________
Home Telephone _______ - _______ - _______  Cell phone _______ - _______ - _______
E-mail ________________________________________________
WU Parking Pass  ____ Yes  ____ No  Room Type:  ____ Single  ____ Double
Name of Requested Roommate ____________________________________________
Extra Stay - Number of Days before Assembly __________  Extra Stay - Number of Days after Assembly __________

REGISTRATION FEES

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PAYMENT METHODS

1) PayPal - please add an additional $10 processing fee per attendee to the total registration fee.
2) Check - please make check payable to CLC-USA, referencing "NA2014" in the memo section and mail to our CLC-USA Administrative Secretary: Helen Plocha, 9284 NW Harvest Hill Dr., Portland, OR 97229
3) Cashier's Check or other types of check - same as check.

SOLIDARITY FUND

To contribute to the Solidarity Fund for other CLC members to attend the National Assembly, please indicate the contribution amount and add to your payment. A Tax Receipt will be issued for the donation amount.

Solidarity Contribution Amount $ __________________________
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

Christian Life Community®-USA
3601 Lindell Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63108
www.clc-usa.org

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CLC-USA National Assembly
Washington University
St. Louis
July 10-13, 2014

Next Issue

Fruits and Challenges of
Assembly 2014