Fruits and Challenges of Assembly 2014
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*Cover: Attendees of the National Assembly at Washington University*
Editorial Foreword

Commitment in CLC

The 25th National Assembly of Christian Life Community - USA is now history. Men and women came from states across our country and three countries abroad to St. Louis in mid-July to participate. The venue was the lovely campus of Washington University. Attendees were welcomed by local CLCers who greeted us with smiles, hugs and the help we needed to get settled. How blessed we were by their generosity and care!

It is fitting that I express thanks for all to our President, Rick Kunkle, and the Program Design and Planning Team: Clarita Baloyra, Helen Seol, Sophie Nguyen, Hang Nguyen and Father Jim Borbely, S.J. We are grateful for a job well done!

The following pages are filled with details of the Assembly, with expressions of gratitude, with reflections on the process, with reflections on the graces received and challenges for the future. Beginning with President Rick Kunkle and President-elect Ed Plocha, you will learn of the content, process and results of the happenings in St. Louis. From Chris Hogan, World ExCo Vice-President, you will be informed about CLC around the world, first from a report on the meeting which took place in Beirut in 2013, followed by some of the initiatives begun since that time. This issue will also feature reflections from members of the cultural regions and selections from senior and junior members of CLC. Included are impressions and hopes for the future, especially for those who belong to pre-CLC groups or those who are new to CLC. What was evident from the start, was the reality that this Assembly was diverse not only in language and customs but also in the level of understanding of CLC, its history and its identity.

One special feature of the opening evening Mass did not receive as much attention as I would have liked. At that liturgy, our new President-elect, Ed Plocha, made his act of Permanent Commitment to CLC. I believe this action is not understood completely nor practiced widely by many professing to be members of Christian Life Community.

In today’s world the word commitment has a bad reputation. We live in a culture of quick fixes, of almost transient relationships, of throw away materials and of lack of respect for life at all stages. Very little seems deserving of commitment. People around us avoid engaging themselves (which implies a degree of confidence and trust) to others or to the tasks at hand.

There are references to commitment in several of the articles within this issue of Harvest. I believe they are made with good intentions and with strong resolve. This kind of commitment is important and needed to accomplish the goals we set for ourselves and our communities.

However, the Commitment (with a capital C) called for in CLC is more intense. It is an inner movement of the will in which we pledge, engage and entrust ourselves and all our actions to the one person who matters most, the person of Jesus Christ. In making this Commitment we affirm our desire to follow Jesus. We acknowledge CLC as our vocation in the Church that helps us bring about the Kingdom of God in our day, in our place.

The CLC Charism document contains an in-depth section on Commitment in Christian Life Community (See III C - Pages 37-41). Beginning with some thoughts on the reasons for Commitment, the document proceeds with steps leading to both Temporary and Permanent Commitment. The following are some excerpts that can help us appreciate Commitment in CLC:

We do not live our vocation and mission as isolated individuals. We live them in community and we proclaim before that community of friends and companions in the Lord that we are in and with the Church. This helps us to live coherently the way of life to which we have committed ourselves (The CLC Charism #170.3).

By bearing witness before the CLC, those making a commitment ask the Lord for the grace that they may give their generous response to His fidelity. By doing so in front of the whole community, they are asking for its help; that the whole community may accompany them on their journey. The external expression of this internal
offering somehow gives it a sacramental character (The CLC Charism #197).

I encourage you along with your community to read and reflect on the The CLC Charism as it pertains to Commitment in CLC. If public Commitment ceremonies are not part of your way of proceeding, that should be revisited.

In closing, on behalf of CLC-USA, I want to congratulate Ed Plocha on making his Permanent Commitment to Christian Life Community at the recent Assembly. I hope you join me in accompanying him as he begins his journey for the Lord and for us as President-elect of CLC-USA.

With gratitude to the Lord,

Dorothy M. Zambito

IN MEMORIAM

Richard (“Rick”) Alan Lewis, son of CLC-USA Administrative Secretary Helen Plocha, died from medical complications during surgery on August 5, 2014. Rick is survived by his wife Cindy, son Michael and stepson Patrick.

Donald Jacobsmeyer, the brother of Jerry Jacobsmeyer who is a member of John XXIII CLC, died in early July. Donald lived with his family in Kansas City, Missouri.

From Metro New York:
Roy Messina of the Westchester CLC passed away during the summer.
Dr. Teresita B. Brillantes MD (nee Bobila), 69, of Short Hills, New Jersey passed away on Tuesday, April 22, 2014 after a battle with cancer. She was a member of the San Lorenzo Ruiz CLC.

From North Central:
Father Pat Malone, S.J., a member of the Remnant community in Omaha and the pastor of St. John’s Church died July 22 after a long battle with lung and heart problems. He was 55.
Dear CLC Companions and Friends,

The National Assembly in St. Louis in July marked the end of my first year as CLC-USA President. In the weeks since the Assembly I have been reflecting on my experiences. I would like to share some of those reflections with you along with some thoughts on our journey together during and after the Assembly.

When each of us begins something new (like President of CLC-USA) we have hopes, ideas and plans for what we might do and accomplish. My first year as President has been a transformative experience. It has been a reminder to put my trust in God. It is not up to me. I am not in control. I think of the phrase, “It is not what I can do for God, but what God can do in me.” On a number of occasions I found myself being called in a direction other than the one I planned. It was an experience of living communal discernment.

When I was President-elect I focused on follow-up to the 2012 Leadership Assembly proposals and the task forces that were formed to work on those proposals. But as I became President in June 2013 the World Assembly was a little more than a month away. The focus shifted to engage fully in the World Assembly. This was a profound experience of the World CLC for me, but as I reflect back on the World Assembly I think I was a bit overwhelmed with what happened there. It has taken me a while to begin to absorb that experience and be present to the movement of the Spirit in our community.

When I returned from the World Assembly, the focus shifted again to preparing for the National Coordinating Council (NCC) meeting in September 2013 in St. Louis. The purpose of this meeting was to respond to the work of the different task forces and discern our next steps. This was my first NCC meeting as President. On the flight to St. Louis I became aware that what I had in mind for the meeting was not what we were being called to do. ExCo discerned to let go of some of our agenda items and open up the process to the discernment of the NCC. This was a grace for me as a leader and I think also for the NCC.

After the NCC meeting I had a lot of energy for acting on the fruit of our discernment. However, after catching up on work and life in general, I began to realize that our attention as leaders needed to shift to the National Assembly. We did not have the resources to act on the fruit of the NCC meeting and also plan the Assembly at the same time. This was not what I wanted to do. I had a lot more energy for acting on the NCC meeting than planning for the Assembly. It took me a while to accept that the National Assembly was our priority. I realized that coming together as a National Community was what we needed to do as the next step in our journey to be one CLC. It was an opportunity to engage our whole community.

We began planning for the Assembly in October 2013. This was a communal discernment process. The plans for the Assembly evolved. What we ultimately did in July is not what I would have envisioned in October, or even January. The Assembly Planning Committee met in Houston in January. On the plane flight to Houston I roughed out an Assembly plan based on our conversations to that point. Once I arrived in Houston, it became clear I needed to let go of that plan. In fact, before our meeting, we invited everyone to write down their ideas and then put them aside so we could be open to discern what we were called to do. Our plans began to take shape and evolve towards what we did in St. Louis, but we were not done. It took another Houston meeting to lay out the overall Assembly Program. The details of the Assembly continued to evolve up to and during the Assembly. As I shared in my closing remarks,
the exercises were planned with the process guides during the Assembly in response to what we were hearing.

As I reflect on the graces of the Assembly, I am filled with gratitude. Personally I am grateful for the presence and support from everyone who participated in the Assembly. The Assembly is one of the few times that we come together as a community in all of our diversity. This was one of the graces of the Assembly – by sharing our experiences we became more aware of our diversity, differences and commonalities. One of my fond memories from the Assembly occurred during the Masses when we sang spontaneously the chorus of familiar songs in different languages and our voices merged as one beautiful sound. The Assembly was a communal discernment inviting us to reflect on how we are being called to live the CLC Charism more deeply. It was an invitation to live more fully the CLC vocation. The three Assembly exercises were a “review of community life.” The graces for each exercise were:

- Ask for God’s grace to listen attentively to one another and to bring light the actual experiences taking place in local CLC life.
- Ask for the grace to be open to the prompting of the Spirit about our community life.
- Ask for the grace for more clarity and openness about what is distinctive about the CLC way of life.

In the Assembly exercises we reflected as a community on our current reality in light of the CLC Charism. This brought to light some clarity about the characteristics of CLC:

- A commitment to growth in communal discernment of spirits
- A commitment to personal spiritual growth
- A real experience of the Spiritual Exercises
- A commitment to seek the services of an Ignatian group guide
- A commitment to meetings conducted in a way that supports the growth of the community in the CLC Charism
- A commitment to the spiritual growth of others in the community and to the community itself

Central to our identity as CLC is the first characteristic – communal discernment. This clarity about CLC is one of the graces of the Assembly. The characteristics are not rules or things we “should” do to be a “good” community. They are an invitation to grace and to living the CLC Charism more deeply. Each community is in a different place on its journey. As a national community we may not even be able to carry out and support the living of some of these characteristics. Yet, we are invited to reflect and respond to these characteristics as a national and local community. How do we accompany each other in living these characteristics?

On Friday evening, the Apostolic Experiences session was one of the highlights of the Assembly. The session began with a slide show of pictures from the apostolic ministries of members and communities. The main part of the session consisted of four presentations:

- Carol Gonzalez on her personal apostolate on environmental stewardship
- Frank Vuong on the group apostolate of the S.E.E.D. ministry, a retreat program for children that is led by young adults
- Hung Vu on the group apostolate of the Marriage Renewal Workshop ministry
- Marie Schimelfening on the CLC role as a NGO at the United Nations - an international advocacy role

There was a lot of positive energy at this session and interest in the apostolates presented. It is a reminder that “our life is essentially apostolic” (General Principle 8). The CLC Charism is a means for carrying out the mission of Christ. While being apostolic does not appear as one of the above characteristics of CLC, it is clearly the outcome. We are community in mission.

On Saturday evening we celebrated being together at the banquet and during the social activities. We recognized and expressed our gratitude to people in our community who have served us and Christ’s mission in the world. Kitty Gray was recognized for her many years of service to CLC with the CLC Development Award. Jerry Shen and Bridget Brennan received the Development of Peoples Award for their service work in Tanzania with self-development for women and setting up a soy milk processing system. Hung and Kim-An Vu also received
The Development of Peoples Award. From their love, dedication and concern for family, they initiated and formed a team to develop and implement the Marriage Renewal Workshop. The service and ministry of each of these people is an inspiration to us all.

As I reflect on the Assembly, I am hopeful. There are graces we can build on. We are invited to share these graces and reflect on how we respond. The National Coordinating Council took some initial steps at their meeting following the Assembly. They affirmed the priority of formation and approved the creation of a National Office of Formation to facilitate and coordinate the formation program of CLC-USA. I ask for your prayers and support as we discern how to implement this formation program in a way that supports the living of the CLC Charism and brings us together as a National Community.

I would like to conclude by thanking Hang Nguyen, our outgoing Past-President, for her many years of service to CLC-USA. Her efforts laid the groundwork for many of the things on which we are now building. I wish her many blessings in her “retirement” from being President and look forward to working with her in the future.

CLC is grateful to welcome Ed Plocha to the Executive Council as the President-elect. I have had the privilege to work with Ed since he and Helen moved to Portland. He accepted the invitation to step into CLC Northwest leadership roles.

We are pleased to announce that Carmen Castagno will fill the vacant Secretary position on ExCo. She has served as National Treasurer in the past and more recently as NCC representative for the New Orleans Region.

With these additions we are forming a new ExCo team along with our current members, Sophie Nguyen (Treasurer) and Jim Borbeley, S.J. (National Ecclesial Assistant). Please keep us in your prayers. May we come together as discerning leaders open to God’s guidance.

Blessings,

Rick Kunkle
Gathering. We came from the all over these United States of America: the Eastern Seaboard from New England to Florida; from the Pacific Northwest to California, Arizona and Texas; and from America’s heartland. We welcomed guests from Vietnam and Canada, a World CLC representative from Australia and a delegation from Chicago representing over eighty members of a Polish immigrant CLC group. We met in the “Gateway to the West,” the city of St. Louis. We spoke and sang in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean and Polish, underscoring our unique diversity as “CLC-USA.” This diversity was reflected in our liturgies. Each Mass incorporated elements and music from the various cultural groups. We recognized that while there is one Spirit there are many “gifts,” and we experienced these gifts in abundance.

The Assembly. The 25th CLC-USA National Assembly was held July 10-13, 2014 at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. The agenda was structured as a deep reflection about who we are as Christian Life Community and how we are called to respond to the challenges and opportunities that we encounter today to live our CLC vocation more authentically. We looked at how local groups function according to our CLC General Principles and General Norms and The CLC Charism. In the months leading up to the Assembly there were a number of reflection exercises for local groups and leadership. These exercises provided content for the group sessions that took place at the Assembly. Among the many voices heard were not only those attending the Assembly, but also the local groups who participated in these exercises. The National Assembly was planned as a community building and formation experience. There was a desire to share the sense that “we are one, we are national, we are World CLC.” We were invited to go deeply and prayerfully to grasp how better to be CLC and to live this unique calling to the Ignatian lay apostolic vocation. We experienced community and shared with each other our thoughts on how best to grow into becoming “one body,” acknowledging the great challenges still ahead of us in discerning what this means and how best to move towards this ideal.

Our Current Reality: Back to Our Roots. The facilitators provided points for reflection in English, Korean and Vietnamese. We took these points to consider: “Our Current Reality” (where we are now); “Our Current Reality in Light of the Vision for CLC” and “Our Lived Experience of Being Apostolic.” We sought to answer how we are growing as one body. We were invited to go back to our roots: Ignatian Spirituality, the Spiritual Exercises, the General Principles and General Norms, the Examen and The CLC Charism. These along with having a personal spiritual director help us in getting in touch with our identity as members of Christian Life Community. In small groups we
discussed the nuts and bolts of our regular local group gatherings, i.e., the format, content and process of these as practiced by local communities. The discussion groups were chosen with a conscious intent to diversify the mix with representation from different regions, nationalities and ages. Each small discussion group was therefore a microcosm of CLC-USA.

Unity in Diversity. There were similarities in the dynamics of the groups; but there also was a distinct style that individual members brought to them. While we celebrated our diversity, we also realized that as we go deeper in dialogue and grow in consciousness of the body and its different parts, we recognize too our differences and experience conflict. Because we come from different backgrounds and cultures, we recognize that we have different ways of doing things and different expectations of ourselves and others. It is only by going deeper in our relationships with each other that we learn to name, accept and work to resolve the differences that potentially can divide us. We seek to gain strength and insight into ourselves and others through prayerful dialogue and discernment.

Apostolic Activities. We shared our apostolic experiences through a panel that covered ministries that represent the four “Frontiers” which the World Assembly encouraged us to pursue: Globalization-Poverty, Family, Youth and Environment. The four panelists also represented the various ways that CLC engages in mission. A video showed the numerous ministries in which members of CLC-USA are engaged. We recall that Franklin Ibañez, World CLC Executive Secretary, identified four areas of visibility of CLC mission: Daily Life Choices, Personal Apostolate, Group Apostolate and International Advocacy. Often the first two areas of mission are not so visible to those around us. Yet, within our CLC groups, we *discern these ministries with the members of our community, thus sharing responsibility for mission with one another*. We share this responsibility in daily life choices in our homes and gardens that have a positive impact on our environment; by conducting marriage renewal programs in Vietnam; or conducting intergenerational retreats with children, their parents, young adults; or, at a macro level, by members participating an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) at the UN. An “Apostolic Wall” with posters and descriptions of groups’ local apostolic activities displayed just how active CLC groups are in works of service in their respective communities. We realized that our actions consist in not just what we do, though of course that is important, but *how* we do *what* we do. We do what we do with prayerful awareness and intention.

Our Way of Proceeding. As we talked and engaged in deep dialogue there were clarities that emerged regarding the distinctive features of the CLC way of life. Some characteristics of a healthy CLC community include:

- A commitment to growth in communal discernment of spirits
- A commitment to personal spiritual growth
- A real experience of the *Spiritual Exercises*
- A commitment to seek the services of an Ignatian group guide
- A commitment to meetings conducted in a way that supports the growth of the community in the CLC Charism
- A commitment to the spiritual growth of others in the community and to the community itself

We recognized that to grow in the spiritual life as individuals and community there are both consolations and desolations. We also realized that currently we lack a sufficient number of guides both for established groups and new groups. Yet it was clear from the Assembly that members feel that ongoing formation is critical to the life of the body. This was affirmed by the National Coordinating Council at its meeting following the Assembly where it took the initial steps in creating a National Office of Formation.

“Having a spirituality and prayer life is the basis for apostolic service.”
Contemplatives in Action. We are invited to continue reflecting on the points to which we are called. At the Assembly there was a strong feeling that personal prayer and personal discernment are critical to growth in the communal discernment of spirits. Having a spirituality and prayer life is the basis for apostolic service. It was noted that just as we evolved from a community of apostles to an apostolic community, so too, we must move from being a community of discerners to a discerning community. However, we must become individual discerners before we become a discerning community.

We should not “run ahead of the grace…” We must remember that “It’s all God’s work.” We were asked to balance the pulse of our heart between prayer and apostolic activity. Formation is an ongoing activity which never ends. There is an initial phase of formation followed by an ongoing process of growth. We also recognize there is a cultural context within which formation takes place. Formation material needs to address these issues.

To the Frontiers. In a broken world, CLC lived personal and communal values are a prophetic witness to the Kingdom. By living a life consistent with our vocation we find joy. Pope Francis invites us to live “the joy of the Gospel.” Fr. Adolfo Nicolás invites us to “go deep” in response to the globalization of superficiality – this is an invitation to journey to interior frontiers to the real core of who I am / we are. There we find our call to mission, since mission comes from a deep prayer life and relationship with God.
Lebanon and Our CLC Vocation

Chris Hogan (World ExCo Vice-President from Australia)

Introduction
Greetings everyone! And thank you for your invitation to be here with you today. Greetings also come from our President, Mauricio Lopez and our World ExCo who wish you a grace-filled Assembly.

Today, in the time allocated, I will touch just briefly upon topics requested:

• Lebanon and our CLC vocation
• Some directions of CLC around the world

The subject matter is vast and the time available limited. Also, much information on these topics is already formally covered in recent Progressio Supplements and on various CLC websites, especially the CLC Rome website. I selected just a few points that seem especially relevant, interesting or new.

(1) CLC - Being in Lebanon

Firstly, I was deeply affected (as were we all) by the experience of being in Beirut and Lebanon itself. Some observations:

• Its religious diversity: Travelling around Beirut, it was quickly evident that different regions of the city were predominantly of one faith or another, Muslim, Druze, Catholic and so on – making for a very diverse city – religiously, politically and culturally.
• Its underlying tensions: In travelling around Lebanon, we seemed to pass through military checkpoints every 20-30 kilometres in some regions.
• The apparent interweaving of normal domestic life and military activity: I saw a man in full battle fatigues leaving a shopping centre with two shopping bags. He walked over to an armoured vehicle, climbed down into it, and drove away – not something we would see in many cities.
• Holy ground, our faith history: At one point, I saw a road sign saying something like “Damascus 73km.” This was a road to Damascus. Was it anywhere near the scene of St. Paul’s dramatic encounter with the Lord?
• The Lebanese people (above all): An enduring recollection of Lebanon for me was the people - especially the CLC host community with whom we had most contact, but also the Lebanese people generally that we met - their spontaneous hospitality, their religious sensitivities and their cheerful acceptance and hope.

It was a very significant decision of the whole global CLC community to hold our Assembly in the Middle East, celebrating our faith roots and joining in solidarity with our brothers and sisters there. There were many times when the CLC decision to hold the Assembly in the Middle East was tested by both external circumstances like civil unrest and violence, but also by circumstances internal to CLC notably about the wisdom of persevering with the original decision. These were understandable misgivings. But advice was always to hold fast and wait. The decision to proceed, in hindsight, was a good one.

As Fr. Tony Da Silva, S.J. commented at the time, “It is truly marvellous to be submerged in so much history and divinity!”

(2) CLC – as Community

Throughout the whole Assembly, a Spirit of good will pervaded the occasion – we had a sense of being “one world community.” We identified with each other as one body – no matter where
people were from – it was particularly moving. To me, it was evident in the absorbing content and discussion of the Assembly and the orderly way the proceedings unfolded. We seemed in touch with each other at another level.

Perhaps I can illustrate this point of “genuine community” at a personal level. At one point, I was talking to a man from Africa – tall and with quite a presence. In a deep mellow voice, he greeted me with “Hello brother!” And we chatted on about CLC and Ignatian spirituality. Very quickly, I felt I had known him all my life – in a way, I had. Truly, our faith and our CLC Charism bring us together, intimately, in community, in Christ, transcending all natural differences such as race, culture and language.

Such community building is a challenge for us all. We derive inspiration from the many words of Christ and St. Paul on the matter – living with a spirit of service and mutual encouragement. Am I prepared to put a towel around my waist and wash the feet of my fellow community members – in other words, truly serve them? Our own GPs and GNs also give us guidance – please don’t underestimate them. They will stand up to re-reading many times. My story about them is: reading many times out of duty, then guidance, then wisdom, then love. This promise of community life, this convergence in Christ, is not something Pollyanna-ish, but substantive, fruitful and lasting.

In summary, our Assembly connected us deeply with ourselves, with our CLC roots (it was, after all, the 450th jubilee year of Ignatian lay communities) and also with our CLC vocation, our faith, our Church, and our very own salvation history – something we share with all God’s people.

At the Assembly, some very good papers were presented (see recent Progressio Supplements) on essential aspects of our CLC vocation – lay, Ignatian, apostolic and collaborative. I will comment on a few aspects of each of these:

(3) CLC – as Lay

Firstly, it was inspiring to hear the emphasis given to “the dignity of all baptized persons be they priest, religious or lay” and to our collective co-responsibility in the mission of Jesus Christ today – we are all called to sainthood, to the 3rd degree of humility (Spiritual Exercises), to complete wholeness.

Invisible though much of our lay daily lives may be (refer to Franklin’s “iceberg” metaphor about the apostolic visibility of the laity), it is nevertheless the heart of our lay mission upon which we build. Fr. Harvey Egan, S.J., in one of his books on “Ignatian mysticism of service” seemed to put it nicely in such terms as: “We are all called to a radical fidelity to the demands of everyday life, hidden or anonymous, with faith, hope and love; in short, in self surrender to the Mystery that haunts us all – a “mysticism of everyday life” – living life’s immediate inner reality, to the fullest.”

Fr. Nicolás especially urged us to live our faith authentically in our occupations and professions. In this way, we try to give apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life (GP8c), bringing the light and “freeing power of Christ to our daily social realities” (Itaici 98).

(4) CLC – as Ignatian

Ignatian spirituality is, of course, one of the special gifts of our CLC Charism. I want to mention just two related points here – its “relevance” and its “lay understanding.” Commenting on its contemporary relevance, Fr. Nicolás, S.J. quoted Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest (regarded as the founder of Liberation Theology) as supporting Ignatian spirituality as one of the most relevant spiritualities available to the laity today. Cardinal Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, has also stressed this same view to us repeatedly, emphatically, in our annual ExCo meeting with him. How privileged we are to be invited, formed and supported in living our faith this way!
But Fr. Nicolás has added an extra challenge. He said: “You, as lay people, tell us what it (Ignatian Spirituality) means in your ‘lay’ context.” It has implications for formation, for CLC and Jesuits alike.

So we give thanks for this gift and seek to live it as lay people ever more authentically.

**(5) CLC – as Apostolic**

How simple, it seems to me, is this understanding of CLC apostolic work.

A model: We note the simple model of apostolic service of the Jesuit Refugee Service: accompaniment, service and advocacy.

Visibility: We recall that much of our apostolic effort as lay people may not be visible in worldly terms (Franklin’s model) – but our Heavenly Father sees everything.

DSSE: We, in CLC, have the additional grace and enabling power of the DSSE process, discerning God’s will and bringing in our wider community, in common mission, to all our endeavours, sanctifying daily life and the present moment.

Applied: At the Assembly, we saw many examples of CLC apostolic works in all three categories (reported in recent *Progressio* Supplements).

So we become “contemplatively active and present – in the home, in our families, at work, in public and cultural life, leading a simple lifestyle.”

**(6) CLC – as Collaborative**

Fr. Tony Da Silva, S.J. cited some convincing precedents for collaboration: the collaborative community of the Trinity; God’s collaboration with humanity to work out our redemption; Christ’s collaboration with his apostles and disciples; the Church’s centuries of collaboration in mission; Ignatius’ own instinct for collaboration in establishing the Society of Jesus and so on. The family is a collaborative community. The enormity of Christ’s mission and our limitations demand collaboration anyway.

Interestingly, to facilitate future collaboration, Fr. Da Silva then suggests (for CLC) exploration of certain distinctions between:

- The lay vocation of a “Christian” versus that of a “CLC person”
- The distinction between “CLC Ignatian spirituality” and “Jesuit Ignatian spirituality”

He suggests that this might then lead to not only a richer appreciation of our CLC vocation but also a more fruitful collaboration between CLC members and others, including the Society of Jesus. He concluded with the title of his address: “There is no future without collaboration.”

**(7) CLC – the Challenge of Being a Prophetic and Wisdom Community**

I find this paper of Fr. Nicolás a little difficult to report upon without more time – but one of the most rewarding, still, to reflect upon. Suffice it to say, I think Fr. Nicolás is encouraging us to be aware of a danger of the times, namely, “the globalization of superficiality.” We counter this by engaging the world in-depth, in a wisdom language, free of church and theological encumbrances, in terms intelligible to the everyday person as Pope Francis does. It is an approach rooted in reality, open to the Spirit of God, understandable in a pluralistic world.

Fr. Nicolás also encourages CLC to be more directly engaged in the Church and to go deeply into the life of the Spirit and find out how God works in our reality.

In his address at the World Assembly, Fr. Nicolás used the words depth, reality and discernment.
a number of times. I notice they are also mentioned quite a bit in your Assembly program. So I imagine he would strongly endorse this.

(8) CLC – the Challenge of the Call to the Frontiers

I think it is still too early to report in much depth on these Assembly Frontiers. I believe they were an honest attempt at the Assembly to discern where the greatest needs of our times are – and to inform our subsequent discernments. However, I think we also need not to overlook the frontier beneath our own noses – our personal lives, our CLC community lives, etc. Perhaps this is what Pope Francis meant when he said, “Yes, we go to these peripheries/frontiers, but this needs to be complemented by deep reflection at the centre.”

Many CLC national communities are already addressing these frontier human needs. To illustrate, I will now make a few further brief comments about CLC World directions, by CLC Region.

(9) CLC Directions - at a World ExCo level

At the level of our Rome CLC Executive Council (ExCo) projects have begun, based upon the Lebanon final document, with the formation of small commissions (within ExCo) on topics under the headings of: Lay Ignatian Identity, Frontiers, Wisdom Language and World Community. Ways are being identified as to how to involve the wider CLC World Community in each project. So, you will hear more from us about these undertakings in due course.

(10) CLC Directions - at a CLC Regional Level

Following are a few comments regarding our six CLC Regions, in which we see both the unity and diversity of our regions:

a. Africa

There are twelve national communities and eight pre-communities. This region has to deal with the language divide, French and English, the expense and sometimes safety of travel and a less developed infrastructure - roads, transport and internet access. Also some countries are severely affected by the instability of government and various internal conflicts (e.g. South Sudan, Nigeria, DR Congo).

However, there are a number of quite substantial apostolic initiatives (e.g. the school in Nairobi, Kenya, and the work with people with AIDS in Rwanda and others).

At their last Regional Assembly (2011) they identified their “frontiers” as:

• Family (preparation for marriage, ministry to the divorced)
• Youth (to provide education rooted in human and spiritual values)
• Care for the Marginalized (victims of war, systemic corruption)

Other more recent emerging priorities are:

• Moving from personal formation to formation for collective mission to deal more effectively with challenges at the margins
• Consideration of a region-wide formation course in “CLC vocation”

b. Asia/Pacific

Asia is a vast region with 60% of the world’s population (and 1.83 billion young people under 25) – with a quickly rising economic influence in today’s world. It is characterised by great religious diversity and some extremes of wealth and poverty. We are seeing more with the emergence of the Asian identity and soul. Yet Christianity is also growing at a considerable rate. In recent years, Catholic events in Asia have attracted huge crowds - by any global standards, at
past papal visits, at the recent Lay Congress in Seoul and at Asia Youth Day in Seoul. Although the laity is still a significantly small minority, except in a couple of countries, they play a very significant role in the spread of the Faith.

In CLC (Asia/Pacific), there are ten national communities with a few in the pre-community stage. They are collectively involved in a very wide range of substantial works relating to interfaith dialogue, youth (and street children), social justice, poverty, migration, education, formation and more. At the last CLC World Assembly, we saw a more visible Asia/Pacific presence than in the past – and I think that will continue.

The implications of the recent CLC World Assembly for the Asia/Pacific region will be formally addressed at its forthcoming Asia/Pacific Regional Assembly in Taiwan in January 2015.

c. Europe

In Europe, there are eighteen national communities and three pre-communities – 60% of the total number of world CLC members! They have a long established regional structure in their Euroteam. Apart from their own apostolic works of considerable size, their ongoing contribution to CLC world community life has been very strong with considerable global outreach.

After Lebanon 2013, they took an interesting initiative: CLC in Europe drafted a letter to the prospective candidates for election to the European Parliament (which took place in May 2014) setting out the concerns of CLC as a European Community with regard to issues seen of key importance to Europeans – such as poverty, environment, migration, solidarity and diversity.

At their recent European Regional Assembly, some further specific hopes for future action were expressed about:
The transmission of Ignatian spirituality to the next generation
The training for lay group guides
Expression of solidarity with forced migration

d. Latin America

In Latin America, there are seventeen communities and one pre-community with the region growing, especially in Central America. They are well coordinated regionally with good communication processes (facilitated undoubtedly by a common language, Spanish – and some common history). They also have good collaborative arrangements with Jesuits and others. They are very active in various works and a visit to their websites is very enlightening.

Their region-wide formation program (the Magis program) has been very instrumental in developing both people in CLC and the wider lay Catholic community (and influencing similar developments in other CLC regions). Also bearing fruit has been their Socio-political Advocacy formation program – the Amazon Project, recently reported upon in our Rome website.

e. Middle East

There are three national communities – Lebanon, Syria and Egypt – all very much affected by the so called “Arab Spring.” In this context, CLC (Lebanon) was nothing less than heroic in its hosting of the last and successful CLC World Assembly. They very much appreciated the solidarity shown with them by the whole CLC global community.

As well as formation programs, support where possible is being given to the Syrian CLC members (we heard from them in Lebanon), and globally we have tried to fund support for them. We note Najat Sayegh’s recent email: “Our Region is exploding, projects are difficult, we help Syrian refugees where possible, prayers and fasting please - where one member suffers, all members suffer.”
f. North America

We are aware of many apostolic works being undertaken in your region and we look forward to hearing more about them as your Assembly unfolds.

At a Regional level, I understand that there have been no recently organized North American Regional CLC initiatives, but that possibilities are to be examined by CLC (Canada), CVX (Canada), CVX (Mexico) and CLC (USA). These possibilities will include forming a closer regional relationship, establishing areas of common interest and mission, and looking at the feasibility of a regional forum or assembly as suggested by CLC (Canada). I wish you well in this endeavour. CLC Regional development is a higher priority than in the past so you join with us in other Regions in seeking to facilitate CLC Regional identity and life.

Concluding Remarks

That concludes some very brief summary thoughts on our World Assembly in Lebanon, some challenges for us, and what is happening in CLC at ExCo level and in other CLC Regions.

While I was very grateful to have been there in Lebanon – right now, I look forward very much to your Assembly.

Thank you.

“Our Region is exploding, projects are difficult, we help Syrian refugees where possible, prayers and fasting please - where one member suffers, all members suffer.”
Savoring our liturgical experiences at the National Assembly helps them to last longer. Now is a good time to look at how the liturgies helped to build community, deepen our faith and help us to continue our spiritual journey. Liturgies had a key role in pulling together several components of the Assembly experience. Prayer/liturgies helped us to ritualize what we had experienced and grow in appreciation of the relationships that we are developing as well as the content that we are processing. Music is both energizing and unifying. Our multicultural experience is heightened through having songs in several languages, as well as by having members from several cultural groups participate in components of the liturgies. Having our ecclesial assistants celebrate Mass and offer their insight through the homilies helped Assembly participants to grow in appreciation of the scriptures and helped to bring together the thoughts and spiritual experiences of the day.

What should we savor?

Music

The liturgy planning team made a commitment to have a theme song for the Assembly as well as to have songs in Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean and English at each liturgy. We chose the initial song “We Are Many Parts, We Are One Body” to reflect our coming together as one community. We felt a theme song would help to unify the Assembly experience and help us to reflect on our spiritual journey each day. The theme song “Go Make a Difference” was chosen to emphasize mission - we are the salt of the earth, and can do things in the ordinariness of our lives that help us to live our mission. People spontaneously and enthusiastically playing the tambourines and the lively singing and guitar playing made me believe that Assembly participants believe that they can make a difference. The smiles and enthusiasm were contagious. Likewise, the songs in different languages helped us to bond with each other. I was aware of the respect and breathtaking attentiveness that filled the room when a song such as “How Great Thou Art” was sung in Korean and simultaneously in a much softer tone in other languages. Likewise, at a couple of points in the liturgy, we needed to continue the music, and the singers quietly added additional verses, starting softly and then having the congregation add additional volume. When one of the young adults commented on how much she appreciated the liturgies, that they were “neat,” I could only add a touching Amen. When one of our guitarists asked to have his picture taken as he was playing, it was evident that he was proud and pleased to participate. When another member shared that she loved liturgies with lots of music, I felt blessed to be part of the team that created the liturgies. Music builds community. We are a community.
Prayer Intentions

Our prayer intentions were written to correspond to the themes of each day of the Assembly.

On our gathering day, we prayed that we as many parts of the CLC-USA body, would grow in appreciation of the gifts, vision and spirituality of our members. We prayed that the Spirit be with the members of our communities who were not able to be at the Assembly. We prayed especially for the MRW Team/Dong Hanh Vietnamese project, that their work in Vietnam be well received as they continued their work as the marriage renewal team. We prayed for members of our community who are ill that they feel the healing presence of God in their lives. We prayed for Pope Francis, our Jesuit Pope. We prayed for peace in the world. We prayed that the World CLC ExCo be blessed as they continue their work. Remembering that we are part of a world body, we prayed for all members of the World CLC.

The Saturday Mass continued the theme of God’s call. We prayed that we be open to the Spirit working within each of us, that we be open to God’s call. We prayed that we be generous and share our gifts with each other and recognize ways we can be empowered and make a difference in the world. We prayed for people who are marginalized, victims of human trafficking, homeless people, people with mental illness and developmental disabilities, and people who are experiencing political upheaval and violence that they may experience God’s love and healing power. We prayed for the Jesuits that they continue to experience success in their ministries. We prayed for members of World CLC that we grow in appreciation of our cultural backgrounds and values.

The Sunday sending forth liturgy was offered for members of the Assembly and CLC-USA. We prayed that we recognize and experience God’s love and grace. We prayed that we hear God’s call and be generous in our response. We prayed that we continue to discover our strengths and talents and that we be empowered to share them. We asked God for help to affirm that we can make a difference. We prayed for all members of CLC who helped to make the Assembly a success, and we prayed especially in thanksgiving for the generous support of the St. Louis CLCs. We asked that God’s love and spirit be present at the NCC meeting. We prayed for safe travel and continued health for our CLC family.

As I looked over the prayer intentions, I realized that I could pray an intention a day to help deepen the prayer experience of the Assembly. During the free time on Sunday afternoon, prior to the NCC meeting, I was struck by how the liturgies had come together - both the planned and unknown parts. We worked together. We were blessed to have Dan LeBrun step in as chair of the liturgy committee. We are our opening song - we are many parts, we are one body. Our gifts are meant to be shared. Chris Hogan, our World CLC Representative, commented that he had never experienced similar multicultural liturgies. As I look back on the Assembly liturgies, they truly were an experience to savor. The unifying feeling of God’s love for each of us and our empowered response were truly a gift.
The St. Louis Assembly 2014: WE Are CLC

Kathy Hicks

I have been a member of several CLC groups in Northern California since the 1970’s, and feel lucky to have been able to attend five or six assemblies. Thankfully some things are always the same: seeing like-minded, spirit-filled people from all over the country gathered for prayer, reflection, sharing, fellowship and fun, is always uplifting and encouraging. Seeing members from different countries and cultures makes one realize how truly we have been called by God to be members of CLC. We are connected to our brothers and sisters and we need to hold one another in prayer and solidarity.

This year’s assembly was somewhat different. It was not just speakers, insertion experiences, silent auctions and talent shows, or a mini vacation in a different part of the country. It was not leaving the business to the delegates to handle after all the “ordinary members” had gone home. This year was a working assembly.

Happily, several of our Western Region groups were able to send more than one person to the event. I think everyone who attended clearly understood as our National President Rick Kunkle mentioned on the last day, that WE are CLC. We cannot look to the National leadership to solve all our problems, or tell us how to be. The ordinary members are responsible for leading and forming our groups, knowing the basic principles of CLC, and guiding the movement into the future. The small handful of leaders and EAs around the country and world are doing a great job. They are just ordinary, busy, unpaid members like each of us, who offer to help lead, out of dedication and call, but who cannot do much alone. All of us must take responsibility for our national and local communities.

We spent our days in small group discussions and large group sharing about where we are as individual groups and what we do at meetings, what we feel the core values of CLC are, and where we are going. Our skilled volunteer guides and small group leaders brought back what they were hearing from us. Our core values appeared to be: communal discernment, apostolic mission, commitment to making the Spiritual Exercises in some form, having a spiritual director and the importance of having a guide to help each of our groups reflect and see how we need to grow. Though our group meeting formats sound very much the same, the surprise and challenge are that many groups do not have a guide, do not have one apostolic mission, do not practice communal discernment often, and that many members have not made the Exercises. This led to a discussion and poll of the large group, as to how we felt our groups were doing. Were we committed enough to CLC to go back and try to work on these core elements? If our groups did not want to embrace these ideas, were we really a CLC? Should members be required to decide if they could really commit to this way of life, or else move on?

What struck me most was the idea that CLC should be a local group, a group of people who live in close proximity, who can meet regularly and work together on what they see as a local apostolic mission. Unfortunately, many areas, such as the Western Region, have few CLC groups, and members are spread out over large geographic areas. It was encouraging to get ideas about how some groups, such as those in the Northwest, overcome these difficulties through Skype / other conferencing methods, and yearly retreats. Despite distances, people find a way to come together and to have the support of guides. I really enjoyed getting together with members from the
Northwest towards the end of the Assembly, to get to know each other and to share concerns, hopes, ideas, better communication and leadership, as they will merge with the Western Region in the near future.

I was really impressed by the apostolic missions shared by some of our groups on Friday night. Our Vietnamese brothers and sisters showed us how good discernment led to the establishment of a marriage renewal program for couples within their communities leading some members to travel yearly to Vietnam to lead weekends there, as well. They also saw a need for their children to experience God in a deeper way, and empowered their young adults to begin S.E.E.D., a retreat program for children that has been replicated in many areas over the last few years.

The greatest fruit of the conference for me was hope - hope that despite dwindling numbers of groups and aging members, CLC is surviving and adapting. I have hope that members are evaluating how committed they are to the CLC way of life, and are willing to put in the effort to revitalize their communities. I also hope that young people are excited about the possibilities CLC offers for their lives and are willing to work to develop communities; hope that we are learning so much from our brothers and sisters from different cultures about discernment and mission; hope that we will all be willing to take on greater ownership of CLC as a lay organization; and hope CLC will survive for another 450 years!
Soon Ja Christina Lee
The assembly was very well organized and helped me to be aware of God’s presence during the whole process, as the guides mentioned repeatedly as a reminder. It was a real gift to experience the process of communal discernment during the Assembly. It was my first time experiencing this process and it made me realize that listening to God’s call by discerning the movement of the Spirit is a challenge needing great effort and preparation, personally and spiritually. I was able to experience CLC as one body in the diversity of groups and cultures. It also gave me some comfort that we have similar concerns and struggles living out the CLC way of life. I really felt that we were all companions who are journeying together, especially when we shared the Apostolic Experiences. I realized that listening with patience and sensitivity to the Spirit and to others, out of authentic love, is the foundation of our communal mission. The most difficult thing during the Assembly was the problem of sharing deeply due to language barriers and a lack of understanding of cultural differences in living out the CLC way of life.

Hwa Kyung Sara Choi
It was truly a grace for me to be able to participate in the CLC National Assembly because I was able to experience the CLC spirituality in action. I felt blessed that I was able to meet many CLC role models who are living out the CLC way of life in their ordinary lives. It was an opportunity for me to meet CLC members from all walks of life and to experience their open mindedness and committed servant leadership in action. I’d like to express gratitude to CLC members in St. Louis who helped with transportation, among many things, for the comfort of all the Assembly participants. The University campus was so beautiful and clean. It was an opportunity to have a sense of belonging, as a CLCer, in a larger body. It was also good to see a variety of Apostolic Ministries run by CLCers around the United States. The Assembly was led by three facilitators who were able to communicate in their own languages, which helped their respective participants to engage fully in the larger gathering.

Paul Kang
Three graces were the diversity, a deeper understanding of the importance of the guide’s role in the community, and the consideration of our common mission. The importance of the DSSE process in living out the life of CLC and achieving our common mission also struck me. One difficulty for me was the difficulty with the language/cultural barriers. My lack of English proficiency caused a bit of discomfort during the sharing within the small groups and larger gatherings. I feel gratitude to those people who worked so hard to make this Assembly possible.

Eun Hee Christina Park
I felt blessed by the connection and belonging that I experienced during the Assembly. It was good to see the many ways that the Spirit is leading the groups into diversity of apostolic activities. It was my first time seeing the model of communal discernment which left me very impressed. I felt that I was truly part of a larger CLC group, which motivated me to actively participate in the process. One difficulty was language where I had to try very hard to follow the discussions, both in the smaller group and large gathering, often losing the focus of the discussion. I was also impressed by the Assembly having the three facilitators working collaboratively giving me courage to ‘do more’ – the Magis.
Clara KyungSook Lee (Javier Community)

첫번째 질문(Q1): 문화와 언어와 모습과 삶과 생각과 연령이 다른, 그 다른 모습 만큼이나 다양한 자신의 언어로 공동체의 삶을 표현하는 국가 공동체의 CLC 를 보았습니다. 다양한 문화 도전이지만 또한, 한느님의 선물이며 은총임을 깊이 깨닫아, 더 큰 선을 이루시고자 하시는 하느님의 뜻을 삶의 전장 안에서 찾아 노력합니다.

두번째 질문(Q2): CLC 공동체의 한 일원으로서, 더 큰 희망안에서 자신의 CLC 삶을 되짚어 볼수있던 기회. 자신의 선 자리에서부터 CLC 의 사도직이 시작되고 이행 되어야 한다는 더 깊은 자각. 현실을 직시하는 자세.

세번째 질문(Q3): 식대의 여정 안에서, 같은회망과 같은용어와 같은열망과 같은기대안에서, 하나의 길로 걸어가는 한 식구라는 느낌을 받았습니다.

Helen Hyunjoo Seol (Magis Community)

첫번째 질문(Q1): 이나시오 영성에 바탕을 둔 CLCer 으로써의 부르심에 대한 감사와 확신을 갖게 되었으며, 일상에서 충실한 기도와 이웃과의 관계에서 하느님을 더 깊이 만나기로 결심하였다. 나 자신의 하느님과의 관계가 충실하지 않으면, 공동체나 사도적으로 성장 또는 기여할 수 없기때문에, 일상에서 하느님과의 관계를 renewal 하기로 결심하는 계기가 되었다.

두번째 질문(Q2): 공동식별을 통하여 One Body 로 나아가는 과정에서 서로에게 귀를 기울이고, 서로의 기쁨과 아픔들을 함께 나누는 경험들이 우리를 더욱 더 가까이 서로에게 다가갈 수 있게 하였다고 믿는다. 많은 다른 의견들로 나눌을 통하여 나타난 우리의 One Body 가 되고자 하는 열망들을 통하여 미국 공동체가 성숙되어가는 여정에 있음을 보았으며, 또한 세상에 나아가 예수님의 손과 발로써 일상에서 묵묵히 살아가는 회원들의 모습에, 나도 내 삶의 자리에서 CLC 회원의 생활 양식을 실천해 나가는 삶을 살기로 결심했다.

세번째 질문(Q3): 각 개인이 성전 오른쪽에서 흘러나오는 생명의 물줄기로써, CLC 라는 거대한 은총의 강물에 풀려들어가 하나의 Body 를 이루는 모습에서, One big family 라고 느낄 수 있었으며, 다른 문화와 지역에서 모인 우리 모두가 마음을 열고 성령의 이끄심에 귀기울이는 모습에서 CLC 라는 사랑의 곤으로 이어진 세계 공동체, 국가 공동체의 일원임을 느낄 수 있었다. 총회는 CLCer 로서 우리가 누구인가, 우리의 정관과 카리스마를 통해 어떻게 살아가고 있는가, 앞으로 미국 CLC 로서 어떻게 살아갈 것인가를 함께 고민하고 celebrate 하는 값진 체험이 있었고 믿는다.
Gemma Heejean Shin (Moncerrato Community)

The 25th National Assembly was the most beautiful formation journey from the local to the national level. The DSSE process was the core of the CLC identity and the most powerful tool in CLC. I truly appreciate this powerful and beautiful procedure. My small group guide role was challenged. Through this spiritual journey, I, as imperfect clay and Jesus as the potter, helped form me as a guide. I learned how important to CLC is the role of the guide. The process helped me understand how to deal with group desolation. I understand better the guide’s need for knowledge of group dynamics. When a group is stuck in desolation, a guide must be aware of the situation and try to move the community towards consolation under God’s will instead of mine and follow the Holy Spirit. After the first two sessions at the Assembly, the large group facilitator was aware that many were in darkness and desolation. However, by the next morning, especially after a beautiful morning Mass and a reflection questionnaire, we were relieved from that desolation and led to a consolation stage under God’s will. I truly appreciate that a large group guide did an amazing job under the Holy Spirit as Guide. Our true guide is Jesus. The most fruitful grace of the Assembly was a guided formation procedure. Another grace was the confirmation that Spirituality, Community and Mission are a kind of Holy Trinity in CLC. I would like to apply this beautiful formation process to my local community as its guide.

The Assembly reminded me that daily prayer and the daily examen need to continue without ceasing. They will give us a fundamental energy to keep our apostolic mission.

My reflection on how the NCC meeting was moved by the Holy Spirit led me to desire that the same format be used in my local community. Though we are different cultures, we come from the same roots. All present were patient with other cultures and tried to understand with their hearts. I felt that all servant leadership was a step toward Jesus. I was very impressed and deeply touched that we are one body in the Jesus of the Cross.

Using the DSSE process, pre-Assembly preparation began with local community discernment. The decision was made to send people to the National Assembly and support them financially, with prayer, friendship, etc. Those who attended felt welcomed and well prepared. They were made comfortable and it felt like home. Even though we spoke in different tongues culturally, we spoke the same language of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. Those facts helped us feel as though we are part of National CLC.

Irena-Mini Park (Magis Community)

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RESUMEN DE MI EXPERIENCIA

en la asamblea

Ligia Morales, President, CLCSFR

La Asamblea Nacional de la CVX que se celebró en St. Louis, a la cual fui enviada fue todo un éxito. El tema que se uso “Desde nuestras raíces hacia las fronteras” fue el mismo de la Asamblea Mundial en Libano 2013. Mi experiencia es difícil de transmitir en estas líneas, sólo puedo decirles que me confirmo y dio claridad a mi vocación de vivir la espiritualidad Ignaciana y su estilo de vida en esta Comunidad de Vida Cristiana, la cual es local, regional, nacional y mundial.

Sentí esta alegría con todas las diversas comunidades, representadas por coreanos, vietnamitas, anglos e hispanos, trabajando en una misma misión. Recibí consolación y esperanza. Somos el cuerpo de Cristo en los Estados Unidos. Todos recibimos la claridad de que significa ser CVX-USA. Es un don de la Iglesia. Un Carisma concedido a la iglesia que no tiene la intención de ser el único modo de vivir la Espiritualidad Ignaciana. Es una vocación y una elección libre de vivir en esta comunidad. CVX-USA. / WCVX.

Siento que regresé a mis raíces, al encuentro de mi primer amor, cuando empecé este camino en el año 2000. El lenguaje que ahora tengo es de Misión y de Contribución en una comunidad en la que creo. Me siento feliz y con deseo de trabajar y contribuir a la misión de Jesús y no me siento sola, porque la nación y el mundo están trabajando para el Reino en todas las comunidades de Vida Cristiana. Soy una parte del Cuerpo de Cristo. Yo sé lo que creo y yo Creo lo que sé.

Rosa Maso, Clarita Baloyra and Ligia Morales

Overview of My Experience of the Assembly

I was sent to the National Assembly which was held in St. Louis. It was a success. The theme “from our roots to the frontiers” was also used in Lebanon for the 2013 World Assembly.

My experience is difficult to convey in these lines. I can only tell you that it confirmed me and it gave me a clear understanding of my vocation to live Ignatian spirituality in Christian Life Community, which is local, regional, national and global.

I felt joy with all the different communities, represented by Koreans, Vietnamese, Anglos and Hispanics, working at a same mission. I received consolation and hope. I am part of the body of Christ in the United States.

We received clarity for what it means to be a member of CLC-USA. It is a gift of the Church. We have received a charism which is not the only way to live Ignatian spirituality. It is a vocation and a free choice to live in this community.

I felt that I returned to my roots, to the meeting of my first love, when I started this journey in the year 2000. I now have a mission and make a contribution in a community in which I believe. I know what I believe and I believe what I know.

I feel happy and I returned with a desire to work and to contribute to the mission of Jesus. I am not alone, because the nation and the whole world are working for the Kingdom in all of Christian Life Community. I am happy to be part of the body of Christ.
From Our Roots to the Frontiers

Frank Vuong

The CLC-USA National Assembly 2014 will hold a special place in both my heart and memory. It was the first of many things crucial to my spiritual and personal development. In reflection, and in my prayer of the Examen, I viewed the CLC-USA NA as a journey in which God took me by the hand and showed me His world through His eyes and with His heart shining and leading the way. Through this Assembly, I discovered that living without community is not the life for me. I found life in the commitment I made to Christian Life Community. In essence, this journey from our roots to our frontiers is nothing short of God’s grace that found its home rooting itself within our hearts and souls. It has been extending and growing beyond our own being, and desiring that we become one discerning community, bringing forth exploration of the frontiers of apostolic mission. God is dreaming, and this dream most definitely is coming true.

During the months, weeks and days leading up to the Assembly, I became increasingly anxious and nervous. For the first time, I was involved in some concrete way with CLC-USA. I had accepted the responsibility of creating the slideshow that would start the Apostolic Mission segment on Friday night. I was very worried that I would not please the audience and possibly offend certain groups, since I had to restrict the playing times of pictures. My email was bombarded for days with images of people I had never met, but who were displaying such admirable and humble ways of serving God’s kingdom here on earth. I think that’s when my preparation and journey began for the National Assembly, and it turned out to be a complete blessing and honor for me to put together the slideshow.

On top of that, I knew that I was given a seven-minute segment during the panel discussion to share my experiences and journey regarding S.E.E.D. Ministry. I was most excited about this, as it has been something that I have been in love with for the past nine years. At the same time, I was very nervous to present S.E.E.D. Ministry for the first time in front of CLC-USA. I was uncertain as to how everyone would react towards this treasure of mine. Would others outside of Dong Hanh CLC find a precious gem in S.E.E.D. as I have? Would they think of it as just another ministry or community service? Would I be able to gracefully and eloquently present, explain and introduce S.E.E.D. the way our ministry deserves it to be done? These thoughts and questions brought me back to the moments of 2012 when I was first elected as the S.E.E.D. National Chair/Coordinator. I questioned whether I was the right person to fill this position and represent hundreds within our ministry. I rediscovered that this journey of mine has always been through communal discernment. I was never alone in discerning whether I was the right person to do the job or to fill the position. It has and will always be a discernment process done through an active community that truly cares for one another in companionship.

My one desolation in coming to the National Assembly was the fact that I would be arriving late. Months ahead, when I was booking my flight, I knew I had a class to attend on Thursday night. There was no way to skip or make up this class, as it was vital to completing my teaching degree. I had booked the red-eye flight and knew I needed to do whatever I could to keep my energy high for the rest of Friday, especially for the evening session in which I was directly involved. Seeing pictures sent to my phone from the other young adults (my dear friends) who were already there and enjoying their time exploring a nearby zoo did not reduce my anxiety. I remember the plane flights being excruciatingly long, as I could not garner any sleep at all. Instead, I decided to bring my S.E.E.D. presentation as close to perfection as possible. I went through the slides repeatedly while closing my eyes and imagining the whole scene and how I would speak and present myself. In a way, I was meditating on how I would conduct myself and be my best self with the larger community. Through prayer and the preparation material, I was able to center myself in God again and be more excited than ever to meet new people and continue this journey from our roots to the frontier. Missing the first day and opening Mass was definitely not ideal nor part of any plan I would have chosen, however I am glad I was able to put that desolation behind me and turn it into to something positive by being fully present throughout the rest of the weekend (with the help of one or two afternoon naps of course). I still wish I could have been there from the very start on Thursday, however it was part of God’s plan for me to make a splash that Friday morning as fellow
brothers and sisters in my Dong Hahn Community welcomed me with open arms, smiles and brightened faces, which essentially are the best ways to start out the morning of any day.

What remains in my heart is the richness of the experience I had the honor to take home from the Assembly. I came there with reserved thoughts and mixed feelings of my small local community, Roots. We have been struggling the past six to eight months in meeting regularly and being a conscious CLC group. Throughout the weekend, sharing my journey and listening to others’ sharings about their journeys with their local communities has brought me light and hope. I learned that with CLC there really is not much of a divide or difference from what local groups experience over a course of a lifetime. We are all able to relate to each in both the struggles and the graces that we encounter. It is through sharing with each other we are able to see ourselves in each other and realize that Jesus is present with us all along and will never leave us. He is the center of our small groups and local communities. We must remember that and continue living our CLC way of life with Him at the center of it all, always.

Communal discernment is beautiful and is definitely one of the roots that is taking me to the frontiers of apostolic mission and ministry. When Friday night’s session ended, I knew our lived experience was apostolic, and I was in the right place at the right time in my life. I felt the spirit fully alive in me and in everyone listening to each of the panelist’s sharing of apostolic ministry. The Q&A portion, as well as the following days of endless inquiries about S.E.E.D. Ministry, was pure affirmation for me that CLC-USA has welcomed us and is excited to have us reach new horizons. I was on fire again. I had fallen in love again with S.E.E.D., Dong Hanh and CLC. The best part of it all is that God is the center of it. Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. said it best,

“Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute final way…. Fall in Love, stay in Love, and it will decide everything.”

If communal discernment is at the heart of our local small groups and how we conduct and lead our local community meetings, then I am all for it and will continue embracing this way of life. After the weekend, I came back to the conviction that Jesus had meant for us to live, develop and deepen our spiritual lives through community. Yes, we all have committed personal prayer lives and personal relationships with God as well. Yet, through communal life with our CLC small groups, I am able to experience what it was like to be a fisherman, a tax collector and a follower of Christ. Through small communities, I can better understand what it means to experience incarnational spirituality. I believe that we all have authentic needs and desires that have been purposefully designed and planted in us, that draw us to live a life in communion with God forever. From our roots to the frontiers, God has been dreaming this journey for a long time now. As we continue to journey together as a discerning community, we are essentially living God’s dreams come true.

Amen.
From Our Past to Our Future – Acknowledging Where We Are Today

Sylvia Shorter

The 2014 National CLC Assembly in St. Louis gave participants a great variety of graces, experiences and challenges. For me the process was especially beautifully and successfully done. Each session focused on a grace for which we were to pray; allowed time for personal reflection on the topic at hand; then skillfully facilitated small group sharings, the fruit of which were shared with the entire gathered community. This process allowed everyone to be heard and acknowledged that every voice was important.

For many years CLCers have struggled with the subjects of mission and commitment. The process of this 2014 Assembly examined what we are today – how we got to be who we are – and what we hope our future would have us become.

Today, I heard that CLC communities exist in a range of different models. Some, for example, come together to serve a particular external mission. These are very focused and much of the sharing is about how the individual imparts the mission and how the mission impacts the individual. While connected to World and National CLC this model’s primary commitment is to the mission.

Another “model” of being CLC is the community that supports members in their own personal mission. This seems to be popular as many people work, volunteer or otherwise serve the building of the kingdom. This is sometimes referred to as the first layer or first tier of mission. This model too connects to World, National and Regional structures, but its primary commitment is to one another.

Some communities, it was discovered, exist without a desire to connect to the World or National community. Their only commitment is to one another. In some instances communities were just recently made aware that World and National structures exist.

As the prayer and discernment process continued, assembly participants began to describe what gave life to their communities and what they felt was most central to the CLC way of life.

Communal Discernment rose to the surface as a core component of CLC. Many participants recognized the need for a guide and the importance of making the Spiritual Exercises.

This is the reality of who we are today. In our future we expect all communities who call themselves CLC to commit to these ideals. Members who can serve as guides and directors of the Spiritual Exercises are called to make themselves available where possible.

Our National ExCo team and our Regional Reps recognize that there is much work to be done in bringing the heart and soul of this Assembly to the many members who were not present. They have also recognized that they cannot do this work alone. National leadership has called on all CLC members to offer themselves so that our future will be stronger, more filled with the Holy Spirit and more able to labor with our Lord.

One of the great graces of this Assembly was discerning our future:
• Sending participants to carry the work of the Assembly to their communities and regions
• Supporting our diversity of gifts
• Evaluating our past and our present knowing that only together with one another and with the Holy Spirit can our future be as meaningful as our past.

Sylvia Shorter has been a member of CLC since 1997. She is a Spiritual Director, Director of the Spiritual Exercises, and Guide for her Fifth Week community. She is a member of the Reiman Great Lakes Guides Group. Sylvia has attended the National CLC Assembly in Miami, Washington D. C. and St. Louis.

As the mother of two adult children and retired Director of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Detroit, Sylvia has practical as well as theological experience.
As the carpool arrived at my home Thursday morning, I was greeted with a smile and a hug by Nancy Wood, whom I had never met. This warm welcome continued as we and Marilyn Barton picked up Fr. Jim O’Brien and continued on our journey to St. Louis. As we arrived at the dining hall at Washington University, again, I witnessed more smiles and hugs as friends greeted one another wrapped up in the joy of reuniting after years between assemblies. As I entered the chapel for Mass, the thought “you will know they are Christians by their love” was seen as many embraced and greeted one another. There was a tenderness and energy that flowed in the space – I was deeply moved by this. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to feel the gift of this connectedness each time we approach the table of the Lord together as church?

As the meetings began, I felt a sense of being an imposter as my small community in Pittsburgh has never identified itself as CLC. We are a young adult group in transition and formation since January 2013. I only became a part of our group about a year ago, after repeated invites from our group guide, Carol Gonzalez. As we continued at the Assembly I found our little group had wisdom to share. Each CLC group brought its own wisdom to the larger group, creating the National Assembly which was a living body of people working to discern what CLC is and who they are as CLC. It was helpful to see the attention to the struggle and the difficulties faced by groups around the nation and to see how the shared experience in our assembly small groups were able to create pathways of openness and receptivity to new ways of being and addressing concerns in our groups back home. I watched and participated as the weekend unfolded into pinning down some of the main distinguishing features of being a discerning CLC. I was wowed by the strong biweekly commitments of many CLC groups. It became a wakeup call to discern and decide, yes this is worthwhile – as witnessed by so many. There were important commitments each of us must make: daily prayer, meeting with our CLC (or pre-CLC) communities, a yearly retreat, a group guide and spiritual companionship. Spoken or unspoken, there was a clear message of the fruitfulness of commitment to authenticity in each of these experiences in such a way that speaks the truth of who we are to ourselves and to one another so that we may help one another on the daily discerning life journey. Seeing the sharing on the bulletin boards and also the Friday evening session on Apostolic Works, it was clear this work was done as a fruit of the prayerful commitments supported by their individual, local, national and international CLC relationships. The connection internationally – giving voice to the United Nations, the beautiful work done to support family – marriage retreats and CLC groups and S.E.E.D. for youth, and the cry of the poor amidst the cry of the earth – reminded us to be mindful and to make a difference locally while being aware of a global impact on our neighbor. Each
Larry and Nora Paffrath and Fr. Dominic Totaro represented the four groups of Christian Life Community at St. Therese Catholic Church in Mooresville, North Carolina. CLC and the Society of Jesus have always had a close association because of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

Chris Hogan, from Australia, the Vice-President of WCLC, gave a summation of the World Assembly in Lebanon in 2013. He also gave a breakdown of how the sixty-six national CLCs are doing around the world.

Lois Campbell, from Pittsburgh, the out-going Secretary of WCLC, along with Christine Kim and Kim Anh Vu facilitated our assembly which had the same theme as the previous World Assembly, namely: “From Our Roots to the Frontiers.” They invited us to live more fully the CLC vocation, the call to be a lay apostolic body, to demonstrate unity in the Church and in our way of living community. We would understand our identity by sharing, listening, refining, distilling. Our entire Assembly would be a communal discernment, starting with the responses that each delegate brought from the deliberations of his or her local community.

Each community or cluster (i.e. a group of communities in a particular area) brought a poster to display its community’s activities. These were placed on boards so that all could browse through the display, pick up ideas, and talk with the people of that community for details. In addition, we had presentations on Environmental Sustainability, the S.E.E.D (Search, Embark, Experience, and Develop) Program for children and teens, Family Retreats, and the work that CLC does at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO).

We heard how communities not only had a program but also trained others to do the program. We recognized the importance of spiritual growth on an individual basis and as a group. We share a responsibility for mission, though this does not discredit or minimize an individual’s personal passion for an apostolic work. We also recognized the importance of the Spiritual Exercises for our own growth and the need for a guide to assist each community to develop as CLC. At the same time, we were disappointed that the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) did not adopt a common mission for all communities.

The liturgies were always joyous celebrations with singing in the four languages of our people: English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean. Our theme song at the end of each Mass was a stirring “Go, Make a Difference.”

We sensed that the major fruit of assembly for us is an affirmation that our own communities here at St. Therese have had a good formation and are ready to experience the Spiritual Exercises to solidify that foundation. We recognized that there are many ways of doing the Examen (the examination of consciousness). We can’t control what others do; we can only control what we can do. For example, an individual community has more effect when it has a common mission. We came away from the Assembly with several unanswered questions. How do we take the steps to commitment to CLC? How do we train our own people to become leaders and guides for communities?

As a relatively new CLC participant and “first timer” attending the National Assembly, I experienced the joy of being with people who carry Christ’s love in their hearts and share it with others in many ways, starting with their deep commitment to our CLC way of life. It is inspiring to share ideas with so many who have dedicated several decades of experience and leadership, and to find them receptive to answering the many questions I carried with me to the Assembly.

The diversity of membership is to be commended and treasured. Never have I attended a national meeting where members of several ethnic groups were
treated with such respect and inclusiveness. Several different languages became the language of CLC by the way they were incorporated into our daily group exercises and in each liturgy. Although spoken in many diverse dialects, the language of the Assembly was unifying, because it brought us together in the love of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The attendees were well prepared for the discussions regarding our individual, group and apostolic participation in CLC. The large and small group exercises generated lively exchanges on the important general principles of CLC. Our delegation from St. Therese in Mooresville felt very well prepared for the group exercises, because we had the benefit of input from our four CLC groups that are members of our parish. They, along with Fr. Dominic Totaro, prepared us very well. We were struck by how blessed we are to have such an experienced ecclesial assistant to guide not only our preparation for the Assembly, but also our ongoing formation in CLC. This became evident to us while meeting members who do not have ecclesial assistants, and rely on trained facilitators or simply have to facilitate group direction on their own. We returned home with the realization that we must prepare for that probability in our future by forming a strong foundation. We will encourage our community members to complete the Spiritual Exercises, become more familiar with the General Principles, gain experience and expertise in group process skills, and develop community apostolic effort. We have taken the first steps to develop lay leadership in our groups, so that Fr. Dominic can focus on his role as our ecclesial assistant and not be burdened with administrative tasks.

We were impressed by the geographical distribution of participation in CLC and the different problems for participation each population distribution presents. Many of our nation’s great cities were represented, as well as suburban and rural areas. We hope to establish Charlotte as another great urban center for CLC participation. It was interesting to hear how some members use modern communication technology to participate in their groups.

We would like to thank several people and groups for their hard work and dedication to make the 2014 National Assembly a great experience for us. Thanks to Rich Kunkle, ExCo, and the NCC for their leadership. “Well done!” Thanks to the group leaders for keeping us focused. Thanks to those who served behind the scenes to make everything work. Thanks to the St. Louis CLCs for your hospitality. Thanks to the young members for your exuberance and assistance. Thanks to the Jesuits for your ministry in our Lord, and the beautiful liturgies. And lastly, thanks to all the CLC members that helped us “newbies” enjoy our time with you.

Nora Paffrath

The CLC National Assembly in St. Louis was my first experience with any CLC activity beyond our local cluster in Mooresville. Through the years I have attended dozens of national meetings and educational sessions for other organizations, but the single thing that struck me as extremely different in St. Louis was the strong feeling of being one community. I had a real sense of being with individuals who are walking together, sharing successes and struggles, growing through listening, reflecting, acting and evaluating.

I see my experiences at the Assembly as ones that both planted seeds and also yielded fruit. The exercise on the Characteristics of a Healthy CLC gave me a template to measure my own progress in living an authentic lay apostolic life. It also gave me insight on the importance of my own spiritual growth as well as that of my CLC group. I was inspired by reports of the apostolic work described in the large group sharing as well as in the small group sessions. I came to a new understanding of the importance of “shared responsibility in mission.” The testimony of the presenters and participants reinforced my belief that “with others I can be more.”

A final gift from the Assembly was the lovely setting of Washington University and the warm spirit of our hosts in St. Louis and their city. The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Gateway Arch) was majestic, and our visit there reinforced our conference theme: “From our Roots to the Frontiers.” Both the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis with over 40,000 mosaics and the Missouri Botanical Gardens reminded us how God fills our world with beauty.
of these apostolic works showed the fruits of being life giving community, connected and ready to serve out an acknowledging relationship with God and with one another in care and compassion.

There was a quote shared during the opening Mass to the effect of “Beauty is the love that shares the pain.” So often we can be tempted in our society to stay in superficial relationships that ignore the real burdens in our own lives and the lives of others. I see in Christian Life Community the invitation to go deeper. Last year my family was rocked by the diagnosis of our son, Oliver, to a life-limiting condition, Trisomy 18. He lived a full life in the womb and passed away in the womb last May on Pentecost weekend. Holding in grief and gratitude this and other difficult experiences, from unemployment to my husband breaking his leg, to any number of setbacks, I can see how loving community has carried us through. Sharing the pain has opened up ways to allow others a space to share their pain, and the beauty is made present. I am so grateful for having been encouraged to be a part of our pre-CLC and though we have not discerned to commit to CLC, we may in time. I am also very grateful to have attended the National Assembly and I encourage you reading this to take the leap and go if you ever have the opportunity. Go to get a clearer vision of CLC. Go to share your wisdom. Go represent your local group. The community is strengthened by individual contributions and each of us is then strengthened for the journey. Thanks to each of you who make CLC what it is. It is inspiring to see the love and the commitment and the witness in your prayers and actions. Thanks for welcoming this stranger.

REGIONAL NEWS

Missouri Region—Mary Wescovich

The CLC National Assembly of 2014 held in July in St. Louis is behind us but its fruits will stay with us and continue as we look forward to the years ahead. Many thanks go out to members of the Missouri Region CLCs in St. Louis for contributing to the success of the Assembly. We had twenty-five participants from St. Louis and each of our local CLCs was represented. Good wishes and prayers came from members who could not be with us and we felt their presence throughout the Assembly. Thanks to Fr. Robert (Cos) Costello, S.J., presider at the opening Liturgy and everyone who assisted with transportation, sightseeing and all manner of help behind the scenes.

Special thanks to ExCo and Fr. Jim Borbely, S.J. with the planning team for a memorable experience. We are grateful to all the CLC members who came to St. Louis to join in the Assembly. It was a special time to renew friendships and meet new friends in CLC.

On another note, Pat Carter, a member of Discipleship CLC and Past President of National CLC, was married to Larry Anderson on August 17. They will reside in Tracy, Iowa. We wish them much happiness in their life together.

Maryanne Rouse, Pat Carter and Mary Wescovich
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Calendar

October 13, 2014
NCC Conference Call

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Fruits and Challenges of Assembly 2014
Part 2