Fruits and Challenges of Assembly 2014
Part 2
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Editorial Foreword

Graces of Gratitude, Humility and Hope

After editing the articles in this issue of Harvest, I was impressed with the positive comments made by the youth and young adults who attended the 2014 National Assembly this past summer. They expressed their concerns about what would be expected of them. They shared some fears about how they could be involved in the process. Some came with the feeling of being ‘less’ than other participants. In reality they were a big part of the fruits which we all took home from the Assembly.

Reflection after reflection included among the graces received, gratitude, a sense of humility and hope for the future. The welcome and sense of the larger community of CLC were also named as graces received. The young adults came to the gathering with openness to listening to the speakers, most of whom were the ages of their parents or grandparents. They were of service to everyone, offering their help in a myriad of ways. Best of all, their faces reflected the joy of life and the light of Christ. All attendees benefited from their presence.

Some of the more senior members of Christian Life Community, myself included, arrived in St. Louis with a little less enthusiasm. We came prepared, having shared the pre-Assembly exercises with our communities. We had attended other national gatherings in the past. We looked forward to meeting longtime CLC friends. One reaction on my part after fifty years in Sodality/Christian Life Community was, “been there, done that.” How was this meeting going to enhance my CLC experience? What was I going to bring home to my community? Part of what I was forgetting/missing was more positive. How has fifty plus years of commitment led to the sharing of wisdom with the young adults and the pre-CLC members who were present, some for the first time? The senior members shared their histories that included times of confusion, disappointment and sadness. They also included the people and actions that raised them up again. All of us need to be reminded that we are not alone in our spiritual journey. This kind of sharing was experienced as we told our stories and celebrated together.

The small groups, in a particular way, were valuable to the success of the process of the Assembly. Gathered as we were, with representatives of each of the cultural groups, youth and adults, new and longtime in CLC, our sharing groups reflected a reality of CLC-USA in 2014. Getting to know the individuals in my group opened my eyes to CLC as it exists in our country at this time. It is a different picture from the one I arrived with at Washington University. It is easy to say that these are not the ‘good old days,’ whatever that means. However, it points to the reality that all groups of people making up Christian Life Community have gifts to share with one another. Identifying those gifts might be one of the challenges we need to address in this post-Assembly time. How can we use these gifts to further CLC in its formation of individuals and its expression of mission?

In the past, CLC has been accused of not being visibly active in apostolic actions. This Assembly could prove the inaccuracy of that belief. As we shared in the works of Jerry Chen and Brigitte Brennan (the Soy Project), Hung and Kim Anh Vu (Marriage Renewal), Marie Schimelfening (NGO - United Nations), Frank Vuong (SEED) and Carol Gonzales (Environmental Sustainability), we came away with inspiration and awe. So many other initiatives were displayed for us on the Apostolic Wall.

As so often happens in our lives, God touches our hearts and opens our minds to new possibilities. I came home from the Assembly feeling that way. Not everything was perfect. That is a fact of life. Our diverse community still has a long way to go to be comfortable, especially as we struggle with language and custom differences. We still need to overcome concerns about membership, authentic CLCs, the lack of guides and the scarcity of our Jesuit brothers. These are some of the challenges we have brought out into the open. As ExCo and NCC continue to discern our needs in these and other areas, we may be called upon to share our gifts and work for solutions. How ready are you to pitch in and say yes to the invitation?

In the President’s Corner, President Rick Kunkle reminds us to keep the spirit of the Assembly alive by
sharing the experience with CLCers who were not present. He reminds us that the mission of CLC is the same as the mission of Jesus Christ to transform a broken world. Rick asks each of us to read and ponder the message of wisdom language as presented by Father General Nicolás and also the message of Projects 160. Each of us has some immediate work to do as we consider these challenges in our communities.

In his usual gentle and compelling way, our guest Ecclesial Assistant, Father Jim O’Brien, S.J., presents not only his reflections on National CLC Assembly 2014, but also his larger perspective of the past few years in CLC-USA. This overview is a valuable tool in understanding the growth and direction of our national community (all of us) as we have been transitioning to a new way of being together. Speaking with a wisdom language, we are called to be part of another growth spurt within CLC-USA. New growth is often accompanied by discomfort. Are you ready and willing to forge ahead?

Chris Hogan, World ExCo Vice President, provides us with his closing thoughts on the Assembly. I believe, he, as many of us, was not sure “…where an assembly program of so open-ended nature might lead us.” However, being open to the spirit and letting our leanings be set aside for the discernment of all led to graces we did not foresee, e.g. the need to define the role of group guide. As Rick noted earlier, Chris also stressed the importance of assembly attendees to “…communicate to others something of the enthusiasm, spirit and directions of the Assembly.”

May 2015 be a year filled with peace and hope for our broken world. May we, members of Christian Life Community, strive, ever more-determined, to help bring this to fruition.

With gratitude to God,

Dorothy M. Zambito

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REST IN PEACE

Teresita B. Bobila, San Lorenzo Ruiz CLC, April 19, 2014

Anne Wells, mother of Mary Ann Cassidy, North N.J. CLC, November 9, 2014

Julian S. Jurus, uncle of Ed Plocha, on November 9, 2014 at the age of 95.
Dear CLC Companions and Friends,

As I write this in mid-November, our National Assembly last summer seems so long ago. The joy and glow of our time together has faded. The seasons have changed and we are busy with many things in our lives. Yet we continue our journey as CLC following the Assembly and in this issue of *Harvest* we share some further reflections on the graces and challenges of the Assembly.

I would like to begin my reflections with the last paragraph from the National Assembly Report:

“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. How do I / does my community best respond to this call? What stirs our hearts? To what can we commit to move toward this radical joy in mission?”

How do we respond to this invitation? How are we responding to this invitation? The experience of the Assembly did not end at the closing Mass. We continue the Assembly discernment to live our CLC vocation more deeply. I would like to reflect on our response to the graces and challenges of the Assembly.

CLC-USA leadership has taken steps to support and accompany each other in our response to the Assembly through the post-Assembly Examen, materials posted on the Assembly website, *Harvest*, and asking National Coordinating Council (NCC) members to share what is happening in their communities. Fundamentally, the graces of the Assembly are shared and applied within our local communities. What am I hearing? The experience varies greatly. People are sharing their experience of the Assembly in written reports, with their local communities, with regional and cultural group leadership, and at cluster and regional gatherings and retreats. I have heard of local communities and groups of communities using some of the Assembly exercises to reflect as a community on the characteristics of CLC that emerged at the Assembly and steps they can take to respond. I am aware of formation teams working in our communities discerning how to apply the graces of the Assembly in the work they do.

However, this experience is not universal. CLC-USA is very spread out and not every community had a representative at the Assembly. Some groups may have been very actively engaged in preparing for the Assembly and sending their members to the Assembly, while others were not. It is difficult to convey the experience of the Assembly to people who were not there. Without feeling the presence and energy of the people at the Assembly, the context for further reflection may be lacking. This is one of our challenges.

CLC characteristics as verbalized at the Assembly are just broad ideas. They come to life in our community experience as we discern further what they mean and how we live them out. We have just begun this process.

In our continuing discernment, I think we need to beware of viewing the characteristics of CLC as requirements that must be attained. As I shared at the CLC Northwest Regional Gathering, CLC is a means for living our Christion mission. We “want to

“...by sharing our experiences we became more aware of our diversity, differences and commonalities.”
follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom” [CLC General Principle 4]. Larry Gooley, S.J., a former National Ecclesial Assistant, wrote in *Guideposts*, “The mission of CLC is the mission of Christ, which is to witness to the Divine Love that is continually pouring into our hearts and into the whole world. It is not so much that CLC has a mission as it is that the mission of Christ has CLC.” The characteristics of CLC speak to our identity and our way of proceeding. Being a healthy CLC is not an end in itself, but a means to living our Christian mission to be Christ in the world. As we evaluate our community life in light of these characteristics, we must keep in mind the Christian mission to which we are called and how CLC influences this.

This brings me to wisdom language. Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., Superior General of the Jesuits and CLC Ecclesial Assistant, gave an address at the World Assembly on “Wisdom Language for the Frontiers.” As I have shared earlier, his presence at the Assembly and his address were among the most significant experiences of my attendance at the World Assembly. He called us to use the language of wisdom “because it brings in depth and counteracts the superficial tendencies of today.” Our spirituality fosters wisdom and depth – “Ignatian Spirituality trains us for reflection and meditation, for sorting out what is superficial and banal from what is deep and real. This is what Ignatian Spirituality does for us – it trains us to be sensitive, to discern.” Fr. Nicolás sees us as carriers of this spirituality. He invites us to both share our spirituality and to use it to go deeper, to seek the *magis*. This relates directly to our experience at the CLC-USA National Assembly where we reflected on how we are being invited to live the CLC Charism more deeply.

Wisdom language is one of the priorities identified by the World CLC Executive Council following the CLC World Assembly in Beirut in August 2013. Projects 160 is an introduction to this CLC priority of wisdom language. It includes a community exercise that communities can use to reflect on wisdom language in their lives. We shared Projects 160 with communities in October along with a copy of Fr. Nicolás’s presentation from *Progressio* Supplement #70. You can find Projects 160 on the CLC World website or included in this issue (http://www.cvx-clc.net/l-en/projects/Projects_160.pdf).

Projects 160 and the community exercise are not just a spiritual reflection. This is an invitation to consider how we are living and sharing Ignatian Spirituality, which is fundamentally about living our CLC Charism. For example, this might involve using Ignatian discernment principles for decision-making where we work. I also recall the sharing of apostolates at the Apostolic Experience session at the Assembly. Each of the four apostolates that were shared is an example of living and sharing wisdom language in our world today.

I invite each community to spend some time with Projects 160 and Fr. Nicolás’ presentation. The CLC-USA Executive Council sees this as part of our journey together following the World Assembly and our National Assembly. Projects 160 is a resource we can use. Just as we shared our stories of apostolic mission at the Assembly, we hope to continue to share our stories to accompany and support each other in the invitation to apply “Wisdom Language for the Frontiers.”

I would like to conclude by sharing that we are taking steps to create the CLC-USA Formation Office. As I shared in an update with the NCC, this is an exciting moment in our CLC journey. Formation is a need that was identified as a priority when I was an NCC member fifteen years ago and has been confirmed on a number of occasions. At its meeting following the Assembly, the NCC identified creation of the Formation Office a top priority. We identified three areas of focus: community guides, community materials, and processes that support the growth of communities and members. Creating the Formation Office will be a challenge. It will take people to be available to serve in the Formation Office and to be community guides. I am hopeful. The recognition at the Assembly that “We are ‘National’ CLC” reflects a growing sense of ownership and responsibility for who we are and for supporting each other to grow together as Christian Life Community. This is also a response to Fr. Nicolás’ invitation.

I ask that we keep each other in our prayers as we strive to respond to the invitation from the Church to more deeply live and share the wisdom of our CLC vocation.

Blessings,

Rick Kunkle
I thank the *Harvest* editorial team for its request to offer some reflections as a Jesuit Ecclesial Assistant upon the CLC National Assembly held in July in St. Louis. I’m happy to accept the invitation, hoping that readers will take these thoughts as those of but one Ecclesial Assistant.

This is a limited source to be sure; I trust though it will make a modest contribution to this thoroughgoing effort to evaluate, and gratefully so, the blessed time in St. Louis. Please God, from a multitude of diverse perspectives a discerning consensus regarding “what God is hoping in us,” (Fr. Joe Tetlow’s happy phrase) will be the valuable outcome. Herein, IN THE DOING, will be found the Greater Glory of God and CLC’s relevance in the Lord for a polarized Church and a frightened, angry world.

To identify more pointedly my personal perspective, this is the seventh consecutive National Assembly I’ve attended since receiving in 1992 the additional mission of “Promoter”—the job title at the time—for CLC within the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus. It wasn’t until the later nineties that the dynamic connection of National with World Assemblies became more apparent to me. Itaici, Nairobi, Fatima and Beirut became central locations on my CLC map, enlightened places for us within MAR to dialogue, discern and discover the deepening reality which was CLC. Fred and Betty Leone along with Marilyn Barton and others were of course at the very center of this learning experience. The result?: a graced awareness of the almost tangible presence and growth-leading of the Holy Spirit from one assembly to the next, and the gentle encouragement to help this vision happen in our day-to-day living.

For myself, indeed for us all, an added central anticipation about our meeting in St. Louis was the vibrant presence on the American CLC scene for the past dozen years of two diverse cultural groups, dedicated Korean and Vietnamese CLCers joining with faithful earlier Hispanic refugees/immigrants and with the more veteran “Anglos.”

This consoling, confusing reality led to a series of leadership conferences in Pittsburgh 2011-2013. From them came a clear communal discernment to structure ourselves into “a new way of being together,” and in the process conform better to the governance structures and apostolic readiness of the other sixty-some nations making up World CLC.

Such was the expectant focus of mind and heart with which I arrived in St. Louis. Thus I found myself in major agreement with the post-Assembly summary “Deepening Relationships in the Lord, Report on the 2014 CLC-USA National Assembly.” This report on can be found in the previous issue of *Harvest* (Vol. 47, No 2, page 8) or online at [http://assembly2014.clc-usa.org](http://assembly2014.clc-usa.org) materials, post Assembly, Assembly report. The planning committee was indeed attentive to the lead of the Spirit in fashioning the program (and prayerfully adjusting it in the midst of the separate sessions) “as a community building and formation experience.” The days proved to be a prayerful, reflective sharing of what it means “to BE CLC and to live this unique calling to the Ignatian lay apostolic vocation.”

First timers to this National Assembly underlined for me the extraordinary depth and openness with which our diverse group entered upon this common search. A basic clear consensus became apparent. Individuals are called to be more practiced in daily prayer, to grow more sensitive in the use of their *examen* of consciousness, more
secure in communal discernment as the rhythm of their small group meetings, more ready and even eager to bring this kind of attentive presence into larger CLC discernments and interactions for prophetic apostolic action.

I was especially gratified by the Friday night session at the Assembly, the panel presentation of the four “Frontiers” highlighted at the 2013 World Assembly: Globalization/Poverty, Family, Youth and the Environment. We can point to our General Principles and speak comfortably about prophetic apostolic witness. It was a joy to realize that CLC-USA is actually modeling ministry from our spiritual Ignatian roots to these endangered foundational areas of human existence. Beirut and St. Louis have made all the more abundantly clear that CLC’s Kingdom call is not to be merely a series of prayer groups or heartening faith sharing encounters. We surely need more and more incarnations of Christ’s warm heart and healing hands at work in this our day, thus to announce and celebrate this vision to ourselves and to others, especially those becoming free enough to hear and reply to the Lord’s calling.

As I bring these reflections to a close, let me underline some expectations and areas of concern for continuing the growth of God’s good work in us. These are intended not as a set of imperatives with which to burden others but as an invitation to identify and share insights each in his/her own context, thus to become an active participant in our one-community communal discernment.

Among expectations the following seem common-sense, perhaps even too obvious for the noting:

– God is drawing us into a fuller harmony. We’re dealing here with ongoing lifetime growth in Christ for ourselves as individuals and as a community. Teilhard de Chardin reminds us: “We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—and that it may take a very long time.” (See his “Patient Trust,” in Hearts on Fire, p. 58.)

– As a result of St. Louis we are able to enjoy in common a fuller clarity about CLC as a special lay vocation. Faithfulness to this shared understanding, grounded in the practice of the daily examen, is both the starting point and the goal for becoming discerning persons. To put it succinctly, singly and together we are called to a style of interior presence like Mary’s, she who, as St. Luke notes, “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.”

– Members of the ExCo and NCC carry heavy responsibilities at this juncture. Let’s pray for them as they become the more practiced in the art of communal discernment in executing the details of the pre-Assembly strategic plan. Others of us, especially from among those who experienced such insightful gifts in St. Louis, ought to be able to supply some of the preparatory heavy lifting as active members of committees and task forces expediting the business of the Assembly. Besides moving matters forward more directly, participants will be getting to know each other across geographic and cultural lines in anticipation of establishing future cluster and common-interest working connections.

How about the areas of concern alluded to earlier which appear as post-Assembly priorities “for continuing the growth of God’s good work in us?” I find four calling for our more immediate attention: formation, guides, ecclesial assistants and communication. You the reader may come up with others. If so, please offer them for the consideration of those with whom you regularly gather, quite possibly to become part of the larger discerning conversation which needs to be at the heart of our “one community.”

Here is a brief explanation of the four which have caught my notice.

**FORMATION:** The NCC, meeting immediately after the Assembly, has already mandated such a committee. This is a pretty clear indication of the Holy Spirit at work in discerning minds and hearts, wouldn’t you agree? Its first task perhaps would be to gather a discerning, user-friendly assessment of how on target we are in our small local groups (or culturally/regionally/cluster-wise) with regard to the formation of our members. This is likely to be uneven across the country, much influenced by cultural concentrations and varying levels of support and involvement by the separate Jesuit provinces. Because of its central manifestation of the CLC charism, formation for mission surely needs to be part of our ongoing discernment. Perhaps the Apostolic Action and Advocacy Team can be constituted as a separate subcommittee to keep uncovering best pastoral practices—recall Friday night at
the Assembly—and considering vibrant, relevant ways to bring CLC's General Principles to life.

GUIDES: Under this heading a task force of experienced guides should be invited to work together. We can point with gratitude and admiration to such outstanding leadership persons in every cultural group, especially, it seems, among our Vietnamese and Korean sisters and brothers. Despite what was voiced by some at the Assembly about the lack of competent guides being a major cause of the lack of healthy growth within CLC-USA, we do have a number of experienced guides, and we’ve tried to gain more. (Witness the several well-presented courses over these last years, attracting almost a hundred eager participants. For whatever reason though, there wasn’t a notable increase in startup groups.) Isn’t all this a Spirit-indicated invitation to “go back to the drawing board” if you will, and given the graces of the Assembly, discover what we should be doing now as a broader, interacting national community to put this important piece into place?

ECCLESIAL ASSISTANTS: This is an area which did not come up directly in St. Louis, nor, given the purpose and format of the gathering, should it have. It would be an understatement to note that this historically essential component of CLC is presently in a state of flux. As ten U.S. Jesuit Provinces become five, they are no longer the bases for CLC Regions, and when Jesuit EAs retire or die we are not likely to be replaced due to the shortage of manpower. CLC-USA is visioning rather a handful of EAs, not necessarily Jesuit, serving the body as a whole. This could well mean the cessation of a collaborative relationship of almost 450 years, and one seemingly out of harmony with World CLC. At that level the last two General Superiors of the Society have volunteered themselves as the worldwide ecclesial assistant. The disconnect is especially ironic coming at a time when CLC-USA gives promise of providing more fully formed lay persons according to the Ignatian model. The situation obviously calls for continuing contact between the Jesuit Conference in Washington, D.C. and CLC’s National ExCo. Happily this is a conversation which has been in progress for some few years now.

COMMUNICATION: As a public figure St. Ignatius is reputed to be the most prolific letter writer of his time; over 7,000 of his letters are extant. In the age of the internet we too must give a high order priority to communications at all levels and in many directions. Our web page ought to be excellent—clear, simple and under continual review. Timely reports from committees and task forces should be linked there and regularly updated. Harvest can highlight these developments and keep us current on the activities of the ExCo and NCC. There may be one or other among us who could make available an archived, annotated bibliography of relevant CLC-related literature and other media pieces. The supportive side-effects could be manifold, e.g. keeping ourselves informed and joyful over the unfolding CLC story, reaching a wider audience, especially of young people and other possible recruits, growing more proficient in online contact and the use of social media, and becoming more clear and connected regarding our future cluster and common interest contacts. In a word, communications is a discerning conversation of utmost importance for the future of CLC-USA.

Thank you for your kind attention to my rather lengthy remarks. I trust they didn’t come through merely as monologue but as engaging communication. May you be finding yourself in many such interchanges with the CLCers around you, all intent upon the leading of the Lord.

In His Peace,
Fr. Jim O’Brien, S.J.

“And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—and that it may take a very long time.”

Teilhard de Chardin
Concluding Comments on the CLC-USA Assembly

Chris Hogan (World ExCo Vice-President from Australia)

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here with you for this Assembly. It has been inspiring and enlightening to be a part of such an occasion - with its rich diversity, yet at the same time, seeming to be of one mind and heart in the Lord and our CLC way of life – the common heart beat, giving life to all the varied members.

I had wondered where an Assembly program of so open-ended nature might lead us. Initial reactions to the process (both before and during the Assembly) varied but all came to appreciate its relevance. So the faith of the planning committee seems justified. The Assembly itself proceeded according to a well designed process facilitating consensus on discernments. Discussion was wide-ranging, but seemed to focus especially on what constituted the essence of our CLC vocation and way of life, at all levels, be they local, regional, national or global.

Special attention was given to such matters as building community – becoming one body, celebrating its cultural diversity as enrichment (rather than dealing with it as division); practicing communal discernment; living our CLC charism and identity as expressed in our General Principles; and discovering our CLC common mission, first and foremost, as lived in daily life, be it visible or invisible, personal or collective. We also heard inspiring accounts of CLC apostolic works. Together, these discussions and reflections revealed what an extraordinary grace our CLC vocation is - as lay, Ignatian, apostolic and collaborative - and how it is being lived in CLC-USA.

Reflections and discussions at the Assembly also suggested areas for further work. A high priority that emerged was the need to define more clearly the role of the lay guide, then to find and train lay guides accordingly. This is seen as an important strategy to continue to encourage all CLC members in our committed interior life, to our fidelity to CLC group life (beyond just faith sharing), in addressing the matter of CLC mission (individual and collective) and in practicing communal discernment.

I congratulate Rick and the CLC-USA community on this Assembly, especially the preparation and service teams, and also all participants. In addition, we thank the Jesuits for their ongoing commitment, loyalty and great service in this collaborative endeavour with us.

We also keep in mind the significant proportion of the CLC-USA community who were unable to attend this Assembly. In this regard, I hope that all people here at this Assembly, and especially the National Coordinating Council, are able to communicate to others something of the enthusiasm, spirit and directions of the Assembly, for this gift of CLC and how it might be more fully lived in the future.

Finally, with everyone here, I am very grateful for the enlightening experience of this Assembly. So at this point, we all join together, asking for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to respond as fully and generously as possible to the graces of the Assembly. We know, of course, that God, working in us, can achieve more than we can ask or imagine. So we respond with a generous heart, as best we can, to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, knowing also that God will not be outdone in generosity in all these matters.

We give thanks for this great time together, and its promise and hope for the future.

Thank you.
I will be the first to admit that I was not all that excited about going to the Assembly in St. Louis. However, I am facilitating new communities in the Metro NY Region and I hoped that I would be able to obtain some guidance from others at the Assembly.

Although my discernment to travel to the Assembly in St. Louis was filled with tensions, I decided to accept the call. Mary Ann Cassidy and I travelled by car through Cleveland where we took the evening to rest and visit with family members. The stopover gave me the ability to voice to my cousins, how CLC was an important part of my life and how it had helped me to seek and see God in all things. While we were on the road, Mary Ann and I spent some time talking through some of our observations about our local community and our commitment to support projects identified by the world community. Our two-day travel together was great preparation for many of the sessions that we attended.

We were happy to arrive just as the opening Mass was to begin. The voices united in song and prayer set a tone that continued throughout the entire weekend. Fr. Cos’ (Robert Costello) homiletic remarks reminded us why we are CLC, “Seeing the pain and acting with it is a CLC treasure that has been with us over the centuries. We see things and say that ought not to be.”

Similarly, the small group discussions at the Assembly provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know representatives from a diverse group of communities. As we listened and prayed for and with each other and the struggles our communities have encountered, we again saw our connections. In our sharing, we talked about opportunities that could enhance our communities’ prayer and mission activities. My group was blessed to have Chris Hogan from World ExCo as one of the contributors. His humble and honest dialogue encouraged all of us, both those from newer communities and those of us who can now call ourselves seasoned CLC members.

The panel presentations highlighted the amazing results of communal discernment. It became clear that as we discern together, the Spirit will lead us to find opportunities for responding to pain. This was the fruit of the message that Fr. Cos had encouraged us to reflect upon when we first gathered in liturgy.

In the post-Assembly examen, we were asked to consider the three most important graces of the Assembly. For me the most important grace was the consolation that came from joining with other CLC members throughout the nation to express our common mission. Another grace was the humbling reminder that CLC is not perfect; it is a work in progress as are we as individual CLC members. Finally, it was a grace to celebrate the mission work of so many communities and to know that through prayer we also are part of their mission efforts.

I am grateful for the inspirational energy that was nurtured during the Assembly. I continue to pray that this energy will stay with me and with my communities as we live out our CLC vocation.
Graces and Challenges

Mary Ann Cassidy

When I arrived with Terri Mierswa at Washington University, I immediately felt the energy and warmth of CLC at the reception area. It was wonderful to see CLC friends I had previously connected with in Pittsburgh years ago. Knowing how depleted we were, Terri and I were quickly sent to the cafeteria to renew our physical strength after a very long drive. The opening liturgy was truly an immersion for me of the love of God poured out through the gathered community. The music always lifts me up, especially because it is sung in each of the languages of those gathered. However, Father Costello’s homily was the benchmark. Fr. Cos suggested that “love that shares the pain” is the charism of CLC. To illustrate this charism he shared an experience from the Nairobi conference when he took an immersion experience in Kibera. He followed the guide along the edge of a ditch that was filled with human excrement and garbage awaiting the rain to wash it away. They headed towards a tiny school where a woman was teaching boys to read. She was very proud that she had two blackboards—that was all she had. Then the woman took them to visit her home - a dark one-room shack with beds stacked like a bureau, one on top of the other, along the wall. Her cooking area was a sterno with a cup sized pot. Father then said that a few days before it had been reported that baby twins had been abandoned along the road, left to die because the mother could not feed them. This school teacher went and rescued the twins and brought them back to her home to love and care for as best she could. Pope Benedict said that each one of us is necessary. Did God create that lady to save the babies and give them food and a home? She was responding to their pain out of love.

A month after the Assembly I was given the scripture John 20:11-18 to pray with during a directed retreat at Loyola Retreat House in Morristown, New Jersey. An image of the reading teacher resurfaced often in my prayer. Like Mary Magdalene, the reading teacher, the apostles and us, we are all being transformed by Christ, who then sends us to bring new life where pain and suffering exist.

Another one of the fruits of the Assembly was the invitation to revisit the General Principles. I heard and saw several GP’s illustrated at the Assembly. Chris Hogan invited us to look upon them as a living word. The GP’s need to be read and prayed with out of love. Beginning with St. Ignatius’ Principle and Foundation, I recalled, “God who loves us, creates us, and wants to share life with us forever.” I experienced this love in the small sharing group, in the lively social, in the well planned large group meetings and powerfully in the liturgies.

Often we heard that the key to apostolic action or solidarity is deeper prayer. Knowing Christ is at the center of our lives gives us openness to recognize Christ at the center of all humanity.

GP#4 describes three broad areas to live out Christ’s mission as members of CLC: the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation. Each of these areas was documented at the Assembly in panel discussions and on the Apostolic Wall. It was very touching to see the many communities with outreach to the homeless and others living on the edge of society. I felt the courage of those committed to the poor in Tanzania, and the personal sacrifice they made to bring their
skills and resources to a small village. Carol Gonzalez, from Pittsburgh, talked about the community garden she developed with and for the poor—to give them a share in the growing and harvesting of healthy vegetables and in the importance of sustainability. Another example of the CLC charism on behalf of the poorest is St. Aloysius Gonzaga High School in Kibera, Nairobi that was started by CLC with Fr. Terry Charlton, S.J. to provide education for young people who have lost parents to AIDS. Enabling young people to complete high school and then go on to college means they will get employment which will help to support their brothers and sisters living in poverty. Since there is no free public high school education, St. Al’s High School is very necessary to help those qualified to get out of the grinding poverty. Planning is underway to build a dorm for girls to keep them safe, another example of bringing love where there is pain.

During Friday evening’s session, Hung Vu shared his community’s outreach to a couple having serious marital difficulty. His commitment to helping this couple led to a retreat process for the renewal of marriage. What struck me was his passion for the covenant of marriage and his giving of his time and energy to reach out to his friends. Hung is an example to me of someone who did not hesitate to say “yes” to bring love where there is pain.

In the closing liturgy Father Jim Borbely reminded us that we are continually being created by God. Formation is God’s work and we are God’s apostolic workers. He said, “God is forming one human community over time.” Our apostolic call is to respond to the graces, but not to run ahead of grace. With the beautiful song, “You Raise Me Up,” I left energized in my CLC vocation.

“Knowing Christ is at the center of our lives gives us openness to recognize Christ at the center of all humanity.”
Dear Pope Francis,

Buona Sera! I hope you’re feeling well – and are as healthy and happy as can be!

I’m writing you because I have been hearing all around these days that when you’re not visiting South Korea, cleaning out the Vatican Bank, inspiring hope that the Church is starting to turn itself around in positive ways, or challenging the mafia (For heaven’s [and Earth’s] sake, please be careful!), you’re writing an encyclical letter on our ecological mission as the human family. I was just part of a worthwhile conference at Seattle University (a Jesuit university I want you to know!) and it highlighted a number of things I’ll be looking for when I get your letter.

First, I appreciate the fact that you haven’t pulled any punches when you’ve spoken out on issues, but have said what you meant and meant what you said. That gives me hope. Keep it up. Your letter has to be honest and urgent, spiritual, and radical. It can’t let people listen or read for a while, yawn, and then go back to their normal lives. Things have gone too far already. For example, we learned at the conference that a sea level rise of 4 feet this century is already guaranteed, – with a 10 foot rise possible and even likely unless we cut our fossil fuel emissions drastically and in a hurry.

I’m sure that is not good news for Buenos Aires, your last home. In fact, we will have seawater and storm surges in a number of our coastal cities too. When you come to the U.S. this fall, you might want to add New York, Charleston, Miami, and New Orleans to your itinerary while it’s still possible to visit them.

So you have to make the letter strong, but you also have to give us some hope so that we don’t just throw up our hands in despair. That’s not an easy line to walk, I know; but it’s the one we have to navigate [pun intended!].
We also learned at the conference how thoroughly everything is connected. You need to help people see that. The way the world economy is structured and the values it promotes and serves have been a key driving force getting us to this crisis place. You need to help us see the connections and point us in more healthy directions than market competition and the futile hope of never-ending economic growth. You have already spoken well about the dehumanizing forces driving our economy; make it inescapably clear that they are destroying Earth as well.

The economy is connected to politics too, of course. The lack of political will to do what is needed for the world as a whole is a disgraceful sign of the corruption of our politics. The sociological realities of who is suffering from climate change already are in perfect harmony with your call to us to end poverty and tend with love to the most vulnerable in our societies. Open our eyes to the ways our culture are driving these forces of human and environmental death and destruction. You are right when you say these are crucial Life issues in which the Holy Spirit is calling us to action.

I’m wondering how you’re going to handle the fact that the Christian interpretation of the Creation in Genesis has for so many centuries legitimated the thoughtless use and careless abuse of creation. You of all people know that ‘confession is good for the soul,’ so I think it would be wise to approach this in humility, contrition, and with a really serious purpose of amendment. You’re good at that and it is so important for a clear-eyed and honest look at our situation.

We also need you to help us in the wealthy parts of the world to accept the need for repentance, to grieve what we must let go of in our lives so others on the planet can have what they need for dignified and healthy lives. Can you help us see that simpler, more relational and communal living are actually more fulfilling and happier for humans? This is the work of a good pastor, and we know you are that. We will work with you, but please pastor us well.

I also hope you will be clear and strong on the institutional and systemic changes you want to see happen. Mobilize the Church’s institutional resources: its moral authority, its teaching and communication resources [you certainly know how to get press!], its purchasing power and investment strategies, its schools, hospitals, charities and development agencies, and its rich and varied spiritualities.

Hold up a big picture of human solidarity. You wrote well of the joy of the Gospel; help us to see how striving for the sustainable and just living of the human family in true solidarity promises authentic joy and human fulfillment. One of our Jesuit brothers at the Seattle conference spoke of the challenge of our future together in Teilhardian terms as the need to draw the 9 billion people that will inhabit Earth before this century is over into a new and higher level self-organization as a single human family.

[By the way, that reminds me, wouldn’t it be a great time to start the rehabilitation of Teilhard de Chardin as a great Jesuit saint for these times?! Just a suggestion.]

That kind of global consensus-building is no easy challenge as we see so many warring factions in so many places. We need your leadership drawing us together in prayer and love — the way you tried to do with Israelis and Palestinians. Maybe you could invite as many leaders of faith traditions as possible from all around the world to join you in common prayer and outspoken leadership on all these issues.

I know you’re very busy these days, so I’ll stop here. I want to assure you we are waiting eagerly for your letter on the ecology. If you want any help with it, be sure to let me know. I’ll be glad to review chapters or drafts for you, make suggestions, even write a bit. And I have friends who would be glad to help. My email address is below — and by the way, I have a cell phone. I’ll send you my number if you’ll send me yours!

Be assured of our love and grateful support.

In gratitude for the awesomeness of the cosmic creation and the power of the Holy Spirit manifest in your election,

James E. Hug, S.J.
August 15, 2014
jhug@jesuits.org
Since 1971, CLC-USA has presented awards to members and others outside CLC.

1. The **CLC Development Award** is presented to an individual (or couple) who has given outstanding service in the promotion, growth and/or development of Christian Life Community. The person nominated should have contributed meritorious service to CLC in the United States over a period of years.

   The award may be given to a lay person or priest or religious. It is assumed that a lay member would have made a permanent commitment and be part of a local community.

   Past awards were presented to lay members and Jesuits who were Ecclesial Assistants, regionally or nationally. Other Jesuits who contributed to the movement by their writing or by developing programs were also considered.

2. The **Development of Peoples Award** is named after Pope Paul VI’s encyclical. It was to be awarded to an individual (couple or group) who is outstanding in carrying out the principles and ideals of this encyclical, especially peace and justice, in particular during the past few years. The encyclical encouraged individuals to “serve society by opening hearts to conversion and the struggle to change oppressive structures.” Those nominated do not need to be CLC members.

   The 2014 **CLC Development Award** was presented to Kathleen (Kitty) Gray. The 2014 **Development of Peoples Award** was awarded to Hung and Kim Ahn Vu and Jerry Shen and Bridget Brennan. The following text will describe why they were chosen to receive these awards.

**The Presentations**

**Kathleen (Kitty) Gray** is a member of People of St. Paul CLC. She stands out as someone who lives the CLC way of life personally and professionally. Almost since becoming a member over fifteen years ago, she has been involved in leadership and she gives genuine meaning to the term, Servant Leader. She was Executive Treasurer of National CLC from 2001 to 2012 and worked tirelessly keeping the books in excellent order. Kitty works in the financial area and she took the role of CLC Treasurer and conducted it on the same professional level. She generously stays in close contact with our present Treasurer as a consultant and mentor.

In the St. Louis area, Kitty is always available to assist in any project. Recently St. Louis CLC board positions have been in a transition and Kitty has served with Fr. Cos and Mary Wescovich to keep CLC in the forefront with local members while continuing to serve the Missouri Region as local treasurer. When visiting CLC members come from around the country, Kitty will often have them stay at her home.

At the National Assembly, Kitty served as co-chair on the Logistics Team. Kitty is a dear friend, a shining light of the vision that St. Ignatius held up for those of us who endeavor to follow in his footsteps.
Hung and Kim Anh Vu have been members of Dong Hanh and DHCLC for twenty-nine years in their group, Nazareth. While attending University of California at Irvine in 1985, they formed Hat Cai (Mustard Seed), a prayer group of students on the UCI campus. Hat Cai still functions today. Many Youth and Young Adults in DHCLC came from this Hat Cai group. Both Hung and Kim Anh served DHCLC as Chair.

As a couple, they served DH Family Ministry for several years. From their love, dedication and concern for family, they initiated and formed a Team to develop Marriage Renewal Workshop for Vietnamese. From 1996 till now there have been twenty-four Marriage Renewal Workshops serving couples both in the US and in Vietnam. It is open for all couples regardless of religion or ages. This year, DH Family Ministry scheduled seven workshops, five in the U.S. and two in Vietnam.

The SEED retreat for children is another fruit from the Nazareth Community where Hung and Kim Anh and other concerned parents contributed effort and ideas. They made it happen. Now SEED has become a Ministry in DH. It has become a place and time not only for children from six to sixteen years old to come closer to God each year, but also for parents as well! Parents who come to SEED to support their children and SEED leaders have their own track, with spiritual and service programs.

Upon receiving the CLC Development of Peoples Award, Jerry and Bridget made this acknowledgement:

Thank you very much. In accepting this award we would like to honor the memory of two CLC friends who are no longer with us but were role models for us in living out the CLC vocation. One, Clare Summers, originally from the Canisius CLC in Buffalo, New York and then a member of John XXIII when she moved to St. Louis. She also worked for a while with the National CLC office. Secondly, Sister Joan Granzier, a member of the Society of Helpers who served as our Guide in John XXIII CLC. We know that Clare and Joan are sitting together in heaven smiling and cheering this National Assembly on.

We are deeply grateful to CLC-USA, Mary Ann Wachtel, and Mary Ellen Wescovich for this award. There are many others that have made the soy project a success, especially Sr. Dot Ettling, Regina, the leader of BUWEA (Bukoba Women’s Empowerment Association) and Sr. Toni Temporetti. They are deserving of this award. We are also grateful for those who nurtured, directed and inspired our growth in Ignatian Spirituality. Without this growth, Bridget and I would not have chosen to go to Bukoba.

Our discernment began with Bridget’s visit to San Antonio. She stayed with Sr. Dot Ettling, who is the founder and director of Women’s Global Connection, an organization that promotes the development of women in poor countries by helping them to start and maintain a small business. At that time, Dot’s organization was completing a project to improve the diet of children by adding soy flour to their diets. With Bridget’s mention that I have experience in soy protein, Sister Dot started a full-court press to recruit me for making soy milk and to recruit Bridget for teaching personal development skills.
Three factors were crucial in our discernment. First, Jesuit Fr. Carl Hangartener, former John XXIII guide, spent a full retreat teaching us about creative opportunities. He said that Jesus came to give us opportunities. Bukoba was certainly a great opportunity to better the lives of many. Second, Jesuit Fr. Tom Swift, former CLC guide, said availability is an important consideration. We were certainly available at that time since I had retired and Bridget could spare the time from her work. Third, I was worried about the project to make soy milk. Here in the U.S., we need large expensive equipment, sanitation and quality control, packing, storage, shipping, labeling and marketing. The Bukoba women had none of these.

But another principle of discernment is to not consider how to implement the decision. Otherwise, we will not be inclined to choose difficult or seemingly impossible choices. Instead, we are guided to trust God with the means of implementation of any decision that we see as the will of God for us. These considerations led us to risk the trip to Bukoba. The pictures show the results of the trip.

At time of our visit, Sr. Dot’s organization was just completing a program to give these kids one extra meal of soy flour per day. The volunteer head master asked me privately what will happen when the program ends. I promised him that the program will not end. My family donated enough money to keep the program going for another school year.

And this is our story thus far. For BUWEA’s soy milk business continues to grow. Bukoba is part of our (my) Ignatian journey that also continues. In that journey, I have grown from seeing challenges and struggles to experiencing emotions of joy and gratitude. I have come to trust that everything in my life is given to reveal God’s glory. More and more, I have grown to trust my most precious desires and possessions to God. And more and more, I have come to experience God’s love and glory.

In bad times, good times, and in the mundane everyday times, I am less anxious and more trusting. And I am moved by joy and gratitude. I share my spiritual journey, the journey of an insignificant man made significant by God’s grace given to me through many of you. I share my gift with you in the hope that it will touch your journeys in some way. And if it does, then God’s gifts are indeed for the community and they have achieved their desired effect.

Again, we thank you for being community to us and for giving to so many our most treasured possession, the Spirit of St. Ignatius.
There is nothing more pleasurable for souls than being able to openly exchange our thoughts about our deepest fears and future visions. The attendance at the CLC-USA National Assembly truly enriched me with tranquility. People from all over the United States came to Missouri to present testimonies of their enduring spiritual journey.

Being a relatively young person and, compared to other attendees of the Assembly, a less experienced one, I received a futuristic insight toward where I am heading with my current actions. As we walk through our life sometimes we encounter a stone on our path; mine was doubt. After spending a year building my spiritual armor, something inside cracked. I prayed and asked God for graces. I felt like everybody in my group was moving on except me. Although I was surrounded by gracious and loving people, impatience surrounded me. At some point, I thought that I was not as involved in my community as I should be. I kept pushing myself harder and harder, but with the same poor results. There was an outside improvement but no progress within. Desperate, I contacted my spiritual director, thinking that maybe he would provide me with some guidance or at least tell me if I should remain in the community. Unfortunately (or fortunately) the result was neutral. I didn’t receive a yes or no. The same night our main coordinator sent out the invitation for the National CLC. I felt an uncontrollable urge to go. I didn’t know if I was suitable enough. Unsure, I contacted our coordinator and I, with three other members of our community, was sent to the Assembly.

Traveling down the state, I created a mini-vision of what the Assembly would look like, expecting showy conferences with speakers. In reality the speakers were the members of our small discussion groups. It was through our mutual exchange that I understood that I am fine just where I am with my spiritual growth and changes will happen gradually. Listening to testimonies and struggles of others produced ease inside me. Not that I felt better than anyone else, but I agreed that if the inside is well cemented the outside will come along. Sometimes when we do something for a long time without results, it may seem hopeless. Actually this crucial point takes us further if we remain dedicated and constant. This experience made me realize that we come from different parts of the world but our struggles remain the same. In them we are blessed, because God helps us notice our weaknesses and raises us higher than we could imagine. The macro-perspective of the National Assembly enhanced the micro-perspective of my community. Being a big picture visualizer, I noticed the merits of details and small points in my community. Small problems presented on a national scale are sometimes easier to notice and correct. I was also very touched by the way sessions were coordinated and the way the questions were presented. I saw it as a map. From analyzing where we stand to how to deepen our call to CLC was quite a journey. The SEED group from California was also an enhancement to my experience. Being one of the youngest members, it felt great to know that there are other young adults who also choose the path of St. Ignatius. Believe me, you don’t see a lot of them walking down the street. Their dedication showed that young people are capable of creating great things and bringing positive changes, if given proper tools. The hospitality was beyond imagination. It was overwhelming to know that somebody awaited us and cared for our opinions. The thing that most stressed me during my stay at the Assembly was lack of time. There was not enough time for contemplation or reflection. That was the only weak point. Once again, I am very thankful for the openness of the Assembly members and their encouraging words. Thank you CLC. Hopefully we will see each other again in five years.

As I reflect on the Assembly, I am filled with the grace of gratitude. I have gratitude for the different CLC communities I was able to experience at the Assembly. I witnessed how people from all over the country, with their own unique stories, have had similar experiences of God through community as CLC members. Even with all our differences in location, culture, age and experiences, we still strive to journey with our CLC community as a place to grow toward God. God has worked through so many people, and I know this is only a glimpse of our enriched larger
community. God’s loving presence is infinitely more grand and beautiful.

With the theme “From Our Roots to the Frontiers,” I spent much of my time reflecting on the wonderful journey I have had with CLC in the past ten years. I had the opportunity to reflect on how I have continually fallen in love with God through my CLC. It is truly awesome to witness how God has worked through all of us. Since the end of the weekend, I feel that God has been inviting me to grow deeper with him through delving more into the Spiritual Exercises. I sense that He is also inviting me to share this fire with my community so that we can continue to serve Him.

Bethany Vu (Nazareth, Phoenix AZ)

When I got onto the plane to return home to Phoenix, Arizona from St. Louis, I was filled with a deep sense of gratitude for all the friends I made, memories I created and graces I received. There were three graces that stood out as most formative for me. First, I was able to be present with a community of people who share the same spiritual identity with me that goes beyond just being Catholic and extends to being a Catholic who chooses an Ignatian way of life. Even though our Assembly was made up of many ethnicities and regional backgrounds, we were all family in the way we are trying to live out our vocations. Having this sense of unity and common vision was a grace for me because it allowed me to feel connected to a community greater than myself. It was a consolation to see that there are other people learning and growing with the same struggles that I have. Being with the other young adults was another big blessing for me. I grew up as a Dong Hanh “cradle born” which meant that I often went to gatherings and leadership conferences with my parents. There were not many other people my age. There were even fewer who attended and had the same desire to be there as I did. This time at the National Assembly I had several of my closest friends and it was so valuable to share this experience with them. We were able to reflect on what we had learned and discuss how we could work together to bring it back to our communities.

Finally, the greatest grace I received during the National Assembly was an invitation from God to deepen my own personal spirituality. On the first night of the assembly, we all met as a Dong Hanh group to do our examen together and share about our feelings before coming to St Louis. Many of the adults shared that they were skeptical about what they were supposed to find in St. Louis. Others worried about what the program could offer to them that they could bring home with them. I worried about none of those things – the thing that I was most anxious about (as well as many of the other young adults) was trying to think of how I could contribute to the experience there. Looking around at everyone else there with all of their years of experience and life wisdom, I was not sure what I would have to share or if it was even my place to be there. I happily came to represent SEED and the youth and young adults though, so I spent every day at the Assembly trying to find opportunities to help out in any way that I could. I was happy to do anything from walking some of our older brothers and sisters to the dining area to putting up posters. Through the conversations I had with everyone, I realized how far our little ministry had come in the past nine years. Every time I asked God, “What can I do? What more can I do for You?” His reply was always, “Look how loved you are. Look how blessed you are.” It was a strong reminder of how God’s love is unconditional and that I don’t have to do anything to earn His love. I don’t need to exert myself to earn my place at the Assembly. I feel that reminder is an invitation for me to allow myself to accept God’s love for me more readily. I look forward to finding an extended silent retreat to go on in the near future.

I am grateful to Dong Hanh Southwest Region and CLC-USA for supporting me with finances to attend the Assembly. Spiritually, mentally and emotionally I think the pre-Assembly exercise helped me to prepare myself and focus my energies on the spirit of discernment and learning. It was also a great consolation to do the exercise both individually and with the other young adults, because we were able to share the thoughts and feelings that we were bringing to the Assembly and know that we had a local community to support us. The overall experience of the pre-Assembly exercise helped me to be more open and aware of where God was present during the weekend.
Sometimes I was drained and distracted while the Assembly was in motion. SEED CA and SEED AZ teams had also reached the final stretch of their planning and I was involved in parts of the programs for both retreats. There were some moments when I felt frustrated that I could not be fully present with either SEED at home or at the Assembly. I feel that the only moments of desolation I had were personal ones. It was helpful to have some personal prayer time, the other young adults and a community that were so active in reaching out to me. I was able to refocus when needed. Also, even though I had to balance ministry and personal affairs, the disturbances were more circumstantial than anything else and I was still able to engage and contribute whatever I could to the Assembly. It was very life-giving for me to be responsible for the entertainment night’s activities. I was able to share laughter, praise and worship, and a piece of SEED with the community. These are activities that are a big part of the way the young adults in Dong Hanh experience their faith. If anything, I think the frustration I felt at having to split my attention was an invitation for me to trust that God and the team at home can carry part of the responsibility for me to be fully present wherever I am.

I have had the opportunity to attend a National Assembly in the past but this experience in St. Louis is particularly special to me. I got the opportunity to experience the National Assembly at an age where I was able to be a part of the program and part of the discerning body. I learned a lot about how God works in us and through us. I am happy to have developed new friendships and found new role models for how to live life as a strong active Catholic in this modern time when the world stands against our beliefs. I look forward to our regional gathering in September to see how we can share some of the graces from St. Louis with the community at home, and I also look forward to participating in future CLC national events.

With all of the smiles and bright memories, I’d like to send a special thanks and prayers for everyone in my small group who became like my mini-family throughout the weekend. They inspired me to be better buddies with God such that He becomes a life companion for me the way He has been for some of my older CLC brothers and sisters.

Jonathan Cheung (Roots, California)

My experience at the National Assembly is truly something I’ll never forget. To be honest, I really had no idea what I was in for and thought I signed up for something that was way beyond me. To an extent, I still have that feeling but it is no longer much of a fear. It is a feeling of hope: hope for something more in the future for myself, hope for other communities and hope for all of CLC.

The first grace that I received was definitely a deep sense of gratitude. The fact that I was able to attend such a wonderful gathering was, beyond doubt, a blessing for me. My words of reflection will never express how truly thankful I am. Throughout the entire Assembly I was at peace with where I was, not just physically but, more importantly, mentally and spiritually. I can never thank enough the people who made my presence at the Assembly possible. I felt so blessed to be a part of CLC, especially finding and experiencing the lifestyle at such a young age. I know that I have much to look forward to in my upcoming years.

The second grace that I experienced was a great feeling of reassurance. Throughout my life as a Catholic, I’ve had many questions and doubts, not necessarily about my faith, but whether or not what I was doing was beneficial to my spiritual growth. The fact that was I able to see so many other Catholics on the same spiritual journey as I am was very comforting, supporting and inspiring. It built up an even bigger sense of community in my mind. At times, hearing about other groups’ struggles and uplifting moments made it seem like I was listening to stories about my own group. It was very reassuring hearing echoes of my life in other people. My third grace came to me towards the end of the Assembly. It was the feeling of humility. It was incredibly humbling to listen and see the works of all the different ministries nationwide. In my mind, I imagined that every member there at the Assembly and all members of CLC groups around the world are but grains of sand scattered throughout a beach. The Holy Spirit would be the waves pushing us towards land and dragging us out to sea. No matter which direction the waves pushed or pulled us, we were all moving in one
direction. Together. As one body. That was very humbling to me.

Overall the weekend was a very positive experience for me. It was my first time experiencing communal discernment on such a large scale and my first time meeting members from other ethnic groups within CLC. The entire weekend also turned out to be a lot more fun than I expected. What I expected was a gathering where we listened and prayed. Don’t get me wrong, we did plenty of that. But we did it together. Being there for one another and listening to everyone’s story was such a great blessing and joy. Everything was such an eye-opening experience and what I brought home is a strong conviction and vigor to continue my journey with my CLC group, Roots.

Izabela Kantorowicz (Polish Community, Chicago)

My name is Izabela Kantorowicz and I am thirty-five years old. I have belonged to CLC in a Polish community in Chicago for over three years. I was always fascinated by the life and personality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. My involvement in CLC helped me develop a stronger relationship with God and I started to open to God’s grace by practicing the Spiritual Exercises.

Coming to the CLC Assembly in St. Louis was a life-changing experience for me. I truly understand now how big and powerful Christian Life Community is as an organization. CLC is about growing in faith and following Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s directions. More importantly, it is about being a messenger and choosing the CLC lifestyle.

It was amazing to see so many different nationalities in one country carrying the same message to the world. God showed me how much he cares for me by welcoming me to this Assembly. It was absolutely beyond my expectations. I asked him to “give me a house and he gave me the whole village.”

I was overwhelmed in positive ways with all the ideas people shared. I have always thought that I was so brilliant and had many good projects in my head. I came to St. Louis and I met people who are very similar or even more creative than I. It was unbelievable to see how much you can learn from people who have the same ideas for growing in faith, especially when they are willing to share them with you. I loved the SEED program and the way of helping marriages to stay strong by celebrating marriage as a sacrament. Also, I really liked that people who had started programs were explaining where they got their ideas. It made it real and authentic.

However, the biggest grace I got was the certainty that CLC is the way I want to go in my life. The experience of people who are longer in this community showed me how to walk and carry the message to others. The main idea I remember is to go out of your community, do what you are called to do and go back to your community. This way we don’t stay closed in the box of our own community. In addition, I realized that CLC is all around the world and it’s like one big family. Therefore, we need to stay in touch by reading and following the main principles of CLC. We should be aware of what the whole CLC struggles with and what we are focusing on every year.

The personal message I got from the Assembly was “simplicity and humility.” I recognized that God is calling me to simplify my life and to be aware of who I am in good and bad ways. God wants me to know what I can and cannot do. Right now, I have no doubt that God has a wonderful plan for my life. He has shown me that just by allowing me to be a part of such an amazing experience. When the time is right, by his grace, I will do things I have never dreamed. Staying at Washington University and learning from such smart people who are so open minded and beautiful was definitely life-changing. I feel very honored being called by God to be a part of CLC and very happy I realized that at the Assembly. Thank you Lord that CLC is part of my life!
Phuong Tran (Carus, California)

First of all, I would like to say thank you to the sponsors who helped me financially. Because of them I received an opportunity to attend the Assembly alongside other young adults. I also was very thankful to Chi Dung for encouraging me to ask my boss for days off and urging me to discern my attending the Assembly. God works wonders in his own way and through the people he places in my life. For that, I’m extremely thankful and feel very blessed.

Some of the graces that I received are the sense of community and hopefulness. **Sense of community:** I always knew that Dong Hanh belongs to CLC-USA but I never knew about this bigger community. Despite the countless times that Anh Chi did a presentation of what Christian Life Community is, I couldn’t grasp it. I just couldn’t imagine the bigger community out there. After the Assembly, I felt a greater sense of belonging and the desire to know more about the community. Despite where we are in life, it was such a blessing to see each of us striving for the same goal—a life rooted in God. **Sense of Hope:** I was very hopeful to see a community alive in the spirit. I couldn’t wait for other young adults to be exposed to this bigger community and to call this community a home away from home. I definitely felt this sense of home-coming. As I was given the opportunity to be there with other young adults, I sensed this deep peace and hope. It was so nice to look across the room full of people of different ages who came together in the hope of making a difference in the world and to proclaim our faith. I just couldn’t wait to see what God has in store for us as a bigger community. I could see the community growing in time with the involvement of more young adults.

Some of the most memorable moments were the long walks that Alex, Bethany, Jon and I had to make to get to places near the campus; the evaluation nights that we got to spend together with other Anh Chi from different regions in Dong Hanh; reunions with the familiar faces that I haven’t seen for years; the new faces that I got to meet and share a part of their journey in life; the laughs we had during small and big group sharing; the thoughtful actions we had to nurture each other while we were there; the knowledge of CLC at large and the graced history that we shared; the Saturday night when we danced and sang together; the passion that I saw in each of us. Every moment was a blessing and a gift.

After the Assembly, God definitely invited me to have a deeper relationship with him by my daily examen of consciousness. It was easier said than done. I am at a place in life where daily prayers/examen/reflections are much needed. As life is getting busier, I wanted to be able to find God in every moment in life and be thankful for that. Regarding my small faith group, Carus, I felt called to be the new coordinators’ support. I want to have faith that God will take care of us. I also need to define how I want to play this role of a supporter. I must narrow down what I need to do rather than trying to take the steering wheel because of fear and doubts. Again, this will come down to having faith that God will take care of the group through the people he has chosen as new leaders for Carus.

The only desolation I had throughout the Assembly was my own life situation. I had a midterm that I needed to finish studying for as well as planning for SEED. It was just the workload that took the energy out of me. However, it was just simply part of life and part of being a student. I looked at it as a challenge for me to plan and practice good time-management. I guess it was both desolation and consolation. July was a month of intense personal growth.

What remains in my heart is that I can’t wait to come back five years from now. I can’t wait to see the community grow older together. I miss everyone dearly and can’t wait to see what the next journey God has for all of us individually and for CLC as a whole.

Thank you AGAIN for your presence as well as your gifts and talents. Until next time, let us continue to unite through prayers.

Much love.
For years I heard about the Christian Life Community (CLC) worldwide, but I never truly grasped what this meant. These past few days, at the CLC Assembly, have given me a better understanding of how vast and wonderful our community is.

My first introduction into CLC was through my participation in a Vietnamese Catholic youth group called Mustard Seeds during my undergraduate years at the University of California Irvine. As my involvement progressed in the group, I began to learn about the Dong Hanh CLC. Through multiple events such as meetings, formations, fundraisers, retreats and SEED, I have had the opportunity to meet and grow close to members of Dong Hanh CLC. We address members of Dong Hanh as “Anh Chi” (older brother and sister). I consider these individuals my role models. They inspire me to live a life centered on God. They have helped formed us, the young adults, through Ignatian spirituality. They have also always treated us like family. They take the time to check up on us to see how we are doing in all aspects of life. They ask about how we are doing in school, our career paths and about our relationships. More importantly they always take the time to check how we are doing mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. I have the utmost respect for people in Dong Hanh. Therefore, when I was asked to discern about attending the CLC Assembly because Anh Chi were empowering and supporting us to attend, I knew it would be a great opportunity.

The first grace that I felt throughout the Assembly was the grace of gratitude. I have gratitude towards the individuals in Dong Hanh CLC who supported and encouraged us to attend the Assembly. I also have gratitude towards CLC-USA for providing us with the Arrupe Grant to help us financially. I am incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity to meet fellow CLC members from across the country. Even though the majority of us were strangers, it still felt as if we had a bond coming together. Every time I crossed paths with a new individual, we would always greet each other with a smile. I will forever cherish all the conversations I had and new relationships I have built. The connections made throughout the weekend really demonstrate how God is in each and every one of us. He intended for our paths to cross.

The second grace that I experienced is that of humility. Sometimes I am so caught up in my own preoccupations that I forget that there is much more out there. I am only one small part of this bigger community. It is also humbling to be among individuals that I look up to and respect.

Lastly, the final grace is a yearning to continue to be more aware of how I can live the CLC way of life. The journey to figuring out God’s calling for me is a never-ending one. Along the journey, I must remember to keep my life centered on my faith in order to better myself as a person. It is also important to stay mindful of how He is calling me to serve more fully within the community.

I did not experience major desolations, but I did at times have a yearning to want to help, but did not know how. As within any family, there will always be disagreements or differences. There were times during the weekend when conflicts were addressed and this showed that everyone was coming together to try to work through hurdles. When I heard other people share about their struggles within their own groups at home or about not knowing whether they can commit to being a part of CLC, I could sense their grief. I would have loved to have had all the answers to solve their struggles, but I do not have any of those answers. Right now, it seems that all I can do is to pray for them and remember to trust in God’s plans.

Overall, the weekend was a blessing. God’s love was evident in all the hard work done by everyone in the background who helped put together this assembly. Throughout the Assembly the sense of community was strong, but by the end, the sense of being a family was more evident. I am proud to be a part of CLC and look forward to future endeavors. I am extremely blessed to have had this opportunity.
Dear Sisters and Brothers in CLC,

Resuming the issues highlighted in our General Assembly in Lebanon 2013, the World ExCo is pleased to introduce our progress on Wisdom Language (WL). We invite you also to join us in the process to develop these ideas in your national community and in your local groups.

The stakes regarding Wisdom Language

The way in which CLC responds to our call to go to the frontiers in our social realities, cultures and daily lives challenges us as Ignatian Lay Body to consider a) What are the particularities of our identity that can bring a fruitful dialogue with the world of today?, and b) What should our disposition be towards the frontiers that effectively reflect this lay Church? “We the laity, who are the Church, we have to be able to recognize and to proclaim Jesus Christ and His Gospel not as a set of prohibitions, interruptions, regulations, dictates or marginal statements but as a word of life in real situations which are being lived...the image of a good Christian must be less stereotyped and more dynamic and capable of discovering the good within people”1

With regard of this, during our last Assembly in Lebanon 2013 Fr. General Adolfo Nicolás SJ invited us to rediscover the Language of Wisdom2. He inspired us to explore how we might engage with the contemporary world in terms of wisdom. He pointed out that through Ignatian spirituality we can provide the depth which societies need today. Wisdom in this sense is about discovering God’s gracious action, not simply in his more obvious actions in history, but in everything, in ordinary life. It is the way of the Contemplation on Love (SpEx 230-237), of finding God in all things. (Lebanon 2013 – Final Document No. 7).

There is a widespread tendency to consider the spiritual life as fuga mundi (flight from the world) where it seems necessary to withdraw from the world to get closer to God. In contrast, Ignatian Spirituality and especially the Ignatian Lay Vocation are rooted in Finding God in everything. It is a spirituality incarnated in the world and therefore it is not averse to the world. Rather it is a constant invitation to be aware of the signs of the presence of God in the ordinary life and to distinguish what leads us to be closer to or away from God’s will.

In this vein, for us (CLCers), Wisdom Language means to find out how God works in our lay reality (everyday life) in the family, at work, in the society we live in, culture, etc. What’s more, Wisdom language is not a second choice. In some circumstances it is the suitable language to use if we want to keep on searching for God in all, especially at the frontiers.

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1 “The Church of the Laity”, Jose Reyes, Progressio Supplement 59
2 Wisdom Language for the Frontiers – Progressio Supplement 70 XVI World Assembly of CLC Lebanon 2013 (pg. 88-97)
Briefly, this is what we mean when we refer to Wisdom Language:
- WL might not be a "language" but an approach or a disposition/attitude
- Wisdom brings in depth and counteracts the superficial tendencies of today.
- Ignatian spirituality allows us to distinguish what is superficial from what is deep.
- The core experiences of Ignatian Spirituality/Exercises might offer keys for Wisdom
- WL is a means to address those who are not familiar with God and to appreciate their joie de vivre
- WL is an invitation for all ignatian family to really search God in all.
- WL requires a conversion of our own understanding and not only a translation of ancient words.

What does it mean to take wisdom language to the frontiers of our lay mission?
1. To live life with openness and a sense of wonder, attentive to and receptive to different perspectives and especially to be positively pre-disposed to others, and to new realities.
2. To make the right choices and help others to do so. Choose what is deep, permanent and meaningful.
3. Research and intellectual work. Give genuine effort to find out what are the different options available which can enrich life in that situation. Be able to understand and speak in language of the non-religious discourses surrounding the frontier.
4. Recognize the presence of God in the little things of daily life and help others to also recognize this presence. We get depth not necessarily through academic studies, because "You have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to simple people (Mt 11,25)
5. Bring the compassion of God to life situations. Prioritize a message of unconditional love instead of norms and commandments as Jesus did and Pope Francis insists in our days.
6. Do not settle for simplistic solutions. Do not also accept dilemmas in which there is no solution offered. Believe that there is Hope, that God offers us a solution and the possibility of a better life. Evil is never the last word. God’s love is the last word.
7. Give value to the wisdom of humanity we have inherited from our parents, cultures, environments and life experiences that we have had unconscious or hidden in our daily lives.

Wisdom Language as a process

This deepening on WL is the starting point of a process that we hope to develop in these five years, therefore we encourage a reflection of WL, especially as an expression of our lay identity, within our CLC communities. As proposal we invite our members to promote a meeting dedicated on this subject. Below in Annex you will find guidelines for a CLC local group meeting on WL.

If you have ideas, suggestions or additional questions please feel free to contact us: wisdomlanguage@cvx-clc.net

Called or not called, God is present,

Denis Dobbelstein Alwin Macalalad Sofia Montanez
Consultor New Executive Secretary

World ExCo working group on Wisdom Language

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY – COMMUNAUTÉ DE VIE CHRÉTIENNE – COMUNIDAD DE VIDA CRISTIANA
ANNEX
Guidelines for a CLC local group meeting on Wisdom Language

We recommend that the person who is going to lead up the meeting read Projects 160 Wisdom Language (the stakes regarding Wisdom Language) in order to help the participants to go to the core message of Wisdom Language approach for CLC.

Prayer time:
The participants sit in a circle and in the center put the written sentence of the petition and ask each of them to write down in a piece of paper one sphere of our lay vocation that has to do with God’s Wisdom (e.g. work, family, etc)

Petition: Lord, let us recognize your Wisdom in the midst of the everyday life

Reading: Elijah meets God at Horeb
God said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by”. Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. 1 King 19, 11:13

To the Reflection: How do you experience God’s Wisdom in your daily life? / What was your experience of God in the last week amidst the bustle, rush, fatigue and complexity of everyday life?

Sharing time:
about Wisdom Language: How the fact of paying attention to the presence of God in the little things in the ordinary life can raise our awareness of the Wisdom Language? / From what I have heard in this meeting where I have found words of wisdom?

At the end of the meeting try to answer the following questions to be shared with World CLC (*): As Lay people, how do I/we communicate the Wisdom of God among ourselves and with others? / Could you identified the tool that may help our members to be more attentive to Wisdom Language in ordinary life?

(*) we kindly invite you to share your answer with the world community, please send us photos, reflections, images, poems, etc. to wisdomlanguage@cvx-clc.net your feedback will be shared mainly in Facebook (page of CVX – CLC) and in a possible Progressio Supplement with the most relevant inputs/testimonies received.
Please remember CLC in your estate plan

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

CLC-USA is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization. All contributions to CLC-USA are tax deductible to the extent allowable under federal law.

Calendar

CLC-USA ExCo In-Person Meeting: Washington, DC,
January 22-25 (gathering with local communities
January 24)

National Coordinating Council Quarterly Teleconference:
February (date to be determined)

World CLC ExCo Meeting: February

World CLC Day: March 25

Dong Hanh-CLC National Assembly: Pittsburgh,
May 28-31

Ignatian Spirituality Conference: St. Louis, July 16-19

CLC-USA National Coordinating Council In-Person
Meeting: Pittsburgh, October 1-4

Next Issue

Wisdom Language