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Meeting I: Background reflections on structure, relationships, and authority

Introduction and Overview:

Christian Life Community's General Principles are a description of its vision and charism. These principles are not a set of rules and regulations, but a particular vision for living out in community Christ's invitation to be church in a unique way. The General Principles were approved at the CLC World Assembly in Guadalajara on September 7, 1990 and by The Pontifical Council for the Laity at the Vatican on December 3, 1990. The General Principles consist of a Preamble and three parts: Our Charism, Life and Organization of the Community, and Acceptance of General Principles. The Preamble states that the General Principles are a Response to God's Love and are “to aid us in making our own the choices of Jesus Christ.” It goes on to say that the “Principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text as by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love (Guided by the Spirit).” The third element of the Preamble describes our Graced History rooted in the communities started by St. Ignatius and the Sodalities of Our Lady.

Part One: Our Charism, consists of six elements: missioned communities, discerning communities, sense of church, world community, apostolic life, and union with Mary. “Our community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of the Kingdom.” The Spiritual Exercises are the center of our spirituality. “We recognize particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.” Our local communities are part of the Church and the larger CLC community. “Each of our communities is a gathering of people in Christ, a cell of His mystical Body… Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community, but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will.” We are called to be apostolic and to carry out the mission of Christ. This apostolate has a personal and communal dimension and “the Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures in society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor.” Mary is honored in a special way as “the model of our own collaboration in Christ’s mission.”

Part Two of the General Principles lays out the structure and organization of CLC community and life. It describes becoming a member, community bonding, CLC way of life, government, ecclesial assistant and property.

The Principles conclude with a section on their acceptance. The General Norms provide guidance on membership, CLC way of life, and life and government of the community.

Preparation readings: If possible the group should read these texts and consider them in prayer before this first meeting.
Meeting (use this in preparation for the meeting)

How do we come?
As the group gathers to begin this new series of meetings, all are invited to identify what is happening in each person’s own life (briefly) and what expectations and hopes s/he has for these next meetings based on the General Principles and General Norms of CLC.

Scripture for prayer at the beginning: Any one of these passages: Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16

First Round of Sharing:
If members have had time to read the three short documents they are invited to share on any, or all of the following questions about them.

1. What stands out for you – either positively or negatively from the three short papers?
2. What does it mean to belong to a group that is officially “recognized” by the Universal Catholic Church?
3. What feelings are stirred in you when you think about these texts? Do they comfort or challenge you? Why or why not?
4. What does authority mean for you? Who has authority in your own life? Why should CLC establish a structure of authority – or be established according to the authority of the Catholic Church?
5. Other thoughts or feelings about these documents?

Second Round of sharing
Did you hear anything said that particularly attracted you or made you nervous or uncomfortable? Especially did you hear anything that seemed like it might have come from the Holy Spirit? What gives you this idea or feeling?

Preparation for next meeting- meeting 2:
The Guide then invites the group to carefully read and prayerfully reflect on the three short paragraphs of the first General Principle (part of the Preamble) in preparation for next meeting.

Closing prayer (with an Examen of the meeting experience)

Business and Social time. (As usual)

Note: Meeting One and all meetings follow a pattern that works best for the community following these meeting plans rather than a universal “recipe”. Meetings must be adapted to the agreed upon time and
pattern of work that this community finds helpful. A brief Examen of the meeting is ALWAYS appropriate. Note that the Examen leaves space for the persons to identify to themselves where they experienced grace or lack of grace during the meeting time – or in preparation for the meeting. Time might well be given for members to jot down their sense of grace or disgrace to further reflect upon between meetings or to discuss with their own spiritual directors.
1A. A short consideration of relationship and authority
By Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan, S.T.D.

One of the hardest concepts for US Americans to work with is genuine authority. As a nation we were established in opposition to the traditional authority of the British Crown with the theology of “The Divine Right of Kings” still held by most of the world’s cultures, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish et al. For the citizens of the new nation in North America to undertake a government “of the people, by the people and for the people” was to fly in the face of long held Christian doctrine and tradition. It was frightening because only about 35% of the population had supported the break from England and believed that the establishment of a new nation, based on the rights of individual citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness fit the plan of God for humanity. That “enlightened” culture of the rights of persons before God and each other, did actually flow out of the broad Christian tradition. But it had been more recently articulated by Protestant Christians than Roman Catholics – even though the ideals espoused were deeply embedded in the Christian Church from its earliest days and practiced in Catholic monasteries of both men and women since the 3rd Century. The idea that a whole nation – possibly thousands and thousands, even millions of men and women, could govern themselves was considered by many, if not most, of the educated classes to be absurd. That men and women would hold together freely in an association of governance or faith was almost unheard of.

The authority of those “chosen by God” was long held as the essential force that enabled governments to function. Only God could select the bearers of God’s authority – and God had seemingly done that through birth or might for centuries. That God might choose those to carry his name and voice through election had been understood in the early Church, but was not a common practice in the medieval Church (with the carefully couched practice of the election of the Pope an exception to the rule). Americans in general, then are put of an “antinomial” culture – a culture that hates laws, and only accepts the most necessary, and wants to be sure that authorities are few in number and that they have some say in selecting them.

What does it mean for the Church to have authority? Why do any of us grant authority to someone else? What does it mean for a group to covenant with one another and to give one or more of their members authority? Why do we do it? What is the purpose and extent of authority? How do mission and authority work with one another? Where does authority lie in a community of believers? What kind of authority does the Catholic Church exercise? Who gives it that authority? Why?

These and lots of other questions arise when a group of people want to create lasting, mutually supportive relationships. All relationships need some kind of “institution” to sustain and support them – even the relationships of marriage and family life are sustained by a number of implicit and explicit institutions.
It should come as no surprise that a faith community that wants to offer its wisdom and gifts to others has to have some social structure. There needs to be some agreement and to who and what a group intends to be or become. Within the Catholic Church, if a group wants to expand and serve many of the members to know and follow Christ more closely the large Church becomes interested in its life and direction. This can be comforting or off-putting, but it has to be reflected upon, prayed about and understood, or members may feel that their own freedom has been usurped.

Authority is a crucial issue for us to pray about, think about and consider. To whom do we give authority to shape our understanding of God and relationship with God? The answer to this question may well determine our life of grace and joy.
1B. Forward to the General Principles

The following text is the “foreword” of the Christian Life Community General Principles and General Norms. It speaks of the relationship that the world community of CLC/CVX wants to have with the Catholic Church as it again outlines the description of our way of life, and way of being together.

FOREWARD

With joy we publish the text of the General Principles of the Christian Life Community.

This text replaces the former one of 1971. It preserves the best of our tradition and incorporates the main developments since 1971 up to now. The approval of these General Principles at the General Assembly by a large consensus indicates that God is addressing us through them. In fact, the General Principles express the way in which we want to respond to Christ’s call. They are our covenant with God, with the Church and with all people.

With this conviction, we have come to the Apostolic See with humility and a spirit of faith to be confirmed in our vocation and sent out to live it among the People of God. In receiving its confirmation and canonical approval, we have experienced once again the life of the Church expressing itself through a very old rite in the history of the pilgrim People of God: the solemn confirmation of a covenant.

May this double approval help us to grow in our sense of communion with the whole Church in its efforts to extend the Gospel in a lasting and profound way in the great variety of places, persons and situations. May we also grow in our love for the Pope and the Apostolic See, visible expression of the mystery of the Church.

These General Principles will help us to fulfil our deepest desires of service. Let us pray on them, individually and in community. Let us use them as an inspiration and a point of reference when we review our lives and program our activities.

Encouraged by the example of Francis Xavier, on whose feast we received our canonical approval from the Holy See , (December 3) let us offer to the Church our life as an apostolic Ignatian community.
1C Decree for the General Principles

PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

1620/90/AIC-50

DECREE

Having considered and carefully studied the text of the "General Principles of the Christian Life Community", approved by the World Assembly of that association of faithful in Guadalajara (Mexico) on 7th September 1990, and subsequently submitted to the Pontifical Council for the Laity for canonical approval,

Also bearing in mind the “General Norms of the Christian Life Community", approved in the same Assembly,

Recognising in the Christian Life Community the joint continuation of the Marian Congregations initiated by Jean Leunis, S.J. which still trace their origins to "those groups of lay people that developed after 1540 in different parts of the world through the initiative of Saint Ignatius Loyola and his companions" (General Principles, preamble 3),

In appreciation of a venerable association erected by the Bull Omnipotens Dei of His Holiness Gregory XIII (5 December 1584), sustained and encouraged subsequently by numerous pontifical documents, particularly by the Apostolic Constitution Bis Saeculari of His Holiness Pius XII (27 November 1948) enriched by examples of holiness and apostolic fruits,

Taking into account the actual commitment of "men women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him the building of the Kingdom, who have recognised Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church” in accordance with their own charism and spirituality (cfr General Principles, part 1),

Recalling that the former World Federation of Christian Life Communities was recognised as an International Catholic Organisation and that its Statutes were approved by the Holy See on 31 May 1971 after a period of three years ad experimentum,

Also considering the actual norm of the Code of Canon Law relative to Associations of the faithful within the Church,

THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

CONFIRMS the Christian Life Community as a public international Association of faithful, of pontifical right, in accordance with canons 312 and following, of the present Code of Canon Law,

AND APPROVES its "General Principles" presented in their original form and deposited in the Archives of this Dicastery.
It is highly significant that this pontifical approval of the "General Principles of the Christian Life Community" occurs precisely in the Jubilee year, which celebrates the 500th anniversary of the birth of St. Ignatius Loyola and the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Society of Jesus. Therefore all the members of the Christian Life Community should take to heart what has been written in the letter of Rev. Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach when he points out that "the Ignatian year has no other purpose than the renovation, in the Spirit, of the apostolic life, both personal and at community level", associating with this celebration in a special way "all those men and women who collaborate most intimately with the Society or who take their inspiration from Ignatian spirituality" while embracing "the Spiritual Exercises in all their rigour and authenticity". This we ask of the Lord through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, to whom the Christian Life community regards itself as profoundly and traditionally united from its very beginnings and in whom it has always wished to inspire its fidelity to the Lord and its apostolic and missionary zeal "for the greater glory of God".

Given at the Vatican, on 3 December 1990,
the feast of St. Francis Xavier.

Paul J. Cordes  Eduardo F. Card. Pironio
Vice-President  President
Meeting 2: General Principle 1 - The call to unity in community
Preparatory Worksheet

PREAMBLE: General Principle 1

1. The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains. Out of love, the Word was incarnated and born from Mary, the poor Virgin of Nazareth.

Inserted among the poor and sharing with them their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity within our human family. This gift of God to us, and our response, continues to this day through the influence of the Holy Spirit in all our particular circumstances.

Therefore we, members of the Christian Life Community, have composed these General Principles to aid us in making our own the options of Jesus Christ and taking part through Him, with Him and in Him in this loving initiative which expresses God's promise of faithfulness forever.

(Taken from the General Principles of Christian Life Community revised and approved in 1990)

Meditation I:

(reflection on the first and second meditations of the 2nd week of the Spiritual Exercises)

#’s 101 – 117 of the Spiritual Exercises

In the first Meditation of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius asks the Exercitant to imagine the Trinity as three persons gazing at the world in sadness and dismay as they observe human beings destroying one another and themselves with various means and decisions. The persons of God decide to remedy the situation and to enter the created order and rescue humanity from destroying itself and all the rest of the world as well. In this contemplation, we place ourselves in prayer so that we can see the truth of the world around us and try to imagine how God is seeing, hearing and feeling about what we are observing.

We know from the witness of Matthew and Luke’s Gospels that God entered the human condition among the poor and the powerless, rather than among the wealthy, powerful and elite in worldly terms. In so doing God demonstrates for us how to be human. Jesus enters a loving family and establishes loving relationships with them in order to begin drawing all of humanity back into a union of love with one another. Jesus shows us that to be in a loving relationship with the Trinitarian God we must strive to be in loving relationship with one another.
Questions for consideration and prayer:

- What does community mean to you? Do you understand that developing a community is a challenge to the expectation of many in Western Culture who have been taught to exploit their own positions in the world so as to enjoy the “good life” even at the expense of the life and well-being of other humans?
- What are some of the demands of community that you are most aware of and afraid of? Can you bring those to prayer and ask for the gift of being in community?
- Why might it be easier for the materially poor to develop community than those who have lots of discretionary wealth?
- What are the “particular circumstances” in which you now live that you are called to bring to community?

Meditation II:

Christian Life Community understands that it is called to establish community with persons throughout every culture, age and nation. As you continue to reflect on these General Principles it might be well to imagine yourself in a community well beyond the few people in this room, and consider people of various national and ethnic groups; people who speak languages that vary from your own; people of many educational and cultural backgrounds; people of wealth and people of poverty; people of various ages.

- How do you extend yourself to these persons?
- What skills do you need to understand them?
- What talents or abilities would make it easier for you to be in community with people of greatly varying ages?
- Does your family background encourage or discourage you from being with people who are not the “same” as you are or who are not “your people”?
- Have you spent time with persons who have very different ways of approaching food, clothing, education, manners or “public behavior” than you do? How comfortable are you?
- Can you trust people who are different or who seem to have different values or expectations? Why/Why not?
- What does “communication” mean to you in terms of community life – either local, regional, national or world?
- What do you expect from people that are part of your community but don’t meet with you every week because they are in another city or country?
- How do you reach out? Cooperate? Make decisions?
- In the 1980’s, World CLC made a discerned decision (after several years of deliberation and prayer together) to change its structure from being a “federation” of national communities to becoming a world community of national communities. What changes do you think this would imply? What difference would there be between a federation and a community?
Meeting 3: General Principle 2 - The call to vocation
Preparatory Worksheet

Focus: General Principle 2

2. Because our Community is a way of Christian life, these principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text but rather by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love. This law, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of daily life. It respects the uniqueness of each personal vocation and enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God. It challenges us to see our serious responsibilities and to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work together with the entire People of God and all those of good will for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.

Scripture Texts for prayer and reflection: Jeremiah 31.31-34; Hebrews 10.11-18; Phil 2.1-11; 2 Cor 3. 1-11

Questions for reflection:
What words or phrases catch your attention? Why?

How does the Spirit write on your heart?

What does it mean to you to have something “written in stone” vs “written on your heart”?

Can you state the “spirit of the Gospel” as you understand it? Do you have a summary phrase or sentence or paragraph that names the “spirit of the Gospel” for you?

How does the uniqueness of each person’s individual vocation get respected? Why should we respect each person’s unique vocation?

How do we “read the needs of our times”? What would you identify as the top three greatest needs of our times? Why?

Additional suggested reading for your reflection:
3A. From the Autobiography of St. Ignatius, as quoted in The Ignatian Tradition, pp 5-7.

3B. From Pope Benedict XVI’s recent Apostolic Letter establishing a dicastery of the Roman Curia to direct the “New Evangelization.”
During this period God was dealing with him in the same way a schoolteacher deals with a child while instructing him. This was because either he was thick and dull of brain, or because of the firm will that God Himself had implanted in him to serve Him – but he clearly recognized and has always recognized that it was in this way that God dealt with him. Furthermore, if he were to doubt this, he would think he was offending the Divine Majesty. One can see how God dealt with him in the following five examples.

First. He was greatly devoted to the Most Holy Trinity, and every day he prayed to each of the three Persons. But while doing the same to the Most Holy Trinity the thought came to him, why four prayers to the Trinity? But this thought caused him little or no trouble since it was of so little importance. One day, as he was saying the Hours of Our Lady on the monastery’s steps, his understanding was raised on high, so as to see the Most Holy Trinity under the aspect of three keys on a musical instrument, and as a result he shed many tears and sobbed so strongly that he could not control himself. Joining in a procession that came out of the monastery, that morning he could not hold back his tears until dinnertime, and after he had eaten he could not refrain from talking, with much joy and consolation, about the Most Holy Trinity, making use of different comparisons. This experience remained with him for the rest of his life so that whenever he prayed to the Most Holy Trinity he felt great devotion.

Second. One day it was granted him to understand, with great spiritual joy, the way in which God had created the world. He seemed to see a white object with rays stemming from it, from which God made light. He neither knew how to explain these things nor did he fully remember the spiritual lights that God had then imprinted on his soul.

Third. It was likewise in Manresa – where he stayed for almost a year, and after experiencing divine consolations and seeing the fruit that he was bringing forth in the souls he was helping – that he abandoned those extremes he had previously practiced and began to cut his nails and hair. One day, while in town and attending Mass in the church attached to the above mentioned monastery, he saw with inward eyes, at the time of the elevation of the body of the Lord, some white rays coming from above. But after so long a time he is now unable to adequately explain this; nevertheless, he clearly saw with his understanding how our Lord Jesus Christ was present in that most holy Sacrament.

Fourth. During prayer he often, and for an extended period of time, he saw with inward eyes the humanity of Christ, whose form appeared to him as a white body, neither very large nor very small; nor did he see any differentiation of members. He often saw this in Manresa; and if he were to say twenty times or forty times, he would not presume to say that he was lying. He saw it again when he was in Jerusalem, and once more when he was on his way to Padua. He has also seen our Lady in similar form, without differentiation of members. These things that he saw at that time fortified him and gave such great support to his faith that many times he thought to himself: if there were no Scriptures to teach us these matters of faith, he would still resolve to die for them on the basis of what he had seen.

Fifth. He was once on his way, out of devotion, to a church a little more than a mile from Manresa, which I think was called Saint Paul. The road followed the path of the river and he was taken up with his devotions; he sat down for a while facing the river flowing far below him. As he sat there the eyes of his understanding were opened and though he saw no vision he understood and perceived many things, numerous spiritual things as well as matters touching on faith and learning, and this was with an
elucidation so bright that all these things seemed new to him. He cannot expound in detail what he then understood, for they were many things, but he can state that he received such a lucidity in understanding that during the course of his entire life – now having passed his sixty-second year – if he were to gather all the helps he received from God and everything he knew, and add them together, he does not think they would add up to all that he received on that one occasion. . . .
3B. From Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Letter establishing a dicastery of the Roman Curia to direct the “New Evangelization”

It is the duty of the Church to proclaim always and everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He, the first and supreme evangelizer, commanded the Apostles on the day of his Ascension to the Father: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). Faithful to this mandate, the Church—a people chosen by God to declare his wonderful deeds (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)—ever since she received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14), has never tired of making known to the whole world the beauty of the Gospel as she preaches Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the same “yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb 13:8), who, by his death and Resurrection, brought us salvation and fulfilled the promise made of old. Hence the mission of evangelization, a continuation of the work desired by the Lord Jesus, is necessary for the Church: it cannot be overlooked; it is an expression of her very nature.

In the course of history, this mission has taken on new forms and employed new strategies according to different places, situations, and historical periods. In our own time, it has been particularly challenged by an abandonment of the faith—a phenomenon progressively more manifest in societies and cultures which for centuries seemed to be permeated by the Gospel. The social changes we have witnessed in recent decades have a long and complex history, and they have profoundly altered our way of looking at the world. We need only think of the many advances in science and technology, the expanding possibilities with regard to life and individual freedom, the profound changes in the economic sphere, and the mixing of races and cultures caused by global-scale migration and an increasing interdependence of peoples. All of this has not been without consequences on the religious dimension of human life as well. If on the one hand humanity has derived undeniable benefits from these changes, and the Church has drawn from them further incentives for bearing witness to the hope that is within her (cf. 1 Pt 3:15), on the other hand there has been a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred, which has even called into question foundations once deemed unshakeable such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral law.

Even though some consider these things a kind of liberation, there soon follows an awareness that an interior desert results whenever the human being, wishing to be the sole architect of his nature and destiny, finds himself deprived of that which is the very foundation of all things.

The Second Vatican Council already included among its central topics the question of the relationship between the Church and the modern world. In view of this conciliar teaching, my Predecessors reflected further on the need to find adequate ways to help the people of our time to hear the living and eternal Word of the Lord.

With foresight, the Servant of God Paul VI noted that the task of evangelization, “as a result of the frequent situations of dechristianization in our day, also proves equally necessary for innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life, for simple people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for
intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 52). Moreover, having in mind those distant from the faith, he added that the evangelizing action of the Church “must constantly seek the proper means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God’s revelation and faith in Jesus Christ” (*ibid.*, n. 56).

The Venerable Servant of God John Paul II made this urgent task a central point of his far-reaching Magisterial teaching, referring to it as the “new evangelization,” which he systematically explored in depth on numerous occasions—a task that still bears upon the Church today, particularly in regions Christianized long ago. Although this task directly concerns the Church’s way of relating *ad extra*, it nevertheless presupposes first of all a constant interior renewal, a continuous passing, so to speak, from evangelized to evangelizing. It is enough to recall what was affirmed in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: “Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived ‘as if God did not exist’. This indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life's very serious problems, are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism. Sometimes the Christian faith as well, while maintaining some of the externals of its tradition and rituals, tends to be separated from those moments of human existence which have the most significance, such as, birth, suffering and death [...].

“On the other hand, in other regions or nations many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved; but today this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can assure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom.

“Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations” (n. 34).

Making my own the concerns of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization. Above all, this pertains to Churches of ancient origin, which live in different situations and have different needs, and therefore require different types of motivation for evangelization: in certain territories, in fact, despite the spread of secularization, Christian practice still thrives and shows itself deeply rooted in the soul of entire populations; in other regions, however, there is a clearly a distancing of society from the faith in every respect, together with a weaker ecclesial fabric, even if not without elements of liveliness that the Spirit never fails to awaken; we also sadly know of some areas that have almost completely abandoned the Christian religion, where the light of the faith is entrusted to the
witness of small communities: these lands, which need a renewed first proclamation of the Gospel, seem particularly resistant to many aspects of the Christian message.

This variety of situations demands careful discernment; to speak of a “new evangelization” does not in fact mean that a single formula should be developed that would hold the same for all circumstances. And yet it is not difficult to see that what all the Churches living in traditionally Christian territories need is a renewed missionary impulse, an expression of a new, generous openness to the gift of grace. Indeed we cannot forget that the first task will always be to make ourselves docile to the freely given action of the Spirit of the Risen One who accompanies all who are heralds of the Gospel and opens the hearts of those who listen. To proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God.

As I stated in my first Encyclical Deus Caritas Est: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction” (n. 1). Likewise, at the root of all evangelization lies not a human plan of expansion, but rather the desire to share the inestimable gift that God has wished to give us, making us sharers in his own life.

From the Apostolic Letter of Benedict XVI: Ubicumque et Semper (Always and everywhere) September 10, 2010
Meeting 4: General Principle 3 – Graced History
Preparatory Worksheet

As you prepare for Meeting Four, you are asked to review (briefly) the large history of the Christian Life Community from its foundations in Rome by the early Society of Jesus through its enormous expansion as a pious diocesan movement of the 19th Century to its restoration to Jesuit leadership and then its development as a lay led and directed Ignatian Movement. This history is part of our story, and becomes part of the story of every group that sees itself as an authentic part of the World Community of CLC. We invite you prayerfully to consider what it means to be part of that history through the following resources. Ask yourself the question whether you feel yourself called to become a part of this stream of Christian history.

Scripture texts for prayer and reflection with the reading materials:
1 Thes 1.1-10;
Josh 24.1-13;
1 Cor 12.13-31

Focus: General Principle 3

3. The Christian Life Community is a public world association whose executive centre is presently in Rome. It is the continuation of the Marian Congregations, started by Jean Leunis S.J. and first officially approved by Pope Gregory XIII's bull, Omnipotentis Dei, of December 5, 1584. Going back beyond the Marian Congregations we see our origin in those groups of lay people that developed after 1540 in different parts of the world through the initiative of Saint Ignatius Loyola and his companions. We live this way of Christian life in joyful communion with all those who have preceded us, grateful for their efforts and apostolic accomplishments. In love and prayer we relate to those many men and women of our spiritual tradition who have been proposed to us by the Church as friends and valid intercessors who help us to fulfil our mission.

After reading and praying with General Principle 3:
- What words of phrases catch your attention? Why?
- What about this passage consoles you? Does any part of it leave you cold? Frightened or annoyed? Can you say why?

Some Questions for reflection on this Principle and on the accompanying material (see appendix A, B, and C):
- What does it matter whether the Universal Church approved of the origins of CLC in 1584?
- Does belonging to a Community that sees its roots in a specific set of practices within the Christian Community attract you or make you feel excluded? Why/why not?
• Why do we see ourselves attracted to certain patrons and holy men and women who have followed this way of life? What difference do they make for us?

Additional materials for your consideration and reflection:

4A – a short summary of CLC History

4B – The third part of Chapter VII from *The Ignatian Tradition*, Kevin Burke, SJ and Eileen Burke-Sullivan. “Josée Gsell and the Christian Life Communities”

4C – A short passage from the end of Decree 6 from the 35th General Congregation of the Jesuits, 2009
4A. The Story of CLC/CVX

From Marian Congregations to World Christian Life Community

In order to understand our identity more deeply, it is important to know about our development from the time of the Renaissance to the present day, Post Vatican II Church. Throughout the past four centuries many generations have prepared the way for us in the Marian Congregations or Sodalities of Our Lady. Christian Life Community was not just a new name, given in 1967, but represented the rebirth, almost a new beginning. This new identity of CLC was expressed in the General Principles, approved in 1971 and revised in 1990. Besides the General Principles, CLC has prepared other documents concerning its charisms and mission.

A brief review of our history

1540 Society of Jesus is founded by Ignatius of Loyola.

1563 A Jesuit teacher by the name of Jean Leunis gathers a group of students of the Roman College for spiritual advancement -- the Marian Congregation is born. This first group quickly becomes a model for other congregations throughout the world.

1578 The Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Aquaviva, approves the Common Rules for those who wish to follow Congregation life.

1584 Pope Gregory XIII with the papal Bull Omnipotens Dei entitles the first Congregation at the Roman College (the Primaria) to be the head of all the Congregations.

1587 Pope Sixtus V, following the request of the Society of Jesus, issues the Bull Suprema Dispositione. This Bull states the right of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus to create aggregates of the first Congregation within other localities, even among persons who were not students of Jesuit schools. It might be interesting for us today to remember that in this early time of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits and lay people who were members of the Congregations would frequently work as a team. The seventeenth century not only saw the highpoint of Congregation life but also the beginning of its decline in spirit.
1748 Pope Benedict XIV, with the Bull Praeclaris Romanorum, tried to renew the vigour of Congregation life. This Bull increased the advantages of membership by granting the members enlarged spiritual benefits and this perhaps had a reverse effect. At this time the Society of Jesus, a victim of political intrigues, was already struggling for its life.

1773 Pope Clement XIV signed a document to suppress the Jesuit Order. The Congregations, by the order of the same pope, become one of the normal works of the universal Church under the authority of each Bishop in every diocese. In the eighteenth century membership increases vastly, from 2500 groups to 80,000. The original spiritual “force” of the Spiritual Exercises was dropped by most groups who became pious prayer or prayer and charity groups. The consequence was a diminishment in fervour and practice. The spiritual life of the members and the social concern for the rejected of society was reduced to pious practices and annual and symbolic events. The Marian Congregations became a pious “mass movement,” VERY different from what Ignatius or Jean Leunis or Aquaviva had meant it to be. This situation continued until the early 20th Century when Pope Benedict XV asked the Jesuit General to once again take responsibility for the development and leadership of the Marian Congregations around the world.

1922 Fr Ledochowski, Superior General of the Society, convened a meeting of Jesuits working with the Marian Congregations or Sodalities, as they are called in the USA and some other countries. The central secretariat, a service center was founded. It was the first secretariat for Jesuit works. Today the SJ curia has eight similar offices for other works. The establishment of the Secretariat was the first step towards restoration. A second step was a renewed set of “rules” for participation in Sodalities directed by the Jesuits that included some Ignatian Spiritual practices (i.e. Examen, prayer with Scripture, etc.) and directives for undertaking action on behalf of the poor.

1948 Pope Pius XII with his Apostolic Constitution Bis Saeculari, gave an important push towards renewal of the Marian Congregations. The Holy Father was deeply committed to the Ignatian Vision of Action on behalf of the poor tied to the Spiritual Exercises. Bis Saeculari was exactly what was needed: a clear, authoritative statement on the authentic identity of the Marian Congregations, a pressing call for reform, with an
orientation towards the future along with some declarations on lay apostolate in general. The impact of this document was enormous (refer to CLC pamphlet by Fr Paulussen, SJ: GOD WORKS LIKE THAT).

1950 Seventy one Jesuits from forty countries follow the call of the new Superior General, Fr Jansen and meet in Rome to develop an institutional response to Bis Saeculari.

1951 The first world congress for the lay apostolate is held in Rome. Forty delegates from 16 countries take the opportunity to meet and discuss the idea of a world federation.

1952 Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona: the opportunity is used to meet and discuss the A World Federation further. The central secretariat in Rome is asked to prepare some Statutes.

1953 The World Federation of the Marian Congregations is approved by Pope Pius XII.

1954 1st assembly of the world federation of Marian Congregation was held in Rome.

1959 2nd assembly was held in Newark, USA, where there was a call to reform the “rules” of the Sodality – but then the Second Vatican Council had just been called, so it was determined to wait to see what the call of the Church would be.

1962 October - opening of the Second Vatican Council in Rome with a number of Jesuit participants and “experts” involved.

1964 In the midst of the Second Vatican Council the 3rd assembly of the world federation of Marian Congregations met in Bombay, India and examined carefully the documents that the Bishops had already passed at the Council. They established a commission to review the rules and the history in light of the call to renew the “Charisms” of all movements of the Church.
1967 The 4th World Assembly was held in Rome where a new name and a new beginning was proposed: Christian Life Communities with a fully restored Ignatian Charism.


1970 5th assembly in Santo Domingo a crisis (a number of members were not happy with the changes and the seeming movement away from Mary toward a Christological center). This was treated as a challenge and the group was asked to prayerfully discern: the General Principles were briefly amended and then formally adopted at the Assembly and finally approved in 1971 by Pope Paul VI. From this assembly also came the determination to revise the structure of the World Secretariat and select a lay person (lay woman) to be the “voice” of CLC as Executive Secretary working with the Executive Council elected at the Assembly (Ex-Co).

1973 At the 6th General Assembly in Augsburg/Germany the World Federation of CLC/CVX began discussing the implications of the Spiritual Exercises: the call to be free, the liberation of all men and women.

1976 At the 7th General Assembly in Manila/Philippines the participants experienced an Eight Day Ignatian Retreat and spent several days among the poorest of the poor in the heart of Manila. The theme of the call to be poor with Christ for a better service challenged the members of the “first world” to ask what Christ is calling CLC to face in the grave financial inequality of the world.

1979 At the 8th General Assembly in Rome, the delegates were carefully apportioned so that each country’s membership was validly represented. The Delegates asked the question how a “federation” structure responded to the call towards a World Community, at the service of One World.

1982 At the General Assembly in Providence the delegates discerned the call to be ONE COMMUNITY and asked the question how to structure ourselves more authentically one World Community on mission to bring about justice.
1986 At the 10th General Assembly in Loyola, Spain, the Delegates made the now traditional 8 day retreat and renewed the importance of seeing Mary as model of our mission, being asked to do "whatever Christ tells us".

1990 At the 11th General Assembly in Guadalajara, Mexico the delegates experienced an immersion into the terrible poverty of the third world and discerned that we are an international community "at the service of the Kingdom, to go out and bear fruit". A second Revision of the General Principles and General Norms was embraced with inclusive language in all the world languages that CLC speaks.

1994 At the 12th General Assembly in Hong Kong, following the theme of CLC Community in Mission "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" raised a number of questions about local communities being committed to mission in an Ignatian sense.

1998 At the 13th General Assembly in Itaici, Brazil delegates wrestled with the challenges of “deepening our identity as an apostolic Community - clarifying our common mission under the theme "CLC, a letter from Christ, written by the Spirit, sent to today's world.".

2003 At the 14th General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, the world delegates challenged the community to practice the second round of sharing and begin the practice of DSSE (Discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating) EACH person’s participation in the Mission s/he has discerned with the community. The theme of the world meeting was “Sent by Christ, members of one body”. Lois Campbell from the United States was elected to the CLC World Ex-Co and CLC USA began a new national formation team from this meeting.

2008 At the 15th General Assembly in Fatima, Portugal the delegates committed to a new document describing a common world formation journey and published a new working document on formation after establishing formation as one of the top priorities of the World Community.
The theme was “Journeying as an apostolic body: our response to this grace from God” based on the Scripture text “The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him what they had done and taught” (Mk 6, 30-34)

*Edited from information taken from the World CLC web site and the Irish CLC web site and additional information from World CLC documents by Eileen C. Burke-Sullivan*
48. Josée Gsell (1925–1997) and Christian Life Communities

As this study has shown, Ignatian spirituality is the heart and foundation of the Society of Jesus. Their spirituality is the first gift that members of the Society give the larger church. But much of Ignatius’ experience that grounds the whole way of life happened to him before he and his companions formed the Society, and well before he was ordained a priest. Ignatius was a layperson when he encountered God in his first conversion at Loyola Castle. He was still a layperson when he undertook the months of prayer and penance that resulted in the Spiritual Exercises. Many of the first persons with whom he shared the experience were laypeople. Ignatius’ way became the inspiration for women’s apostolic communities like Mary Ward’s institute and thirty-three other women’s communities and several orders of men. Further, the Ignatian way from the beginning has shaped the spiritual consciousness of persons who are not called to orders or religious vows, but do experience a call to follow this way of apostolic life.

Shortly before Ignatius died, a young Belgian named John Leunis joined the Society. While in early studies he formed a group for lay students at the Roman College that undertook the Spiritual Exercises. With them he developed a pattern of spirituality that incorporated frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and Eucharist, daily personal prayer, discernment of God’s will, reverence for Mary as the prototype of Christian life, and practical work of justice and mercy among neighbors. The members further made lifetime promises to sustain this spiritual life and maintain cordial companionship with other members even after they married and established families. This Marian Congregation of the Roman College became a model for subsequent groups of both youth and adults established by the Jesuits across the world wherever they took up ministry. The terms “Congregation of Mary” and “Sodality of Mary” were used interchangeably to identify the communities that arose from the Roman College model.
Numerous references to the sodalities are found in the writings of the early Jesuits. Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Matteo Ricci, Roberto de Nobili, Francis Xavier, Pierre Favre, and others described the effectiveness of this instrument for forming men and women committed to service of Christ. While closely associated with the life and work of the Society, these groups never became second or third orders, but remained simply a ministry of the society. There is growing historical research that supports the claim that these groups, and others like them, did much to reform the moral life of Catholics while providing an anchor and mainstay for the Catholic faith in mission lands from Japan to the Americas.

In the late eighteenth century the Society of Jesus was suppressed for nearly forty years in most of the European countries and their colonies but the sodalities were not suppressed. The formation and direction of them, however, was assigned to local bishops. Even after the Jesuits were restored in 1814 the formation of sodality groups was not officially recognized by the church as a Jesuit ministry until the early twentieth century. During that nearly 130-year period many of the sodalities lost their Ignatian character, their mission focus, and their communal grounding.

With papal urging in 1922, the general of the Jesuits, Fr. Ledochowski accepted for the Jesuits the daunting task of working to restore the Ignatian character to the worldwide sodality movement. In 1947 Pope Pius XII confirmed in the apostolic constitution Bis Saeculari that all groups attached to the original Roman College sodality were restored to the guidance of the Jesuits. They were to be organized and formed as Ignatian Catholic action groups. By the Second World War, the Jesuits brought about the restoration of lay leadership at all levels of organization.

Vatican II called every ecclesial group to rediscover and renew their original charisms. In line with this, in 1967 the world sodality movement formally adopted General Principles (in place of former rules) that deliberately restored the original spirituality and purpose and changed their name to Christian Life Communities (CLC). In 1971 Pope Paul VI formally suppressed the sodality and recognized Christian Life Communities.
With lay leadership the world community entered a new relationship with the Society of Jesus, a partnership in mission. During General Congregation 35 the Jesuits identified CLC as a community with “roots that are deep in the charism and history of the Society” and expressed an intention of continuing to work together. Father General Adolfo Nicolás, who accepted the role of ecclesial assistant to CLC from Pope Benedict XVI, told the delegates at a world assembly in Portugal, “We Jesuits are extremely happy to see that the gifts of Ignatius are yours, are spreading and move beyond Jesuit circles and control. . . . It is our joy to see the gifts of Ignatius become our shared patrimony for the good of the Church and the World.”

A laywoman from France named Josée Gsell proved to be one of the extraordinary leaders that steered the challenging process of renewal and transformation. Born in 1925 in St. Hippolyte, in the Alsace region of eastern France, Gsell was deeply formed in an apostolic faith through the Christian Agricultural Youth movement during the “Springtime of Catholic Revival” in the years following World War II. In 1960 Gsell moved to Paris seeking theological training from the Jesuits. Deeply imbued with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and desiring better formation in Ignatian spirituality, she joined the French sodality. In that setting she studied Karl Rahner’s theological exposition of the Spiritual Exercises and then made the Exercises in a long retreat under Maurice Guiliani, a French Jesuit who pioneered the restoration of individually guided Spiritual Exercises for laypersons according to the Nineteenth Annotation.

In the midst of her long retreat Gsell recognized a call to “help souls,” as Ignatius had, by sharing her extraordinary experience and leadership talents with other laypeople. She teamed up with a small group of Jesuits who were guiding members of the French sodalities in the Exercises, and became a national leader in the French federation.

When CLC identified the Spiritual Exercises as the characteristic instrument of member formation, world leaders realized that a strong formation team would have to be established at the
world office in Rome. Father Arrupe, the new Jesuit general, recommended Josée Gsell and urged that they hire her as executive secretary with a mandate to develop formation programs grounded in Ignatian spirituality. For sixteen years Gsell traveled to sixty-five nations organizing and leading formation programs for local leaders with strategies for developing small communities of faith, teaching personal and communal discernment of spirits, providing methods for giving the Exercises to persons of every economic strata, and recommending practical ways for first-world members to simplify their lifestyles. All over the world she led institutes on social analysis, and workshops on discovering the greatest needs for service within various settings and social conditions.

In addition to her travels, Gsell kept up a massive correspondence, writing as many as one hundred letters a day when she was in Rome and nearly as many on the road. She participated in the Pontifical Council on the Laity and oversaw CLC’s application to the United Nations for recognition as a non-governmental organization (NGO). This gave CLC a permanent presence in the United Nations at both the New York and the Geneva offices. She edited the CLC international monthly journal, Progressio, and made certain to highlight key themes of Ignatian spirituality such as the evangelical love for the poor and the companionship of a discerning community. Moreover, she encouraged members to write about these and other Ignatian themes from the perspective of lay members as well as Jesuits, and to do so from all over the world.

Although health concerns forced Gsell to retire from the World Office of CLC in 1987, for another twelve years she offered personal spiritual direction and formation institutes in France. She died at home in Alsace, France, in 1997.

While Gsell’s written work was primarily practical correspondence and descriptions of formation programs, she periodically wrote short monographs as supplements for Progressio, and short essays in other Ignatian journals. Brief excerpts are included here from an extended meditation on Mary’s role in Ignatian spirituality, and from a short life of Fr. Louis Paulussen, S.J., one of her Jesuit partners in the CLC
mission. The texts disclose how deeply formed she was in the Ignatian tradition. They also point out the focus and the challenge of lay formation in that tradition.

Eileen Burke-Sullivan

From “Walking the Road with Mary”

<extract>

The road gradually opened out . . . the road taken by the Savior of the world; the road taken by the Word of God. The road of his humanity; a humanity made possible by love and lived from the soil of poverty and self-donation, the soil uniquely capable of making it fertile. . . .

You saw him take that road, Mary, and you took it with Him. Each of its stages became a stage of your own road, to the point of blending yours completely with his. You were the first to walk after him, first to understand the way of God, first to utter the yes of a saved humanity. . . .

You, Our Lady of all times and all moments, you make it your task to prepare and guide, to alert and strengthen us, so that all will hear the call. You desire that all will advance toward your Son and work for the coming of his Reign. But above all, each person is able to find in you the example of genuine participation in the liberation of humanity to the extent we desire to do so.

Doesn’t our desire to be faithful to the CLC way of life bring us, in a privileged way, toward Mary? “We venerate the Mother of God in a special way, and we trust in her intercession to fulfill our vocation. . . .”

To go with Mary is to follow the direction of her life: a simple lifestyle lived in solidarity with the poor and oppressed; a life docile to the Spirit, who molds it until it becomes like her Son’s. Our service, our availability for others, is the sharing of efforts to become open channels for the gospel message. A plural reality: the CLC members scattered in the various countries of the world each in his or her own mission becomes one, identical vocation shared and binding our community together. Together, we have been called. Together, we must respond. And we entrust the togetherness of our worldwide community to
her intercession. . . “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me.”

From “Forming Free Men and Women”

The General Principles provided us with a written description of the CLC way of life. But how were we to encourage the progress of groups toward real community? There were no easy answers to any of these questions. We felt—and events confirmed this—that not every kind of formation would lead to an experience of the CLC way of life. . . . The real turning point was 1973, when the first international session on formation was held in Villa Cavalletti, outside Rome, and followed by the Augsburg Assembly. . . 105 members of Christian Life Community, coming from 39 countries, registered for the 15 day session! Clearly, the proposed session was meeting a real need. For the first eight days, all took part in individually guided Spiritual Exercises; during the remaining week, they defined and deepened their understanding of the essential aspects of the CLC way of life. Practical teaching, perfectly integrated with the dynamics of the Exercises, would have a lasting effect on the process of growth, a process that must be encouraged within the framework of a serious commitment to CLC. . . . It would not be enough to provide “a few elements” of spirituality; rather, it was important to give access to it in full and to make clear the demands of the spiritual experience proposed by Ignatius in his Exercises. The purpose was clear: to form free men and women who would be ready to serve others and to promote the concept of “[the dignity of] every person, and the whole person.” . . . Its implementation required, and will always require, formed lay people. . . . Three years later, with the help of Fr. Paulussen, we were able to prepare for the 1976 Assembly in Manila with the theme “Poor with Christ for a better service.”

Add footnotes
4C. Short Passage from Decree 6

From Decree 6 of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, 2009 entitled: “Collaboration At the Heart of Mission”
(Note that these are the closing paragraphs of Decree 6, which primarily deals with the Society’s own work of formation toward collaboration. This decree calls attention to the special relationship that the Society of Jesus has had and continues to have with CLC – an autonomous Ignatian world community of lay persons.)

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28. We note with gratitude and joy the many autonomous associations with whom we share a spiritual bond, the fruit of which is greater and more effective service to the mission of Christ in the world. Among these, the Christian Life Community has roots that are deep in the charism and history of the Society. We wish to continue to support CLC in its journey towards ever greater apostolic effectiveness and collaboration with the Society. Likewise, other Ignatian groups, including Jesuit alumni/ae associations, various Jesuit volunteer organizations, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Eucharistic Youth Movement, and many others deserve our continued spiritual accompaniment as well as our support for their apostolic service.

29. Recommendations:
   a) We encourage the Society’s government at all levels to explore means by which more effective networking might take place among all apostolic works associated with the Society of Jesus.
   b) We encourage the Society’s government at all levels to explore with other communities of Ignatian inspiration, both religious and lay, ways to promote and support an “Ignatian Family” or “Ignatian Community” which will have a common vision of service, will promote networks of mutual support, and will foster new and closer forms of collaboration locally, regionally, and internationally.
   c) We encourage Superiors, especially Major Superiors, to seek ways to support and accompany CLC and other Ignatian inspired autonomous associations locally, regionally, and nationally.

Conclusion

30. In his day, St. Ignatius gave shelter to the homeless of Rome, cared for prostitutes, and established homes for orphans. He sought collaborators and with them established organizations and networks to continue these and many other forms of service. To respond today to the pressing needs of our complex and fragile world, many hands are surely needed.

Collaboration in mission is the way we respond to this situation: it expresses our true identity as members of the Church, the complementarity of our diverse calls to holiness, our mutual responsibility for the mission of Christ, our desire to join people of good will in the service of the human family, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is a grace given to us in this moment, one consistent with our Jesuit way of proceeding.)
This bond between the Society and the individual “is by its nature spiritual and apostolic, not legal.” Peter-Hans KOLVENBACH S.I., “Sobre la ‘vinculación jurídica’ de los laicos a la Compañía” (17 March 1999), AR 22 (1996-2002) 530-533.

Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Vita Consecrata, 12.

1 Cor 12:12 ff.
Meeting 5: General Principle 4 – Charism
Preparatory Worksheet

Part I
Focus: Introduction on Charisms in general
As you prepare for Meeting Five, you are asked to reflect carefully on the meaning and function of a Charism – or gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church at large, to particular members of the Church or to a specific member of the Church – always for the sake of the mission of the Church.

All Christian Charisms are given to build up the strength and universality of the whole Church’s MISSION. In other words charisms empower certain persons or groups to become prophetic witnesses to some specific aspect of the mission of Jesus Christ that all Christians have responsibility for but may not have the gifts to accomplish. So that the mission is carried out by the (whole) Church, certain gifts, talents, abilities, desire, education, formation, training, skills etc. are given to specific persons or groups. As such, all Charisms belong to the whole Church, and those who are given them as powers are accountable to the whole Church for exercising them to the service of the mission of the Church.

The Charism(s) of CLC are recognized by the Universal Church from the 16th Century to the present under numerous popes. Most recently, the Charisms were recognized by Pope John Paul II in 1990 in the revised text of the General Principles.

Scripture texts for prayer and reflection: 1 Cor 12; 1 Thess 5.3-21

Questions for reflection:

- As you read and pray about the nature of charisms in the Church what do you think are your own strongest charisms? What gifts of a spiritual/intellectual/interpersonal nature have you been given to help proclaim the Kingdom of God?
- Have you ever spent time discerning your charisms and how God might want them used for the sake of the Kingdom? – (perhaps in a time of retreat, mission, extended prayer over job or career, prior to marriage or other commitment etc.) What was this like? What consolations or desolations came upon you during such a time of reflection?

Part II  Focus: General Introduction to CLC Charism:
General Principle 4 is the first of six General Principles under the heading of Our Charism in the General Principles. These six General Principles identify the core gifts of the Spirit to CLC and through CLC to the larger Church. General Principles 4 – 9 describe the specific dimensions of the CLC charism as affirmed by the Universal Church. You will be studying these principles one-at-a-time, but keep them “in mind” as a unity as you work with each number.
4. A way of life or specific vocation to follow Christ in the world (as lay persons) in a simple life style that seeks to bring God’s Kingdom to fruition here and now especially for the poor
5. Ignatian wisdom of spiritual exercises and discernment
6. Intimately connected to the Catholic Church
7. Lived in community – local, national and world
8. Essentially apostolic – service to the Church and world in the world both personally and communally
9. Inspired in a special way by Mary’s self-donation in her fiat at the annunciation

Scripture Texts: Mark 3.31-35; John 6. 65-71

Supportive materials: The CLC Charism. This is shared so you are aware it exists. Consider reading the forward and glancing at the contents.

Question for reflection:
- Do you see how each of these paragraphs of the General Principles of CLC can be understood as a group or community “Charism”?

Part III
Focus: General Principle 4: A Way of Life for persons in the world

Scripture texts: 1 Tim 1.12-17; 1 Peter 2. 4-10; Luke 5.27-28; Mark 10.17-2

General Principle 4
Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church.

We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation.

We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple life style, which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them.

To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we assemble people in community who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism.
We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live.

Questions for Reflection:
- Which of the Scripture passages did you feel most drawn to pray with? Why? Were you distracted from praying with any of them? Did you make time to repeat any of the texts in prayer? What emerged from your repetition?
- As you reflect on each paragraph of General Principle 4 what stands out for you as inviting, challenging, exciting, or encouraging?
- As you reflect, what stands out as “confirming” your own sense of call or the charisms you have been given?
- Does anything in the text frighten you or annoy you?
- What feelings do you have as you reflect on practically living out the statements in General Principle 4?
Meeting 6: General Principle 5 – Ignatian Spirituality (the Spiritual Exercises)

As you prepare for Meeting Six, you are asked to keep in mind your reflection on charisms in relationship to a group or community within the larger Church. What is it that God asks of CLC to commit ourselves to in order to receive and exercise the Charism or Gift of Ignatian Spirituality?

Focus: Paragraph 5 of the General Principles

The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times.

Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.

Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life.

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

Supplemental readings for reflection:  
6A – from *The Ignatian Tradition*  
6B – from *The CLC Charism*

Scripture texts for prayer and reflection: Philippians 2. 5-11; Luke 1.26-38

Questions for reflection and possible sharing:

As you read and reflect on General Principle 5:
- What stands out for you as inviting, challenging, exciting, or encouraging?
- What stands out as “confirming” your own sense of call or the charisms you have been given?
- Does anything in the text frighten you or annoy you?
- What feelings do you have as you reflect on practically living out the statements in General Principle 5?

As you read the supplemental readings and reflect on Ignatian Spirituality:
• How do you understand the term spirituality?
• What element(s) of Ignatian Spirituality which you have become familiar with appeal especially to you and to your way of being in relationship with God?
• What element(s) that you are familiar with are uncomfortable or don’t seem to help you deepen your spiritual journey?
• What do the events of our times have to do with your own spiritual journey? Can you name specific events that you are convinced have brought you spiritually to the place where you now are?
• What does Ignatian Spirituality look like in the concrete situation(s) of your personal life?
• What questions do you have about this spirituality?
Principles of Ignatian Spirituality

We have rehearsed the story of Ignatius’ life as the immediate source of the Ignatian tradition. But his story by itself does not comprise the complete matrix from which this “way” of living the Christian Gospel emerges. The path of only one person, however laudable, remains simply that if others cannot understand the path and imitate it. As his life story illuminates, almost immediately after his conversion experience Ignatius realized that the graces he received, as well as his struggles to respond to them, were similar to those of others who engaged similar forms of prayer and ascetic practices with generosity and attention.

Ignatius not only guided his companions in his Spiritual Exercises, he expected his companions to share, from their own experience, this gift with others. In some cases his companions seemed to understand the dynamic and the “theory” of the process better than Ignatius did. Gradually the guiding book was edited and redacted to include the wisdom and experiences of those other first companions. While there are certain fundamental insights that are drawn from Ignatius himself, the spirituality that emerges from his way is enriched, more deeply understood, and handed on through the lived experience of many others in various languages and cultures, in places as far-flung as Portugal, India, Russia, South Africa, the missions of South America, and the city of Rome. The movement grew through the ensuing five centuries of men and women, religious, clergy, and laity living this tradition. It continues to develop today.

Therefore, Ignatian spirituality can be understood as a matrix of core principles. These principles manifest in specific behaviors and form a graced dynamic of synergistically interactive coordinates that shape both persons and communities of persons into apostolic witnesses of God’s Trinitarian presence in history. We identify and briefly describe eight such core principles.

1. God’s a priori love. The foundation of all Ignatian Spirituality is the felt knowledge (described by the Spanish verb sentire) of God’s a priori love. This is not simply an ideological assent to an assertion that God loves, but is a deeply received psychological knowing, grounded in a graced (i.e. given) experience. A human person cannot confect or pretend the experience which is fundamentally transformative. All Christian spirituality presumes this love, but for Ignatius it became manifest for each person in a recognizable sensibility within each one who receives it and responds to it. For Ignatius this experiential knowing, both intellectual and affective, touches the core of human desire and provides the necessary energy for generous response. This experience of the a priori love of God forms the grace of the “First Principle and Foundation” of the Exercises and of the whole spiritual life for two reasons. First, in its most explicit sense, all Christian spirituality flows from God’s first act of creating and redeeming each person. Second, a person’s experience of that love undercuts the power of self-loathing, the
negative effects of human rejection, and the human tendency to fear death and a myriad of other perceived threats. This experience of a priori love locates a person in right relationship to the sovereignty of God.

This grace provides foundation in a second sense because it establishes an experiential “touchstone” in the memory of the disciple from which discernment of spirits can proceed. If the retreatant can remember the power of the feeling of God’s love for her, that knowledge continues to feed her deepest and truest desires. Further, it clarifies how God’s grace operates identifiably within this specific human subject. This sensibility to God’s presence and love becomes the affective and intellectual foundation for future discernment of spirits.

In most cases the profound experience of being loved by God opens an exercitant (one who is in the process of making the Spiritual Exercises or who, by extension, is living out Ignatian spirituality) to receive the graces of the First Week: the subject’s knowledge of self as both sinner and loved. It is this knowledge of God’s love while one is far off and in sin (Eph 2.11-13) that establishes the possibility for a unique call. Finally this grace serves to provide the logical necessity both of responding to such overwhelming love by loving God, and fueling the subject’s humble service – about which more is said below.

2. God’s unique operation in and with each person. The experiential knowing of God’s love continues to operate uniquely with each person to lead him to his fullest development as a human person. Ignatius stated that he experienced God working directly in his mind and heart as a school master leads a student. This direct and immediate activity of God grounds the sensibility of different gifts and vocations that is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. No “one size fits all.” No spiritual or ascetical practice can be prescribed universally. Those guiding the Exercises are instructed in a series of twenty annotations at the very beginning of the book to adapt the process of growth to the specific needs, impedances, and gifts of each person they direct. Throughout the process this personalization continues with various notes, rules, suggestions and recommendations all directed toward helping the director understand that the person she is guiding is unique before God. Some will move faster than others. Each will desire and request graces unique to her need, mission, and growth. Some will find profit in one meditation or contemplation over another. In every case God’s grace is uniquely given but with certain common manifestations of thought and feeling that allow the director to recognize and therefore guide the route of the path being followed by the disciple.

3. To be fully human requires spiritual freedom. God’s Spirit labors within the concreteness of human lives and historical moments to call every person into God’s reign of mercy and justice. However, no one can answer the call to God’s reign unless he or she achieves spiritual freedom, that is, the capacity to recognize and accept God’s call to fuller humanity. Spiritual freedom always entails interior deliverance and often includes some kind of external liberation. It is characterized by courage in the face of terror, hope in the face of despair, wisdom in the face of ignorance or confusion, and joy in the face of unbearable grief.
Spiritual freedom intellectually recognizes the truth and prompts the will to choose the greater good in various circumstances of life and ministry. Ignatius recognized that spiritual freedom is the characteristic of the human as imago Dei, as one made in God’s image. It is the freedom to master one’s own fears and weaknesses even as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Ultimately it is the freedom that springs from being loved and it empowers one to love without compulsion or need. Such freedom is the goal of Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises.

Freedom reaches fruition in each human heart through active cooperation with its impelling movements. Both the Old and New Testaments witness to the liberating will of God and its requirement of a response: the commitment to fight or to labor in the manner of God’s compassion and justice. Failure to cooperate with the freedom that God wins for us ensures freedom’s loss and augers an even greater enslavement.

4. Human life comes to fruition through obedience to God’s will. Because of the great influence of Ludolph’s Life of Christ during his recovery after Pamplona as well as his subsequent awareness of the conversion of own will, the dominant Christian virtue for Ignatius was obedience to the will of the Father. Such obedience springs from gratitude. It flowers as the empowerment of spiritual freedom. It spreads out seeking the ultimate good of others. One who genuinely loves cannot will to do the beloved harm. Human logic would point out that with God there can be no mistake about knowing what is the best good for the beloved. So the issue lies in absolutely trusting that there is a God who does know all and loves each of us singularly. This trust is prior to knowing and flourishes even when our human knowledge comes up short. This trust is a grace given to the one who asks with deep desire and a willingness to listen, to obey.

5. The “enemy of human life” works to block our freedom, disrupt our obedience, and undermine our humanity. Spiritual freedom, which enables us to be authentically human, is diminished and can even be destroyed by acquiescing to the power of “the enemy” of human life. For Ignatius, “the enemy” is any force or power, whether personal or corporate, that works within persons, cultures, or nature to diminish the way of mercy, justice, and compassion.

Human sin gives rise to a history marred by violence, depravity, and weakness. Everyone born into that history faces the threat of becoming enslaved to sin’s interior and exterior demands. The book of Genesis provides a biblical reflection on the general experience that we cannot choose what is good for us because we cannot even perceive clearly what is good. Even when we can perceive it, we often lack the will or the courage to do it. And even when we both perceive it and courageously act to accomplish it, we may well act from disordered motivations that undermine the outcome. Our perceptions are dulled, our desires are distorted, and our intentions corrupted. This is our condition without grace.

Despite this dark reality of human brokenness and sin, God’s power is always greater than any capacity of “the enemy” to harm the created order, for our real enemies are not divine powers but creatures who have failed to love God. With the assistance of God’s Spirit the enemy is overcome. This is true in
the case of external forces enslaving whole populations or interior addictions driving one person to self-destruction. With our cooperation, God’s Spirit restores spiritual freedom and often material freedom.

6. Finding God in all things. The way of Ignatius is essentially incarnational. Ignatius was clearly a man who read the signs of his times and responded to the world he was born into. He did so with the best tools he could find or forge. Ignatius did not look for God to work magic on the world. He never sought a deus ex machina. But he did find the presence of God manifest in every aspect of the created order. Too often in the Catholic experience, spirituality has been thought of as doing something pious, praying a rosary or going to mass. Ignatian spirituality does not deny the importance of intentional prayer activities, but it is more essentially about recognizing the presence and the power of God in absolutely everything and every activity done for love. All the created order is overflowing with the divine existence. So the story is remembered of Ignatius going out each night on a balcony at the Roman College and doffing his hat in reverence to the God who created the stars. He knew that all of creation was holy.

In a particular way, Ignatius wanted those who followed him to understand that God is to be found in places where we are least comfortable looking for him. In his human life, Jesus faced the darkest dimensions of human evil and submitted willingly to its power in order that God’s reign might be unleashed and made manifest in the world. Becoming a true companion of Jesus requires following him even when the way leads to crosses large and small. One might find God’s presence in the decision of a superior who does not understand his gifts, talents, or vision; one finds God in suffering and illness as much as in good health; one encounters God in disappointments as much as in success. One finds God even in the failure of God’s own project. All that is human, all that springs from the body, mind, and spirit, springs from God and for God.

God is not “more” present in a church than a courtroom, a monastery than an operating room, but God is found differently in each different human context. God is present in and to every aspect of our human living and loving. In this spiritual tradition one can discover God’s presence in the groans of a dying old man as in the whispered prayers of the young novice. There is nothing inherently holier in spending time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament than there is in spending time teaching algebra to high school sophomores. There is nothing inherently more graceed about saying the rosary than there is about fixing supper for one’s husband and children. Studying theology is not necessarily holier than working as a laborer, clerk, or executive. God is fully present in every molecule of the universe. The challenge is to find God where God is and not where we think God ought to be. Ignatian spirituality teaches that the essence of the spiritual life entails the moment-by-moment search for God’s desires throughout the course of one’s own life.

7. An apostolic focus. Generally for those called by God to Ignatian spirituality, action in the world on behalf of God’s reign, according to one’s vocation and one’s talents, is imperative. What Ignatius called the desire to “help souls” was the ground for an apostolic approach to the world beyond any cloister or church building. In European religious practice of the sixteenth century this was unusual for vowed religious communities. Even lay organizations were often pious prayer societies. Today such apostolic
focus represents a major theme for religious life due, in large part, to Ignatius’ and his companions’ pioneering work. As early as the twelfth century, Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman had seen the necessity for a ministry of preaching, hearing confessions, and responding to human needs in the highways and byways of medieval Europe beyond the convent and cloister. Even so their rules called for extended and established times for prayer, often sung in choir as generations of monks had done before them.

Ignatius did not replicate monastic practice when he and his companions determined to form a religious community. They saw themselves called above all to direct service of the gospel in the streets of cities where humanity dwells in poverty, ignorance, and often violence. If one is faithful, attentive, and generous in redressing the greatest or most demanding needs to which he is sent, the labor itself, whether spiritual, material, intellectual, or social, and the relationships which arise from such service, provide both an encounter with the risen Lord and any necessary penance and self abnegation. Formal prayer is limited to short periods of meditation each day, regular participation in Eucharist and reconciliation, and daily times of self-examination to discern whether one is following the light of consolation from God or desolation from darker impulses. This discerning examination focuses not only on interior movements of formal prayer but especially on the movements and impulses which occur during and within the daily activities of apostolic life and all human interactions. Holiness comes from an intimacy with God through partnership with Jesus in obediently discerned service of others.

8. Companionship in and with Christ. Despite some historic accusations that followers of Ignatius are “lone rangers,” in the work of spreading the Gospel an important sensibility of Ignatian spirituality is the necessity for companionship in prayer, in service, in the struggle for justice, in the works of mercy, indeed in all aspects of life. The first companion is Jesus Christ, but Jesus’ closest companions become guides, friends, and partners in the mission. The Spiritual Exercises are to be undertaken under the guidance of a spiritual companion. In the meditation on the two standards from the second week the retreatant recognizes the deep friendship among the servants of the Lord that characterizes those who rally under the standard of Christ. The word “companion” comes from the Spanish verb “to [have] bread with” and with it we are reminded that much of Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation and implementation of the reign of God in the world comes through the mediation of table fellowship. Companions are those who will not only walk the extra mile with you, but labor in the hot sun through the middle of the day and have a cold beer and hear your stories around the fire; or teach all day in the next classroom and then share a hot cup of tea with tales of the [mis]adventures of the mission. Companionship is also an extension of the great love shared with those serving the same Lord in a project far away in another land, culture and language – the sense that those who follow this pattern of Gospel life are “ours.”

Ignatian Practices

In addition to the matrix of core principles that distinguish Ignatian spirituality, Ignatius and his first companions developed a collection of basic practices which help to realize in each person’s life the essential principles described above. These practices are not rigid; nor are they absolute for every person who wants to live the Gospel in this way. They are better seen as a set of tools that can be effectively employed to open the heart, mind and will of the Christian to receive God’s direction,
become interiorly free and willing to be sent to the most effective labor of the God’s reign. We focus here on five basic practices that give shape to Ignatian spirituality.

1. Imaginative prayer. Methods of prayer that progressively lead to the discovery of, and eventual cooperation with, God’s actions within each person provide the driving energy of Ignatian spirituality. The forms of prayer Ignatius recommended for those undergoing the Spiritual Exercises are ordinarily incarnational or imagistic. These methods involve the whole range of intellectual capacities: memory, imagination, intuition, ability to reflect and logical reasoning. They also engage the entire physical capacity to experience reality through the senses and the use of various postures in order to embody praise, sorrow, wonder or need.

In the specific prayer called the “application of the senses,” Ignatius instructs directors of the Exercises to encourage their exercitants to “see with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Christ our Lord preached” (SpEx # 91), “to see the different persons, first, those on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and in manner of acting. . . see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty. . . see our Lady and the angel saluting her,” (SpEx # 106). Likewise, he bids one “to listen to what the persons on the face of the earth say, that is how they speak to one another, swear and blaspheme. . . also hear what the Divine Persons say. . . listen to what the angel and our lady say” (SpEx # 107). Most significantly, he urges the retreatant not only to see and hear but to put him- or herself in the story. Thus, in the contemplation on the nativity, after seeing all the persons in the story, the exercitant is encouraged to consider him- or herself “a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon [the Holy Family], contemplate them, and serve them in their needs with all possible homage and reverence” (SpEx # 114). This application of the senses requires the person to bring the affections into focus: the desires, fears, and hopes for the future. Finally, Ignatian prayer calls for the willful responsibility to choose among multiple options that surface.

All of the aspects of the human person are intentionally and deliberately drawn into prayer through the various methods that build upon one another. Through brief but dynamic daily prayer the Ignatian person engages in a generous, lifetime effort to hear and obey God’s will, gradually becoming an ever freer and more intimate participant in the Christ life.

2. Rules for discernment. Ignatius found both in his own experience and in the men and women that he guided spiritually that all were inclined toward or away from God by various exterior coercions, and, more forcefully by inner compulsions, which he described as known or unknown human desires. Beyond basic human needs that allow us to survive, we have an array of wants or desires that are triggered by each person’s hope for a better human existence. Questions such as “What do I really want? Who do I want to become? Who do I want to be in relationship with? What do I want to have? How do I want to behave? What is truly meaningful or life-giving for me?” drive human choosing in a way that is not comparable in the rest of the animal kingdom. Responding to these and similar questions establishes a fabric of human existence that is either life-giving or death-dealing for oneself and sometimes for
others. Choosing among incompatible desires is often the most difficult human task, but failure to choose can leave a person paralyzed in inaction.

Ignatius called “consolation” those intellectual insights, emotional impulses, invitations, or pulls that led him to love God more deeply and to desire whatever God desires. Conversely he named “spiritual desolation” the various forms of intellectual darkness that led him to deny the will of God. Possessing wealth, power, security, or any material thing leads a human to being possessed and therefore enslaved, so these impulses he defined as desolation. He also recognized ripe occasions for desolation in human fears of death, change, or uncertainty because such fears often paralyze the human spirit.

Based on his own experiences with these and other drives, desires, and impulses Ignatius found he was able to “help souls” find their true inner freedom by guiding each one to trust God. God works for the radical good of each human life and guides each person within the complex interaction of ideas, emotions, and desires that surface in her life. To this end, Ignatius developed a broad set of very practical “rules” for determining whether inner movements or impulses come from God (spiritual consolations) or the enemy (spiritual desolation). Cooperating with consolation and working against desolation becomes the task of the spiritual journey into God. Necessarily the rules deal with intellectual processes, emotional experiences, willed decisions and various actions or behaviors, but at the heart of all discernment is to discover one’s deepest and truest desires and the goal(s) they point to. In a reasonably healthy human person such desires are ordered toward one’s authentic good – and thus come from and lead toward God.

Generally, Ignatius’ rules follow the principle that as one draws closer toward God the enemy works harder to block the graced movement, so the task of discernment becomes more complex. His rules, therefore, are ordered to the stage of the spiritual journey where one actually is located. Furthermore, Ignatius was committed to staying within the ecclesial tradition. He points to the importance of weighing one’s personal wisdom against the long practice and insight of the apostolic community of faith even when interpreting that tradition within a new period of human growth. God’s Spirit will not act in a manner contrary to the teaching and practice of Jesus as witnessed by the church. He also recognized that choices build one upon another. A Spirit-led choice will not undermine or destroy a previously discerned decision that established a set of committed relationships.

An important experience in Ignatius’ life illustrated this insight. After his brushes with the Inquisition in Spain he determined that he needed to be ordained a priest in order to effectively help souls. Further, he had been scandalized often enough by mediocre or poor priests who did great harm to God’s people from ignorance of the scriptural, doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual aspects of the tradition. Ignatius saw that, among other things effective priests needed to be well-educated. For this reason he entered a long process of education from elementary Latin to a Masters of Arts in Theology. While he pursued his studies, Ignatius discovered that he had to set aside some of the time given to prayer and even his charitable work to accomplish his goal. He experienced what appeared to be powerful consolations that kept him locked in delightful prayer for hours during the night. However, attending to these “consolations” made it difficult to study or sleep enough to be a competent student. He discerned that the experiences that seemed like consolations from God were in fact leading him
away from the apostolic work that God called him to accomplish. This kind of “false consolation” was not new to him, but it confirmed for him that a seeming good could be the counterfeit of the enemy. Determining what was graced or disgraced in such times could not be determined solely by the feelings or thoughts that accompanied them, but decisions had to be seen in relationship to the demands of rightly discerned decisions already made. The capacity to discover whether a seeming consolation is in fact that or a movement toward less good or a disguised evil is a gift of God that is urgently necessary for those who have responded to the call of Christ to greater service. Ignatius’ more advanced rules indicate that the only way to discover the truth of whether a desire is from God is to prayerfully determine the context of its coming, the goal toward which it seems to lead, and the relationship it has to other decisions. A discerner usually does this best in dialogue with a trained guide who holds no vested interest in the outcome.

3. Agere contra – practice working against the enemy. When one following the Ignatian way discovers any manifestation of the enemy blocking her path toward companionship with Jesus, she is instructed to ask for the specific grace needed to counter this power. It may be a grace of patience when the world seems to move too slowly, the grace of courage in the face of fear, or the grace of compassion to deal well with a difficult co-worker. One is instructed to name – as a desire to be prayed for – whatever specific grace one needs in a given situation. Furthermore, the person asking for this grace is instructed to act confidently as if the grace is already given. This works against the power of desolation. Agere contra in the face of desolation is a generous act of human cooperation that develops strength of will. By practicing it the discerning person works to concretize in his own life the power of God’s grace. He develops a kind of “spiritual muscle” that corresponds to the language of “spiritual exercises.”

4. Examen. Accompanying the practice of prayer for a specific desire, Ignatius encouraged one who is seeking to grow in the spiritual life to practice a review of a specified period of time (one’s prayer time, or the morning of work, or the whole day) to discover whether the grace desired was granted, whether one practiced agere contra successfully, and to ascertain the spirits that moved one to various decisions and actions. This practice of examen becomes established as a habit while a person makes the Exercises. Afterward she will continue the practice each day providing the foundation for ongoing, daily discernment.

After participation in the Eucharist, Ignatius taught that the examen was the most important spiritual practice in the life of a Jesuit. If his mission required him to abandon virtually all other spiritual habits he must not give up the practice of daily examen; those few moments allow him to notice and face the hidden and unbidden impulses that subtly rule human choice if left unexamined. Even a serious disciple of Jesus, if he neglects to examine the movements of interior spirits, often falls prey to the manipulations of the enemy.

5. Magnanimity: the magis and humility. The virtue of generosity is witnessed to the degree that the exercitant remains faithful to prayer, open to the director’s guidance, steady in the practice of agere contra, generous in forgiving the wrongs of others, and passionate about laboring under with Jesus and under his standard. Ignatius insists that one who begins the Exercises must be generous in these ways so
that he can receive from God gifts in greater abundance. Beyond generosity, however, is the virtue of magnanimity or “greatness of heart” that causes a person to be the first to volunteer for the hardest job – not because one is masochistic, or wants appreciation – but because one loves God and God’s work needs doing. In his forgiveness of the prodigal son the father in Jesus’ famous parable displays magnanimity. Likewise, the magnanimous include those who attend to the dispossessed at the margins of society and help them find ways to live. A variety of evangelical examples – giving your coat to one who asks for a shirt, walking the extra mile, caring for the injured neighbor on the road, and so on – witness to what Ignatius calls magnanimity.

Such largeness of spirit is rooted in the practice of humility which is the fruit of gratitude. Like the word “love” in English, the word humility can have many meanings or shades of meaning. Humility within the Spiritual Exercises describes the grace of living the absolute truth that God is God and that I am not God for myself or anyone else. Further, my whole existence flows from God’s generosity, so I owe God everything. I recognize that all I am and all I have is gift of God. Gratitude flows inherently from this experience of God’s boundless generosity.

The capstone of the Spiritual Exercises is a contemplation to attain love for God. The meditation is constructed so as to arouse heartfelt gratitude in the exercitant. From gratitude flows humility. From humility flows increased generosity that explodes into magnanimity so profound, that she prays, “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty; my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess” [SpEx #234.]

The exercitant asks that for the rest of his life he will understand that his truest and most glorious existence is to be a loyal servant of God. No rank or wealth or material measure in this life can change these simple “facts” about human existence. Such graced humility grants the recipient the desire to serve God’s reign in the most modest, most dangerous, or most difficult of tasks and at whatever cost might be required. Thus the most humble of all has the greatest and truest heart.

From this spirit of magnanimous love, the follower of the Ignatian tradition will seek to accomplish the most difficult or least sought after work, that will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number, but in a manner that gives glory to God not self. The term “magis” is applied to this sensibility – to seek the greater glory of God by doing the task no one else wants but that has to be done for the good of many or of all. Finally a magnanimous person does what he does for love alone without counting the cost or seeking redress for his losses or his suffering.

In summary, one can approach Ignatian spirituality both by tracing its emergence in the graced experiences of Ignatius of Loyola and by identifying the principles and practices at work when one adopts this way of Christian life. The principles and practices described above are all drawn from the totality of the Christian life, but the interweaving of these coordinates into a specific “spiritual DNA” causes the one who chooses to be shaped by them (1) to seek the greater glory of God (2) through companionship with Jesus and (3) always guided by the discerned Spirit of God; (4) to seek that greater glory (5) in the reality of this historical moment (6) in this particular place (7) within the whole created
world. All of this suggests that while the Ignatian tradition attends to the traditional spiritual themes of purgation, illumination, and union, it is best approached as a mysticism of service.

Insert footnote
6B. From the CLC Charism

3. The specific CLC vocation

17. The CLC vocation makes the universal Christian vocation specific by means of three principal characteristics:

3.1. An Ignatian vocation

18. The charism and spirituality of CLC are Ignatian. Thus, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are both the specific source of this charism and the characteristic instrument of CLC spirituality.

19. The General Principles emphasise the Ignatian character of CLC by using phrases throughout the text, which refer to the experience of The Exercises or to the Ignatian charism. They emphasise the central role of Jesus Christ. Their explicit references to the Ignatian origins of the CLC way of proceeding and to the importance of apostolic discernment in opening oneself to the most urgent and universal calls of the Lord make it clear that discernment is to become the normal way of making decisions.

20. The CLC way of life is shaped by the features of Ignatian Christology: austere and simple, in solidarity with the poor and the outcasts of society, integrating contemplation and action, in all things living lives of love and service within the Church, always in a spirit of discernment. This Ignatian Christology springs from the contemplation of the Incarnation where the mission of Jesus is revealed. It springs forth from contemplating Him who is sent by the Father to save the world; who personally chooses and calls those He wants to collaborate with Him from among those who recognize themselves as being weak and sinners. It arises from following Jesus the Eternal King who emptied Himself in order to live a life of poverty and humiliation, in union with Him in his passion and resurrection, when the strength of the Spirit forms the Church as the Body of Christ.

21. Ignatian Spirituality also explains the Marian character of the CLC charism. The role of Mary in the Community is, in effect, the same role that she has in the Exercises and in the spiritual experience of Ignatius. The mother of Jesus is constantly present at the side of her Son, a mediator as well as an inspiration, and a model of response to His call and to working with Him in His mission.

22. In the light of the founding experience of the Exercises, the CLC has as its vision the integration of faith and life in every dimension: personal, social, professional, political and ecclesial.

23. The spirituality of the Exercises strengthens the distinctive character of this Christian vocation.

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1 “Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens us and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life.” (GP 5)

2 Philippians 2:7
The Ignatian *magis* sets the style of our response to the universal call to holiness, seeking the "greater glory of God", by following Jesus Christ more closely through "offerings of greater worth and importance".

Christ, moreover, reveals Himself in Ignatian Spirituality as "a man for others", and to follow Him is to put ourselves at the service of our brothers and sisters: a distinctly *apostolic* way of understanding the Reign of God. CLC members are Christians who "want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him in the building of the Kingdom".

Finally, the Exercises, and hence our spirituality, underline the *ecclesial character* of apostolic service. In as much as it is a mission received from Christ, it is mediated through the Church. "Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues His mission of salvation".

The Ignatian character of CLC and its members finds expression in the regular practice of the Ignatian way of prayer, examen, evaluation and apostolic discernment (personal as well as communal), and by frequent participation in the sacraments.

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3 GP 4.

4 SpEx 97, 104, etc.

5 GP 4.

6 GP 6.

7 The Ignatian heritage can be likened to a great tree planted in the garden of the Church. The principal branch of the tree is undoubtedly the Society of Jesus, but *Ignatian* is not a synonym for *Jesuit*. The spirituality of the Exercises nourishes other religious and lay groups as well, each of which expresses in its own way this or that character of the Ignatian charism. It is among these groups that a special place has to be given to the Marian Congregations, the predecessors of the CLC.
Meeting 7: General Principle 6 – CLC and the Church

General Principle 6
Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues his mission of salvation. By making ourselves sensitive to the signs of the times and the movements of the Spirit, we will be better able to encounter Christ in all persons and in all situations. Sharing the riches of membership of the Church, we participate in the liturgy, meditate upon the Scriptures, and learn, teach and promote Christian doctrine.

We work together with the hierarchy and other ecclesial leaders, motivated by a common concern for the problems and progress of all people and open to the situations in which the Church finds itself today.

This sense of the Church impels us to creative and concrete collaboration for the work of advancing the reign of God on earth, and includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand.

Scripture texts for prayer and reflection: Luke 12.54-56; Mt 16. 1-4; Mt 16.13-20

Supplemental readings for reflection:
7A - excerpts from The CLC Charism
7B - excerpts from The Catechism of the Catholic Church

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

1. What feelings and thoughts does this General Principle paragraph evoke for you? Are you enthusiastic about it or does it have more negative connotations?
2. A commonly quoted theological comment these days is “It’s not that the Church has a mission, but the Mission (of God) has a Church (to implement it).” Does this open a different way to see how God calls the faith community of the Ekklesia (Church) to cooperate with Jesus in bringing about the Reign of God “on earth as it is in heaven”?
3. When you think of the term “church” what is the first image that comes to mind? Why?
4. If you could change that image what would you want your first image of Church to be?
5. What are some of the common problems and progress of all peoples that you associate with the work of both the bishops and people of the Church?
6. Often younger Christians will say that they are “spiritual but not religious” meaning that they have some sense of God or of a greater presence in life, but they don’t want to be
bothered with a Church. How does Christian spirituality get known and practiced without a Church?

6. CLC is rooted in Ignatian spirituality – how would this vision of the world be spread if there were not practitioners? How do we practice Gospel values without being in deep bonds of relationship? Could CLC exist without the larger structure of the Catholic Church? Why or why not?

7. Identify some of the “signs of the times” that the Church and CLC are called upon to address.
**7A: Excerpts from *The CLC Charism***

**4.1. The basis of the CLC's ecclesial character**

158. CLC was born and is growing within the Church, and draws from the Church its identity and its universality. This vital relationship with the Church is founded on union with Christ Himself. Union with Christ leads to *union with the Church where Christ here and now continues His mission of salvation*.\(^8\)

159. The CLC is, at every level, at the service of the people of God. By its very existence within the Church, CLC contributes to the promotion of:

\* a Church where one finds communion within a diversity of charisms and ministries, and a shared responsibility for the fulfilment of Christ's mission;

\* a Church which is not an end in itself, but "*receives a mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the reign of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom.*"\(^9\)

**4.2. The relationship of CLC with the Church**

160. **a. Fidelity to the message of Christ.**

The CLC seeks to deepen its understanding of the Gospel, by living the faith that has been passed on to us by the Apostles, interpreted and preserved by the Church and safeguarded by her magisterium.

161. **b. Participation in the life of the Church:**

The CLC does not exist in isolation from the rest of the Christian community (parish, diocese, national and universal Church). It is, on the contrary, an integral part of this community and this finds its expression:

\* in a liturgical and sacramental life, which, centred on the Eucharist, is "*a concrete experience of unity in love and action*".\(^{10}\)

\* in the ordinary life of the Church, by participating in Church activities and identifying, effectively and lovingly, with her needs and problems, and supporting her progress.

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\(^8\) GP 6.

\(^9\) Lumen Gentium 5

\(^{10}\) GP 7.
162. **c. Collaboration in the mission of the Church.**

Having received its mission in the Church and from the Church, CLC, in accordance with its directives and its pastoral priorities, brings to the people of God and their pastors the gift of its apostolic service and its rich and original charism in a spirit of discernment and shared responsibility.

163. **d. Solidarity.**

CLC seeks especially to be open, with a spirit of communion, to the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, in short, to all those who, in the Church and in the world, have the greatest need of help and sustenance: CLC is ready to share what it has with them and to integrate this attitude into its way of life.
Paragraph 1. THE CHURCH IN GOD'S PLAN

I. NAMES AND IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

751 The word "Church" (Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ek-ka-lein, to "call out of") means a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose.\(^{139}\) Ekklesia is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people.\(^{140}\) By calling itself "Church," the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly. In the Church, God is "calling together" his people from all the ends of the earth. The equivalent Greek term Kyriake, from which the English word Church and the German Kirche are derived, means "what belongs to the Lord."

752 In Christian usage, the word "church" designates the liturgical assembly,\(^{141}\) but also the local community\(^{142}\) or the whole universal community of believers.\(^{143}\) These three meanings are inseparable. "The Church" is the People that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ's Body.

Symbols of the Church

753 In Scripture, we find a host of interrelated images and figures through which Revelation speaks of the inexhaustible mystery of the Church. The images taken from the Old Testament are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body.\(^{144}\) Around this center are grouped images taken "from the life of the shepherd or from cultivation of the land, from the art of building or from family life and marriage."\(^{145}\)

754 "The Church is, accordingly, a sheepfold, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ. It is also the flock of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are unfailingly nourished and led by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and Prince of Shepherds, who gave his life for his sheep.\(^{146}\)

755 "The Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God. On that land the ancient olive tree grows whose holy roots were the prophets and in which the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about again. That land, like a choice vineyard, has been planted by the heavenly cultivator. Yet the true vine is Christ who gives life and fruitfulness
to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ, without whom we can do nothing.  

756 "Often, too, the Church is called the building of God. The Lord compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the corner-stone. On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles and from it the Church receives solidity and unity. This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God in which his family dwells; the household of God in the Spirit; the dwelling-place of God among men; and, especially, the holy temple. This temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are built into it. It is this holy city that is seen by John as it comes down out of heaven from God when the world is made anew, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband."

757 "The Church, further, which is called 'that Jerusalem which is above' and 'our mother', is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless lamb. It is she whom Christ 'loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her.' It is she whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable alliance, and whom he constantly 'nourishes and cherishes.'"

NOTES:
140 Cf. ⇒ Ex 19.
141 Cf. ⇒ 1 Cor 11:18; ⇒ 14:19, ⇒ 28, ⇒ 34, ⇒ 35.
142 Cf. ⇒ 1 Cor 1:2; ⇒ 16:1.
143 Cf. ⇒ 1 Cor 15:9; ⇒ Gal 1:13; ⇒ Phil 3:6.
144 Cf. ⇒ Eph 1:22; ⇒ Col 1:18; LG 9.
145 Lumen Gentium (LG) Doctrinal Constitution on the Church (V II) 6.
146 LG 6; Cf. ⇒ Jn 10:1-10; ⇒ Isa 40:11; ⇒ Ezek 34:11-31; ⇒ Jn 10:11; ⇒ 1 Pet 5:4;
⇒ Jn 10:11-16.
147 LG 6; Cf. 1 Cor 39; ⇒ Rom 11:13-26; ⇒ Mt 21:32-43 and parallels; ⇒ Isa 51-7;
⇒ Jn 15:1-5.
148 LG 6; Cf. ⇒ 1 Cor 3:9; ⇒ Mt 21:42 and parallels; ⇒ Acts 4:11; ⇒ 1 Pet 2:7; ⇒ PS 118:22; ⇒ 1 Cor 3:11; ⇒ 1 Tim 3:15; ⇒ Eph 2:19-22; ⇒ Rev 21:3; ⇒ 1 Pet 2:5; ⇒ Rev 21:1-2.
Meeting 8: General Principle 7 – Bonds of Community

General Principle 7

Our gift of self finds its expression in a personal commitment to the World Community, through a freely chosen local community. Such a local community, centered in the Eucharist, is a concrete experience of unity in love and action. In fact each of our communities is a gathering of people in Christ, a cell of his mystical Body. We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother. Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will.

Scripture texts for meditation: Matthew 25.31-46; John 13.34-35; Eph 4. 1-6; Eph 4.11-16

Supplemental readings for reflection:
8A - excerpts from The CLC Charism
8B – excerpts from Guidelines for Formation in CLC (Charism II)
8C - excerpt from “The Apocalyptic Finality of Love” from Pedro Arrupe, S.J.: Essential Writings

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

1. What feelings and thoughts does this General Principle paragraph evoke for you? What stands out to you? How does this General Principle apply to your life?

2. What do you understand the basis of community relationships to be? Has your experience of community included people that you don’t “like” but still care about because they are in the community?

3. Would you consider your family of origin to be a community? Can you explain why or why not?

4. Have you encountered “anomia” in your own experience? Met someone who really wanted to do harm or who was indifferent to charity and love? What feelings does such an experience spark in you? Can you pray for people who act out of this vice? [Note: anomia is described in supplemental reading 8B]

5. Can a community survive if people practice forms of “anomia”? Why?
6. Can you describe the characteristics of community that hold you in relationship with the people you are in community with?

7. Does the demand of community in CLC frighten you? Give you hope or courage? Exhaust you?

8. What happens when someone you don’t particularly like wants to join your community or your circle of acquaintances or friends? What happens when someone you really love or like decides to leave the circle of friends or your community? Can you let him or her go?
II. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY (CLC)

125. CLC is called to be first and foremost a Christian community with a certain number of features and characteristics of its own. In order that we may understand better the distinctive features of CLC as a community, we will first briefly examine the specific process by which the community grows and matures and then, in more detail, the role it plays in the growth and maturation of its members.

A. The CLC process as a Community

126. Our biblical faith shows, that God calls not only individuals, but also sends communities on their journey as either religious or lay, like CLC.

127. Therefore, taking the Spiritual Exercises as the "specific source" of our spirituality, CLC as a group lives a history of grace similar to the journey lived by an individual. The community goes through moments of promise, of call and of moving forward with confidence and hope. It goes through periods of crisis: moments when it feels far away from God, but turns back to Him and feels welcomed. It goes through experiences of regenerating the love of God, in reconciliation and mutual acceptance, and through periods of discerning the calls of God in order to grow in becoming discerning apostolic communities.

128. It usually begins by becoming a *community of friends in the Lord*. This first goal gives direction to the group and offers the necessary basis for the community's development. So that the community may have the richness of "friends in the Lord" right from the beginning, it is important that a true experience of God is lived within it.11

129. After an initial stage when the community is full of hope, there may be moments of crises and tension, and even of collective sin. At such times, it is important that the guide help them to see and live these moments as times of growth, purification and reconciliation in and with Christ (First week of the Exercises).

130. Thanks to this experience a new desire begins to unfold in the community: to be united to Christ in his mission to the world and to direct one's life more and more in the light of Christ's choices (Second week and on of the Exercises). Contact with poverty, marginalization, and other painful

11 “In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God.” (GP 12a)
situations in our world and the frequent practice of the Spiritual Exercises, personalized and complete, if possible, will be necessary. This will be the moment for vocational discernment (for young people the election to a state of life, of profession etc... for adults a reform of life) and later on of opening oneself as a person and as a community to an ongoing permanent apostolic discernment in the following of Christ.

131. Thus the community becomes an apostolic community, made up of adults "who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of His Reign, and who have recognised Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church"; consequently, they make a Permanent Commitment to it. The members of a group will help each other to keep alive their apostolic zeal and to render the quality of service that the Church expects of them.

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

133. In the adult stage, the most important mission is normally the "family". The time dedicated to the community will be rigorously conducted. Its meetings and events are programmed to having "mission" as their purpose. The community rhythm cannot be the same as in the earlier stages, when its members were in formation (from the human, professional and Christian point of view). At this stage, imagination and flexibility are needed.

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLC COMMUNITY

1. A "lived" community

134. "To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we form communities of those who strongly desire to unite their lives completely with their Christian faith according to our charism."

135. Vocation in CLC is communal. It is lived out with the support of the community. The commitment of the individual to the World Community is expressed through a particular community, freely chosen, made up of a maximum of twelve people, generally from a similar background. Each

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12 GP 4.
13 GP 4.
14 GP 7.
15 GN 39b.
member of this community of friends in the Lord is called to accompany its members in discerning their personal vocations and lives as collaborators in the mission of Christ\textsuperscript{16}. It can be said that community is a privileged way in which CLC implements Ignatian Spirituality and apostolic service in its members' lives.\textsuperscript{17}

136. The CLC is a "gathering together in Christ, a cell of His mystical Body", which is based on faith and a common vocation, rather than on natural affinities. "We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary, as our mother."\textsuperscript{18}

137. The community itself, in so far as the group expresses unity among its members and with others, bears witness to the Good News of Christ before the world.

138. With some exceptions, the members of a group do not normally share goods in common and live under one roof. Nevertheless, CLC is a community of life, and as such is "a unity expressed in love and action"\textsuperscript{19}, because its members are engaged in:

\begin{itemize}
  \item following the same particular vocation in the Church and adopting a way of life consequent on that;\textsuperscript{20}
  \item sharing their problems, their aspirations, their plans and various aspects of their lives, and helping each other in this way to live their Christian faith fully;\textsuperscript{21}
  \item helping each other in their spiritual and material needs with a spirit of solidarity;
  \item undertaking a common mission, despite different social backgrounds, ages, characters or tasks.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{itemize}

139. The CLC process of formation entails the mutual assistance of its members towards apostolic and spiritual growth, by trying to integrate their faith with their lives. The community is able to continue the dynamics generated by the Spiritual Exercises\textsuperscript{23} so that members are better prepared for apostolic witness and service.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{16} GP 12c.
\textsuperscript{17} GP 11.
\textsuperscript{18} GP 7.
\textsuperscript{19} GP 7.
\textsuperscript{20} GP 4 and 7.
\textsuperscript{21} GP 12c.
\textsuperscript{22} GP 8.
\textsuperscript{23} GN 39a.
\textsuperscript{24} GP 4.
140. The CLC community supports the human, spiritual and apostolic development of each of its members, especially through:

- the apostolic activities undertaken by the community and its commitment to a common mission,
- the witness of the lives of the members, particularly of the adult ones,
- formation activities such as shared prayer, the general examen, communal discernment and study groups,
- the group life and teamwork help to sustain attitudes of interior freedom and openness to others, the capacity to understand and to forgive, the ability to renounce one's own desires, and a sensitivity to the needs of others and a readiness to respond.
- service to the local, regional, national and world communities.

141. The most concrete expression of this community life is its meeting which should be held each week or fortnight. Regularity is necessary for real growth in the group. At these meetings, important elements of CLC formation and activities take place, appropriate for a community that lives on mission and which is engaged in apostolic service. Group bonds are reinforced by a better knowledge of each other and by reciprocal gestures of love and service.

142. The life of the CLC is centred on the Eucharist. This is why all its members participate periodically in the celebration of Eucharist together, expressing sacramentally that intimate communion, which is based on Christ and on the Church.

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25 GN 39b.
26 GN 40.
8B. Excerpts from Guidelines for CLC Formation (Charism II)

2.2 Community Dimension

Being and Being with Others

1. We come together in small communities or groups to live out fraternal communion with God and to help each other to grow in our own vocation and mission.\(^{27}\) The invitation to live in Community, which reflects the progress of its members, their steps forward and their steps backward, derives from Biblical tradition.

2. Our participation in community life is marked by its quality and fraternising with others\(^{28}\), where we discretely and openly share the life experiences of the members. We focus on the discernment of our personal and community life ‘projects’: we are discerning communities.

3. The formation, which is lived and offered as spiritual guidance in the Community, has as its ultimate aim a gradual integration into the particular group, into the National Community, into the World Community and into the Church. At the appropriate times we take on temporary and permanent commitments as a natural step in our identification with CLC and out of our love for our own vocation.\(^{29}\)

Growing in Universality

4. CLC is a World Community and membership is expressed through commitment to one particular group.\(^{30}\) All CLC members form one body and we identify ourselves with the General Norms and Principles and with the Charism. It is there that the universal basis of our vocation is rooted and this vocation transcends cultural differences and other special features.

5. In the same way we take on the decisions of the World Assembly and the World Executive Council. Community life extends to work or service Communities: apostolic teams, teams of guides, leadership communities (councils at local, regional, national level) etc.

\(^{27}\) Charisma 2001 no.28; GP 4

\(^{28}\) We would like to recover the attraction, which was characteristic of the first Christian communities. Seeing these small and new Christian groups many said ‘look how they love each other’. Tertullian (3rd century) notes that this was said by the critics and detractors of Christianity. It cannot be denied that communion of lives, wills and even goods in certain circumstances, fascinated those who were not Christians; thus many conversions came about, in spite of the persecutions.

\(^{29}\) GP 10 GN 2-4.

\(^{30}\) GP 7, 10, 11
To Feel Part of the Church

6. We live in communion in all instances with the Church since we are ecclesial communities. The lay vocation of CLC is one option among many others, which enriches the Church whom we ‘serve humbly because we love her passionately’\(^{31}\). We maintain stable relations with the hierarchy, the religious, the organisations or movements in the local churches, especially those which share Ignatian spirituality.\(^{32}\)

7. As laity, the Church entrusts us with the evangelisation of the family, of culture and of politics and economic structures etc. We are called upon to deepen and to discover the richness of the lay vocation and thus to nourish the Church, being creatively faithful.


\(^{32}\) Nairobi 2003, Our National Dimension, 8.
C. Excerpt from "The Apocalyptic Finality of Love" from Pedro Arrupe, SJ

The Apocalypse: Fundamentals of Love

Kevin F. Burke, SJ

Selected with an introduction by

Essential Writings

Pedro Arrupe

Modern Spiritual Masters Series

8C. Excerpt from "The Apocalyptic Finality of Love", from Pedro Arrupe, SJ
In the age of technology, the importance of human interaction cannot be overstated. The rise of social media and digital communication has led to a decrease in face-to-face interaction, which can have negative consequences on mental health and social well-being. However, it is important to recognize the value of human connection and to make an effort to maintain relationships in-person. This can be achieved through regular communication, shared experiences, and physical presence. The absence of in-person interaction can lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection, highlighting the importance of maintaining social connections. Despite the benefits of technology, it is crucial to strike a balance between digital and face-to-face communication to ensure a comprehensive and fulfilling social experience.
be in a mysterious communion of love.

not beg a new work of virtue through me. For me, with

ever forget of my being, having sanctified me and so that I will

be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Invocation to the Trinity

AN INVOCATION TO THE TRINITY

AN INVOCATION TO THE TRINITY

I*. 185-88

in Thy mercy, Lord God, have mercy on us Thy servants, and...
Meeting 9: General Principle 8 – CLC Mission (Apostolic Life)

General Principle 8

As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have received from Christ the mission of being his witnesses before all people by our attitudes, words and actions, becoming identified with his mission of bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, setting the downtrodden free and proclaiming the Lord's year of favour.

Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures.

a) Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places and situations.

b) At the same time, we exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the Community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organizations and efforts.

c) The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the "Review of life" and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.

d) The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sort of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians.

Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ.


Supplemental readings for reflection:
9A - excerpts from *The CLC Charism on Mission*
9B – presentation by Franklin Ibanez given at the CLC World Assembly on *Challenges of CLC Mission* (condensed version appearing in CLC-USA Harvest Magazine)

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

1. What in any of your reflection on General Principle 8 brings you joy? Where do you find anxiety, frustration or dismay?

2. How would you briefly write General Principle 8 in your own language to more clearly describe what it means to you? Write your version of General Principle 8 in several sentences.

3. Christ’s mission is our mission. How do you understand Christ’s mission? How would you describe Christ’s mission?

4. What are your challenges for living Christ’s mission in the world? How does CLC help in living your mission?

5. Is the “review of life” or Examen something that you find helpful? Does it help you live your mission and “give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of everyday life?”

6. How would you describe your personal apostolate? How does this relate to living Christ’s mission?

7. Are you involved in any group apostolate? How did you make the decision to undertake this apostolate? To whom are you accountable for this apostolate?
9A: Excerpt from the CLC Charism on General Mission

(from CLC Charism accepted by the World CLC at Nairobi in 2005)

1. **The meaning of mission**

1.1. **The mission of Jesus**

76. In the Gospels, especially in that of John, Jesus is presented as the One sent by the Father. Being sent is precisely what gives sense to His life and His presence among us, so that we can't understand the person of Jesus except through this mission that the Father has entrusted to Him. On the other hand, mission is not something belonging to Jesus; it is a gift he has received from the Father.

77. Jesus lives this mission in total communion with the Father. For this reason, the most intimate reality of Jesus is being Son. His life is the Father's, given to Him by the Father. It is a life He will give to humankind, thus believers will be those who live with the Son's life.

78. The mission of Jesus the Son is that which the Father has entrusted to Him. Jesus knows that He is not the proprietor of this mission: He has not come into this world "on His own" but in order to carry out His mission, because the Father and He are one, and live in full communion with the Spirit (God is Trinity and is Communion).

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33 The starting point of mission is the relationship with Jesus. Jesus is present, not only in our own hearts, but also in His Body, of which our local CLC group is a cell; and furthermore, He is present in those to whom we are sent - family, friends, work-place, the wider community, especially those in need. Consequently, mission comes alive and energises us when this three-fold presence of Jesus resonates and interacts - Jesus present in our heart; Jesus present in our CLC group; Jesus present in those to whom we are sent.

34 “I have come from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him who sent me” (Jn 6:38; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 9:4-5; 14:24).

35 “He who has sent me is with me…” (Jn 8:29; 3:35; 17:7-8; 5:19).

36 “For, just as the Father has life in Himself so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself” (Jn 5:26).

37 “As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me” (Jn 6:57).

79. The precise object of this mission will be that all men and women, beloved of the Father, become one with the Triune God: even now we are called to live in the fullness of God Himself. 39 Jesus is the messenger and, at the same time, the message. 40

1.2. The mission of the Church

80. The Church is "the congregation of all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace"; "founded and built by God to be a visible sacrament of this saving unity". 41 The Church is the sacrament of salvation in the concrete history of our world. 42

81. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church represents the hands and feet of Jesus, Risen and Alive. The Church carries out the same mission as the Son. The Church is the sacrament of the mission of the Son who, moved by the Spirit, journeys through history towards the fullness of communion of all with Christ and, in the same Spirit, towards fullness of life with the Father. If it were not for the Son's mission, the Church would be nothing, it would lose its meaning. 43

1.3. Sacramental dimension of mission

82. Jesus is the sacrament of the Father's love; the Church, the sacrament of Jesus, is life and salvation for all humanity. The call of the Father, born out of love, is carried out and is efficacious in Jesus and in His mission; the call of Jesus, for love, is carried out and is efficacious in the Church and in Her mission. And this mission of the Church develops in the mission of those called and gathered by the love of the Father towards the Church.

83. Each Christian is above all someone grasped by the love of God. That link with the Lord (vocation) will take on concrete form and will develop and be efficacious precisely when Christians receive the Spirit and are sent - on mission - to the world in and through the Church.

84. In agreement with the specificity of each of the charisms, which arise in the Christian community, the Church entrusts the mission of Jesus to all Christians. To be truly mission, it has to be expressed by means of specific signs. The mission entrusted by the Father is realized through us, the body of Jesus. The mission entrusted by Jesus is carried out through the members of the Church. The

39 “... so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them” (Jn: 17:21, 24, 26).

40 “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6).

41 Lumen Gentium 9

42 LG 1

43 Jn 17:17
mission of each member of the faithful and each group of faithful, community, and local church is carried out through visible signs that are proportionate to each situation. Each ecclesial charism will express "missioning" in its own specific way.\(^{44}\)

85. Mission implies that someone sends and that someone is sent to implement the very mission of Jesus in and through the Church.

1.4. **Prophetic dimension of mission**

86. The mission of Jesus is explained and understood in New Testament writings as a prophetic mission. Jesus is "the prophet" *par excellence*\(^{45}\), who through His words and His behaviour (word + action) carries out the mission that the Father has entrusted to Him. The mission is not simply a way of thinking or a way of being in the world, but rather *specific actions*\(^{46}\) and *words*.\(^{47}\) Jesus' disciples are called to behave as prophets, as Jesus teaches them.\(^{48}\)

87. Every Christian is consecrated\(^{49}\) for this prophetic mission. This is the sense of the anointing in the rite of baptism.\(^{50}\) The Holy Spirit anoints the person being baptized and seals the person with an indelible seal.\(^{51}\) With this anointing, the Christian can repeat the words of Jesus: "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to**

\(^{44}\) The charism of lay associations is expressed through being *sent on mission* through a process of communal discernment and through concrete forms that are in themselves distinctive. Regarding the charism of religious life, it expresses its mission by a discernment related to the vow of obedience. In both instances, it presupposes searching for the will of God and fulfilling it as Church mission.

\(^{45}\) "... mighty in deeds and word ... the one to redeem Israel (Lk 24:19-21; Lk 4:24; Lk 7:16; 13:33; 24:19; Mk 1:22; 6:2; Mt 16:14; 21:11-14).

\(^{46}\) "Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness." (Mt 10:1)

\(^{47}\) "Father consecrate them in truth; your word is truth ... on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word." (Jn 17:17, 20; Mk 6:30)

\(^{48}\) Mt 10:40-42

\(^{49}\) Consecration signifies that God takes possession of what is destined for a specific mission. In the OT, kings were consecrated to God by anointing their heads with oil.

\(^{50}\) "Omnipotent God... I consecrate you with the chrism of salvation, so that incorporated into his people, you may always be a member of Christ, priest, prophet and king for all eternity" (Ritual of baptism, the anointing with holy oil.)

\(^{51}\) 2 Cor 1:21-22
proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”. Thus, by the washing of Baptism and the anointing with chrism, the baptized person shares in the mission of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Messiah.

1.5. Vital Dimension of mission

88. Being a Christian implies being a disciple and therefore to have received the prophetic mission, a mission that has many facets. At times, the most important is to communicate hope and the meaning of life to the men and women of our world, but there is no doubt that in many cases it will also mean denouncing and speaking out without fear. This presupposes a way of living and thinking, a way of facing life's challenges in our family, social, political and professional contexts. Therefore, it is not enough to be simply there; Christians are there as prophets, to announce with actions and words the presence of the Reign of God.

1.6. Mary, model for mission

89. In God's design, Mary held a key role in making the Son's mission possible. Mary was chosen by God's immeasurable love. She was called (vocation) and sent to fulfil the mission of giving birth to the Son for our world.

90. Mary welcomed the call and immediately set out (action) to bring the good news (word) to Elizabeth. The welcoming of the mystery marked her life. She was, above all, the first believer, the first Christian. In Mary, the hopes and desires for salvation that the poor had placed in God's love, are fulfilled. Mary was the "poor of Yahweh", who, in the midst of her real poverty, put her hope in God alone. Her lifestyle, poor and simple, was a prophetic gesture.

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52 Lk 4: 18-19; Is 61:1-2

53 ChL 13.

54 GP 9.

55 Lk 2:19, 51

56 Lk 1:45

57 This is the sense of the Magnificat, which gathers together and summarizes the expectations of all the poor (Lk 1:46-56). It is inspired by the song of Hannah, a young woman who hoped only in the action of God (1 Sam 2:1-10).

58 Lk 10:21; Mt 11:25-27; Mt 10:4
2. **The CLC mission field –**

91. Conforming to the direction given by Vatican II, the mission of the laity within CLC is not to be understood in a restrictive sense or by establishing dichotomies. The CLC field of mission is unlimited. It extends to the Church and to the world, in the service of individuals and of society, in an effort to reach the heart of each individual and to change unjust structures by bringing the Gospel to everyone and every situation and circumstance.\(^{59}\)

92. Given the lay character of the CLC vocation and given today's world situation, marked by serious structural injustice and by the marginalization of a large part of the human family which lives in poverty and misery, the service to which CLC is called to give priority, in the light of its preferential option for the poor, is the *promotion of justice*.

93. It is the love of God, which prompts us, as members of CLC, to transform the world so that all God's children can live with dignity. We should try to see Jesus in every man and woman, because Jesus identified Himself with each, especially with those most in need.\(^{60}\) Commitment to the cause of freedom and justice makes sense for us only so long as the Spirit of Christ motivates it, as an expression of faith and love.

94. Work for justice takes different forms according to regional and cultural circumstances, and different socio-political situations. However, this priority must show itself in our style and standard of living. In the Spiritual Exercises, we ask for the grace to follow Jesus, poor and humble, and our hope is to obtain this grace from the Lord. To *believe* in Jesus, therefore, means to follow Him more closely; to share His poverty means to live a life of faith, which promotes justice and takes an option for the poor. A simple lifestyle safeguards our apostolic freedom, expresses our solidarity with the poor and makes our faith credible. This option cannot remain theoretical. Ignatius, speaking of poverty, asks of Jesuits that "...all should when occasions arise, feel some effects of it".\(^{61}\)

95. The promotion of justice is, therefore, integral to the larger context of evangelisation, the proclaiming of Jesus Christ and His Reign.

\(^{59}\) GP 8.

\(^{60}\) Mt 25: 31-46

\(^{61}\) Constitutions 287 (GP 4 and 8)
3. Development of Mission in CLC

96. As community, CLC receives a specific charism (Ignatian) at the service of the Church's mission. It is expressed by the sending of its members on mission, the fruit of communal apostolic discernment, on specific forms of apostolate. It will not always be easy to do so, but one thing is certain: those who have opted for the Ignatian charism are, above all, apostles on the Church's mission and therefore they are sent by the community which shares their specific vocation. It is their right to know that the community explicitly sends them and at the same time accompanies both the apostolic discernment and the mission as it unfolds.

3.1. Individual mission

97. In relationship with others, and attentive to the signs of the times, those who are so disposed are moved to open their hearts to the needs of the men and women of their world. From this contact with reality arise the personal calls that lead to specific ways of following the Lord.

98. The invitation to follow Him (vocation) will become concrete in the way we personally respond to these calls. The initial vocation to follow Jesus will unfold in specific activities. But, for these activities to become mission, it is necessary that the community assume the call, help to discern and, finally, send each one on mission. In this sense perhaps, it would be more correct to speak of personal involvement in the Church's mission.

99. For each CLC member, the different contexts of their life as laity: family, politics, profession, community, local Church, are the main fields of action.

62 All prophetic missions follow this process. First God breaks unexpectedly into the life and heart of the one whom He wants to send to serve His people (vocation). Then, from the commitment of the heart and the needs of the people, the prophet will find his/her mission, and carry it out with specific gestures and words.

63 Quoting John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici (Dec. 30, 1988) we point out some fields of action:

"An essential service which the Church can do for the whole human family is to rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person.... If, indeed, everyone has the mission and responsibility of acknowledging the personal dignity of every human being and of defending the right to life, some lay people have special responsibility: such as parents, teachers, health-workers and the many who hold economic and political power.” (ChL 37 and 38)

"The lay faithful's duty to society primarily begins in marriage and in the family. This duty can only be fulfilled adequately if we are convinced of the unique and irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the Church herself.” (ChL 40)
3.2. Group Mission

100. Action can be not only on a personal level, but also on the group level according to circumstances and in response to the needs perceived by the members of the community. These apostolic actions are also the expression of the personal vocation each one has received from the Lord. In this case, the community, in one way or another, will tend to translate the action, which it assumes and discerns, into mission. Therefore, we can speak of group involvement in the mission of the Church. Working as a team, with the grace of God, will have greater apostolic efficiency.

“A charity that loves and serves the person is never able to be separated from justice. Each in its own way demands the full, effective acknowledgment of the rights of the individual, to which society is ordered in all its structures and institutions”...

...“In order to achieve their task directed to the Christian animation of the temporal order, in the sense of serving persons and society, the lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in ‘public life’, that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good... every person has a right and duty to participate in public life, albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks and responsibilities. Charges of careerism, idolatry of power, egoism and corruption that are oftentimes directed at persons in government, parliaments, the ruling classes, or political parties, as well as the common opinion that participating in politics is an absolute moral danger, does not in the least justify either scepticism or an absence on the part of Christians in public life”...

... “Furthermore, public life on behalf of the person and society finds its continuous line of action in the defence and the promotion of justice, understood to be a ‘virtue’, an understanding which requires education, as well as a moral ‘force’ that sustains the obligation to foster the rights and duties of each and everyone, based on the personal dignity of each human being.” (ChL 42)

“In the context of the transformations taking place in the world of economy and work which are a cause of concern, the lay faithful have the responsibility of being in the forefront in working out a solution to the very serious problems of growing unemployment; to fight for the most opportune overcoming of numerous injustices that come from organizations of work which lack a proper goal; to make the workplace become a community of persons respected in their uniqueness and in their right to participation; to develop new solidarity among those that participate in a common work; to raise up new forms of entrepreneurship and to look again at systems of commerce, finance and exchange of technology.” (ChL 43)

“Above all, each member of the lay faithful should always be fully aware of being a member of the Church yet entrusted with a unique task which cannot be done by another and which is to be fulfilled for the good of all. From this perspective, the Council’s insistence on the absolute necessity of an apostolate exercised by the individual takes on its full meaning: The apostolate exercised by the individual - which flows abundantly from a truly Christian life (Jn 4:14) - is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organized expression, and admits no substitute. Regardless of circumstance, all lay persons (including those who have no opportunity or possibility for collaboration in associations) are called to this type of apostolate and obliged to engage in it. Such an apostolate is useful at all times and places, but in certain circumstances it is the only one available and feasible (Vat II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, Ap .Act. 16).” (ChL 28)
101. As Church institutions become aware of their inadequacy, they will feel the need to collaborate among themselves in the service of Jesus' mission, and to collaborate with other associations of believers or non-believers which have chosen to serve those in need. For Christians, mission in the Church may often mean sharing with believers and non-believers, on a personal or a group level.

3.3. **Common mission**

102. The common mission of CLC is the mission, which Christ entrusted to CLC as a Church association. This mission is the response, which CLC feels called to give to the great needs and aspirations of today. It is its way of announcing the Good News of God's love in this present historical time. The common mission is made concrete by identifying apostolic priorities and lines of action.

103. It does not mean that all CLC members must do the same thing. It is mission that is common: the tasks are different. This is not only because of the origin of mission, but also because of its direction. All of us, each in his/her own way, stand for the same values, follow the same aims and have the same priorities. We can speak of **common involvement in the Church's mission**.

4. **Finding our Mission in CLC**

104. In the Ignatian process of formation, the starting point is the real world. All are invited to be exposed to the pain, the poverty, and the "anguish" of our world. This is true above all for young people. Ignatius uses a classic term for this type of experience. He speaks of "probations". These experiences touch those who live through them and allow them to see their world with a new vision. These probations are like "sacraments", which profoundly mark a person. It would be good for CLC to look for realistic ways to experience their world in this way.

105. This "baptism of reality" goes beyond mere social analysis, and through it one can acquire a special sensitivity to the **signs of the times**.

106. On the other hand, in order to find our mission in CLC, it is important to be available to serve the local and universal Church. This is how Ignatius and his companions always acted.

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64 SpEx. 203.

65 To understand the Ignatian process of formation, it is not enough to know the Exercises. Ignatius proposes a series of experiences, and the first among these is the “Spiritual exercises for a month more or less”... the “second, serving in hospitals”... the “third, being a pilgrim for another month without money”... the “fourth, exercising oneself in different low and humble offices”... the “fifth, giving Christian Doctrine to other uncouth persons” (Const. 65-59). Obviously, this process is not applicable to CLC, but Ignatius' intuition is. Ignatius kept before his eyes Jesus' emptying, as a key to understanding the mission of salvation. (Phil. 2:1ff)
107. Being attentive always to the *signs of the times* and ready to serve the Church, one is sensitive to specific calls, which through personal and community apostolic discernment are transformed into mission. But, we must not forget that the first step in discernment, in order to be able to choose freely and out of love, is indifference.

108. The whole process of discernment, by which we "look for" the will of God concerning our mission, requires a careful attention to personal and group rhythms, with the help of both personal and group guides.

### 4.1. Apostolic discernment

109. Apostolic discernment means the intelligent and contemplative attention given to the Spirit by the mature Christian in all commitments: family, work, the different ways in which God can make His will manifest profession, social and Church. The purpose is to seek and to find God's will for our mission. In order to seek the divine will one's heart must burn with the same fire as burns within the Heart of Christ. One must also be familiar with. In short, one must be ready to opt for the greater glory of God and for the universal good.

When this discernment process is done in community - something very characteristic of CLC - the following elements should be present:

#### 4.1.1 Personal and communal prayer

110. From beginning to end, discernment is a journey of prayer. Remembering that we have been created to "praise, reverence and serve God our Lord"[^66] , "we need prayer and discernment, personal and communal...in order to seek and find God in all things"[^67] , we want to ask our Lord for the gifts of availability and of knowing His will in this world in which we live. We make this petition as an important part of our daily personal prayer and we also repeat it in our community encounters throughout the whole discernment process.

#### 4.1.2 Looking at this world in which we live

[^66]: Lk 12:49; Phil 2:5

[^67]: SpEx 23

[^68]: GP 5

[^69]: SpEx 5
We recognize that the whole world is our meeting place with God. For this reason, we make contact with all that surrounds us in order to discover there the Lord's call. Since the field of our possible mission knows no limits, we cannot narrow down this look at our world when we seek to know our mission. The Lord speaks to us in our community, through its present and past history, in the Church and in our country. This is how we can see Him acting through us in our personal apostolates and in the corporate or group apostolates. The needs we see today in the Church and in the world are also calls from the Lord. We want to respond better, knowing that "love ought to manifest itself more in deeds than in words".

4.1.3. Our Ignatian charism

As a community we are well aware that our common vocation, our charism and style of discernment have their origin in the Spiritual Exercises and are expressed in the CLC General Principles. Our life makes no sense if it is not living and seeking "in all and through all the greater praise and glory of God our Lord" (SpEx 189). Let us remember that "our life is essentially apostolic" and that "the field of CLC mission knows no limits". "As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have been sent by Christ to be His witnesses to all people by our attitudes, words and actions".

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70 GP 8.

71 See what was said about the “probations” proposed by St. Ignatius.

72 GP 8a.

73 GP 8b.

74 SpEx 230.

75 GP 8.
4.1.4. Spiritual movements

113. St. Ignatius learned to recognize interior and spiritual movements. In his autobiography he says that while still in the house of Loyola, "his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it, realizing from experience that some thoughts left him sad and others joyful. Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that were stirring, one from the devil, the other from God".76

114. Then in Manresa, during the original experience of the Spiritual Exercises, he deepened his awareness of this difference of spiritual movements and how to interpret them in order to know the will of the Lord. Formed in the school of the Exercises, we can deepen daily our understanding of and learn to become more aware of, and to interpret more surely these interior movements, which are raised up by our looking around us. This enables us to know what the Lord desires of us, both as individuals and as community.

4.1.5. Group process

115. These, interior movements, will be experienced in prayer and in daily life by each member of the community. They will also be a part of the experience, which we share openly. To become aware of them and to interpret them spiritually will enable us to know if our reactions, to the world we see around us, lead us to the greater service and praise of God.

116. This presupposes that the group is deeply rooted in mutual trust and that, with the help of the guide, it can be sensitive to the dynamic process of the group itself. A constant openness to others, through listening, will be important, avoiding any discussion unless the process of discernment itself explicitly calls for it.

117. These elements are essential for an apostolic discernment and it is fitting that they be present throughout the whole process. As we said, the constant support of a good community guide is necessary. In a similar way for individual apostolic discernment, it is recommended that we have the support of an experienced spiritual guide.

4.2. Apostolic discernment as a permanent attitude

118. In one way or another these elements are always present in the CLC member who desires to live apostolic discernment as a habitual attitude. It is the fruit of the "Contemplation to attain love" at the end of the Exercises77: "an interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, in order

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76 Autobiography 8.

77 SpEx 230-237.
that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve His Divine Majesty in all things". Moved by this grateful love, St. Ignatius invites us to seek always a greater awareness of God's presence and action in our lives.

119. For this reason the examen is one of the more significant activities by which apostolic discernment becomes part of us. In the Exercises, various types of examen are proposed. Among these is the General Examen (or review of the day), which helps us "to love and serve in everything" remembering that, "love ought to manifest itself more in deeds than in words". For Ignatius, the daily review is truly a colloquy overflowing with humble gratitude and filled with faith, trust and love.

120. It is understood that the one who practices this "spiritual exercise" is an apostle, who has been working with Jesus Himself throughout the day, in accordance with the meditation of the Kingdom: "whoever wishes to come with Me..." and who at the close of the day wants to talk over what the Lord has done during all this time "as one who speaks with his friend". For the day, which is about to begin, there is prayer for the grace to live each moment sharing the mission of Jesus.

121. Thus, for those who walk in the footsteps of the apostle seeking to continue alongside the Lord, the examen is an absolutely indispensable pause, which permits them to see their journey in perspective and to gather their strength to tackle the next stage with renewed vigour and clarity. Above all, the faithful practice of the examen is essential to the formation of the "contemplative in action" who seeks and finds God in all things.

78 A fundamental dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises is the continuous call to reflect in prayer about the whole personal experience, in order to be able to discern where the Spirit of God is leading us. Ignatius requires reflection on the human experience as an indispensable means of discerning its validity because without a prudent reflection it is possible to have a merely deceptive illusion, and without attentive consideration, the significance of the individual experience could be diminished or minimized. Only after an adequate reflection on the experience and an interiorization of its significance and the implications of what we are living, can we proceed freely and confidently to a correct decision on the way to proceed. This will favour the full and integrated development of the person who seeks to accomplish the mission he or she received from God with greater fidelity. For St. Ignatius, reflection is the central point in passing from experience to action. This continuous interrelationship of experience, reflection and action is the key to the Ignatian process of formation.

79 Some types of examen proposed in the book of the Exercises are: the “Fifth Addition of Prayer” (SpEx 77); the “First Method of Prayer” which can be considered as a prayer of examen (SpEx 241); the “Particular Examen” (SpEx 24-31); and the Examen on the Exercises and Additions (SpEx 90, 160, 207); the General Examen (SpEx 32-43). See in the support material “Review of the Day”.

80 SpEx 95.

81 SpEx 54.
4.3. Criteria for apostolic discernment

122. The CLC General Principles underline the need for apostolic discernment. They also propose a number of criteria, inspired by those drawn up by St Ignatius, for choosing our ministries and specific missions. Everything, which comes to us from Ignatius, in this case apostolic discernment, is marked by the "magis" (the more effective). His zeal for the greater glory of God enabled him to seek the most effective means for helping others.

123. This discernment of the more appropriate means is made in the Spirit of Christ, by means of the rules for discerning which interior movements arise from the same Spirit, through our contemplation of the life of Jesus. These rules have already been mentioned in the paragraph concerning the choice of our personal vocation. It is a process, which involves the heart no less than the head. Ignatius proposes, however, certain rational criteria (cf. Three times suitable for making an election SpEx 175) with a view to discovering the greatest service, which can be rendered to our neighbour in particular circumstances.

124. The Ignatian criteria for apostolic discernment are found not only in the Spiritual Exercises but above all in the Autobiography, where personal progress and processes are illustrated and in his Letters, where Ignatius suggests strategies for definitive objectives and proposes means for attaining them. In the Constitutions of the Society, Ignatius makes a systematic presentation of the criteria for choosing ministries. These criteria can help us in CLC to define our own apostolic mission; for example, that CLC members should be open to what is more urgent and universal.

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82 “The community helps us to live the different dimensions of this apostolic commitment, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the Review of Life and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense even to the most ordinary parts of our daily life” (GP 8). “Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the coming of the Kingdom, each individual member is called to be active in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ presence, concretely into our world.” (GP 12b)

83 Constitutions 618, 622...

84 The universal and most enduring good: “to think globally and act locally”; in other words “to set up structures rather than one-time events”, to develop actions and services which can be replicated or repeated by the participants.

The greatest need and urgency: to go where there is no one else, where those who should be there, care little or nothing about their obligations.

The greatest good: the formation of “multiplicators”; the creation of networks of communication conscience that we are one global family.

85 GP 8c.
9B. Challenges for the CLC Mission

Franklin Ibanez, World CLC Executive Secretary, gave a presentation at the Beirut World Assembly on “Challenges for the CLC Mission - What can an Apostolic Body be and do concretely?” His presentation outlined the four different levels of CLC mission. These levels can be viewed as the ways we live the CLC vocation in our world. They reflect different dimensions of being a lay apostolic body. In this sense, Franklin’s presentation is a continuation of what Chris presented on deepening our understanding as a lay apostolic body.

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

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

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

- On the first level (a) we find the ordinary, day to day activities. We need to emphasize these because many of the misconceptions and negative images of CLC (or other lay associations) begin here. Many times, lay associations or missions are seen in a bad light – it is easy to say that they don’t do very much, if anything at all. I think this is a mistake.
- Let’s begin with a well know phrase “Gloria Dei Vivens Homo” or “God’s glory is seen in a person fully alive” (St. Irenaeus). The better a human being lives – the greater will be God’s glory. Every person’s life is a valuable project in God’s eyes. God wants every man and woman to live fully. This phrase, understood in depth, can be viewed as the basis or theme of all lay missions or apostolates: To live life fully, this is our mission!
The Second Vatican Council wanted to rediscover the mission of the laity. It states: “the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life”.1

Therefore, the mission of the laity is to be concerned and committed to the ordinary things like everyone else, but the layperson should do it in a different way: the Christian way. In other words, they are asked to live in the world according to the Gospel. Finding God and revealing God in their ordinary, day to day lives.2

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

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

**Mission Level (b) “Apostolates”**

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

- When we usually speak of CLC missions, level (b) is usually the level we give more attention to. It’s the type of mission we know best. For apostolates of this type, we mean those activities outside of our working hours and unpaid. Traditional apostolates are usually of a pastoral or social nature.3 Pastoral apostolates include catechism classes in parishes, schools or Christian spiritual centers; or, in the case of CLC, many members are spiritual companions in the Spiritual Exercises and also in everyday life. Social apostolates are services for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), volunteering in social work projects in schools, in hospitals, etc.

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

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1 Lumen Gentium 31,2

2 In the Vatican Council documents (Lumen Gentium, Gaudium et Spes, Apostolicam Actuositatem) we find expressions like “temporal affairs”, “ordinary activities”, “daily life”. In the text I assume that it refers to the same: the common activities or normal life of any person

3 Of course, on level (b) we should also include all the internal CLC services that our members do, e.g. serving on the National Council or on the Formation Team. That is to say, many CLC members serve CLC in their free time and free of charge: “Serving CLC behind the scenes so that CLC is a more apostolic outside”, this is also an important apostolate!!!
• It is important to have missions of type (b). Every member and every community in their different levels should ask themselves and answer honestly (e.g. through the process of DSSE) if, at this moment in time, they are doing what they can and what they should. But (b) is not better than (a) - they are both missions, but of different kinds. It is also important to recognize level (b) missions are not always possible for everyone. By contrast, every member is called to live mission at level (a) intensely. This isn't an option, but what we should always do.

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

Mission Level (c) “Institutional presence or mission”

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

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

• In the 80’s and 90’s, there were only a few institutions or CLC projects like these. Some pioneers were France, which took over a retreat house run by the Jesuits, and CLC Hong Kong, who was asked to take charge of a school, Marymount, that had been run by a community of religious sisters. In the 2000’s, there seems to have been an “explosion” of institutional works. On the current list, we have fifteen national communities involved in approximately forty projects. These figures may not be accurate and there are likely others.

• Institutional presence, what some communities call “national common mission," can be expressed in three ways:
  o Works or Projects: We have talked about projects and know examples. This type of mission requires a high level of responsibility of the community, given that the works have a life of their own, and they demand financial and legal commitments which are permanent.
  o Subjects/Themes: The second way of institutional presence is to identify areas or fields of mission. All members are asked to do something in relation to this subject. For example, CLC Rwanda decided some years ago that its common mission would be the issue of HIV.
  o Activities: The third way of being institutionally present is by participating in one action or activity. Participation is for a particular activity and for a limited period of time.
• Are we called to have an institutional presence? Maybe in some cases yes, but it isn’t about promoting this type of mission simply to gain more visibility. Visibility is the medium for the mission, not its objective. In CLC we should promote the institutional presence only if we sense the call of God inviting us to do more and better in that particular direction, not so people will say “look how many works CLC is involved in” or “look how many things they do”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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5 In Spanish, the word “accompany” sounds better than “support”. To accompany seems closer to the Ignatian meaning.
• The common WHAT helps to flesh out the meaning of the word “community.” Some examples include:
  o The 4% Education Campaign in the Dominican Republic: CLC led the international campaign and finally this year the Government of the Dominican Republic accepted the 4%. Moral: We are one body when we act together.
  o The March 2011 earthquake that struck Japan. In response to some CLC members wondering, “how can we show solidarity with our Japanese brothers and sisters?” CLC Japan shared their reflections and proposed a novena of prayer. At least six thousand people took part in this chain of prayer. Moral: We are one body when we pray together.
  o The “Accommodation Project” between 2011 and 2012. The campaign to buy an apartment in Rome for the people who work in the Executive Secretariat of CLC was a success. The money that was spent on rent can now be spent on the Apostolic Fund. Moral: We are one body when we share our resources.

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

**Challenge 3:** To discern our apostolic potential with missions that involve the world community.

**Collaboration with Jesuits and others**

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

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

A lesson which we can learn from the Society of Jesus is the broadening of our collaborative horizons. In CG 35 Jesuits talk frequently about collaborating “with others”, considering even those non-Christians who are nevertheless people of good will. In fact, CLC also does this on various levels, in many parts of the world. In every level of mission, we can be witnesses to examples of collaboration with others.
**Challenge Four:** To propose different ways of collaborating which, starting with a fair understanding of the components (levels), it might become a model of apostolic effectiveness and fraternity.

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

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

When we consider these four levels, one on top of another, it could give the impression that what is on top is the ultimate mission or that it is of more value. I don’t believe this. I have upheld the priority of (a). Instead of seeing the graphic of the four levels as an ascending pyramid, we should see it as an iceberg. An iceberg is a huge mass of floating ice. We only see a small part of it, the part that is above the water and just under the surface. But the largest part of its bulk is under water – hidden, invisible. Even so, it holds up the part which is seen. So it is with the mission of CLC, or other lay associations. It is as if level (a) is condemned to remain invisible. Part of the (b) apostolates can be seen, but not very clearly. In contrast, the institutional presence (c) is seen more clearly and international action (d) is also.

*But there would be no iceberg without the great mass of (a).*
Meeting 10: General Principle 9 – The Role of Mary in CLC

General Principle 9

Since the spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ: she is the model of our own collaboration in Christ's mission. Mary's co-operation with God begins with her "yes" in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation. Her effective service as shown in her visit to Elizabeth and her solidarity with the poor as reflected in the Magnificat, make her an inspiration for our action for justice in the world today. Mary's co-operation in her Son's mission, continued all through her life, inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary, who by accepting the designs of God became our mother and the mother of all. Thus we confirm our own mission of service to the world received in baptism and confirmation. We honour Mary, the Mother of God, in a special way, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.


Supplemental readings for reflection:
Some thoughts about MARY in the CLC way of life (see below)
10A: from the writings of Josee Gsell, former World Executive Secretary of CLC, Meditations on Mary – Mary and CLC

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

1. What in any of your reflection on General Principle 9 brings you joy? Where do you find anxiety, frustration or dismay?

2. As you prayerfully meditate on the Annunciation scene from Luke does anything stand out to you? What captures your imagination, your feelings, and your thoughts?

3. Does the Annunciation passage from Luke’s Gospel give you an appreciation for the “way of life” that CLC understands to be our vocation? In what way? What are characteristics of Mary that would be characteristics of this way of life?

4. How would you describe your own relationship with Mary? Is she important in your spiritual life? Does she strengthen your relationship with Jesus? With the Father?

5. What is your imagination of Mary? If she were to stand in front of you what would she look like? How would she be toward you?
6. Does Mary’s choice to be of complete service to the Father’s will inspire a similar desire in you? Why or why not?

7. Where are your spiritual consolations and spiritual desolations in these days of reflecting on Mary?

Some thoughts about MARY in the CLC way of life:

The Second Vatican Council called for an appreciation of Mary’s role in our spiritual life to be specifically in service to the central role that Jesus is to play in our faith. For many that was a great disappointment, because many Catholics had an imagination of Mary as virtually equal with Jesus, sort of a replacement of the Holy Spirit, at that time in the Church. The Council Fathers were criticized for downplaying Mary’s role because instead of writing a whole document on the role of Mary, they placed her in a culminating Chapter in the document on the Church. This says something very specific about the Church’s THEOLOGICAL understanding of Mary’s importance in the Christian Faith. She is a member, the supreme member, but still a member of the Church that is the Body of the Risen Christ. Mary is fully human. She is a daughter of Eve as truly as you and I are sons and daughters of Eve. She was preserved from sin by God’s Grace, more than her own doing, in order to be a spotless vessel for Jesus Christ – her preservation from sin is considered a fruit of Jesus’ death on the Cross and consequent resurrection, so in effect she is the first among the Baptized (who are preserved from sin by Jesus’ death and Resurrection). There has been a temptation in the Church either to place her on too high a pedestal (make her semi-divine) or to ignore her role (something some Protestants do in reaction to placing her too high). Either mistake twists the genuine teaching of the Church about her role. This genuine teaching is carefully drawn in the Constitution on the Church, and by placing the teaching in the context of the rest of the Church, we better understand our own role vis-à-vis Jesus and Mary. So as you pray about her patronage of CLC consider how you seek to make the Divine Will operative in your life, even as Mary did. As you think of her position as an undocumented alien in Egypt, or as a poor person of the land in the downtrodden land of Judea, consider how she calls us to take up our mission among the poor and those least able to defend themselves. How does she call us to respond to our world?

Gently pray the “Hail Mary” and consider the words of the Scriptures that are captured in the first part and the prayer of the Church captured in the second part:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
10A Mary and CLC

Texts from the writings of Josée Gsell, World Executive Secretary for CLC 1972 - 1991: from a small collection of meditations on key Ignatian Exercises through the lens of Marian love and appreciation. (Supplement to Progressio, Number 11, April 1978)

Our Lady of the Way

The road gradually opened out . . . The road taken by the Savior of the world; the road taken by the Word of God. The road of his humanity; a humanity made possible by love and lived on the one soil capable of making it fertile: in poverty and self donation.

You saw him take that road, Mary, and you took it with Him. Each of its stages became a stage of your own road, to the point of blending yours completely with his. You were the first to walk after him, first to understand the way of God, first to utter the yes of a saved humanity. . .

You, Our Lady of all times and all moments, make it your task to prepare and guide, to alert and strengthen, so that all will hear the call, will advance toward your Son and work for the coming of his Kingdom. But above all to the extent any person desires it, he or she will find in you the example of a genuine participation in the liberation of humanity.

In the autumn of the year 1537, Saint Ignatius arrived in Rome. The following year, on Christmas Day, he was ordained a priest. He frequently celebrated Mass in a parish church near his lodgings in the parish of the Astalli family, where there was an altar consecrated to Our Lady of the Way (Madonna della Strada). There too, Francis Xavier and Peter Faber used to offer the Holy Sacrifice during the time they were in Rome, that is, till 1540. On June 24, 1541, Pope Paul III gave that little church to the Society of Jesus, which he had just approved some nine months earlier. Besides Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, Peter Faber, all the first companions will come here to venerate the picture of the Virgin: Peter Canisius, Stanislaus Kostka, Francis Borgia, and so many others. Blessed by the Madonna della Strada at that altar, they will say farewell and set out for India, China, Japan, the Islands of Oceania, Brazil, Paraguay, Canada, the shores of Africa. Amid endless fatigues and perils, the vow they pronounced at Mary’s altar will uphold those apostles who set out down the high ways of the world to make Jesus Christ known and bring his message of salvation to new peoples searching for the light. A life of sacrifices ending in martyrdom sometimes. A poor life with no other consolations than the crucifix, the picture of the Virgin that they carried and the living memory of their community scattered in the service of the Church. But a life enriched by the divine blessing promised to those who accept the vocation given them.

Doesn’t our desire to be faithful to the CLC way of life bring us, in a privileged way, toward Mary? ‘We venerate the Mother of God in a special way, and we trust in her intercession to fulfill our vocation’ (GP 8).

All along the route, at each crossroad, you meet Mary. She knows all those highways, because she trudged them herself. She preceded you and waits for you at the end of the road. She offers to accompany you. She invites you to travel the road together. So that your journey will resemble, be identified more and more with that of her Son. Whatever your way of addressing her, whatever the form of your prayer, it will open up a space for the Spirit to act. Your prayer will commit you. Venerating her is to commit yourself to move, to be dispossessed, to give yourself away.

“He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. . . Luke 1.__ff

To go with Mary is to follow the direction of her life: a simple lifestyle lived in solidarity with the poor and oppressed; a life docile to the Spirit, who molds it till it becomes like her Son’s. Service, availability for others, the sharing of efforts that become open channels for the gospel message. That message can answer the hopes of every person for true dignity. Then the announcement of the gospel
can reach the hearts of men and women, and through those hearts can free from sin whatever human beings have corrupted whether it is our relationships, our systems, our institutions, or our structures. Following Mary’s example, the response of all persons can become a participation in human liberation. God took the initiative. He does not cease making his call heard in the circumstances of today. But when he gave us Mary as our Mother, he was good enough to leave us, in her, the perfect model to imitate with our human response. “We trust in her intercession to fulfill our vocation.” (GP. 8) Doesn’t that suggest simultaneously a plural and a singular?

A plural: the CLC members scattered in the various countries of the world. A singular: the one, identical vocation that they share that binds their community together.

Together, we have been called. Together, we must respond. And we entrust the togetherness of our worldwide community to her intercession. For our community too is on the road. Called to keep moving on, with our ears attentive to catch the voice of Him who calls, our eyes scrutinizing the signs through which He speaks. Like each of us, our community is called to a transformation, a conversion, an encounter with Jesus Christ, to witness to him along the roads and pathways of history. May the response of all of us who are ‘Companions on the Road with Mary’ in today’s world become more and more like hers: “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me”. Luke 1

(Note: This text was a rough draft of a much longer text translated from French by Eileen Burke-Sullivan, STD in preparation for inclusion (after editing) in The Ignatian Tradition, Liturgical Press, 2009)
Meeting 11: Review of General Principles 1 – 9

The group has spent time reflecting on General Principles 1-9, Preamble and Our Charism. In this meeting we review our experience with General Principles 1-9. Spend time praying with GP 1-9 and reflecting on our experience going through the General Principles.


Supplemental readings for reflection:  
11A. General Principles 1-9

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thoughts and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

Review of GP 1-9

What has your experience with CLC been over these months as we reviewed the General Principles? What graces have your received? What has been difficult or challenging?

What aspects of the General Principles attract you to CLC?

Are there aspects of the General Principles that do not attract you to CLC?
PREAMBLE

1. The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains. Out of love, the Word was incarnated and born from Mary, the poor Virgin of Nazareth.

Inserted among the poor and sharing with them their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity within our human family. This gift of God to us, and our response, continues to this day through the influence of the Holy Spirit in all our particular circumstances.

Therefore we, members of the Christian Life Community, have composed these General Principles to aid us in making our own the options of Jesus Christ and taking part through Him, with Him and in Him in this loving initiative which expresses God's promise of faithfulness forever.

2. Because our Community is a way of Christian life, these principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text but rather by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love. This law, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of daily life. It respects the uniqueness of each personal vocation and enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God. It challenges us to see our serious responsibilities and to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work together with the entire People of God and all those of good will for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.

3. The Christian Life Community is a public world association whose executive centre is presently in Rome. It is the continuation of the Marian Congregations, started by Jean Leunis S.J. and first officially approved by Pope Gregory XIII's bull, Omnipotentis Dei, of December 5, 1584. Going back beyond the Marian Congregations we see our origin in those groups of lay
people that developed after 1540 in different parts of the world through the initiative of Saint Ignatius Loyola and his companions. We live this way of Christian life in joyful communion with all those who have preceded us, grateful for their efforts and apostolic accomplishments. In love and prayer we relate to those many men and women of our spiritual tradition who have been proposed to us by the Church as friends and valid intercessors who help us to fulfil our mission.

PART ONE
OUR CHARISM

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

We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation.

We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple life style, which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them.

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

We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live.

5. The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times.

Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.

Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life.
We recognise particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.

6. Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues his mission of salvation. By making ourselves sensitive to the signs of the times and the movements of the Spirit, we will be better able to encounter Christ in all persons and in all situations. Sharing the riches of membership of the Church, we participate in the liturgy, meditate upon the Scriptures, and learn, teach and promote Christian doctrine.

We work together with the hierarchy and other ecclesial leaders, motivated by a common concern for the problems and progress of all people and open to the situations in which the Church finds itself today.

This sense of the Church impels us to creative and concrete collaboration for the work of advancing the reign of God on earth, and includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand.

7. Our gift of self finds its expression in a personal commitment to the World Community, through a freely chosen local community. Such a local community, centered in the Eucharist, is a concrete experience of unity in love and action. In fact each of our communities is a gathering of people in Christ, a cell of his mystical Body. We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother. Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will.

8. As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have received from Christ the mission of being his witnesses before all people by our attitudes, words and actions, becoming identified with his mission of bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, setting the downtrodden free and proclaiming the Lord's year of favour.

Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures.
a) Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places and situations.

b) At the same time, we exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the Community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organizations and efforts.

c) The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the "Review of life" and through personal and communal discernment.
We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.

d) The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sort of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians.
Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

9. Since the spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ: she is the model of our own collaboration in Christ's mission. Mary's co-operation with God begins with her "yes" in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation. Her effective service as shown in her visit to Elizabeth and her solidarity with the poor as reflected in the Magnificat, make her an inspiration for our action for justice in the world today. Mary's co-operation in her Son's mission, continued all through her life, inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary, who by accepting the designs of God became our mother and the mother of all. Thus we confirm our own mission of service to the world received in baptism and confirmation. We honour Mary, the Mother of God, in a special way, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.
Meeting 12: General Principles 10 – 15 and Membership

The group has spent time reflecting on General Principles 1-9, Preamble and Our Charism. In this meeting we consider Part 2 of the General Principles (GP 10-15), Life and Organization of the Community with a focus on Membership.


Supplemental readings for reflection:
12A. General Principles Part Two
   10. Members
   11. Community Bonding
   12. Way of Life
   13. Government
   14. Ecclesial Assistant
   15. Property
12B: Projects #150 from the CLC-CVX World Executive Council on Membership

Some thoughts about “a way of life” as opposed to an organization or club (see below)

Questions for reflection and sharing: Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

What questions arise for you with the statement that CLC presupposes a vocation (call) from God?

What does it mean to you that CLC understands itself as a “Way of Life?” How would you respond to the questions in the text on the next page about factors to more fully understand this reality of belonging to a Community that understands itself as a way of life?

What does the language of temporary or permanent commitment evoke in you? What problems or graces does this raise for you?

As you explore this Way of Life is there a sense of call and fit for you?

How is the Spirit guiding you regarding your continued involvement with CLC as a member after review and reflection on the General Principles?

Do you feel peace with the result of your discernment?
Some thoughts about “a way of life” as opposed to an organization or club

One of the hardest things that North Americans – and often Europeans as well – struggle with is the notion of belonging to something that is a “way of life” not just a member organization. We belong to many clubs, organizations, societies, political parties, groups, etc. All such groups have an external purpose – whether it be social, educational, developmental, etc. But participation in a “way of life” presumes something more than just a member structure with a purpose. The purpose of a “way of life” is to shape our whole life toward deeper participation in the society. Marriage and family, Baptism into the Church, vowed religious communities – these are all classic ways of understanding “a way of life” but membership in CLC isn’t precisely the same as these – although there are similarities.

The social systems mentioned here share the fact that the PURPOSE of the society is the way the members live their lives. The societies are formed to support a particular set of values and commitments.

Families generally come together in a mixture of free choice and the “accident” of birth – but their only purpose in a sense is the formation of the members into fuller humans and to provide the communal support for maturing into responsible and moral adulthood.

The Church is formed by all persons called together by Christ and being transformed into Christ through a wide varieties or ways of life but all for the purpose of bonding the members into the life of Christ and the Reign of God on earth – not waiting until life after death.

Vowed religious groups are called by God through a particular spirituality and not only form their members, share a common vision and spiritual tradition – but share goods and the life responsibility for one another in a financial and juridical way – they are examples of call to a “STATE of life” just as marriage is. But a state of life can and must be lived in a way of life – so religious communities provide a way of life to support a state of life. CLC is a LAY way of life that supports the states of diocesan priesthood, or the single life, or marriage, widowhood, or the life of one whose marriage ended in divorce. In other words, CLC is a way of life that supports the Gospel character of all the states of life.

But what are some commonalities that CLC shares with these forms of society or community?

We could look at a number of factors to more fully understand this reality of belonging to a Community that understands itself as a way of life:
What is the process of belonging?
What is the purpose for coming together?
What is the investment each person makes?
What is the level of commitment?
What does belonging “cost” but also what does it offer?

As we struggle to understand “way of life” – the challenge of CLC becomes evident. It is a LAY way of life, lived in family, marriage, priestly or single vocation – lived in the world and culture – specifically Ignatian – always communal, and oriented to the service of those who present the greatest need in our world.
10. Members

Becoming a member of Christian Life Community presupposes a personal vocation. During a period of time determined in the General Norms, the candidate is introduced into the way of life proper to CLC. This time is allotted for the candidate and the wider Community to discern the candidate's vocation. Once the decision has been taken, and approved by the wider Community, the member assumes a temporary commitment and, with the help of the Community, tests his/her aptitude for living according to the end and spirit of CLC. After a suitable period of time, determined by the General Norms, permanent commitment follows.

11. Community Bonding

As a primary means of formation and continuing growth, members come together on a regular basis in a stable local community, to assure a deep sharing by members of their faith and human life, a true community atmosphere and a strong commitment to mission and service.

12. Way of Life

a) The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God.

b) Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the advancement of God's reign, all individual members are called to an active participation in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence, concretely, to our world. Our broad and demanding mission requires of each member a willingness to participate in social and political life and to develop human qualities and professional skills in order to become more competent workers and convincing witnesses. Furthermore, it demands also simplicity in all aspects of life, in order to follow more closely Christ in His poverty and to preserve inner apostolic freedom.

c) Finally, each one assumes responsibility for participating in the meetings and other activities of the Community, and to help and encourage other members to pursue their
personal vocation, always ready to give and to receive advice and aid as friends in the Lord.

13. **Government**

a) The World Christian Life Community is governed by the General Assembly, which determines norms and policies, and by the Executive Council, which is responsible for their ordinary implementation. The composition and functions of these bodies are specified in the General Norms.

b) The National Community, constituted according to the General Norms, comprises all those members who are striving to live out the CLC way of life and mission within a given country. The National Community is governed by a National Assembly and an Executive Council. Their aims are to ensure the structures and formation programs necessary for responding effectively to what is needed for the harmonious development of the whole Community, and for an effective participation of Christian Life Community in the mission of the Church.

c) National Communities may, if they find it helpful, establish or approve regional or diocesan communities or centers, comprising the local communities of a given region, diocese, city or institution. They are constituted according to the General Norms and the National Statutes.

14. **Ecclesiastical Assistant**

Christian Life Community on each level has an ecclesiastical assistant, designated in accordance with Church law and the General Norms. The assistant takes part in the life of the community in its various levels according to the General norms. Working in collaboration with other leaders of the community, he is principally responsible for the Christian development of the whole community, and helps its members grow in the ways of God, especially through the Spiritual Exercises. In virtue of the mission given him by the hierarchy, whose authority he represents, he also has special responsibility for doctrinal and pastoral concerns and for the harmony proper to a Christian community.

15. **Property**

Christian Life Community on each level can, if it is useful, own and administer property as a public ecclesial person, in accordance with Church law and the civil laws of the country in question. Ownership and administration of such property belongs to the specific community.
12B. Projects 150 on Membership

World CLC Day 2012 – The Meaning of CLC Membership

Our General Principles, specifically GP. 10, describes membership in CLC as an authentic, personal vocation. Membership is the result of a process of discernment and assumes a genuine, living commitment of the individual (from the small group and/or local community to the national and global community) and is understood, along with our lifestyle (GP. 12), to be complementary to the great Apostolic Body that CLC represents. On World CLC Day 2012, we invite all communities and close friends to contemplate what a genuine and full membership in CLC means. This will involve living a commitment within CLC, living our three pillars of spirituality (formation), community and mission (apostolic works), being financially co-responsible, and responding to all that we are called to live within our community.

Some problems understanding CLC “membership” today
Membership is understood and influenced by human structures (social, political and cultural) that prevail in the world today. In other words, in many cases, membership is understood as belonging to formal groups that can easily become isolated, discrete places, where we can assume our identity as distinct from “others”, or even getting to the point of excluding them.

From this perspective, membership often establishes a divide or set distances between people. Often, this separation is achieved by virtue of what is found at a material or relational level i.e. by membership of clubs or groups, or by associations of exclusive elites which are recognized as superior by some economic, intellectual or social indicator. On other occasions, membership of groups can be formed based on differences in culture, ethnic origin, beliefs or other reasons. For example, ethnic groups and/or immigrants may organize themselves based on place of origin, or certain religious affiliation and may isolate themselves to strengthen their identity. As a community, we are also partly a reflection of our context. Being under the influence of the structures surrounding us, it is important that we pause and ask ourselves how we understand and live out the meaning of membership in CLC in the midst of this reality.

We now invite the community to have a “first moment of reflection” with the following question:

*How much have social, economic, political or cultural realities influenced my understanding of the concept of membership as a person, as a Christian and as a member of CLC?*

Other perspectives
One view that can help us to understand the meaning of CLC membership is one that accepts us as human beings with our particularities and differences reflecting our social and cultural contexts, while at the same time recognizing ourselves as members of a single human family. As members of CLC, this is consistent with our conviction that we are sons and daughters of the same God who is above all an expression of profound love for his creation, especially for man and woman (Gen 2:1-7). God desires for us human beings that we understand the meaning of our existence as fully as possible so that we are not alone and live communally and fully (Gen. 2: 18 – 23).
An example that can help us to understand “membership” in this sense is one that is lived among family. The family is the most important place and starting point of the true school of faith, dignity and the re-creation of God’s love among its members and for all of humanity, especially the most outcast and vulnerable (GP 4). The family should be seen as more than mere kinship, but rather defined as more of a living community, where as members, we feel a level of trust, supportive coexistence and companionship in daily life. The family becomes a place of intimacy that permits a deep encounter with love that is serious, profound and responsible. It is also a place for the procreation of life, and through sustenance and guidance also for building a committed society. It is the place where the need for personal, as well as economic fulfillment, exists and is attained in solidarity. And above all, the spiritual life is the integrating element of the entire family experience.

Keys for understanding membership in CLC within our faith

a) **Community membership animated by the Holy Spirit:** “All were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1-11). Membership in CLC begins with certainty in the living strength of a God who fills our lives. In other words, we are aware that the loving presence of the Spirit enables us to affirm that God’s love is the transforming force which sustains us throughout our lives. Our identity is sustained by the certainty that God lives within us, in spite of our limitations, and it is out of His love that we are called to be part of this great community of men and women. We draw faith from this (GP. 2).

b) **Community membership and charity:** Look how they love one another! “All who believed were together and had all things in common … and distributed them to all, as any had needs”. (Acts 2: 44-45). Our experience of God … verifies that God himself has become one of us. The incarnation of Jesus is the key element of our vocation as Christians and as members of CLC. It is out of this reality that we acquire the sense of being a community. Membership in the community, beyond the formalities, is made visible by the deep love, commitment, solidarity and companionship which is affirmed in our communal experience (GP. 7).

c) **Community membership on mission to the most needy:** The Lord sent them two by two: “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:1-5). Therefore, the meaning of our membership (a) is woven from the identity that confirms the presence of the Spirit of God within us, (b) is affirmed by the communal expression of solidarity and loving brotherhood/sisterhood, and (c) becomes real in the mission which leads us to the most urgent needs in our world. Our membership is a firm commitment to go out in search of the poorest of the poor. Christ sends us out in community to work for the building of His kingdom. So then, the need for structures, processes (eg induction procedures), all of our formation programs, explicit financial co-responsibility, and any other processes for our integration and growth in CLC should always aim towards “mission and commitment” with reality (GP. 8). Only in this way do we become full “members.”

At this time we invite the community to a “second moment of reflection” on the following questions:
a) What has been my experience in discovering a loving God and the force of His Spirit in my life as a Christian and as a member of CLC?
b) What have been the most significant examples of community (e.g. of solidarity and brotherhood/sisterhood) we have experienced within CLC?
c) As members of CLC sent on the mission to build the kingdom, how have we responded through our apostolic commitment to the poor?

In this way, we seek to understand the meaning of Membership from these three keys.

Post-reflection task – World CLC Day 2012
Following your reflections, and in the interests of building community and membership awareness, you are asked to:

• Gather any news and photos from your World Day CLC 2012 celebrations
• With the support of local communities, produce a summary document.
• Send them to the EXCO (webmaster@cvx-clc.net) for the website (www.cvx-clc.net)

In closing, we give thanks to Mary our Mother for her living testimony of the meaning of membership - courageous, free and loving. Her example allows us to live out gradually a full membership as members of CLC in its entirety. Her testimony gives us a clear horizon to see that this will allow us to live out more fully our commitment as a World Apostolic Body.

Mauricio López Oropeza
Consultant

Lois Campbell
Consultant
Meeting 13: Membership and Commitment

In this meeting we continue our consideration of membership from our previous meeting by considering commitment to CLC.

*Temporary Commitment* is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life. This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation.* *(The CLC Charism, 177)*

*Permanent Commitment* is the culmination of our vocational discernment in which we express our desire to discover God’s will and fulfil it in our apostolic life, in answer to our specific call and our readiness to be sent on mission. *(The CLC Charism, 192)*

**Scripture texts** for meditation: John 1:35-49; Luke 19:1-10; Mark 1:16-20

**Supplemental readings** for reflection:
12A. General Principles Part Two (note in particular the reference to commitment in #10 and the description of way of life in #12)
   10. Members
   11. Community Bonding
   12. Way of Life
   13. Government
   14. Ecclesial Assistant
   15. Property
13A. Commitment and Freedom from the JesuitPrayer.org website (Real Freedom)
13B. Introduction to Commitment Ceremony: From Julian Elizalde, SJ, former World CLC Ecclesial Assistant
13C. CLC Commitment Fall09 Newsletter: Brief reflection by Rick Kunklc from the CLCNW Newsletter

**Questions for reflection and sharing:** Remember that these questions are “starter” questions. In your reading, thought and prayer you may have some other point to bring to the group – so you are not limited to these questions or any that might be presented to you.

What strikes you in your reflection, both positively and negatively? What feelings arise in your heart?

What does the language of temporary or permanent commitment evoke in you? What problems or graces does this raise for you?
As you explore the CLC Way of Life is there a sense of call and fit for you? What are your desires regarding membership in CLC? What draws you toward CLC? What draws you away?

Do you have a desire (or not) to continue to explore and discern a commitment to CLC? What draws you toward commitment and what draws you away? Consider writing these things down.

Do you feel peace with the result of your discernment?
13A. Real Freedom

I wonder how St. Ignatius and his first companions felt on this night in 1541. They were on the cusp of making a major commitment. The next day, they would walk across Rome to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls, where they would profess their solemn vows as Jesuits.

We often hesitate at the thought of making permanent commitments, especially ones that reconfigure the whole of our lives, such as getting married or entering a religious vocation. Our culture feeds this anxiety, telling us freedom comes in having unlimited options available to us.

For St. Ignatius, freedom meant something different. It was found not in having many options, but instead in pursuing one option wholeheartedly, namely, the option for God and the will of God as it is made known to me in my life.

What commitment is God asking me to make that will bring me into a deeper freedom?

—Vincent Strand, S.J., a Jesuit scholastic of the Wisconsin Province, is studying theology in preparation for priestly ordination at the International College of the Gesù in Rome.

From JesuitPrayer.org
13B. Act of Commitment in CLC

Introduction

Act of Commitment in CLC
Julián Elizalde, S.J.
Rome, May 1st, 2005

A community's life depends on the vitality of its members. The source of this vitality is to be found in the Spirit who calls them and in the personal response to this vocation. It is the Spirit, therefore, who makes a CLC Community bloom, grow and bear fruit but, at the same time, a CLC community blooms and grows when many of its members are generous in their response to this call.

The visible expression of this response is their personal committed to the CLC way of life.

If few members commit themselves publicly we can ask: are these communities "alive"? Do they grow and flourish? Sometimes the community is strong and active. Many of its members are deeply committed, for a long time, and even carry upon their shoulders the burdens of the institution, but have not yet formulated their commitment publicly. Doing it publicly would be helpful; it reinforces the community [and the individual members]; it is "sacramental" (a sign that does what it signifies).

What does commitment to CLC mean?

In whichever way admission takes place, the new members must be helped by the Community to decide whether a call, an ability and a willingness to live it are present, and to become identified with the wider Christian Life Community. After a period of time normally no longer than four years and no less than one, they assume a temporary commitment to this way of life. An experience of the Spiritual Exercises is strongly recommended as a means of arriving at this personal decision. [GN 2]

The temporary engagement continues as such until, after a process of discernment, the member expresses his or her permanent commitment to CLC, unless he or she freely withdraws from the community or is excluded by it. The length of time between temporary and permanent commitment should be ordinarily no more than eight years and no less than two. [GN 3]

Commitment is the arrival goal of a journey and the starting point of a new one. It is the arrival goal in the sense that the decision to make the commitment is the fruit of a journey, of an experience: we want to be Christian and live out our faith with these brothers and sisters in CLC. It is also a starting point: from now on we belong more fully to the community and we assure you of our cooperation with the community's mission; you can count on us!

It is not a commitment to put us at the service of the CLC community, but of the Lord. "This is the place where we feel called to serve the Lord and His Church."
Vocation is a central element in commitment. We understand vocation as a lived experience, as a personal journey. Our vocation is the place where we live, bloom and bear fruit as persons and as Christians. That is what God wants for us, this is our vocation.

Not withstanding our weaknesses and those of the community. Making our commitment does not mean that we consider the CLC to be the best or the more apostolic community of the Church. Along the years living and working together we have learned about our limitations and about the shortcoming of our brothers and sisters. Our commitment means that we have come to terms with our poverty and despite these limitations we trust the Lord's grace. His Spirit will not fail us and will even draw some good from our poverty. We feel at home in CLC.

"This is the ground where we live, bloom and flourish as persons and as Christians in our friendships and in our faith; in our hope and in our service".

Our commitment is the answer to many graces we have received from the Lord, particularly since we joined the community. The Lord has called us first. We have received so much. Our commitment is a grateful answer to His love.

To what do we commit ourselves?

We commit ourselves to CLC's way of life and mission. In the General Principles there is a clear description of this way of life to which we commit ourselves:

"...to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God" [GP 12 #a].

This GP speaks of "active participation in the vast field of apostolic service, and of apostolic discernment, without forgetting", "the participation in the meetings and other activities of the community" [GP 12 #b and #c].

The commitment binds us not only to the local community or group but to the World Community as an apostolic body in the Church. The commitment means also being attentive to God, to people around us, to the signs of the times and to the Spirit speaking to us through these events. Thus, commitment is also a starting point. The daily review of life, regular spiritual direction and the annual retreat are the expression of a deep desire to maintain our hearts, with the community's help, attentive, open and vigilant.

Conclusion

Commitment is the arrival goal of a journey we started moved by the question: what shall I do for Christ? When we make up our minds and ask our community leaders to allow us to join the sisters and brothers who in the next celebration will make their commitment we bear witness to the Spirit who has guided us up to this moment. Commitment is the starting point of a journey
guided by the same question: *what shall I do for Christ?* And the Spirit assures us of His faithful presence, renewing every day the love that moves us to serve and enlightening our hearts so that we know what and how to do and say.

*Father Julián Elizalde, S.J. was the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Christian Life Community from 1999 to 2000*
13C. Reflection on CLC Commitment/Recommitment

What is commitment to CLC about? The CLC General Norms state that after a period of time learning about CLC and the CLC way of life, a CLC member along with their community can discern “whether a call, an ability and a willingness to live it (CLC way of life) are present.” Commitment is expressed by a public declaration to the community of one’s desire to live the CLC way of life first at the present time (temporary commitment) and then as a lifelong experience (permanent commitment). So why would someone want to make a commitment to a CLC way of life and what exactly is being committed to?

We have already made a commitment to a Catholic/Christian way of life through our baptism and confirmation, so why also commit to CLC? When I first joined CLC I was looking for community. I knew little about Ignatian Spirituality. The opportunity to share faith experiences in my CLC community was wonderful. But as CLC/Ignatian ways begin to permeate my life I became more conscious of the movement of God in my experiences. My sense of God expanded and a “God of Infinite Possibilities” began nudging me along on my journey and calling me to more. Making a temporary and then permanent commitment to CLC was an expression of my desire to respond to this call and continue my journey in the CLC way of life.

When we make a temporary or permanent commitment to CLC, what are we committing to? On one level we are making a commitment to be present to the CLC community. In particular this is a commitment to our local community. We are also committing ourselves to a way of life rooted in Ignatian spirituality and in mission (Christ’s). What does this mean? I believe it means paying more attention to my experiences, my feelings, and my prayer and in this way recognizing the ever-present God in my life. It means sharing my experiences in community. My experiences in CLC have also made me more aware that we are called not only to belong to the Church, but also to be the Church. CLC is a way of being church. As Larry Gooley, SJ once said, “CLC is not a parallel church, it is Church. It is a community of love and companionship within the Church community.” And like the Church, CLC is a world body. It is an association of the faithful but is specifically lay in formation and commitment. It is a way to bring forward the vision for the laity expressed in Vatican II; a way to become the church we are called to be; to carry out Christ’s work in the world. This is mission.

The CLC General Norms and Charism documents provide guidance on what should be considered when discerning a commitment to a CLC way of life. I think it is important to see this information as guidance and not as a set of rules. As Ignatian people we are called to discern our desires and hopes and to consider where God is leading or seeking us. You may not feel called to CLC or ready to make a commitment. That is okay. There are many ways for each of us to live the call to be Christ in the world. Where you are at may be where you need to be now. You may also find there are times when it is valuable to affirm your commitment to CLC or to recommit to your CLC community. My journey in CLC has opened up possibilities that have been both challenging and life giving. My commitment to CLC is an affirmation of my desire to continue seeking how I am called to carry on the mission of Christ.

-Rick Kunkle

Rick Kunkle, CLCNW Winter 2009 Newsletter