Regional Fall Retreat Is a Spiritual and Attendance Success

By Ken Keefner

The North Central Region’s Biennial Fall Retreat was an encouraging success. Eighteen participants gathered in Cedar Falls, Iowa, to be led by Fr. Kevin Schneidder, SJ, who aided us in realizing “our personal holiness.” His verbal presentations and accompanying music directed our holy hearts and thoughts to be directed toward others.

He also reminded us of the rich resources contained in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. In addition, he re-introduced the use of “preparatory-prayer” before entering into any activity. Preparatory-prayer means a brief prayer prior to praying, walking or entering a meeting. Using such a prayer allows us to be intentional in our prayer. Fr. Schneider incorporated facets of the Spiritual Exercises and emphasized Fr. Greg Boyle’s “Now. Here. This.” in encouraging us to strive to be actively in the present moment with our Lord. The Retreat House and grounds added to the grandeur of the creativity and gifts the Lord showered upon us.

The unexpected gift of the weekend was in meeting four people from the Davenport area that are the seeds for new CLC communities. Marie-Catherine and Pierre Guyot come to us from France and have many years of experience in CLC there. In addition, Sr. Judy Herold and Jane Trasoweep have been energetically involved in inviting people to a year’s discovery of CLC.

The full Saturday of retreat and reflection was followed by Mass and an active and entertaining social evening, including song, jokes, poetry, limericks and much, much laughter. At Saturday breakfast, Michael Dante challenged us to a limerick contest; in succeeding issues of the newsletter we will include some of the limericks and jokes shared during the evening.

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Making time to be with our community amplified the retreat experience as we lived together in quiet. Silence that followed presentations helped me to listen and discover where I am called and consider that God’s love and mercy is unbounded.

Be in the NOW. Be present to experience Love and Mercy. Mercy is in the NOW. Be. Hear. Now. Listen, be present to others and self and God. God is ever present and untiring of loving us. Feeling this frees me from useless self-chatter.

Distilling what I experienced into single thoughts and limericks helped clarify my feelings.

Remember what resources there are in the Spiritual Exercises and in Pope Francis’ writing on the Beatitudes: Gaudete et Exultate

Music helps open us to deeper parts of ourselves.

It helps to be with others in an intentional community with support, seeing, experiencing many gifts shared.

Pray with intention. Pre-pray.

Be grateful; that is, Experience Grace.

Omaha Ignatian Collaborative Event

Several months ago, CLC was invited by John Sealey, provincial assistant for Social and International Ministries, to join with representatives of some of the local Ignatian Ministries in order to enter into conversation among the various groups and missions.

The idea is to provide an opportunity for Ignatian-inspired groups to get to know how others live out the mission of St. Ignatius. This could enhance each group and open new ways of collaboration that will benefit us all and the living out of our particular missions.

All CLC groups and Ignatian-inspired groups in the Omaha area are invited Dec. 12 for “Mass, Dinner and Conversation,” a celebration of who we are and what we do. Mass will begin at 6 p.m., and groups are invited to bring display materials that will give all who attend a greater idea of other Ignatian groups in the Omaha area.

Mark your calendars for Dec. 12. The location is tentatively on the Creighton campus, but details will be provided via email. For more information, contact Ken Keefner at 402-334-5105.

Next newsletter, February ‘19
Looking Back at Leadership Role
By Maryanne Rouse

I have been asked to share a few thoughts as I cycle out of regional leadership, which was effective in October at the Regional Gathering in Cedar Falls at the American Martyrs Retreat Center.

J. Berry and I assumed leadership roles shortly before Fr. Jack Zuercher, SJ, died. Since then, we have functioned as a Leadership Council, mostly by telephone, usually once a month or so. We were joined by Jeanne Sieger, Wisconsin promoter; Ken Keefner, Nebraska promoter; Fr. Luis Rodriguez, SJ, Jesuit assistant; Bob Smith, treasurer; Mary Kuhlman, bookkeeper and minder of check-writing and bill-paying; and Marianne Hall, at-large member. Most recently, our newly commissioned chair, Michael Dante, Milwaukee, was added. It was a glad day when Michael’s discernment led him to agree to join us as chair of the Leadership Council.

For the most part here in the region, we live CLC life within our communities. But occasionally, we are invited to share community life beyond our local communities in a regional retreat, national assembly or as part of a national CLC training experience. Personally, my CLC life has been enhanced enormously by these experiences. As a leader, I wish that I had been successful in motivating more of us to give these gatherings a try.

Finally, to end on notes of gratitude: My colleagues on the Leadership Council are terrific. Fr. Luis was just what we needed as a successor to Fr. Jack. Most of you reading this have shared some pieces of these years with me. I thank you. Finally, for now, there is a CLC-USA National Assembly July 18 – 21, 2019, in Pittsburgh. Solidarity funds are available. Hope to see you in Pittsburgh!

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Better yet, come hear them for yourselves at our next Biennial Fall Retreat in 2020! I personally feel the weekend and socialization of that evening were the adhesive that bonded us all together as a true CLC community.

The Cleveland ‘Conclave’
By Michael Dante

The national officers and National Coordinating Council (NCC) had its annual in-person meeting in Cleveland this past September. Our theme flowed from the World Assembly, acknowledging our gifts and sharing them with others. We prayerfully discussed the current strengths CLC-USA has, as well as those areas we as a community are “stuck.” This exercise helped provide direction for the upcoming year and approaching National Assembly in July 2019.

After this prayerful experience, we moved to business. We discerned two national officers. On the third ballot, Barbara Rudolph was chosen president-elect and Carmen Castagno was elected treasurer, unanimously. We are excited about the leadership they will bring, ideas they have offered, and their dedication to CLC.

We had conversations on community growth: Currently, there are 725 members in CLC-USA. We also officially welcomed two new communities at the national level, Quo Vadis (Wichita, Kansas), Family Companions (Fairfax, Virginia); as well as two new pre-CLC groups in Utah and Maine.

Ways of sharing the gifts of CLC and the Spiritual Exercises were discussed, and we had some extensive conversations on the Guides Course, a major initiative of CLC-USA. The current approach is three-fold: (1) to provide guides a consistent understanding of their role, (2) to create a community of guides to grow and share wisdom, and (3) to have the guides become the trainers of future guides in their region.

We also discussed the upcoming National Assembly from July 18-21, 2019, and previous World Assembly. Another discussion area was the budget, which is running at a deficit. More discernment will occur as we explore our co-financial responsibility to CLC-USA and increase contributions for the World-CLC.

Overall, there was a good spirit and building excitement for the National Assembly next year.
For many people the fall season is the favorite one of the year’s cycle. Nature displays its brightest colors, cooler air temperatures provide a relief from hot summer days and it is also harvest season, undoubtedly the favorite season for farmers. But the fields are not the only locus of harvesting. All of us are called to harvest what the Lord has planted in our hearts in the course of our lives. Our twice-a-month CLC gatherings are both a harvesting and a renewed planting, as in faith sharing we both offer/plant and receive/harvest.

This past quarter has meant for me a lot of traveling, the last of which was our regional retreat in Cedar Falls, Iowa, definitely a time for both planting and harvesting. I know that others are reporting here on this rich experience, so I will simply express my gratitude for the opportunity to widen anew my own awareness of CLC as something larger than my own group. This time the widening was enhanced by the presence of four members from the Quad Cities, where they have recently formed two groups with a total of 16 members. Talk about harvest!

Other travels took me to visit our Wisconsin CLC groups. Visiting the Des Moines group is not really travel, just a somewhat longer ride. I have not visited some of the Omaha groups in quite a while, but you know that, other than meeting regularly with my own group, I only visit on invitation. So, please feel free to invite me.

It is always impressive to see the generous dedication of members, who have served in the Executive Committee \((Exco)\) for many years and continue to do so. But it is very important and seriously needed that other members in our region “step up to the plate” and relieve our veterans. We should not take for granted that those, who have served many years, will continue to be willing and even able to do it. So, allow me to challenge all of you to consider serving in the Executive Committee.

—Fr. Luis

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The Joy of Accompanying Pre-CLC Groups in the Quad Cities

By Marie-Catherine Guyot

Pierre and I arrived from France three years ago, having been members of CVX (CLC France) for 10 years. Pierre was also a member of the CVX assembly, and I was a guide and involved in formation texts redaction. We came with the deep desire to keep on that fruitful journey as apostles of Jesus. We found that CLC was not present in the Quad Cities, so we nurtured the dream to create some groups. Our contacts with CLC USA were from the beginning very warm and supportive.

Sharing our life-changing experience with faith-sharing groups rooted in Ignatian spirituality with our parish book club, we felt a strong interest from priests and lay people. They felt it might be nice to offer to people who would like to go deeper after Bible studies or a parish retreat experience. We had the confirmation that our desire to establish CLC was well-founded.

With no Jesuits in the Quad Cities area, we needed an American, Ignatian-compatible spiritual guide. Our priest sent us to Sister Judy, SSND, newly retired (and his actual sister!). We are so blessed that her discernment led her to accept the challenge. She is enthusiastic, a great listener and much appreciated by everyone. What a blessing it has been to build the project together with her!

Twenty-five people, invited by word of mouth, came to our three presentation meetings. Fifteen discerned to commit to our seven (or so) pre-CLC meetings including a retreat weekend. What a joy to hear how they have been moved by the first two meetings!

And what a joy to attend the regional retreat in Cedar Rapids. We experienced a real sense of being with long-time companions even though we had just met. That’s the miracle of companionship rooted in the Gospel and Ignatian Spirituality!
Praying for Our Leaders and Each Other

At the closing of the CLC Regional Conference, CLCers prayed this prayer of blessing on Michael Dante, the new chair of the Leadership Council. Michael took a seat in the middle of the group, and all laid hands on him while Marianne Rouse read “For A Leader,” from *To Bless the Space Between Us* by John O’Donohue. She reminded everyone that “we all share the function of ‘leadership’ in CLC,” and that each should say this prayer for members of the CLC Region.

**For a Leader**

May you have the grace and wisdom
To act kindly, learning
To distinguish between what is
Personal and what is not.
May you be hospitable to criticism.

May you never put yourself at the center of things.
May you act not from arrogance but out of service.
May you work on yourself,
Building up and refining the ways of your mind.

May those who work for you know
you see and respect them.

May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
in order to engage with those who meet you.
When someone fails or disappointments you,

May the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement.

May you treasure the gifts of the mind
Through reading and creative thinking
So that you continue as a servant of the frontier
Where the new will draw its enrichment from the old.
And you never become a functionary.

May you know the wisdom of deep listening,
The healing of wholesome words,
The encouragement of the appreciative gaze,
The decorum of held dignity,
The springtime edge of the bleak question.

May you have a mind that loves frontiers,
So that you can evoke the bright fields
That lie beyond the view of the regular eye.

May you have good friends
To mirror your blind spots.

May leadership be for you
A true adventure of growth.

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