Implementing Clarities of the Assembly
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Editorial Foreword

Awareness, a Gift and a Challenge

In a neighboring town, hundreds of mourners gathered to be present at the funeral Mass of a twenty-two year old woman who died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. People in the church were very aware of the fragility of human existence. Some cried openly and others whispered, “How can this be? Why? How unfair!” Each mourner was dealing with the situation differently.

Many of us have had the wonderful experience of becoming aware of an expected child or grandchild. With this awareness, we were filled with joy. It was easy to react with smiles and thanksgiving at the knowledge and anticipation of the new life that was on the way.

Awareness can be described in many ways: having knowledge, realizing, becoming conscious, being vigilant, becoming informed, discovering. It comes to us in a variety of ways: through the speech and writing of others, through the actions of those we encounter, through happy and tragic events, and through observation. For us in Christian Life Community, awareness comes alive in prayer and discernment. In my life, one of the most powerful tools and gifts of Ignatian spirituality is the awareness examen. I get clarity about who I am, where God is in my life today and where I discover God calling me to be.

Recently at daily Mass, we read from the first book of Samuel. When Samuel was in the charge of Eli, we read of his being awakened by a voice. More than once he assumed that it was Eli calling to him. With Eli’s guidance we know the response Samuel was to give when he heard the voice again. “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9) I often ask myself, how well am I listening?

After the National Assembly this past summer, CLC members came away with greater clarity about the present reality of CLC in the USA. We shared our gifts joyfully, identified our paralyses sadly, embraced our differences lovingly and looked ahead to our frontiers hopefully. Together these represented gifts and challenges of being made aware of who we are as CLC. Hopefully, the energy and promise we experienced in Pittsburgh continues to be spread and shared throughout our communities.

WITHIN THIS ISSUE

In “NOW the Bread of Life Is Rising” President Barb Rudolph gives suggestions as follow-up to the Pittsburgh Assembly. She mentions getting involved in new ways in our communities, working as a team and using our creative gifts as ways to deepen and share our CLC way of life.

Father John Lan Tran, S.J., in “Reflecting on Approaching the Four Frontiers,” tells of his experience with one of the frontiers, that of Integral Ecology. Some of Father’s comments question the values of social advocacy and that of communal discernment as he observed them in the past. An exception was noted in what happened at the Assembly.

Lois Campbell’s “A Call to Growth in Our Capacity to Discern” focuses on the experience of communal discernment that took place at the 2019 Assembly. Lois revisits the process and urges us to use this valuable tool in our daily environment in CLC, the Church and the world.

In “Our Way of Finding God (OWFG) Project,” Nam Phan Huy describes in depth the vision and plans for expanding and enriching the Dong Hanh CLC ministry to young adults. Read about the Core Needs that were identified and The Unified Vision that was articulated as they move forward.

The gift of community is the focus of Patrick Cleary-Burns’ article, “I’ve Always Had a Table.” Patrick tells his experience of community locally and in a deepening way in the world beyond Cleveland.

Ann Marie Brennan’s offering, “The Synod,” is timely and informative. She explains about synods in general and speaks specifically about The Amazonian Synod. Along with Ann Marie, we await the response from Pope Francis on the subject.

“God of Surprises” by Eunae Christina Kim describes the National Korean CLC’s invitation to collaborate with Korean Jesuits in Australia in offering
spiritual guidance to Korean speaking people there. They responded positively - giving back what they had received.

Father Dominic Totaro, S.J. in “Follow-up at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Assembly” recaps the meeting held in MAR following the National Assembly. The goal was to ‘experience and expand’ communal discernment and to deepen awareness of how the region is called to proceed in the frontier of Integral Ecology.

In “Deepen, Share, Go Forth” Patrick Cleary-Burns reports on the ways Reiman Great Lakes Region has responded to both the National and World Assemblies. He shares some upcoming events which will deepen and share CLC identity and actions regionally.

Mary Juliano’s “Memorial of St. Francis Xavier” was written as an Advent reflection for her parish bulletin and website. As CLC members we are called to be prophetic, discerning people and communities on mission. Mary’s words focus on mission as she experiences it and as she challenges us to do, as well.

Included in this issue is a page on The Four Frontiers. This is a good reminder and refresher of the framework for personal and communal mission.

It was heartening to see that some regions took seriously the mandate to Deepen. Share and Go Forth. It is our hope that other regions will follow suit in keeping the spirit, energy and clarities of the recent National Assembly alive. Our Summary Document should be close at hand as we discern and move forward.

In gratitude to the Lord,
Dorothy M. Zambito

IN MEMORIAM

James (Jim) Dunbeck, Companions CLC, Detroit, 12/9/17.

James (Jim) Fidler, Sojourners CLC, Detroit, 8/28/19.

Lawrence (Larry) Lang, Sojourners CLC, Detroit, 10/20/19.


Renato Villavicencio, Brother of Teresita Centenera, Formerly of San Lorenzo CLC, New York, 1/27/20.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.
May the perpetual light shine upon them.
May their souls and the souls of all
the faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God
Rest in peace.
Amen

On the cover: Korean CLC in Australia; Impact ministries in the Dominic Republic; Metro NY Day of Prayer.

Please Note:

This issue of Harvest is the last issue of 2019. It is time to renew your subscription for hard copies. See Page 23.
President’s Corner

Barb Rudolph
President

NOW the Bread of Love Is Rising!

Take my gifts and let me love you God as You have first of all loved me. Now the Bread of Love is rising...Now the Bread of Love is rising...Because Your love has touched me, I have love to give away...Take a risk of new adventure, taste and zest beyond belief.

Bernadette Farrell, song Take My Gifts

The bigger picture is that our after-Assembly activities and projects give us ways to develop further our relationships with each other and also provide experiences for members to become involved in more “layers” of CLC, albeit in clusters, regions or national committees. Hopefully, this will provide opportunities for leadership development for our members. It is important for us as an organization to encourage “newer” or “younger” members to invest and be involved in our CLC-USA governing structures. It often takes several years for people to branch out to the larger CLC. Being a member of Christian Life Community is a process and experience.

Additionally, as we work with other members, we appreciate ways of working together as One Body, the overall theme of our Assembly. Being One Body includes ways of learning more about our strengths and talents as well as celebrating some of our differences. In the process, we deepen relationships and learn to trust each other. It also helps us to enhance the stages of personal development that are described in CLC literature. (See Formation Stages on the World CLC website.)

The medium sized picture is that as we begin to look at ways of implementing ideas that are an outgrowth of the Assembly, there are many key concepts to keep in mind.

First, we need to recognize that at least the next four-plus years is the time frame for working on our 2019 Assembly goals. This gives each of us time to look at one, or more than one, aspect of the Assembly thoughtfully, thoroughly and with intentional energy. Each of us may have a slightly different way of getting involved, but basically, I would encourage each of us to respond to something that touched us, or something that made us think that there is “the more” of the activity. Having been at the Assembly helps us to want to deepen and share the experience.

Simultaneously, we have time to savor the event by working more steadily and also looking at smaller parts of the Assembly. We are able to “slow down” our process so that we can appreciate it more completely. Hopefully, this process will make people feel more satisfied. Some members felt that the Assembly process became too pressured. Certainly prayer and discernment are part of this process and can help us to deepen our relationship with God.

As we look at our interests and talents, we also need to look at our other life responsibilities so that our lives are in balance. Years ago, when I worked at a local hospital, the physician in charge of the unit kept stressing that TEAM stands for Together Each Accomplishes More. Working as a team can be a life-giving growth experience. The energizing relationship-based process of working together can help us feel a sense of camaraderie.
Likewise, if there are discussions about ways of proceeding or different options regarding the planning process, learning to work together and perhaps compromising can be a healthy way to deepen our relationships with each other. Even if you were not at the Assembly, there are still many ways that you can get involved. We welcome all members as participants in this process!

Lastly, I would encourage us to have some fun while we work on Assembly proposals! Might there be theme songs that we could sing as mantras along with our One Body song; pictures taken that tell the story of what we are doing; other artwork that might summarize some aspect of the Assembly? Could we develop videos or perhaps write a skit or have a communal dance? Sharing our creativity is another way of enhancing a sense of connectivity and energy. Could we have a Bread of Love contest? What other creative ways of sharing can you envision?

Please pray for each other as we work on Assembly themes and processes. May the Love of God be deep within each of our hearts, overflowing and rising to touch those we encounter. Savor the experience and go forth!

World CLC Day 2020

Join with our CLC brothers and sisters around the world in celebrating. Prepare by reading and praying over PROJECTS No. 173.

“Young people are an indispensable part of the CLC apostolic body.”

In 2019, Pope Francis published the Apostolic Exhortation, Christus vivit. It is dedicated to young people, providing a “deep and refined framework to shape the relationship between youth, Christian communities, youth ministry and the Church as a whole.”

PROJECTS No. 173 provides quotes and reflection materials from Christus vivit for our preparation for World CLC Day. Keep in mind that Youth is one of the Four Frontiers of CLC.
At the recent CLC-USA Assembly, I talked with several people about their reactions to the workshops on the four frontiers. I would say that their initial reactions fell into two categories: curious (and cautious) and enthusiastic (and supportive). I belong to the first group, curious but cautious, and so I offer some personal reflection on how I approach the four frontiers.

Overall, I am curious and even enthusiastic about our four frontiers. Take ecology, for example. I have always been supportive of ecological efforts. When I graduated from college in 1991, my first job involved doing environmental research, air quality to be exact. In that job, I had the opportunity to learn about environmental regulations, air testing, pollution inventories and many other things. I also had the chance to travel to many parts of the country. In one particular project in Duluth, Minnesota, I worked on a team that tested “alternative de-icing agents,” alternatives to salt for melting snow. I remember that every time a snow storm approached Duluth, I would fly there to do tests. It was very, very cold, and we did not succeed in finding the appropriate alternative de-icing agents.

I left the job in environmental research in 1994 to work on computer programming, but I remained interested in environmental issues. As a Catholic, I believe that all humans have personal responsibility to protect God’s creation.

Coming back to the four frontiers, the issue for me is how to carry them out because I am weary of social advocacy. When I think about ecology, for example, I recall that in the promotion of Gospel justice, some Jesuits after the Vatican Council understood Gospel justice to be social justice, and some became directly involved in politics. This happened in many countries in Central and South America. One well known example was Fr. Fernando Cardenal who left the Jesuits in 1984 to serve as Minister of Education in Nicaragua. (He was readmitted later after resigning from his post.)

Without debating particular cases, the flip side of social advocacy, coupled with my experience of growing up under Communism, left me cynical and hesitant. If one studies the history of the last 40 years, I am not sure if social advocacy does much good. I have visited several countries in Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize), and I have mixed feelings about the changes that happened there since the 1970s. Some of these places experienced wars and social upheavals. Without going into a social analysis of each situation, recent events with immigrants seem to prove that things have not gotten much better in many countries.

These situations and other similar examples make me cautious about the four frontiers. While intellectually I understand the need to be involved, experiences lead me to be distrustful that some advocacy issues would drag CLC-USA into political messes. I admit that my hesitancy with the four frontiers is a personal issue. Perhaps I belong to the generation that does not want to “change the world.”

Yet, for me hesitancy is an invitation to more prayer and real communal discernment. Based on my experience since becoming NEA, I have not witnessed much communal discernment in CLC-USA, and I suspect some may have experienced painful communal discernments. Many of our decisions seemed to be based on discussion and compromises instead of prayer and discernment.

Let me end this by saying that not all of my recent experiences of communal discernments have been bad. It was amazing to witness what happened at the last CLC World Assembly. Somehow hundreds of delegates came together as one body to listen to God. Perhaps God is inviting us to embrace the four frontiers by overcoming our own personal frontiers of fear and pride.
A Call to Grow in Our Capacity to Discern

Lois Campbell

Our days together as an Assembly in Pittsburgh were, in my view, deeply graced. The Spirit did wonderful work through us during those days—in discernment, in relationship-building, in prayer and worship, in play and celebration. I will not soon forget the image of 183 people across so many cultures and languages praying, sharing in small groups, worshipping together, meeting or re-connecting at socials and meals, at the banquet and dancing into the night on Saturday. I smile every time I look at our picture on the cover of Harvest - one diverse discerning community on mission.

For me the central grace of the Pittsburgh Assembly was discovering, sharing and owning who we are as CLC in the USA with all of our gifts, our flaws and our great diversity. The central challenge going forward will be helping each other stay connected to the energy and graces of those days. We told ourselves in the Summary Document what we/CLC need(s) to do to be faithful to the grace given in those days. Now we just need to do it.

I am grateful for the National Coordinating Council’s work to bring the Assembly Summary to us. Are we living the Spiritual Exercises, practicing the Examen, and using the three rounds of sharing in our communities? Are we discerning with each other, sending each other, supporting each other on mission and evaluating each other as we are on mission (DSSE)? Do we need accountability in CLC that is mutual to each other as well as to the leadership and the organization. We are one Body!

As Denis Dobelstein, World CLC President, reminded us, the most important gifts that Christian Life Community brings to Church and world are personal discernment and communal discernment. At the Assembly, we experienced it together using the three rounds of sharing as a fundamental tool for growing in our capacity to listen to the Spirit speaking in the group. How do we increase our own capacity for discernment and communal discernment so that we can share them?

Our Church and country need what CLC has to offer. I write this as the House of Representatives is getting ready to vote on impeachment. We are divided as a nation around politics, climate issues, immigration, healthcare, guns and so much more. We have always had major places of disagreement and will have them. Now it seems nearly impossible to even discuss many issues. Too often, just the mention of an issue leaves us so polarized that real conversation in communities and sometimes even in families, seems impossible.

The Church is also wounded. In Pittsburgh, it is from the abuse by some of our clergy and the pain of merging and closing parishes. Here too we are divided or perhaps just not taking the time to listen to each other’s hopes and hurts.

Through CLC we have gifts, tools and skills that are desperately needed in our world. Recently I was invited to think about communal discernment not only as a way of decision making but as a guided and structured spiritual conversation that helps a group grow in its ability to listen to the prompting of the Spirit. The skills of communal discernment are helpful to the group whether there is a specific decision to be made or not. The central tool for communal discernment is three rounds of sharing.

What came up for me as I prayed? (Round 1)
What comes up for me when I listen to all of you? (Round 2)
What might the Spirit be saying to us? (Round 3)

Lois Campbell is a member of the Chesed CLC in Pittsburgh, PA. She is currently the Chairperson of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Lois is on the National Guides Team. She is a former President of CLC-USA and served on the World ExCo. Her professional work is in leadership development, group process and facilitation.
As we pray and learn to listen to the Spirit’s nudge to our own hearts, listen deeply and nonjudgmentally to each other in the first round. Share what each of us heard during that second round. Then back up further to listen for and share how God might be leading the group as a group. We are practicing discernment. We are learning to listen to God’s voice not only in our own hearts but also in the group. How exciting is that!

We live in a world that cries out for interiority, for respectful listening, for honoring the preciousness of each person and the earth that supports us. The Spiritual Exercises and regular practice of the Examen, teach us to listen and respond to God’s Spirit in everyday life. We learn to distinguish impulses that are of God/of Love from those coming from selfish or wounded places. In our groups if we use the three rounds, we increase our capacity to discern together. In what ways do we bring these particular gifts to our relationships, our parishes, our workplaces?

I’ve Always Had a ‘Table’… The Gift of Community

Patrick Cleary-Burns

When Sharon and Andy Bramante invited my wife Jeannie and me to consider joining a new CLC, I thought about why it was so attractive. I realized that I have always had a “table.” My tables were always groups of people with whom I felt safe being myself. This was important for me because I felt called to be a lay minister inviting others into ministry…not exactly a typical career path. Living the CLC charism is also not a typical life choice. What my life journey has taught me is that I can live boldly when I trust my community to support, challenge and send me.

One of the miracles of CLC is that we are part of a world community of local communities. I love going to the World CLC website and clicking on the links to websites of CLC groups around the world, communities like South Sudan.

Over the past decades I have read about the awful history of famine, civil war and political violence in what is now South Sudan, but I never knew how to respond. Then I discovered the four CLCs in South Sudan. Each of the four has had one or more member(s) killed! I can’t even imagine how awful that must have been for each of those communities! Now their ministry is to visit with the families who have lost a family member and sit with them as sisters and brothers who know loss. In addition, two CLC members are also sitting on their diocesan Peace and Reconciliation Commission.

Now I can pray for my sisters and brothers in South Sudan. I have also asked folks on the World ExCo to share my prayers with the four CLCs in South Sudan and ask them to pray for our four communities here in Cleveland.

My CLC table keeps getting wider and more grace-filled every day. We in CLC are all challenged to live out our call to live in the image of our communal triune God of Love. May our loving God bless our local communities with the grace to participate actively in the very real faithful world-wide community of Christian Life Community.
Our Way of Finding God (OWFG) Project

Nam Phan Huy

Our Way of Finding God (OWFG) Project was introduced at the Dong Hanh Assembly in 2015 as a way to spearhead Young Adult Ministry. A Working Group was tasked with a mandate to develop a strategy and program to form young adult Christians. It occurred to the working group that it would be a journey into a communal discernment to assess the core needs of the young adults. The journey was filled with surprises and inspired us with insights, always energizing it with consolation, hope and joy, despite the many long laborious hours of teleconferencing, reading books, preparing reflections and gathering young adults to do pilot reflection series and programs. It was hard work, quiet work, but the Holy Spirit united the six members into one cohesive unit, bringing our individual gifts and talents together.

In 2018, at the Dong Hanh National Assembly the workgroup presented a package as the result of a discernment process. Here are some of the main points of the package.

Core Needs of Young Adults

The Church is entrusted with Christ’s mission: “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) Different ministries exist in the Church to serve people with unique needs and challenges. We need to journey with the ones to whom we will minister to help them encounter God where they are. Therefore, to consider forming a ministry for young adults (YAs), we need to understand what their real needs are.

1. The Process of Identifying and Confirming the Core Needs

The discernment on the core needs of YAs began with the 2015 DH-CLC Assembly in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This Assembly dedicated one whole day for the entire delegate assembly to go through a discernment process in which YAs who attended the Assembly shared their reflections on struggles, challenges and aspirations. The fruit of this discernment was a mandate titled “Our Way of Finding God” (OWFG) for the DH-CLC Executive Council to develop a proposal for reforming the YA ministry.

The OWFG Workgroup reviewed the report summarizing the reflection shared by YAs at the 2015 DH-CLC Assembly and worked to identify and differentiate authentic needs from their other needs. To further confirm the core needs, the Workgroup formed several pilot groups made up of YAs from both inside and outside the DH-CLC community and invited them to do the reflection series, “You Are My Beloved,” designed with questions to identify the core needs. Following are the needs summarized by the pilot group facilitators. These were categorized into three core needs by the Workgroup:

2. Core Needs

a. Sense of Belonging

YAs from the pilot groups characterized sense of belonging to include the need for a group:

• Where they can feel safe to be who they are,
• Where they can freely express themselves without fear of judgment and feel accepted,
• Where they feel a sense of purpose,
Where they have opportunities to connect with God in others, and
Where they are afforded opportunities to contribute with their skills to the common causes of the group.

b. Mentorship

- From their interaction with the adult seniors in the community, the YAs from pilot groups have found the way that the adult seniors approached them, with kindness, gentleness, compassion, care, patience, encouragement and understanding, has helped them greatly in their faith journey.
- They have found the adult seniors’ heartfelt sincerity, with the pure interest for YAs and willingness to be present with them, greatly helped in establishing trust that gives them confidence to seek guidance from their seniors.
- They also long for companionship with their peers, a relationship with friends who not only share the same aspirations and vision, but also can exchange experiences and ideas on many issues.
- They search for the kind of guidance similar to what Jesus gave His disciples.

c. Relationship with God

- The pilot groups echoed what was said by YAs at the 2015 Assembly. The community has nurtured and inspired them to pursue a deeper, more personal relationship with God. It provides opportunities for them to share their own faith journey and to receive affirmation of God’s presence, love and work in the sharing of their peers.
- They have also confirmed that the charity and apostolic services are a way for them to find and connect with God.

Unified Vision and Core Needs

The Core Needs have been identified and confirmed as unique areas where the ministry can help YAs encounter and follow God in living out their baptismal callings of Christ’s priestly, prophetic and kingly office. How can these core needs be met consistently? A vision is needed that can provide a clear direction to a long-term and sustainable ministry to effectively serve these YAs’ core needs.

The objective of the project “Our Way of Finding God” is to “form solid Christian characters,” as Pope Paul VI gave to CLC as its mission. In other words, by way of our particular CLC vocation, we are to assist the Church in forming solid young adult Christians. The objective is “not to form them into CLC communities, or to provide CLC formation to them with the intention to form them into CLC. Forming any young adults into CLC persons would be the job of Formation.”

1. What is the Proposed Unified Vision?

An in-depth reflection on the graced history of DH YA ministry in its entirety dates from the birth of Dong Hanh initially known as Linh Thao Movement to the present. It has revealed to the Workgroup quite a few significant lessons which are indeed graces. The reflection enlightened the Workgroup especially on the reason why the YA ministry was not sustainable in the past. One of the lessons learned from the history is the lack of a vision that should have been based on communal discernment, comprehensive review of past efforts as well as current reality, and involvement of YAs in the discernment process.

Hence, the vision the Workgroup has developed for this proposal is called Unified Vision because it is a fruit of the aforementioned combined elements. Following is the proposed Unified Vision for the YA ministry:

By way of our particular CLC vocation, we readily assist the Church to journey with the YAs to embrace a Christ-centered life. We foster their desire to deepen relationship with God through discerning communities, and prepare them to respond passionately to the call of apostleship in their daily lives.

How can the Unified Vision help the YA ministry satisfy the YAs’ core needs?

2. Unified Vision and Sense of Belonging

Through discerning communities stated in the Unified Vision, YAs are afforded opportunities to develop meaningful bonding with their peers who share similar
struggles, needs and aspirations. A sense of group identity developed through shared goals and activities provides ground for the growth of sense of belonging in YAs.

3. **Unified Vision and Mentorship**

By emphasizing the importance of journeying with YAs, the Unified Vision addresses the YAs’ need for mentorship. Journeying includes not only coaching but also the actual companionship with YAs throughout their Christian faith formation at their maturity level, their culture and languages, as the Apostle Paul said: “Although I am free in regard to all, I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win over those under the law.... To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some.” (1Cor 9:19-20,22)

4. **Unified Vision and Relationship with God**

The heart of the Unified Vision clearly states its purpose to foster in YAs a desire to deepen their relationship with God by embracing Christ at the center of their lives. The CLC way of life can help YAs develop an intimate relationship with Christ by praying with scriptures in the Ignatian way, making Ignatian retreats, learning to seek God’s will with the Ignatian daily *Examen*, discernment of spirits, communal discernment with their groups and laboring with Christ through charitable services and apostolic missions.

Equipped with the three Core Needs, the Unified Vision for the Young Adult Ministry, strategies and pilot programs, the Workgroup proposed at the 2018 Dong Hanh Assembly that the next phase would be to develop a National Implementation Team to further embrace the Unified Vision and facilitate communication with the regional young adult groups. In addition, the new team needs to draft a mission statement and do research on models and structure of organization for this ministry to be sustainable.

**Questions for reflection and/or discussion:**

1. The OWFG Project set out to identify Core Needs of Young Adults.

   The Workgroup identified a sense of belonging, mentorship and relationship with God. Do these needs resonate with you as a Young Adult or as a more Senior Adult?

2. If your core needs are different from those indicated above, have you a vision directed to a Christ-centered life and a response to “the call of apostleship” in your life? Does your vision take you in another direction?

3. In PROJECTS 173 we are reminded that “young people are an indispensable part of the CLC apostolic body.” What are you, your community or your region doing to insure that young adults are part of CLC’s one body in Christ?

4. Is your local parish ministering to the needs of Young Adults? Is there some suggestion or action that will assist in the promotion of those needs? Being creative and thinking “outside the box” may be needed.
What is Synodality?

Synodality means the path along which the People of God walk together. In the last four years, Pope Francis has convened four synods, two on Family (2014, 2015), one on Youth (2018) and one on the Amazon (2019). The image of people walking along a path together evokes an image of friends swapping stories, sharing words of wisdom and caring for one another along a journey. That they are People of God conveys that they share a deep understanding of their Creator God who has made each of them in the image and likeness of God. Papal biographer, Austen Ivereigh, defines synodality as “a method and process of discussion and participation in which the whole people of God can listen to the Holy Spirit and take part in the life and mission of the Church.”


1. Time is greater than space. Unity prevails over conflict. Realities are more important than ideas. The whole is greater than the part.

As a pastoral leader of the Church, Pope Francis recognizes that the Holy Spirit is within each of us. He emphasizes the important process of listening and accompanying people living in a particular reality, whether they be youth, families or those living in the Amazon. “Hearing what the Holy Spirit has to say to the Church can only happen through a deep, mutual interaction among the people of God at all levels.”

What’s involved in Synodality?

Listening, dialoguing, praying and discerning are the key activities at a synod. In church synods, the voting members are bishops, but with synodality, the bishops are also listening to and dialoguing with others who are experiencing particular realities such as with youth, families or the indigenous in the Amazon.

Pope Francis offers a few guidelines when participating in a synod. First, he encourages every participant to speak with parrhesia, that is, boldness, openness and frankness in order to integrate freedom, truth and charity. Next, dialogue allows for us to grow, but it must be honest, not “useless chatter, rumors, conjectures or prejudices.” And as people speak with courage, those listening must do so with humility, open to newness and the possibility of changing their opinions.

Discernment is of fundamental importance in this process. “It is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life’s events, in the people I meet and who speak to me.” But, “discernment needs space and time.” The Pope has specified approximately three minutes of silence to be observed periodically. This time of silence can “allow everyone to recognize within their hearts the nuances of what they have heard and to allow everyone to reflect deeply and seize upon what strikes me most.” This attention to the movements within, the movements of the Spirit, is essential in proceeding through the synod process which takes on variations of “see, judge, act” or “recognizing, interpreting and choosing,” or “seeing, discerning, acting.”

The fruits of synodality for our Church are many. First of all, synodality honors the maturity, dignity and equality of all Christians.
beautiful and human world for coming generations.” Secondly, the process promotes Christian unity, even where differences occur, in fact, especially where differences occur. Respecting the diversity of perspectives allows for broadening of one’s understanding and deepening of the truth in particular situations. Ideology is outranked by addressing the particular reality. Also, by allowing openness and free expression of challenges, obstacles and problems, so also solutions can be worked out together, in a win-win way. Finally, the synodal process is truly missionary. As the Spirit inspires in the listening and discernment, so also are the participants—young people, families, peoples of the Amazon—inspired in going out to give witness to the love of God! Synodality inspires evangelization, true joy in Christ and relevance of the Church in a very practical way.

**Synod on the Amazon** was significant in being the first synod focused on a geographic area. The cries of the poor AND the cries of the Earth have been loud and clear for some time in the Amazon. The Latin American bishops have utilized dynamic synodal processes for many years, and Pope Francis likely experienced the value of them during his time in Argentina. Christian Life Community has been very blessed and enthusiastic as one of our own brothers, Mauricio Lopez Oropeza, former World CLC President, served in a major role in the years leading up to this Synod as Executive Secretary of the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network, also known as REPAM, a co-organizer for the Synod on the Amazon. There was much accompaniment of the local peoples in listening to their stories, to their struggles, to the injustices, to the devastation of their lands and creatures living there. There are many indigenous Christians living in the Amazon region who are leaders in their community. Their diverse cultural practices that may differ from those of their European colonizers but still do harmonize with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Cardinal Hummes, a Franciscan friend of Pope Francis, said that the Amazon needs its own Church with “an Amazon face and also an indigenous face” rather than a “European Church transplanted in the Amazon. This message of the Amazonian Synod is not only for the diversity of ethnic groups in the Pan-Amazonian territory, but it applies increasingly in the plural heart of all our cities and communities. As in previous synods, we feel the call to see and to know Jesus among the people in their languages, listening to how the Holy Spirit has created within those cultures for centuries.” The Amazonian Synod integrated many indigenous and women religious into the processes, and many expressed satisfaction that they were heard. There was some pushback and resistance to the Amazonian Synod by groups who either misinterpreted some of the rituals or misunderstood the processes. Our World ExCo wrote a letter of support to the Pope to which his Secretary responded. You can find both letters on the website of World CLC: [www.cvx-clc.net](http://www.cvx-clc.net)

As in his encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis noted the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. The peoples of the Amazon know this reality of interconnectedness all too well. Their customs and traditions adhere to the lifecycles of plants and animals along with the seasons of the year. The people work with these seasons and cycles. However, in recent years, they are noticing changes in climate, animal patterns and
called to Conversion! The final document for the Synod on the Amazon calls for Four Conversions: Pastoral, Cultural, Ecological and Synodal. These conversions involve promoting interfaith dialogue, recognizing the richness of the indigenous, and intercultural experience and wisdom. Realizing our interconnectedness and the need for international solidarity and action, new ways must be found to serve communities, both remote and urban, so that they may receive the fullness of the sacramental life of our faith. Two proposals received overwhelming support by bishops: 1) ordination of married deacons and 2) reconvening the commission on women deacons.

For us as Church and as CLC, we are called to listen to the messages of the communities in the Amazon, many of whom are fighting for the life of the Amazon but also for the whole world; and to take action toward conversion individually, communally and politically. According to Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., there are “no new paths” nor “no real change” without conversion. And because the ecological crisis is so deep and urgent, if we do not change, “we are not going to make it!” Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., a synod member and editor-in-chief of *La Civilta.*Catholica*, noted, “The peripheries speak from the center with the awareness that its experience is heard as a prophetic voice for the whole Church.”

Pope Francis will study the proposals in the final document and respond early next year with his reflections and any decisions.

**Significance for CLC.** The processes utilized at the Synod, that of listening, dialogue, prayer and discernment affirm those processes used in CLC, particularly that of taking the time to listen to the movements of the Holy Spirit and the three rounds of Spiritual Conversation. These processes open us up to the invitations and promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that we may cooperate in the mission of Christ here on Earth.

Regarding the Synod on the Amazon, it is worthwhile reading and reflecting on the final document which can be found here: [http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html](http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html)

The Synod on the Amazon challenges us to be in solidarity with the indigenous, the vulnerable, the Earth and with future generations. How are we called to act in solidarity? Christina Leano, Associate Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement invites us to immerse ourselves in nature; to appreciate the wisdom and nourishment that nature offers us: to “listen, linger and love!” We should act by simplifying our lifestyles, divesting of extractive industries, stopping funding fossil fuels and fighting for the rights of all!

Let us walk together with the Vision of Church that Christ invites and calls us to!
The Mid-Atlantic Regional Assembly took place on October 25 - 27, 2019, following five days of individually directed retreats. Sixteen members participated. We desired to bring the work of both the National and the World Assemblies to our Region. We hoped to receive two graces: 1. to experience and expand our capacity for communal discernment; and 2. to deepen our awareness of how we are called as CLC to address the Frontier of Integral Ecology, especially Caring for Our Common Home.

After dinner together and the usual introductions and check-ins, Lois Campbell, our chairperson, led us in a Power Point presentation on Communal Discernment. We saw Communal Discernment as a structured and guided group spiritual conversation. Participants added additional comments such as:

- Personal discernment and social listening lead to building community as well as making decisions.
- Attending to the movements of consolation and desolation helps the community to discern the will of God.
- The use of the Examen and the Review of Prayer are most helpful.

In the morning we viewed “A Canadian Response to Laudato Si’.” This 36-minute film gives a concise summary of Pope Francis’ encyclical, and it shows how Canadians are putting the pope’s message into action. The video shows how we ourselves are contributing to putting more of the “carbon footprint” into the atmosphere.

After some personal prayer, four small groups gave reports:

**Group 1:**
We are saddened by how our government is going back on all that has been started. God did not give animals to man just to eat. The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are the voice of God. Be responsible; it is a climate crisis. Ghana and Ivory Coast agreed to stop child labor. The encyclical is written to ALL people. We operate out of an exaggerated anthropocentric norm. Keep an awareness of the Amazonian Synod.

**Group 2:**
I don’t throw away. Peace and justice committees are focusing on climate change. I need to commit to my diet, e.g. meatless days. My relatives don’t recycle; so where’s the truth? I have been driving a hybrid since 2002.

**Group 3:**
There is lack of response to the need to change. I notice my own inner resistance.

**Group 4:**
The poor don’t have hot showers nor three meals a day. I need to be more attentive to the water I use and to my comfort and conveniences. Perhaps, I can do more political advocacy. More prayer and discernment will help me to be better informed on values, lower my own carbon footprint, and be a better steward of the environment.
In our Third Round, participants remarked:
Is God inviting us, i.e. MAR, to care for the earth?
We need to share information, to encourage one another,
and to be accountable.
Get an email list of all here and help others.
Be awake and act on the nudge.
Consciousness raising is needed before “what we are going
to do.”
A climax was reached when Ann Depner noted: “We
are doing Communal Discernment on Ecology.” All the
participants realized that this is exactly what we were
doing.

We reflected upon Communal Discernment and had
the following responses:
It is easier to listen when I’m not preparing what I will say.
I will not go home frustrated that WE have not decided
what WE will do.
Can we use ZOOM to bring this to all our members?
We need to start with what I think and feel.

Our individual prayer was enriched by others’ prayer.
Don’t force it, and che sara, sara.
Can we draft a cycle on Communal Discernment and how
to do it?
Teach the Third Round to be used at each meeting.
Make sure there is time for prayer. Do we use Laudato Si’?
Can we use this meeting’s process in 4-5 meetings on each
of the Four Frontiers?

When we reflected upon the entire weekend, we
noted that we had a good experience of doing Communal
Discernment, and we had excellent input on Ecology. I
myself noted that I heard many statements like: “I will do
this. I will pray on this more. I will do that. I will bring
this point back to my community.” But I never heard any
proposals on what we as a Region might do. I was glad
that our chairperson noted this item for future reference.

I am also happy to report that our new community in
Baltimore has now completed what we had done at the
assembly. We are committed to reading and sharing our
understandings of each chapter of Laudato Si’.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Urges all New York Counties to Sign the
Climate Smart Communities Pledge.

• Build a climate-smart community.

• Inventory emissions, set goals and plan for climate action.

• Decrease energy use.

• Shift to clean, renewable energy.

• Use climate-smart materials management.

• Implement climate-smart land use.

• Enhance community resilience to climate change.

• Support a green-innovation economy.

• Inform and inspire the public.

• Engage in an evolving process of climate action.
On a recent trip to Rome, my husband, John, and I visited the Church of the Gesu, the mother church of the Society of Jesus. As graduates of Jesuit universities, we were particularly excited to visit the tomb of Saint Ignatius of Loyola – the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and a reliquary of Saint Francis Xavier, one of the co-founders, and personal friend of Saint Ignatius. How our Catholic history comes to life when blessed with experiences like these!

King John III of Portugal asked Ignatius to send two men to the Portuguese province of Goa in India to serve the Christians there. Francis Xavier jumped at the chance! In India, Francis preached and taught the gospel, and continued on to Japan to deliver the Good News of Jesus. He contracted a fever and died near the coast of China in 1552 at the age of 46. Francis Xavier is the patron saint of missionaries.

How does this relate to us and how can we apply it to our daily lives? On World Mission Sunday this past October, Pope Francis’ message to the faithful helps us understand our participation and responsibilities as missionaries:

This missionary mandate touches us personally: I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission. People in love never stand still: they are drawn out of themselves; they are attracted and attract others in turn; they give themselves to others and build relationships that are life-giving. As far as God’s love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant. Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God’s love... The mandate given by the Risen Jesus at Easter is inherent in Baptism: as the Father has sent me, so I send you, filled with the Holy Spirit, for the reconciliation of the world (cf. Jn20:19-23; Mt 28:16-20). This mission is part of our identity as Christians; it makes us responsible for enabling all men and women to realize their vocation to be adoptive children of the Father; to recognize their personal dignity and to appreciate the intrinsic worth of every human life, from conception until natural death.

My family has been blessed with the opportunity to serve on multiple medical missions to the Dominican Republic, dating back to the early 1990s. So many say to us that they long for the chance to serve in this capacity, too. When I think of myself as a missionary, though, I am drawn back to my individual encounters with people in our comfortable first world society. As so many in my generation and younger have left our church or never had an affiliation, I am a missionary by sharing the love of Jesus with the unaffiliated, with the poor in our community, by inviting others to be involved in the work of justice around us – whether volunteering at the food bank, making blankets with the Why Knot Ministry at St. Stephens, providing gifts for underprivileged through the K of C Toy Drive, Catholic Charities Giving Tree program or the Warwick Area Migrant Committee Christmas Store. I can invite friends who have been away from the church to Lessons and Carols on Thursday or share a cup of coffee with someone who is alone at our next Hospitality Sunday. There are millions of ways and endless opportunities each and every day to help others feel significant, loved.

Will you commit to one way you can be a missionary today?

Pope Francis said, “People in love never stand still.” We have a great example of this in the life of Saint Francis Xavier, whose life was given to bringing Jesus’ love to the world. Imagine what our world would look like, if we each ignited the missionary spirit within us in our own community.
Prayer to Saint Francis Xavier –
written by Luke Rothen

Help me become a hero –
One who executes both spiritual and physical feats;
One who gives himself up to be part of something greater;
One who departs on a journey and returns changed.

Help me to emphasize the magis –
One who does his best in every area;
One who strives to be great in all aspects of his life.

Help me become a person with and for others –
One who respects himself as well as others;
One who performs deeds not for himself, but for others.

Help me become a leader –
One who persuades others to do the right thing;
One who guides others through action, not talk.

We pray to you for help, Saint Francis Xavier.

Amen.
One fine day in March of 2019, Jesuits in Korea asked the National Korean CLC Chair, Angela Shim, if it would be possible to send three retreat/spiritual guides to Australia in November, to assist at their weekend silent retreats for the Korean speaking supporters of Jesuits. After discerning the request with the NKCLC leadership, it was decided that this was a good opportunity to collaborate with Korean Jesuits in the ministry of spiritual guidance. Korean Jesuits have been helping with our annual silent retreats for the past 20 years or so, and we, in turn, thought that this was a good chance to give back the help we received. Later, a Korean Jesuit priest who came to give the retreat told us that he did not think that this was possible because of the long distance, a 24 hour flight, and our own financial responsibility that we had to take on to make this journey.

This decision was further aided by previous requests from several Korean Jesuits studying in Australia to help them form a CLC. Due to the lack of resources, in terms of people and finances, this had been put on a back burner. The NKCLC leadership decided to send Angela Shim (Chair), Helena Seol (Secretary) and me (Formation coordinator) to Australia to support their apostolic ministry. Through Ann Marie Brennan, World CLC Vice President, I was able to get in touch with Michael Walker (Chair, Sydney) and Chris and Jenny Gardner (Melbourne) to discuss the possibility of meeting with them while we were in Australia.

Through our conversations, we found that one Korean speaking CLC group was already established in Melbourne after their annual retreat in January. This happened with the help of a Korean speaking CLC member who has been part of the Melbourne community for eight years. This new CLC is currently made up of seven people who were interested in Ignatian spirituality and the CLC way of life. Due to their limited personal and community resources and support, the group has been struggling to maintain its meetings through prayers and supporting each other. After meeting them and hearing about their journey, it was truly inspiring to see how God has been present in all of this. We were truly glad to be invited to be part of this journey. Additionally, the group in Sydney has shown interest in forming CLC groups. Before leaving Australia, we promised to work with them to provide support and prayers in any way we could.

In reflecting on this journey, I am once again surprised by God who is so present in our world and our lives, who constantly labors to draw us near Him. It reminded me to always ‘Stay Awake’ and have a discerning heart to listen and follow where He may lead me. Although this journey was deemed “impossible” by many, God had a way of surprising us with many graces that we needed to accomplish His work. AMDG!

We have been invited by Korean speaking groups/parishes in Guatemala, Shanghai, and some cities in the U.S to help form new CLCs. We are currently embarking on a new journey with a group in Dallas.
Four Frontiers
CLC’s Framework for Personal & Communal Mission

Vatican II called on the Church to discern its ongoing mission by watching and listening to the signs of the time. At two consecutive World Assemblies, 2013 in Lebanon and 2018 in Argentina, Christian Life Community discerned that our mission can be envisioned as Four Frontiers. We called them Frontiers because they call us to journey in mission beyond the boundaries of our current knowledge or abilities to serve our loving God in all people and in all the earth.

1. Youth
Youth today face many seismic pressures. How do we meaningfully engage with them? How does our life of committed community offer hope to them in a world of increasing isolation? How can they teach us about new ways to engage the world and the Gospel?

2. Family
Throughout the world, CLC encounters families dealing with an extraordinary array of issues. How do we walk with them? How do we support families in their efforts to deal with the challenges of life? How do we, each of the local communities in more than 70 countries, become more welcoming to families?

3. Globalization of Poverty & Migration
Jesus constantly sought out the poor and those outside the margins of society. Today the problems are universal. How do we support each other in loving refugees, victims of contagious diseases, and families and individuals who are hungry, homeless and hopeless? How do we find new ways to share strategies for serving our sisters and brothers locally and globally?

4. Integral Ecology
The forces threatening our climate seem distant to many of us. Others of us are already encountering devastating climate changes. How do we as communities and members of CLC engage with the many people involved in work on behalf of creation? How does the Gospel give us hope and call us to mission with the profound awareness that we are integral to both the crisis and the solutions – through the grace of God and the mutual prayers and support of the global network of Christian Life Community?

These Frontiers may seem enormous and distant, but the most exciting development is for local communities around the world to share strategies and to pray for each other’s efforts. The reality that CLC is one world community becomes very real when we are sharing together our experiences and prayers.
Called to Deepen, Share, Go Forth
Striving to Implement the Lessons of the Assemblies

Patrick Cleary-Burns

Since we received the reports from the 2018 World Assembly, and a dozen members of our region attended the National Assembly in Pittsburgh this past summer, we have been trying in many ways to deepen, share and go forth.

At our Spring regional gathering in Toledo a year ago, we used two of the practices used at the World Assembly. First, we prayerfully reflected on and shared our history of grace in our personal walks in CLC and the region’s history. Then we looked at what forces were imprisoning us, keeping us from being the most effective witnesses to the Gospel.

In response to these reflections, communities in Cleveland prayerfully read Richard Rohr’s book about the Trinity, Divine Dance, experienced the 19th annotation form of the Spiritual Exercises and read Pope Francis’, Joy of the Gospel and Laudato Si’. Two communities in Detroit are prayerfully reading and discussing one article from Harvest at each meeting. Three other members in Detroit have renewed their commitment to their ministry with immigrants. All of these efforts help deepen our spiritual foundation and our call to grow in CLC.

When twelve of us came home from Pittsburgh energized to embrace the lessons of the Assembly and the exciting vision of unity in diversity we all cherished, we decided to invite members from Cincinnati and Chicago to join us this coming May 1-3 at the St. Francis Center in Tiffin, Ohio for a workshop/retreat. We will focus on getting to know new CLC sisters and brothers, prayerfully exploring the Frontier of Integral Ecology and brainstorming about how to attract more folks to CLC.

**Update:** the new community that started almost two years ago at Gesu Parish in Cleveland is thriving. We are also working to organize new communities on the West Side of Cleveland and in Toledo.
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