

# CLC CANADA FORMATION MANUAL 1

(REVISED 2009- 2<sup>nd</sup> PRINTING 2010)

## FOREWORD

It has been almost two decades since John English, SJ and a lay team wrote the manuals of formation for the Christian Life Community. These manuals have been used in different parts of the world with much effectiveness. Following the *National Leadership Formation Encounter* workshops that took place in the 4 CLC Regions of Canada in 2007/2008, we found that the overall content of these manuals is still valid, according to the responses received from different regions of Canada. But the desire to revisit and update these texts has also come from many who have used these texts over the past 20 years. The National Council of CLC Canada has authorized a team to set about this task of revision beginning with Phase 1 manual.

This manual came into being through the experience of many people – laity, sisters, priests. These persons have experienced various parts of the manual and evaluated it from time to time. The revised Manual 1 builds on these experiences and the insights of other formation manuals. We hope the revision of the manual will make them even more effective instruments in the promotion of the Christian Life Community way of life.

The prayer material in Manual 1 is arranged in a way that groups can meet once a week or every two weeks. Groups may decide to go more slowly through the material as arranged in each session. Other material could be added to and used in conjunction with liturgical celebrations throughout the year. Remember this is not about doing everything and doing it perfectly. It is about taking a communal spiritual journey, holding on to what you need and letting other things go, guided by the Spirit of God.

*National Revision Team: Barbara and Peter Peloso (CLC ELDERS) Charles Pottier-Pâté, sj (NATIONAL EA), Gilles Michaud (COORDINATOR).*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **HISTORY OF CLC CANADA**

Historically, the Christian Life Community of Canada began in 1975. In 1978 CLC was introduced into the Hamilton diocese by John English, SJ, together with four married couples. Art Walter was a leading force in the development of other CLC local groups in Ontario, until he died suddenly on February 19, 1979. John English and Art Walter met weekly to organize the CLC meetings. They used materials of "Vie chrétienne" from France's CLC (*Communauté de vie chrétienne*).

Sr. Barbara Paleczney, SSND gathered these notes and published them in "*Growing Together in Christ*" in October, 1979. After some years CLC felt this document needed to be revised and expanded. With the assistance of Michel Coté, o.p., Barbara Paleczney produced "*Becoming Followers of Jesus*". In 1984 the Executive Council of the National CLC of English speaking Canada commissioned the Formation Team at that time - Helen Drago, Shirley Gatchene and Patrice Rietzel - to compose and publish the immediate forerunner of the first manual. This manual follows the format and style of its predecessors. Its development is based on the hard work completed by the Formation Team of 1984 and thanks are due to them.

Other sources that should be recognized are: the *Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius* translated by Louis J. Puhl SJ., "*Orientations*" by John Veltri SJ., the "*Survey of the Formation in Christian Life. Communities and Supplement*" (Survey), *Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for the Corporate Person* (ISECP) published by University of Scranton and the *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT #56 "THE CLC CHARISM"* (CLC Publication available from the World CLC Secretariat, Borgo S. Spirito, 4 CP 6139, 00193 Roma, Italia).

### **PURPOSE OF MANUAL**

The purpose of this manual is to assist those who are beginning the Christian Life Community (CLC) journey of life. This journey leads the participants into the CLC way of life. In order to receive the proper understanding of the ongoing regular meetings of the Local Group\*, it is recommended that a Coordinator\*, well-versed in the content of the manual, and a Group Guide\*, trained in group process, be present at regular local meetings to help facilitate sessions and lead new communities through the manual. Their knowledge and experience will help to instill the value of regular meetings. As other members are ready, they can be called upon to act as facilitator\* of a particular meeting.

The CLC way of life is based on Ignatian Spirituality\* which can be summarized in St. Ignatius' statement: "*I desire to find God in all things, that I may the better love and serve God*". It includes an ability to pray with holy scripture (God's Word revealed in both Hebrew and Christian writings) and the constant practice of integrating one's life of faith in all aspects of daily living. Such practices enable one to discover God's will and act upon it for the greater good of one's family, church, society, and all of creation.

The CLC way of life is revealed through its unique charism. This charism includes three key aspects commonly referred to as: spirituality, community and mission. These three dimensions interrelate to and interpenetrate one another in the CLC way of life. They are considered the three “pillars” or the three parts of a flower – roots [Spiritual Exercises], stem [community] and flower [mission]. One without the other two is an incomplete understanding of the CLC way of life. All three of them constitute the specific “Ignatian Spirituality” of the CLC way of life.

In particular, this manual will assist the members in obtaining a heightened awareness of the way God is personally present and moving in them individually, through their communal sharing of interior spiritual experiences. This awareness is gained by daily prayer with scripture and by a deep understanding and practice of the Awareness Exercise or Examen Prayer\*. The Manual will also introduce methods of communal assistance in making good decisions “according to the mind and heart of Christ” in the carrying out of His mission in our world.

This manual attempts to assist people in developing a responsible spirituality based on their own experiences and through sharing with others the vision of the mission of Christ. It does this by using methods that adults find useful.

## **OVERVIEW OF THIS MANUAL**

The Phase 1 Manual has eight sections. Sections 1-6 provide guidance through 37 sessions on various themes related to the CLC way of life. Each of the sections includes a specific formation objective, excerpts from our World CLC Charism\*, the *Progressio* publication\*, or one of our General Principles and a disposing prayer. Each session within a section offers suggestions for prayer and faith sharing\*, for formation content and process, resource articles, and other prayer material.

Section 7 at the end of the manual provides clarification of terms and concepts used or implied in this manual that are marked by an asterisk \*.

Section 8 at the end of the manual provides a list of other CLC resources helpful to those who lead groups through the Phase 1 Manual journey.

<b>SESSIONS</b>	<b>SECTIONS</b>	<b>THEMES</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>THE JOURNEY OF CLC</b>
1-5		Considering the journey of CLC Gathering energy for the next part of the journey
	<b>2</b>	<b>EXPERIENCING PRAYER</b>
7-12		Experiencing Prayer
13		Commitment and gathering energy for the next part of the journey

	<b>3</b>	<b>SENSE OF DISCIPLESHIP</b>
14-17		Sense of Discipleship
18		Sharing the CLC way of life
	<b>4</b>	<b>EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY</b>
19		Experiences of Identity (Loved-forgiven sinners)
24		Community Reflection
	<b>5</b>	<b>CALLED TO WORK WITH CHRIST</b>
25 - 30		Called to work with Christ in his mission
31		Community Life and the Sacraments
	<b>6</b>	<b>OWNING ONE'S EXPERIENCE</b>
32-37		Evaluation and Commitment for the next phase

## **NB**

The 37 Sessions provide a way of guiding a CLC Group through what is referred to as the initial phase of the CLC journey. If a Group Coordinator/Guide were to follow these 37 Sessions in the context of a weekly gathering, the initial phase could be completed in one year, based on the fact that the Group would be meeting from September to May during that current year.

However, it should be pointed out that some Groups may decide to meet on a bi-weekly basis. Another consideration is that **some Sessions could take more than one Group meeting to adequately process**. In addition, the material and prayer exercises may be adjusted to fit certain liturgical requirements such as Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost, when the significance of Christ's paschal mystery\* might be emphasized.

Therefore the 37 Sessions could represent a longer period of time. The CLC Group, with the guidance of the Group Coordinator/Guide, should be ready to discern its progress as it navigates its way toward its destination. **Manual 1 is a process** and it is intended to be like the bellows of an accordion that can be expanded or contracted according to the feel and need of the music being played.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The CLC journey and its way of life are for men and women who are sensitive to the needs of the world and desire to be instruments of God's grace in their family, workplace, church, city, country and international organizations. They wish to be more loving and of service to others. They are willing to make an investment of themselves to bring gospel values to all humanity. They are willing to undertake the

necessary Spiritual Exercises as part of the journey in faith, as well as participate in discerning group processes that are both supportive and challenging.

Such persons will be generous people of realistic desire, “ever on the alert”. They will have a flexible attitude in relationships, “like a balance at equilibrium” (*Survey\** p 6a).

## **MEETINGS**

As the CLC journey and way of life begins, each group with its Coordinator and/or Guide will decide the time, place, style and frequency of its gatherings.

Preferably, the meetings are held weekly or at least every other week. Since the journey is a communal one, every member of the group should be committed to regular attendance.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE CLC MEETING**

Format of Meetings/Gatherings\*

In general, the format of the gatherings should include three activities:

- a) Members sharing various aspects of their lived faith experience since the last session.
- b) A consideration of some topic related to the CLC journey and way of life
- c) An evaluation and appropriation of the meeting

The first activity (a), is dependent on the awareness exercise and scriptural prayer of the past period of time; the second (b), is explained in the manual for each session; and the third (c), is an instrument of appropriation by the group. These three activities are significant for each member’s spiritual growth and for the development and growth of the discerning faith community. These three activities will be explained more fully as the journey proceeds.

## **BASIC PATTERN OF EVERY MEETING**

**PART I: Sharing since the last session:** Preliminary activity: A moment of re-collecting ourselves to enter into the awareness of God’s presence, that where “two or three are gathered in His Name, Christ Jesus is present among us. This is symbolized by the lighting of the candle.

An atmosphere of prayer is important: a table with a candle, a Bible and a symbolic object to pass around when sharing, such as a flower, a stone, a feather etc.

Some groups begin by a very brief round of “how are we coming to this meeting/gathering?”

- Open with a hymn\* and prayer\*

- Recall the grace of the last week(s) - the particular gift we have been praying for – during the past week(s)
- Listen to God’s Word by reading the scripture passage. (This reading sets an atmosphere for the meeting. Take a few moments for quiet reflection after this “proclamation of the Word” before moving into group sharing of our personal stories.)
- Share: In *the first round\**, we tell our story to heighten awareness of how the Lord has been present in my life. This is also called faith sharing\* or spiritual conversation\*.

This sharing can include some of the following elements:

- The events of the week: what has dominated one’s mind and heart during the week, experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in one’s work, experiences of interpersonal relationship with others or the created world that surrounds us – of love or rejection.
- The experience of the past week’s prayer and reading material: interior experiences of intimacy with the Lord, of consolation\* or of desolation\*.
- When, where and how have your life experiences and prayer experiences come together?

After the first round of sharing there is a *second round\* of sharing*. After we have listened attentively in the first round to the personal experiences of how each sensed God was present in one’s prayer and daily life, in the second round we briefly share what we may have heard from this sharing that reveals a new or deeper understanding of God’s action in this community, in and through the members’ sharing. This activity helps to build a sense of community.

Questions such as:

- What did I hear from one or more members that touched me and evoked a deeper response in me?
- What common thread (s) did I hear from the members’ sharing?

End with a suitable prayer of thanksgiving.

## **PART II:** CLC Formation: Content and Processes

- Consider and reflect together on the prepared material
- Explain the Grace\* to be prayed for in the next session
- Give the prayer material and reading assignment for the next session



- Allow time if necessary, for Communal Discernment\*.

### **PART III: A: Practical Considerations for the group**

B: Awareness of the Meeting. Reflection and sharing on the sense of the meeting (evaluation\* and appropriation\*)

Each meeting may close with petitions for the needs of our world, community, etc. but always ends with the common recitation of the *Lord's Prayer*\*. (In many places, a gesture of the peace of Christ is extended to each other.)

### **GOALS AND METHOD FOR EACH PART OF THE MEETING**

**PART I:** Sharing in faith of what has happened since the last meeting. (Spiritual Conversation\*)

Using the method and insights of the *AWARENESS EXERCISE*\* (or *EXAMEN PRAYER*\*)

Significance of the Awareness Exercise:

The awareness exercise is an instrument for helping persons to discover the different motivations, interior movements and experiences that indicate their relationship with God and other humans. It is significant for the individual person and for the community.

Through this exercise the person is attempting to get in touch with various levels of interior experiences, such as the following:

- Feelings of being loved by God
- Feeling the absence of God
- Recognizing the goodness, beauty, truth and oneness of God in all the experiences of life
- Knowing the power of vices and temptations
- Recognizing how God's love can overcome these vices
- [... And other similar experiences.]

To be significant for community, the awareness exercise has to precede the activity of sharing that takes place in PART I of each meeting. Members need to learn how to use the awareness exercise quite early on their journey. This prayer is to be used daily, thus enabling persons to get in touch with and share their interior lives at deeper and deeper levels, which will help bring about a community united in hearts and minds.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF SHARING:**

The basic significance and activity of sharing our stories and our life experience with others is twofold: it is an instrument of self awareness and an instrument for building community.

The sharing in the first part of the meeting involves listening to others and telling one's own story since the last meeting. The telling of the story is to include significant experiences of the presence of God in one's life. Some experiences will happen during prayer and some outside of prayer. Listening to the experiences of others and the work of the Spirit in them may give us a sense of awe and gratitude toward God and a respect and trust of the other members of the group. It helps us recognize our unity in spite of our diversity, which gives us a new awareness of ourselves and a means of discernment. Listening may open us up to our own experiences of the presence of God, or our sinfulness and need to forgive or to be forgiven.

Telling our own story helps us appreciate the gifts God has given to us and brings us to a new sense of humility. We gradually open ourselves to others, gain trust and become free with others.

Eventually, we discover that this sharing is a new form of prayer and a new experience of the presence of God among us. We realize that we are all limited, sinful, yet beloved of God. When we begin to recognize our own giftedness of ourselves and the giftedness of the other members, we gradually have an experience of "church." We become a community of faith as we move from a life of isolation and individualism to one of community. We are given a new realization of the presence of Christ, not only in the Word of Scripture and the Eucharist\* (or Lord's Supper/ Holy Communion), but also in this small faith - sharing Christian community. We realize that "We are the Body of Christ". How fitting it is, then, for these communities to celebrate and deepen this presence in the Word and the Eucharist: The joys and hopes, sorrows and grief of others, as our own in Christ.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SHARING:**

Three things are important in the activity of sharing:

- a) the attitude or way that we view the meeting
- b) how we listen
- c) how we express ourselves.

### a) Attitude

Our attitude towards the meeting and the atmosphere engendered is very important for the group. If we approach the meeting as an opportunity to be with Christ and those who belong to the Body of Christ, then the meeting can become a contemplative experience. We then start to approach each other differently and we are open to structuring our meetings to assist us to be what we are, an expression of the Body of Christ. When we share our story in Part I of the meeting, we open ourselves to the whole community's story and start to establish the bonding that helps us to approach the meeting as a contemplative experience. Then the other parts of the meeting, no matter how challenging and critical, will be appreciated as part of this contemplation.

### b) Listening

In Part I the sharing group is not a discussion group or a debating group. It is basically a listening group although, occasionally we may ask for clarification. Later

in Part II and III the community will include dimensions of discussion and evaluating within the group.

What is being shared are personal experiences. This means the one speaking is the expert. The role of the listener then is to listen attentively and with a non-critical attitude. We are not to make moral judgments about the moral worth of the person speaking, nor the activities they are relating.

Since the person speaking is talking basically about experiences of God in his/her life, the listener is relating to the words as an expression of the Spirit, no matter who is speaking. The listener can then recognize where there is a harmony in his/her own experience of God.

Such listening requires humility and self-forgetfulness. The listener takes on an attitude of appreciation of the gift being presented by the speaker. The listener has to get out of his/her own mind to hear what is being said. This listening requires a freedom with what he/she will share later in the meeting

### c) Speaking

How do we tell our story? Our story is like that of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. "Then they told [the others] what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:35).

The brief period of reflection at the beginning of the sharing takes us back through our week's experience with God. We recognize the main experience of the week that we wish to share. Sometimes it will be from an experience with scripture in prayer, sometimes it will be some event at work, while traveling, or in a family situation. The daily awareness exercise will have highlighted this for us already.

In order not to oppress the group with a "long-winded" account, each person speaks briefly, yet with enough concreteness to enable the others to relate to our experience and gain insights into their own.

Gradually, we learn how to share certain intimate experiences that are important to us in our relationship with God. These intimate experiences may have been with loved ones and/or with the persons of the Trinity but, initially, all we may be able to tell are mundane and exterior events of our story. This is enough at the beginning until we have gained trust in the group or have learned how to recognize these intimate experiences and how to express them.

## **PART II: CLC FORMATION: CONTENT AND PROCESSES**

The purpose of this part of each meeting is to pass on knowledge and experience of the CLC way of life to those on the CLC journey. This is done through the study, reflection and discussion of aspects of the CLC way of life. This kind of discussion focuses around spiritual topics and events that concern one's faith and touches our personal lives, rather than just an intellectual exercise about ideas or concepts. Some examples of these are: the spirituality of CLC, prayer as relationship with God, discipleship, mission, discerning God's will for us. Materials for prayer are assigned in Part II.

When time needs to be spent in Communal Discernment and/or business, it should be done before moving to the awareness part of the meeting (evaluation and appropriation).

**PART III: A: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE GROUP  
B: EVALUATION AND APPROPRIATION**

One of the important needs of a group is an awareness of itself. The manual suggests that this begin by a simple evaluation (or review) at the end of each meeting. Gradually the time given to this might be extended and more sophisticated questions can be asked. Such questions will assist the community to recognize their meetings as a contemplative experience. Evaluations that are positive as well as negative become powerful instruments in developing a communal awareness. A second part of this awareness is called “appropriation” of the grace received during this meeting. The meetings always close with the *Lord’s Prayer*.

**BASIC GOALS OF EACH PHASE OF THE CLC JOURNEY:**

**PHASE I:**

The goal of Phase I of the CLC journey is to arrive at two destinations. The first is a lived experience of the overall vision and dynamic of CLC. The second is to gain a heightened awareness of personal interior movement of spirits, for this is fundamental to the members of CLC as they strive to be *discerning communities of apostolic mission or service* in the Church through the power of the Spirit, for the whole of humanity.

**PHASE II:**

There are five important destinations in Phase II of the CLC journey. The first one is to learn the art of individual and communal contemplations. The second is to gain a deeper understanding of incarnational and liberational theology. The third is to grow in spiritual understanding of our world. The fourth is to discover the way of decision-making through communal discernment of spirits. The fifth is a preparation for the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

**PHASE III:**

This phase of the CLC journey is taken up with the experience of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In the CLC journey through the Exercises there will be a communal component. This means that CLC meetings will continue and some sharing of the state of one’s being while doing the Exercises may take place, or the community as a whole might go through a communal experience of the Exercises.

**PHASE IV:**

This phase of the CLC journey begins with learning and practising instruments of communal discernment. It continues by assimilating the journey of the previous three phases and now trying to apply it to ongoing community life. It is a time for living the General Principles of CLC and practising the skills of communal decision-making that leads the community to mission.

## **CLC WAY OF LIFE AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY**

After a time of assimilation, members of CLC who feel called may embark on the continuing journey of CLC. This is made real and experienced in the various CLC dimensions: Community, Human/Personal, Prayer, Mission, Wider Vision. Each dimension develops and deepens through the 5 Fundamental Stages\* of the entire process. Each Stage begins with Desires, and cycles through Search and Discovery, to Confirmation similar to the Graces of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius\*. This dynamic process throughout each stage is understood to occur in the person's faith journey within the context of an initial commitment (temporary) and a deeper commitment (permanent) to the CLC Way of Life and union with the World Community of CLC\*. This charism or gift of self on the journey might involve more responsibility, depending on a person's sense of call and giftedness.

## **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM JOHN ENGLISH SJ, ABOUT CLC.**

Dear beginners on the CLC journey:

I would like to say a few words to you about the CLC way of life. The CLC way of life has a very long history. It goes back to the days of St. Ignatius Loyola (the Founder of the Jesuits) who lived in the years 1491 to 1556.

While still a layman, Ignatius experienced what became known as '*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*'. Out of this experience and from many walking pilgrimages through Europe and to the Holy Land, Ignatius determined to help other lay persons experience God through his '*Exercises*' and to carry on spiritual conversations in small groups.

A number of years later a young Jesuit, John Leunis, first organized these groups into Marian Congregations, known as the Sodality of Our Lady. These sodalities helped lay people to develop a spiritual life in accord with Ignatius' '*Spiritual Exercises*' and to dedicate their lives to apostolic activities for the good of Christianity around the world.

You will find that the CLC way of life will help you to live a deep spiritual life in our contemporary world and give you fellowship with others seeking to do the same. Its communitarian dimension is very important for its membership and as a witness to other people, who are finding the individualistic competitive atmosphere of our world meaningless and destructive. The National and World CLC put you in touch with a larger extent of life and make it possible for you to contact and assist others in the third world and in difficult circumstances of life. The National CLC of English Speaking Canada is twined with the National CLC of India.

My own experience as a Jesuit in a lay person CLC, has been very supportive and enriching for me as a priest. The mutual sharing of our spiritual life has given me certain faith dimensions of life that I would otherwise not know about. I have discovered how dependent I am on others for my faith and the ways in which the faith of others enriches me. My experience with the lay people in our community has also helped me in making significant decisions for my life as a priest.

You will discover that the other members of your CLC give you insight into your own lives. They become an instrument of God's grace for you. They will support you and assist you in making and carrying out Christian decisions.

May Our Lady inspire you to follow more closely her Son, Jesus Christ, who is the model for your own lives.

Your brother in Christ,

John English, SJ

[Official Church Representative 1989 (today, known as National Ecclesiastical Assistant)]

Father John English, SJ Born, February 7, 1924 – died, June 9, 2004

**NB** *John English's closing remark in his reference to "Our Lady inspiring us to follow Jesus" could also be expressed in the following way, "May the Holy Spirit inspire you - aided by the prayer of Mary, Mother of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord - to follow more closely Jesus Christ, who is the model for your own lives."*

## **A WORD FROM THE PRESENT NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL EA. (2009)**

Dear members of CLC,

It is with great gratitude and joy, and with a sense of hope that we, on behalf of General Council of Christian Life Community English Canada, welcome this revision of the *Manual of Formation for Christian Life Community Phase 1*. Many people have participated in this revision, and much time, effort and work have gone into this new edition of Phase 1 Manual – from recommendations from the local communities across the country, through various levels of revision, to the work of the final Revision Team, led by Gilles Michaud.

On behalf of CLC Canada we give them our heartfelt thanks. Those who have used the former Manual for the last 20 years will recognize many familiar aspects in this new edition. In addition, they will notice a new format and changes in content that are the result of the experience and reflection of many communities over the years. It is hoped that the widespread use of this revised Manual Phase 1 - even beyond our Canadian borders - will be an even more effective instrument in forming new members in the way of life of Christian Life Community.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide all those who use this Manual Phase I towards "finding God in all things", and lead them to a greater collaboration with others in the mission of Christ in the Church - the proclamation of God's "reign of truth and life, a reign of holiness and grace, a reign of justice, love and peace."

Ruth Chipman, President

Charles Pottie-Pâté, sj, National Ecclesiastical Assistant

## **SECTION 1 - THE JOURNEY OF CLC**

### **SESSION 1**

#### **THEME: COMMUNITY AND CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY**

##### **Objectives of Meeting:**

- To become acquainted with one another
- To discover reasons for being part of this group
- To begin to look at CLC from the perspective of Christian community

##### **PART I:**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes: remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

*Acts 2: 42-47 (Description of the early Christian community)*

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Keeping in mind how this applies to my life, the preparatory reflection questions above will be useful for this shared reflection.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

In this first meeting, the Group Coordinator and/or Guide will introduce the second round by briefly sharing what she/he has heard that reveals a new or deeper understanding of God's action in this community in and through the members' sharing. *The group Leader could also invite other members to share a word or phrase, revealing a deeper understanding of God's action in this community.*

##### **Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

##### **PART II:**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully read the article below:



## **The DESIRE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

*It is an understanding [of a 'soft individualism'] expressed by those in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous . . . that permits ourselves to seep out and the selves of others to seep in (M. Scott Peck).*

It is an extraordinary phenomenon indeed, the welling up of small communities throughout the Christian world! The phenomenon is manifest in the many different ways in which Christians are attempting to form small faith communities, some in well organized common living together, others in less organized forms of living together, still others not living together.

There are married people and singles living in rural and city communes. There are communities of marginalized persons, such as L'Arche communities. There are those attempting to live in community outside such settings connected with each other in groups such as Cursillo, Charismatic Renewal, Marriage Encounter, Christian Life Community (CLC), Christian Family Movement (CFM), and twelve-step groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Adult Children of Alcoholics.

There are small groups of people living in large institutions of vowed religious life. Other groups of vowed religious are moving from institutional settings into smaller houses. Groups get formed in various ways: for example, someone at a charismatic meeting says, 'I am feeling the need of community'. Others respond to this outburst. People come not so much to share intimately their interior life, but to commit themselves more intimately to each other.

Often the desire for community goes through stages. For example, those who were heavily committed to the social and psychological care of people in prisons felt a need to share some of the burdens of this work from a faith perspective. As they shared their need for advice and support, they became conscious that deeper desires were operating in their beings, and they realized that they really wanted to support each other in prayer. They did this for some time. Gradually, they expressed two other important desires: the desire for a fuller commitment to each other in a communal way, and the desire to assist each other in personal decisions.

Eventually they realized this last desire meant a further entrance into each other's faith life so that they could truly assist each other in making significant decisions. As the group continued to gather, it met other faith concerns, such as the desire to be instruments of God's grace in working to create more just structures in the prison system.

### **Reading the phenomenon**

To understand the phenomenon, for several years I have surveyed participants in small faith communities. Following are some responses to my questions.

What are you seeking in small communities? What has led you to seek a small faith community?

- I've been through many programmes of prayer and am looking for a more permanent way of Christian life.
- My life has been so hectic in social action groups; I'm looking for a deeper relationship with Christ.
- I find that I am all alone in my faith.
- I'm here because a friend invited me.
- I wanted a group with whom to share and be energized for deeper involvement in Christian social action.

What do you do in these small communities?

- We listen to Scripture and share our understanding of it.
- We recount the experiences of our life since we last met, using a Christian viewpoint as we talk and listen.
- We talk over some of our problems in life and try to help each other with them in terms of our Christian faith.
- We help each other with personal decisions on the basis of our faith.
- We socialize every so often.
- We make some group decisions on social action issues or assisting some people who need our help.
- We discuss some ways of living our Christian faith in our professions and our places of work.

What are you personally experiencing?

- I experience a belonging.
- I sense that I am welcome here, even though I am a sinner.
- I am getting a new knowledge of Jesus, myself and others.
- I am beginning to have a new awareness of Christ in our midst; to appreciate Jesus' words: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them".
- At times I feel really challenged by the group, but for the most part in a supportive way'.

How would you describe your community?

- It's a small Christian group sharing experiences of life out of prayer faith.
- It is a group with whom I can discuss some of the deep faith issues that the world today makes me face.
- It is a small group of religious attempting to support each other through sharing and prayer to live out their commitment.
- It is a place to get help to live my faith.

- I feel very free and able to share quite intimately some of my deep religious beliefs and some of my fears and sinfulness.
- I find our group is made up of concerned persons wishing to bring all of the many issues that face humanity today into our discussion and consideration.

John English SJ, *Spiritual Intimacy and Community* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd 1992)

What word or phrase stood out for me? Share this with the group.

Reflect on the questions:

- What has been my most positive experience of Christian community?
- What characteristic of that experience do I most value, and why?

Do a round of sharing on this and discuss these characteristics (note on flip chart or in some other way).

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and Scripture passage for daily meditation (several other related Scripture passages may be added by the group leader.)
- Refer to resource material: "CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY". *Note what strikes you as most helpful or meaningful. Be prepared to share this with those in your group.*

## **PART III**

### **A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

### **B: Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

#### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

John 1:35-39 (*Come and See*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on the article below.

### **CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY**

**What is it?** Christian Life Community is an international community of small groups of committed lay Christians who seek to integrate the realities of lay experience with Ignatian Spirituality, which calls members to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of Christian faith.

**What does the CLC “way of life” mean in practical terms?** Each member assumes the responsibility for participating in the meetings and activities of the group, and each helps and encourages the other to pursue his/her personal vocation, always ready to participate in the interchange that seeks and gives aid and advice as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

**Prayer** is fundamentally surrender to God and God’s desires for us and the human race.

**Listening** is surrender to the other persons in the community expressing where they have found God. The CLC process brings these two together:

- Personal quiet prayer over the Word of God in Scripture
- Listening to others’ experience of God in their lives

Eventually, these two moments lead to discerned decisions for individuals and the community. Such decisions assist the members and the group to carry out their **mission**.

### **Why join CLC?**

All baptized Christians have a vocation to reveal the healing, reconciling power of Christ in our world. There are many gifted ways of doing this. CLC is one way for women and men who desire to have a part in building a reign of peace, justice, love and joy in our world in this twenty-first century. It is a way that is both traditional and new. In short, men and women who desire the spiritual freedom to speak and act in Jesus’ name in this world, will find support and direction in CLC.

Men and women come to CLC for a variety of reasons. Some come to find companionship (community), some come to find a deeper, freer relationship with Christ (spirituality), some come committed to a vision of changing the world and desirous of finding others equally committed (apostolic service or mission), while others come to find a simple structure that enables the integration of action and prayer in company with others. For whatever reason people come, formation and growth of persons into the full Christian communal life is a long process. While a Christian Life Community group is not primarily a prayer group, a discussion group, a Scripture study group, a self-help group or an issue action group, there are dimensions of all these at various times in the CLC experience and history.

### **What does CLC mean by community?**

The CLC is a World Community with members in more than 60 countries, located on every continent. The local CLC group is the face and local expression of this world community. The local group is a community of persons committed to each other. This happens through the interaction of a group in which members become at ease with one another, able to trust the care and reverence of each other, and able to extend a gospel quality of love that heals, while revealing Christ in the world.

Christian Life Community gathers at many levels, but the experience of human affection spans the levels from local to national to world to create bonds which are basic to the personal growth and apostolic service of members.

The World and National CLC have developed formation tools for enabling new groups to get started or existing prayer and study groups to become CLC groups/members.

### **What is Ignatian Spirituality?**

The impetus of Christian Life Community is a spirituality that is baptismal and Ignatian. Very simply, this means the CLC recognizes that the saving action of Christ is the work of all baptized Christians who are empowered by the same Spirit that enabled Jesus of Nazareth to reveal the unconditional, compassionate love of the Father. St Ignatius Loyola, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Basque nobleman, experienced the reality of this unconditional love of God in a specific prayerful process he called the **Spiritual Exercises**. These **Exercises** have been recognized by the Catholic Church as a powerful tool for helping men and women of generous spirit to gain the freedom required to discover the desires of God rooted in the human heart. Other Christian traditions also value these **Exercises of St. Ignatius**.

Ignatian Spirituality is an integrated spirituality, i.e. a **process** which brings together our faith and daily living, so that we may become more aware of Christ's presence in our life and respond to the Lord's invitations, in an ongoing way, to carry on the mission of Christ in our world today.

## **International Association of Lay Persons**

The World Christian Life Community is governed by a General Assembly of delegates from all member nations which meets for 10 days every five years. This assembly elects an international Executive Council (ExCo) for 5 years and sets the policies and orientations for the executive council up to the next assembly. The executive council maintains a secretariat in Rome and appoints an Executive Secretary to assist it in this work.

## **SESSION 2**

### **THEME: SPIRITUALITY (OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST AND CLC)**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To see where we are in our relationship with Jesus Christ.
- To reflect on the process of developing a life in the Spirit.
- To open up our understanding of CLC spirituality.

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes: remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

John 1:35-39 (*Come and See*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

The Group Coordinator and/or Guide will introduce the second round by briefly sharing what she/he has heard that reveals a new or deeper understanding of God's action in this community in and through the members' sharing. *The group Leader could also invite other members to share a word or phrase, revealing a deeper understanding of God's action in this community.*

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully review the article: "Christian Life Community"

- What word or phrase stood out for me?
- Share this with the group.

Reflect on the following questions:

- *Who is Christ for me at this time in my life?*
- *Where do I meet him most?*

Share this with the group.

Read the article below:

### **A NEW SPIRITUALITY**

The phenomenon of small Christian communities welling up everywhere indicates an intuition of the possibility of a new Christian Spirituality in today's world.

Christians are responding to the urging of the Holy Spirit calling us to live a spirituality of intimate community. This means that Christians realize anew that life is a community affair, that salvation is a community experience, and that building the realm of God here on earth is a community endeavour. They judge the 'affairs of life' in terms of community relationships. They understand scriptural messages of creation, sin, forgiveness, call, suffering and glory, in terms of community. The desires and petitions of prayer are of the community. Prayer is a community experience. People experience, understand and judge life in the relationships between individuals and the community, and realize life in the individual members and in the community as a whole.

Today's communal spirituality is in the tradition of the early Church and expresses a deep appreciation of the Church as the body of Christ. Although there are different styles of Christian living in these various gatherings of Christians, a common spirituality is present in all of them.

- What images and self-identities are present?
- What way of life is operative? In other words, what is the spirituality of Christian community?

Share and discuss these characteristics (note on flip chart or by other means)

Reflection question:

- How does CLC's understanding of spirituality connect to your hopes for participating in this group journey?

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and Scripture passage for daily meditation. (Other related Scripture passages may be added by the Group Leader)
- Note resource material, "A Brief Summary of CLC Spirituality", and the article, "The Spiritual Examen Prayer".

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**



## **B: Communal Awareness:**

### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.

## PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION

### **GRACE:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Romans 12:1-2 (*Worship God in our lives*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on the article, “*A Brief Summary of CLC Spirituality*” below. Note what you would like to share with your group.

Prayerfully read and do the “Awareness/Examen Prayer” below. Note what you would like to share with your group

### **A Brief Summary of CLC Spirituality**

#### **A Way of Life**

Ignatian Spirituality is an integrated spirituality, i.e. a ‘process’ which brings together our faith and daily living, so that we may become more aware of Christ’s presence in our life, and respond to the Lord’s invitations, in an on-going way, to carry on the mission of Christ in our world today.

This process is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: as a retreat experience, or/and as a way of life on the personal and communal level

**As a retreat experience**, the Spiritual Exercises ‘speak’ (if experienced) for themselves. However, the process takes a person through various prayer experiences that assist the person “to better love and serve God in all things”.

The experience of the Spiritual Exercises is continued on the personal level in two ways. Of course, these two ways are not exhaustive:

*Through the sort of prayer that **begins** by surrendering to God and telling God how we feel – we tell the Lord what is on our mind or in our heart. This may take all the time for prayer, or only part of it...but it is where we begin. We only grow in intimacy with a person to the extent that we reveal ourselves to that person and let him/her reveal himself/herself to us. This sort of prayer makes for the integration of our faith and daily living, and is a growing experience of **conversion** (a “metanoia”/ a turning **back** or turning **to** God) we begin to see life in a new way, through the eyes of God revealed in Christ Jesus, and turn to it, where before we saw nothing, or only something negative.*

*Through the daily examen prayer (awareness exercise) There are various models for this. Perhaps one of the best known in CLC is the model proposed by Fr. George Aschenbrenner, SJ. The aim of this exercise is, through a growing attentiveness to our inner **movements** – i.e. our feelings, our motives, our inspirations – to come to know the wellsprings of our actions and the*

patterns of our behaviour, so that we may be attuned to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and more alert, as well, to the prompting of the forces of evil that come to us.

**On the community level:** the usual CLC process in a group reinforces the movement of integrating our faith and daily living.

There is a time for quiet prayer, using a passage of Scripture (sometimes this leads into shared prayer, depending on the group).

There is an exchange, on the level of experience of some aspect of daily life (decided in advance).

Other activities may follow, but these two moments are essential. They bring the light of faith, in a community context, to the different concerns of our life. Moreover, these moments further reinforce the movement of integration because they bring together prayer and listening. **Prayer**, basically, is surrender to ABBA/the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ– to let God be God in my life. **Listening** is surrendering to the other – to let the other freely be himself/herself. We know how real our prayer is by looking at the quality of our listening.

### **What is mission?**

Mission is not so much what we do, as it is the whole quality of presence we bring to the world in which we live.

Our mission is to carry on the mission of Christ, to be Christ-bearers like Mary. Christ's mission was not just what he did, but who he was, his whole life. His whole life, in human terms, was the full revelation of the Father's love.

His dying reveals that the Father's love is unconditional and completely 'vulnerable' to creation, in the sense that when God's love is fully revealed, what we see is a 'man with a broken heart'. Christ's rising reveals that the Father's love is undying and unconquerable.

Our mission, therefore, is to carry on Christ's mission; being people who reveal the Father's love.

We not only do this but *are* this – i.e. a revelation of the Father's love – through seeking to build the sort of world in which people can live as brothers and sisters, united as children of the Father.

That is the CLC mission and it is further specified by our experience as members of the Church. In the world today, we cannot live as brothers and sisters unless:

- a. we have a simple lifestyle – poor with Christ – poor for a better service
- b. we carry the spirit of evangelization, a concern for the service of faith and the promotion of justice

That is the CLC mission in the world today – to live as brother and sisters who reveal the Father's love, and pray and hope that the people around us may also come to

believe that the Kingdom of the Father is both possible and true...a Kingdom of justice, peace and love.

Patrick O'Sullivan, SJ, From *PROGRESSIO*

### **THE AWARENESS/EXAMEN\* PRAYER**

This short daily prayer exercise of 10 to 15 minutes will help increase one's sensitivity to God working in one's life, and to provide the enlightenment needed to co-operate and respond to His presence.

#### **Settle into Prayer With An Attitude Of Gratitude**

I begin by placing myself in the presence of God, who is like father and mother to us and so much more than we can imagine. I try to become aware of God beholding me.... I thank God for accompanying me on my journey, whether I recognize God's constant presence or not.

#### **Ask For What You Seek And Desire**

I ask for the guidance of the Spirit to help me get in touch with what has been happening in me and around me today. I ask for the ability to recognize how the Spirit is leading me through these happenings.

#### **Reflect On Your Experiences of the Day**

1. I remember various moments of the day. On what one event or experience do I want to focus? For example, enjoying, or being repulsed by, or being attracted by some person, event or thing?
2. a) What did I feel as the incident happened? There may have been a mixture of feelings or a noticeable lack of feelings. Was I aware of my feelings as it happened, or did I become aware of them later?  
b) How did I respond to these feelings? Suppress them? Laugh? Cry? Take them out on others? etc.  
c) What are the aspects of the event that help me understand what went on within me and outside of me?
3. How is the Spirit of God present for me in this? Are there any signs of the Spirit that I recognize in that experience? Are there any indications that some parts of the experience were not in harmony with God's Spirit? What does this indicate? For example: my own needs? the needs of others? questions? awareness of fears? awareness of gifts? etc.

#### **Respond To God**

I dialogue with God who is with me and loves me profoundly in the midst of this reality. I talk over with God how I am being called now towards the next day.

(Sometimes you may want to read a passage of Scripture to let the Word shed light on your experience.)

## **SESSION 3**

### **THEME: MISSION AND CLC**

#### **The Objectives:**

- To understand Ignatian Spirituality.
- To reflect on our personal experience of ministry or apostolic service
- To open up understanding about CLC and mission.
- To share our experience of the daily Examen Prayer

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes: remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, for grace to open our hearts to God, and to each other, and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Roman 12: 1-2 (*Worship God in our lives*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The second round of sharing:**

In this third meeting the Group Coordinator or Guide may offer a more collective way of second round sharing. After the members in the group have shared the experience of their prayer time, have a second round of sharing. This fosters a sense of community and will help the group by deepening what has been shared. After a few moments of reflection, share on the following questions:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully review the articles from SESSION 2:

- A brief summary of CLC Spirituality
- Spiritual Examen Prayer.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What word or phrase stood out for me?
- What has been my experience of service?
- How do I sense I am being called, at this time in my life, to join Christ in His mission, in loving service?

Share this with the group.

Read the article below.

### **DIALOGUING WITH THE DANCE OF CREATION**

What a magnificent sight the panorama of the heavens makes on a clear night – the myriads of planets, stars and galaxies, as they move across the heavens before us! Psalmists, troubadours, poets have all expressed amazement at the sight. Scientists and theologians, in spite of their differences, are united by wonder and awe, and by the desire to know and understand the heavens... Scientists have made it possible for us to view the heavens in new and fascinating ways. Telescopes and space stations show us the circling of planets and gases in the universe, leading to the creation of new stars and planets. They tell us that the universe is constantly expanding in an activity like a choral dance.

[....]

We can imagine the dynamic activity within the Trinity, its dance or *perichoresis*, overflowing into the dance of the heavens. We are caught up in this marvel of motion, sound and light which is the movement of the stars, the variations of light and of sound coming from beyond our earth. We are part of the Trinity's dance.

[....]

It is important to note how Ignatius [ ...] links humans to other creatures in their personal salvation. 'The other things on the face of the earth are created for human beings' to help them attain salvation." Today we would say that all creatures of the universe gain salvation collectively[....]

We need to ponder deeply our connectedness with all the other creatures of the universe and our dependence on them. How often do we realise the significance of the sun and other celestial beings for our existence and ongoing life? Do we, like the aboriginal hunter, thank the deer for giving up its life to feed us?

At the end of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius once again places our relationship with God against the background of other creatures. He suggests that we are to consider how the Holy Spirit dwells in creatures: the elements, the plants, the animals and humanity (Exx. 235).

The Principle and Foundation expresses our purpose and goal in life. It tells us that we are creatures of a benevolent Creator, and then insists on the need for freedom (in Ignatius' language 'indifference') in our relationships with other creatures. Ignatian spiritual freedom involves a correct relationship with all the creatures of the earth; conversely, it is undermined by the abuse of our companions on the way to union with God. We must seek an awareness of our connectedness with other creatures in order to praise, reverence and serve the Trinity in all things.

For Ignatius, God is present at all times and in all things. We are to be loving companions as we relate to other creatures and use them for their salvation as well as our own. In Romans, Paul speaks of our groanings as we wait for resurrection, while all around us creation is groaning too. We are to be brought to a sense of connectedness with all the other creatures of the universe....

Early Christian doctrine saw a closer relationship between creation and salvation than was later envisioned. Created reality never exists without its actual ordering to grace and salvation. The creative act of Christ extends to all humanity and even reaches the cosmic realm. Other created things are to be valued in themselves and not just their use. Ignatius' text itself goes beyond the strictly utilitarian.

The Principle and Foundation has often been presented as referring to the individual. But Ignatius was speaking of 'humanity' as a whole, and was linking human beings with the whole range of creation. We might say, 'we are saved as a people', or even 'we are saved as a planet'. We are to approach other creatures as our companions on our journey to the Trinity.

John English, SJ, on Web Site: *Orientations*

Notice 3 or 4 characteristics of CLC service.

- Share and discuss these characteristics (note on flip chart or by other means)

Reflection question:

- How does CLC's understanding of mission connect to your hopes for participating in this group journey?

#### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and Scripture passage for daily meditation.
- Note resource material, "*Answering the Call to Service: How to Begin*", and "*Faith in Practice*".

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**



**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Matthew 28: 16 - 20 (*The mission to the world*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on the articles below.

### **Answering the Call to Service: How to Begin**

Personally, and within CLC groups, I have had quite a struggle with my call to service. Personally, I have found it difficult to determine what I am being called to do, and in a group setting, we have had trouble maintaining interest and commitment to various projects.

However, in the past year I have had two wonderful CLC-related experiences that have helped me deal with call to service. Both experiences actually deal with what I will call the pre-service stage. These experiences have helped me to answer the question, "How do I begin?"

1) While I participated in the CLC Youth Colloquium held in Rome in December 1984, we spoke quite a bit about mission. Mario Danieli, SJ, addressed our little international group and gave us a model which can be helpful to a person or a group seeking a special way to express their faith and be of service to others. Below are the steps in the model:

**Move from ignorance to information:** as a first step in inserting oneself into the world, be well informed as to what is going on around you.

**Move from information to awareness:** one should go deeper than the level of information. It is not enough to know there is poverty; one should be capable of seeing its effects, causes, extent, its deepest human significance.

**Move from awareness to sensitivity:** direct contact with situations of injustices and poverty.

**Move from all of the above to commitment:** we should be able to give creative responses to the reality which challenges us: generous responses which are going to demand more time, more freedom, more effort, and more prayer from us.

2) My second helpful experience took place during the summer of 1985 when I took part in a special program offered by the US National Federation. The program was offered to anyone who wanted to increase their knowledge of, and commitment to, CLC. It also offered the opportunity to live in community with CLC members living at the National Centre and also to work in the National Office.

Mission was again a subject I learned a great deal about during this experience. Although, I did not realize some of the steps in the model Mario had given us at the Youth Colloquium.

While living at the National Centre, the program's director, Jean Kielty, and the participants went about assessing the needs of the people in the area and visiting centres serving the needs of the people. The National Centre is in an area suffering economic hardship and as a result there are many poor, homeless and hungry people (**moving from ignorance to information**). We began to seek information about various houses and centres that help poor people and we spoke to those who work at these centres to learn more about the situation of poverty around us (**moving from information to awareness**). Finally, we visited and worked temporarily at one of the centres for homeless people (**moving from awareness to sensitivity**). Because I would not remain living in the area, I could not make a commitment of time to any of the centres, but the experience is one that will help me in **my future responses to God's call to service**.

I have also learned through these experiences that service can be both local and global. Working in a local nursing home visiting lonely, elderly people is just as important and necessary as joining the masses protesting apartheid in South Africa. God recognises the human limitations of those who serve. Local acts of service will most often reap results that one can see and feel good about, while with global efforts we may be part of a beginning process we may not see the results of in our life time. Perhaps it is good to begin with small service projects while we are young or new to the call of God's will. Each small act will strengthen us bit by bit for the time when God may choose us for some formidable task. Having been strengthened by each small act of service, we will not shrink from our Christian duty when Jesus asks us, "Follow me", "Feed my poor", "Do my will."

Beth Lortie (*adapted*)

## **FAITH IN PRACTICE**

These past two years, I have had the wonderful privilege of traveling to Guatemala with a group based in Houston Texas, called Faith in Practice. Ever since I became a nurse many years ago, I have often wondered what it would be like to do missionary work. So, when a physician in Newport told me about this organization, I decided this was my chance.

**Faith in Practice** started twelve years ago and sends teams to Antigua, Guatemala every week, for about fourteen weeks between February and June. Most teams are made up of a surgical teams and a village team. The surgical team stays in Antigua and performs surgeries on patients referred from previous village teams. The village team travels to an area and then goes to four different villages during the week.

Because I am not a surgical nurse, I travel on the village team. We head out on Sunday morning to our base motel, many times three to four hours by bus from Antigua. Then we start our weekdays at 5AM with devotions, breakfast and a bus ride to the village. I work on the GYN Team and see women. There are also pediatricians, internists, family practice doctors and sometimes a dental team.

We all work hard and the weather is hot, but the satisfaction can't be beat. I find this to be a very spiritual time for me. It is so humbling to see how hard these people work, how much they help each other and how little they complain about their hardships. It is not hard to see Jesus in the faces of these humble people. For me, it is a privilege to teach, relieve fears, treat illnesses and recommend surgeries that will change many of their lives. But there are times, too, when my heart cries, as there is nothing we can do in some situations

My Christian Life Community here in Newport, as well as other friends and family, have all been very supportive of my trips, not only with their prayers, but financially as well. Even though I pay my own way, there is a need to raise money for medicines, post-recovery care and travel expenses for patients otherwise unable to make the long trip to Antigua.

This year, I had two additional blessings on my trip. I was fortunate to be in Antigua before Holy Week. I was able to see some processions, devotions and the whole community participating in the events leading to Holy Week. I was also able to visit with one of the children I sponsor through Christian Foundation for Children and Adults. He arrived in Antigua by bus from his home two and a half hours away. He was accompanied by his mother, little brother and an interpreter. As we had exchanged many letters, it was rewarding to finally meet in person. Hopefully, next year I will be able to meet the little girl I also sponsor.

I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of Faith in Practice. It has been a very spiritual and growth experience for me.

Virginia Fisher, *Harvest- CLC USA Publication*

Ponder this question: *What thoughts and feelings stirred in me as I read this article?*

Note what you would like to share with your group

## **SESSION 4**

### **THEME: SHARING THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To reflect on CLC's understanding of and attitude to the Church.
- To reflect on the call of CLC to become an apostolic community, Sharing the Church's mission.

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn:**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes: remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Matthew 28: 16-20 (*The mission to the world*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

Once again, the group continues in the same manner as the previous SESSION. After the members in the group have shared the experience of their prayer time, have a second round of sharing. This fosters a sense of community and is helpful for the group by deepening what has been shared.

After a few moments of reflection, share on the following questions:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully review the article from SESSION 3, "ANSWERING THE CALL TO SERVICE: HOW TO BEGIN"

- What word or phrase stood out for me?

Share this with the group.

[Reflect on the following questions:

- What has been my experience of service?
- How do I sense I am being called at this time in my life to join Christ in His mission, in loving service? ] See *Session 3*

Share this with the group.

Read the article below:

### **The Mission of the Laity**

There is a starting point and a foundation, which is our baptism, and this brings us into the life of Christ and makes us participants in his mission[...] the laity, which has become aware of and committed to the mission of the Church and empowered by the Holy Spirit to participate fully in this, needs to engage in continuous reflection as to how we may live out our missionary or apostolic vocation. We also need to find the help and means which will allow us to collaborate with each other and the ordained clergy and religious.

**1. In the church we share in the mission of Jesus Christ[... ]** This is all about spreading the Good News, announcing freedom, freeing things that bind, making the blind see, proclaiming the love of God who fills things with [God's] grace[...] Christ gives us mission, we receive it from him. We are first and foremost his witnesses. We are not spreading propaganda or being active about some project of our own. We cannot 'take upon ourselves' the mission of Jesus in a triumphant and powerful way. No, Jesus enters into our lives to inspire them in a permanent way.

All this dynamic of knowing and loving Jesus in order to receive from him his mission and to share in his radical options - we live it as a people who are equal, as church. We do not live this 'in the church'. We live this 'as church', becoming one people, becoming church as we journey together. Communion and mission cannot be separated; just as in our spirituality, contemplation and action are inseparable. So as laity, we live out our mission '*as members of the People of God on our way*' (G.P. 8); that is to say, in the company of others and within a process which has no end, a process or a way which has its ups and downs, its struggles, its moments of weariness, its successes and its failures.

One central concern which we have is that our union with Christ and his mission brings us together as a people and does not set us apart from other men and women but, in fact, takes us beyond our limitations and statues. We will be called to '*collaborate in initiatives which work to unite Christians*' and to offer '*our active*

*presence in secular or religious organizations and efforts which already exist*, unified with many leaders and following the Spirit of our Lord.

**2. There are no limits or fixed territories.** The field of our mission has no limits; it does not confine us to set circles or areas. In this way, we are able to act both in the church and in the world. We are aware, as well, that the limits are not so fixed, and that in today's world we are more and more involved in our identities and relationships[...] It is a fact that the terms 'church' and 'world', while they are certainly different, cannot be kept apart because the dividing lines between them are not clear cut and they have 'shared areas'.

Nor do other dichotomies, such as serving people or transforming structures, really work either. We must see ourselves as helpers of Christ in all these things, according to our talents and discernment, collaborating with others and in the full knowledge that our action is not the definitive one, since it is our Lord who brings about conversion and who multiplies our efforts and brings them to fruition.

**3. There is an individual dimension which cannot be surrendered[...]** Christ calls each one of us in a personal way and our response – although it may be thought through with and empowered by the community – is always a personal one, in the same way as [...] our process of growth and our vocation are[...] But it is a mistake to speak only of 'doing' because in a definitive way, this is about the quality of our presence and not only of our actions. For example, within our families we could live out the fact of being parents like a ministry, [...] as a service to the mission of Christ. This will not only have to do with how we act as parents but with the entire quality of our presence and our attitude within the family, including at times what we do or even in spite of what we do (or fail to do).

**4. There is a call to action together or collaboration[ ...]** this is not just a matter of achieving a greater efficiency, but of acting in the best possible way as 'being church'. The church – community – is built up and expresses itself through an apostolate [service or ministry] which is made up of groups. In this way it becomes visible, believable, and becomes attractive to others.

José Reyes, *excerpts from PROGRESSIO*, December (2004),

Reflection question: *How does your understanding of mission connect to your hopes for participating in this group journey?*

#### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and Scripture passage for daily meditation.
- Note resource material:
  1. "*Redemptoris Mater*" – *Mother of the Redeemer* – (excerpts) by John Paul II)
  2. "*Toward an Understanding of the Mother of the Lord*" – (excerpts) by Tim Perry)

## **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 1: 26 - 38 (*Let it be done to me according to your word*)

Pray and meditate on the following:

#### **Canticle of Mary (the *Magnificat* - Paraphrased)**

My soul proclaims your greatness, O my God,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in you my Saviour.  
For your regard has blessed me,  
Poor and serving woman.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed.  
For you who are mighty have made me great.  
Most Holy be your name.  
Your mercy is on those who fear you throughout all generations.  
You have showed strength with your arm.  
You have scattered the proud in their heart's fantasy.  
You have put down the mighty from their seats,  
And have lifted up the powerless.  
You have filled the hungry with good things,  
And have sent the rich away empty.  
You, remembering your mercy,  
Have helped your people, Israel  
As you promised Abraham and Sarah,  
Mercy to their children forever.      (*See Luke 1: 46-55*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on the 2 articles below.

#### **Redemptoris Mater – Mother of the Redeemer** – (excerpts -John Paul II)

The whole Church, in its adhesion to Christ, travels the same itinerary as the Virgin Mary. Hers is the “figure”, the advance model of the Church, in faith, in hope and in charity, in a perfect union with Christ.

Mary’s “pilgrimage” in the faith is a reference point for us all. And so much the more is this true in that she has reached the end of the journey, as the first member of the Church, and after Christ has come into the final glory, crossing the threshold between faith and face-to-face seeing. Thus, she illuminates all of our history.

The angel’s annunciation introduces Mary into the Mystery of Christ, in which the Trinity has blessed all of humanity by their eternal design, so that we may become “holy and immaculate in God’s presence” (Eph 1:36). This blessing touched Mary in a

special manner. Clearly, she is “blessed among women” (Luke 1:42) and “full of grace” (Luke 1:28). She is eternally loved by God in the beloved Son. She has been eternally elected to be the mother of this Son. And the redemption worked by her Son is anticipated in her, preserving her from inheriting original sin, she is Christ’s, right from her conception. And in the victorious struggle against evil, she is always at her son’s side, as we see right from the divine promise of Genesis (3:15), up to the vision of the book of Revelations (12:1-17).

Elizabeth says Mary is “happy because she has believed”. Because of this faith of Mary, which responds to the divine choice, the promise could become reality in her. Her consent and her yielding herself up to the divine plan, in an “obedience of faith”, are the human decisions that makes possible the realization of the mystery of the redemption. Just as Abraham’s faith was the starting point of the old covenant, Mary’s faith is the starting point of the new covenant. [...] Then like Abraham, Mary too went on believing, and to “hope against all hope”, since she had confidence in God, above and beyond her own capacity to understand. Simeon’s prophecy and the flight into Egypt were for her the announcement; complementary to the Angel’s that her path, beside her Son, would be dark and painful. During Jesus’ hidden life, Mary’s life, too, was “hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Day after day she lived intimately with the mystery of her son, but in a kind of “dark night of faith.” “She went forward in a pilgrimage of faith,” as the Vatican council says[...]

In the public ministry and from high up on the cross, Jesus gave new meaning to Mary’s motherhood. Jesus announced the Realm of God[...] And because of her faith, because of her adhesion to the word of God (cf .Luke 11:27-28; 9:20-21), Mary discovered and welcomed, as her Son’s first “disciple”, this new spiritual dimension of motherhood. Hence her behaviour at the Cana wedding, a scene of great symbolic value, in which she exhibited her care for people in their need (“The have no more wine”) and in her role as spokeswoman of Christ’s will (“Do whatever he tells you”).

[...] At Nazareth, alone and within the sphere of Pentecost, together with the disciples, she is the Mother, when the Word and the Church are born from the Spirit.

The Church is walking as a pilgrim through space and time, and also walking interiorly, in faith, in the midst of the world’s persecutions and God’s consolation. On this pilgrimage Mary is present, right from the start in the Upper Room. She did not directly receive her mission from the apostles, but she was with them when they were being prepared by God to take it on.

In the eyes of the infant Church she was already “an exceptional witness to the Mystery of Jesus”, “the first to believe”, right from the annunciation and from the Lord’s childhood, on through Calvary and up to the resurrection in which “the promise had begun to be converted into reality”. This heroic faith of Mary’s preceded the Church’s apostolic testimony. All those who accept this testimony take part in Mary’s faith and contemplate it in the light of the Word become flesh. The Magnificat’s prophecy will become true: “All generations will call me blessed.” Elizabeth’s greeting to “she who has believed” is extended. Everyone will seek in Mary’s faith support for their own faith. The Lord’s disciples in every nation “will persevere in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:4).

In the Annunciation, declaring herself to be the “handmaid of the Lord”, Mary submits to the sole mediation of Jesus Christ, accepting the task of being his mother. Her total gift of herself to God [...] brings her to this spontaneous consent, under the action of the Holy Spirit.

By her Assumption Mary joins the pilgrim Church on earth with the final and definitive reality of the Communion of Saints in the glory of Christ [...] Mary is a “type”, that is, a model of the Church that is a mother, in so far as she faithfully receives God’s word and generates the children that God gives her. Mary is at the service of the Incarnation, and the Church is at the service of our adoption as children of God. Both keep themselves faithful to their “spouse”; Mary as the perfect model, the Church, in its attempt to resemble her.

### **Toward an Understanding of the Mother of the Lord**

At the conclusion of the study, it is perhaps wise simply to list what has been accomplished alongside what has not. I have attempted to construct a Mariology within a theological method that most evangelical Protestant theologians would recognize as theirs [...] The result is an understanding of Mary squarely within and indeed beneath the rubric of Christology. Beliefs about Mary arise from and are intended to clarify our beliefs about Christ. Indeed, they are intended not to glorify Mary as much as they are intended to glorify her Son.

Those beliefs include the ongoing significance of the virginal conception for Christology, a willingness to reconsider claims to perpetual virginity, and recognition of the deep symbolic connection between the Mother of God and the people of God. Added to these are convictions concerning the place of Mary in God’s plan to save the world and an acceptance of Mary’s sanctity defined biblically as perseverance, rather than traditionally as Immaculate Conception. Finally, the picture is completed when we acknowledge Mary’s intercessory, mediatory and co redemptive role in the plan of salvation

Many of my readers will conclude that by presenting this picture, I have signalled a belief that the Reformation was in many ways an error that now needs to be undone, that I have overlooked or conveniently forgotten the history of the controversy surrounding Mary in Western Christianity, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. To these readers I offer a reminder of those places where I believe I am constrained by Scripture not to go.

I believe that Scripture rightly read rejects any understanding of the election of Mary as necessary, rather than contingent on the election of God to become incarnate. I continue to hold that the two modern dogmas – which can be appreciated for their emphasis on grace – enshrine post biblical legends about Mary’s beginning and end, thereby distracting believers from the literary basis for beliefs in Mary’s sanctity, namely, the Old Testament. I remain convinced that a great deal of pious or affective language about the Blessed Virgin perpetuates a grave misunderstanding of her

*subordinate* role, effectively creating an equal alternative Saviour. This is especially the case when the language of intercession, mediation and co-redemption is used too loosely and in a manner abstracted from biblical roots.

[...] I hope, however, that I have helped to clear away some of its unhelpful polemical baggage (and each side has a truckload) in order that productive conversations may take place – conversations that articulate clearly just where we can and cannot agree, not in order to perpetuate that disagreement, but in order to prayerfully set those disagreements before the One who prayed that we may be one.....

Tim Perry, *Toward an Understanding of the Mother of our Lord – Mary for Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2006), 307-308

Note what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 5**

### **THEME: MARY: FIRST DISCIPLE AND MODEL OF THE CHURCH AND CLC**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To look at Mary as a model of mission
- To reflect on our own relationship with Mary

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes: remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other and to see Mary as one open to the call of God.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Luke 1: 26-38 (*Let it be done to me according to your word...*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

Once again, the group would continue in the same manner as the previous SESSION. After the members in the group have shared the experience with their prayer time, have a second round of sharing. This fosters a sense of community and is helpful for the group by deepening what has been shared.

After a few moments of reflection, share on the following questions:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully review the articles "*Redemptoris Mater – Mother of the Redeemer*" and "*Toward an Understanding of the Mother of the Lord*" from SESSION 4:

- What word or phrase stood out for me?

- Share this with the group.

Reflect on the following question:

- Which qualities of Mary particularly attract you? Why do you think that is so?

Share this with the group

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and Scripture passage for daily meditation.
- Note resource material: "*Outline of the CLC General Principles*".

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Acts 4:32-35 (*The sharing of everything in community*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on the articles below.

## **TO SEEK AND FIND ONE'S INDIVIDUAL VOCATION IN CLC**

The formation of the laity should bring them an ever-clearer discovery of their vocation and an ever-greater readiness to live it so as to fulfil their mission. In the process of discovering whether an individual has a CLC vocation, two things must be considered. First, whether the individual hoping to live such a vocation has a suitable disposition and, second, if they do, how this can be strengthened and the person helped to recognise that God is calling them to embrace the CLC way of life. These elements of the CLC process of formation in relation to vocation are based mainly on the Spiritual Exercises.

## **THE VITAL ROLE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN THE DISCERNMENT OF VOCATION**

The discernment of a particular vocation to CLC is made mainly during the Spiritual Exercises where are found, besides the basic perspectives that determine the choice of a Christian way of life, the stages for discerning vocation.

The Spiritual Exercises are fundamental and essential for living the CLC vocation. They are the *"source and characteristic instrument of our spirituality"*. Therefore, we cannot understand or much less live the CLC vocation without experiencing the Exercises.

At the beginning of the book of the Exercises, St Ignatius defines what he understands to be the method God inspired in him; thanks to which, he could help many: *"...by this name of Spiritual Exercises, is meant every way of examining one's conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions, as will be said later."*

For Ignatius the Exercises are the different ways of "exercising" the spirit. He justifies his definition saying: *"For, as strolling, walking, and running are bodily exercises, so 'spiritual exercises' is the name given to every way of preparing and disposing one's soul to rid herself of all disordered attachments, so that, once rid of them one might seek and find the Divine Will in regard to the disposition of one's life for the good of the soul"*.

Synthesis drawn from *THE CLC CHARISM*

Note what you like to share with your **group by writing a letter in preparation** for the Prayer Service in SESSION 6 saying:

- what have I received from these meetings;
- from the people here;
- what I feel I have to share with the people here, and do I wish to continue in meeting with the group.

Be as honest and as challenging as you can in your letter.



## **SESSION 6**

### **THEME: SHALL WE CONTINUE TOGETHER AS COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY?**

It is intended that this gathering will help bond this group. It is also the time for the individuals and the group to decide whether or not they should remain together on the journey as a Christian Life Community. This is a time for celebrating what we have received from each other.

#### **SUGGESTED MEETING FORMAT:**

You can design your own ritual or liturgy or follow the prepared prayer service experience which follows; or, the evening could be a celebration of the Eucharist.

#### **SUGGESTED PRAYER SERVICE (as follows):**

### **PART I**

**Opening Hymn:** following the theme of this SESSION.

**Leader:** We gather together in prayer, to be re-created by the saving power of God's Word. May the Spirit who searches our innermost desires be with you.

**All:** And also with you.

**Leader:** Mindful that the dwelling of the Word among us is to make us free, we pray:  
*(a moment of silence)*  
Loving and faithful God, you call us to fullness of life in Christ Jesus. We have reflected on our concerns, our goals, our needs. In our profound need, we come to you in a simple way to listen to your Word. Speak Lord, we are listening.

**Word of God:** Acts 4:32-35 (*An attempt to share everything in community*)

**Sharing:** Each person is invited to read his/her letter. A period of silent reflection can follow the reading of each of the letters.

#### **The second round of sharing:**

Once again, the group continues in the same manner as the previous SESSION. After the members in the group have shared the experience of their prayer time, have a second round of sharing. This fosters a sense of community and is helpful for the group by deepening what has been shared.

After a few moments of reflection, share on the following questions:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Closing Prayer:** Let us pray (*moment of silence*)

*Gracious God, we came into our world in need. We have shared our need for You and for each other and our desire to serve. As we reflect on what we are willing to give and on what the gift will cost us, strengthen us and confirm us in the gift of ourselves to You and to each other. In Jesus we ask this, and through Him we give You all praise and glory, now and forever, Amen.*

## **PART II**

Look at the grace and daily prayer/readings in SESSIONS 7 to 13 as a preparation for moving into SECTION 2.

## **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to one another.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask the Lord for light and for the grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

1 Peter 1:22-25 & 2:1-3 (*Called to holy living...*)

1 Peter 3:8-12 (*Finally, you should all be of one mind...loving one another*)

2 Peter 1:3-11 (*We participate in the divine nature.*)

1 Timothy 4:11-16 (*Advice to Timothy...Do not neglect the gift that is in you.*)

Romans 12:3-13 (*Be concerned for others...we are one body in Christ.*)

Prayerfully read "*Experiencing Silence*".

### **Experiencing Silence**

Each CLC meeting stresses a specific Christian attitude. This bears fruit only if this attitude is practised through a daily effort during the week or months following the meeting. We are at the beginning. We will start with the simplest and yet the precondition of all the rest: to learn how to pause and be silent, to be present to oneself. This text from *VIE CHRÉTIENNE*, October 1972, can introduce it:

**First**, silence is instinctively felt as the absence of external noise. So people seek silence; to flee from urban life which has become noisier; to go into places of calm and relative solitude – mountains, the countryside, a “den” room or a quiet chapel. One notices then that the absence of external noise sometimes, but not always, produces an interior calm and recollection. More often, on the contrary, we then feel ourselves invaded by the flow of our imagination and our ideas, which is why one often seeks to get away from it all. By that, one means true quiet, the absence, too, of interior commotion, that sought-after state in which a person, far from being possessed by things, is in possession of oneself.

**Secondly**, silence can then be experienced as a becoming aware of oneself, in which one naturally feels a great quiet and peace in the disappearance of all anxiety, or in which one quietly controls one’s imagination and thoughts. This interior state is not tension, but relaxation in the possession of oneself. It is, of course, fostered by conditions that one can seek out or arouse. Nature and art [...] play a key role. In returning from a mountaintop that one has been long in climbing, in listening motionless to the first strains of a concert, in letting oneself be penetrated by the chant of the silence of a community in prayer, one experiences a sudden state of solitude with oneself and communion with many friends at one and the same time. In these privileged moments, one enjoys a great interior freedom and, at the same time, a striking communion with other.

**Thirdly**, silence allows us to perceive the intimation, obscure, but full of hope, that, beyond ourselves and this interior universe that has now become ours, is an all-embracing, total presence. This perception, spontaneous and deep, quickly becomes a waiting, a desire, even a love, opening on a world that is mysterious, interior and limitless. Sometimes it is a secret encounter which leaves behind an inexplicable joy and peace as one leaves a church where one has gone in to pause for a few moments. It may be an illumination of our mind, in an instant, almost outside time, which does not dazzle us, but brings a confused comprehension of many things, a comprehension one cannot unravel; and this point of light, though extinguished at once, leaves behind its prolonged traces in our ordinary life. It does not issue in grand thoughts at all, or in precise projects, nor above all in the security of something definitely acquired. Such a presence, which is a presence not simply of oneself, but of another, comes to us as pure gift. It can be received only by simply welcoming it. That other may well be the One whom we call God. The welcome given it may well be the faith. And yet we cannot really say anything about it, except to affirm what St. John declares in a wonderful phrase, "*That God – if indeed it is He – is much greater than our heart*" (1John 3:20).

Why not try it? Take 10 or 15 minutes each day to be silent, setting it aside in your schedule. Foresee the place and the time. Find a good bodily position. Start by being conscious of your breathing; letting you bear the ebb and flow by its rhythm. If I do it, I see how difficult it is: interior turmoil, distractions, pressing concerns. But, I see too, how necessary it is: "Therefore, do not be anxious. Seek first the realm of God and God's righteousness" (Matt 6:32). Each day take a moment to discover again before God the thread of my life, the essential.

From *PROGRESSIO*

## **SECTION 2 - EXPERIENCING PRAYER**

### **SESSION 7**

#### **THEME: THE EXPERIENCE OF SILENCE**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To share with one another our approach to personal prayer
- To share and discuss with others the significance of silence in our life
- To experience the gift of silence as one way to dispose ourselves for prayer

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Romans 12:3-13 (*Christian Life= Loving in a genuine way*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

Once again the group would continue as in the previous SESSION and ponder the following questions:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared- experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

**A.** Read and reflect on the *CLC GENERAL PRINCIPLES* below.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLE #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.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLE #12 - WAY OF LIFE**

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.

- What word or phrase stood out for you?
- Share this with the group.

**B.** Read the article below:

### **PRACTICING SILENCE AS A "SPIRITUAL EXERCISE"**

Given that the Trinity indwells us through baptism, let your intention be to 'open yourself to God's Presence within' as you move into this experience of silence.

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes.
- Begin to slowly and gently breathe in and out
- Continue breathing in this slow rhythm as you begin to relax all your muscles starting with the top of your head and moving downward to your feet
- As you continue to breathe ... breathe in God's love, breathe out tension
- When distracting thoughts come, do not dwell on them, nor try to push them away. Simply notice them but let them float away, like watching a boat moving past you downriver.
- As you ease gently into this inner silence, simply remain there with God.
- At the end of the time you have chosen, gently ease out of the silence and become aware of your surroundings.

Share with the group a few words to describe your experience.

With soft, meditative music allow a full 3 minutes of silence.

Reflection questions:

- What experiences or moments of silence have you had that stand out as significant for you?
- Where were you?
- What was the effect of that silence on you?

- Share this with the group

C. Do a guided exercise using the **Lectio Divina** technique below:

### **LECTIO DIVINA**

The technique known as **lectio divina**, is an ancient art practiced, at one time, by all Christians. It is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. **Lectio divina** includes the prayerful reading of a passage from scripture, meditation, response and contemplation.

**Lectio divina** begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear “with the ear of our hearts”. It is to listen for the still, small voice of God, the “faint murmuring sound” which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an “attunement” to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

Having found a word or a passage in the Scriptures that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and “ruminate” on it. Through meditation we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

**Lectio divina** has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

**THE FIRST** reading [of the text] is for the purpose of hearing a word or passage that touches the heart. When the word or phrase is found, it is silently taken in, and gently recited and pondered during the silence which follows. After the silence each person shares which word or phrase has touched his or her heart.

**THE SECOND** reading [of the text] is for the purpose of “hearing” or “seeing” Christ in the text. Each ponders the word that has touched the heart and asks where the word or phrase touches his or her life that day. In other words, how is Christ the Word touching his own experience, his own life? How do the various members of the group see or hear Christ reach out to them through the text? Then, after the silence, each member of the group shares what he/she has “heard” or “seen.”

**THE THIRD** and final reading is for the purpose of experiencing Christ “calling us forth” into **doing** or **being**. Members ask themselves what Christ in the text is calling them to **do** or to **become** today or this week.

**PROCESS: Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word**

**Scripture Text:**

1. One person reads aloud the passage of scripture, as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them.
2. **Silence** for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
3. Sharing aloud [a word or phrase that has attracted each person] a simple statement of one or a few words on ... ***“How Christ the Word speaks to ME.”*** **(No elaboration)**
4. Second reading of same passage.
5. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on *“Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?”*
6. Sharing aloud: **(Briefly)** *“I hear, I see... **What Christ the Word invites me to do.**”*
7. Third reading
8. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on *“I believe that God wants me to . . . . . today/this week.”*
9. Sharing aloud, at somewhat greater length, the results of each one's reflection.

*Orientations II – J. Veltri, SJ*

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment
- Note the resource material for SESSION 8

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?



- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask the Lord for light and for the grace to open our hearts to God and to each other.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Isaiah 43:1-5 (*Fear not, for I have redeemed you...*)

Luke 12:22-31 (*Consider the lilies of the field...Do not worry.*)

Psalm 23 (*The LORD is my shepherd*)

Psalm 91 (*My refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust*)

Psalm 103 (*For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is God's kindness toward us...*)

Matt 23: 37 (*Jerusalem, Jerusalem [...] how often have I yearned to gather your children!*)

**Read and prayerfully reflect on the article below.**

### **A Presentation on Praying for the Grace**

To pray for a grace is not something that one does at the beginning of each exercise only. Rather, one continues to pray for a grace all through the exercise. To pray for a grace is first of all to acknowledge that growth in prayer is God's gift and not our work. It puts us in the position of receiver rather than that of doer. It gives us a focus for prayer. St. Ignatius continually suggests its use.

When I pray for a grace, I leave that part of my being open to receive it; I make a certain area of my life available for God's action. As I pray frequently for the suggested grace, I find that the general grace becomes more particular according to my needs. For example, I may be praying for that awareness of how personally my Creator relates to me and, towards the middle of the week, I discover that I am afraid of anyone relating personally to me because I find it hard to trust [...]. So I begin to pray for the trust I need.

J. Veltri, SJ *Orientations II*

Note what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 8**

### **THEME: PRAYER AS A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To share with one another our experience of practicing silence
- To open up the topic of prayer as relationship with God
- To open up the concept of praying for a grace
- To consider some practical helps in taking a personal prayer time

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace and light to open our hearts to God and to each other.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture**

Matthew 6:5-15 (*Whenever you pray...*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

**A.** Read and reflect on the *CLC GENERAL PRINCIPLE 5* below:

##### **GENERAL PRINCIPLE 5**

The spirituality of our Community is centred 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 [...]

Share with the group

**B.** Read the 2 articles below:

### **A LIFE OF PRAYER**

Think of a person whom I love, for example my wife or husband. Love takes different forms, different expressions:

- the simple glance, the small gesture which revivifies the presence, signs without apparent importance but whose sudden disappearance would make us feel cold,
  - the longing when you are separated and prepared to return; or when you dispose yourself to reconcile after a quarrel,
  - the conversation after a tiring day, when the children would have gone to bed; sharing of sorrows and joys, of disappointments and hopes,
  - the projects done together, or when, separated from each other, one pines for the other, for the children, for a better world,
  - the moments of intimacy lived in silence or of participation in social life.
- 1) Consider our relationship with God. In Scripture, God is compared to the Spouse of Israel. The Church is called the Spouse of Christ.
  - 2) Go over the examples given above. Can I point out the things that help me understand the life of prayer?
  - 3) Practically speaking, how do we find the time and the conditions for prayer in the life that we lead? Rhythm, place, time...

From *PROGRESSIO*

### **WHEN GOD AND I FIND OUR PLACE**

To learn to pray takes time. But what does it mean to pray?

What is in there so great and so frightening that it makes me so afraid? We have forgotten how. We have gone so far away from prayer that we have come to think of it as a purely human activity, a talking to God. We no longer know that it is God who prays in us. In praying, we all make the mistake of the rooster who thought that by his crowing he made the sun rise. He imagined that the sun rose in response to his voice and that if one day he would have the misfortune of forgetting to crow, the sun would not rise. Reality is much more beautiful than what the rooster thought. It is the sun that, at the first streaks of dawn, wakes the rooster.

To PRAY is to put myself under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to be calm, to be recollected so as to allow what is deepest in us to well up, spring up, and filter through, in order to become docile to another who prays in us.

To PRAY is to submit to Someone greater than I, to let stir in us, overflow in us the joy and love of the Son for the Father. There is only one prayer that the Father loves, only one prayer that the Father hears with delight, with boundless joy and pleasure; it is the incessant murmur of love, desire, reverence, admiration, respect, thanksgiving that wells up from the heart of the Son toward the Father. All prayer is united with this prayer.

To PRAY is to let rise from our heart to our lips the love of the Son for the Father: the Spirit.

To PRAY is to put myself so much at the disposition of God that one day we let Him do in us what He has always wanted to do but we never gave Him the opportunity to do.

That is how our Lord prayed. Jesus began by saying: "If it is possible, let this chalice pass from me" (Matthew. 26:39). After remaining several hours in prayer, Jesus was able to say: "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Let us try to pray that way, try to yield ourselves to this transforming power and feel ourselves changed under the influence of prayer. We have become weighed down with our burdens, overwhelmed by crushing anxieties, by depression, by obsession, by fear. We will never throw them off by ourselves. They oppress us, flatten us to the ground.

And then behold, in prayer slowly God arises, God acts, God appears. God becomes God before our eyes. And all the knots are untied, the mountains are lifted. One does not know how it happened, but it is true that now they seem to float around us. It is true that prayer moves mountains.

When God has again become God for us, all is changed, and yet all remains the same. All our questions have found an answer simply because God and I have found our place again.

From *PROGRESSIO*

Question:

- What word or phrase stood out for you?

Share this with the group.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment
- Note the resource material, "**When God and I Find Our Place**".

## **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep confidence and trust in God's personal care for me.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Matthew 5:13-16 (*You are salt and light*)

1 John 4:7-21 (*Let us love one another as God has first loved us*)

Ephesians 3:14-21 (*That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.*)

John 14: 15-31 (*If you love me...the Advocate, the Paraclete...will teach you all things*)

Luke 8: 4-15 (*The parable of the sower and the seed*)

Prayerfully read once again and reflect on the article "**When God and I Find Our Place**", found in the previous SESSION 8

Note what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 9**

### **THEME: SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To grow in trust through sharing the fruit of our prayer in Community.
- To experience the skill of Spiritual Journaling
- To experience a guided Review of Prayer and Repetition

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for the grace of being drawn closer to God and to one another through the practice of personal prayer.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Ephesians 3:14-21 (*May you be strengthened through the Spirit in the inner self*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared- experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

- A.** Read and prayerfully share your thoughts on the CLC GENERAL PRINCIPLE below:



## **GP #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.

Share with the group.

**B.** Read the article below:

### **REVIEW OF PRAYER**

After the formal prayer period is over I should review what happened during that time – not so much what ideas I had, but more the movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on – perhaps something about my distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. Questions like the following may help:

- 1) What went on during the period of prayer?
- 2) What struck me?
- 3) How did I feel about what went on?
- 4) What was my mood, changes in mood?
- 5) What did the Lord show me?
- 6) Is there some point I should return to in my next period of prayer?

During this review, I thank God for favours granted and ask pardon for my own negligence.

This review is an instrument to help me reflect upon the experience of the prayer period. It helps me notice my interior experiences. Thus, it enables me to be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and to go with the flow of the experience. If I were to monitor myself during the period of prayer, I would be interfering with the Lord's communication. I let happen what is happening during the prayer time; afterwards, I take a look to see what the Lord is saying in all this.

It is helpful during this review to jot down a few reflections that strike me so that I can more easily prepare for my next period of prayer. The Lord may be inviting me to go back to a point where I was moved. St. Ignatius says, "I should remain quietly meditating upon a point **until** I have been satisfied", (i.e. until the movement has been completed, the insight completed; the struggle resolved; the consolation ended; the meaningfulness finished ... for now).

Jotting down my reflections during the review is also a help for me to discuss my prayer experience with the spiritual director.

It is also helpful at the end of a prayer period to mark the difference of this review from the prayer period by some change of place or posture: the activity of **review** is different from the activity of the prayer period.

## **REPETITION**

Repetition is an important way of disposing oneself to listen to the Lord. St. Ignatius would recommend its use frequently during a directed retreat.

### **What Repetition is NOT:**

1. Repetition is not the repeating of the prayer material as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding.
2. Nor does it mean that one returns to the same matter for prayer in order to dig for something new or different.
3. Nor does it mean that one always returns to all the material of the last prayer period.

### **What Repetition IS:**

Repetition means that I return to those points where I have experienced "greater consolation, desolation or great spiritual appreciation" (Spiritual Exercises #62). Hence, I return to those points where I have experienced significant movement; not to the experience itself but to the points, parts in scripture where the experience occurred.

### **Some Examples:**

1. I have prayed over the scripture account of the Last Supper. In my review I noticed that I have spent much time absorbed in the adoration of the sacrament; I also noticed that I had a struggle reflecting upon the persons present at the Last Supper. In the following prayer period, I return to both the real presence and to the various people present.

2. I am using my imagination in praying over the Baptism at the Jordan. In my review after the period of prayer I noticed that I was with Jesus but His back was to me and I had a feeling of sadness. So in the next period of prayer, I return to the place where Jesus was turned away from me and the experience of sadness occurred.
3. I am praying over the hidden life of Jesus. In the review I noticed that I could not get settled; that I was filled with distractions and anxiousness. So in the next period of prayer, I return to the same material.
4. I am praying over my sin history and requesting from the Lord the deeper awareness of the sin effects on my life. This is now being given to me. In my review I have a sense that the Lord desires to show me more. So I keep on returning to the same material.

**Fundamentally**, repetition helps one listen more carefully to God's communication.

**1. Repetition allows spiritual movements to take place:**

Since one of the goals of the directed retreat is to discern the interior movements in one's being, repetition is the way we allow these movements. If a person praying moves from scripture passage to scripture passage, even within the same theme one tends to cut off the interior movements.

**2. Repetition is a help to NOTICE interior movements:**

Since many of our interior reactions at prayer happen without our noticing them, repetition gives the time for the interior reaction to be experienced more distinctly.

**3. Repetition is the way we can respect God's communication:**

Just because a prayer period has ended, we should not suppose that the Lord has nothing more to say to us through the particular message we have been using. Repetition respects God's communication for we continue to return to the same material until we sense that the Lord wishes us to move on.

**5. Repetition is a means by which desolation becomes consolation:**

As stated above, repetition is used where there has been struggle, distraction, discomfort, ennui. Often these latter experiences indicate that the Lord is trying to communicate with us at a deeper level and we are resisting God's approach. When we return to those points which were experienced "negatively", we often discover that the Lord overcomes our barriers and then desolation gives way to consolation; darkness to light; struggle to surrender.

**6. Repetition helps one to experience God's Mystery more deeply:**

When Ignatius writes: “I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied,” he means not only **within** the one period of prayer, but also **over** several periods of prayer, and even **days** of prayer. Through repetition we allow the Lord’s Mystery to touch our mystery at deeper levels of our being. Often, through repetition, a kind of simplification of our own activity takes place. Often, what starts off as mediation, through the use of repetition, subsequently becomes contemplation and stillness.

Share with the group

Read the article below:

### **SPIRITUAL JOURNAL**

A spiritual journal is a form of diary. It is a way of recording spiritual experiences of one’s day. The spiritual experiences can occur at the time of formal prayer or at any other time during the day and in any situation.

A simple way to keep such a journal is to use one or both of two common awareness exercises as the source of one’s findings. If you choose to use one, the **Daily Awareness/Examen Prayer\*** is the instrument to help you. This exercise covers your whole day and can include your formal time of prayer. If you choose to use two exercises, the **Review of Prayer** is added to the **Daily Awareness/ Examen Prayer**.

During, or after the time of doing these awareness exercises, you can write briefly what the Lord has revealed to you while doing the Daily Awareness Exercise or the Review of Prayer.

You may record experiences of the presence of God with a companion, spouse, family, friend or while working or driving home. You may record experiences of dryness or joy or special insights given to you about Jesus or yourself in prayer. Sometimes, you may have experienced anguish over a decision or action. Experiences of this sort make up the spiritual journal.

As you grow in awareness of the interior life, you will find more and more experiences to write. It then becomes necessary to choose the more significant ones and write them briefly by means of a word, a phrase or a sentence.

Try to do at least some of the journaling daily.

### **JOURNALING**

There is no better way to access your inner space than by journaling. This is free writing. Don’t worry about grammar or spelling; just get your thoughts and

feelings on paper. It is for you and God alone. The act of writing things down can free you from polluted inner space. Things become clearer. You get in touch with what you really believe and feel. Don't cheat yourself out of this opportunity.

The discipline of journaling starts with our review of prayer. The review picks up where we have been moved, struck, or given an insight etc. from the prayer passage. As we reflect back on this prayer experience, we produce a heightened awareness of the movement of the Spirit.

The next step is to translate this heightened awareness into words. What can we say about it? Writing this awareness into our journal helps us to clarify it. If we share this journal in spiritual direction or with our CLC community, we now further deepen our awareness.

The same can be said with journaling our experience of the Awareness/Examen Prayer at the end of the day. Here we collect insights into our emotions, thoughts, story etc., often seen through the lenses of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. This process frees up our mind.

Journaling is a practice that involves discipline. Many journals have gaps in them. The idea is to simply start again. Spending 15 minutes a day on journaling is a good practice.

Let us review some of the steps mentioned:

1. We have an experience.
2. We heighten our awareness of it by putting it into words.
3. We now go through another process of writing these words in our journal.
4. We take what we have written and speak it to others; community or spiritual director.
5. Every 6 months we can use our journal as prayer, which then deepens our awareness of God's presence in our life even more.

Buy yourself a lovely journal, shop for a special pen.

Share with the group.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment
- Look at the resource material for SESSION 10

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask for a deep trust in God's personal love and care for us.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Psalm 139:1-18; 23-24 (*God knows everything about me*)

Isaiah 55: 1-13 (*Come to the waters. The offer of abundant life*)

Repetition of days 1-2 where you felt close to God or where you seemed to struggle

1 Kings 19:1-18 (*Elijah flees to Horeb. God comes in the still small voice*)

John 14: 15-31 (*I shall ask the Father who will you another Advocate, the Holy Spirit*)

Prayerfully revisit and read over "*REVIEW OF PRAYER AND REPETITION*"

Note in your "Spiritual Journal" what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 10**

### **THEME: A GUIDED EXPERIENCE OF PRAYING WITH THE GOSPELS**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To share with one another the fruit of our assigned prayer material.
- To reflect on the importance of Ignatian Repetition and Review of Prayer as a way to hear God more deeply.

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

We ask for a deep trust in God's personal love and care for us.

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Psalms 139:1-14; 23- 24 (*O LORD you have searched me and known me...*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- Take a few moments for quiet reflection, and with the help of your journal, share your prayer experiences.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence since the last meeting.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared- experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Recalling the *Lectio Divina* technique, prayerfully read the article below:



## **IMAGINATION IN PRAYER**

Some preliminary remarks regarding the use of the imagination in prayer:

- a) We can have the same encounters with Christ that His friends and relatives had historically. Time and space are not barriers for the risen Lord.
  - b) God can be very active in us through the images and symbols produced in our imagination.
  - c) God's activity involves enlightening, healing, energizing, and directing us.
  - d) We can identify with persons or things we imagine.
  - e) We can trust "letting the imagination go", as it has a certain truth in itself. Yet, we can also control it when we need to.
  - f) It is possible to block out the directions being given, and to follow something more significant which is happening within the imagination.
1. Close your eyes and relax (not too deeply). You may prefer not to close your eyes. In this case, at least glance downward.
  2. Prayerfully read John 1:35-42 (*Come and see...*)
  - 3 Place yourself in the scene at the point where Andrew is about to introduce his brother, Simon, to Jesus. Enter into the Scriptural scene.
    - a) Ask questions which will encourage the use of the senses bringing the scene to life. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Where does the scene take place? What time of day is it?
    - b) Focus on Andrew. What does he look like? What kind of person is he? How does he introduce Simon?
    - c) Focus on Simon. What does he look like? What kind of person is he? Scripture implies that he was often impetuous, courageous, boastful [...]
    - d) Now see Jesus meeting Simon for the first time, and in the encounter deeply touching him. Notice that something powerful is happening to Simon as all the positive aspects of his being are deepened and strengthened within him.
    - e) Hear the Lord giving Simon a new name. From now on he is Peter, which means "rock". As time goes on, Peter will identify more and more with that image implanted deep within him.
  4. State that the Lord will do the same for you. Imagine Jesus now turning toward you. Andrew and Peter are watching as Jesus speaks to you, saying, "You are... (name the people in the group)". Think of what your name represents – who you are now because of your family background and past experiences, and what qualities you have. Hear Jesus give you a new name. Let an image or words surface as he says; "In the future you will be more and more called \_\_\_\_\_."

Then pause for a few minutes.

5. Conclude the imagery experience by gently reflecting aloud. The word or image may not be clear right now. This could be the beginning of a process which will continue into weeks or months to come. For some, the process may have begun long before this day.

The new name could even be one's ordinary name heard in a new way. Expect a deeper clarification of the word or image in the future.

6. Conclude by thanking Jesus in whatever way you would like.

Share in the group any part of your experience, reinforcing that this prayer experience is theirs and can be trusted.

Sr. Pat Mansfield, SSND

Use the Scripture prayer John 1:35-42 (*Jesus meets and calls the first disciples*) for the *Prayer of the Imagination*.

Question:

- How did this experience feel like for you?
- What words or images might help you describe that?

Question followed by a contemplative pause:

- As I listened to the sharing of the others, what did I hear that moved or touched me?
- How would I name or describe that inner movement?

Share this with the group.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?

- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep confidence and trust in God's personal care for me.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

John 1:35-42 (*Jesus meets and calls the first disciple*)

Luke 5:1-11 (*From now on you will catch people*)

Matthew 14:22-33 (*Jesus walks on the water. He says "Do not be afraid"*)

Isaiah 43:1-7 (*You are precious in my eyes*)

Hosea 11: 1-9 (*When Israel was a child, I loved him*)

Luke 22: 14-23 (*The last supper with the Lord*)

## **SESSION 11**

### **THEME: IMAGES OF GOD**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To explore our different images of God
- To deepen my understanding of self and prayer

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

Deep confidence and trust in God's personal care for me

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

John 1:35-42 (*Jesus meets and calls the first disciples.*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence since the last meeting.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The second round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared- experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## MY EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Christianity is experiential. The mature Christian lives on the word of God. All authentic Christian Spirituality begins with the experience of God in Jesus Christ, and until there is a real encounter with Jesus Christ, until He is a person to me and I to Him, I will always remain at the level of a religion, of law and ritual. Creeds and codes and rituals have their place. I must **live up to** the demands of faith. It is necessary that I move from the following:

**Head knowledge** - rational, factual knowledge about God

to

**Heart knowledge** - personal insight and commitment to God, to Jesus as Lord, and to the Spirit.

I am the only living authority about my personal experience. I know better than anyone else what my personal experience of God is. It is important that I be aware of and reflective about that experience. It is also important that I be able to identify, and articulate, (at least to myself), the nature of my God experience.

This exercise is a contemplative exercise designed to help each of us **get-in-touch-with** our own personal faith experience and articulate it for ourselves. Answer each sentence as honestly, frankly, and spontaneously as you can. This paper is for you alone; share only what you choose.

1. For me, God is...
2. I seldom ever think of God as...
3. I feel more **in touch** with God when...
4. One **moment** in my own life when I was most aware, most conscious that God's power was working in me beyond my own limits was...
5. My prayer to God is most often...
6. For me, Jesus is...
7. I have felt the Holy Spirit active in my own personal experience when...
8. What I want most of all to share with someone about my God-experience is...
9. When I am **in-touch** with my own personal sinfulness, I think of God as...
10. What delights me most about God is...
11. When I think about God's love for me personally, I am...
12. For me, the surest sign of God's presence in my life is...

Question:

- How did this experience feel like for you?
- What words or images might help you describe that?

Prayerfully read the article below:

### **IMAGES OF GOD, IMAGES OF SELF, IMAGES OF PRAYER**

We are dealing with Spiritual Awareness (consciousness). Spiritual awareness is not the same as holiness. The journey of the spiritual life is not the same as the consciousness of that journey.

1. We want to be able to **allow** the Trinity to touch our mystery. The Trinity is Mystery – they are **other** – “YHWH” (I AM WHO I AM). They respect my mystery and I must respect their Mystery.
2. Sometimes we try to reduce Mystery by stereotyping the other. When this happens, the other is not free to communicate; feelings are filtered and twisted; noticing is prejudiced and communication is received wrongly. We block the revealing word of God in our experience through our **false images** of God, ourselves and prayer.
3. Images influence our responses and expectations of others and of God.
4. What is an image of God? An image of God is an unreflected, spontaneous attitude that influences my responses to the Lord. Hence it can be a caricature, a stereotype, a hidden belief. It is tied up with my attitudes towards life and others. It is like a locked in affective response. For example: think of the image a person can have if they have been told early in life, “God is going to get you for being bad.”

Some possible false images are as follows: tyrant, policeman, Santa Claus, movie director, puppeteer, chess player, architect, cat and mouse etc.

When a person who has a false image of God as a grand designer or architect, they cannot experience the presence of the Lord in a personal way. God remains for them, outside life, looking down on the grand design. This design is the most perfect of all designs and therefore these persons can only see themselves as trying to fit into this design by hard work, super-efficiency and by being responsible to keep it going. God-the-outsider demands that they measure up and change themselves according to the given design. This false image affects a person’s self image, in that they feel guilty because it is impossible to measure up. They feel like a spectator, rather than a participant. This false image also affects their image of prayer, which is considered a duty. The message to be received in prayer is always fixed because they believe prayer has nothing to do with experience. This in turn affects their expectations of a group or community in that they expect everyone to interact in the most rational of ways – saying what they think is more important than sharing what they feel.

5. In order to receive God’s communication correctly in our own experience, we have to be free from false images. Spiritual leaders should learn to recognize false images at work in dealing with others on a one-to-one or in a group situation. For example: persons insisting that they have to share everything they have experienced and have to keep talking over and over again, may, in fact,

have an image of self as a bad person seeking the approval and strokes of the group. The image of God may be of one who has been displeased with an individual's life choices – the image of the group may be one of having to work through and analyze a given situation. One can see how these images and expectations can interfere with the purpose of the group. False images can mean that the group is not free in the decision making process.

Spiritual leaders should be in touch with their own images and the expectations that flow from these; they can then begin to recognize these operating in others. **The image of God is the Risen Lord** – All images in the Bible must be corrected by the **Image of Jesus Risen**. The so-called negative images that are found in the Bible are examples of how disobedient and alienated people project their own alienation upon God's love. An example of this is the way a disobedient child projects tyranny on a parent's loving request and concerns.

- 6. Our Prayer** – In ordinary communication between persons, our image of the person communicating with us often interferes with the communication. This is true on a spiritual level too. It is important to become more aware of this reality in our own life of prayer, so that we can become more open to the Trinity's communication with us and be able to recognize similar **blocks** to their communication in others.

J. Veltri, SJ *Orientations II* –

Question:

- What images of God, self, emerged as you reflected on the article?
- What words or images might help you describe that?

Share with the group

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment
- Note the resource material for the SESSION, ``PERSONAL GRACED HISTORY``.

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.



**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep wonder and awe at my personal existence.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Hosea 11:1-4 (*I loved Israel when he was a child*)

Isaiah 45:9-12 (*I am the Holy One of Israel and his Maker*)

Job 38 & 39 (*The LORD GOD answers Job*)

Under the gaze of God's love, I ponder the most significant events in my life that have led me to want to respond more to God's love and call.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (*I will make a new covenant...*)

Prayerfully read the article below,

### **PERSONAL GRACED HISTORY**

This prayer is extremely important for it helps us to bring God into our immediate experience. It is the beginning of an interior understanding of the discernment of spirits. Ignatius is always asking people "to reflect upon themselves and draw some profit."

There are three instruments to assist us in learning how to discern the interior movement of spirits in our lives. These are the Review of Prayer (over a prayer period), the Review of the Day (Awareness Examen), the Review of Life (praying with one's graced history).

Group Leaders can introduce these methods with a pre-community knowing that more in-depth experience and understanding will occur later as they go on through the process of the stages of formation.

In discerning communities, all the members desire to follow the lead of the Spirit. They are willing to discern and reflect on the interior and exterior movements of the Spirit. They will do the two discernments, individual and communal, and be willing to disclose their interior life to each other. An exercise on one's personal graced history can be a helpful way to begin these practices.

### **PERSONAL PRAYER Context**

*I said to you; "Have no dread or fear of them. The LORD your God, who goes before you, is the one who will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your very eyes, and in the wilderness, where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled until you reached this place. But in spite of this, you have no trust in the LORD your God, who goes before you on the way to seek out a place for you to camp, in fire by night, and in the cloud by day, to show you the route you should take." (Deuteronomy 1:29-33).*

In tune with Deut. 1:29-33, I begin with God as my companion to look back on my life.

Seek..... Desire..... Ask....

I seek the grace to be present to my life story as it is lovingly told by God, and I pray that I may respond more generously to God's love flooding my heart.

Reflection...

I consider my history in terms of the light-filled moments of my family background, childhood, school years, work years, my growing sense of vocation, my years in religious life.

I remember different persons, places, situations and the historical state of the world at the different times I am remembering.

After this time of remembering, I ponder the continual presence of God with me during these years. Where have I experienced being drawn beyond myself, e.g. someone else's love for me, my love for someone else, God's love for me, God's activity through me, the sense of the one, the true, the beautiful, the good, grasping and drawing me to the One, the Truth, the Beautiful, the Good?

How was God with me in one or several of these experiences?

Response...

I speak to the Lord, in various ways expressing my appreciation and gratitude for God's presence to me in my life, "as friends talk with one another". I close with the Lord's Prayer.

## PERSONAL REVIEW OF ONE'S EXPERIENCE

Take a few minutes to revisit your present experience of prayer.

1. What feelings surfaced as you prayed?
2. How did you sense the presence of God?
3. What awareness or insights did God give you?
4. Where did you experience consolation and desolation?
5. How would you describe these to someone else?
6. Image your life history in four time periods. Divide a sheet of paper into four corresponding sections. From your key experiences of your spiritual life during those periods, use words or symbols to capture the key experiences in your story of God-with-you. Be prepared to share some aspect of this story with the others in your group at the next meeting.

*CLC Canada Leaders Manual*

Note in your "Spiritual Journal" what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 12**

### **THEME: RECOGNITION OF KEY EXPERIENCES OF MY SPIRITUAL LIFE**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- Recognition of key experiences in my spiritual life

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly in a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

Deep wonder and awe at my personal existence

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Job 1:21; 38:1-41 (*Naked I came from my mother's womb... Now I know that you can do all things...*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence since the last meeting.

### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

1. Prayerfully read Resource Material from SESSION 11, "*PERSONAL GRACED HISTORY*".
2. Share with the group the images of your life history in four time periods. Use symbols or sketches to show the main periods of your faith history.

3. This exercise should be done in the posture of prayer, and it is suggested that sketches be kept for future reference.
4. After this exercise has been completed, each person should have the opportunity to share it with the group, remembering that the sharing will be special and meaningful.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.

### **PART III**

#### **A: Practical consideration/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

#### **B: Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group

##### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

#### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep wonder and awe at my personal existence.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Wisdom 13: 1-9 (*All were foolish who were in ignorance of God*)

Isaiah 45:9-12 (*I am the Holy One of Israel and its Maker*)

Job 38 & 39 (*God's answer to Job: where were you when...?*)

Genesis 1: 24- 2:3 (*Creation of humankind and the Sabbath*)

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (*The New Covenant.*)

Psalms 8: (*The majesty of God and the dignity of humans.*)

## **SESSION 13**

### **THEME: COMMUNITY REFLECTION**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- To reflect on the life of the community to date and gain insight.
- To prayerfully discern a temporary commitment to the CLC way of life.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

Deep wonder and awe at my personal existence.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Psalm 8 (*The Glory of God and dignity of humans*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With our journals to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence since the last meeting.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

- How have I experienced the Lord's presence as a result of my participation in this community?
- How have these sessions affected me: in my life of prayer, in my desire to grow as a Christian in my commitment to the Lord, those around me, this CLC?

- What growth have I seen within this CLC striving to become God's disciples?
- Read and reflect on the article, "*Temporary Commitment*", below.
- Read CLC General Principal #4 below:

## **TEMPORARY COMMITMENT**

A reading of the *General Principles and General Norms* shows that CLC life originates in a call from the Lord to each individual member. Such a vocation is apostolic and universal; lived in the Church and within a local community.

This emphasis on vocation can inspire, better than anything else, the initial steps in CLC. The new members "*must be helped by the community to assimilate the CLC way of life, and to decide whether a call, together with an ability and a willingness to live it, are present*".<sup>1</sup>

Vocation - or calling - is perceived in the beginning as a vague and diffused longing that is, however, strong enough to encourage the person to make contact with CLC. When a person first becomes a member of a community, he/she begins to become familiar with the CLC's way of life and growth.<sup>2</sup> These ways are introduced gradually, as part of a formation process during which spiritual guidance<sup>3</sup> plays an important role.

During this growth stage, the person has to make certain decisions: to join in days of recollection, to participate in a local community, to assist regularly at group meetings, to meet with a spiritual guide, to take part in an apostolic activity, to undertake the Spiritual Exercises or a short retreat of 4 to 8 days etc. In making these decisions, candidates commit themselves progressively to the CLC way of life. **On their journey, they will experience different emotions, and these will help them to realise whether or not this is the way for them to enrich their relationship with God. The community, for its part, sustains the person with an attitude of discernment and encourages them to take further steps towards growth and commitment.**

At length, the moment arrives when the person must ponder in prayer whether the path along which he or she has been taught and guided for some time (1-4 years according to GN 2), is truly a call and a grace from God. This moment of discernment can arise spontaneously, or it can be a response to a deliberate invitation.

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<sup>1</sup> GN 2

<sup>2</sup> GP 12

<sup>3</sup> GN 41b



## **THE PURPOSE AND MEANING OF TEMPORARY COMMITMENT**

Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life.<sup>4</sup> This commitment implies a **search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation***.

In those individuals who already have the necessary disposition, this vocational discernment takes place on two levels:

- › The choice of **a *state of life*** by those who have not yet done so (religious life, of course, excludes a Permanent Commitment to CLC),
- › ***Amendment and reformation of lifestyle***, for those who have already decided upon their state of life.<sup>5</sup>

This discernment of vocation does not take for granted a definitive CLC vocation, but tries to remain open to whatever state of life we are being called by the will of God. The process, lived in the CLC way, implies that the person already belongs to a community to which he/she has made a temporal commitment, even if the individual vocation has not yet been clearly defined.

An important aspect of such discernment is the question, "do they want and desire" to seek and find the will of God in their lives and to follow His call? This presupposes an ever-deepening experience of God fostered by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, with the support of the community, for greater service. They discern whether or not the CLC way is what God wants for them, and if they are "open, free and ready" to go on this journey with a "deliberate determination"<sup>6</sup> toward an apostolic way of life.

This vocational stage as such is open to different options. For a married adult, for instance, the question will be whether he/she is called to live a CLC lifestyle in married life. Young people will ask themselves, what style of life (lay, religious or clerical) they are called to. A good number of adults and young people will feel called to live according to the CLC style of life. Others find that their motivation for joining was rather social or affective and, acknowledging that they have no desire to continue further, seek other ways of belonging to the Church.

For those young people or adults who come to the conclusion that the community answers their deepest aspirations, this stage brings a renewed commitment to the CLC way.

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<sup>4</sup> GN 39a

<sup>5</sup> SpEx 189

<sup>6</sup> SpEx 97

Thus, "Temporary Commitment", made within the community and accepted by it, is the expression of the individual's determination to seek God's will by employing Ignatian methods and the community's offer of its own Ignatian process of formation.

It is important that "Temporary Commitment" should not be reduced to a set of obligations, but should be our loving answer, in *the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love*<sup>7</sup>, to God who loved us first.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius play a key role in the discernment of vocation. At this stage of formation, Temporary Commitment fosters in them the dispositions needed for making the Spiritual Exercises well, bearing in mind their apostolic vocation.

### **WAYS OF APPROACHING TEMPORARY COMMITMENT**

It is important that *those who make a commitment* find a sacramental expression (a sign that does what it signifies) of their desire to seek and find God's will, through the use of Ignatian methods and in the company of the community. At the same time, the *local community* commits itself to accompany and encourage them, offering them the Ignatian methods. It is also important to make an explicit reference to their commitment to the *World Community*, an apostolic body in the Church.

Temporary Commitment can be implemented in different ways. One way is to have a yearly meeting for those who have been taking part in CLC for some years at which they could be invited to reflect on the significance of Temporary Commitment. Discernment is thus provoked and those who wish to make their Temporary Commitment can agree on the best way to express it (occasion, form and formula). Another way might be to have each year, as a National or Regional tradition, a procedure, a formula and a fixed date (e.g. World CLC Day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pentecost), when those, who wish, express their Temporary Commitment.

In a well-guided CLC process, this time of discernment of an explicit Temporary Commitment is inevitable. If this is not the case, it could be for one of the following three reasons:

- the process stops at some stage and becomes repetitive;
- commitment is not properly understood; it has the wrong meaning or connotation;
- difficulties arise from the way in which commitment is expressed and celebrated.

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<sup>7</sup> GP 2

Our challenge today is to find visible ecclesial signs for what we are trying to live and believe that express a theological and spiritual point of view in keeping with our formation.

The CLC Charism *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT #56, pages 57 to 60*

#### **GENERAL PRINCIPLE #4:**

#### **OUR CHARISM**

Our community is made up of Christians: men and woman, adults and young people, of all social conditions, who want to follow Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, having recognized the Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church.

Our aim is to be committed Christians, 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.

In particular we recognize the urgent need to work for justice by trying to see our world through the eyes of the weak, the oppressed, and the poor, and by seeking a simple lifestyle which expresses our freedom and solidarity with those in need.

To prepare our members for apostolic witness and service, we form communities of those who strongly desire to unite their lives completely with their Christian faith according to our charism.

We hear Christ speaking through our everyday lives calling us to this unity of life.

#### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the letter for CLC Commitment.

#### **PART III**

**A: Practical consideration/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Amazement that God relates to me in a personal way

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

John 3: 16-17 (*God so loved the world*)

Hosea 11: 1-9 (*When Israel was a child, I loved him. God's compassion*)

Luke 22: 14-23 (*The Last Supper with the Lord Jesus*)

Deuteronomy. 1: 29-33 (*The LORD your God goes before you*)

Isaiah 54: 5-10 (*God's love will never leave you*)

Deuteronomy 7: 7-9 (*God's steadfast love shall not depart from us*)

**Write a letter** indicating your initial commitment to CLC at this time, answering the question:

- **Is CLC a spirituality that I desire to express and live out my baptismal call?**

## **SECTION 3 SENSE OF DISCIPLESHIP**

### **SESSION 14**

#### **THEME: PETER'S EXAMPLE AND IMPORTANCE FOR US**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of the example of the saints, especially Peter, for us.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

**Recalling the Grace:** Amazement that God relates to me in a personal way

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Matthew 26: 31-35 (*Peter's denial foretold*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence this week.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## **NB**

*This week we focus on Peter's very real weakness and generosity and love for Jesus: we also see Jesus' unconditional love and affection for Peter.*

## **PETER'S CONVERSION**

The essential component of the many aspects of a Christian's conversion experiences is the freely-made decisions affecting one's life in Christ Jesus. Accompanying these decisions are shifts in a person's heart and consciousness. As an example of this, we can consider Peter's interior experiences. Like us, he experienced different kinds of religious experiences from his initial attraction to Jesus, through an awareness of his own creaturehood and sinfulness, through a deeper insight into the mystery of Jesus' mission.

Was Peter "converted" when he first met Jesus (John 1)? Or was he converted when he had the profound sin-call-creaturehood experience (Luke 5)? Or was it during that event when he was given profound insight (Matthew 16:16)? Or was it when he experienced Jesus' forgiving love (John 21)? Was it at Pentecost (Acts 2)? All these religious experiences have some connection with Peter's ongoing conversion toward deeper union with God and greater openness to the world. They were all conversions, producing a new horizon at different levels of his consciousness. Many of these individual events in Peter's life represent shifts in his consciousness and prepared him in different ways for the decision to surrender his worldview. In the midst of his ministry, he was converted to a new horizon, very different from the one that had carried him for so many years. By the end of his spiritual journey, Peter was called to surrender his image of creation (Acts 10), his image of how God acts in the world, and his image of God. Peter finally came to accept that God's Spirit could come to the Gentiles first, even before his Jewish sisters and brothers.

John Veltri SJ from *Orientations- Web Site*

Consider these questions:

- What example is Peter for you? Name one area in which you can identify with Peter.
- Spend some time reflecting on Peter's very real weakness and very real generosity and love for Jesus; also Jesus' unconditional love and affection for Peter.

Share on the above.

## **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the resource material, "*MARY THE MODEL OF MISSION*".

## **PART III**

### **A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events. Etc.**

### **B. Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

#### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate the example of Peter for relationship with God

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 5: 1-11 (*Call of the first disciples*)

Matthew 16: 13-23 (*Peter's profession of faith and Jesus' response*)

Matthew 17: 1-9 (*The Transfiguration*)

Matthew 18: 21-22 (*Jesus explains forgiveness to Peter*)

Matthew 4: 18-22 (*Jesus calls the disciples to follow Him*)

Read and pray with resource material below in preparation for the next SESSION.

## **MARY, THE MODEL OF MISSION**

"Behold, I am the servant of God," Mary tells the angel. "Let it be with me according to your word." With that yes, the story of Jesus begins. God becomes human. We humans learn first hand about God. Everything can change for the better, if we only heed the invitation.

But Mary's yes could not have been easy. Even though she is a young, frightened girl, there must have been a hard-fought inner life of prayer and peacemaking for her to move from fear and confusion to humble acceptance of God's will. According to various scripture scholars, including a feminist theologian, a better translation of Mary's answer would be, "Behold, I am the slave of God". The Greek word implies that Mary sees herself not just as a servant, but as God's slave. In this politically incorrect description, Mary obeys the orders of her master. As a slave, she has no real personal life; she suffers by doing whatever the Master requires of her. Her obedience is complete. There is no other alternative.

In Mary's obedience to God we see the deep love of consent. "Let it be done to me," Mary declares. Mary knows that choosing what God wants is always right, even if it does not make sense at the moment.

Mary's "yes" comes because she has dedicated herself to God. She has spent herself contemplating God and preparing to obey God. Because God holds the exclusive priority in her life, she understands herself in relation to God. She knows herself as servant and slave of God. She waits day and night to do God's will. This loving obedience is the purpose of her life.

Mary's choice for God was right. It was difficult but beautiful, as any choice for goodness, for God, for life, must be in such a world. And Mary keeps her end of the bargain. She is faithful to her identity as God's servant. In the end, she stands at the cross of her crucified Son, and sits with his friends when his Holy Spirit descends upon them at Pentecost. She remains lovingly obedient

because she is devoted exclusively to God. She knows who she is. She knows her true self because she sees herself always before God.

Mary's acceptance of God's will challenge me on a variety of levels. Do I wait upon God day after day? Can I live as a humble slave of God, trying to do only God's will and not my own selfish will? Dare I let go of my false self? Do I want to see God? Would I truly want to join God's salvific work? Can I accept the life of holy obedience to God and live in the freedom of God's grace? Will I become the person God intended me to be; God's loving, compassionate, peacemaking son[child]? Dare I choose to be chosen by God? Can I ever say with Mary, "I am the servant of the God of peace; let God's will for me be done"?

Mary's example challenges me, but also encourages me. It invites me to pursue God through intimate prayer and humble obedience. It summons me to the depths of contemplative nonviolence, to the God of peace. Though I am not yet God's faithful servant and friend, I desire to become so, and pray for the desire and reality of my conversion toward my true self as God's servant, friend, and son [child]. Mary gives me hope that nothing is impossible with God, that even I, a sinner and Pharisee, can be transformed by God's grace into God's servant, God's son [child], God's peacemaker, God's friend. With Mary, I can ask for the gift and try to live as if it has already been given because, in fact, it has. The more I live as God's servant, the more I humble myself before God, the more I can cooperate with God's liberating grace and be transformed here and now into God's peacemaker. In this contemplative process, God may use me to serve God's peace, in some way that I may not understand and never understand in this life. In the end, becoming God's servant and friend is a pure gift. There is nothing I can do to earn it; all I can do is accept it humbly, with gratitude, as a gift given over and over again. Perhaps that is all that is required of us.

The story of the Annunciation reveals something even more astonishing. Just as we want to be divine instead of being human, God wants to become human. God wants to share human life and show us in the process how to be human. The implication is clear: we no longer have to play God. All we have to do is be human. Mary is human and says yes to God's desire to become human and share the life of humanity. Her mission is awesome to behold. But the angel does not leave Mary alone without any support. With a touch of "human" kindness, the angel tells Mary that her kinswoman, Elizabeth, a holy, devout, and barren woman, is also miraculously pregnant. Mary will find support in this other faithful woman who has been chosen by God to do God's work.

When the angel leaves, Mary packs her bags and "makes haste to Elizabeth." She immediately tries to help out someone in need, a woman six months pregnant. Mary's journey to Elizabeth demonstrates that contemplative nonviolence leads to active nonviolence. Mary's spiritual encounter with God in her prayer pushes her to love her neighbor.

But Mary is no longer afraid. She runs out into the world with a heart full of love. She has become God's peacemaker.

John Dear SJ, *Mary of Nazareth, Prophet of Peace*

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 15**

### **THEME: IMAGE OF MARY**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To reflect on the qualities of Mary as shown in the Scriptures.
- To grow in awareness of the words expressed by Mary, “*Do whatever he tells you*”.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord’s loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate the example of Peter in my relationship with God

#### **Listening to God’s word in Scripture:**

Luke 5: 1-11 (*Call of the first disciples*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced wonder at your personal existence this past week.
- Group shares the last week’s life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and processes:**

Reflect on, and write down the qualities of Mary as seen in these assigned Scripture passages. Each will be given a different passage for reflection and discussion: Luke

1: 26-38(*Annunciation*); Luke 1: 39-56 (*Visitation and Mary's song of praise*); Luke 2:1-21(*Birth of Jesus*); Luke 2: 22-52(*Presentation of Jesus in temple*); Matthew 2: 1-23(*Visit of the Wise Men*)

Has your image of Mary changed after this exercise and discussion? If so, in what way?

Share with the group.

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the CLC General Principle #9 below and the article on "*THE VOCATION OF MARY*".

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLE #9**

**Union with Mary:** Because the spirituality of our community is centred on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ: she is the model of our collaboration in Christ's mission.

Mary's co-operation with God began 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 lifelong co-operation in her son's mission 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 us all.

This confirms our own mission of service to the world which we 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.

### **THE VOCATION OF MARY**

I would like to share my reflection on some of my thoughts on Mary, who cooperated, actively, to change the history of the world. This woman was unknown and humble, yet courageous and wise; poor in wealth but rich with God, who provoked an upheaval in humanity unlike any produced by scientific discovery or ideological movement in human history.

As we are called to make our work more human, so it seems to me of great importance to emphasize the attitudes of Mary that even we ourselves, or better, God through us, can change the world at its very roots.

For this it is necessary to know and love Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the church teaches. It is important to know this teaching of the church in order to truly discover the person of Mary as she truly was and is today. This will keep us from falling into fanaticism or rationalism that would distance us from Mary and, thus, from God and from all true human effectiveness. For there is a fanatical approach to Mary which is the product of an unbalanced devotion, and which can lead to an escape from the real world. There is the rationalistic approach of those who believe that they know everything about her. With Mary, as with any person, one can only get to know her when one loves her.

#### A Superficial view of Mary:

Mary was a humble woman without any extraordinary characteristics. We know nothing of her physical features, but it can help us to know that she was an inhabitant of the village of Nazareth, a place lost to the eyes of the world. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)

Mary's life, from her earliest days, was spent quietly, and hidden in the heart of a Nazarene family. We are told that they belonged to the *ANAWIM*, "the poor of the Lord". She was a woman tied to the home, who led a life intensely devoted to her family, yet she was also sure of herself and free from what people would say. Just before her wedding she showed signs of great courage; she went to Judah, a journey of about 120 kilometers, to visit and help a cousin, Elizabeth. She also demonstrated a deep understanding of the Bible. Her *Magnificat* was not something she invented totally, but rather, it was a hymn of praise to God interwoven with biblical quotations from several Old Testament authors. Mary is fully a woman of Israel whose criteria for judging the world is the Covenant with God.

She married the carpenter of the village and had one Son, a fact which had possibly left her somewhat inferior in the eyes of the other women who had measured their blessings by the number of children they bore their husbands.

She gave great importance to the biblical formation of her Son, to the point where, at the age of 12, he already stood out in his learning, as the event in the Temple tells us (Luke 2: 41-50).

She had great admiration for her Son, and invited the people, as at Cana, to do whatever he said. Because of this, it would seem to me, she suffered as she witnessed how the people, who had followed him, little by little, began to abandon him: how they accused him of different crimes, betrayed and denied him. She saw him die the most shameful death of that age; that of a criminal rejected by his people, that of a man abandoned by the God she had taught him to believe in, to trust and to

love. Seen from the outside, the life of Mary, just like that of her Son, was a complete failure.

An interior view of her life:

The annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) is a central moment in Mary's life and helps us to understand her intimate knowledge of herself. Mary was betrothed in marriage to Joseph; she was certainly in love with him, we are told. Her vision of the future was to live with her beloved, and, as a good Israelite, bear him many sons. Yet God announces to her, in her prayer of listening, that she will conceive a Son now, and not when she is already married and living with Joseph. This for her is simply incomprehensible. She asks how this can be. The messenger of God explains to her: The Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her. Mary listens, and is very attentive even if this goes against all the dearest hopes of her heart. She discovers her vocation, the Proposal of God to her, yet the response to this call is not easy.

On the one hand, Mary is a young girl devoted to doing the will of God in everything. She is convinced that this will is the most important of all things in her life. On the other hand, what is asked of her to sacrifice is enormous. She would lose her husband, who would repudiate her, as was to be expected in such cases according to the Law. She would lose her honour in front of the whole village, and she would be exposed to the full rigour of the law; death by stoning was the punishment for unfaithful brides. If she tried to explain, no one would understand; they would think her crazy. Even if Joseph would not denounce her, all her dreams, which are so human, of bearing him many children would vanish.

Before the manifest will of God, she changed all her plans and did the Lord's will with generosity and courage. From her inmost being came forth the difficult response: *"I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."*

Mary knew from the depths of her heart and of her whole life that she had an important part in the realization of this world, as everyone had, to the extent that she was open to hearing and answering with her whole being the call of God. She knew that *"all is possible with God."* She understands that people are more human to the degree that they are open to this call of God in history, their own history, in whatever way the call is to be lived. She understands that in this world the only thing positive and firm is to serve God, and to serve where God wishes to be served.

This understanding of humans, as beings open to listen and to respond to God in the reality of life, is what, from the time of Mary, characterizes the thinking and the life of a Christian. She became the servant of the Lord. She knew that God, who gave her life and preserved her, called her to serve, to surrender herself, to love. This is her mission. And she knew that to serve, to surrender herself, to love, is the only way to be a woman, to leave a mark, to be significant, to realize herself. She surrendered herself completely, even to the point of human absurdity. *"Let it be done to me according to your Word"*. She was sensitive, open to the call, ready to accept the

grace that would make her who she is, to serve where and in what way God might ask her.

Mary made the will of God her own. She heard and surrendered to the call. She accepted her vocation fully and opened herself to her mission: to surrender herself to the Son of God made human in her womb, to surrender herself to God-who-is-with-us (Immanuel).

She teaches us, with her life, the tremendous importance to all humanity of listening to God, believing in God, letting God become part of our lives and of surrendering ourselves to others. She teaches us the tremendous vital force that flows from seeking one's true vocation and offering it in mission. She is the one who teaches us to listen to her Son with the example of her life and with her words at the wedding feast at Cana, "*Do whatever he tells you.*"

This is the great message of Mary: do whatever Jesus tells us: be ready to listen, keep the words of God in our hearts, put them into practice so that the Lord can do marvels in the world through us. In the inspiring canticle of the *Magnificat*, we find an excellent summary of Mary's own awareness: "*The Lord had done great things for me, Holy is God's name.*"

Josefina Errazriza (CLC Chile) *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT*

Share with the group.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the resource material, "*The Vocation of Mary*".

### **PART III**

#### **A. Practical consideration/announcements/CLC events etc.**

#### **B. Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections.

##### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?



- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To accompany Mary and learn how to be faithful witnesses in the accomplishment of our mission

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 1: 26-38 (*The Annunciation*)

Luke 2: 1-21 (*The Birth of Jesus*)

Read and pray with “*The Vocation of Mary*”. (Resource Material from previous SESSION 15)

Luke 2: 22-52 (*Jesus is presented in the Temple*)

Luke 1: 39-56 (*Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and the Magnificat*)

Matthew 2: 1-23 (*The visit of the Wise Men from the East*)

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 16**

### **THEME: DISCIPLESHIP**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To more fully understand discipleship.
- How does this affect your choices & lifestyle?
- To see how support with and for others supports the growth of discipleship.

### **PART 1**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To accompany and learn from Mary as to how we can be faithful witnesses in our mission

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Luke. 1:39-56 (*Mary visits Elizabeth and praises God*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Read Luke 9: 23-27 (*Take up your cross and follow me*)

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the resource material, “*DISCIPLESHIP*”, below:

## **DISCIPLESHIP**

In discipleship, our response to God is brought to a deeper level when the concrete challenges, temptations, and opportunities of daily life present the need to make new and specific choices for Christ. We do more than follow a leader. In discipleship we internalize the values, thoughts, and ways of Jesus in such a manner that they imbue our entire being. “*I live no longer, but Jesus lives in me.*”

Our original choice of Jesus may be likened to the ‘Yes’ expressed by a man and woman on their wedding day. The couple may hardly recognize the full implications of their commitment. As time goes on, trials and crises cause them to make new choices for one another and actually increase their love. The general commitment of their wedding day becomes deeper through specific daily choices in much the same way Christians become disciples through ongoing choices. These choices more intimately unite them with Christ. Discipleship is not in the original choice as much as in the ongoing choices of living.

Through our acceptance of Jesus as the centre of our lives and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are given the freedom and ability to accept the discipline of discipleship. The cross takes on new meaning for us, as does the whole cycle of death and resurrection. We discover that “...*those who would lose their life for My sake will gain it*”.

Through discipleship, our love is searched out and it grows. No matter how exuberant our original “yes” to the Lord was, each specific choice for God in concrete life situations makes our initial choice more conscious and real. This growth process creates a oneness of hearts between ourselves and the Lord. It develops a lifestyle that endures in and out of season. Discipleship is, then, ever new, life-giving, and freeing.

Christian disciples frequently find their values at odds with the standards of society. Through community support and prayerful discernment, disciples are strengthened in their continuing fidelity to all choices and commitments and in their ability to serve and influence the society in which they live.

The society in which we live is not governed by the values of Jesus, and the disciple will face many obstacles to one’s ongoing attempts to become a disciple. People say, “*Everybody is doing it.*” Disciples can’t make compromises such as this. Or people say, “*The message of Jesus is idealistic.*” The disciple can’t rationalize the quest for truth. The comments of others, or even their criticism and ridicule, are ways in which “we lay down our lives.” They are the many little dyings of the disciple.

One of the ways in which the disciple is able to respond to the challenge is the support of others who share the same vision. The dynamic of the supportive group is crucial for the disciple as a person strives to live out the Gospel through actions and decisions which may be contrary to the lifestyle of others.

### The Life of the Disciple in Community

The Christian Community, empowered by the spirit, enables the disciple to overcome the selfishness of his/her nature. The experience of acceptance, affirmation and trust within community gives the courage necessary to be true disciples of Christ.

When we read the Gospels and discover the many references which are made to the disciples, we may be struck by a simple, and yet a profound fact, that the disciples spent time with one another. Rarely is the word disciple used in the singular and even when Jesus sent them out, they went two by two.

When we pause and consider the world in which we live, we can't but notice how many people we see alone. How many cars have only a driver, how many people walk down the street alone, and even groups of people are often strangers to each other.

The Lord calls us uniquely and individually and invites us to be disciples, but this invitation links us to others as well as to Jesus. Sometimes we tend to see our relationship to God as somehow separate from our relationship to other people and we are quick to forget the words of John, "*How can we say we love God whom we can't see if we don't love those we do see?*"

In a world that has so many value systems which are contrary to that of Jesus, disciples need to be a part of a community of believers to reinforce their beliefs and to provide the opportunity for growth. This community cannot be just a word of an idea; it must be real: it must have flesh and bones and have names. Even in our churches, the size of many parish congregations is such that we don't experience community but isolation.

The disciples were a small group who loved one another and who affirmed one another. The modern disciple cannot hope to go it alone. The two examples when the disciples of Jesus did that were Judas and Peter just before the death of Jesus. Perhaps we need to learn this simple lesson again.

From *RENEW; Cost of Discipleship*

Prayerfully read, discuss, and share on the following articles "*GENERAL PRINCIPLE #8*" and "*MISSION AND SERVICE IN THE CLC*":

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLE #8:**

### **Apostolic Life**

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.

We take as our own his mission to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to the blind, new sight, to set the downtrodden free and to proclaim 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 to the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individuals and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures.

- a. We each receive from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our own environment. This personal apostolate is necessary for extending the gospel in an effective way among the great diversity of people, places and structures.
- b. We also exercise a communal apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by our Community, or through the involvement of our members in existing secular or religious organizations and events.
- c. The Community helps us to live the different dimensions of this apostolic commitment through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense even to the most ordinary parts of our daily life.
- d. The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of the structures of society, taking part in efforts to free victims of all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We want to play our part in the evangelization of cultures from within. Our desire is to achieve all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives which bring about unity among Christians. Our life finds its lasting inspiration in the gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

Reflect on these questions, and then share:

1. What does it mean to you, to take up your cross daily? How does it translate into concrete action, decisions and costs in your life?
2. Is it possible for someone to know that you are a Christian by the lifestyle you choose?
3. Do the models of discipleship given by Mary and Peter help? How?
4. Who are the people in your life who have given you an example and support? How can you help support others striving to become disciple of the Lord?

## **MISSION AND SERVICE IN THE CLC**

Let us now focus on the goal of the Christian Life Community, its service, and its mission.

The CLC is a small cell within the Church where members support and help each other to live out the Gospel message. The daily evaluation of one's sacramental life, and personal exchange between members all lead to a growing gift of self in the Lord, a way of living that is like Christ's, and a desire to serve others better.

The progressive identification with the Person of Christ and this openness to the Spirit lead to a better service resulting in a truer participation in the mission of Christ and of His Church.

### **What is Mission**

The mission of the church, and all people of good will, is to prepare the way for all people to come to know and accept their Creator and Saviour. The service asked for will always be within this framework and that of the mission Jesus entrusted to the church.

The form it takes will vary, as will the milieus or situations in which it is carried out. But in underlining, as they do, the promotions of justice and evangelization as top-priority goals, our recent General Assemblies have pointed us toward the great needs of today. They have made us aware that liberation from injustice is a permanent dimension of our service.

The mission of CLC then will be the dynamic expression of the gift of ourselves in response to God's gift and will insert itself into the reality of concrete situations. It looks to a profound liberation of the whole person, and of all persons and, indeed, all of creation, and leads them to knowledge of the Lord. It is operative in all sectors: professional, social, economic, political, and environmental where the collective future of human kind is being fashioned, and where the relationships among persons and all creation- either in the sense of solidarity or of alienation- are being formed. And we encounter these sectors at our own level – village, city, region, country – in their collective public expressions (schools, hospitals, campus [ ...]). It is there that we must act in a concrete way. We are gravely in error when we confine ourselves to our daily concerns, in a horizon limited to ourselves. From that viewpoint, it is impossible for us to see and to share.

We erect a barrier between our life and the life that pulses in creation. CLC must help its members to overcome fear and resistance so that they can witness effectively in word and action in the areas in which they live, or in the areas to which they are called.

Today, as a priority, the Spirit suggests to the Church and its member the renewal and sanctification of the temporal order. By learning how to discern the most urgent and most universal needs, we are better able to work towards the reform of the structures of society where discrimination and enslavement exist.

From *PROGRESSIO*

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the resource material, "*MISSION AND SERVICE IN CLC*".

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To accompany Jesus where we find He is still betrayed, abandoned and crucified today.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 9: 23-27 (*Take up your cross and follow me*)

Isaiah 58: 5-12 (*Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice...?*)

Luke 9: 23-27 (*Take up your cross and follow me*)

Reread "DISCIPLESHIP", the resource material from SESSION 16

Matthew 9: 35-38 (*The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few*)

Read and prayerfully reflect on, "MISSION AND SERVICE IN CLC", resource material from SESSION 16

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 17**

### **THEME: MISSION OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Developing a deeper understanding of the mission of Christ and His Church.
- See how I/we can help build the Realm of God on earth.
- How can we support one another to become an apostolic community?
- Look at a group action.

## **PART I**

### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To accompany Jesus where He is still betrayed, abandoned and crucified today.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Luke 9:23-27 (*Take up your cross and follow me*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how to be a faithful witness in your mission.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully review: "*MISSION AND SERVICE IN THE CLC*" from SESSION 16.

Share on the following:

- What does “the mission of Christ and of His Church” mean for us?
- How can we individually and collectively help to build the realm of God on earth each day?
- How can we help one another to become better apostles individually and as a community: in our families; in our workplace; in our parish; in our friendships?
- How will we decide as a community when it is appropriate to take group action?

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the article, “*THE MISSION*”.

### **PART III**

**A: Practical consideration/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God’s working am I leaving with from this meeting
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord’s Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION

### **GRACE:**

To accompany Jesus where he is still betrayed, abandoned and crucified today.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Matthew 20:20-28 (*The request of the mother of James and John*)

Luke 4: 16-22 (*Jesus speaks in the synagogue at Nazareth*)

Reread "*MISSION AND SERVICE IN THE CLC*", resource material from SESSION 16

Matthew 15: 1-9 (*Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees*)

Prayerfully read the article below, "*THE MISSION*".

### **THE MISSION**

A CLC is a small cell of the Church where we become brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, when we support one another to live a life in conformity with the gospel. The "EXAMEN" before God of one's daily life, is a life of prayer which finds inspiration in the Scriptures and creation, an intense sacramental life, the communal exchange [...] geared towards a growing gift of self to the Lord, a way of life more like Jesus, a desire to serve others better.

A group of Christians who meet regularly for only this intention discovers quite soon that, **that is not enough**. One wants to meet, not only to be fed, but also to become more "apostolic". One no longer wants to limit oneself to a particular group, to meetings: one desires also to promote a community sent into the world in communion with the whole church. As a group, it is the mediation of the larger church which helps us find Christ. It is also the medium through which we discover ourselves and one another as being sent by the Lord: "*As the Father has sent me, I also send you.*"

As the Vatican II Council has expressed it very strongly: *The members of the Mystical Body of Christ are so linked and interrelated that those members who fail to make their proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the church nor to themselves.* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity) So the church is not an addition of groups, or parishes, or juxtaposed movements closed in upon themselves, but a "communion" of persons who have in common the fact of **being called** by Christ to live with the Lord according to the gifts given to each one and **to be sent** into the world to prepare for the coming of the Realm of God.

Therefore, these are no longer "our" tasks, "our" dedication, "our" important commitments. The consecration of oneself to the work of the Realm of God indicates a passage from a life where moral obligations were the dominant perspective to a real, spiritual life. One is not only concerned to act well or to be dedicated to a task in an action where we are finally to be the master; one receives this action of the Lord through the Holy Spirit, in the Church [...] in the midst of humans and creation and through exterior and interior events: *The Son can do nothing alone; the Son only*

*sees and does what the Father is doing: and whatever the Father does the Son does too* “. (John 5:19) To receive a mission and to put it into action unites us to the Son, and puts us more fully at the service of humanity and creation.

### The Mission

Today, the Spirit suggests to the church and Christians to dedicate themselves, as a priority, to the renewal and sanctification of the temporal order. To accomplish this, the group helps us in particular by the practice of the “EXAMEN” as a way, to give an apostolic sense even to the most humble realities of our daily life. It teaches us to discern the most urgent and the most universal. It pushes us to work for the reform of the structures of society, participating in efforts working towards the liberation of all creation from every kind of discrimination and trying first to suppress the differences between the rich and the poor in the Church. Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ in such a way as to make us work in a spirit of service for the establishment of justice and peace for all humanity. Training to live in this way, we will no longer be able to separate what is Christian and what is “profane” in our life, no more than one can separate what is God and what is human in the person of Christ.

From *PROGRESSIO*

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 18**

### **THEME: THE NATIONAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To visit and celebrate with members of an established CLC.
- To develop a better knowledge of the national and world CLC.

This is an evening set aside for sharing, celebration and witness. It is an evening in which members from an established CLC group could be invited to visit the new community making themselves available to share their own growth and development as part of a CLC.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To accompany Jesus where He is still betrayed, abandoned and crucified today.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Romans 12:1-21 (*The new life in Christ*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Processes and Content**

Prayerfully read, discuss, and share on the CLC documents below:

### **1. CLC CANADA COMMON MISSION**

Through the apostolate of the Spiritual Exercises, communication, education, social justice in action, we will strive to better love and serve the Blessed Trinity in our world community as the Canadian CLC. CLC Canada will act as communities, and not as individual identities. We will develop leadership that will move communities into action, with special attention to youth and young adults.

*CLC National Assembly in Winnipeg June 26-28, 1999*

### **2. CLC WORLD COMMON MISSION (summary)**

**First**, we want to bring the freeing power of Christ to our social reality.

**Secondly**, we want to find Christ in all our varied cultures and to let His grace illuminate all that needs transformation.

**Thirdly**, we want to live Christ so as to bring him to every aspect of our daily life in the world.

These three areas of mission were enlightened by the spiritual source which nourishes and empowers us for mission, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, which helps us to grow in Christian life.

In addition, we must attend to our own formation for mission, so that our community may ever become a more effective instrument of service. We suggest to everyone who receives this mission statement to read it, not from a merely intellectual viewpoint, searching for information, but as a wording of the strong desire of the World Christian Life Community, as gathered in the Assembly.

We invite the reader to join our pilgrimage so that Christ may gain his full stature. That is what we passionately yearn for and wholeheartedly commit ourselves to.

*World General Assembly Hong Kong 1994*

(Complete document can be found on *CLC Canada Formation CD* or the *CLC WEB Site*)

Prayerfully read "*HISTORY LINE OF CLC CANADA (English)*" below:

### **3. HISTORY LINE OF CLC CANADA (English)**

**1972** •Jose Giselle, a member of the World Executive Council in Rome, meets with Fr. Nick Reimer, SJ (USA) and Fr. John English, SJ (Canada), at Loyola House, Guelph. They talk about becoming a center for CLC in Canada.

- 1974** •Fr. English, SJ gathers four men (including Art Walter and Peter Peloso) and shares CLC prayer material from France.
- 1975** •Gathering of first group to assist Fr. John English, SJ of Loyola House, in Guelph, Ontario in giving the Spiritual Exercises to the laity. The group follow some instructions of *Vie Chrétienne* course. The group consists of four couples: Desneiges and Art Walters, Helen and Lou Drago, Barbara and Peter Peloso, Helen and Frank Sullivan, to begin a special journey of life. These pioneers and trail blazers were the founding members of CLC Canada  
•Art, Peter and Barbara accompany others on their journey through Annotation 19<sup>th</sup>.
- 1977-**
- 1978** •The *program* becomes known as the “*Growing Together in Christ*”. Many later members of CLC were doing the Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life at this time with the Loyola House personnel. Art Walter gathers and visits about 5 groups in Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge & Brantford.  
•Peter Peloso bring CLC to the Kitchener Waterloo Charismatic Prayer group.
- 1979** •St. Michael’s Parish, Waterloo: 4 CLC groups emerge; Waterloo, Brantford, Elora and Burlington. All members experience the Exercises in Daily Life.
- 1981** •These 4 groups meet in Guelph and discern to become the “English-speaking CLC of Canada”, and to apply to the World Federation.
- 1982** •The World Federation accepts the English-speaking CLC of Canada.  
•Peter Peloso and Jean Floyd represent Canada at the World Assembly in Providence R.I., USA: “*Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly before God.*”  
•Peter and Barbara Peloso (Hidden Life, Ontario) become Presidents for CLC Canada.
- 1984** •First Continental Meeting of CLCers from USA, Mexico, French Canada and English Canada in Montreal.
- 1985** •Lois and Kuruvilla Zacharias (Hidden Life, Ontario) become Presidents.  
•ExCo is mandated to develop a constitution and is responsible to implement formation, National Community organization, finance, and mission committees.
- 1986** •5 delegates from CLC Canada attend the 12<sup>th</sup> World Assembly in Spain. Theme: “*Mary, Model of our Mission.*”  
•ExCo meets with the Jesuit Provincial of English Canada.
- 1987** •Jean Floyd (Our Lady of Lourdes, Ontario) becomes National President.  
•Jack Milan, former President of CLC USA, is hired as the National Coordinator.



- First local CLC in Toronto forms. Its name: “Companions”.
  - John English is assigned as a director of the Jesuit Office of CLC by the Jesuit Provincial.
  - Fr. English visits Kelowna, BC, and introduces CLC to the Sisters of St. Martha.
- 1988**
- The beginning of a General Council with representatives from across Canada.
  - National Assembly, Guelph.
  - 5 more communities join CLC.
  - Drawing up of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
  - Group Guide course in PEI.
  - Information sessions on CLC in Lethbridge lead to the start of 4 CLC groups in the area.
- 1989**
- John and Chris Sullivan (Hidden Life, Ontario) become Presidents.
  - Phase 1 manual is published by Office of English Canada CLC, as compiled by the Formation Team for the CLC of English Canada.
  - Regional Assemblies in the Atlantic, Central, and Western Region.
  - Group Guide course in Edmonton.
  - 12 communities are committed to the National Community.
  - 30 more groups are in various stages of the CLC journey.
- 1990**
- Gilles Michaud (Ixthus, Prince Edward Island), Joanne Mawhinney (Emmaus, Victoria Island), and Fr. English attend the World Assembly in Guadalajara, Mexico: “*CLC at the Service of the Kingdom.*” Daphne Stockman, now a member of our Central Region, represents CLC India.
  - Western Regional Assembly in Lethbridge is attended by more than 50 CLC members from the area (+BC), and from Spokane, Washington, Oregon and Seattle.
  - For the first time, a Rockies Regional Representative, (Sonja Sphon), and Marilyn Heaton attend a General Council Meeting in Guelph.
- 1991**
- Beth and Graydon Nicholas (River of Life, New Brunswick), are elected as Presidents.
  - First retreat for CLC members in Lethbridge (at the Martha Retreat Center), under the guidance of Fr. John English, SJ.
  - Formation Manual Phase II is published in 1991, compiled by Fr. English, SJ, Sr. MacDougall, CND, and Jack Milan.
- 1992**
- First National Assembly is held in Guelph. This Assembly is the first official National gathering because of the representation of delegates across Canada: “*Appreciation of the larger vision of CLC*”; 50 delegates attend, as representatives of their local communities.

- Lethbridge forms a Core Group: one representative from each of the four local communities.
- 1993**
- Gilles Michaud (Ixthus, PEI) is elected President of CLC Canada.
  - Atlantic and Central Regions have their 1st Regional Assembly.
  - Group Guide weekends in Regina, SK by Fr. English and Barbara Peloso, and in New Brunswick, by Fr. English and Gilles Michaud.
- 1994**
- Gilles Michaud (Ixthus, PEI), Fran Morrison (Fidelis, Ontario), and Fr. Dave Creamer, SJ attend the 12<sup>th</sup> World Assembly in Hong Kong: "*CLC Community in Mission.*"
  - Formation Manual Phase III is published – compiled by Fr. English, SJ.
- 1995**
- Bob and Shirley Gatchene (Our Lady of Lourdes, Ontario) are elected Presidents of CLC Canada.
  - National Assembly held in Halifax, NS: "*A call to act justly, love tenderly, to walk humbly with our God.*"
  - In November, a World CLC Working Group is formed and meets in Rome to design a long range formation plan for CLC. Gilles Michaud attends the 10 day session.
- 1996**
- ExCo develops a Formation Needs Survey
  - CLC Regional Structure Committee is established with representatives from the Western, Central and Eastern Regions.
- 1997**
- Fr. John English arrives in Winnipeg.
  - Working Group Formation begins working on a Leaders' Manual
  - ExCo proposes a donation structure of \$25 per year for members who have completed the 1<sup>st</sup> Phase of Formation.
  - Atlantic Regional Assembly, Fredericton, NB: *Discernment about the pros and cons of a Regional Structure.*
  - Central Regional Assembly in Guelph (Regional Structure, Guide & Leadership Courses).
- Ray Comeault, Winnipeg accepts his role on GC as Youth Representative replacing Dale Swirsky (Winnipeg).
- 1998**
- 13<sup>th</sup> World Assembly in Itaici, Brazil: "*Our Common Mission*", is attended by Elaine Regan (Companions, Ontario), Fr. Earl Smith SJ, Leah and Gilles Michaud, as incoming World Executive Secretaries.
  - Group Guide Coordinating Committee is established: development of a Group Guides Training Program (for Group Guides of a new CLC and Group Guides of a formed CLC).
  - Group Guide Course in Central Region.
  - The Leaders' Manual is completed.
  - Assembly in the Central Region.

- Fr. English directs Spiritual Exercises at St. Ignatius Parish, Winnipeg, and begins training new directors.
  - SOPs on how to organize National and Regional Assemblies and the responsibilities of the Regional Representatives are reviewed by General Council.
  - GC decides that *UPDATE* – the National Newsletter - is now mailed to all members of CLC Canada (not only the contact persons); via e-mail when possible.
  - Gilles and Leah Michaud start their work at the World Secretariat in Rome.
- 1999**
- Elaine Regan and Fran Morrison become Presidents of CLC Canada.
  - National Assembly held in Winnipeg, Manitoba: “*Appropriating Our Identity as an Apostolic Body as called by the Spiritual Exercises and General Principles.*” What is our Identity, Vocation, Mission, as a National CLC? A copy of the Canadian Common Mission is provided. This is the first time an Assembly is held in the West of Canada. Keynote speaker: Leah Michaud
  - At the Assembly, the Western Region is divided into the Prairies and Rockies Regions. Canada is now composed of 4 regions.
  - Atlantic Region meets in Amherst, NS; an Atlantic Regional Structure is established.
  - Group Guide courses in Central and Atlantic Regions.
  - Prairies Region consists of 1 community in Winnipeg, 4 in Regina, and a new CLC starts meeting at St. Ignatius Parish, Winnipeg, after experiencing Annotation 19.
- 2000**
- Annual meetings between the SJ Provincial and CLC Presidents are established
  - Fr. Smith, SJ is appointed National Ecclesiastical Assistant by the Jesuit Provincial, replacing Fr. English, SJ (now Ecclesiastical Assistant Emeritus).
  - General Council discerns to develop a SOP on the role of the National Ecclesiastical Assistant and one for a National Disaster Fund, in order to help other countries in need.
  - Role and responsibilities of the Atlantic Regional council are defined.
  - Colleen Sumarah (Truth Given, Nova Scotia), forwards a report on CLC Ecumenism to General Council.
- 2001**
- General Council Meeting is held for the first time in Winnipeg.
  - Action Plan for renewal is developed: “To become discerning apostolic communities in action”.
  - Fr. Charles Pottie-Pâté, sj is assigned EA for the Atlantic Region.
  - 3 CLC groups now meet at St. Ignatius Parish, Winnipeg.
- 2002**
- North American Conference, Guelph: Delegates from CLC Canada, CVX (French Canada), CLC USA, and VCCT [Vietnamese Companions of Jesus, USA] participate (Facilitator: Jack Milan)

- ANIA, Midland, Ontario (Ignatian Experience before the World Youth Day in Toronto): 7 CLC members participate as animators.
  - Atlantic Regional Assembly, Halifax, NS: *Recognize, welcome and share 'the pearl of great price' as the source of our becoming mature and discerning communities of apostolic action.*
  - Atlantic Region: new Formation Coordinator and Editor of the newsletter, *Colloquy*, is Leo Deveau
  - Group Guide Course in Thunder Bay, with Lois and Kuruvila Zachariah; attended by 6 local CLCers and Kati Gumbmann, Winnipeg.
- 2003**
- 14<sup>th</sup> World General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya: "*Sent by Christ, Members of one Body*," is attended by John Sumarah, Kati Gumbmann and Fr. Smith, SJ, Leah and Gilles Michaud attend as outgoing members of the World Secretariat.
  - Presidents of CLC Canada are elected: Kati Gumbmann (Koinonia, Manitoba) and Graydon Nicholas (River of Life, NB).
  - "John English Fund" is established before his 80th birthday (in honour of his role as a Founding Father), to help with formation expenses.
  - First ExCo and General Council Meetings via telephone.
  - Central Regional Assembly, Waterloo Ontario.
  - First Regional ExCo Meeting in Central Region.
  - Jesuits meet with lay collaborators in Winnipeg: Fr. English, Fr Smith and Kati Gumbmann attend.
  - Prairies Region grows in awareness of the need for discerned regional leadership.
  - 3 local communities in Thunder Bay, Ontario, discern to leave Central and to join the Prairies Region.
  - Formation Team is formed in the Central Region; Chair: Barbara and Peter Peloso.
  - Leah Michaud is elected at the World Assembly in Nairobi (2003) as a member of the World ExCo.
- 2004**
- Death of Fr. John English on June 9.
  - National Assembly, Lethbridge: "*One Apostolic Community – Our Way of Life*" Keynote speaker: John Sumarah
  - Working Group for Leadership Formation is established, along with a Working Group for the revision/updating of Formation Manuals; coordinator: Gilles Michaud.
  - Working Group for Communication is established; Chair: Clarence de Schiffart.
  - Working Group reviews current Constitution and SOPs; Chair: Maria Brown.
  - Manitoulin Island starts its first local CLC.
  - Prairies Region initiates workshops discerning CLC World and National priorities.

- Atlantic Regional Assembly, St. John, NB: “*One Community ... invited ... blessed ... sent.*”
  - In collaboration with the Society of Jesus, Leah and Gilles Michaud (CLC Canada), Roswitha Cooper (CLC Germany), and CLC India ExCo, represent World CLC at the World Social Forum held in Mumbai, India.
- 2005**
- Peter Chouinard (Earthen Vessel, NB), and Kati Gumbmann are elected Presidents of CLC Canada.
  - North American Conference, Chicago: delegates are Peter Chouinard and Ruth Chipman (Koinonia, Manitoba).
  - Geraldine Tingley (New Brunswick) accepts the task of webmaster for CLC Canada .
  - Regional Meeting in Prairies Region: “An evolving communal awareness of our need to share responsibility in all aspects of our CLC way of life”.
  - Weekend workshop for Rockies Region led by Kati Gumbmann and Fr. Smith: The Spiritual Exercises and CLC, Specific Contribution of the different Roles in a CLC group.
- 2006**
- Fr. Charles Pottie-Pâté, sj, is appointed as National Ecclesiastical Assistant
  - Gilles Michaud attends the International Formation Encounter in Rome on behalf of CLC Canada.
  - Fr. Earl Smith, SJ is appointed Atlantic Regional Ecclesiastical Assistant
  - Lakeshore retreat in Prairies Region: “Examining Commitment in CLC”.
  - Weekend workshop for Rockies Region led by Kati Gumbmann and Fr. Smith: The 3 Pillars of our CLC Way of Life. Introduction of a Group Guides’ Course.
- 2007**
- World CLC president, Daniela Frank, visits Ontario.
  - North American Conference is cancelled.
  - World Vice-Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Alberto Brito, SJ, visits the Atlantic, Central and Prairies Regions.
  - The Atlantic Regional Assembly takes place at the University of PEI, Aug.17-19: “*Deepening CLC Identity-Commitment to a way of life.*”. Lois Campbell, from CLC USA, and member of the World ExCo, is the key note speaker.
  - USA CLC Formation Encounter takes place at Creighton University from June 24-30. 70 USA CLC members attend, along with Ruth Chipman (CLC Canada) and Rock Lapalme sj (CVX Canada). Gilles Michaud participates as a member of the facilitation team.
  - A CVX Leadership Formation Encounter takes place at Villa St Martin, in Montreal, on October 5-7. The facilitators: Lucille Madore (President of CVX Canada), Roch Lapalme, sj and Gilles Michaud.
  - Leadership Formation Encounter takes place in the Atlantic Region, facilitated by Lois Campbell (CLC USA) and Gilles Michaud.
  - Central Regional Assembly: Guelph, ON.

- Prairies Region: Group Guide workshop, facilitated by Elaine and Peter Regan/Nightingale.
- Prairies Regional Assembly, in Winnipeg, November 1-3.
- Fr. Pottie-Pâté, sj and Ruth Chipman conduct a Group Guide workshop for the Rockies Region.
- Elaine Regan/Nightingale attends the International Workshop on Ignatian Communal Apostolic Discernment of the Signs of the Times, at the Drongen Retreat House, Drongen, Belgium, July 8-13.

- 2008**
- A Central Regional Formation Encounter takes place in Toronto, April 4 - 7. 50 CLC members attend. Lois Campbell (CLC USA) and Gilles Michaud facilitate the workshop.
  - The Prairies Regional LFE takes place on April 11- 13, in Winnipeg. 11 CLC members participate, including Anne and Phillip Goertzen, representing the Rockies Region. Lois Campbell (CLC USA) and Gilles Michaud facilitate the workshop.
  - 15<sup>th</sup> World CLC General Assembly is held in Fatima, Portugal, August 12- 21. Theme: “*Journeying as an Apostolic Body: Our Response to this Grace from God.*” Delegates: Ruth Chipman, Mary Balfe and Fr. Charles Pottie-Pâté, sj, as the National EA. Leah Michaud ends her mandate on the World ExCo.
- 2009**
- Mary Balfe and Fr. Charles Pottie-Pâté, sj, attend course: “Communal Apostolic Discernment, in the Light of General Congregation 35”, in Rome, January 18- February 4.
  - The National Assembly takes place in Guelph, ON, at the Loyola Spirituality Center, April 23 - 26..Theme: “*Pillars and Prophets: CLC Called to be Transformed.*”

## **CLC CANADA AND ITS HISTORY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE...**

Prayerfully read, ***THE CLC WORLD HISTORY BELOW***.

### **WORLD HISTORY OF CLC** (from Marian Congregations to World Christian Life Community)

In order to understand our identity more deeply, it is important to know about our development. Throughout the past four centuries, many generations have prepared the way for us in the Marian Congregation. Christian Life Community was not just a new name, given in 1967, but represented a 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.

**1540** Society of Jesus is founded by Ignatius of Loyola.

- 1563** A Jesuit teacher, *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 the Congregation life.
- 1584** Pope Gregory XIII, with the papal Bull *Omnipotentis Dei*, entitles the first Congregation at the Roman College (the *Prima Primaria*) to be the head of all the Congregations.
- 1587** Pope Sixtus V, following the request of the Society of Jesus, issues the Bull *Superna 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 is 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*, tries to renew the vigour of Congregation life. This Bull increases the advantages of membership by granting the members enlarged spiritual benefits and this perhaps has a reverse effect. At this time the Society of Jesus, a victim of political intrigues, is already struggling for its life.
- 1773** Pope Clement XIV signs 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. In the eighteenth century, membership increases vastly from 2500 groups to 80,000. The consequence is a diminishment in fervour and practice. The spiritual life of the members and the social concern for the rejected of society is reduced to pious practices and annual and symbolic events. The Marian Congregations have become a pious mass movement, different from what Ignatius or Jean Leunis or Aquaviva had meant it to be.
- 1922** Fr Ledochowski, Superior General of the Society, convenes a meeting of Jesuits working with the Marian Congregations or Sodalties, as they were called in some countries. The central secretariat, a service centre, is founded. It is the first secretariat for Jesuit works. Today the SJ curia has eight similar offices for other works. This is the first step towards restoration.
- 1948** Pope Pius XII with his Apostolic Constitution *Bis Saeculari*, gives an important push towards renewal of the Marian Congregations. *Bis Saeculari* was exactly what was needed: a clear, authoritative statement on the authentic identity of the Marian Congregations, a pressing call for reform, orientations towards the

future, and some declarations on lay apostolate in general. The impact of this document was enormous (Fr Paulussen, SJ in: *God Works Like That*).

- 1950** Seventy one Jesuits, from forty countries, follow the call of the Superior General, Fr Janssens, SJ, and meet in Rome as a first answer 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 of Marian Congregations.
- 1952** At the Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona, the opportunity is used to meet and discuss the 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 in Rome.
- 1959** 2nd Assembly in Newark, USA.
- 1962** Opening of the Second Vatican Council.
- 1964** 3rd Assembly of the World Federation in Bombay, India.
- 1967** 4th Assembly and **a new name and a new beginning: Christian Life Community.**
- 1968** On the Feast of the Annunciation, Pope Paul VI confirms the General Principles of the World Federation of the Christian Life Community
- 1970** 5th Assembly in Santo Domingo: a crisis and a challenge... (the General Principles are amended and approved in 1971 by the Holy See).
- 1973** 6th General Assembly in Augsburg, Germany: "*The call to be free, the liberation of all men and women.*"
- 1976** 7th General Assembly in Manila, Philippines: "*The call to be poor, poor with Christ for a better service.*"
- 1979** 8th General Assembly in Rome: "*Call towards a World Community, at the service of One World.*"



- 1982** The General Assembly in Providence: *“The challenge to be one World Community on mission to bring about justice.”*
- 1986** 10th General Assembly in Loyola: *“Seeing Mary as model of our mission, being asked to do “whatever Christ tells us”.*
- 1990** 11th General Assembly in Guadalajara: *“An international community “at the service of the Kingdom, to go out and bear fruit.”.*
- 1994** 12th General Assembly in Hong Kong: *“CLC in Mission “I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!”*
- 1998** 13th General Assembly in Itaici (Brasil): *“Deepening our identity as an apostolic Community - clarifying our common mission. “CLC, a letter from Christ, written by the Spirit, sent to today’s world.”*
- 2003** 14th General Assembly in Nairobi (Kenya): *“Sent by Christ, members of one body.”*
- 2008** 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Fatima, Portugal: *“Journeying as an Apostolic Body: Our Response to this Grace from God.”*

**NB**

The Power Point Presentation on CLC Graced History, from the Canada CLC Resource Formation CD could be shown.

Share with the group.

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the articles, “CONSCIOUSNESS EXAMEN” and, “EXAMEN AND PRAYER”.

**PART III**

**A: Practical consideration/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?

- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**CELEBRATION:**

Pot Luck Supper or some other form of celebration.

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To be aware of our dependence on God

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Prayerfully read and reflect on the Histories of CLC.

Romans 12: 3-8 (*We have gifts that differ according to the graces given to us*).

Prayerfully read and reflect on Part 1 of the “*CONSCIOUSNESS EXAMEN*” below.

Prayerfully read and reflect on “*EXAMEN and PRAYER*”.

Jeremiah 18: 1-11 (*The Potter and the Clay*)

Luke 12: 22-34 (*Consider the lilies of the field...Do not worry*)

## **CONSCIOUSNESS\* EXAMEN**

### THE TRINITY DRAWS US

We are aware that the Trinity is constantly drawing each human heart to union with themselves in and through Christ. “*No one can come to Me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent Me*” (John 6:44).

This drawing registers within us. We feel it in our hearts. It registers in our feelings, moods, impulses, desires, urges. This is happening to everyone – the good and the bad. Even the most malicious sinner is being drawn. Whether one is aware of it or not, or whether one has deadened one’s heart against it or not, is another matter, but it is happening.

It may surprise us to learn this, but it is a fact that the revelation of God happens more in our interior feelings and moods than in clear and distinct ideas. This does not mean that God’s revelation does not happen in our intellects. But we are all aware that much of what we do is by sub-conscious motivation, without stopping to reflect on the feeling that is moving us.

If we want to find God most intimately, then we must let the Lord draw us at the core of our being, and we must become aware of the feeling operating there. It is only by doing this that I will come to know who I really am and who I am intended to be when I fully become all that God is giving me to be.

The goal of our life is holiness – wholeness – complete union with God. We attain this union only if we listen to God and respond to the constant invitations to draw nearer. We said earlier that God draws each of us in a unique way, is present in the level of our being where our feelings, impulses, urges and desires register. There is another side to this however. Our sinful nature also registers at the same level in our hearts, our feelings, moods, impulses, desires, urges. This leaves us with a problem. If I am in touch with myself at that level of my being, then I am conscious of these

other feelings as well. Which ones are leading me to the Lord and which are not? I have to sort them out.

We may even find it hard to get in touch with our feelings. Perhaps our training almost urged us to the opposite, to pay no attention to our feelings.

***But it is important how you feel.***

We are not talking here about superficial sentiments, but rather about the movements at the core of our being –deep in our heart where God’s word resides.

If we stay away from this area, our real selves, we will be missing much of what the Spirit is saying to us and we will not become our true selves, because it is from this level of our being that we make our decisions, that we discover our real relationship with God and our true identity. We discover what has to be: faced, interpreted, decided, acted upon in the light of this identity.

Sometimes, in the faith life of each person, basic questions such as these will be faced: “Is God real? Does Jesus, Risen and alive, mean anything to me?”

If this person can gather together all the strands of faith experiences one has had and then says: “Yes, God is real! I have experience to back it up.”, then the person’s faith becomes more mature, and one has a clearer grasp of one’s identity and relationship with God.

The experience that gives this conviction is called our core faith experience, the experience that opened us to God, that basic total surrender to God that we have all experienced or we wouldn’t be here. This may not have been a dramatic thing; it could have been a moment of quiet conviction when, for the first time in my life, I consciously surrendered totally to God, perhaps in fear – because I didn’t know where God was taking me – but finally in joy and peace, because I had somehow experienced in the depths of my being what it was to be at one with God, at home with God.

I have to learn to take each present interior experience and drop it down inside myself at that level when I am still trying to live out my total surrender, my, “Yes, Lord.” If it fits into that stance before God, then this will be a sign to me that it is right and good and from God. There will be a sense of rightness, peace and joy. But if I take my present interior experience and drop it down to that level of my being to test it against my core experience of God, and it pops up again and all my efforts to make it fit simply cause disruption, disturbance and anxiety, then it is a temptation – it does not make me feel at home with God. It is not from the Lord.

This is how important it is for us to be in touch with our feelings so we can sort them out and not be blown about by them or allow them to be operating in our sub-conscious and coming out in harmful ways. One of the best instruments to keep me in touch with my true self is the EXAMEN. We used to be very faithful to the daily EXAMEN and perhaps we are still. But it is very important that we understand it

correctly. Next to the Eucharist, the EXAMEN should provide the occasion for the most intimate encounter of the day with Jesus.

### EXAMEN – ITS REAL GOAL – A DISCERNING HEART

I'm afraid that you and I looked upon the EXAMEN as a time to examine ourselves on our particular or predominant fault or to see how we are growing in a particular virtue. This is not too bad, but it was certainly not what St. Ignatius (from whom we inherit it) intended it to be. This was meant to be only a small part of the EXAMEN. We made it the major or only part.

Its real goal is to help me to keep the faith dimension of my life – to put me in touch with my real self before God. The Lord is constantly drawing each of us to God in an intimate and unique way. If I live from day to day simply reacting spontaneously to all that comes to me, I may be failing to hear God's gentle and quiet invitation, because there are two spontaneities at work in us: one good from God, the other evil and not from God.

The EXAMEN is a daily prayerful exercise in discernment, helping me to respond to God's loving invitations, not just during the time of the EXAMEN, but in all of my daily living. It is to help to find God in everything. So it is primarily concerned not with good and bad actions, but with what occurs in us prior to action: our deep inner feelings, how we are experiencing the drawing of the Lord, how our sinful nature is quietly tempting and alluring us away from our God in subtle dispositions within us. It is an exercise in awareness, awareness of my present relationship with a living Lord whose invitations to draw nearer to God are presenting themselves in new forms at every moment.

It is not possible for me to make this kind of EXAMEN without confronting my own identity in Christ before the Trinity. I am an individual person married, single or with vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience, living in community and having a certain apostolate. All this is part of my identity – my second name of grace.

BUT MORE THAN THIS – over the years I have come to know God's special ways of drawing me and I am aware of my past responses and how my life has been shaped because of this. I answer to a name that no one else answers to – my first name of grace. And daily the Lord is inviting me to deepen and develop this identity. Each day I should make the EXAMEN, not just as any Christian, but as the CHRISTIAN I AM, with as close a grasp of my identity as it is possible for me to have at this moment.

### EXAMEN AND PRAYER

It is in my prayer that God is gradually revealed to me and the mystery of the plan of salvation for all of reality in Christ. It is in prayer that I experience the Lord's invitations and challenges to me personally. This is why the Examen is a prayer and

is related to my daily, personal, contemplative prayer. My prayer would be empty if I did not order my life to respond to God. It is the daily Examen that helps me to sense and recognize those interior invitations of the Lord that guide and deepen this ordering. To be prayerful means to find God in all things, not just in the time of formal prayer.

If I see the Examen as related to my prayer, I will readily understand why it is good to begin the Examen with thanksgiving. In my prayer life I have to come to realize that I am poor. I possess nothing, not even myself. I come before the Lord as one who has been gifted by God. I owe God everything. The deeper my faith becomes, the more truly I become aware of my utter poverty and the more I am struck by God's great goodness to me. This sense of thankfulness should become an attitude that abides with me, remains a part of my constant awareness.

### 1. GRATITUDE

I use the time of the EXAMEN to bring GRATITUDE into my conscious awareness so that I can learn to have an abiding consciousness of the Lord and the goodness of God. Gradually, I will experience what it is to believe that ALL IS GIFT and this awareness alone could change my life.

As I make this part of the EXAMEN, I should THANK GOD SPECIFICALLY for the gifts received in the part of the day just completed. Expressing my gratitude will help me to discover gifts from God as they are given to me in the future so that I can be more spontaneously grateful as they are given:

- What has happened today that I should be thankful for?
- Do I take God's gifts for granted?
- Is my whole life becoming a "thank you" response to God?
- What do I find most difficult to be grateful for?

### 2. PRAYER FOR THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT (PETITION)

No doubt I have made enough mistakes in life to realize that seeing clearly in spiritual matters is not simply a matter of using my reason and common sense. Since only God knows me fully and knows who I will be when I become all I am capable of becoming, it is clear that only God can give me the needed insights into my life. It is important then, that I ask for the SPIRIT to give me a growing insight into the mystery which I am. I also need to ask myself:

- Am I becoming more and more Spirit directed?
- Am I open to ALL the channels by which God speaks to me?
- Did I allow God to direct me in the events of the morning/day?
- Do I experience God's gifts: a new peace, patience, love, joy, kindness, fidelity, gentleness, self- control?

### 3. EXAMINATION (REVIEW)

This is part of the EXAMEN that we are most familiar with. It consists in examining ourselves. But on what should we examine ourselves? In the past, many of us at this

point reviewed our actions of the part of the day just finished and counted up failures and/or victories. ***THIS IS JUST WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO!***

Our real concern here is FAITH and what has been happening TO US and IN US since the last EXAMEN PRAYER. So the questions I ask myself could be similar to the following:

- Did I feel drawn by the Lord any time today through: a companion, an event, a good book, nature, etc?
- To what was God drawing me?
- What have I learned today about the Lord and God's ways: the ordinary occasions, in stray moments?
- How did I meet the Lord in: fears, work, sufferings, joys, misunderstandings?
- How did God's word come ALIVE to me today in: my prayer time, other readings, Scripture, liturgy, nature?
- In what ways have I encountered Christ through the members of my community? Have I brought Christ to them?
- In what ways have I been the sign of God's presence and love: to my companions, friends, to the people with whom I work, to the people I've met today?
- Have I felt moved to go out of myself in concern for the: lonely, discouraged, sad, needy?
- How am I becoming more and more conscious of God's work: in the larger church, in my country, in other countries of the world?
- How does it affect me?
- Have I experienced a growing awareness of: my being loved, my sinfulness, a desire to reciprocate, my dependence?
- Of what area of my being is Jesus not yet Lord?

Only secondarily are we concerned about our ACTIONS insofar as they are RESPONSES to God's calling. Too often, we are so concerned with action that we become self-moved and motivated rather than moved and motivated by the Spirit. It is likely that the Lord is calling me to CONVERSION in some area of my life. This is what I should be responding to instead of being busy in the area I choose to work on. Only God can reveal my sinfulness to me and the Lord does so only out of love.

#### 4. CONTRITION AND SORROW (FORGIVENESS)

A growing awareness of my sinfulness (my lack of response to love) should arouse in me:

- sorrow and wonder at being constantly brought to newness
- a sense of deep joy and gratitude because I have been guaranteed freedom through Jesus -a growing mistrust of self and firm trust in God.
- a humble awareness of my weakness
- a strong faith that I am gradually being converted from sinner to child of God.

Here I can express sorrow over specific actions that were inadequate to God's love at work in my heart.

## 5. HOPEFUL RESOLUTION FOR THE FUTURE (RENEWAL)

What I do in this part of the EXAMEN should flow naturally from all that has preceded; therefore, it will be different each day. If it were the same it would be a sure sign that I have not really entered into the previous four elements (1.Gratitude, 2.Petition, 3.Review, 4.Forgiveness) of the EXAMEN.

How do I look toward the future? Am I despondent, fearful, discouraged; if so, why? I must be honest and not repress my true feelings. There should be a great desire to face the future with renewed vision and a sensitivity as I pray:

- to recognize the ways in which the Lord calls me in each situation of the future  
AND
- to respond to God's call with more: faith, humility, courage, especially as I experience the Lord's calling for PAINFUL CONVERSION IN SOME AREA OF MY HEART.

I SHOULD BE FILLED WITH HOPE, founded not on my desires or powers, but in the Trinity, whose glorious victory in Jesus Christ I share through the life of Their Spirit in my heart. The more I trust God and allow the Lord to lead my life, the more I will experience true supernatural hope in and through Christ, but beyond my weakness, pain and poverty. And this experience brings JOY!

*BELOVED, I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT I HAVE MADE IT MY OWN; BUT THIS ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND STRAINING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARDS THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HEAVENLY CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. (Philippians. 3:13).*

*(This Awareness Exercise is an abbreviated presentation of Fr. George Aschenbrenner's article, "Consciousness Examen" from the Review of Religious, Volume 31, 1971)*

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.



## **SECTION 4 EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY**

### **SESSION 19**

#### **THEME: CREATUREHOOD AND AWARENESS**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop an enhanced awareness of my CREATUREHOOD.
- Read the “*FIRST PRINCIPAL AND FOUNDATION*” from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How do I come to this meeting? (share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord’s loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To be aware of my dependence on God

#### **Listening to God’s word in Scripture:**

Luke. 12:22-34 (*Consider the lilies of the field...Do not worry*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With the journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of last week’s life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART III**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## CREATUREHOOD

When we consider creaturehood as a spiritual experience a question arises, "What is spirituality?" Spirituality is dependent on the interior awareness of interpersonal relationships, whether about *esprit de corps* or with plants, animals, humans and stars in the cosmos. Today we have an expanded sense of community that includes all creatures. We are led to appreciate the spiritual truth that "we are saved as a people, as a planet." Interconnectedness, interdependence and intercommunication with the sacred, the interpersonal sense of life is important for all expressions of spirituality. Thomas Berry, the advocate of deep concern for the earth, points out, "This arc of communion with the earth we can relearn from the Indian (Aboriginal), thus a reverse dependency is established...In some ultimate sense we need their mythic capacity for relating to this continent more than they need our mechanistic exploitation of the continent."

For Christians, spirituality is about interpersonal relationship with the persons of the Trinity, in whatever way that gets expressed. It is my contention that both science and religion can bring insight that will help in the present affective experiences of the spiritual life of individuals and communities.

St. Paul says that spirituality is about the activity of the Spirit in all things: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love, these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God [...] And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.'"(1 Cor 2:10, 13) Spirituality is about the activity of the Spirit in our interpersonal life, our prayerful relationship with the Trinity, Our Lady, the Saints, and the interpersonal in the universe. It gives us an interpersonal overarching matrix of understanding our motivations and choices in life. It develops a reflective knowledge of our human experiences, such as creaturehood, in terms of God's interpersonal relationship with us.

For Christians this is expressed in the first statement of our Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, The Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible." From this belief one is brought to a realization of one's existence by the personal activity of God, the Trinity. One acknowledges relationship to all other beings as fellow creatures, even as kin. And the experience of being a creature goes beyond one's individual sense of existence. There is a further experience of creaturehood that is one's sense of relationship with other creatures and with the Trinity. We are not alone in this experience of being a creature. We are in communion with the rest of the created universe. All other beings are our kin. We are together in the dance of the Trinity. We are part of the community of the Trinity.

The understanding and sense of our creaturehood can be a basis for entering into the mysteries of our faith and the mystery of our own life. So we realize that the historical events of Christ's life and our own present historical state express an

experience of creaturehood. Our own acts of wonder, awe, sorrow and repentance make the action of Christ present to us through the mysterious way of his Ascension, somewhat like the remembrance at the Eucharist makes the Last Supper present to us.

From *"SINGING AND DANCING WITH THE MUSICAL OF CREATION"* by John English SJ

Share with the group.

Prayerfully read and share on *"THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION"* (2 translations offered below).

### **1. PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION**

"We are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save our souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for us to help us in attaining the end for which we are created. Hence, we are to make use of them in as far as they help us in the attainment of our end and we must rid ourselves of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to us. Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things. **Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.**"

St. Ignatius Loyola (Translated by L. Puhl, SJ)

### **2. PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION**

"We humans are created in union with all other creatures of the universe to praise, reverence and serve the Trinity, and in this united activity, to appreciate our kinship with each other and to discover the fullness of our own lives on earth. We are to respect all other creatures, even as we use them for our own livelihood, and unite with them in praise, reverence and service. This requires true spiritual freedom on our part. Such freedom extends to our relationship with everything. This is the basic attitude toward all members of the community of life and is necessary for true love. So we need to find this freedom in order to develop a right relationship with creatures: human, plant and animal. This gives us freedom to live our lives in honour or dishonour, poverty or riches, sickness or health, a short life or a long life and in all other matters. **Our one desire is to choose what will better help us be united in love and gratitude with all of creation for the greater praise, reverence and service of the Trinity.**"

From *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT #57*

Read the following:

**What is the PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION?**

- It is the initial attitude of faith and is the first step in one's journey.
- It is a deep desire to believe in a God who communicates with me.
- It is a God who gives His love to humankind making him lovable. "The glory of God is the person's best self, a person fully alive".
- It is God's dream for the world, and is the establishment of the reign of God, a community of freedom, justice, fellowship, peace and love.
- It is experiencing His unconditional love: acceptance and love of self and others.
- It is becoming sons and daughters of the Father. "You are my very dear daughter and son" and brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.
- It is freedom from fear, guilt, self-hatred, resentment and all the barriers that block the invasive love, life and power of God.
- It is a freedom from exploitation, control, discrimination etc.; to be ready to do what God wants.
- It is to commit oneself to be in communion with all things in Creation, to build such a community of life.
- It is to be more and more free, more and more open and available to God's action in me.
- It is to be more and more the source of unity for all of Creation.

*Spiritual Exercises for Today* by Lydia de Souza. CLC India (adapted)

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the articles, "*PRACTICING REPETITION- JOURNALING*" and "*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*".

**PART III**

**A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events etc.**

**B. Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

A deep appreciation of how the Lord has been present in my life.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

1 Corinthians 4:7-13 (*We are fools for the sake of Christ*)

Isaiah 43: 1-5 (*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you*)

Job 1:21 (*Naked I came forth from my mother's womb*)

Prayerfully read and reflect the article, "*PRACTICING REPETITION and JOURNALING*", below.

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10 (*Paul's revelations...When I am weak, then I am strong*)

Prayerfully read and reflect on one of the two examples of the "*PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION*" in SESSION 18

Prayerfully read and reflect on the article, "*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*", below.

## **PRACTICING REPETITION and JOURNALING**

Spend 15-20 minutes of prayer each day on the scripture passages. If one or other of the passages becomes significant to you, you may want to spend three or four days on that one Scripture text. Don't feel you have to cover all the material. Repetition of a point where you have been moved is more important than covering everything.

Each passage is chosen to illustrate a basic experience of the spiritual life. Place yourself in the presence of the Trinity. Read the passage slowly several times. Let the passage touch off your memory concerning some parallel experience in your own life. Recall the experience in detail, letting your imagination capture the event. Appreciate with God its significance in your life, by speaking with God about it.

AFTER the period of prayer, reflect back over the prayer experience by asking the following questions:

- What did the passage remind you of in your own life?
- How did this memory make you feel during the prayer?
- What significance did the experience have for you then... now?
- What did you learn about your relationship with God from your remembering prayer?

Note your reflections in your journal.

### **SUMMARY OF THE METHOD:**

#### **BEGINNING**

Presence of the Trinity

Read the passage several times slowly

## DURING

- Recall a similar experience
- Speak with God about it.
- Review what went on in your prayer

## AFTER

- Write in your journal.

## **PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

To reflect on one's own experience to discover God's influences is a highly developed skill. We use different models to help us understand various experiences. The idea in this exercise is to take each of these various models and exercise oneself in its use. Then, little by little, phase by phase, over a longer period of time, to incorporate the discernment gained.

### **The Phase of Acknowledging the Presence of One's Feelings**

In my life I have experienced different feelings. Often without even thinking I act out of these feelings. At times I repress them and fail to acknowledge what is really going on. I must take my feeling experiences seriously if I am to become fully human.

- Place yourself in the Presence of the Trinity.
- Simply stop, and let all the feelings of the past period of time come to the surface of your consciousness since you last stopped to consider what is going on in you. (Some of these words may help you identify these feelings: joy, turmoil, acceptance, peace, bitterness, resentful, defensive, angry, alienated, loving, hostility, longing, desire, distant, confident, helpless, embarrassed, cautious, fury, indignation, bugged, bold, relieved, fearful, loved, hyper, confused).
- Name and own what has really been going on in your experience. Be as honest with yourself and God as you can.
- Choose one or two of your dominant feelings and recall the event that has provoked them. Try to identify why you feel as you do.
- Talk to God about your feeling. God already knows, but it is often healing when we actually express them to God. Perhaps you can pray a psalm that expresses one of these more dominant feelings.

### **The Phase of Being in Touch with the Underlying Realities behind One's Feelings.**

Sometimes we experience our feelings one way, but when we honestly look at them we discover a reality behind them. This reality may be another feeling, or a value, or an attitude. For example, I may feel "confused", but when I really look at this feeling of confusion. I may discover a truer feeling of hostility, which surprises me. Or again, when I look at a grateful feeling, I may discover that, guilt of not being grateful enough, is really operative. A feeling of peace may reveal a positive sense of

accomplishment or a negative fear of confronting another. Sometimes, feelings reveal a hidden attitude or value. For example, my feeling of confusion may reveal that, as a parent, I always have to be right.

- Place yourself in the presence of the Trinity and pray for enlightenment.
- Let your real feelings surface and name them as in Phase 1.
- Choose one or another of the more significant feelings and be with them for some time as you explore with God what they might further reveal and what is taking place. Keep staying with the feeling as you recall the event that provoked it.
- Ask God to help you uncover the real feeling or attitude that is really going on beneath your experience.
- Express what you discover to God in gratitude for the revelation. You might want to choose one of the psalms or prayers of the bible that expresses this underlying reality.
- Jot down in your journal what you have discovered.

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.



## **SESSION 20**

### **THEME: FREEDOM AND AWARENESS**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Developing an understanding of ordered and disordered attachments.
- Looking at spiritual freedom and discernment.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and grace to open our heart to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

A deep appreciation of how the Lord has been present in my life.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Romans 8: 26-39 (*The enduring love of God for us in Christ Jesus our Lord*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share your experiences of your awareness of God's eagerness to forgive you.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions, share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Using the resource material below, the group leader presents a consideration of freedom in these terms:

- ordered and disordered attachments
- openness to discover God's will
- willingness to follow it when I know it

## **ON SPIRITUAL FREEDOM**

The experience of spiritual freedom is one of the key experiences of the spiritual life and of our struggle to live in faith with the Risen Jesus. During our spiritual journey, we have experiences of spiritual freedom and we grow in it. There are “moments” when we experience freedom and complete openness to the Lord’s presence. Besides these individual “moments”, there is also growth in freedom through various stages of the spiritual life. There are two aspects to spiritual freedom:

- Freedom FROM: from enslavement to self, from disordered attachments, from controlling attachment, from sin, from misguided generosity, from fears that paralyze, and from selfishness.
- Freedom FOR: for others, for the apostolate, for the ability to make a good decision, for what is more conducive to building up the Kingdom, for the life in Jesus.

As St. Ignatius writes in the *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES*

*“For everyone must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life, one’s progress will be in proportion to one’s surrender of self-love and of one’s own will and interest” [189]*

Using resource material below, “*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*”, do the exercise by prayerfully reading Genesis 22:1-19: Reflect silently on Abraham’s sense of freedom.

## **PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

Phase of recognizing the physical and psychological roots of one’s feelings

The source of many of our feelings can be biological, psychological or simply a human free response to a present situation. It is wise to grow in recognition of this, otherwise we might “spiritualize” falsely what is really going on. “If it quacks like a duck; if it walks like a duck; if it flies like a duck: call it a duck.”

### **Biological**

Some people respond to a low air pressure weather system by feeling listless; others to fatigue by becoming irritable, others to noise by hyperactivity, others to menopause by a sense of uselessness.

### **Psychological**

To grow in self-knowledge is to know our own psychological history; the way we grew up, our past scars that influence us now, the ways we have learned to cope with life,

our own unresolved adolescence. Often these realities are relived over and over again in our present feelings and fantasies, and the behaviour that flows from these. Most people who are not in touch with this, live out “dramatic scripts” that have been written into their personalities and experiences from early childhood.

For example:

- A child of immigrant parents, who was frequently called lazy, may grow up always trying to prove herself as being worthwhile.
- Another person may have learned to play the “good guy” role as a cover up for his gross inadequacy.
- Another person may have learned to clam up as a defense every time she/he is caught unaware by a threat.

### A Human Free Response

Many of our present interior experiences are simply free honest responses to present situations that tell us exactly what is going on in the situation or in ourselves in response to a situation. Inasmuch as we are in contact with our feelings as they are, we can use them to judge what is really going on outside us.

For example:

- A remark at the meeting I have just attended provokes a feeling of uneasiness. This feeling I recognize is not a defensive cover up, but a reaction to the remark which I sense to be dishonest. The uneasy feeling is a real indicator of real dishonesty. Having looked at it, I can discover how to handle the situation.
- At another time I find myself distancing another, keeping the other person away. Again, I recognize that this is not a defensive cover up, but rather it tells me that the other person is trying to manipulate me.

### Spiritual Exercise:

Place yourself in the presence of the Lord and pray for light.  
Relax... Let your real feelings surface and name them.

Ask the Lord to help you uncover what is really going on beneath your experiences.

Talk to the Lord about them:

- Is the source biological?
- Is the source psychological? If so, precisely what: a reliving of the past? A defense built up?
- Is the experience simply a free human response to the present? What does it tell me about what is going on in the situation? In me?

Talk to Jesus about these experiences. You may want to thank the Lord for them. Or, if they are negative, you may want to ask to grow in freedom. You might talk about how you might handle them in the future. Perhaps you could imagine yourself in a

similar future situation and ask the Lord how you might later handle it. Then let it go. This process of recognition with the Lord is itself a freeing process and leads to recognition of what is happening, when it is happening.

Choose a passage from the gospels that somehow correspond to your experience. For example:

- “*Blessed are the meek*”....may in fact correspond to your present experience of true meekness. Or it may correspond to your present need for true meekness.
- “*Unless you become as little children*”... may correspond to a need you have of being honest in dealing with others, or it may correspond to a need your community has that you are being called to fulfill in some way.

Have I responded freely to the situations since I last examined myself? Or have I let my behaviour be dominated by my “psychological un-freedom”?

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations Web site*

Share and discuss the meaning of the Genesis reading.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer
- Note the article, “*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*”.

## **PART III**

### **A. Practical considerations, announcements, CLC events, etc**

### **B. Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God’s working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

**PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION.**

**GRACE:**

To appreciate that Jesus alone is my personal Saviour

**PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 18:1-8 (*The corrupt judge and persistent widow...Pray always and do not lose heart*)

Genesis 22: 1-19 (*The testing of Abraham*)

Read and reflect on the "*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*" from the resource material in SESSION 20.

Hebrews 11: 8-16, 17-19 (*Abraham's faith in God*)

Ephesians 2: 1-10 (*God is rich in mercy and love*)

Colossians 1: 15-23 (*The fullness of God in Christ and reconciliation through him*)

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SESSION 21**

### **THEME: FORGIVENESS OF SIN**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- To develop a deeper understanding of sin and forgiveness in my life.

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate that Jesus alone is my personal Saviour

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

2 Tim 2: 8 -13 (*If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced God as your personal Saviour.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Process:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the resource material below:

##### **Sin, Mercy and Forgiveness**

"God is the loving creator and redeemer. The Trinity brought us into existence and relates to us personally, thereby, making us persons. As Father, Son and Spirit relate with us, their loving gift of themselves continues to be creative for us. Sin is basically

an unwillingness to carry on this relationship and communion with God, preventing God from letting their love take root in us. Ungrateful pride and self-sufficiency isolate us, saying, "Leave me alone". It is non-sense and anti-social. It cuts off relationship with God and the people of God. It is individualistic, a non-response to love offered. We cannot be alone. Only God initiates love; we get in tune with it. But sin cuts us off from the source of love; it is self-destructive and leaves us helpless. Cut off from loved ones and unable to communicate or even ask forgiveness, our self becomes fragmented.

Only as the Trinity forgives and takes the initiative in giving themselves to us, can we be recreated, redeemed and given salvation or wholeness (within ourselves and with others).

The story of the Old Testament is a history of a people's relationship with God. Although people are continually breaking the covenant relationship, God is always faithful. The image of God is one of a loving mother, or of a persistent husband, loving his adulterous wife and bringing her home. In the New Testament, the image of God is one of a loving father desiring the return of his son and of a shepherd seeking out the lost. Focusing on ourselves, we find it difficult to admit sin; it is a sign of grace and relationship that we consider ourselves sinners. It is because the woman (Luke 7: 36-50) was forgiven much that she can love much! Forgiveness precedes her loving. It is natural, spontaneous and freeing for her to go to Jesus and pour out her heart of love. It became a way of celebrating the forgiveness! We are body-persons and celebrate externally what is real within. Also, just as sin is anti-social (and affects others deeply), the gift of relating with the Trinity makes us more social, more loving.

Our Christian community is a communion of sinners with God. We need not be surprised by the presence of selfishness, betrayals, misunderstandings and all other violations of the ideal. We do not need to pretend they do not exist or defend them. We are all sinners who are loved by God. Whenever we come together for a Eucharistic celebration, we begin by admitting our common bond of weakness; we receive forgiveness and forgive others. It becomes obvious that it is God's power that is at work in us!"

Barbara Paleczny, SSND and Michel Côté, OP, *Becoming Followers of Jesus*

Consider these questions:

1. If a five year old child questioned me concerning the nature of sin, how would I respond?
2. Does sin seem real and important to our society, to me, to God?
3. What keeps me from forgiving myself?
4. What helps me to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation meaningfully?

Share with one another the answers to these questions.



## **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the article, "*Charity, Justice, and Social Sin*".

## **PART III**

### **A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events etc.**

### **B. Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

#### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To grow in spiritual freedom and trust in God's love

John 3:22-30 (*He must increase and I must decrease*)

Genesis 22: 1-19 (*The testing of Abraham*)

Prayerfully read and reflect on the article below, "*Charity, Justice and Social Sin*"

Mark 14: 17-31 (*Betrayal, the Last Supper and Peter's denial foretold*)

Jeremiah 1: 1-10 (*The call of the prophet Jeremiah*)

Reflect on an actual situation of social sin in your life... Note this experience in your journal and be prepared to share this with your group.

### **CHARITY, JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SIN**

As the Canadian Christian Life Community deepens its awareness of the call to work for justice and to "bridge the gap between the rich and the poor", it is important to clarify the similarities and differences between works of charity and works of justice.

The sanctity and the integrity of the Sabbath was protected in Jesus' day by the Law. The Law forbade most everyday activities on that day, including any form of work. On their way through a cornfield one Sabbath, Jesus' hungry disciples picked some ears of corn. The Pharisees, on seeing this infraction of the Law, criticized the disciples. But Jesus defended them, saying: "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath" (Mark 2: 27).

In so doing, Jesus was declaring that the human needs of people took precedence even over the Law of Moses. What appeared to be a sacred value, the holiness of the Sabbath, was not important in itself. It was worthwhile only in relation to the concrete needs of the Jewish people.

This Gospel story, as many others, proclaims the great dignity of men and women. It puts into perspective the right order of things: namely, that all of creation is at the service of all humanity, God's pride and joy. Our laws, customary ways of doing things, the resources and fruits of the earth, all are to be used for the development, well-being, and dignity of each person and of all persons.

The centrality of human persons and their needs is the hallmark of a truly humanized world; that is, a world created for people. The error of the complaining Pharisees was that they were very good at creating a way of life which made the needs of people subservient to the Law and custom; hence, a de-humanized and de-humanizing way of life. Life-styles and the structures which support those life-styles must meet human needs and hence, free people for service to one another and for union with God.

De-humanization is experienced in daily living. When we intervene in the concrete, de-humanized life situations of others, we are performing acts of charity. Visiting the sick and isolated elderly, preparing Christmas baskets for the poor, and having “parties” for the mentally challenged, are some practical examples. We humanize the circumstances of these “least” among us because our activities carry the message that these “least” are, in fact, precious. Value and dignity are accorded to people as we meet their concrete needs for food, shelter, or human association. For the moment, at least, we create an environment for people.

These charitable acts affirm the worth of persons who live within structures which convince them otherwise. Our charity is authentic and humanizing when it enhances the self-esteem and independence of those who are the beneficiaries. Our charity is a sham when it reinforces powerlessness and degradation because it is paternalistic, dominating or self-serving.

But, while de-humanization is experienced in the day to day routine of life, it is most often caused by societal systems or structures. Each human group, family, neighbourhood, city, nation, world – organizes itself to accomplish tasks necessary for the well-being of each and all. These include feeding, clothing, educating, providing opportunities for the nourishment of the spirit, and maintaining public order. Each level of each society divides labour and sets down rules which, when observed, should maintain and enhance the quality of life for each member.

The way we organize, and the “real” end result, intended or unintended, may in fact deny the very needs of the participating members. Overwhelming numbers of people are hungry, sick, poorly housed, marginalized, “enslaved” by jobs, or schools or governments. When the “health” of some sector of the economy or profits take precedence over the economic well-being of all persons; when “national interests” become the god around which we organize our global relationship; when the “right way” (which happens to be white and middle class) eclipses the native Canadian “way” or the Asian “way”, then people are de-humanized. So, justice activity concerns itself with sinful social systems and structures. Such activity means working to transform the economic “rules of the game”, so that all people can eat and have a decent place to live. It is supporting changes in the way we provide medical care so that all can receive quality care; it means asking whether Canadian education really results in learning and growth, or whether its function is to produce suitable “commodities” to be bought and sold in the labour market. It means making sure that our church structures are designed for participation and dignity. When the broader societal rules and environmental factors are arranged so that persons are the centre, we have a just society.

Justice and authentic charity, then, have important similarities – the liberation of people from de-humanized and de-humanizing circumstances. Only the means of achieving the goal is different. Charity requires that we respond to concrete persons in concrete situations with concrete caring. Justice requires that we change those societal “rules of the game” that make so much of our charity necessary. Mahatma

Gandhi, the great apostle of non-violent social change, taught that both charity and action for justice are necessary. The Christian and CLC believe the same.

Jack Milan, *CLC Leaders Manual*

## **SOCIAL ANALYSIS**

Once the situation of concern has been named, we are urged to do the analysis; that is, to try to understand the situation or issue in terms of the root causes. We try to analyze the situation according to our cultural realities and from the perspective of the poor.

## **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION WORKSHEET**

- 1) Briefly describe the situation or event on which you are doing the theological reflection.
- 2) What was the sinfulness in this situation?
- 3) Where do you see the presence of grace in this situation?
- 4) Was there a Christ figure in this situation - someone who took the brunt of it - in order to help resolve it?
- 5) Where do you see the action or inaction of "Church" in this situation - communal behaviour that affected the outcome?
- 6) During this situation or event, did the beliefs of individuals or groups play an important part? Was it influenced by "Faith", either in the religious sense or in the sense of commonly held values or beliefs?
- 7) Were there any "sacramental moments" that affected the situation? Special, meaning-filled times that had a big impact on the outcome?
- 8) Now that you have done a theological reflection on this situation, has it changed your understanding in any way? If so, how?

Further suggested questions:

- What is the important history of the situation?
- What influence does money have in this situation?
- Who makes the most important decisions in this situation?
- What will things be like in ten years if this situation keeps going in the same way?
- Who does this situation benefit/help? Who does it hurt? How?
- What are the two or three root causes most responsible for the current situation, etc...?

It is suggested that at this stage, an "expert" be invited by the group to shed some light on the situation (one that is most affected by the situation. (I.e. farmer, fisher, single mother, refugee, a person on social assistance etc.)

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

This next step is one that helps us "think/feel" with the Church. Here, we try to evaluate the root causes revealed in our analysis according to the insights of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

Further suggested questions:

- What documents of the Church (i.e. Christian Social Teaching) are concerned with this issue? What is the church saying about this situation?
- Which actions, words and attitudes of Jesus come to mind as I try to understand this situation? How does this situation reflect the Beatitudes or does it?
- What does this mean for the Christian understanding of this situation, etc...?

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group

*CLC Leadership Formation Encounter CD*

## **SESSION 22**

### **THEME: SOCIAL SIN**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- The understanding of the dynamics of social sin and personal sin.
- A look at organizations that are working against sinful social structures.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our heart to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To grow in spiritual freedom and trust in God's love.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Phil 3: 7-16 (*I press on towards the goal...*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced freedom and a trust in God's love for you.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Review the material, *CHARITY, JUSTICE AND SOCIAL SIN* and *SOCIAL ANALYSIS/THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION* from the previous SESSION

In the context of Micah 6:8(*What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* ) share the result of your prayerful reflections with the help of the following questions:

- How do personal sin and social sin differ?
- What are some examples of social sin which have touched your life at home, in your neighbourhood, at work, in your city, province, or country?
- What makes them socially sinful?
- How does one repent of social sin?
- What persons, groups or organizations do you know of who are working against sinful social structures?
- Perhaps you might invite a representative to your next meeting.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.

### **PART III**

#### **A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

#### **B. Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

##### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

#### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs, and then, pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep awareness of God's eagerness to forgive me

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 5:12-15 (*Cure of a person with leprosy*)

1 John 1: 1- 2: 2 (*The Word of Life; God is Light; Christ our Advocate*)

Luke 15: 1-2, 11-32 (*God's Compassion and the Prodigal*)

John 8: 2-11 (*The Woman Caught in Adultery*)

Luke 15: 1-10 (*Parables of Divine Mercy*)

Luke 19: 1-10 (*Jesus and Zacchaeus*)

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.



## **SESSION 23**

### **THEME: CONVERSION TO CHRIST AND AWARENESS**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- To take a deep look at how God is calling us to conversion.

#### **PART I**

##### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How do I come to this meeting? (share a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

##### **Recalling the Grace:**

Deep awareness of God's eagerness to forgive me

##### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Luke 19:1-10 (*Jesus and Zacchaeus*)

##### **Spiritual Conversation**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection before moving into group sharing.
- Share those times when you experienced God's eagerness to forgive you.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

##### **The Second Round of Sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

#### **PART II**

##### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Read and reflect on the following scripture passages and questions:

Philippians 2:5 (*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*)

- Question: What are important values in our society today?

Philippians 3:8-13 (*He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him.*)

- Question: What is important to Jesus? Give examples.

Do the *exercise*, below.

### **COMMUNAL AWARENESS EXERCISE**

1. Act of Presence

Let us begin by placing ourselves in the presence of the Trinity. I try to become aware of God **beholding** us... (Pause)

2. Thanksgiving

Aware of my poverty before the Lord, I **reflect upon all of God's gifts to me** today – those that I am grateful for and those I find it difficult to be grateful for... (Pause)

3. Prayer for guidance of the Spirit

I **ask for the guidance of the Spirit** to give me a growing insight into the mystery that I am.

4. Examination

With the Spirit leading, I try to get in touch with **what has been happening in me and through me today** so that I will be able to share these awarenesses with the community... (Pause)

5. Contrition and Sorrow

We are aware that sometimes we place obstacles to the Spirit's working in our own life and in the lives of others... (Pause)

Mention those things for which you wish to **ask forgiveness from God** and the community....

As an expression of sorrow let us pray: "Lord, have mercy" (3 times).

6. Hopeful attitude Toward the Future

Let us become **aware of the grace we are in need of** to help us cooperate with God in the future... (Pause)

Close with the **Lord's Prayer**

Sr. Frances MacDougall, CND

Spend a few minutes in silence, reflecting and asking yourself the question; how is the Lord calling me to conversion now?

## **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.
- Note the article; "*PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS*".

### **PART III**

#### **A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events etc.**

#### **B. Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

##### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

##### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate that Jesus alone is my personal saviour

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Philippians 2:1-11 (*Imitating Christ's Humility*)

Philippians 3: 7-16 (*I wish to know Christ and the power of His resurrection*)

Prayerfully read and reflect on "Practice of Consciousness" below.

Ephesians 2: 1-10 (*Generosity of God's Plan*)

Romans 5: 1-11 (*God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us*)

Acts 3: 1-16 (*Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar in the Name of Jesus*)

## **PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

It is a phase of recognizing the Christ dimension (or Spirit dimension) in the expression of one's feelings and in the behaviour that flows from these feelings.

As a Christian, I am called to live every experience of my life in Christ Jesus. I am called to put on the mind and heart of Jesus in everything I do. But I am also called to be authentic. I have many feelings and reactions and experiences which are not Christ-like. So I may try to pretend that I am like Christ when I am acting. But this is but a mask and ends up being un-Christ-like. There are two other possibilities:

The first possible solution to the dilemma lies in the choice of the feeling out of which I act. Any one event in my life may produce many different feelings. The appearance of an unexpected guest when I am busy can, at the same time, be experienced as annoyance, resentment, love, compassion. Some of these seem to be contradictory but they can be present in my heart at the same time. If I take my feelings seriously and if I am aware of the source of these feelings within me, I can quickly choose in Christ that out of which to act. They are all authentic feelings. They are all me. But I choose to act out of the one that is most Christ-like in the here and now situation.

The second possible solution lies in the freedom that the power of Jesus can give. If on a particular occasion, I seem to be dominated by confusion and anger and if I simply can not act in the Lord, then I wait and I bring my feelings to Christ. Jesus can, if I truly ask, transform my interior experience. Anger and confusion can be lifted and become compassion and concern.

However, I must remember that I may be called in Christ to state my boundaries and simply say, "I'm sorry, I am not prepared to see you at this time."

Place yourself in the presence of the Lord and pray for enlightenment. Relax. Let your real feelings surface and ask the Lord to help you recognize the human sources of your experience.

Take one of the following passages from scripture and with the Lord try to discover how the words have been experienced and lived out since your last SPIRITUAL EXAMEN PRAYER.

Matthew 5:3-12 *The Beatitudes*

Matthew 5:24 *“Leave your gift at the altar and go first and be reconciled with your brother or sister.”*

Matthew 5: 44 *“Love your enemies.”*

Matthew 6:14 *“If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you.”*

Matthew 7:12 *“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”*

Matthew 23:24 *“Blind Guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.”*

Matthew 21:12 *Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple.*

John 13:14 *“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*

Rom 12:6 *“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.”*

1 Corinthians 13:4: *“Love is patient; love is kind.”*

Luke 4:18 *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”*

Have I lived in the past period by choosing to act out of those experiences that are consistent with the Lord’s word? If so, praise the Lord! If not, what is really going on in me; what am I being called to die to; where do I need to experience Jesus’ healing or freeing power?

Spend some time talking over these things with the Lord.

Jot down in your journal what you have discovered and be prepared to share this with your group.

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations-Website*

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group

## **SESSION 24**

### **THEME: COMMUNITY REFLECTION**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

- To do a communal reflection on how the community is doing to date.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening prayer and/or hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light, and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other, and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

A deep awareness of how God has to free me in order that I can respond to God's call in my life.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

John 3: 22-30 (*He must increase but I must decrease.*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection. Share your experience of how you experienced Jesus as your personal saviour.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of Sharing**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, and reflect on the scripture: John 6:53-66.

Do the Exercise below:

## **COMMUNAL AWARENESS EXERCISE**

### *Act of Presence*

Let us begin by placing ourselves in the presence of the Persons of the Trinity. We try to become aware of God beholding us with eyes of love.

### *Sense of Gratitude*

Aware of our total dependency on God for our existence and activity, we reflect upon all of God's gifts to us as individuals and as a group.

### *Prayer for Guidance of the Spirit*

We ask for the guidance of the Spirit to give us a growing insight into the mystery that we are.

### *Heightened Awareness*

With the Spirit leading, we try to get in touch with what has been happening in us and through us during this meeting and other meetings so that we will be able to share these awarenesses in the community.

1. *Discerning Atmosphere*: How did we develop a sense of presence to each other and of God within and beyond us?
2. *Communication*: How did we listen and speak to each other? Did we include everyone in the group?
3. *Agenda*: Did we design a good agenda? Did we use it responsibly and freely? Did we begin and end on time?
4. *Commitment*: Is God calling us to continue in our CLC formation and way of life?

Pause and then share awareness

### *Thanks, Contrition and Hope*

1. Express thanks for the ways the spirit has been working within us.
2. Express sorrow for the ways we have placed obstacles to the Spirit's working in our communal life.
3. Express insights and hope for a better process at our next meetings.
4. End with the prayer that Jesus gave us.

### *CLC Canada Leaders Manual*

Take 10-15 minutes to reflect on the following questions:

- How have I experienced the Lord's presence in myself and in the community these past weeks?
- What three things have I found most helpful in our meetings and in our life during this time?
- What three things have I found least helpful?

- What suggestions have I for growth in our group?

Share the result of your reflection with the group.

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer.

### **PART III**

#### **A. Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

#### **B. Communal Awareness:**

##### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

##### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

##### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate how Jesus' love sets me free to help build the reign of God.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Sirach 18: 1-4 (*The Lord is patient with them and pours out his mercy upon them.*)

Prayerfully read "COMMUNAL AWARENESS EXERCISE"

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10 (*A Thorn in the flesh*)

John 6: 41-51 (*I am the living Bread that came down from heaven.*)

John 6: 52-69 (*And I will raise them up on the last day*)

Do a repetition using the prayer material of any of the scripture passages above that have moved you or where you have experienced a greater sense of; gratitude, challenge, struggle etc.

Note in your journal what you would like to share with your group.

## **SECTION 5 - CALLED TO WORK WITH CHRIST**

### **SESSION 25**

#### **THEME: PERSONAL DECISION MAKING**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- enhanced awareness of unity and sense of communion and solidarity
- to develop an attitude of openness and respect for others.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how Jesus' love sets me free to help build the realm of God.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss, and share on the article below:

## THE DAILY DECISIONS

How does one find God in one's actions? This is a question not only for the serenity of silent prayer but also for the hustle-bustle of life through events: the problem of education, work relations, social and political reality, economic difficulties, a phone call, a letter, a solicited visit, all interwoven into our everyday life. Tomorrow perhaps, we may have to choose another apartment, another school for the children ... another profession or job; or else, to take a stand in civic or city life.

There is great difficulty because we no longer have pre-existing modes of actions to follow. The world is changing; the reference points for actions are blurred. However, events do not wait: we have to make choices; we have to make decisions!

There was a time when Christians tended to regard daily decision making as "neutral" with regards to the Gospel. The Gospel was seriously misunderstood. In Scripture we see that the Lord constantly challenges His people in and through the events of its history. And we, as part of this revelation, see ourselves as persons to whom God's word is addressed in a concrete situation and from whom God awaits a response.

In this perspective, things, persons and events above and beyond their own proper existence are means by which the Lord calls His People. Each one of them are signs by which we listen, respond, and forge with God bonds of friendship and love.

The difficulty we feel today in making decisions is providential. It is just this situation of uncertainty which obliges us to go beyond the observations of rules and moral recipes to discover again the conduct of the Holy Spirit: "*Everyone moved by the Spirit is a child of God*" (Romans 8:14).

When Christ bid His disciples farewell, He did not leave a regulation to follow but the promise of the Spirit: "*When the Spirit comes He will lead you to complete truth*" (John 16:13). As a matter of fact, after Pentecost, a radical change took place in these hesitant disciples, timid and easily shaken by events. Here they are full of assurance before others. They find the just answers, the clear choices, and firmness in everything. That is the work of the Spirit.

For a Christian it is a great joy to discover that the Spirit is present in him/her, that he/she is no longer an "orphan" that he/she can risk his/her future with **Him** in the community of humans.

God no longer appears to us as the Almighty who imposes a rule upon us and makes plans for us, but as the One who calls, who cooperates with us in our decisions and who promises that whatever happens, God will be with us to the end. "*You are my sons and daughters*", God says. **We have to forge our lives with God.**

If I, as a Christian, reflect on the significance of my decisions, I see that none of them is unrelated to God's plan. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in my most intimate and daily use of freedom that the Spirit of the Lord meets me, invites me from within and draws me to conform myself to the choices of Christ. True spiritual life is situated at the level of our decisions, our choices, at the point where prayer and action are no

longer separate activities. They are one single act for our freedom, which desires what God wants.

The aim of our meeting is to help us to measure the spiritual dimension of our daily choices. It is by training ourselves in this matter of seeing things that, little by little, we learn to find God in all things, to become contemplatives in action.

From *PROGRESSIO*

### **Exercise on making decisions**

With the aid of a flip chart, talk about different kinds of decisions and how to make them in the Lord using the exercise below by John Veltri SJ as a guide for the group discussion.

1. Quietly and spontaneously answer by listing many of your goals. Start those that are most essential for you: (e.g., by the time you die, which will have been most important?)
2. Check any that requires some decision on your part or by others.
3. List about 15 choices you have made in the last few days. Beside each of the items mark:
  - + ...choices made out of habit
  - x ...choices made with full consciousness that you were making a choice
  - \* ...half and half

*For example:*

- + *put on a new pair of socks*
- \* *agreed to visit relative on Sunday*
- x *contracted to buy a house*

4. What is your normal style of making decisions?

*For example:*

- I wait until the last moment and avoid thinking about it; then I choose arbitrarily.*
- I ask many questions explicitly, get hold of variables, work out the pros and cons and try to deduce my decisions logically.*
- I respond intuitively (gently or leaping into it?)*
- I hate to think clearly about it.*
- I use the pleasure-pain principle and choose what appears to be less painful.*
- I usually choose because of deep feelings.*
- I let circumstances dictate decisions.*
- I try to see whether it fits my inner core.*
- Other...*

5. Is there a difference in the way you make decisions in the different areas in your life?
  - between small decisions and large decisions
  - personal decisions and work-related decisions
  - personal decisions and other public-related ones (for example: purchasing, working on a committee, joining a volunteer group, responding to requests for your time)
6. With what kind of decisions are you more: careful, at ease, secular, spiritual, efficient, logical, impatient?
7. How did you make significant decisions in the past? Choice of school, career, vocation: single, married, religious life, priesthood spouse, community, change of job.

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations*

Prayerfully read, reflect and share on 1 John 4:7-17 (*A new commandment*)  
Do a round of sharing

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate how Jesus' love sets me free to help build the reign of God.

1 John 4:7-21 (*God is love and is the source of all love*)

Luke 5:1-11 (*From now on, you will be catching people.*)

Philippians 3: 1, 7-11 (*Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord; I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.*)

Matthew 4:18-22 (*As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon...and Andrew... and he called them..*)

Isaiah 6:1-10 (*The call of Isaiah*)

Review the *COMMUNAL AWARENESS EXERCISE* in SESSION 24, and write in your journal noting what you may want to share with your group.

Reread "*THE DAILY DECISIONS*".

- Is there a decision that you would be prepared to share with and ask for support from your group?

## **SESSION 26**

### **THEME: COMMUNITY HELP IN PERSONAL DECISION-MAKING**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- to grow in an awareness of a common vision and purpose.
- to deepen a communal relationship based on trust.

#### **PART I – Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how Jesus' love sets me free to help build the Realm of God.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

1 John 4:7-21 (*God is love and the source of all love*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Take one of the member's need or issue and work through the steps given in the resource material below.

### **STEPS IN FACILITATING A PERSONAL DECISION**

Step 1: *General Discussion of the Issue*

State a problem: "I have such and such a decision to make concerning such and such...I need your help."

Step 2: *Clarify the Issue* (question, problem)

Search out the background facts and feelings pertaining to the issue. The techniques of social analysis are important here. When this is being done alternative possible answers usually surface as the members of the group try to understand the issue.

Step 3: *Decide upon the Key Answer*

This involves looking at all aspects of the issue to see what the key answer is. Separate this key answer from the others. There may be a need to prioritize. But often in personal decisions, lesser significant answers are taken care of automatically if the key one is determined.

Step 4: *State the Answer Clearly as a Positive Statement* (as briefly as possible).

If it is too rambling it can lead to confusion. Each word in the statement must be clear.

Step 5: Set up the Four Column Method: On a sheet of paper or on a blackboard, state the answer as a positive statement; "I will do this" and negatively; "I will not do this". Then list the advantages to me and the disadvantages to me in doing and the advantages and disadvantages to me if I don't do it.

Step 6: Having discussed the issue at length, each member of the group takes the **Key Answer** home to pray over it. Before entering this step, there is need for:

- i) A reminder of affectivity: Here, the group guide reminds the members of the importance of doing the method with empathy, i.e. putting oneself in the place of the person with the situation, need or issue and considering his/her personality (strengths and weaknesses) to feel with the person.
- ii) Prayer as a group: Before the close of the meeting we ask for guidance of the Holy Spirit and the grace of freedom for each one of us in this consideration. Each then takes the answer home for the week, prays over it and writes down what come in the appropriate columns.

#### -----NEXT SESSION-----

Step 7: Each person brings his/her completed sheets to the meeting. In a round of sharing, each person gives the results of his/her reflective prayer. This is not an occasion to give any advice such as "this is what I think you should do". After this process is completed the individual sheets that were used for the reflective prayer and deliberation are given to the person who was seeking the help. Except for ongoing prayer to support the person, this is the end of the communal process.

Step 8: The person who sought the help initially now goes to prayer and discerns the Lord's will. This discernment also includes asking the Lord for a confirmation of the decision.



A few comments to conclude this section: The community or group itself does not make the decision. The community only assists the person who is making the decision and continues to pray for that person. At times the group will help the person to weigh the findings but often it becomes obvious where the Spirit is leading. The group remains silent as to the final decision.

**NOTE:**

The decision making process described in the Resource Materials can be continued for a number of weeks (SESSIONS), so that many of the group members may bring their issues to the community for discernment.

Regular practice will deepen the understanding of this method. Decision making is an important element of the CLC way of life. Members are encouraged to bring issues to the community.

If the group wishes to do this communal discernment exercise for a number of meetings, follow the guidelines below:

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us the grace of freedom to deal with the issue given.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

John 14: 15-20, 25-28 (*If you love me...*)

Matthew 28: 16-20 (*Jesus sends the disciples forth to all nations*)

Acts 2: 1-13 (*The Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples*)

Acts 4: 5-22 (*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...*)

Romans 8: 1-27 (*Life in the Spirit*)

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10 (*Paul's Visions and Revelations – "my power is made perfect in weakness."*)

### **Each day:**

Pray about the issue and write down, in the appropriate four columns, whatever comes to you.

### **Respond to God:**

I dialogue with God who is with me and loves me profoundly in the midst of this reality. Sometimes you may want to read a passage of sacred scripture to let the Word shed light on your experience.

### **NB**

**Personal Decision making is a dynamic process and requires prayer and time;** do not move ahead until you have reached a point where all the members are satisfied with the outcome. There may be a need for two or three sessions devoted to the Decision-Making process, in which case follow the steps given below. Otherwise move on to SESSION 27.

This may mean completing steps 7 and 8 for the previous issue and then repeat steps 1-6 for a new issue. Use the Scripture passage from John 15:5-17(*I am the vine, you are the branches....If you abide in me...*) each time.

With the help of your journal, each person shares their prayer experiences based on the Decision Making process.

## **SESSION 27**

### **THEME: DISCERNING GOD'S WILL FOR US: DEEPENING AWARENESS**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To deepen my awareness of how the Trinity is revealed within all aspects of our humanity
- To recognize the different ways in which God is revealed in my experiences of life.

## **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us the grace of freedom as we reflect on the issue presented.

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

John 15:1-17 (*I am the vine and you are the branches...abide in me.*)

#### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

#### **Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **I. PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully discuss and share on the article below:

## Phase of recognizing in my experiences of life, the different ways in which God is revealed

All the experiences of my life manifest the presence of the Lord in some way. It is helpful to grow in attentiveness to the ways God is present for me. The following exercise may help one grow in this attentiveness.

- a) Place yourself in the presence of the Lord and pray for enlightenment. Relax. Let your real feelings surface.
- b) Ask the Lord to help you recognize the human origins of your experience.
- c) Now pay attention to the ways by which the Lord has been present to you today. Some questions may help:
  - I) Did I feel drawn by the Lord anytime today through a book, a companion, art, music, nature, an event, a letter, etc.
  - II) How did I meet the Lord: in fears, in a misunderstanding, in temptations, in joys, in sufferings?
  - III) How did the word of God come **alive** to me today: in prayer, reading, songs, scripture, liturgy, conversation?
  - IV) How has the Lord moved me today: from excessive self-confidence to trust in God? from **my** plans and **my** ways to God's ways? from a lack of self-confidence to a great acceptance of myself?
  - V) Have I felt moved to go out of myself: to the lonely, to those suffering from injustice, to my enemy, to comfort another in love, to the discouraged, to change a sinful social structure?
  - VI) What has happened today that I should be grateful and thankful to God about?
  - VII) How do I look forward to the future? Am I despondent, discouraged, fearful, hopeful, grateful, etc.? If so, why? I must be honest and not repress my true feelings.
  - VIII) Is there some area in my heart that I experience the Lord calling me to conversion? If so, I can ask for this gift and wait for the expression in sorrow and response.
- d) Spend some time talking over these things with the Lord.

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations*

Questions:

- The Trinity reveal themselves within all aspects of our humanity, through all people and events. Talk about how we know God's will for us.
- How the Trinity reveal themselves to us in creation, in daily events, moments of reflection, encounters with other persons, in His word and Sacraments.
- How can we let Scripture shed light and meaning on these events, as we celebrate and deepen this life in Sacraments and daily living.

Group Sharing

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate the freedom necessary to respond to Christ's love

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (*This commandment... the word is very near to you*)

Ephesians 1:15-20 (*God has put all things under the feet of Christ*)

Ephesians 3:14-21 (*Now I kneel in the presence of God...*)

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (*Hear O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone*)

Continue working on your own daily **SPIRITUAL EXAMEN PRAYER**

Pray with the article below:

### **Recognizing More Precisely the Spiritual Movements in My Being**

The ordinary means of the Lord's revelation that draws us closer to God for the work in building the realm of God, is by the Spirit's presence known in the deepest movements of our hearts: feelings, affections, fleeting insights. We often follow these without noticing them and their importance. Some of these experiences come from the Lord's influences; others do not.

Besides understanding these experiences through a continued practice of the earlier phases described above, I can come to further appreciate these movements within me by recognizing them as manifestations of consolation or desolation.

It will be helpful here to familiarize oneself with the "**Rules for the Discernment of Spirits**" from the *Spiritual Exercises* particularly #316 to 324 inclusive. It is well to note that consolation may not be the same as "a pleasurable experience". Consolation can be experienced as dry and arid while at the same time **meaningful**. Desolation is experienced in relationship to the perception of God's seeming **absence**; but when one is in desolation, one is not necessarily "down"; desolation can be experienced as a kind of hyper joyfulness. Nor is consolation to be considered "good" and desolation to be considered "bad"; for desolation can also be a prelude to consolation once I am able to identify it and account for it. It is sometimes a sign that God is drawing near and I am distancing myself from God.

#### **Stop**

Place yourself in the presence of the Lord and pray for enlightenment. Relax. Let your real experiences surface.

#### **Look**

At the experiences that seem to stand out as being more dominant and influence you more: your inner being; interior moods, urges, joy, pain, dryness, confusion, peace, anxiety, increase of love, anger, freedom, presence of God, isolation, harmony, annoyance. What experience seems to be more dominant now?

#### **Listen**

To what these experiences might mean!

- Listen with common sense. Are the sources of this experience biological, psychological or simply a free human response?
- Listen with the heart and mind of Jesus. Have I chosen to act out of those experiences which correspond to Jesus' way? If not, where do I need freedom?
- Listen with deeper faith perception:

### **Am I in consolation?**

One or other of the following phrases can help me determine this:

- the experience is moving towards the Lord
- leading to an interior acceptance of others
- delicate and gentle
- leading to a realistic knowledge of self
- a sense of God's presence with a deeper faith perspective
- if painful or dry or sorrowful it is because of the Lord (e.g., my sins have put Him on the cross)
- meaningful and a sense of hope
- tension may still exist but underneath there is a sense of faith, hope or love
- not turned in on self

*If I am in consolation*, I can let gratitude be my stance and prepare for times of desolation.

### **Am I in desolation?**

- turned in on self
- God is not part of my consciousness in my activities
- the experience is moving towards the sensual and material
- I feel alone and separated while at the same time desiring to be with God
- I feel sad, separated as it were, from the Lord
- lack of caring, everything seems hard and difficult
- I feel hyper and happy but there is a lack of delicacy, a fanatical quality to it with my disordered tendencies influencing my actions; it is a cover-up for seeking myself
- the experience is moving me away from the Lord\
- I cannot see things in clear perspective.

*If I am in desolation*, I should begin to examine myself with the Lord; waiting patiently until God's presence returns. The following questions may help to identify the causes?

### **If I am in desolation:**

- Is my sinfulness getting in the way?
- Have I been negligent in my dealings with Jesus? Taking the Lord for granted?
- Is the Lord helping me to grow in spiritual maturity?
- Is there something I do not want to face? Am I refusing to grow?

- Am I being taught that all is gift and that I should not take consolation as my making? Was I being dependent on the consolation of the Lord rather than the Lord of consolation?
- Perhaps I am being invited to carry the cross or to be rejected with Jesus?

**Spend some time talking over these things with the Lord**

*If in consolation*, I should thank God and acknowledge that it is the Lord's work.

*If I am in desolation*, I should express sorrow if I am the cause, and ask God's forgiveness; ask the Lord for help and patience so that my desolation does not influence my daily decision and responses to an ongoing situation.

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations*

Note in your journal what you have discovered and prepare to share with your group.



## **SESSION 28**

### **THEME: DISCERNING THE SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS IN MY BEING**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- to pray for the freedom from the influences of self-centeredness, prejudices, fears, anxieties, preferences that blocks the Spirit's movements in one's being
- to gain greater awareness of disorder in one's attachments (person, job, position, some gift etc.)

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate the freedom necessary to respond to Christ's love.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (*My commandment...my word is very near to you*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Revisit, discuss and share on the article, "*RECOGNIZING MORE PRECISELY THE SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS IN MY BEING*" from the preceding preparatory materials

Talk about recognizing consolation and desolation in my being.

Prayerfully read and discuss Colossians 3:12-17 (*As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*)

Group sharing

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate the freedom necessary to respond to Christ's love

### **PRAYER MATERIAL**

Colossians 3:12-17 (*Above all, clothe yourselves with love*)

Philippians 2:1-11 (*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus*)

Mark 10: 17-27 (*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*)

Matthew 13:44-46 (*The kingdom of heaven like the treasure, the pearl and the net*)

Continue to pray with the daily **SPIRITUAL EXAMEN PRAYER**.

Read and reflect on the article below:

### **LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP**

During the time ahead we might reflect, with the help of the following text, on the different communities to which we belong: conjugal and family community, company or labour union, parish group, parent association, and finally, our Christian Life Community.

The fact that people get together indicates that there is a conscious or unconscious desire in them to be accepted and approved by others. But this desire is often mixed with fears: fear of being misunderstood or rejected. The interpersonal relationships in a group are then very important and also hidden in them are the underlying objectives which we are trying to obtain. For example, a group might have a lively discussion on the subject of mutual respect and acceptance and yet at the same time deprive some members of the opportunity to express their opinions.

In the life of a group, things normally happen on two levels:

- the content – the subject for the sharing and the objective to be realized
- the process – the relationships that are developing

In a football team the objective is to win and good understanding is at the service of success. On the contrary, in certain formation groups, the content of the exchanges is negligible compared to their quality.

In a group that seeks to become a Christian Community it is obviously the quality of the relationship that counts. It depends on mutual confidence and the honesty of the relationships. For a person who has experienced frustration and rejection in life, a great faith in God and in others is needed to trust and to risk again in order to get out of one's shell. If the proper atmosphere is not present, this person has no chance to grow or even change.

In the evolution of a group, three phases are often distinguished:

1. **The First Phase:** The group process is most often marked by a "piori" confidence that the members have toward each other. After having overcome the initial difficulties, they encounter the various positive experiences

necessary to advance together. For example, in youth groups, an involvement in actions and projects often serves as a force fostering this phase of mutual confidence and its deepening.

2. **A Test of Truth:** In an effort to create and to preserve the initial atmosphere of trust and of sympathy experienced during the pre-confidence phase, a group often tends to focus attention on the agreeable things and to avoid or shove into the background the disagreeable elements. However, when people who are trying to build a community begin to share more intimately, the differences and personal limitations will be felt – inevitably and often strongly.

Part and parcel of the interaction among people who begin to live or work closely together are the many occasions for disagreement, misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Consequently, an undercurrent of tension and conflict is built up. The group may then choose to ignore the real situation and remain superficial, thereby running the risk of reaching a point of “explosion” and possible disintegration.

For a community to grow, the conflict must be faced honestly and resolved. This is a delicate and crucial moment when several things may happen to the community. More often than not, the tension and hurt feelings are related to personal “hang-ups” from which the members need to be liberated. We too have our own hang-ups. The first important question is: when is the proper moment for persons to reveal their inner feelings, and to admit their own hang-ups, trusting that others in the group will understand and accept them as they really are? The real question is: Is there enough freedom in the community to encourage other members to point out the hang-ups of another who may not be aware of them? Should one say something or not? If true freedom is lacking, there is no answer to these questions. The real solution consists in creating little by little the freedom needed to speak.

3. **Mutual Acceptance:** It is true that the community must first live through difficult moments before this point is reached. Faith and truthfulness are the decisive attitudes. The result is not just a changed community, but the conversion and liberation; confronted with themselves and with the others, they learn to accept themselves with their limitations, confess their individual helplessness, and experience the love and merciful acceptance given to them by the others.

When a community reaches this point, it is ready to discern truly, in the context of a concrete situation, the particular call of God. If the community is faithful and generous in its response, it will experience a deeper peace and joy which are the signs of the action of the Spirit.

From *PROGRESSIO*

Note in your journal what you have discovered and prepare to share in your group.

## **SESSION 29**

### **THEME: LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- To deepen one's relationship with Jesus to prepare to let the Spirit change needs and aspirations, deficiencies and weaknesses.
- To work together for a world both more human and more divine.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate the freedom necessary to respond to Christ's love.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Eph 3: 14-21 (*May Christ Jesus' love be the root and foundation of your life*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares on their experience of life and prayer experiences

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Revisit, discuss and share on the article "*LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP*" found in the preceding preparatory material.

Prayerfully read Acts 2:42-47 (*Description of the early Christian community*)

Discuss the difficulties and growth involved in applying this to different kinds of communities.

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To put on the mind and heart of Christ Jesus

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Acts 4:23-37 (*The Prayer of the early Christian community*)

Acts 2:42-47 (*Description of the early Christian community*)

John 13:33-35 (*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another*)

Luke 10:25-37 (*Who is my neighbour? Parable of the Good Samaritan*)

Luke 1: 26-38 (*Mary said: Let it be with me according to your word*)

Read and reflect on the article below:

## **WITH JESUS FOR THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM**

To be a Christian is to be part of a people who have been, and know themselves to be, called by God the Father to follow Jesus Christ in his work, which is to announce and make present in history the Kingdom of God.

Behind being a Christian there lies the gratuitous initiative of God who has loved us, who has offered us pardon in Jesus Christ and who has chosen us to be His friends and continue the work of His Son, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Faith is our response to this call and is expressed through entering into the community of those who follow Jesus. This is precisely what Baptism is: it is passing from a life centred on ourselves with our own criteria and plans, to a life in community with those who know they have been pardoned by God, who want to follow Jesus Christ and collaborate in His work in history which consists in announcing and making present the Kingdom of God as a gift of God Himself.

During His ministry, Jesus demanded two fundamental attitudes from those who received His message: to welcome the good news of the Kingdom and to follow Him in His work of announcing this good news. To each person He offered the good news of the Kingdom of God already at hand; but even more it was present in Jesus Himself as love, pardon, and deliverance for the poor, the marginalised, the oppressed, the humble of heart. But from those who welcomed this good news of the Kingdom and were converted to it through opening themselves to the new reality that Jesus offered, He demanded that they follow Him and work like Him, in the sense of announcing to others through deeds and words, the coming of the Kingdom of God.

To be a Christian then, presupposes a moment of conversion, of accepting the love and pardon of God, which are manifested in the deeds and words of Jesus. But this also presupposes an attitude of service, of following Jesus Christ in the mission He has received from the Father.

We could say that these fundamental options are:

1. The first option is to live for the mission He has received from His Father and that He fulfils it with a filial attitude. Jesus declares very often that He does not carry out His own work, but that of the Father; that His food is to do the will of the Father. Jesus is the complete opposite of a person who lives his own life, goes his own way, does whatever he wants, has his own ideas of what is good and evil, responds only to his own whims and fancies. To be a Christian is to live as children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, receiving from the Father a call to follow Jesus and to work with Him. From here comes the meaning of prayer which opens us up to the Father, of the attitude of discernment, of the radical availability to whatever the Father asks of us.

2. The second trait of Jesus is that He announces the work that the Father accomplishes and will accomplish in history. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is coming, that it has already arrived; but He announces it as a gift, as due to the initiative of God and not as the mere work of men and women. To be a Christian is to hope for the fullness of the Kingdom of God as a gift, and not as the result of our activity. Hence the Christian is always critical of whatever tends to consider that the fullness of the Kingdom of God has already arrived in history and that we should hope for nothing more or nothing better. But at the same time, and for the same reason, the Christian is a person of unquenchable hope, who always hopes for something more something better than what we now have, and struggles for the coming of this new world.

3. The third option of Jesus is that, to the mission entrusted to Him by the Father, He takes flesh in a concrete situation and accepts the limitations that this implies. To announce and to bring about the liberation of all people, Jesus accepts the limitations that this implies. To be Christians, then, is to be called to be people of our time, our culture, to know profoundly the problems of our country, to accept the limitations of our history. To try to live in such an openness to the whole world that we do not become involved in our own specific reality would be quite foreign to the following of Christ. To be a Christian is to be called to become deeply involved in our world and its tensions.

4. A fourth fundamental option of Jesus is that He announces the Father's preference for the poor, the marginalised and the despised people of this world, and that His work reflects this. Jesus puts Himself clearly on their side and He announces that they are the first to be called into the Kingdom. To accomplish this, Jesus had to know and analyse the situation of His time and discover who were the poor and marginalised. In fact, He Himself shared their life and their lot as He came from Nazareth and grew up as the son of a small tradesman. To be a Christian is also to make a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised of our time, which is different from the time of Jesus. If we want to be faithful to the option of Jesus, we have to analyse our society and discover who are the poor and forgotten people



today, and what are the structures of society that lead to people being marginalised and forgotten.

5. A fifth option of Jesus is that He announces the deliverance which the Kingdom of God brings, through truly effective words and deeds. Jesus was most acute in discovering what the factors were that really oppressed the people of His time, and in performing striking deeds which signified deliverance and made it actual: healing the sick, breaking down religious barriers, welcoming sinners and living with them, pardoning sins. To be a Christian today demands of us that we discover and actually perform gestures and deeds of deliverance/liberation which show that the Kingdom of God is already at work in our history, and that our announcing this is not a question of empty words. The radical confidence in the living presence of God in history should constantly push us to be imaginative, creative, courageous in searching for and performing signs which will show our brothers and sisters that God wants to liberate them and is actually delivering them from everything that holds them back and makes them slaves. We should try to be as effective as possible, and so be continually asking ourselves, what are the most effective things we can do to make the Kingdom of God present today?

6. A sixth option of Jesus is that He is faithful to the mission that the Father has entrusted to Him, that He is passionately involved in the Father's work and is not afraid of the conflicts which come from carrying it out. Jesus is aware that working for the liberation of those who are oppressed will affect the people who are doing the oppressing, in one way or another. In fact, in the course of Jesus' life, the conflict with the powerful people of His time quickly appeared (cf. Mark 3: 1-6); He did not run away from it, but neither did He seek it explicitly. Just as Jesus did not look for death, but neither did He abandon His mission through fear of dying, so Christians should strive for a profound freedom which helps them in their lives in the following of Christ.

7. A seventh option of Jesus is that He does not impose the option for the Kingdom of God, nor for the liberation He brings, through means of religious or political power, but rather He offers these in a way that respects the freedom of people and helps them to grow. Instead of transforming Himself into a man of power who imposes Himself on others, Jesus chose to be a servant who loves and puts Himself at the service of others. To be a Christian today means to be clear-sighted, to discern constantly in what way we should announce the Kingdom and make it present, what our relationship with power really is, and how we are using it. If we want to be fruitful in the work of liberation, we should use our power, while always preserving the fundamental option of Jesus, which is to be servants of others and not making use of them (cf. Mark. 10:41-45).

From *PROGRESSIO*

Note in your journal what you have discovered and prepare to share with your community.

## **SESSION 30**

### **THEME: THE CALL OF CHRIST**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- Grow in one's trust that God is present where human fears make us tend to think that God is absent.
- Become aware of the mission given to Jesus from the Father and imitating His style.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate the freedom necessary to respond to Christ's love.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

John 13:33-35 (*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares on their experience of life and prayer experiences

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared- experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully revisit, discuss, and share in your group on the article "WITH JESUS FOR THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM" found in the preceding preparatory material.

Prayerfully read John 10:1-18 (*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*)

Discuss the question: how can we do today what Jesus did in His time?

Group sharing

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To put on the mind and heart of Jesus

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

John 10:1-18 (*The Good Shepherd*)

1 Corinthians. 4:1-6 (*Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries*)

Colossians 1:15-20 (*Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.*)

John 1: 1-18 (*And the Word became flesh and lived among us.*)

John 14: 1-7 (*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*)

Read and reflect on the article below:

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY LIFE FOR UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING THE SACRAMENTS**

There is an interplay between our communal life experiences and our Sacramental Life. Our deep understanding of communal life helps us to appreciate and understand the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation more fully. The experience of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation lead us to a new understanding and appreciation of our communal life.

- First, I will discuss these statements in terms of our experiences of **reconciliation** and **celebration** in community life.
- Second, I will consider the importance of individual and communal experiences of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation for our community life.

### **1. Our Experiences of Reconciliation and Celebration in Community Life**

An important aspect of community life is that of reconciliation and celebration among the members of a CLC. Every so often members of a community should make it a point to become reconciled to each other. This may mean some asking and receiving forgiveness among individual members outside the formal meeting time. It may require a simple ritual of reconciliation at some meeting. Or it may take place briefly at the evaluation time of each meeting. Some of these same activities are necessary for communal celebration.

There are times when we can hurt each other in our interchanges and these need to be dealt with through reconciliation. But, it may be that there is no intent to hurt and this happens because of the different ways our personalities express or receive communication. This will often take place when members of the community are seeking clarification about an issue or trying to help the other members after they have shared some inner anguish or concern.

Reconciliation is not always called for in these instances. But, open discussion can bring out the intent of those speaking and the ways they tend to question or make suggestions. Similarly, open discussion can help those receiving, reveal their ways of hearing and being offended. As the members relate to each other and discuss their communication people adjust to each other's personality quirks and expectations.

With these interchanges and the effort at reconciliation, the community gains a deeper sense of oneness and awareness of God's forgiving and patient love. Such an experience may call the members to express this with God and the whole church through the sacrament of reconciliation.

Celebration is also important for community life. This entails special times when individuals come together to share with each other some aspect of union, whether of joy or sorrow. Celebration is also necessary as a community. This means certain occasions of celebration should be recognized by the community such as birthdays, weddings, funerals as well as times of achievement and success.

Celebration is accomplished when we give recognition to our members for their giftedness and dedication. In some instances we may wish to have a special rite of thanksgiving and praise to God for the giftedness of our members. At other times, we may wish to do this at the evaluation time at the end of the meeting. Again, the individuals may wish to bring this sense of celebration to the whole church in an experience of their daily Eucharist.

## **2. The Importance of Individual and Communal Experiences of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation for our Community Life**

As suggested previously, individuals may feel the need to take their experiences of celebration and reconciliation to the larger context of God and the church in experiences of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This in turn may bring them a deeper appreciation of their communal life.

The Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation always contain a communal aspect. God in Jesus Christ expresses celebration and reconciliation with all of humanity through the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The experiences of Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation give us a sense of our unity and peace with Christ, the church and all humanity. The result of this awareness comes home to us in our various experiences of communal life such as family and CLC.

The experience of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation can heighten our appreciation of the presence of Christ in the individual members and in our community as a whole. There can be a carry over from these sacramental experiences into our own intimate CLC group. Therefore, we will be able to find the meaning of the Paschal Mystery in our everyday relationships with the other members of the community and when we gather to share our stories and make decisions together.

These sacramental experiences become the example of how we are to relate to each other in terms of reconciliation and celebration. They make us conscious of Jesus' desire for us as a community. They call us forth as a community of disciples in the

Lord to be instruments of celebration and reconciliation beyond our community. We are to be the expression of God's celebration and reconciliation to the whole of humanity.

As individuals and as a community, we are to become Christ like. These sacramental experiences indicate that: we are to "*Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful*" (Luke 6:36). We are to respond to sinfulness as Jesus did: "*Woman, has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you...go away and from this moment sin no more*" (John 8:10-11).

The constant remembering of the Eucharist is to help us realize that we form one body in Christ through our sharing in the one bread and the one cup: "*The blessing-cup which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ; and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?*" (1Cor 10:16) The Eucharist expresses the special covenant bond of blood that we have with all the members of the CLC and indeed the whole church: "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you*" (Luke22:20).

This covenant calls us to love one another as Christ has loved us: "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. You can have no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12-14). It also carries us beyond ourselves in community to the rest of humanity. So we are to approach the whole human race with Christ's love: "*I did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world*" (John 12:47).

It is helpful that we constantly call to mind and recognize the interplay between our communal life experiences and our sacramental life. At times our understanding of communal life will help us to appreciate and understand the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation more fully. At other times the experience of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation will lead us to a new understanding and appreciation of our communal life.

John English, SJ

Note in your journal what you have discovered and prepare to share with your community.

## **SESSION 31**

### **THEME: COMMUNITY LIFE AND THE SACRAMENTS**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- to deepen one's understanding of communal reconciliation and celebration.
- to grow in one's appreciation of the sacramental experiences in community.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To put on the mind and heart of Christ Jesus

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

2 Corinthians 4:1-7 (*But we have this treasure in clay jars*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share your experience of how you experienced the Lord calling you to conversion.
- Group shares on their experience of life and prayer experiences

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Revisit, discuss and share on the article '*SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY LIFE FOR UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING THE SACRAMENTS*' found in the preceding preparatory materials.

Share your answers to these questions:

- What new insights did you gain from reading the article?
- Where did you feel most challenged by the article?
- What do you think this will mean in the future for yourself and for the community?

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

Deep awareness of the interplay of our CLC communal life with our sacramental life

1 Corinthians 11:17-29 (*The Lord's Supper*)

John 13:33-35 (*I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another*)

Acts 2: 1-13 (*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit*)

Psalms 51:1-19 (*Have mercy on me, O God*)

Psalms 89 (*Hymn and prayer celebrating God's faithful love*)

Review and reflect on the 2 articles below:

### **REVIEW OF PRAYER**

After the formal prayer period is over I should review what happened during that time: not so much what ideas I had, but more the movements of consolation, desolation, fear, anxiety, boredom, and so on; perhaps something about my distractions, especially if they were deep or disturbing. Questions like the following may help:

- What went on during the period of prayer?
- What struck me?
- How did I feel about what went on?
- What was my mood, changes in mood?
- What did the Lord show me?
- Is there some point I should return to in my next period of prayer?

During this review, I thank God for favours granted and ask pardon for my own negligence.

This review is an instrument to help me reflect upon the experience of the prayer period. It helps me notice my interior experiences. Thus it enables me to be spontaneous during the actual prayer time and to go with the flow of the experience. If I were to monitor myself during the period of prayer, I would be interfering with the Lord's communication. I let happen what is happening during the prayer time; afterwards I take a look to see what the Lord is saying in all this.

It is helpful during this review to jot down a few reflections that strike me so that I can more easily prepare for my next period of prayer. The Lord may be inviting me to go back to a point where I was moved. St. Ignatius says, "*I should remain quietly meditating upon a point **until** I have been satisfied*", [cf SpirEx 76] (i.e. until the movement has been completed, the insight completed; the struggle resolved; the consolation ended; the meaningfulness finished ... for now).

Jotting down my reflections during the review is also a help for me to discuss my prayer experience with the spiritual director. It is also helpful at the end of a prayer period to signalize the difference of this review from the prayer period by some

change of place or posture; the activity of **review** is different from the activity of the prayer period.

## **Repetition**

Repetition is an important way of disposing oneself to listen to the Lord. St. Ignatius would recommend its use frequently during a directed retreat.

### **What Repetition is NOT**

- Repetition is not the repeating of the prayer material as one repeats a study assignment for more thorough understanding.
- Nor does it mean that one returns to the same matter for prayer in order to dig for something new or different.
- Nor does it mean that one always returns to all the material of the last prayer period.

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group

## **SECTION 6 - OWNING ONE'S EXPERIENCE**

### **SESSION 32**

#### **THEME: REVIEW AND REPETITION**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

### **PART I**

#### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

#### **Recalling the Grace:**

Deep awareness of the interplay of our CLC communal life with our sacramental life

#### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 (*God has given us the ministry of reconciliation in Christ.*)

#### **Spiritual conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares on their life and prayer experiences.

#### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

### **PART II**

#### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## TELLING THE STORY

For years the Israelites shared their story of the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, as Jews continue to do to the present day.

In times to come, when your child asks you, "*What is the meaning of the instructions, laws and customs which the LORD our God has laid down for you?*". You are to tell your child, "*Once we were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt by a mighty hand. Before our eyes, The LORD worked great and terrible signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and his entire household. And the LORD brought us out of there, to lead us into the country which the LORD had sworn to our ancestors to give us. And the LORD has commanded us to observe all these laws and to fear the LORD our God, so as to be happy forever and to survive, as we do to this day*" (Deuteronomy 6: 20-25)

Each year the eldest in the family tells the story of God releasing the Israelites from the oppression. These stories found their place in the Bible and are the heart of the Jewish sense of identity as the people of God who released the Israelites from the oppression of the Pharaoh. These stories found their way in the Bible, and are still at the heart of the Jewish sense of identity as the people of God.

Christian community first occurred, it might be said, as the disciples recounted their experience of meeting the risen Jesus, "*Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognized him at the breaking of bread*". (Luke 24:35) As the young community persevered in "the breaking of bread" and the prayers, (Acts 2:42), at the heart of their thanksgiving (Eucharist) was the story of Jesus taking bread on the night that he was betrayed. This strong memory (Greek-**anamnesis**, Latin-**memoria**) was, as with the Israelites, the making of community. The act of remembering, re-telling the story, is a much more dynamic experience in both Jewish and Christian life than the rather shallow notion of memory, as popularly understood, might suggest. The Hebrew Testament witnesses to the creative power of the word in Israel's religion. Christians not only keep alive the past by re-telling the story of the paschal mystery, the Passover of Jesus, but they are themselves enlivened as they make the Passover with him, as the body of which he is the head.

Each Christian story is told, and heard, in the light of this story; each Christian community is formed and grows as it discovers its identity in the body of Christ by the hearing and telling of its communal stories. Telling one's story is the initial instrument for the members of a community to begin truly to listen to each other and to gain a heightened awareness of the Spirit's activity among them. The person telling [their story] is risking self; the persons listening [to the story] are opened up and discover and risk themselves. Sharing becomes an instrument of affirmation and trust, and so gives the group a new awareness of being community. The consoling sense of God's presence in this activity becomes the basis for the group's further discernment of its state and of its future action. And when such discernment is practised as a way of life, "telling the story" takes on its proper importance.

John English SJ, *Spiritual Intimacy and Community*

Read and discuss the material below on, “*APPROPRIATION/AWARENESS and EVALUATION*”.

## **EVALUATION AND APPROPRIATION AWARENESS**

Two dynamic elements which should always be included in working with a group are *Evaluation and Appropriation*. Both are contemplative in their activity but with different foci.

### **A. EVALUATION**

Evaluation is the activity of getting in touch with one's immediate experience, both in content and process, and looking at it on a quantitative scale. A way to focus is to look at the hopes and expectations which were expressed at the beginning. Express what actually happened and look at what you or the group discovered or experienced as unexpected *learnings*. In doing this, it is necessary to be as specific as possible. It is recommended to start with the negative elements so as to better free up the positive energy.

One could ask:

- What elements of the program/process were less helpful, useful, and valuable for you? Why?

Then move to the positive and ask:

- What elements were more helpful, useful, and valuable? Why?

It is useful to address all elements of a program: e.g. presentation, content, pacing, timing, ambience, etc. Evaluation is an essential dynamic to gather more clarity about content and process for the future, an opportunity to build on the positive energy and avoid what is less helpful.

### **B. APPROPRIATION/AWARENESS**

Appropriation is the effort to understand and appreciate the *significance* of our experience so as to be able to use it in concrete actions and decisions. It is more than an academic understanding. It is a qualitative understanding or insight which carries the energy to move forward. Members seek to understand more clearly how God has been working in them or in the group and what has taken place interiorly.

Some questions which might elicit a response are:

- What truths are present for me/us to face?
- At the end of this experience, what is now coming clear to me/us?
- How can I/we sustain this experience? this sense of union, of togetherness?

Further Focusing Questions:

- What is your understanding of owning one's experience of appropriating one's experience?
- How do you feel about the activity of evaluation?
- What do you sense is the difference between the Review of Prayer, Repetition of Prayer, Appropriating one's experience and the activity of Evaluation?

Group sharing

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming session.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Isaiah 43: 1-7 (*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine*)

Hosea 11: 1-9 (*I called my son out of Egypt...I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst.*)

John 3: 16-21 (*For God so loved the world...*)

Romans 8: 26-39 (*The Spirit helps us in our weakness... that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.*)

2 Corinthians 1: 3-7(*The God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction.*)

**It may be useful to REVISIT AND REVIEW some or all the material in SESSIONS 1 to 5.**

The following questions may help to focus your repetition:

1. What did I experience during this stage of CLC FORMATION?
2. How did I experience it?
3. Where did it lead me?
4. What indications does it have for the future?

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group.

## **SESSION 33**

### **THEME: EXPERIENCING PRAYER**

#### **THE OBJECTIVES:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

A deep awareness of the interplay of our CLC communal life with our sacramental life

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Philippians 2:1-5 (*Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind in Christ Jesus.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss, and share on the article below:



## **PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE**

God speaks to us first. This fundamental truth makes it possible for us to pray to God. God has been concerned for each of us long before we became concerned for ourselves. The Trinity desires to communicate with us. They speak to us continually, revealing themselves to us by various modes:

- through Jesus Christ, the Word of God
- through the Church, the extension of Christ in the world (because we are joined together in Christ, God speaks to us through other people)
- through visible creation around us, which forms the physical context of our lives (creation took place in the Son, and it is another form of God's self-revelation)
- through the events of our lives
- through Holy Scripture, a real form of God's presence (this is the mode of communication we are most concerned with in prayer)

### **The Trinity invite us to Listen**

Our attitude to the Trinity's initial movement is to listen to what they are saying. This is the basic attitude of prayer.

### **How to go about Listening**

What you do immediately before prayer is very important. Normally, it is something you do not rush right into. Spend a few moments quieting yourself and relaxing, settling yourself into a prayerful comfortable position.

In listening to anyone, you try to tune out everything except what the person is saying to you. In prayer this can be done best in silence and solitude. Select a favourite passage from Holy Scripture, 5 to 10 verses. Put a marker in the page. Try to find a quiet place where you can be alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence. Try to quieten yourself interiorly. Jesus would often go up to a mountain by Himself to pray with His Father.

In an age of noise, activity and tensions like our own, it is not always easy or necessary to forget our cares and commitments, the noise and excitement of our environment. Never feel constrained to blot out all distractions. Anxiety in this regard could get between ourselves and God. Rather, realize that the Word did become flesh – that God speaks to us in the noise and confusion of our day. Sometimes in preparing for prayer, relax and listen to the sounds around you. God's presence is as real as they are.

Be conscious of your sensations and living experiences of feeling, thinking, hoping, loving, of wondering, desiring, etc. Then, conscious of God's unselfish, loving presence in you, address God simply and admit: "Yes, You do love life and feeling into me. You do love a share of your personal life into me. You are present to me. You live in me. Yes, You do."

God is present as a Person in you through the Holy Spirit, who speaks to you now in Scripture, and who prays in you and for you.

Ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to listen to what God says.

Begin reading Scripture slowly and attentively. Do not hurry to cover much material. If it recounts an event of Christ's life, be there in the mystery of it. Share with the persons involved, e.g. a blind person being cured. Share their attitude. Respond to what Jesus is saying.

Some words or phrases carry special meaning for you. Savour those words, turning them over in your heart. You may want to speak or recite a Psalm or other prayer from Scripture. Really mean what you are saying.

When something strikes you;

- you feel a new way of being with Jesus, Christ becomes real for you in a new way (you sense what it means to be healed by Christ)
- you experience God's love
- you feel lifted in spirit
- you are moved to do something good
- you are peaceful
- you are happy and content just to be in God's presence

This is the time to ...PAUSE: this is God speaking to you in the words of Scripture. Do not hurry to move on. Wait until you are no longer moved by the experience.

Don't get discouraged if nothing seems to be happening.

Sometimes the Lord lets us feel dry and empty in order to let us realize it is not in our power to communicate with God or to experience consolation. The Lord is sometimes very close to us in God's seeming absence (Psalm 139:7-8). God is for us in an entirely selfless way. God accepts us as we are, with all our limitations, even with our seeming inability to pray. A humble attitude of listening is a sign of love for God, and a real prayer from the heart.

At these times remember the words of St. Paul:

*"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit\* intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).*

Relax in prayer. Remember, God will speak to you in the Lord's own way.

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).*

Spend time in your prayer just being conscious of God's presence in and around you. If you want to, speak with the Lord about the things you are interested in or wish to thank God for: your joys, sorrows, aspirations, etc.

### **Summary: The 5 “P’s”**

**Passage** from Scripture: Pick one and have it marked and ready.

**Posture**: Relaxed and peaceful - harmony of body with spirit.

**Place**: Where you are alone and uninhibited in your response to God’s presence.

**Presence** of God: Be aware of it and acknowledge and respond to it. If nothing happens, turn to the...

**Passage** from Scripture: Read it very slowly aloud and listen carefully and peacefully to it.

John Veltri SJ, *Orientations – Web Site*

Reflect, share and discuss the following questions:

- What is my usual method of prayer?
- Why do I use this method?
- What would I like to hear about prayer from the other persons of our CLC?

### **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

## **PART III**

### **A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

### **B: Communal Awareness:**

#### **Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

#### **Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God’s working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

### **Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord’s Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Luke 5: 1-11 (*You will be catching people*)

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10 (*Spiritual gifts but also accepting our weaknesses.*)

Genesis 22: 1-19 (*Sacrifice of Isaac and testing of Abraham's faith*)

Jeremiah 1: 4-10 (*The call of Jeremiah*)

Ezekiel 36: 16-38 (*A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh*)

**It may be useful to REVISIT AND REVIEW some or all of the material in SESSIONS 7 TO 12.**

The following questions may help to focus your repetition:

1. What did I experience during this stage of CLC FORMATION?
2. How did I experience it?
3. Where did it lead me?
4. What indications does it have for the future?

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group.

## **SESSION 34**

### **THEME: SENSE OF DISCIPLESHIP**

#### **THE OBJECTIVE:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Ephesians 3:14-21 (*I pray that you may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## DISCIPLESHIP

In discipleship, our response to God is brought to a deeper level where the concrete challenges, temptations and opportunities of daily life present the need to make new and specific choices for Christ. We do more than following a leader. In discipleship; we internalize the values, thoughts and ways of Jesus in such a manner that they imbue our entire being. *“And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”* (Galatians 2:20)

Our original choice of Jesus may be likened to the “Yes” expressed by a man and a woman on their wedding day. The couple may hardly recognize the full implications of their commitment. As time goes on, trials and crises cause them to make new choices for one another and actually increase their love. The general commitment of their wedding day becomes deeper through specific daily choices in much the same way Christians become disciples through ongoing choices. These choices more intimately unite them with Christ. **Discipleship is not in the original choice as much as in the ongoing choices of living.**

Through our acceptance of Jesus as the centre of our lives and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are given the freedom and ability to accept the discipline of discipleship. The cross takes on new meaning for us as does the whole cycle of death and resurrection. We discover that *“those who would lose their life for My sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:39)

Through discipleship, our love is searched out and it grows. No matter how exuberant our original yes to the Lord was, each specific choice for God in concrete life situations makes our initial choice more conscious and real. This growth process creates a oneness of hearts between our selves and the Lord. It develops a lifestyle that endures in and out of season. Discipleship is then, ever new, life-giving and freeing.

Christian disciples frequently find their values at odds with the standards of society. Through community support and prayerful discernment, disciples are strengthened in their continuing fidelity to all choices and commitments, and in their ability to serve and influence the society in which they live.

The society in which we live is not governed by the values of Jesus and the disciple will face many obstacles to one’s ongoing attempts to become a disciple. People say, “Everybody is doing it.” Disciples can’t make compromises such as this. Or people say, “The message of Jesus is idealistic”. The disciple can’t rationalize the quest for truth. The comments of others, or even their criticism and ridicule, are ways in which “we lay down our lives”. They are the many little *dyings* of the disciple.

One of the ways in which the disciple is able to respond to the challenge, is the support of others who share the same vision. The dynamic of the supportive group is crucial for the disciple as a person strives to live out the Gospel through actions and decisions which may be contrary to the lifestyle of others.

## **The Life of the Disciple in Community**

The Christian community, empowered by the Spirit, enables the disciple to overcome the selfishness of his/her nature. The experience of acceptance, affirmation and trust within community gives the courage necessary to be true disciples of Christ.

When we read the Gospels and discover the many references which are made to the disciples, we may be struck by a simple and yet a profound fact, that the disciples spent time with one another. Rarely is the word disciple used in the singular and even when Jesus sent them out, they went two by two.

When we pause and consider the world in which we live, we can't but notice how many people we see alone. How many cars have only a driver, how many people walk down the street alone, and even groups of people are often strangers to each other.

The Lord calls us uniquely and individually and invites us to be disciples, but this invitation links us to others as well as to Jesus. Sometimes we tend to see our relationship to God as somehow separate from our relationship to other people and we are quick to forget the words of John, "*How can we say we love God whom we can't see if we don't love those we do see?*" (1 John 4:20)

In a world that has so many value systems which are contrary to that of Jesus, disciples need to be a part of a community of believers to reinforce their beliefs and to provide the opportunity for growth. This community cannot be just a word or an ideal, it must be real: it must have flesh and bones and names. Even in our churches, the size of many parish congregations is such that we don't experience community but isolation.

The disciples were a small group who loved one another and who affirmed one another. The modern disciple cannot hope to go it alone. The two examples when Jesus' disciples did this were Judas and Peter, just before the death of Jesus. Perhaps we need to learn this simple lesson again.

### *RENEW: Cost of Discipleship*

Focusing questions:

- What is discipleship for you?
- How are Mary and Peter examples for you?
- When do you have a sense of discipleship?
- Do you recognize changes, growth or development in your thoughts or your actions?

Group sharing

## **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

## **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.



## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

**GRACE:** To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Isaiah 43: 1-4 (*You are precious in my eyes*)

Romans: 8: 26-39 (*The Spirit helps us in our weakness*)

Luke 9: 23-25, 57-62 (*The cost of following Jesus*)

John 14: 15-28 (*I will not leave you orphans...the Father will give you another Advocate*)

I Corinthians 4: 7-21 (*We are fools for the sake of Christ*)

**It may be useful to REVISIT AND REVIEW some or all of the material in SESSIONS 14 to 18.**

The following questions may help to focus your repetition:

1. What did I experience during this stage of CLC FORMATION?
2. How did I experience it?
3. Where did it lead me?
4. What indications does it have for the future?

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group.

## **SESSION 35**

### **THEME: EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY**

#### **THE OBJECTIVE:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Luke 5:1-11 (*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

Prayerfully read, discuss and share on the article below:

## THE CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Christian life is the answer to the call of Jesus to follow Him and to be transformed by His Spirit. This is the design of the Father who has predestined us in Christ: *“Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to . . . live through love in his presence... [to] become his adopted children through Jesus Christ ...”* (Ephesians 1: 4-5).

Christ invites us to follow Him, by adopting with the grace of the Spirit, those same feelings and attitudes which were His during His life and at the time of His death; and which are set out in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-12), so that we might pass ourselves from death to true life: *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”* (Philippians 3:10-11).

The Lord invites us to share in His friendship, *“I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you.”* (John 15: 15-16). He also invites us to work with Him in His mission: *“As the Father has sent me, so I send you”* (John 20: 21). The Christian vocation is a call to follow Christ in the service of others.

One responds to this call of the Lord in faith by welcoming His word and the gift of His Spirit, by which the Father consecrates us to the mission of Christ: priest, prophet and king. Baptism is the sacramental sign of incorporation within the body of Christ, the Church, the community of his followers.

The call of God to an individual is a part of the nature of the person and of the circumstances of individual history. Each person has his or her own mission to fulfil, both within individual family and professional life, and within the larger contexts of the Church and society. Sometimes mission is simple and unassuming, at other times, more dazzling, but the value to the person does not depend on the importance of the mission; it depends on the faith and love with which the individual responds.

Both vocation and mission have their origins in God's design and become clear in the light of His calling. Vocation, however, has reference to the direction which we give to our life and to the style in which we live it (being with Jesus), while mission relates to our leading our life according to God's designs (announcing the Good News). *“And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message.”* (Mark 3: 14).

In the search to discover individual vocation, Christians find before them the usual life choices: marriage or the single life, priesthood or laity, choice of profession, duties and responsibilities, the accumulation of wealth and possessions, material well-being, friends, interests, projects, etc. These choices, if they are made freely and consciously in order to best follow Christ, constitute the response of the Christian to

God's call, and little by little, they transform the universal vocation into a personal vocation.

Each one of us must prepare him or herself, seeking, asking for, and welcoming with recognition the gifts of the Lord which guide our steps along the path of life towards the deepest communion with Him and with our brothers and sisters in love and service. At the same time, the Lord is always inviting us to detach ourselves from all these gifts in order for us to learn to love them, not for themselves, but for the Creator and Lord who gives them to us. *“So, therefore, none of you can be my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions”* (Luke 14, 33). Our calling is thus an invitation to reorganise our life around Jesus, who must become the centre.

CLC members recognise their personal vocation in this particular way of Christian life, within the Church. This personal vocation is closely tied to discernment of their apostolic mission, that is, the way in which they are being called to serve the Church in the evangelisation of the world.

From *PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT # 45-46*, Dec. 1996

Focusing questions

- What do you think are some of the characteristics of identity as a Christian in our world today?
- How would you describe your identity as a member of CLC?
- When do you find that you are living out of this identity?

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you
- What did you find useful|?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?

- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

**GRACE:** To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Romans 8: 26 -35 (*The Spirit comes to help us...*)

John 3: 16 -17 (*God so loved the world...*)

Ephesians 1: 3 -14 (*Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Christ Jesus...*)

James 1: 16 -18 (*Do not be deceived my beloved Every generous act of giving ...is from above...*)

Isaiah 50: 4 -11 (*The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards ...*)

**It may be useful to REVISIT AND REVIEW some or all the material in SESSIONS 19 to 23.**

The following questions may help to focus your repetition:

1. What did I experience during this stage of CLC FORMATION?
2. How did I experience it?
3. Where did it lead me?
4. What indications does it have for the future?

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group.

## **SESSION 36**

### **THEME: WORKING WITH CHRIST**

#### **THE OBJECTIVE:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (*The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes**

Prayerfully read, discuss, and share on the article below:

## **THE SPECIFIC CLC VOCATION**

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

### **An Ignatian vocation**

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<sup>8</sup>.

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.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

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.

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.

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

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<sup>8</sup> "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)

<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> through "offerings of greater worth and importance".<sup>11</sup>
- 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".<sup>12</sup>
- 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*".<sup>13</sup>

The Ignatian character of CLC<sup>14</sup> 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.

### **A Communal Vocation**<sup>15</sup>

CLC members live Ignatian Spirituality in community. The help of brothers and sisters sharing the same call is essential for our growth in fidelity to our vocation and mission. In addition, community itself is a constituent element of the apostolic witness of CLC. "*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 human lives completely with their Christian faith according to our charism*".<sup>16</sup>

### **A Lay Vocation**

CLC is defined in the General Principles as an association, not of laity, but of the faithful: "*Our community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions...*"<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> GP 4

<sup>11</sup> SpEx 97, 104, etc

<sup>12</sup> GP 4

<sup>13</sup> GP 6

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> This dimension of CLC's vocation is described in detail in a special section (no. 125-163).

<sup>16</sup> GP 4

<sup>17</sup> GP 4

With maturity, however, at the time of Permanent Commitment, the CLC vocation is specifically lay, with its objectives and its characteristics: *"We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live."*<sup>18</sup>

*The CLC Charism SUPPLEMENT # 56*

The Second Vatican Council treated the same subject as follows: "A secular quality is proper and special to the laity... But 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, from which the very web of their existence is woven. God calls them there, so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the gospel, they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In this way they can make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope, and charity. The laity is closely involved in temporal affairs of every sort. It is therefore their special task to illumine and organize these affairs in such a way that they may always start out, develop, and persist according to Christ's mind, to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer" (LG 31).

And Pope John Paul II wrote, "The 'world' thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfil their Christian vocation, because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ. The Council is able then to indicate the proper and special sense of the divine vocation, which is directed to the lay faithful. They are not called to abandon the position they have in the world... on the contrary, [baptism] entrusts a vocation to them that properly concerns their situation in the world... Thus for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality. but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well."

*Christifideles Laici #15*

1. What does it mean when we say Christ calls us to work with Him in developing the realm of God?
2. Where would you expect Christ calls you to do this?

Focusing question:

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<sup>18</sup> GP4: In 1946, Pope Pius XII said *"The faithful, more precisely the lay faithful, find themselves on the front lines of the Church's life; for them the Church is the animating principle for human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church."* (AAS 38, 1946, pg.149)

- When have you been given awareness that you are doing this? Describe this to each other.

**REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- Briefly review the grace and daily prayer/reading assignment.
- Look at the resource material for the upcoming SESSION.

**PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you.
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**NB**

Bring a symbol to the next meeting. Be prepared to explain it to the group.

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **PRAYER ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT SESSION**

### **GRACE:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **PRAYER MATERIAL:**

Jeremiah 1: 4 -10 (*The call of Jeremiah*)

Genesis 22: 1-19 (*The testing of Abraham's faith and the sacrifice of Isaac.*)

Romans 8: 1-39 (*Living according to the Spirit of the Risen Christ...*)

John 20: 19 -23 (*Peace be with you...I send you....Receive the Holy Spirit.*)

2 Corinthians 12: 1-10 (*I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*)

**It may be useful to REVISIT AND REVIEW some or all of the material in the SESSIONS 25 to 30.**

The following questions may help to focus your repetition:

1. What did I experience during this stage of CLC FORMATION?
2. How did I experience it?
3. Where did it lead me?
4. What indications does it have for the future?

Write in your journal noting what you want to share with your group.

**REMEMBER:** To bring a symbol to the next meeting. Be prepared to explain it to the group.

## **SESSION 37**

### **THEME: COMMITMENT and CELEBRATION**

#### **THE OBJECTIVE:**

- to recall and gratefully acknowledge one's growth in prayer through the experiences of these past months.

## **PART I**

### **Opening Prayer and/or Hymn**

- How am I coming to this meeting? (briefly, a word or phrase)
- The opening prayer includes remembering the Lord's loving presence, asking for light and for grace to open our hearts to God and to each other and giving thanks.

### **Recalling the Grace:**

To appreciate how the Lord has been present to us during this stage in our CLC journey.

### **Listening to God's word in Scripture:**

Philippians 3:7-16 (*More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*)

### **Spiritual Conversation:**

- With your journal to help you, take a few moments for quiet reflection.
- Share those times when you learned from Mary how to be a faithful witness.
- Group shares the last week's life and prayer experiences.

### **The Second Round of sharing:**

After a few moments of reflection on the following questions share briefly:

- Where did I experience harmony and union of minds and hearts with the others as they shared experiences, images?
- What new insights was I given about myself and the group?
- How will this help in my future prayer and spiritual life?"

**Close Part I with a prayer of gratitude.**

## **PART II**

### **CLC FORMATION: Content and Processes:**

#### **Commitment and Celebration:**

The format for this evening's meeting will vary depending on if there is an ordained priest to preside at the Eucharistic celebration. If not, the CLC group may want to create their own liturgical celebration (see CLC Resources in SECTION 8).

Reflect for 10-15 minutes on the following questions:

1. Thanksgiving, praise, community, celebration, communion, sacrifice all express what we are about when we celebrate as a community. Which of these is part of our CLC?
2. What difference does belonging to this faith community make?
3. What particular experience in my life do I want to celebrate this evening?
4. What do I want to celebrate as a member of CLC?
5. What grace for our Regional/National/World community do I want to pray for?
6. *"In the Spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love"* will I continue in my CLC way of life and growth?

Share the results of your reflection in the group.

Share the symbol you brought.

The group may want to extend the celebration by sharing a meal.

### **PART III**

**A: Practical considerations/announcements/CLC events, etc.**

**B: Communal Awareness:**

**Evaluation:**

- Reflect on how the meeting was for you?
- What did you find useful?
- What could be better?
- Share your reflections with the group.

**Appropriation:**

- What way has the Spirit worked within me/us in this meeting?
- What particular grace/new awareness of God's working am I leaving with from this meeting?
- How can I/we sustain this experience?

**Close Meeting:**

- With short intercessory prayers for various needs and then pray the **Lord's Prayer**.
- Offer a gesture of peace to each other.

## **REVIEW ASSIGNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE MEETINGS**

With help of your Group Leader review the resource material for the continuation of CLC Formation Phases.

The prayer assignment may vary depending on the decision made by your CLC group. The CLC Group Leaders (Coordinator and/or Guide) will provide information and further guidelines on how the members of the CLC group are to proceed in their CLC formation (ref. document on Fundamental Stages of CLC Formation).

### **Suggested Prayer Material during this time of decision and transition:**

**GRACE:** To appreciate the gift of the community in my life.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 24:13-35 (*The Disciples on the Road to Emmaus*)

## **SECTION 7**

### **CLARIFICATIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS:**

#### **AWARENESS EXERCISE or CONSCIOUSNESS EXAMEN OR EXAMEN PRAYER:**

*This exercise-prayer is outlined further in the prayer assignment for SESSION 2 (page13). Various terms for this prayer exercise are in vogue. The three outlined are the most common ones used. The important point of this exercise is that it is a form of prayer, or one could say a spirituality, to help us be attentive to, and recognize the interior movements of God in all aspects of our daily life, to interpret them properly and to respond accordingly.*

**APPROPRIATION:** *This is a time to catch the deeper level of what happened in the meeting: what grace or gift am I aware of having received? What deeper awareness am I leaving with that helps me to move forward in the commitment to this group's journey as CLC? [These dimensions of the meeting are discussed more fully in the course of using this manual.]*

**CHARISM:** *From the Greek, meaning "gift", this term refers to the particular quality or way that characterizes a way of life or ministry in the church. A 'charism' in the Christian community comes from the Holy Spirit, source of all God's gifts.*

**CLC CHARISM:** *This refers to The CLC Charism published in the CLC PROGRESSIO SUPPLEMENT #56(revised Dec 2001). The publication "The CLC Charism" originated from a two page draft prepared in 1994 to facilitate dialogue between national communities; the draft consisted of a series of questions such as: what kind of a person do we expect the CLC person to be and what kind of community do we expect in CLC?*

**CLC FORMATION AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL STAGES:** *This document is offered as a road map for those given the responsibility of group leadership by describing goals, characteristics and signs of moving on through five stages of growth in CLC formation. It is a process leading the CLC group and its members through five **movements** or what could be referred as "**five communal graces; pre-community, initiation, redemption, deepening, apostolic community.**"*

**COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT:** *Is a dynamic process understood as a five phase process: experience, reflection, articulation, interpretation, decision-and-action. Every one of these phases is important and each phase interacts with the others (cf. Spiritual Intimacy and Community by John English SJ -page 29).*

**CONSOLATION:** *The term St. Ignatius uses to express the experience of interior movements that orient and lead us to God, the Creator and Source of all things; every increase of faith, hope and love (cf. **Spiritual Exercises**, #316, 330-336).*



**CONTACT PERSON:** *This person acts as a communication and information conduit for the local group in its relationship to other groups concerning the events on the regional, national or world levels. This role can also be rotated within the group.*

**COORDINATOR:** *This person is the facilitator of the meeting process. S/he has a leadership role within the group, especially in its beginnings, keeping the meeting moving in its proper dynamics and different components, assuring that the meeting proceeds according to form and in good order. Gradually, as the community develops, more responsibility in the various roles can be taken on and shared by the members of the group.*

**DESOLATION:** *The term St. Ignatius uses to express the experience of interior movements that draw us away from God, as Source of all; a lack of faith, hope and love (cf. **Spiritual Exercises**, #317-322).*

**EUCCHARIST:** *Also known as the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion or the Divine Liturgy or the Mass is the ritual act of worship that Christ Jesus enjoined on his followers to do "in memory of Me". Its basic structure has persisted since the time of the apostles: a gathering of God's people (usually on the Lord's Day – Sunday) to hear and respond to God's Word, to pray for the needs of church and world, to offer the thanksgiving prayer over the bread and wine and to share in this holy meal the signs of the presence of the Risen Christ among us, and finally to be sent forth from the gathering or assembly to live out in our lives what we have celebrated – this mystery of Christ's self-gift of love for God and for the sake of all humanity.*

**EVALUATION:** *At the end of each meeting/gathering, the group does a brief "review" (a reflective awareness) of what has happened during the meeting. How did the various elements flow? Was there sufficient time for each of the parts? What was more helpful? What was not helpful? ... and similar questions.*

**EXAMEN PRAYER:** *see \*Awareness Exercise above.*

**FAITH-SHARING OR SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION:** *Is the honest and trusting exchange or sharing between persons of faith concerning the experience of God in the context of their prayer and their daily lives.*

**FACILITATOR:** *This person assures that a particular meeting proceeds according to form and in good order; he/she may invite other members of the group to share responsibility for different parts of the meeting.*

**FIRST ROUND OF SHARING:** *This sharing can include some of these elements:*

- a) *The events of the week: what has dominated one's mind and heart during the week, experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in one's work, experiences of interpersonal relationship with others – of love or rejection?*
- b) *The experience of the past week's prayer and reading material: interior experiences of intimacy with the Lord*

- c) *When, where and how one's life experiences and prayer experiences came together?*

**GOD:** *When the term "God" is used it may refer to the first person of the Trinity (Abba/Father), or to the Triune God ("God in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit"). When "the Lord" is used, it refers mainly to the second Person, the Risen Lord Jesus who is God's [Abba/Father] self-revelation to us in the humanity of the Word, [the Word- made- flesh]. (St. Ignatius often refers to Christ as our "Creator and Lord"). We "know" this in faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity of Persons is implicitly present whenever we address any one of the Divine Persons. Further, in the translation of sacred scriptures, the unpronounceable name YHWH (Hebrew) – I AM WHO I AM - (as revealed to Moses) – is rendered THE LORD (in small capitals). Finally, for St. Ignatius, "God", as Father/Abba, or as the Trinity of Persons in their communion of eternal love, is always the ONE who is loving each of us intimately and all of us collectively, and we are invited to both intimacy and awe-filled reverence before this All-Holy One in Three.*

**GROUP GUIDE:** *In order to receive the proper understanding and grace of the ongoing regular meetings/gatherings of the local group, a group guide is critical in helping new communities move through the Phase I Manual. In the beginning, the group guide helps to facilitate the regular meeting. This is a person who is familiar with the CLC way of life, with the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and with some basic knowledge of group dynamics. This person helps, especially at the beginning of groups in formation, working with the Co-ordinator, but also in the ongoing formation of a group, to assure that the process and content of the meetings are in the spirit of the CLC basic elements: prayer, discerning faith - community and apostolic outreach. A group, once on its journey, may ask the guide to return ever so often to reflect with the group on its fidelity to these elements, or at times to help the group discern certain actions, etc.*

**HYMN:** *A gathering hymn of praise or a Taizé refrain, whenever possible, according to the church season or according to theme of week, has the value of uniting the members as one body. If singing unaccompanied is not possible, one may use appropriate recorded music to gather the group in prayer.*

**IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY:** *All Christian "spiritualities" are practical forms of "life in the Spirit of Christ Jesus". Each spirituality (e.g. Benedictine, Franciscan, Lutheran, charismatic, etc) is rooted in the Word of God, in the church's worship/liturgical traditions and in service to one's neighbour. But each one expresses this in a particular way. "Ignatian" Spirituality is influenced by the life and charism given to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and most especially through the Spiritual Exercises. The experience of these Exercises gives us a way of prayer, a way of discernment and decision making and a way of seeking and finding God in all the dimensions of our lives. This Spirituality is at the heart of the CLC way of life. (This topic is treated gradually throughout these manuals.)*

**LOCAL GROUP:** Members participate in the life of the community at several concentric levels. The local community level (also called "small CLC group" or simply "group") is the most appropriate for a communal continuation of the dynamics of life generated by the Spiritual Exercises (GN 39A).

**LORD'S PRAYER:** Also known as the "Our Father". There is also an official ecumenical version of this common prayer of Christians as follows:

**Our Father in heaven**

**Hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come,**

**Your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,**

**Now and for ever. Amen**

**MEETING OR GATHERING:** The term "meeting" in English has various meanings. It can refer to a business type "meeting" with persons who follow an agenda and make decisions. Or it can be used in the sense of a "gathering in faith of persons for worship or a common purpose". It is more with this second meaning that the CLC uses the term "meeting". Decisions which are discerned by the group may be part of the whole meeting process, but other elements, such as prayer, the reading of God's Word, sharing, reflection, etc are also part of the "meeting". The term "gathering" might be a preferable alternative.

**OPENING PRAYER:** This prayer is both one of gratitude and praise. It is followed by a recalling of the grace for the particular meeting. The Christian community normally prays to God (Abba) in the name of Jesus the Lord and in the power of the Spirit. One can pray as well directly to the Risen Christ or to the Triune God (Father-Son-Spirit). Some formula to end the prayer is helpful (e.g. "we ask this in Jesus' name"; or, "we ask this through Christ our Lord"; or when praying to the Trinity, "You are God forever and ever") so that the rest of the group can respond with an AMEN.

**PASCHAL MYSTERY:** this phrase refers to the once and-for-all, and continuing act of the total self-giving love of Christ Jesus for the salvation of the world, revealed in his death – resurrection – ascension to God's right hand – and the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit. All history, including the events of Christ's life prior to **this central event of Christ Jesus**, and everything after- the church and its worship, creed and way of living, up to the final and second Coming of Christ - is to be understood in the light of this definitive event.

**PRAYER:** Prayer Material:

- is assigned for several days following the meeting and more prayer material can be added for the time period between meetings based on the theme and grace.

- *is designed to review and deepen awareness and understanding of the information discussed in Part II of the meeting.*
- *Daily prayer is essential (see also \*Opening Prayer).*

**PROGRESSIO PUBLICATION:** *This is the official World CLC publication which is published three times yearly. All CLC members are encouraged to receive this publication by applying for a subscription to:*

**PROGRESSIO**

**Borgo Santo Spirito, 4,  
00193 Rome, Italy**

**SECOND ROUND OF SHARING:** *After we have listened attentively, in the first round, to the personal experiences of how each sensed God was present in one's prayer and daily life, in the second round we briefly share what we may have heard from this sharing that reveals a new or deeper understanding of God's action in this community in and through the members' sharing. This helps to build up the sense of community.*

**SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION:** *see Faith Sharing above.*

**SURVEY:** *Is a CLC document published in 1981 by an International CLC Working Group. The document gave an overview, covering the entire period of CLC. It has been complemented by other CLC Formation documents and material such as; "The CLC Charism" and "The Canadian CLC Stages of Formation".*

**WORLD CLC:** *The address of the world office of CLC is:*

**CLC Secretariat  
Borgo Santo Spirito 4,  
00193 Rome, Italy**

**Email: [exsec@cvx-clc.net](mailto:exsec@cvx-clc.net)**

## **SECTION 8**

### **CLC RESOURCES**

#### **CLC PUBLICATIONS AND NEWSLETTER:**

- **PROGRESSIO:** *World CLC Publication*  
Address: CLC World Secretariat  
Borgo Santo Spirito, 4  
00193 ROMA (Italia)
  
- **UPDATE:** *CLC Canada newsletter*  
Contact: CLC National Office  
E-mail: [clccanada@jesuits.ca](mailto:clccanada@jesuits.ca)  
Tel. 403-328-3612
  
- **COLLOQUY:** *CLC Canada Atlantic Region*  
Contact: Atlantic Regional ExCo  
Website: <http://www.jesuits.ca/clc/>
  
- **HARVEST:** *CLC USA Publication*  
Contact: CLC USA Office  
3501 Lindell Blvd.,  
St. Louis, MO 63108 USA  
Tel. 314 613-4628
  
- **PARTAGE:** *CVX Canada*  
Address: National Secretariat  
25 Jarry West  
Montreal, Québec H2P 1S6
  
- **PROJECTS:** *World CLC ExCo Newsletter*  
E-mail: [exsec@cvx-clc.net](mailto:exsec@cvx-clc.net)

#### **DVD and CDs:**

- **CLC“COME AND SEE”**      Contact: Atlantic Regional ExCo  
Website: <http://www.jesuits.ca/clc/>
  
- **CLC LEADERSHIP FORMATION ENCOUNTER**  
Contact: CLC National Office  
Website: <http://www.jesuits.ca/clc/>  
E-mail: [clccanada@jesuits.ca](mailto:clccanada@jesuits.ca)  
Tel. 403-328-3612

## **BOOKS:**

- **CLC FORMATION MANUALS**  
by the CLC Canada Formation Working Group  
*Four individual formation manuals for CLC Group Leaders and persons in formation: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III, and Leaders Manual.*  
Contact: CLC National Office  
E-mail: [clccanada@jesuits.ca](mailto:clccanada@jesuits.ca)  
Tel. 403-328-3612
  
- **Twenty-Four Spiritual Exercises for the New Story of Universal Communion**  
by John J. English SJ, Kuruvila Zachariah, PhD., Lois Zachariah, PhD,  
published by *PROGRESSIO*  
*SUPPLEMENT #57*  
CLC World Secretariat  
Borgo Santo Spirito, 4,  
00193 ROMA (Italia)  
[progressio@cvx-clc.net](mailto:progressio@cvx-clc.net)
  
- **Spiritual Intimacy And Community: An Ignatian View Of The Small Faith Community**  
by John J. English SJ, originally published in 1992 by Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., London, is available through:  
B. Broughton Co. Ltd.,  
2105 Danforth Ave.,  
Toronto, ON., Canada M4C 1K1  
Tel. 416-690-4777 toll free at 1-800-268-4449  
Fax 416-690-5357  
<http://www.bbroughton.com>.
  
- **Choosing Life:** Significance of personal history in decision-making  
By John J. English SJ, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1978
  
- **Orientations Vol 1 and Orientations Vol 2 Part A and Part B**  
by John Veltri SJ  
Guelph Centre of Spirituality  
Guelph ON. Canada, N1H 6J9
  
- **Notes on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola**  
edited by Davis Fleming SJ  
Review for Religious, 1983  
36012 Lindell Boulevard  
St Louis, Missouri, USA, 63108-3393

➤ ***Entering Christ's Prayer***

by Eric Jensen SJ  
Notre Dame, IND: Ave Maria Press, 2007

➤ ***Christ in a Grain of Sand***

An Ecological Journey with the Spiritual Exercises by Neil Vaney SM and  
Foreword by William A. Barry SJ.

Notre Dame, IND: Ave Maria Press, 2004

➤ ***Healing Troubled Hearts***

by Lyn Holley Doucet

Daily Spiritual Exercises  
St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003

**BOOKS ON IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY by Timothy Gallagher OMV**

- ***The Discernment of Spirits***. An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living.  
2005
- ***The Examen Prayer***. Ignatian Wisdom for our Lives Today.2006
- ***Spiritual Consolation***. An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment  
of Spirits. 2007
- ***Meditation and Contemplation***. An Ignatian Guide to Praying with  
Scripture. 2008
- ***An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer***. Scriptural Reflections According to  
the *Spiritual Exercises*. 2007  
Crossroad Publishing Company,  
New York

**BOOKS ON THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS**

- ***The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius***  
by Louis J. Puhl SJ  
Chicago: Loyola Press. 1968
- ***Draw Me Into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises***  
A Literal Translation and a Contemporary Reading by David L. Fleming  
SJ  
The Institute of Jesuit Sources  
St. Louis. MO, 1996

- ***Taking the Exercises to the World.***  
A Manual for Group Meetings for the 19th Annotation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius by Ellen Tomaszewski, 2008  
Website: [www.spiritual-exercises.com](http://www.spiritual-exercises.com)  
E-mail: [info@soiritual-exercises.com](mailto:info@soiritual-exercises.com)
- ***Giving the Exercises in Everyday Life***  
by Maureen Conroy, RSM, D.Min.  
Website: [www.the-upper-room.org](http://www.the-upper-room.org)  
Email: [office@theupper-room.org](mailto:office@theupper-room.org)

#### BOOKS BY THE ISECP GROUP

- ***Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for the Corporate Person***  
by ISECP
- ***Beyond Individuation to Discipleship***  
by George J. Schemel SJ and Judith A. Roemer  
Website: [www.isecp.org](http://www.isecp.org)

#### BOOKS FOR CELEBRATING SPECIAL MOMENTS

- ***May I Have This Dance***  
By Joyce Rupp  
Ave Maria Press,  
Notre Dame Indiana 46556
- ***The Circle of Life***  
By Joyce Rupp & Macrina Wiederkehr  
Sorin Books, Notre Dame, In  
Web site: [sorinbooks.com](http://sorinbooks.com)

For other books on this subject check Ave Maria Press web site.

#### **WEB SITES:**

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY (WORLD)  
<http://www.cvx-clc.net/>

CLC CANADA  
<http://www.jesuits.ca/clc/>



ORIENTATIONS BY John Veltri SJ  
<http://www.jesuits.ca/orientations/>

REVIEW FOR RELIGIOUS  
<http://www.reviewforreligious.org/>  
Books on the Spiritual Exercises by David L. Fleming SJ

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Gilles Michaud  
CLC Revision Project Coordinator

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