

# **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY**

*Approved by the General Assembly on September 7th, 1990  
Confirmed by the Holy See on December 3rd, 1990*

## ***PREAMBLE***

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

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

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

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

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

## ***PART ONE***

### ***OUR CHARISM***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- a) Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places and situations.
- b) At the same time, we exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the Community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organizations and efforts.
- c) The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the "Review of life" and through personal and communal discernment.  
We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.
- d) The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sort of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians.  
Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

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

## ***PART TWO***

### ***LIFE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY***

#### **10. Members**

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

#### **11. Community Bonding**

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

#### **12. Way of Life**

- a) The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God.
- b) Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the advancement of God's reign, all individual members are called to an active participation in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence, concretely, to our world. Our broad and demanding mission requires of each member a willingness to

participate in social and political life and to develop human qualities and professional skills in order to become more competent workers and convincing witnesses. Furthermore, it demands also simplicity in all aspects of life, in order to follow more closely Christ in His poverty and to preserve inner apostolic freedom.

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

### **13. Government**

- a) The World Christian Life Community is governed by the General Assembly, which determines norms and policies, and by the Executive Council, which is responsible for their ordinary implementation. The composition and functions of these bodies are specified in the General Norms.
- b) The National Community, constituted according to the General Norms, comprises all those members who are striving to live out the CLC way of life and mission within a given country. The National Community is governed by a National Assembly and an Executive Council. Their aims are to ensure the structures and formation programs necessary for responding effectively to what is needed for the harmonious development of the whole Community, and for an effective participation of Christian Life Community in the mission of the Church.
- c) National Communities may, if they find it helpful, establish or approve regional or diocesan communities or centers, comprising the local communities of a given region, diocese, city or institution. They are constituted according to the General Norms and the National Statutes.

### **14. Ecclesiastical Assistant**

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

### **15. Property**

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

## ***PART III***

### ***ACCEPTANCE OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES***

#### **16. Modification of the G.P.**

The General Principles, which express the fundamental identity and charism of the Christian Life Community and therefore its covenant with the Church, have been approved by the General Assembly and confirmed by the Holy See as the fundamental Statutes of this World Community. Amendments to these General Principles require a two-thirds majority vote by the General Assembly and confirmation by the Holy See.

#### **17. Suspension and exclusion**

Acceptance of the General Principles of the Christian Life Community is a prerequisite for membership in CLC on any level. Significant failure of a member or a local community to observe them is cause for suspension and eventual exclusion by the National Community. Significant failure of a National Community to act when one of its local communities is not observing them is cause for its suspension and eventual exclusion from the World Community. There always remain a right of appeal from a local or regional decision to the national community, from a national decision to the World Community.

# **GENERAL NORMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY**

*Approved by the General Assembly on September 7th, 1990*

**Amended by the General Assembly in Itaiçi July , 1998**

**Amended by the General Assembly in Nairobi, 2003**

**Amended by the General Assembly in Fatima, 2008**

**Amended by the General Assembly in Lebanon, 2013**

## ***I. Membership***

1. A person can become a member of the World Christian Life Community in one of the following ways:
  - a) By initiating along with others a local, pre-CLC community, which is accepted by a regional or national community. The accepting community must provide the formation resources for the development of this new community.
  - b) By being a member of an existing group of Christians, which has chosen the CLC way of life. This group accordingly has been received as a local community by the regional or national community, which is its accepting community.
  - c) By joining an existing local community, which is the accepting community, and which provides the means of formation.
2. In whichever way admission takes place, the new members must be helped by the Community to assimilate the CLC way of life, and to decide whether a call, an ability and a willingness to live it are present, and to become identified with the wider Christian Life Community. After a period of time ordinarily no longer than four years and no less than one, they assume a temporary commitment to this way of life. An experience of the Sp. Ex. is strongly recommended as a means of arriving at this personal decision.
3. The temporary commitment continues as such until, after a process of discernment, the member expresses his or her permanent commitment to CLC, unless he or she freely withdraws from the Community or is excluded by it. The length of time between temporary and permanent commitment should be ordinarily no more than eight years and no less than two.
4. An experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises in one of their several forms (in daily life, a closed month, retreats over several years), precedes permanent commitment to Christian Life Community.

5. The forms of these personal commitments are left to the National Communities. It is suggested that a printed model of these personal commitments be drawn up by each National Community and that they include an explicit reference to the acceptance of the General Principles of CLC.
6. All that is said above must be understood and practised according to age, culture and other specific characteristics. For this purpose the National Communities must develop formation programmes, diversified if necessary for various groupings of members and the various exceptional circumstances, which may arise for individual members.
7. The Christian Life Community is a particular way of following Jesus Christ and working with Him to bring about the reign of God. It allows for many different individual responses and does not value one more than another. Within the richness of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church and as a result of their growing in Christ, some CLC members may desire to emphasise one or more of the many evangelical counsels by taking private vows. Likewise, persons or groups of persons who have taken such vows outside CLC can be accepted into the community on the same basis as all the others.

## ***II. Way of life***

8. National and regional communities must find ways for making accessible to all members the actual experience of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, of spiritual guidance, and of other means of growth in the Spirit.
9. As a primary means to continue our growth as persons and as Christian Life Community, our ordinary way of decision-making at all levels is a discerning approach, and even a formal community discernment for the more important shared decisions.
10. In the spirit of its best tradition, and for the sake of greater apostolic efficacy, the Christian Life Community at all levels promotes the participation of its members in joint projects to respond to various and changing needs. National or international networks, specialised apostolic teams, or other such initiatives may be set up by the Community where appropriate.
11. Likewise, in the same tradition and in view of the formation of its members and of other people, the Christian Life Community at all levels promotes workshops, seminars, courses, publications and other such initiatives.
12. For the sake of mutual help and apostolic collaboration, the Christian Life Community at any appropriate level can affiliate other associations of people who wish to share in our way of life but not to become full members. Similarly, the Christian Life

Community at any appropriate level can find ways of expressing meaningful links with persons or institutions that are somehow related to the same tradition.

13. Special attention must be given at the world and national levels to ensure that all local communities be helped to live a genuine CLC process with a well formed guide and an efficient co-ordinator.
14. All that is said above, both with regard to apostolic and formative challenges, supposes a good collaboration with the Society of Jesus and with other persons, communities and institutions that share in the ignatian tradition.

### ***III. Life and Government of the Community***

#### ***A. General Assembly***

15. The General Assembly is the supreme governing body of CLC. It is made up of the Executive Council and the delegation of each National Community. Each delegation will consist normally of three delegates, one of whom should be the Ecclesiastical Assistant or his representative. Difficulties, which may arise in making up the delegations, are to be settled by the Executive Council.
16. The General Assembly:
  - a) Approves the activity reports and accounts of the period since the previous assembly.
  - b) Sets the policies and orientations for the period up to the next General Assembly.
  - c) Decides the financial policies to be followed.
  - d) Decides on proposed amendments to the General Principles and General Norms.
  - e) Confirms the establishment of new national communities.
  - f) Elects the Executive Council for the period until the next Assembly.
17. The General Assembly meets normally every 5 years and is convened by the World ExCo at least 12 months in advance.
18. The President is empowered to convene the General Assembly at other times following consultation with the national communities and the written agreement of one third of them.
19. In the General Assembly each National Community has one vote and decisions are taken in a spirit of discernment by a majority vote providing a quorum is present. A quorum consists of 50% of the national communities. In the Assembly, the Executive Council has one vote in the person of the President.

## **B. Executive Council**

20. The Executive Council is responsible for the ordinary government of the Community. It is made up of 7 elected members and 3 appointed members and a maximum of two co-opted members.
  
21.
  - a) The elected members of the Executive Council are: the president, the vice-president, the secretary and four consultors, all elected by the General Assembly for a period of five years. They may be re-elected only for three terms maximum and two terms maximum in one office
  
  - b) The appointed members of the Executive Council are the ecclesiastical assistant, the vice-ecclesiastical assistant and the executive secretary.
  
  - c) The World Executive Council may, if it wishes, co-opt one or two additional consultors.
  
22. The Executive Council is responsible for:
  - a) Promoting the implementation of the General Principles and General Norms.
  
  - b) The implementation of the policies and decisions taken at the General Assemblies.
  
  - c) Fostering national communities, stimulating their mutual assistance and collaboration, and promoting their active participation in the world mission of CLC.
  
  - d) Assuring CLC representation in programs of international co-operation wherever it may be opportune. Our representatives in these international institutions participate with observer status at the General Assembly or are represented by the World ExCo.
  
  - e) Promoting the implementation of the teachings of the Church, especially that of Vatican Council II and its further developments.
  
  - f) Encouraging the fuller sharing, by national and other communities, between each other and with the World Community, of their documentation, experiences, personnel and material resources.
  
  - g) Promoting and encouraging specific projects particularly in accordance with norms 10 and 11.
  
  - h) Encouraging and creating initiatives necessary to fulfil all these tasks.
  
23. The Executive Council meets at least once a year. It informs all national communities of its activities.

24. In the Executive Council, decisions are taken in a spirit of discernment by a majority vote providing a quorum is present. A quorum consists of 5 members.
25. The Executive Council maintains a Secretariat for carrying out its policies and decisions.
26. The Executive Secretary is appointed by the Executive Council, which determines the rights and responsibilities of the office.
27. For all official communications the address of the World Secretariat is to be considered as the address of the Executive Council.
28. Nominations for all elected officers are to be proposed to the World Executive Council in writing at least six months before the meeting of the General Assembly at which the elections take place. Nominations are submitted by each national community through its executive council.
29. A list of candidates for the presidency of the Christian Life Community is to be presented to the Holy See at least three months prior to the election.

### **C. Establishing New Communities**

30. Though the Christian Life Community is one, it may nevertheless comprise groupings of National Communities according to common specifics or relating to territory.
31. The World Community officially establishes a single national community in a given country. When circumstances make formation of a single national community impossible, the World Community may establish more than one community in a country or one community to include more than one country. Establishment of a new national community is first, approved by the World Executive Council. Such approval makes the newly established community eligible henceforth for all the rights and obligations of membership. However, the decision is to be confirmed by the General Assembly.
32. The Church authority which grants official approval to a national, regional or local community is the World Christian Life Community, canonically approved by the Holy See, with the consent of the bishop or bishops concerned; for communities established in places belonging to the Society of Jesus or in those whose charge has been confided to it, the consent required is, according to the pontifical documents, that of the General or Vicar General of the Society of Jesus, who may delegate this authority to the provincial or to the ecclesiastical assistant.

33. Every established national community must accept:
- a) The General Principles and General Norms.
  - b) The resolutions approved by the General Assembly.
  - c) The financial contribution fixed by the Executive Council.
34. a) The Executive Council of the World Community respecting the legitimate rights and obligations of the National Communities will take action regarding a national community only in the event of non-compliance with General Norm 33. The General Assembly reserves to itself the right of expulsion.
- b) Reasons for excluding a member from the World CLC:
- (1) A community which does not accept the General Principles, the General Norms and the Standing Orders;
  - (2) A community, which does not implement the GP and GN according to the guidelines of the World Community expressed in basic documents;
  - (3) A community not paying dues, without giving an explanation.

It is the right and the obligation of the General Assembly to exclude a national community if the above reasons are given. Such a decision is to be prepared by the World ExCo. The World ExCo will contact the given community for explanations, and will report to the General Assembly for a decision.

#### **D. National Communities**

35. Each national community as a branch of the World Community establishes its own statutes in conformity with the General Principles and General Norms and the stage of development of the national community. The statutes of national communities have to be translated by these communities into one of the official languages of the World CLC, and have to be confirmed by the Executive council of the World Community. Such statutes would ordinarily deal with:
- a) Membership in and admission to the national community.
  - b) Goals and means of the national community.
  - c) Relationship with the hierarchy
  - d) Structures for choosing leaders and for making decisions.
  - e) Procedure for selecting delegates to the World General Assembly.
  - f) Any other matters essential to ordering the life, unity, growth and mission of the national community.

36. Each National Community may establish regional, diocesan, parochial or other suitable units as may facilitate its development.
37. Secretariats may be established by national communities, which desire them for the purposes of co-ordination, counsel and promotion.
38. National Communities are free to enter into relationship with each other for apostolic projects or any other just concerns. Any new structure resulting from such initiatives, if it intends to act in the name of those national communities, must have a clear and specific mandate approved by the Executive Council.

## **E. Local Communities**

39.
  - a) Members participate in the life of the community at several concentric levels. The local community level (also called "small CLC community" or simply "group") is the most appropriate for a communal continuation of the dynamics of life generated by the Spiritual Exercises. These small communities practice the type of prayer and relationships, which foster a process of integration of faith and life by offering to all members a permanent communal verification of their spiritual and apostolic growth.
  - b) Experience shows that for this end it is of great help that these communities be composed of no more than twelve members of like qualities, such as age, occupation, or state of life, and that they meet weekly or every fifteen days so that the process carries over from one meeting to the next.
40. Each local community, within the framework of a wider community (a centre or church, a diocesan or national community, or whichever unit is appropriate to the different realities) adopts its process for accepting new members, its own programs, service, and the content and format of its meetings. All members participate periodically in celebrating the Eucharist and share responsibility for the life of their local community and of the wider community in which this is inserted. Thus, the entire community decides all its affairs except those it delegates to its leaders.
41.
  - a) The principal responsibility for co-ordination in each local community is vested by the members in its elected co-ordinator, who works in close collaboration with the guide and possesses such other powers as are delegated by the community.
  - b) The guide, well formed in the Ignatian process of growth, helps the community to discern the movements at work in the individuals and the community, and helps them to maintain a clear idea of the CLC goal and process. The guide assists the community and its co-ordinator to find and to use the means needed for the community's formation and its mission. The guide's participation in the life of the community is conditioned by the objectivity needed to carry out effectively the

role of guide. The guide is chosen by the community with the approval of the national or regional community.

## **F. Ecclesiastical Assistant**

42. The World Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Christian Life Community is appointed by the Holy See after receiving a list of names from the World Executive Council.
43. The The World Christian Life Community accepts as its Vice-Ecclesiastical Assistant the Jesuit who, after consultation with the World Executive Council, is appointed to this post by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus.
44. National, regional, diocesan or other ecclesiastical assistants are proposed by the CLC executive councils at the equivalent level, but their appointment is reserved to the competent authority. Generally at the national, regional and diocesan levels, the ecclesiastical assistant is a priest; in special cases the competent authority may assign the function to any other qualified person, always taking account of the role that the CLC expects from its assistants (GP14). Procedures and formalities for these appointments must be clearly expressed in the National Statutes.
45. At the level of the local community the link with the ecclesiastical assistant will normally be maintained through the local community guide.
46. The term of office for a national, regional or diocesan ecclesiastical assistant is four years. This may be renewed.

## **G. Modification of the General Principles and General Norms**

47. Changes in the General Principles and General Norms are to be proposed in writing by national communities to the World Executive Council at least six months prior to a meeting of the General Assembly. Copies of formal amendments will be circulated to the national communities at least three months prior to the meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of the Assembly is required for approval of such amendments.
48. The World Community of itself can both establish and amend the General Norms by a two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly, with the exception of norms 21b, 29, 42 and 48 which touch on our relations with the Holy See.
49. A national community may reword the General Principles and General norms, if need be, for better comprehension, as long as the substance is retained, subject to approval by the World Executive Council.