

THE CLC CHARISM (revised Dec. 2001)

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INTRODUCTION

The Christian Life Community is an international association of Christians: men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions, who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of the Kingdom. Members make up small groups, which are part of larger communities organised regionally and nationally, all forming *ONE World Community*. The CLC is present in all five continents, in almost sixty countries.

We are convinced that CLC has much to offer the Church and the society in which we live. The role played by the SODALITIES OF OUR LADY in the formation of the laity, for the service of the Kingdom during more than 400 years of history, is a precious heritage for CLC. Christian Life Community, however, was not just a new name, given to the Sodalities of Our Lady in 1967. In the words of Father Paulussen, CLC represented the *rebirth of the movement, almost a new beginning*.

The new identity of CLC was expressed in the General Principles, approved in 1971 and revised in 1990. But from the very beginning it was felt necessary to complement this fundamental text with other documents, which expressed more explicitly the processes of formation proper to CLC.

In 1982, the World Community presented *SURVEY* as a key paper giving direction to CLC formation. Today, a duly adapted *SURVEY* remains relevant to any analysis and description of the growth of a CLC, of the means used and of the contribution of different roles at each stage in this growth.

Nevertheless, there is a need for a clearer presentation of the vocation of our lay members, which will enrich the formation plans of our National Communities and strengthen the unity of the World Community. The World Assembly in Hong Kong in 1994 was particularly aware of this need and recommended the implementation of formation plans (initial and continuing) according to specific criteria.

The first step was the drawing up of a brief paper *Criteria for CLC Formation* by an international working party. The first draft was re-

worked in the light of the *international meetings for Jesuits and CLC*, which took place in Europe, Africa, and Latin America between 1995 and 1996.¹ In December 1996, this was published as a *Progressio* supplement (no. 45-46) so that National Communities could put it to the test and use it as a working document in their preparation for the next World Assembly in Brazil.

Throughout 1997, the ExCo² received comments and suggestions about this document. Using these contributions, a small group of experts completed it and unified its style, giving it its present form. Thus we again offer it to the World Community as a valid expression of the Ignatian charism, which is our character. Taking into account so many different cultures, we felt it fitting to keep the text as a "working document" which can enrich and be enriched by the formation programmes and the experiences of each National Community. In the search for greater fidelity to our charism, it did not seem useful to ratify the text formally at the World Assembly in Brazil.

These guidelines have been written for group guides, assistants and those responsible for CLC formation. Their greater experience and knowledge of the community's way of life will make it easier for each National Community to adapt the contents of this document to the stage of growth of its members.

There are two parts to this document:

- 1. Criteria for CLC formation, and**
- 2. The CLC process of Growth and the Appendices.**

¹ *In English:* Italy, August 1995; Philippines, April 1997; Australia, July 1997.
In Spanish: Argentina, October 1995; Peru, January 1996; Spain, April and November 1996; Mexico, October 1996; Dominican Republic, May 1998.
In French: Zaire, July 1995; Egypt, January 1996; Cameroon, August 1996; Ivory Coast, August 1996.

² CLC's World Executive Council whose Secretariat is in Rome

For a better understanding and use of the document we propose the following keys for interpretation:

The personal dimension of the Ignatian process of formation (human vocation)

St Ignatius firmly believed that each creature was an original and unique work of the Creator. Each person, created in the image and likeness of God, is free to respond to His love. These Criteria for Formation help us to recognise those who have chosen CLC as their way of life, and *how they should be formed*. Until now, in CLC's rich history, the emphasis has been mainly on community.

Now, without losing anything of that richness, it is a matter of looking at *the person* (subjectum) who has the potential for entering the school of the Spiritual Exercises and of living the CLC way of life. The Ignatian process of formation is addressed to everyone and helps each one to put everything that he/she is and has at the service of the Kingdom of God. To achieve this, each person is invited to live in an attitude of availability, always ready to question his/her personal way of acting and thinking, while trying constantly to integrate *experience, reflection and action*³. To be faithful to that process of formation, CLC wants to form men and women who offer themselves freely to the Lord and the Church, ready to serve wherever they are sent. These *criteria* form a reference for this process of formation.

The breath of the Spirit throughout CLC history

Under the guidance of the Lord and of His Spirit, the CLC formation has been gradually codified in various papers: those of the World Assemblies, *SURVEY*, the revised General Principles and in numerous formation tools and programmes. These *criteria* form another page of this history of the

³ Regarding the Ignatian paradigm we recommend you read "*Ignatian pedagogy - a practical approach*", a document prepared in 1993 by the International Commission for the Educational Apostolate of the Society of Jesus, ICAJE.

presence and action of the Lord⁴. Thus, they should not be seen as supplementary, but as a humble attempt to sum up the most recent graces which have marked our path and which have taken us a step further towards living the CLC charism in its fullness.

Sharing our common heritage

CLC history written by the Spirit is inseparable from the history of its apostolic association with the Society of Jesus and those other religious families of Ignatian inspiration, to the greater service and glory of God. This collaboration between CLC and the Society of Jesus has been growing with the passage of time.

Now, after the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of the Society of Jesus⁵, this collaboration can intensify due to the recommendation, made by the Society, to set up an *Ignatian apostolic network* in order to increase the human and institutional resources at the service of Christ's mission.

These *documents* should be read and put into practice in the light of this cooperation. They are intended for those involved in CLC formation, many of them Jesuits. We share with them the common heritage of the Spiritual Exercises, the riches of a long tradition, and the desire to commit ourselves, in mission, to the service of others.

⁴ Among the documents included in the appendixes you can consult those, which refer to the history and background of CLC.

⁵ The document "*Cooperation with the laity in mission*", of the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, is included in the appendixes.

CRITERIA FOR CLC FORMATION

1. This paper sets out to describe the specific CLC charism. It presents it as a particular vocation within the Church to which its members respond with a life commitment. Such an approach expresses both the simplicity and the richness of the charism, drawing attention both to its historical roots and its later enrichments. This does not pretend to be an exhaustive account of the subject, or to examine all its aspects.
2. The presentation is based on the experience of the National Communities, but our approach goes well beyond that which is actually lived in this or that Community. The CLC vocation and the CLC charism are an ideal and a challenge for all of us. Contributions from very experienced CLC members are certainly necessary so that the proposals can be put into effect in each National Community. But also, we must all continue to work without stint on the task of renewing, according to our charism, both our personal and our community life.

I. THE CLC PERSON

A. TO SEEK AND FIND ONE'S VOCATION IN THE CHURCH

1. *The personal vocation*

3. We hope that all CLC members will participate in the mission of Christ according to their own vocation in the Church. "*Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions, who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and to work with Him for the building of the Kingdom, having recognised the Christian Life Community as their special vocation within the Church*". (GP 4)⁶

⁶ The "General Principles of the Christian Life Community" approved by the World Assembly in Guadalajara '90, and confirmed by the Holy See in December of the same year. The quotation is from the paraphrased version used in England and Wales and other English speaking countries.

4. The foundation of CLC formation and renewal is *the value of each person* and the conviction that each person has a *divine vocation*, which embraces all dimensions of that person's existence. God calls everyone. God takes the initiative, but respects our personal freedom. Each individual discovers this call when he/she listens to it and accepts God's wishes. This call of God is a personal vocation, which reveals itself in our deepest inclinations and our most authentic desires. Our free response to God's call is what gives meaning and dignity to our existence.
5. Understanding our personal life, our family, work and civic life as a response to the call of the Lord frees us from any inclination to resign ourselves to the situations in which we find ourselves. Equally, it brings us to react against that conformity which seeks to impose a state and style of life on us.
6. Each person finds in his or her own personal vocation the concrete way to live the *universal vocation* of the human family, which is a call to communion with the Father through the Son in the Spirit of love. In fulfilling his mission as a loving response to the call of the Lord, the individual progressively fulfils his or her destiny of developing a full communion with God and with the human family.
7. In this document CLC is presented as a particular vocation within the Church. But, this vocation can be understood only in the light of the fundamental vocation of all Christians.

2. *The Christian vocation*

8. 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 Christ⁷. Christ invites us to follow Him in His life and death by adopting, with the grace of the Spirit, those same

⁷ “*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)

feelings and attitudes which were His and which are set out in the Beatitudes⁸, so that we too may pass from death to true life⁹.

9. The Lord invites us to intimacy with Him¹⁰, and to collaborate with Him in His mission of announcing the Good News and promoting God's Reign¹¹.
10. We respond to this call of the Lord in faith by welcoming His word and the gift of His Spirit, by which the Father consecrates us for the mission of Christ, priest, prophet and king. Baptism is the sacramental sign of this incorporation within the body of Christ, the Church, the community of His followers.
11. God's call is inserted in the fabric of our natural gifts and in the circumstances of both our personal and social history, in which we participate.
12. The Christian vocation is an invitation *to reorder* all one's life by placing Jesus at its centre. In the Christian vocation, we find the inspiration to choose a new lifestyle, the strength to persevere and the joy to announce the Good News to the poor¹², to love and to pardon.
13. **In adults**, who have already defined their family and professional lives, the question of how to follow Jesus will affect, above all, *the way of living* their commitments so as to arrive at a profound and gradual transformation of their relationships with others, with their

⁸ Mt 5:3-12

⁹ "All I want to know is Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead" (Phil 3:10-11).

¹⁰ "...I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; ..." (Jn 15:15-16)

¹¹ "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." (Jn 20:21)

¹² Lk 4:14-21

material means and with themselves. In the language of Ignatius, the answer to this question leads to the *amendment or reform of one's life*.

14. **In young people**, who have not yet clearly defined what they want to be or to do, the question of how to follow Jesus not only leads them to a new *way of life* but it will also help them to make freer decisions about their *life choices* (to start a family, celibacy, priesthood or religious life, a profession).
15. Vocation is intimately linked to mission. When a Christian deepens his or her bonds of friendship with the Lord, He entrusts a mission to them. Vocation has its origin in the entering of God into their lives and needs time to transform their hearts, binding them totally to Christ. The mission entrusted to them by Christ is a deep, permanent and growing desire born out of this bond¹³.
16. CLC members recognise their personal vocation within the Church in this particular form of Christian life. The particular vocation of CLC members is closely related to the discernment of their apostolic mission, that is, the type of service each Christian is being called to render in the Church for the evangelisation of the world.

3. *The specific CLC vocation*

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

3.1. An Ignatian vocation

18. The charism and spirituality of CLC are Ignatian. Thus, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are both the specific source of this charism and the characteristic instrument of CLC spirituality¹⁴.

¹³ “*He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message...*” (Mk 3:14)

¹⁴ “*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)

19. The General Principles emphasise the Ignatian character of CLC by using phrases throughout the text, which refer to the experience of *The Exercises* or to the Ignatian charism. They emphasise the central role of Jesus Christ. Their explicit references to the Ignatian origins of the CLC way of proceeding and to the importance of *apostolic discernment* in opening oneself to the most urgent and universal calls of the Lord make it clear that discernment is to become the normal way of making decisions.
20. The CLC way of life is shaped by the features of *Ignatian Christology*: austere and simple, in solidarity with the poor and the outcasts of society, integrating contemplation and action, in all things living lives of love and service within the Church, always in a spirit of discernment. This Ignatian Christology springs from the contemplation of the Incarnation where the mission of Jesus is revealed. It springs forth from contemplating Him who is sent by the Father to save the world; who personally chooses and calls those He wants to collaborate with Him from among those who recognize themselves as being weak and sinners. It arises from following Jesus the Eternal King who emptied Himself¹⁵ in order to live a life of poverty and humiliation, in union with Him in his passion and resurrection, when the strength of the Spirit forms the Church as the Body of Christ.
21. Ignatian Spirituality also explains the *Marian character* of the CLC charism. The role of Mary in the Community is, in effect, the same role that she has in the Exercises and in the spiritual experience of Ignatius. The mother of Jesus is constantly present at the side of her Son, a mediator as well as an inspiration, and a model of response to His call and to working with Him in His mission.
22. In the light of the founding experience of the Exercises, the CLC has as its vision the integration of faith and life in every dimension: personal, social, professional, political and ecclesial.

¹⁵ Philippians 2:7

23. The spirituality of the Exercises strengthens the distinctive character of this Christian vocation.
24. † 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 closely¹⁶ through "offerings of greater worth and importance"¹⁷.
25. † 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"¹⁸.
26. † 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*"¹⁹.
27. The Ignatian character of CLC²⁰ and its members finds expression in the regular practice of the Ignatian way of prayer, examen, evaluation

¹⁶ GP 4.

¹⁷ SpEx 97, 104, etc.

¹⁸ GP 4.

¹⁹ GP 6.

²⁰ 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.

and apostolic discernment (personal as well as communal), and by frequent participation in the sacraments.

3.2.1. A Communal Vocation²¹

28. 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.
29. *"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".²²*

3.3. A Lay Vocation

30. 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..."²³*
31. 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."²⁴*

²¹ This dimension of CLC's vocation is described in detail in a special section (no. 125-163).

²² GP 4.

²³ GP 4.

²⁴ GP 4. 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)

4. *The profile of the CLC person*

32. The CLC vocation presupposes certain conditions, essentially those required to make the Spiritual Exercises. This aptitude is recognised in those characteristics, which allow the individual to encounter God. It is not so much a question of something already acquired as the potential. To indicate such an aptitude St Ignatius uses the expression "*tener subiecto*". *Tener subiecto* has a dynamic sense: an individual becomes progressively "subiecto" (disposed) or, conversely, not disposed; we may move forward or backwards, but we are never static, we never remain in the same place.
33. The Annotations²⁵ offer us a picture of the adult exercitant. This picture is sometimes a point of departure and sometimes a point of

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)

²⁵ SpEx 1-20.

arrival. These are the minimal conditions, laid down by Ignatius, for undertaking the adventure and also, more fully, the result of the undertaking. In other words, the characteristic traits, which define a suitable individual, must in some manner be present in the beginning. Ignatius adapted the Exercises to each individual, but at the same time, he recommended that the question of an election should not be put to everyone indiscriminately. Moreover, in describing both the exercitant and the conditions required for undertaking the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius presupposes that whoever wishes to have this experience wants above all "*to love and serve the Divine Majesty*"²⁶. These are also the distinctive characteristics of the individual best fitted to become a CLC member.

34. These personal characteristics, which must in some way be present at the beginning of the Ignatian experience, can be put into two categories.

35. From the human point of view:

- *capable of facing reality*, sensitive to the social and political world in which he or she lives, able to communicate and render service to others in a significant way;
- *with strong desires* to lead a passionate and dynamic life, even if these ideals are, at least for a short time, mingled with personal ambition;
- *not self-satisfied* with their own little world but ready to modify their points of view and lifestyle.

36. Concerning their experience of God:

- *moved by the desire*²⁷ to encounter and follow Jesus Christ²⁸;

²⁶ SpEx 233.

²⁷ Desires are essential for St Ignatius. For him, being human means basically being capable of having desires. For Ignatius, a person's capacity to grow in holiness and bear apostolic fruit depends on the strength of his/her desires. For St Ignatius

- *in love with Jesus and His mission*, yearning for a deeper personal relationship with Him that will redirect and correct, if necessary, their needs and aspirations, and heal their wounds and weaknesses;
- *aware of being a sinner*, but loved and chosen by Christ;
- *open to the needs of others*, ready to serve them and to join with all who seek to build a world both more human and more divine;
- *conscious of being a responsible member of the Church*, identified with its message and committed to its mission.

5. To seek and find one's individual vocation in CLC

37. *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.*²⁹

38. 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

a desire is a life thrust, which enables the person to wish, dream, act and love. A human being is someone with the desire for justice, peace and love: with a desire for God. The more a person fosters the inner capacity for desires, the more he/she is prepared to be fulfilled by God. Thus, for St Ignatius, those with strong desires, even if they were still sinners, were suitable for the Exercises. For Ignatius the spiritual life does not consist in keeping rules and guidelines, but in having desires, which the Lord can foster and fulfil.

²⁸ Constitutions 102.

²⁹ *Christifideles Laici* 58.

of life. These elements of the CLC process of formation in relation to vocation are based mainly on the Spiritual Exercises.³⁰

5.1. The vital role of the Spiritual Exercises in the discernment of vocation

39. The discernment of a particular vocation to the 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.
40. The Spiritual Exercises are fundamental and essential for living the CLC vocation. They are the *"source and characteristic instrument of our spirituality"*.³¹ Therefore, we cannot understand or much less live the CLC vocation without experiencing the Exercises.
41. 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."*³²
42. 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*

³⁰ The purpose of the Exercises is to "overcome oneself, and to order one's life" (SpEx 21); "to explore and inquire in which life or state does his Divine Majesty wish us to serve Him" (SpEx 135); they are the school for making us listen to the call of God and for helping us to respond, and for making us ever more ready to be always listening to His divine voice, transforming our entire life into a generous response to the Lord who calls us and who sends us. The Exercises prepare us for a life of "call-response".

³¹ GP 5.

³² SpEx 1.

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".

43. Therefore, for Ignatius it is clear that just as a body, which is not exercised loses its agility and movement, so it is with the spirit, which needs exercise to give its best and satisfy its deep longing for fulfilment.
44. The Christian Life Community, faithful to the Ignatian spirit which inspires it, wants its members to be agile in spirit, exercising themselves constantly to hear God's calls and responding promptly with their whole being.
45. The original experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises, as conceived by St. Ignatius, covers a period of approximately one month, spent in silence, speaking only with a guide or spiritual companion. In this context, it is possible for the exercitant to experience, as proposed by Ignatius, the different ways of praying, of examining oneself and of contemplating, of reflecting and drawing "profit", thus becoming sensitive to what the Lord wants in terms of vocation and apostolic action.
46. In the course of the four weeks of the Exercises, after having confronted him/herself as a sinner loved by God, the retreatant is placed before the person of Jesus Christ, with whom he/she will continue to grow in intimacy, disposed to be and to do in the world what Jesus is and does, even accepting the consequences of this.
47. Already in the time of Ignatius, and with even greater reason in the modern circumstances of life, it is often not possible, especially for the laity, to make the experience of the Exercises in thirty days. For this reason the Exercises can be adapted to the different circumstances of each person, being made in shorter steps or in daily life, but seriously, without overlooking any of the steps of the Ignatian itinerary. These Exercises, adapted by stages or in ordinary life, are truly an Ignatian experience.

48. Once made and assimilated, the main fruit produced by the Spiritual Exercises is a new style of life. What has been lived throughout the four weeks - in terms of closeness to the person of Jesus and his way of life, in terms of learning to discern the movements of the Spirit in daily life, in terms of becoming "contemplative in action" - all this reshapes the lifestyle of the person causing him/her to be and act more in keeping with the desires of the Lord for the building of His Reign.
49. CLC hopes that its members are people of prayer, able to listen to the desires of the Lord, able to discern among the many calls of life what is best suited for the building God's Reign. For this reason, CLC puts at their disposal the school of the Exercises, which according to the letter of Ignatius to Manuel Miona are, *"all the best that I have been able to think out, experience and understand in this life, both for helping somebody to make the most of themselves as also for being able to bring advantage, help and profit to many others"*.³³
50. For CLC members, therefore, the Spiritual Exercises are not an optional experience, to be made or not, or, that once made, belong to the archives of the past. They are a basic, vitalizing experience constitutive of their very vocation. An experience, on the other hand, to which it will always be necessary to return and whose effect on each person needs to be nourished and renewed constantly.
51. The Exercises are not an experience with which the apostolic life reaches a climax but rather an initial, decisive experience for a personal apostolic option, which is then lived for the rest of one's life.

5.1.1. Levels of God's call

- **THE FATHER'S call to life: The splendour of being human**

³³ November 16, 1536.

52. When the Father creates us, He calls us, men and women, to live fully in the image and likeness of God³⁴, to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and conquer it and to recognise the fundamental good in all things. Finally, the New Testament reveals all the splendour of the human being who, created in Christ, is called to divine life in communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit of love.
53. The *Principle and Foundation* reminds us that we are called to be in dialogue, recognizing the gifts and presence of God in everything – whether in health or sickness, riches or poverty – and to respond, like Jesus, with praise, reverence and service.³⁵
54. The *First Week* leads us to confront both, God's design for us and the reality of sin and death, the distinctive features of our personal and collective existence. In the Dialogue of Mercy, we recognize and humbly acknowledge our sinfulness and then, full of confidence and gratitude, receive the forgiveness of God, who saves us through Jesus Christ. The experience of the love of Christ, who died on the cross to give us new life in His Spirit, invites the exercitants to ask themselves, "*What can I do for Christ?*" and to continue on into the Second Week.
55. Each day we extend this living dialogue with an *examination of conscience*, in which we acknowledge the benefits received from things, people and events.³⁶ This is a way of living day after day the Contemplation to Attain Love, which urges us to ask "... *for interior knowledge of all the good I have received, in order that ... I may be able to love and serve His Divine Majesty in everything*".³⁷

• **JESUS CHRIST calls us to be with Him and to follow Him**

³⁴ Gen 1:26-30

³⁵ SpEx 23.

³⁶ SpEx 43.

³⁷ SpEx 233-234.

56. The experience of being saved by Christ and freed from the slavery of sin,³⁸ invokes in us the desire to put ourselves entirely at His service and to listen to His call to work with Him in building His Reign.³⁹ In fact, the eternal King calls us to stay and work with Him, to follow Him in His suffering and in His glory. To stay with Jesus and to follow Him in His work of establishing His Reign is the one and indivisible choice. To follow the Lord means wanting to know Him better, to love Him more intensely and to follow Him more closely in His mission.⁴⁰ This is the objective of all the Contemplations in the Spiritual Exercises.
57. This option for Christ and to work for His Reign means, in Ignatian Spirituality, opting for the whole Christ. To know, to love and to serve His brothers and sisters, this is to love more intensely and follow more closely the Christ who is "the true life".⁴¹ It is also to exalt Him and to contribute to the reconciliation of everything to Him and in Him, so that the Father may be all in all.⁴²

³⁸ SpEx 53. The first week of the Exercises is usually called the "week on sin". It would be more appropriate to call it the "week on mercy", the "week on salvation". In fact, the focus of this first week is the experience of God as Saviour and Redeemer, and the experience of oneself as one who has sinned and has been forgiven. This revelation occurs through the figure of the crucified Christ (SpEx 53). Before Him, St. Ignatius teaches us to ask: What have I done? What am I doing? What will I do for Christ? To those who were lost or locked into the dark abyss of self, salvation is presented as a door out of the self, a voyage towards the other. The sin in which we were lost or into which we were locked now resounds as an offering of liberty and salvation, a call of the Eternal King. To respond to it not only with judgement and reason but also with entire surrender is the way of liberation for men and women.

³⁹ SpEx 95.

⁴⁰ SpEx 104.

⁴¹ SpEx 139.

⁴² 1 Cor 15:28

58. CLC is wholly imbued with this great option: the desire to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of His Reign.⁴³

- **THE HOLY SPIRIT moves us to greater fidelity in following Christ**

59. Ignatius was a teacher who learned from experience. His spirituality is not based on abstract principles of perfection but on the concreteness of God, close and transcendent, who we experience in life. Those, making the Exercises, must prepare themselves to make the most important decision, "*of finding that state of life which God our Lord proposes for us*"⁴⁴, using a very concrete methodology: contemplating Christ's life, and at the same time being attentive and alert to their own feelings and interior movements through which the Holy Spirit speaks to them and moves them.

60. The experiences of consolation and desolation and of various spirits⁴⁵ also play a fundamental role in Ignatian elections. The group of Meditations and the Rules for making an election⁴⁶ are aimed at clarifying these experiences and thus leading to a discernment. But, they are always concerned with actual experiences and not abstract wishes, because Ignatius is satisfied only if "*without any intermediary, the Creator deals with His creature, and the creature with the Creator and Lord*".⁴⁷

5.1.2. Stages in the discernment of vocation

⁴³ GP 4.

⁴⁴ SpEx 135.

⁴⁵ SpEx 176.

⁴⁶ SpEx 135-168; 169-189.

⁴⁷ SpEx 15.

61. Ignatius speaks of making a sound and good "**election for one's life and state**". This "election" should be a free and generous reply on our part to a "vocational call" from God. Ignatius shows us the way to dispose ourselves, interiorly, to listen to the call of the Lord and how to behave depending on the manner in which God makes Himself heard.
62. We can distinguish between two objectives:
- To discern "a state of life": a lay life (in CLC or somewhere else), the priesthood or religious life.
 - to discern "a lifestyle".⁴⁸ A key element in this discernment is the relationship between a person and his/her possible life-contexts: family, friends, community, study, or work... Not every context is suitable for personal growth, nor for the growth in freedom needed to discern a lifestyle. We need to facilitate this discernment amongst lifestyles that foster growth. Often, development comes to a standstill because of a lack of care in the first stages.
63. Discernment of vocation is a process, with stages, which it is essential to follow and understand. These stages are not linear, but there is between them a dynamic movement of grace and freedom.
64. First, we must have a proper *disposition*, by adopting particular spiritual attitudes, which are the prerequisites of a good election:
- ◆ Assimilating Christ's criteria.⁴⁹
 - ◆ Making decisions according to the will of God.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ SpEx 189.

⁴⁹ The Two Standards (SpEx 136-148)

⁵⁰ The Three Classes of Persons (SpEx 149-157)

- ◆ Having our affections centred on God, by loving Jesus with a free and fervent heart:
65. • in the "first degree of humility", making a fundamental choice: *"...that in everything I obey the law of God, so that, even if my own life on this earth were at stake, I would not deliberate about breaking a commandment...which binds me under mortal sin."*⁵¹
 66. • in the "second degree of humility", feeling detached and free with regard to all created things, to the point of not being able to envisage under any circumstance a venial sin, so as to knowingly resist God's call even in a small thing.⁵²
 67. • in the "third degree of humility", seeking the *magis* with a growing identification with the Spirit of the poor and humble Christ.⁵³
68. On the other hand, we must search carefully for manifestations of the Lord's will
- ◆ by reflecting, in His presence, on the objective of the election and on the advantages and disadvantages of each choice in the light of faith;
 - ◆ by remaining attentive to the movements of spirits and their effects (consolation or desolation) for discerning which way the Lord is moving us;
 - ◆ by praying with fervour to the Lord to make His will known.

5.1.3 Preparation and confirmation of the election made in the Spiritual Exercises

⁵¹ SpEx 165.

⁵² SpEx 166.

⁵³ SpEx 167.

69. According to Ignatian tradition, the Spiritual Exercises constitute the best time for discerning our vocation. However, as Ignatius knew well, we cannot make the Exercises with a view to choosing our state of life without preparing well. This preparation can last for a reasonable period of time but should not carry on indefinitely, lest the election becomes impossible. Although, the Third and Fourth weeks of the Exercises are already a time of confirmation of the election in the Second week, it is good also to have the time necessary to confirm and make more explicit the Lord's call, through what happens to us internally and externally in our contact with the world.
70. In the preparation, as well as during the confirmation period, Ignatius invites us to place ourselves in different situations, which he calls experiences or probations, and to be accompanied spiritually by someone who can help us to discern the call of the Lord.

5.2. The use of experiences or probations

71. As preparation for the Exercises involving an election, these experiences are not only of real service, but they can above all place a person in a favourable context for becoming aware of new calls from the Lord. As a preparation and confirmation of an election, it is important to take note of any spiritual movements and their effects, as St. Ignatius suggests in *the second time* for making a good election.⁵⁴
72. In these experiences, which can be such as to move us deeply,⁵⁵ we seek to become vulnerable to the will of the Lord both in the community and by means of the community. This vulnerability prepares us for, and its consequences confirm us in, the election we have made.

⁵⁴ SpEx 176.

⁵⁵ “realizing and relishing” (SpEx 2).

73. Some possible areas of experiences:

- ♦ Experiences of exposure to the world of suffering and poverty,
- ♦ Participating in apostolic and service activities in situations different from the usual protected ones, to experience our own qualities and poverties and, above all, to be able to live in depth the free gift of oneself.
- ♦ Undertaking studies and formation programmes with a clear apostolic intention: only to "help souls..."
- ♦ A school of prayer as preparation for the experience of the Exercises, beginning with spiritual guidance, participating in retreats and light Exercises etc.

74. The choice, of experiences or probations and the way of presenting them, will depend on the stage of vocational discernment at which the person has arrived. Therefore, it is important to consider the age of the individual discerning his or her vocation to CLC. For adult laity, with an already defined state of life, the experiences suggested would be different from those proposed to young people, whose vocational discernment will be on their state of life.

5.3. Individual spiritual guidance

75. Spiritual guidance is not about asking for advice, even less for asking what we should do. It is a matter of sharing our experiences with someone in order to hear better what God is saying and what He wants. Occasionally the guide can provide clarification or offer advice, but these occasions should be the exception rather than the rule. Spiritual guidance is an indispensable part of searching and finding one's true vocation.⁵⁶ It is particularly useful before and after the yearly Exercises.

⁵⁶ Spiritual guidance presupposes above everything a mutual trust, which manifests itself in an openness of heart to the spiritual guide and requires absolute discretion. It is also important for the guide to have assimilated thoroughly the Annotations (SpEx 1-20), to be familiar with the spiritual growth process and the

B. AVAILABILITY FOR MISSION

1. The meaning of mission

1.1. The mission of Jesus⁵⁷

76. In the Gospels, especially in that of John, Jesus is presented as the One sent by the Father. Being sent is precisely what gives sense to His life and His presence among us, so that we can't understand the person of Jesus except through this mission that the Father has entrusted to Him. On the other hand, mission is not something belonging to Jesus; it is a gift he has received from the Father.⁵⁸
77. Jesus lives this mission in total communion with the Father.⁵⁹ For this reason, the most intimate reality of Jesus is being Son. His life is the Father's, given to Him by the Father.⁶⁰ It is a life He will give to

requirements of an apostolic vocation. It is important that the promotion of justice and intercultural dialogue, as an essential dimension of evangelisation, be integrated in his or her own life.

⁵⁷ The starting point of mission is the relationship with Jesus. Jesus is present, not only in our own hearts, but also in His Body, of which our local CLC group is a cell; and furthermore, He is present in those to whom we are sent - family, friends, work-place, the wider community, especially those in need. Consequently, mission comes alive and energises us when this three-fold presence of Jesus resonates and interacts - Jesus present in our heart; Jesus present in our CLC group; Jesus present in those to whom we are sent.

⁵⁸ "I have come from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him who sent me" (Jn 6:38; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 9:4-5; 14:24).

⁵⁹ "He who has sent me is with me..."(Jn 8:29; 3:35; 17:7-8; 5:19).

⁶⁰ "For, just as the Father has life in Himself so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself" (Jn 5:26).

humankind, thus believers will be those who live with the Son's life.⁶¹

78. The mission of Jesus the Son is that which the Father has entrusted to Him. Jesus knows that He is not the proprietor of this mission: He has not come into this world "on His own" but in order to carry out His mission, because the Father and He are one, and live in full communion with the Spirit (God is Trinity and is Communion).⁶²
79. The precise object of this mission will be that all men and women, beloved of the Father, become one with the Triune God: even now we are called to live in the fullness of God Himself.⁶³ Jesus is the messenger and, at the same time, the message.⁶⁴

1.2. The mission of the Church

80. The Church is "*the congregation of all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace*"; "*founded and built by God to be a visible sacrament of this saving unity*".⁶⁵ The Church is the sacrament of salvation in the concrete history of our world.⁶⁶
81. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church represents the hands and feet of Jesus, Risen and Alive. The Church carries out the

⁶¹ "As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me" (Jn 6:57).

⁶² Jn 10:30, 38; 11:41-42; 13:1-3; 13:9; 14:20; 16:28

⁶³ "... so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them" (Jn: 17:21, 24, 26).

⁶⁴ "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).

⁶⁵ Lumen Gentium 9

⁶⁶ LG 1

same mission as the Son. The Church is the sacrament of the mission of the Son who, moved by the Spirit, journeys through history towards the fullness of communion of all with Christ and, in the same Spirit, towards fullness of life with the Father. If it were not for the Son's mission, the Church would be nothing, it would lose its meaning.⁶⁷

1.3. Sacramental dimension of mission

82. Jesus is the sacrament of the Father's love; the Church, the sacrament of Jesus, is life and salvation for all humanity. The call of the Father, born out of love, is carried out and is efficacious in Jesus and in His mission; the call of Jesus, for love, is carried out and is efficacious in the Church and in Her mission. And this mission of the Church develops in the mission of those called and gathered by the love of the Father towards the Church.
83. Each Christian is above all someone grasped by the love of God. That link with the Lord (vocation) will take on concrete form and will develop and be efficacious precisely when Christians receive the Spirit and are sent - on mission - to the world in and through the Church.
84. In agreement with the specificity of each of the charisms, which arise in the Christian community, the Church entrusts the mission of Jesus to all Christians. To be truly mission, it has to be expressed by means of specific signs. The mission entrusted by the Father is realized through us, the body of Jesus. The mission entrusted by Jesus is carried out through the members of the Church. The mission of each member of the faithful and each group of faithful, community, and local church is carried out through visible signs that are proportionate to each situation. Each ecclesial charism will express "missioning" in its own specific way.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Jn 17:17

⁶⁸ The charism of lay associations is expressed through being *sent on mission* through a process of communal discernment and through concrete forms that are in themselves distinctive. Regarding the charism of religious life, it expresses its

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

1.4. Prophetic dimension of mission

86. The mission of Jesus is explained and understood in New Testament writings as a prophetic mission. Jesus is "the prophet" *par excellence*⁶⁹, who through His words and His behaviour (word + action) carries out the mission that the Father has entrusted to Him. The mission is not simply a way of thinking or a way of being in the world, but rather *specific actions*⁷⁰ and *words*.⁷¹ Jesus' disciples are called to behave as prophets, as Jesus teaches them.⁷²
87. Every Christian is consecrated⁷³ for this prophetic mission. This is the sense of the anointing in the rite of baptism.⁷⁴ The Holy Spirit anoints the person being baptized and seals the person with an

mission by a discernment related to the vow of obedience. In both instances, it presupposes searching for the will of God and fulfilling it as Church mission.

⁶⁹ "... mighty in deeds and word ...the one to redeem Israel (Lk 24:19-21; Lk 4:24; Lk 7:16; 13:33; 24:19; Mk 1:22; 6:2; Mt 16:14; 21:11-14).

⁷⁰ "Jesus gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness." (Mt 10:1)

⁷¹ "Father consecrate them in truth; your word is truth ... on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word." (Jn 17:17, 20; Mk 6:30)

⁷² Mt 10:40-42

⁷³ Consecration signifies that God takes possession of what is destined for a specific mission. In the OT, kings were consecrated to God by anointing their heads with oil.

⁷⁴ "*Omnipotent God... I consecrate you with the chrism of salvation, so that incorporated into his people, you may always be a member of Christ, priest, prophet and king for all eternity*" (Ritual of baptism, the anointing with holy oil.)

indelible seal.⁷⁵ With this anointing, the Christian can repeat the words of Jesus: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"*.⁷⁶ Thus, by the washing of Baptism and the anointing with chrism, the baptized person shares in the mission of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Messiah.⁷⁷

1.5. Vital Dimension of mission

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

1.6. Mary, model for mission

89. In God's design, Mary held a key role in making the Son's mission possible⁷⁸. Mary was chosen by God's immeasurable love. She was called (vocation) and sent to fulfil the mission of giving birth to the Son for our world.

⁷⁵ 2 Cor 1:21-22

⁷⁶ Lk 4: 18-19; Is 61:1-2

⁷⁷ ChL 13.

⁷⁸ GP 9.

90. Mary welcomed the call and immediately set out (action) to bring the good news (word) to Elizabeth. The welcoming of the mystery marked her life.⁷⁹ She was, above all, the first believer, the first Christian.⁸⁰ In Mary, the hopes and desires for salvation that the poor had placed in God's love, are fulfilled. Mary was the "poor of Yahweh"⁸¹, who, in the midst of her real poverty, put her hope in God alone. Her lifestyle, poor and simple, was a prophetic gesture.⁸²

2. *The CLC mission field*

91. Conforming to the direction given by Vatican II, the mission of the laity within CLC is not to be understood in a restrictive sense or by establishing dichotomies. The CLC field of mission is unlimited. It extends to the Church and to the world, in the service of individuals and of society, in an effort to reach the heart of each individual and to change unjust structures by bringing the Gospel to everyone and every situation and circumstance.⁸³

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

93. It is the love of God, which prompts us, as members of CLC, to transform the world so that all God's children can live with dignity.

⁷⁹ Lk 2:19, 51

⁸⁰ Lk 1:45

⁸¹ This is the sense of the Magnificat, which gathers together and summarizes the expectations of all the poor (Lk 1:46-56). It is inspired by the song of Hannah, a young woman who hoped only in the action of God (1 Sam 2:1-10).

⁸² Lk 10:21; Mt 11:25-27; Mt 10:4

⁸³ GP 8.

We should try to see Jesus in every man and woman, because Jesus identified Himself with each, especially with those most in need.⁸⁴ Commitment to the cause of freedom and justice makes sense for us only so long as the Spirit of Christ motivates it, as an expression of faith and love.

94. Work for justice takes different forms according to regional and cultural circumstances, and different socio-political situations. However, this priority must show itself in our style and standard of living. In the Spiritual Exercises, we ask for the grace to follow Jesus, poor and humble, and our hope is to obtain this grace from the Lord. To *believe* in Jesus, therefore, means to follow Him more closely; to share His poverty means to live a life of faith, which promotes justice and takes an option for the poor. A simple lifestyle safeguards our apostolic freedom, expresses our solidarity with the poor and makes our faith credible. This option cannot remain theoretical. Ignatius, speaking of poverty, asks of Jesuits that "*...all should when occasions arise, feel some effects of it*".⁸⁵
95. The promotion of justice is, therefore, integral to the larger context of evangelisation, the proclaiming of Jesus Christ and His Reign.

3. Development of Mission in CLC

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

⁸⁴ Mt 25: 31-46

⁸⁵ Constitutions 287 (GP 4 and 8)

them and at the same time accompanies both the apostolic discernment and the mission as it unfolds.

3.1. Individual mission

97. In relationship with others, and attentive to the signs of the times, those who are so disposed are moved to open their hearts to the needs of the men and women of their world. From this contact with reality arise the personal calls that lead to specific ways of following the Lord.
98. The invitation to follow Him (vocation) will become concrete in the way we personally respond to these calls. The initial vocation to follow Jesus will unfold in specific activities. But, for these activities to become mission, it is necessary that the community assume the call, help to discern and, finally, send each one on mission.⁸⁶ In this sense perhaps, it would be more correct to speak of *personal involvement in the Church's mission*.
99. For each CLC member, the different contexts of their life as laity: family, politics, profession, community, local Church, are the main fields of action.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ All prophetic missions follow this process. First God breaks unexpectedly into the life and heart of the one whom He wants to send to serve His people (vocation). Then, from the commitment of the heart and the needs of the people, the prophet will find his/her *mission*, and carry it out with specific gestures and words.

⁸⁷ Quoting John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (Dec. 30, 1988) we point out some fields of action:
“An essential service which the Church can do for the whole human family is to rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person.... If, indeed, everyone has the mission and responsibility of acknowledging the personal dignity of every human being and of defending the right to life, some lay people have special responsibility: such as parents, teachers, health-workers and the many who hold economic and political power.” (ChL 37 and 38)

“The lay faithful's duty to society primarily begins in marriage and in the family. This duty can only be fulfilled adequately if we are convinced of the unique and

irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the Church herself.” (ChL 40)

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

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

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

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

“Above all, each member of the lay faithful should always be fully aware of being a *member of the Church* yet entrusted with a unique task which cannot be done by another and which is to be fulfilled for the good of all. From this perspective, the Council's insistence on the absolute necessity of an apostolate exercised by the individual takes on its full meaning: The apostolate exercised by the individual - which flows abundantly from a truly Christian life (Jn 4:14) - is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organized

3.2. Group Mission

100. Action can be not only on a personal level, but also on the group level according to circumstances and in response to the needs perceived by the members of the community. These apostolic actions are also the expression of the personal vocation each one has received from the Lord. In this case, the community, in one way or another, will tend to translate the action, which it assumes and discerns, into mission. Therefore, we can speak of *group involvement in the mission of the Church*. Working as a team, with the grace of God, will have greater apostolic efficiency.
101. As Church institutions become aware of their inadequacy, they will feel the need to collaborate among themselves in the service of Jesus' mission, and to collaborate with other associations of believers or non-believers which have chosen to serve those in need. For Christians, mission in the Church may often mean sharing with believers and non-believers, on a personal or a group level.

3.3. Common mission

102. The common mission of CLC is the mission, which Christ entrusted to CLC as a Church association. This mission is the response, which CLC feels called to give to the great needs and aspirations of today. It is its way of announcing the Good News of God's love in this present historical time. The common mission is made concrete by identifying apostolic priorities and lines of action.
103. It does not mean that all CLC members must do the same thing. It is mission that is common: the tasks are different. This is not only because of the origin of mission, but also because of its direction. All

expression, and admits no substitute. Regardless of circumstance, all lay persons (including those who have no opportunity or possibility for collaboration in associations) are called to this type of apostolate and obliged to engage in it. Such an apostolate is useful at all times and places, but in certain circumstances it is the only one available and feasible (Vat II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, Ap .Act. 16).” (ChL 28)

of us, each in his/her own way, stand for the same values, follow the same aims and have the same priorities. We can speak of *common involvement in the Church's mission*.

4. *Finding our Mission in CLC*

104. In the Ignatian process of formation, the starting point is the real world. All are invited to be exposed to the pain, the poverty, and the "anguish"⁸⁸ of our world. This is true above all for young people. Ignatius uses a classic term for this type of experience. He speaks of "probations".⁸⁹ These experiences touch those who live through them and allow them to see their world with a new vision. These probations are like "sacraments", which profoundly mark a person. It would be good for CLC to look for realistic ways to experience their world in this way.

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

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

107. Being attentive always to the *signs of the times* and ready to serve the Church, one is sensitive to specific calls, which through personal and

⁸⁸ SpEx. 203.

⁸⁹ To understand the Ignatian process of formation, it is not enough to know the Exercises. Ignatius proposes a series of experiences, and the first among these is the "Spiritual exercises for a month more or less"... the "second, serving in hospitals"... the "third, being a pilgrim for another month without money"... the "fourth, exercising oneself in different low and humble offices" ... the "fifth, giving Christian Doctrine to other uncouth persons" (Const. 65-59). Obviously, this process is not applicable to CLC, but Ignatius' intuition is. Ignatius kept before his eyes Jesus' emptying, as a key to understanding the mission of salvation. (Phil. 2:1ff)

community apostolic discernment are transformed into mission. But, we must not forget that the first step in discernment, in order to be able to choose freely and out of love, is indifference.

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

4.1. Apostolic discernment

109. Apostolic discernment means the intelligent and contemplative attention given to the Spirit by the mature Christian in all commitments: family, work, the different ways in which God can make His will manifest profession, social and Church. The purpose is to seek and to find God's will for our mission. In order to seek the divine will one's heart must burn with the same fire as burns within the Heart of Christ.⁹⁰ One must also be familiar with. In short, one must be ready to opt for the greater glory of God and for the universal good.

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

4.1.1 Personal and communal prayer

110. From beginning to end, discernment is a journey of prayer. Remembering that we have been created to "*praise, reverence and serve God our Lord*"⁹¹, "*we need prayer and discernment, personal and communal...in order to seek and find God in all things*".⁹² With

⁹⁰ Lk 12:49; Phil 2:5

⁹¹ SpEx 23

⁹² GP 5.

"great courage and generosity"⁹³ we want to ask our Lord for the gifts of availability and of knowing His will in this world in which we live. We make this petition as an important part of our daily personal prayer and we also repeat it in our community encounters throughout the whole discernment process.

4.1.2 Looking at this world in which we live

111. We recognize that the whole world is our meeting place with God. For this reason, we make contact with all that surrounds us in order to discover there the Lord's call. Since the field of our possible mission knows no limits⁹⁴, we cannot narrow down this look at our world when we seek to know our mission. The Lord speaks to us in our community, through its present and past history, in the Church and in our country.⁹⁵ This is how we can see Him acting through us in our personal apostolates⁹⁶ and in the corporate or group apostolates.⁹⁷ The needs we see today in the Church and in the world are also calls from the Lord. We want to respond better, knowing that "*love ought to manifest itself more in deeds than in words*".⁹⁸

4.1.3. Our Ignatian charism

112. As a community we are well aware that our common vocation, our charism and style of discernment have their origin in the Spiritual Exercises and are expressed in the CLC General Principles. Our life makes no sense if it is not living and seeking "*in all and through all the greater praise and glory of God our Lord*" (SpEx 189). Let us

⁹³ SpEx 5.

⁹⁴ GP 8.

⁹⁵ See what was said about the "probations" proposed by St. Ignatius.

⁹⁶ GP 8a.

⁹⁷ GP 8b.

⁹⁸ SpEx 230.

remember that "*our life is essentially apostolic*" and that "*the field of CLC mission knows no limits*". "*As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have been sent by Christ to be His witnesses to all people by our attitudes, words and actions*".⁹⁹

4.1.4. Spiritual movements

113. St. Ignatius learned to recognize interior and spiritual movements. In his autobiography he says that while still in the house of Loyola, "*his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it, realizing from experience that some thoughts left him sad and others joyful. Little by little he came to recognize the difference between the spirits that were stirring, one from the devil, the other from God*".¹⁰⁰

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

4.1.5. Group process

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

⁹⁹ GP 8.

¹⁰⁰ Autobiography 8.

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

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

4.2. Apostolic discernment as a permanent attitude

118. In one way or another these elements are always present in the CLC member who desires to live apostolic discernment as a habitual attitude. It is the fruit of the "Contemplation to attain love" at the end of the Exercises¹⁰¹: "*an interior knowledge of all the great good I have received, in order that, stirred to profound gratitude, I may become able to love and serve His Divine Majesty in all things*". Moved by this grateful love, St. Ignatius invites us to seek always a greater awareness of God's presence and action in our lives.

119. For this reason the *examen* is one of the more significant activities by which apostolic discernment becomes part of us.¹⁰² In the Exercises,

¹⁰¹ SpEx 230-237.

¹⁰² A fundamental dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises is the continuous call to reflect in prayer about the whole personal experience, in order to be able to discern where the Spirit of God is leading us. Ignatius requires reflection on the human experience as an indispensable means of discerning its validity because without a prudent reflection it is possible to have a merely deceptive illusion, and without attentive consideration, the significance of the individual experience could be diminished or minimized. Only after an adequate reflection on the experience and an interiorization of its significance and the implications of what we are living, can we proceed freely and confidently to a correct decision on the way to proceed. This will favour the full and integrated development of the person who seeks to accomplish the mission he or she received from God with greater fidelity. For St. Ignatius, reflection is the central point in passing from experience

various types of *examen* are proposed. Among these is the *General Examen* (or review of the day), which helps us "to love and serve in everything" remembering that, "love ought to manifest itself more in deeds than in words". For Ignatius, the daily review is truly a colloquy overflowing with humble gratitude and filled with faith, trust and love.¹⁰³

120. It is understood that the one who practices this "spiritual exercise" is an apostle, who has been working with Jesus Himself throughout the day, in accordance with the meditation of the Kingdom: "whoever wishes to come with Me..."¹⁰⁴, and who at the close of the day wants to talk over what the Lord has done during all this time "as one who speaks with his friend".¹⁰⁵ For the day, which is about to begin, there is prayer for the grace to live each moment sharing the mission of Jesus.

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

4.3. Criteria for apostolic discernment

to action. This continuous interrelationship of experience, reflection and action is the key to the Ignatian process of formation.

¹⁰³ Some types of examen proposed in the book of the Exercises are: the "Fifth Addition of Prayer" (SpEx 77); the "First Method of Prayer" which can be considered as a prayer of examen (SpEx 241); the "Particular Examen" (SpEx 24-31); and the Examen on the Exercises and Additions (SpEx 90, 160, 207); the General Examen (SpEx 32-43). See in the support material "Review of the Day".

¹⁰⁴ SpEx 95.

¹⁰⁵ SpEx 54.

122. The CLC General Principles underline the need for apostolic discernment.¹⁰⁶ They also propose a number of criteria, inspired by those drawn up by St Ignatius, for choosing our ministries and specific missions. Everything, which comes to us from Ignatius, in this case apostolic discernment, is marked by the "*magis*" (*the more effective*). His zeal for the greater glory of God enabled him to seek the most effective means for helping others.
123. This discernment of the more appropriate means is made in the Spirit of Christ, by means of the rules for discerning which interior movements arise from the same Spirit, through our contemplation of the life of Jesus. These rules have already been mentioned in the paragraph concerning the choice of our personal vocation. It is a process, which involves the heart no less than the head. Ignatius proposes, however, certain rational criteria (cf. *Three times suitable for making an election* SpEx 175) with a view to discovering the greatest service, which can be rendered to our neighbour in particular circumstances.
124. The Ignatian criteria for apostolic discernment are found not only in the Spiritual Exercises but above all in the *Autobiography*, where personal progress and processes are illustrated and in his *Letters*, where Ignatius suggests strategies for definitive objectives and proposes means for attaining them. In the *Constitutions of the Society*¹⁰⁷, Ignatius makes a systematic presentation of the criteria for

¹⁰⁶ "The community helps us to live the different dimensions of this apostolic commitment, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the *Review of Life* and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense even to the most ordinary parts of our daily life" (GP 8). "Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the coming of the Kingdom, each individual member is called to be active in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ presence, concretely into our world." (GP 12b)

¹⁰⁷ Constitutions 618, 622...

choosing ministries.¹⁰⁸ These criteria can help us in CLC to define our own apostolic mission¹⁰⁹; for example, that CLC members should be open to what is more *urgent and more universal*.

¹⁰⁸ *The universal and most enduring good*: “to think globally and act locally”; in other words “to set up structures rather than one-time events”, to develop actions and services which can be replicated or repeated by the participants.

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

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

¹⁰⁹ GP 8c.

II. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY (CLC)

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

A. THE CLC PROCESS AS A COMMUNITY

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

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

128. It usually begins by becoming a *community of friends in the Lord*. This first goal gives direction to the group and offers the necessary basis for the community's development. So that the community may have the richness of "friends in the Lord" right from the beginning, it is important that a true experience of God is lived within it.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ "In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God." (GP 12a)

129. After an initial stage when the community is full of hope, there may be moments of crises and tension, and even of collective sin. At such times, it is important that the guide help them to see and live these moments as times of growth, purification and reconciliation in and with Christ (First week of the Exercises).
130. Thanks to this experience a new desire begins to unfold in the community: to be united to Christ in his mission to the world and to direct one's life more and more in the light of Christ's choices (Second week and on of the Exercises). Contact with poverty, marginalization, and other painful situations in our world and the frequent practice of the Spiritual Exercises, personalized and complete, if possible, will be necessary. This will be the moment for *vocational discernment* (for young people the election to a state of life, of profession etc...for adults a reform of life) and later on of opening oneself as a person and as a community to an ongoing permanent apostolic discernment in the following of Christ.
131. Thus the community becomes an *apostolic community*, made up of adults "*who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him for the building of His Reign, and who have recognised Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church*"¹¹¹; consequently, they make a Permanent Commitment to it. The members of a group will help each other to keep alive their apostolic zeal and to render the quality of service that the Church expects of them.
132. It sees itself not only as a community of apostles, that is of persons more or less committed to their own individual missions, but rather, it is an apostolic community in which the members, although dedicated to their own different tasks, share together their lives and the way they each carry out their mission. They also discern together the object and content of each other's mission. They are sent by the community and, with its help, evaluate how they are following Christ who was sent by the Father.

¹¹¹ GP 4.

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

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLC COMMUNITY

1. A "lived" community

134. *"To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we form communities of those who strongly desire to unite their lives completely with their Christian faith according to our charism."*¹¹²

135. *Vocation in CLC is communal.* It is lived out with the support of the community. The commitment of the individual to the World Community is expressed through a *particular community*, freely chosen¹¹³, made up of a maximum of twelve people, generally from a similar background.¹¹⁴ Each member of this community of friends in the Lord is called to accompany its members in discerning their personal vocations and lives as collaborators in the mission of Christ¹¹⁵. It can be said that community is a privileged way in which CLC implements Ignatian Spirituality and apostolic service in its members' lives.¹¹⁶

¹¹² GP 4.

¹¹³ GP 7.

¹¹⁴ GN 39b.

¹¹⁵ GP 12c.

¹¹⁶ GP 11.

136. The CLC is a "*gathering together in Christ, a cell of His mystical Body*", which is based on faith and a common vocation, rather than on natural affinities. "*We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary, as our mother.*"¹¹⁷

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

138. With some exceptions, the members of a group do not normally share goods in common and live under one roof. Nevertheless, CLC is a *community of life*, and as such is "*a unity expressed in love and action*"¹¹⁸, because its members are engaged in:

- ♦ following the same particular vocation in the Church and adopting a way of life consequent on that;¹¹⁹
- ♦ sharing their problems, their aspirations, their plans and various aspects of their lives, and helping each other in this way to live their Christian faith fully;¹²⁰
- ♦ helping each other in their spiritual and material needs with a spirit of solidarity;
- ♦ undertaking a common mission, despite different social backgrounds, ages, characters or tasks.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ GP 7.

¹¹⁸ GP 7.

¹¹⁹ GP 4 and 7.

¹²⁰ GP 12c.

¹²¹ GP 8.

139. The CLC process of formation entails the mutual assistance of its members towards apostolic and spiritual growth, by trying to integrate their faith with their lives. The community is able to continue the dynamics generated by the Spiritual Exercises¹²² so that members are better prepared for apostolic witness and service.¹²³

140. The CLC community supports the human, spiritual and apostolic development of each of its members, especially through:

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

141. The most concrete expression of this community life is its *meeting* which should be held each week or fortnight. Regularity is necessary for real growth in the group.¹²⁴ At these meetings, important elements of CLC formation and activities take place, appropriate for a community that lives on mission and which is engaged in apostolic service. Group bonds are reinforced by a better knowledge of each other and by reciprocal gestures of love and service.

¹²² GN 39a.

¹²³ GP 4.

¹²⁴ GN 39b.

142. The life of the CLC is centred on the *Eucharist*. This is why all its members participate periodically in the celebration of Eucharist together¹²⁵, expressing sacramentally that intimate communion, which is based on Christ and on the Church.

2. *A community on mission*

143. To live on mission is the specific way of being for CLC. All that the community is and does receives its sense from the mission of the Church itself.¹²⁶ CLC is a community on mission or an *apostolic community*.

2.1. Mission always communal

144. Even when apostolic service is offered on an individual basis, the service is always part of the mission received in CLC. Mission is always communal.

145. It is the *being sent by the Church* that gives a sense of mission to the apostolic tasks and humanitarian services of the members of CLC. The world community, integrated in the life and the mission of the Church, is the fundamental mediator of our mission. We receive this mission in our local and national community.

146. Moreover, mission is a common mission because it is the *fruit of communal discernment* at the local, national or world level. Thanks to the community, a personal discernment is completed by a communal discernment.

147. The small group or local community is indispensable to our discernment of mission. This group is not always the place where all initiatives are taken and it does not necessarily have the means to sustain some apostolic activities. Other structures, such as the General Assembly and the Executive Councils, are needed at the

¹²⁵ GN 40.

¹²⁶ GP 4 and 8

World or National Community levels when more universal apostolic priorities and concrete plans for action and collaboration by CLC are undertaken.

2.2. Apostolic communal discernment

148. Apostolic communal discernment is a way of implementing what Vatican II called *discerning the signs of the times*, and involves the following stages:

- the community is *attentive to and capable of opening* itself to others, to hearing their deepest desires and recognising their most pressing needs in order to discover the most urgent and universal tasks which should be undertaken, and to offer more efficient, radical and global solutions to these problems.
- the community *prays for the grace of availability*. In this prayer, we receive the fruit of a community, which desires to be attentive and open to that Spirit, who calls us to service and sends us on mission. This personal prayer is shared with the group.
- the community that *deliberates, sends and confirms our mission* is able to make decisions, to make choices and assume apostolic tasks in which, one way or another, all the group members are engaged.

3. A world community

3.1. The universality of CLC

149. The communal nature of CLC reflects the tension that is to be found between what is individual and what is universal, between the local community and the world community. CLC is basically a sharing of life at the local level, but it also has a universal dimension.

150. Following a communal discernment, which began at the Rome Assembly in '79 and ended at Providence in '82, the World Federation decided to become *one world community* governed by a

General Assembly, whose meetings are privileged moments when the community discerns CLC's mission.

151. At the beginning a group, united with Fr. Jean Leunis SJ, founded the Marian Congregation. As the number of groups grew, they were attached to a main community in Rome (1574) called the "*Prima Primaria*". In 1953, the Marian Congregations were united in a World Federation.
152. In 1967, the General Principles were approved and the renewal of the spirit was expressed by changing the name to World Federation of Christian Life Communities. In 1982, the World Assembly at Providence approved being *one unique World Community*, living in local communities. Each member of CLC belongs, first of all, to the World Community through his or her specific community. "*We each commit ourselves to the World Community through a freely chosen local community*".¹²⁷
153. Thus the universality of CLC is visible in our *one* world community. This universal dimension ought to be present in every member and in each local community because it is rooted in our theology and is an essential element of our Ignatian Spirituality.

3.2. The theological roots of the universality of CLC: the Trinity, Jesus and the world

154. The General Principles speak to us of the three Divine Persons who, contemplating divided humanity, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women to make them free from all that drive them.¹²⁸ This redeeming initiative was expressed in the Incarnation of the Son and awakens - as a grace - in the members of CLC the desire to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ.

¹²⁷ GP 7.

¹²⁸ GP 1.

155. The more deeply we live our faith in Jesus, the deeper will be our desire for communion with all men and women going beyond the small community in order to reach "all persons of good will"¹²⁹ as the Trinity did in Christ. At the World Assembly in Rome 1979, it was said:

- *We are called to the deepest meaning of community. Our community is called to reflect God's family. God is community.*
- *CLC members are to contemplate the world into which they are sent, in the manner of the Trinity, and accomplish in their lives the task, which the Eternal King wishes to realize in the history of each one.*¹³⁰

3.3. A community at the service of the world

156. "We aim to extend these bonds of unity to the National and World CLC and to the Church communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will."¹³¹

157. During the World Assembly in Rome 1979, a communal discernment was made which led to the decision to transform the World Federation of Christian Life Communities into one World Community. The main reasons, which led to making this choice, were as follows:

- ◆ sensitivity and commitment to the needs and problems of all humanity.¹³²

¹²⁹ GP 7.

¹³⁰ GP 4.

¹³¹ GP 7.

¹³² "We must have great sensitivity to the needs of others. The universal dimension of CLC is a challenge and an ideal which invites us to commit ourselves even more in every way, since we are all equally precious in the sight of God. A member of CLC and one small group, that has this universal vision, open themselves to Christ's mission which extends to all." (Rome 1979)

- ♦ being open to people from other countries and other cultures.¹³³
- ♦ the need for unity of vision and action in the face of the world's problems.¹³⁴
- ♦ being available for what is most urgent and most universal. As members of the CLC we are *predestined for nothing, but available for everything*. While other associations within the Church undertake specific apostolic tasks, CLC remains open to serve all the needs of the Church and the world, whatever they are.¹³⁵
- ♦ the mutual enrichment of communities.¹³⁶

4. *An ecclesial community*

¹³³ “As members of a World Community we are called to establish close bonds with those from other cultures, overcoming all prejudice, and opening our eyes to the points of view of those from other countries and taking an interest in those who live beyond our own frontiers in order to discover the richness of life each has.” (Rome '79)

“The world has need of the witness of a community founded on a love which surpasses national frontiers” (ibid).

¹³⁴ “As part of the Church, CLC is called to assume a global responsibility in following the same objectives and having the same world vision, despite differences.” (Rome '79)

“As a world community, united in front of common problems, we are able to provide a more adequate response.” (ibid)

¹³⁵ “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.” (GP 8)

¹³⁶ “This universality invites us to enrich each other by a deep sharing of our spirituality, our formation programmes, spiritual perception and resources. It is in the level to which each member and each community lives in this universal dimension that we can see national problems objectively and open ourselves yet further to the needs of all the association.” (Rome, '79)

4.1. The basis of the CLC's ecclesial character

158. CLC was born and is growing within the Church, and draws from the Church its identity and its universality. This vital relationship with the Church is founded on union with Christ Himself. Union with Christ leads to *union with the Church where Christ here and now continues His mission of salvation.*¹³⁷

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

- ♦ a Church where one finds communion within a diversity of charisms and ministries, and a shared responsibility for the fulfilment of Christ's mission;
- ♦ a Church which is not an end in itself, but "*receives a mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the reign of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom.*"¹³⁸

4.2. The relationship of CLC with the Church

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

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

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

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

¹³⁷ GP 6.

¹³⁸ Lumen Gentium 5

- in a liturgical and sacramental life, which, centred on the Eucharist, is "a concrete experience of unity in love and action".¹³⁹
- in the ordinary life of the Church, by participating in Church activities and identifying, effectively and lovingly, with her needs and problems, and supporting her progress.

162.c. *Collaboration in the mission of the Church.*

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

163.d. *Solidarity.*

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

¹³⁹ GP 7.

III. COMMITMENT IN CLC

COMMITMENT IN THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND NORMS.

164. *"Membership of the Christian Life Community requires a personal vocation. For a period of time determined in the General Norms, the candidate is introduced to the CLC way of life. This time is allotted for the candidate and the wider community to discern the candidate's vocation. Once a decision has been made, and approved by the wider community, the member makes a Temporary Commitment, to allow time to test, with the help of the community, his or her ability to live according to the end and spirit of CLC. Then, after a suitable period of time, determined by the General Norms, a Permanent Commitment is made."*¹⁴⁰
165. *"In whichever way admission takes place, the new members must be helped by the Community to decide whether a call, together with an ability and a willingness to live it, are present, and to become identified with the wider Christian Life Community. After a period of time, normally no longer than four years and no less than one, they assume a Temporary Commitment to this way of life. An experience of the Spiritual Exercises is strongly recommended as a means of arriving at this personal decision."*¹⁴¹
166. *"The temporary engagement continues as such until, after a process of discernment, the member expresses his or her Permanent Commitment to CLC, unless he or she freely withdraws from the community or is excluded by it. The length of time between temporary and Permanent Commitment should ordinarily be no more than eight years and no less than two."*¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ GP 10.

¹⁴¹ GN 2.

¹⁴² GN 3.

167. "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 the community."¹⁴³

A. REASONS FOR COMMITMENT

There are many reasons for commitment, the most important being:

168.1 - ***The fundamental Trinitarian Theology.*** The roots of commitment in CLC are found in God. The Principle and Foundation of our commitment is that God establishes an unbreakable covenant with His people. The Lord is the first to commit Himself in a permanent and visible way. God has been faithful to this covenant again and again throughout history as witnessed by His liberating deeds. But, it is in the Incarnation that He shows us "without a shadow of doubt" the greatest and irrevocable sign of this covenant.¹⁴⁴

169.2 - ***Anthropological basis:*** Human beings are not pure spirit and need to express their deepest experiences through the senses. Our relationship with the mystery of God is best expressed in visible, sacramental signs. We are, equally, part of the times in which we live, so our spiritual and apostolic experiences are lived in these times. Thus, Temporary or Permanent Commitment with the CLC is perceived through the senses. Permanent Commitment signifies that, within time, we pattern our response according to the faithful love of God and the fullness of the mystery of Christ who brings all things to Himself.¹⁴⁵

170.3 - ***Communal basis - the Church.*** We do not live our vocation and mission as isolated individuals. We live them in community and we proclaim before that community of friends and companions in the

¹⁴³ GN 4.

¹⁴⁴ 2 Cor 1: 19-20

¹⁴⁵ Lk 9:62; Rom 12:1

Lord that we are in and with the Church. The community has the right to see, hear, feel and appreciate our commitment. This helps us to live coherently the way of life to which we have committed ourselves.¹⁴⁶

171. Thus our commitment is to present ourselves freely before the Lord and His people and to give a visible sign of that which we have lived and discerned in our hearts. It is a gesture somewhat similar to a marital engagement. In proclaiming before God and our companions that we have committed ourselves to a spirituality, a way of life and a mission, we are confirming before them our discernment and the gift of ourselves. We proclaim publicly, that the Christian Life Community is the body within which we live the charism that the Spirit of the Lord has given to us.

B. TEMPORARY COMMITMENT

1. The process leading to Temporary Commitment

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

173. 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*".¹⁴⁷

174. 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

¹⁴⁶ Mt 6:14-16; 1Thess 1:6-10; Heb 10:23-25

¹⁴⁷ GN 2.

CLC's way of life and growth.¹⁴⁸ These ways are introduced gradually, as part of a formation process during which spiritual guidance¹⁴⁹ plays an important role.

175. 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 part¹⁵⁰, sustains the person with an attitude of discernment and encourages them to take further steps towards growth and commitment.

176. 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.

2. The purpose and meaning of Temporary Commitment

177. Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life.¹⁵⁰ This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation*.

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

¹⁴⁸ GP 12.

¹⁴⁹ GN 41b.

¹⁵⁰ GN 39a.

- 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.¹⁵¹

179. 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.

180. 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"¹⁵² toward an apostolic way of life.

181. 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.

¹⁵¹ SpEx 189.

¹⁵² SpEx 97.

182. 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.
183. 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.
184. 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*¹⁵³, to God who loved us first.
185. 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.

3. Ways of approaching Temporary Commitment

186. 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.
187. 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).

¹⁵³ GP 2.

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.

188 In a well-guided CLC process, this time of discernment of an explicit Temporary Commitments 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, has the wrong meaning or connotation;
- difficulties arise from the way in which commitment is expressed and celebrated.

189. 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.

C. PERMANENT COMMITMENT

190. *Permanent Commitment* corresponds in the vocational process of the CLC member, to the stage of full apostolic life: when personal vocation is lived as apostolic mission. The unfolding and expression of all vocations is mission. Those who make their Permanent Commitment are those members who have completed their vocational discernment and have offered themselves to and embraced the CLC's lifestyle. This stage is necessarily linked to *apostolic discernment*, as an indispensable element for developing mission.

191. Temporary Commitment in CLC is linked to the formation process and corresponds to the call of the Eternal King and the "election". *Permanent Commitment* follows from the CLC way of life, and is in harmony with the trustful surrender of the Contemplation for attaining Love. Commitment is the "*Take, Lord and receive...*" as a response to the commitment of God who 1) *has given me so much*; 2)

*dwells in me, giving me existence and meaning; 3) labours and works for me; 4) seeing how all good things and gifts descend from above... just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source, so too from God comes power, goodness, justice, mercy and the necessary desire to live out our commitment.*¹⁵⁴

192. Permanent Commitment is the culmination of our vocational discernment in which we express our desire to discover God's will and fulfil it in our apostolic life, in answer to our specific call and our readiness to be sent on mission.¹⁵⁵

1. Permanent Commitment

193. Rather than seeing Permanent Commitment as a risky decision, which limits future freedom, it is important to realise that inner freedom is the foundation of this decision and one of its fruits. Real freedom exists when people are able to direct their lives according to their deepest desires. Thus, they are free inasmuch as they are able to live according to the deep desires the Spirit of the Lord has awakened in their hearts.

194. Our free acts are not simply based on will power, but are acts of faith and hope. The radical quality of our commitment is not so much based on our capabilities, but on *"the freedom with which Christ freed us and means us to remain free"*.¹⁵⁶

195. For this reason when CLC members reach the conclusion that proclaiming Christ and His Good News to the world around them is what *"I want and desire, and it is my deliberate determination"*¹⁵⁷,

¹⁵⁴ SpEx 235-237.

¹⁵⁵ GP 8c.

¹⁵⁶ Gal 5:1

¹⁵⁷ SpEx 98.

they know that the Lord has guided their steps through a long journey. Freedom to commit themselves does not just mean being ready to choose. It really means giving themselves, surrendering to God, and trusting Him totally.

196. It is in this spirit that St Ignatius prays: *"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will - all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours. Do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, for that is enough for me."*¹⁵⁸ Our freedom comes from God's love and is offered to Him. God loved us first; God committed Himself to us first.

2. Public Commitment

197. By bearing witness before the CLC, those making a commitment ask the Lord for the grace that they may give their generous response to His fidelity. By doing so in front of the whole community, they are asking for its help: that the community may accompany them on their journey. The external expression of this internal offering somehow gives it a sacramental character.

198. For the rest of the community, the public celebration of commitment bears a certain sacramental dimension. It is a visible sign of the Spirit at work in each member leading, him or her, to a greater commitment to their mission. It is also a sign building and strengthening the community in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, sent by the Father. With a spirit of faith, the public commitment of a member of the community is an invitation to *"rid ourselves of every burden and persevere"* in the service to the one who has called us into community, *"keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith"*.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ SpEx 234.

¹⁵⁹ Heb 12:1-4

199. This is the time for confirmation of the Election, to ensure a strong commitment to mission and service.¹⁶⁰ The Spiritual Exercises should play a key role in this life process of living mission helping us to follow, more perfectly, the poor and humble Christ.¹⁶¹

200. At this stage, formation should be considered as "ongoing formation" so that we are always "in good apostolic shape", and thus able to give at any time the most adequate response to the question: *What shall I do for Christ?*

¹⁶⁰ GP 11.

¹⁶¹ GP 8d.