



**Christian Life Community**  
Australia

# Colloquy



**on**



# Commitment

**Do not be afraid. I am with you.**  
**Isaiah 41:10**

# Colloquy on Commitment

## Background:

This booklet contains the materials for the Colloquy on Commitment, one of the means of discernment for those considering making Commitment within the World Community of CLC. . The aim of this Colloquy is to help participants to understand better what CLC Commitment is, and to discern further their own call to such Commitment.

## Process:

- The Colloquy process involves four meetings of 60-90 minutes each.
- Some groups will meet virtually – by Skype or phone conference – while others may meet face to face.
- The meeting dates will be determined by each group, hopefully allowing adequate time for reflection between meetings
- For each meeting, there are recommended prayer texts and readings for reflection. Our response to these will form the basic material for the Colloquy meetings.
- At the start, we have a Composition of Place – two pages giving the context for this Colloquy at the international and national levels. This is worth reflecting on as we begin, and may also come into the discussions of the first Colloquy session. After this Composition of Place, the four basic ‘modules’ are:
  1. Understanding Commitment: The Basic Documents
  2. Understanding Commitment: Deepening Our Understanding
  3. Do I feel called to Commitment?
  4. Review of the Colloquy

In any such process, some prefer more readings, some less; some like simpler reflections, some prefer more theological ones. We have included a few pages of readings for each session of the Colloquy. For those who prefer more reading, there are two appendices. The first is a theologically rich, rather long reflection from CLC France. The second is taken from the section on Temporary Commitment in the document “The CLC Charism”.

## Dispositions:

Ignatius speaks of the Colloquy in the Spiritual Exercises as a conversation between friends (#54). So we are invited to enter into this conversation ready to share as friends in the Lord what arises in our prayer, as we do in CLC meetings. Like any good Ignatian process, this Colloquy involves both the head and the heart – that is, it is both about coming to a better *understanding* of what is being discussed and also seeing how it *moves our hearts*, personally and collectively. Some elements will be more directed to one or the other, but all involve both head and heart in some way.

Let’s enter this process in the way Ignatius would have us – with generosity and magnanimity [Sp Exx 5], with the desire for freedom from whatever would cloud our minds and bind our hearts in relation to this issue [Sp Exx 1], and praying for the gift to become aware of and to understand the different movements of the spirits within us, the good, to receive them, and the bad to reject them [Sp Exx 313].

## COMPOSITION OF PLACE

### Where we are at in relation to Commitment:

#### 1. International situation:

The CLC recent evolution as an apostolic community – “apostolic body”, in the designation of Nairobi 2003 – has given more and more relevance to the meaning of CLC Commitment. The public expression of the Commitment usually carries with it a greater consciousness of CLC identity and a greater involvement with the apostolic mission and in the life of the Community.

Although we may now see a much clearer connection between Commitment and the apostolic community CLC wants to become, the first reference to Commitment dates from the approval of the first General Principles, in 1967. Already at the beginning of its regeneration, the CLC – at that time still a federation of communities – thought it crucial to underline the bond tying each member to the whole, through a certain way of life. Today, it continues to specifically consecrate a chapter (GP 10) to the value of that bond.

Along its history, CLC went on creating and identifying a path of growth in which the desire to make the Commitment has been recognised, in the experience of many, as a sign and an incentive for a growing adhesion to the CLC way of life. It’s the role of the Community to help and encourage all to a permanent development, respecting, however, the calling experience and the kind of response each one feels moved to give.

Temporary and Permanent Commitment were provided for in the revised General Principles and Norms of CLC that were the outcome of a global discernment associated with the CLC World Assembly of 1990 (Guadalajara, Mexico) and subsequently approved by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. General Principles ## 7, 10 and General Norms Norms ## 1-14 (especially 2-5) are the key references, which we shall reflect on in the next unit of this Colloquy. But we can note at this point the basic idea, contained in the section on “Membership”, that members should be helped by the community to decide whether they are called to *live the CLC way of life* and to become *identified with the wider Christian Life Community*. When this decision is made and the national community confirms it, an individual is ready to make Temporary Commitment. After some further progress in the CLC way of life, they may later discern to express their Permanent Commitment to CLC.

The World Assembly in Fatima in 2008 confirmed that Commitment is part of the CLC way of proceeding and invited national communities to “evaluate their current practices in relation to Commitment.” The World Assembly in 2013 in Lebanon recommended that EXCO continue to facilitate our world community’s self-understanding concerning commitment,

#### 2. Other countries’ experiences:

A majority of communities have processes in place for members to avail themselves of the possibility. Generally, it is seen to have significant implications for CLC at both the personal and communal levels. At the personal level, the general experience across the globe has been that the experience of Commitment has been an important transition for those concerned, especially in terms of a deepened sense of vocation to CLC, led into by an election and understood in terms of a refinement of our basic baptismal commitment. At the communal level, national groups have discovered a stronger CLC institutional identity, a growth in apostolic strength, and a confidence about institutional presence through time.

This widespread availability of Commitment does not mean that large numbers are necessarily taking up the option in each national community. The percentage varies greatly, from 20-30% in

some communities to as low as 1% in others. Whatever the rate, though, it is regarded as an important aspect of CLC life for both the individual and the community. Another variable factor is what Commitment involves in concrete terms for those who make it. Some countries see people in Commitment as being more “available” to take on responsibilities; some have greater financial co-responsibility; many look to those in Commitment as ‘wisdom figures’. National communities largely determine what the implications of Commitment will be for that national community and these may well develop as the communities reflect on and experience Commitment as a normal part of their life.

The processes a person makes Commitment also vary between national communities, but all involve discernment about “readiness” for Commitment, often indicated by a set of criteria. There are always two aspects to this discernment – the discernment by the interested CLC member and the discernment by the wider CLC community. Later on, we will note the developing criteria and process set up by Australian NEXCO.

Commitment is formally made in a Commitment ceremony, a simple, meaningful ceremony to help facilitate the sacramental character of the event, and designed according to local needs and culture. At the heart of this ceremony will be the statement of Commitment by those involved, designed by the national community. A key element would be that this commitment (ultimately to Christ) is to the CLC World Community and its way of life. There may also be references to vocation, service, the Church, St Ignatius and Mary, our Mother and intercessor in fulfilling our vocation. Typically, such an opportunity for the expression of Commitment is provided for members once a year, usually at some CLC gathering. It is an occasion for considerable celebration.

### 3. Australian discussion:

CLC in Australia has discussed formal Commitment over many years, even decades; in the last few years, this discussion has been more focused and structured. At our Gathering in Mittagong, 2010, a session in Open Space was devoted to Commitment in CLC, and those involved in that discussion requested further exchange on the topic. Thus, in August 2010, the National Formation Group sent an initial set of reflection questions to all CLC members. In light of the feedback from these reflections, it was agreed to offer a Colloquy on Commitment in which any member – whether personally interested in Commitment or not – could take part as another stage of the national community’s discernment. Finally, in July 2012, the National Assembly – CLC Australia’s governing body - discerned Australia’s readiness to make formal Commitment available to those members who wished to take this step. The Assembly asked the new NEXCO to develop a process to enable a Temporary Commitment ceremony to take place at the National Gathering in 2014. Subsequent to this 14 people made Permanent commitment and 1 person made Temporary Commitment at this event.

We should note that there has been some unease amongst some CLC members in Australia over this question of Commitment. Three key reasons were put forward: firstly, that such formal commitment is more appropriate to the way of life of religious or priests than of lay people; secondly, that such formal ceremonies are not part of the Australian way of doing things; thirdly, that such a process seems to suggest that people who may have been wholeheartedly involved in CLC for years are not already committed to CLC.

Without here answering each of these points in detail, the National Assembly took each of them into account in its discernment. In terms of the first, a number of lay communities within the Church make commitment of various sorts, though different from the obligations undertaken by

priests or religious. In terms of the second, it was noted that Australian CLC is part of a World Community that endorses such Commitment; the question was raised as to the basis on which we can deny it to those members wishing to move towards this. In terms of the third, there is no doubt at all that many members already show a tremendous degree of commitment and have done so over many years, with their ongoing faithfulness to that group life and process which lie at the heart of CLC, and to service within CLC at various levels. But Commitment with the Big C refers to a formal and public commitment to membership, not just of a local group, or region, or national community, but of CLC as a World Community. It is this which will hopefully become more apparent in the various readings for reflection in this Colloquy process.

**COLLOQUY 1**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**The Basic Documents**

**Preparation before Session 1**

**Texts for Prayer, Reflection, and Discernment**

John 1:35-39

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

**CLC General Principles 7 & 10**

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

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

**CLC General Norms 2-5**

2. In whichever way admission takes place, the new members must be helped by the Community to assimilate the CLC way of life, and to decide whether a call, an ability and a willingness to live it are present, and to become identified with the wider Christian Life Community. After a period of time ordinarily no longer than four years and no less than one, they assume a temporary commitment to this way of life. An experience of the Sp. Ex. is strongly recommended as a means of arriving at this personal decision.

3. The temporary commitment continues as such until, after a process of discernment, the member expresses his or her permanent commitment to CLC, unless he or she freely withdraws from the Community or is excluded by it. The length of time between temporary and permanent commitment should be ordinarily no more than eight years and no less than two.

4. An experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises in one of their several forms (in daily life, a closed month, retreats over several years), precedes permanent commitment to Christian Life Community.

5. The forms of these personal commitments are left to the National Communities. It is suggested that a printed model of these personal commitments be drawn up by each National Community and that they include an explicit reference to the acceptance of the General Principles of CLC.

## CLC Charism 168-171:

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

168. *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.<sup>1</sup>

169. *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.<sup>2</sup>

170. *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 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.

## Projects 145:

Commitment gives fuller expression to personal vocation, to strengthening CLC apostolic capability, to building CLC identity and visibility in the world and more.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor 1: 19-20

<sup>2</sup> Lk 9:62; Rom 12:1

<sup>3</sup> Mt 6:14-16; 1Thess 1:6-10; Heb 10:23-25

**COLLOQUY 1**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**The Basic Documents**

**Notes from My Preparatory Prayer and Reflection**

**COLLOQUY 1**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**The Basic Documents**

**Colloquy Group Meeting**

**Opening Prayer** based on John 1:35-39

**Questions for sharing:**

1. Where am I as I start this Colloquy in terms of my *understanding* of CLC Commitment?
2. What further light have I found through reflection on this prayer passage/s and documents?
3. Where am I as I start this Colloquy in terms of my own *desire for* Commitment?

**Notes:**

**COLLOQUY 2**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**Deepening Our Understanding**

**Preparation before Session 2**

**Texts for Prayer, Reflection, and Discernment**

**Acts 2:42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**The CLC, a way of life**

**Guy Maginzi** (*Former World CLC Executive Secretary*) (Progressio 2008 Number 1)

The CLC is a way of life. It is through this brief phrase that the CLC was introduced to me by one of its members. I had just taken part in the first CLC meeting of my life. And the phrase has been effective in introducing the novice that I was to the identity of the community. Twenty-three years later - still - this phrase resonates strongly in me on reading this issue of *Progressio*, for it opens up important aspects of our identity.

Nowadays, the question of identity is both sensitive and crucial. Sensitive, for our world, which constantly reduces the distance between peoples, accepts uneasily the assertion of identity. The risk of intolerance and rejection of anyone who does not share my identity is never far away when the pursuit of identity becomes too vehement. Paradoxically, the gradual discovery of the difference of the other seems to invite a better knowledge of myself. So discovering who I am becomes imperative for a dialogue with the other and for building a mature relationship.

The CLC vocation lies at the heart of our CLC identity. As our Lord and Master gives us the grace to know Him better, this vocation becomes clearer to our spirit and more and more precious to our heart. Jose Reyes shares his experience of the journey as a couple, speaking of this vocation which is born and grows through desolation and consolation.

What place would commitment have in this vocation? What form would it take to become a bearer of significance as much for those making a commitment as for the community? There are so many questions for those of us who have acknowledged the CLC as our special vocation in the church. A sharing by CLC France helps us place the steps of commitment within our CLC journey, by stripping away in particular the possible shortcomings of a hidden identity.

Formation is one of the keys for discovering and deepening the CLC vocation. A return to the experience of the Latin American *Magis* programme reminds us of this. A beautiful consolation, as is the birth of every new community. The city of Kisangani in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is another place where the CLC presence is developing.

Our presence is not only geographic, it is also 'apostolic', as is witnessed by our presence in the United Nations, our participation in the now-defunct conference of international Catholic organisations, and in the new Catholic-inspired Forum of NGOs. That is our CLC identity, too. That is the CLC too, a way of life.

## The CLC Vocation: An Evolution

*Jose Reyes S (CLC Chile) for CLC Uruguay* (Progressio 2008 Number 1)

I have been asked to reflect on how the CLC vocation evolves in the different stages of life, acknowledging that through the years it grows from an intuition or hunch into a permanent and stable style of life. This work has already been done in several documents, particularly in our "CLC *Charism*" and in the plans of formation of each national community. Perhaps the Spiritual Exercises are the best model for understanding our growth from the loving initiative of God passing through contemplation to reach love, going through purification, the election and transformation.

Nevertheless, I dare, as a kind of complement, to meditate on the matter from another perspective. I have taken up some old notes and re-edited them from this point of view. The method that I follow is analogical, since I appeal to my own evolutionary experience in the relationship of a couple, and I try to establish a parallel, looking at the CLC vocation as a relationship that keeps on growing, passing through crises, sometimes inconvenient, seeking greater fullness and maturity, advancing toward stability and fecundity. It is an adventure that is expressed in different forms of commitment. As in marriage - an appropriate image when talking about the Church and the community according to Saint Paul - we live different moments of growth in the relationship, now no longer between a man and woman, but between each one of us and the community. This exposition pays much attention to the affections and, according to how they develop, necessarily moving toward the election and commitment. Permit me then to propose some stages of growth toward a mature and stable vocation, using my personal experience which I suppose is incomplete.

### 1. Initial attraction

CLC presents itself to me as something attractive, there is "something" in it that fascinates me, something that moves my affection and my desires. That "*something*" is sometimes vague, diffused. There is a bit of "*premonition*" in this, and little intellectual knowledge. There are "*waves*" in the air; it is a "*physical-chemical*" problem.

The attraction moves me first to one encounter or step which inaugurates a series of other encounters through which a relationship, a process is developed. The first encounter supposes a sense of risk, because things are not clear. The difficulty in accepting the risk is at the basis of much affective and spiritual stagnation.

As in human love, this first stage is somewhat romantic and irresponsible, but it is foundational and it will mark the whole relationship. It is not centered in the fulfillment of the needs of the other, but rather in satisfying my own needs in this relationship. The other appears somewhat idealized, and I, somewhat irresponsible.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be of a good and joyful humor but diffused. It will allow me to be comfortable in CLC, where I will only take what gratifies me or what I find attractive.

*"Sir, Where do you live?"*

*"All remained in admiration "*

### 2. Progressive knowledge

The contours begin to be clarified; I begin to identify and express the elements of the initial attraction. There is a need for time, coexistence, the expression of one's own feelings, desires, ideas, etc. We need long conversations and walks in order to know one another better.

I also know what was not present in the initial attraction, including less attractive aspects. In this stage, the "I" continues to be protected. We seek to discover more knowledge of the other and are not concerned with the exposure of ourselves. There is an attitude of observation, critical, reserved, although interested and expectant.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will lead to me to actively seek a greater knowledge. I will want to know more clearly why I find the person attractive, and for that, I will visit her periodically; I will have long walks and conversations.

*"He stayed with them"*



### 3. Alteration of oneself

In the relationship of a couple, if we get through this first stage, the other begins to enter my life, to inconvenience me: Why didn't you come yesterday? Can you come to get me? At what hour are you going to arrive today? It touches my personal time, my vacations, my likes and preferences of programs, etc. The inconvenience begins to be invasive: questionings, mutual demands, fraternal correction, search of definitions, etc.

The alteration of oneself includes the two senses of the word alteration: *"to change"* and *"be bewildered"* (*"descentrarse"*).

*"Are not you able to watch with me?"*

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be in the line of a discernment: Do I really want the other in my life? Do I recognize in the other an opportunity, an invitation from God? I will use the means characteristic of discernment: prayer, accompaniment, the revision of life in community, the examination of conscience. Perseverance is the key. I will allow myself to be bothered: I will pay the quotas, I will respond to the letters, I will make the Exercises, I will come to the Masses, I will sell tickets for the raffle, I will go to the *"formation Thursdays"* etc.

### 4. Crisis of the relationship

The crisis is an experience of contradiction: I want to or I don't want to; I am able to and I am not able to. In relation to the past, the crisis is experienced as a nostalgia for lost freedom: I didn't have to give an account to anyone. I did what I wanted, I had more free time. The idealization of the past and the exaggeration of the present difficulties.

In relation to the future, the crisis is experienced as a fear of the radicality of the commitment. I sense that I am risking my whole life. What more can I do?

In the present, the crisis is expressed by setbacks, self-defense, protection of my weakness, exaggeration of my powers.

The relationship can end at any stage, but obviously in this stage the rupture occurs with more frequency. If the relationship doesn't break up it continues on to the successive stages.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be deep and discreet, (prayerful). I will seek the source and separate myself from what is accidental. I will center myself in the quality, in the depths.

### 5. Growing intimacy

One of the signs of the overcoming of the crisis is that the barriers and the protection that I have built around myself begin to fall. I accept and I feel that I am accepted, the crisis of identity is overcome and enters into the dynamics of intimacy.

It no longer bothers me to have the other in my life; on the contrary, I like to think of a common project, think of life in two (in the case of a couple), in several (in the case of CLC). The encounters are deeper and less possessive, with greater richness of expression and capacity to listen.

There is a basic trust in the other, a certainty of their presence in my life that permits intimacy even if there are physical separations.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be one of availability: I will offer myself to the other, I allow her to make use of me. At the same time, I will have the freedom of saying no, but without frivolity.

## 6. Fecundity

Love circulates and begins to touch others, it is a sign. The intimacy explodes into fruitfulness. In the case of the couple, the most obvious fruitfulness is the children. There is an unconditional support for the other, so that their vocation be alive. There is a common project, that is developed with realism and perseverance. A style of life is generated in common that touches all spheres of life.

There is a social and ecclesial role of 'shaping', which includes accompanying others, the children, other couples, communities, etc.

I distinguish, for the moment, four phases in this stage of fecundity, and I associate them with my four children:

*1st son: spontaneous and hopeful fecundity.*

*2nd son: conscious and wanted fecundity.*

*3rd son: the realistic and persevering fecundity.*

*4th son: the surprising and renewed fecundity.*

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be creative and productive: visible and attractive before the other, able to propose and execute new ways, encouraging one another, laying foundations and bearing witness, able to write, to rise to new possibilities, open to the universal, free in order to serve.

## 7. The death of parents

In full maturity and with the assumed awareness of the children, one is able to set the stage for the departure of the solid references that preceded us. They could be our own parents or our formators, or those who invited us to start out. The sensation is experienced of having no one ahead of us, of being the first in line. Previous figures and securities have left: we are now the parents, and we experience the weight and the responsibility, but also the trust and the faith. We experience fatigue, we see the problems and the successes with more clarity.

We center more on God, we ourselves become relative. We recognize the love of God that remains in us and move towards others in spite of our limitations.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be of fidelity and donation: unconditional giving to the project, testimony of gratitude, perseverance, hopeful lucidity, greater amplitude and gratuity in our relationships (intergenerational, international, the welcoming, the leadership, the humble services done with maturity and freedom).

## 8. The departure (or the rebellion) of the children

What we saw being born and grow, what bears our imprint, is made free and different; it evolves and changes, taking different directions and options. We experience confusion, we question ourselves on the path we have taken. We idealize the past, we distrust the new. We feel attacked, displaced, lacking value or being used. We live an expressive, affective and intellectual ambivalence. On one hand admiration, on the other hand distrust. On one hand happiness, on another nostalgia. In short, we don't know, we are not sure, but we trust, because we have known how the Spirit works.

If I am in this stage, my commitment will be transparent and discreet, sometimes a reflection of the emotional ambivalence: being and not being, contributing and allow to give, differing and supporting, offering... even accepting to be set aside.

These stages are to be understood through a wide and dynamic approach, without establishing divisions or rigid successions. Also, they must take into account individual differences. What is clear is that the CLC vocation, as any authentic vocation and as human love, has internal movements and many points of inflection. It is always manifested in a commitment that remains but that takes the forms characteristic of the stage that is being lived.

**COLLOQUY 2**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**Deepening Our Understanding**

**Notes from My Preparatory Prayer and Reflection**

**COLLOQUY 2**  
**UNDERSTANDING COMMITMENT:**  
**Deepening Our Understanding**

**Colloquy Group Meeting**

**Opening Prayer** based on Acts 2:42-47

**Questions for sharing:**

1. What further light have you found through reflection on the prayer passage/s and documents?
2. What might be the implications for CLC Australia of having members make Commitment?
3. How is my own discernment going?

**Notes:**

**COLLOQUY 3**  
**DO I FEEL CALLED TO COMMITMENT?**

### Preparation before Session 3

#### Texts for Prayer, Reflection, and Discernment

#### Spiritual Exercises: The Call of Christ the King

**Prayer.** Let the Preparatory Prayer: I take time to place myself before God in reverence, begging that everything in my day be more and more directed to God's service and praise.

**Composition of Place:** to see with the sight of the imagination, the synagogues, villages and towns through which Christ our Lord preached.

**The Grace:** to ask grace of our Lord that I may not be deaf to His call, but ready and diligent to fulfill His most Holy Will.

#### **PART 1: Christ the King and His Call**

##### **Points:**

1. In the first part, let me put myself into a mythical situation – the kind of story-truth of which fairy tales are made. I imagine a human leader, selected and raised up by God our Lord: everyone of good will, whatever their age, is drawn to be in the presence of such a leader, to listen, and to follow.
2. The challenge of this leader rings out in words, like these: “I want to overcome all diseases, all poverty, all ignorance, all oppression and slavery – in short, all the evils which beset humankind. Whoever wishes to join me in this undertaking must be content with the same food, drink, clothing, and so on, that comes with following me. So, too, whoever is with me in the labour of the day's work and with me in the loneliness of the night watches will likewise have a part with me in the final victory.
3. If a leader so attractive and inspiring and so good and close to God issues a call like this, what kind of person could refuse such an invitation? How could anyone not want to be a part of such a noble challenge?

#### **PART 2: Christ the King**

In the second part, I consider Jesus Christ our Lord and his call.

1. If a human leader can have such an appeal to us, how much greater is the attraction of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, our Leader and King! Jesus' call goes out to all peoples, yet he specially calls each person in a particular and unique way. He makes this kind of appeal: “It is my will to win over the whole world, to overcome evil with good, to

turn hatred aside with love, to conquer all the forces of death – whatever obstacles there are that block the sharing of life between God and humankind. Whoever wishes to join me in this mission must be willing to labour with me, and so by following me in struggle and suffering may share with me in glory.”

2. With God inviting and with victory assured, how can anyone in their right mind not surrender to Jesus and his call to labour with him?
3. Those who are of great heart and are set on fire with zeal to follow Jesus, eternal King and Lord of all, will not only offer themselves entirely to labour for such a mission, but will act against anything which would make their response less total. They would want to express themselves in words such as these:

“Eternal Lord and King of all creation, humbly I come before you. Knowing the support of Mary, your mother, and all your saints, I am moved by your grace to offer myself to you and to your work. I deeply desire to be with you in accepting all wrongs and all rejections and all poverty, both actual and spiritual – and I deliberately choose this, if it is for your greater service and praise. If you, my Lord and King, would so call and choose me, then take and receive me into such a way of life.”



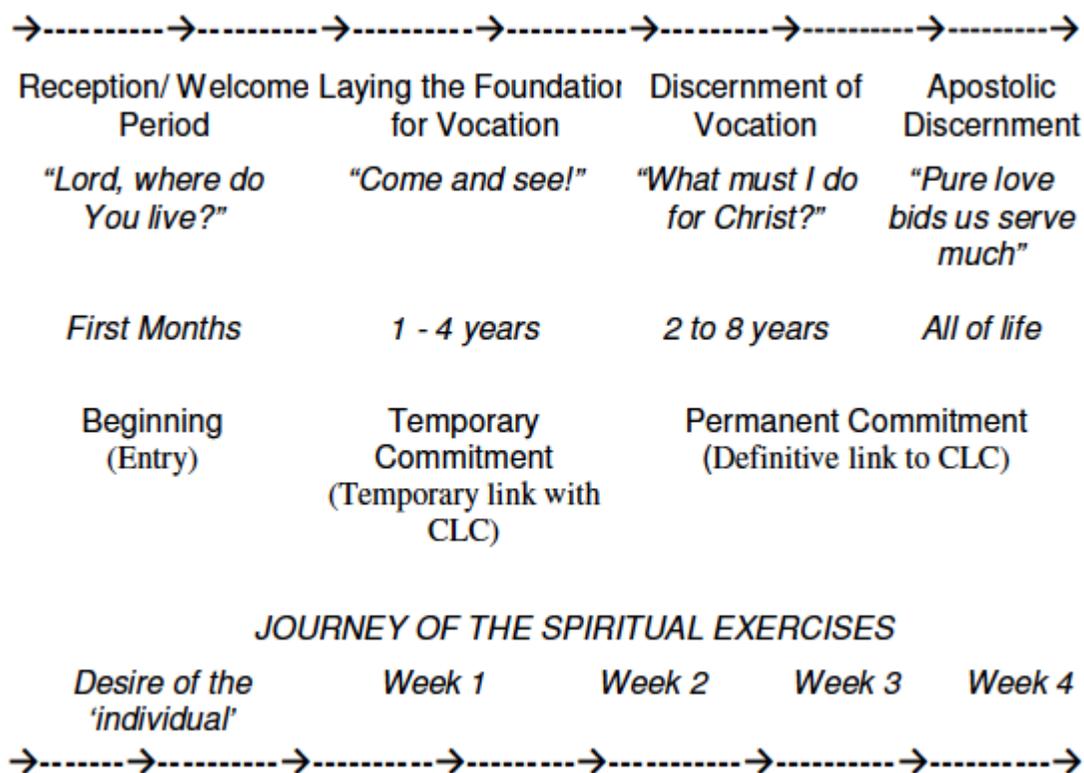
### Readings:

Texts from The Process of Growth in CLC (see next 3 pages) showing how Commitment sits in relationship to CLC formation and vocation.

## THE PROCESS OF GROWTH IN CLC (SUPPLEMENT 64) COMMITMENT IN RELATION TO CLC FORMATION

44. Formation, which is lived and offered with spiritual guidance in the Community, has as its ultimate aim our gradual integration into a particular group, into our National Community and into the World Community and the Church. At the appropriate times, we take on temporary and permanent commitments as a natural step in our identification with CLC and out of our love for our own vocation.

87. Taking as a reference the experiences of the Spiritual Exercises and the way of life of the World Community, and in the light of the CLC Formation Principles (Part 1 of Our Charism), we consider how the CLC process to seek the will of God for our lives (in each concrete moment) is divided into the following stages:



### STAGE 1: PERIOD OF RECEPTION/WELCOME

Definition: This is the CLC induction period.

Aim: It is intended that the participants make themselves known to and get to know the others in the group, working on getting to know and accept themselves as they are, that they may discover within themselves the deep desires which have been inspired by the Lord. At the same time, they live out the experience in this early stage of what CLC Community life is like receiving the basic information which deals with its structures and spirituality.

Time Scale: This can go on for several months. It is completed when the individual actually joins CLC.

## STAGE 2: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR VOCATION

Definition: This is the first stage in the formal CLC formation process. It finds its inspiration in the First week of the Spiritual Exercises and in the call suggested at the beginning the Second Week.

Aim: To experience the Call to conversion, recognising Him as the '*Principle and Foundation*' of our being and of all creation. We understand that we are unconditionally loved by God and destined to find our fulfilment in love and service.

Time Scale: Between 1 and 4 years. It is **completed with the Temporary Commitment** or with the search for another vocation within the Church.

## STAGE 3: DISCERNMENT OF VOCATION

Definition: This stage is centred in the Second week of the Spiritual Exercises. It leads to discernment and to the election of a state and/or way of life.

Aim: To discern and to confirm CLC vocation in the Church, as a member of this apostolic body or of another in the Church. This stage can lead to a double discernment and election depending on the age and the life situation of the individual: (1) To a state of life (eg lay, priest, religious) and/or (2) To a greater faithfulness to his/her current way of life to which the Lord is already calling the person.

Time Scale: Between 2 and 8 years. This stage is **completed with Permanent Commitment** or with the search for another way within the Church.

## STAGE 4: APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT

Definition: At this stage, individuals are seeking to give, in a permanent way, an apostolic meaning to all dimensions and activities of their lives.

Aim: To integrate everyday human (and Christian) life and one's personal plans, with those of community apostolates and/or those carried out in collaboration with others; to grow in constant and sensitive awareness of world reality in order to become better agents for social and cultural change and for building up the Kingdom; to put the capabilities of the CLC Apostolic Body at the service of the mission of Christ and of His Church; to help generate dynamic Communities which will make for greater apostolic efficiency and which will promote justice in favour of the very poorest.

Time Scale: For life

**TABLE 3: SIGNS OF GROWTH (BY DIMENSION) IN THE JOURNEY**

Formation Stage→ ↓CLC Dimension	Stage 1: Period of Reception/Welcome	Stage 2: Laying the Foundations for Vocation	Stage 3: Discernment of Vocation	Stage 4: Apostolic Discernment
<b>SPIRITUAL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Desire to deepen the relationship with God, with the Church and with this vocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conviction of the group that Jesus is the centre of their lives</li> <li>▪ Appreciation of and constant participation in the sacraments</li> <li>▪ Practice of prayer</li> <li>▪ Carrying out some experience of the Exercises which have been adapted for this stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Effective Ignatian integration of faith, everyday life and mission.</li> <li>▪ The person has carried out and is living the Spiritual Exercises in their entirety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An attitude of ongoing formation</li> <li>▪ Continuous personal spiritual Guidance</li> <li>▪ A joyous life in faithfulness to Christ in communion with the CLC Apostolic Body</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regular attendance and, enthusiastic attitude</li> <li>▪ Feeling of responsibility within the group</li> <li>▪ Clear disposition to live the CLC process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A more conscious desire to accept the CLC way of life</li> <li>▪ A contribution to the strengthening of the Community at different levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Definitive commitment to the CLC Apostolic Body</li> <li>▪ Participates in the life of the Church and feels fully part of it</li> <li>▪ Helps build (CLC) community at all levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engaged in the ordinary life of the Church</li> <li>▪ Helps with the strengthening of the community of the Apostolic Body</li> <li>▪ Lives a discerned apostolic life, supported and evaluated by community</li> </ul>
<b>APOSTOLIC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concern and sensitivity towards the reality of the world</li> <li>▪ Willing to collaborate in internal and external tasks of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A concrete adoption of the austere and simple CLC way of life</li> <li>▪ A greater political and socio-cultural understanding</li> <li>▪ A carrying out of the first experiences of probation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generous engagement in practical services in and outside the community</li> <li>▪ Shows, by example, a greater evangelical sensitivity to and awareness of the poor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leads a full apostolic life</li> <li>▪ Has a commitment to the poorest</li> </ul>

**COLLOQUY 3**  
**DO I FEEL CALLED TO COMMITMENT?**

**Notes from My Preparatory Prayer and Reflection**



**COLLOQUY 3**  
**DO I FEEL CALLED TO COMMITMENT?**

**Colloquy Group Meeting**

**Opening Prayer** based on the Call of Christ the King (*Sp. Exx.* 91-100) (Pages 15, 16. of this document)

**Questions for sharing:**

1. What further light have you found through reflection on the prayer passage/s and documents?
2. In terms of the Process of Growth document, what stage do you feel you are at in your CLC journey? Focus particularly on the Signs for each stage, noting that it would not be unusual for any person to be more 'advanced' in relation to some signs than others.
3. How is my own discernment going?

**Notes:**

## COLLOQUY 4 REVIEW

### Preparation before Session 4

#### Texts for Prayer, Reflection, and Discernment

Examen on my experience of the Colloquy:

1. Gratitude:
  - a. I become aware I am in God's presence.
  - b. I ask for a spirit of gratitude as I begin this Examen.
  - c. What am I grateful for in this Colloquy process? I recall the joyful moments – perhaps the sharing of others in the group; or new insights into the CLC way of life; or greater self-awareness; or new appreciation of CLC as a world community; or deepening desires within me.
  - d. I express my thanks to God, the giver of all good gifts.
2. Guidance:
  - a. I pray for the Holy Spirit to guide me in understanding what has been happening in this Colloquy – in me and in the group.
  - b. I ask for wisdom to see myself more clearly and to see what has been unfolding in the Colloquy.
  - c. I ask to understand the different moments from the process that come to mind, what was happening within me, what the source of those feelings was.
3. Looking at the Colloquy:
  - a. I try to see patterns and connections in my different experiences during this Colloquy.
  - b. I seek to see where the good Spirit was moving, in myself and in the group interactions – where was there energy, good desires, a sense of hope, a genuine love, a real peace?
  - c. I seek to see where the false spirit was moving – where were we disheartened, trapped in fear, confused, frustration?
4. Consciousness:
  - a. I turn to Christ on the cross, with all that has come to mind.
  - b. I see his tender love for me, for the whole group.
  - c. I notice the ways I/we responded to the movements of the good Spirit. I express gratitude.
  - d. I notice the ways I/we have moved with the false spirit during this process.
  - e. I ask his forgiveness from the Cross.
5. Where to from here?
  - a. I ask God's grace and help for the final session of the Colloquy.
  - b. I ask especially for His help in the areas that have come to mind during this Examen.
  - c. Are there attitudes I've become aware of that I would like God to change?
  - d. Are there decisions I need to make?
  - e. Perhaps I ask God for a greater freedom as this Colloquy draws to a close.

**COLLOQUY 4  
REVIEW**

**Notes from My Preparatory Prayer and Reflection**

**COLLOQUY 4  
REVIEW**

**Colloquy Group Meeting**

**Opening Prayer**

**Questions for sharing:**

1. Evaluation of the Colloquy process – using CLC evaluation process.
2. How is my own discernment going?
3. Where to next?

**Notes:**

## Appendix 1: CLC Commitment

Written by CLC France

Translated from the French by Theresa Cademarto

Printed in *Progressio* N1-2008.

### How does the CLC Way lead to an explicit commitment?

- *God is the first to commit to an unceasingly renewed Covenant.*
- *Persons, united by the same spiritual experience of a personal encounter with the Lord through the Spiritual Exercises, form a community in union with the Spirit and dispersed throughout the world for the service and building of the kingdom.*
- *A body formed to bring the vocation of each member to its full dimension, to aid and encourage each one in their mission; a body "constituted" and "instituted" to transmit a charism.*

This can be the starting point of our reflection on receiving the invitation to an explicit commitment in CLC: why then commit oneself in this way?

1. **Personal Response:** CLC Commitment is first of all a personal response to the Lord who has first committed himself. There are three bases for this commitment in CLC:<sup>4</sup>
  - a. **An Anthropological Foundation**, as has just been mentioned. A person is created in a manner that in order to build his/her identity and truth he/she needs to express it in a sensible and visible way that fosters life, love, faith, and deep values. Thus, one can be specific in this domain, able to affirm it in a precise place, at a precise time, to have a word of one's own that is an explicit response to the Word which one day set him/her on this path. Therefore, what the commitment wants to express is an explicit and deliberate choice of love of Christ, lived in CLC as a reference of one's personal history and a constitutive element of one's identity.
  - b. **A Theological, Trinitarian Foundation**, also mentioned above. The root of our commitment is not found within ourselves but in the Trinitarian Project, the project to which God first of all was committed in a visible, permanent way, throughout our history. From the beginning, a Faithful God proposed an irrevocable Covenant continually renewed after each failure and definitively inscribed in our hearts with the Incarnation of the Son, which tirelessly solicits a response from our liberty. The Christian Life Community's choice of March 25th for its world feast day, the day the Church celebrates the Annunciation, expresses this invitation made to all its members to remember this Covenant coming from "the tender mercy of our God" (Luke 1:78) and to respond "with courage and generosity" as is recommended in the Exercises (Sp.Ex. #5).
  - c. **A Communitarian, Ecclesial Foundation**. The commitment also wants to signify that our spiritual way is not reduced to an individual relationship with God but, as happened with all the great figures of the Bible from Abraham and Moses to the Virgin Mary, the call heard by each one could only be heard in the heart of a People and for a People. It is within the spiritual growth of the Community, by it and for it, that each can deepen their personal vocation in the service of Christ and His mission and work "for the good of the whole Body." This community "of friends in the Lord" does not exist only to bring mutual aide, as essential as this might be, but it is also the place where the Spirit works and imparts grace. It is thus natural that this solemn affirmation of the way to which we feel called be understood, received and appreciated by the Church community.

This presence of the Community is also the manifestation of our fidelity to the heritage of the Christian Life Community which, since the World Assembly of Guadalajara in 1990, has insisted on the General Principles and the General Norms and again in Itaici in 1998 on the importance of this commitment. Undoubtedly, we must personally rediscover the intuition and inspiration of those who voted on and confirmed these reference texts and clarified their meaning.

*The lived experience reflected in the General Norms is not the experience of a particular country or region but rather the fruit of a reflection on numerous present and past experiences. The General Principles and the General Norms do not pretend to confirm an experience or a way of seeing in particular but rather to orient and stimulate each experience, leaving room for creativity in the diversity of our realities.*<sup>5</sup>

It is a question of bringing about today that which our predecessors themselves experimented and verified without however setting it in stone.

<sup>4</sup> See CLC Charism 168-170.

<sup>5</sup> GP of the CLC – *Progressio* Supplement N. 36 January 1991 - Help for Reading the General Principles p.25.

2. **Giving Colouration to Baptism:** CLC Commitment gives "colouration" to one's baptism, within the dynamics of the Exercises.

The sacraments, gifts of God, precede us in the Church. They are the visible manifestation of God's commitment towards humankind. At the basis of everything, there is baptism, the primordial sacrament. Baptism is the first commitment. It enables us to adhere to Christ and to become disciples of Christ with others. It gathers us together into the Body of Christ; it commits us and makes us interdependent. The Christian Life Community can be a means of living our Christian commitment, of giving it colour, material or flesh. The choice of this community as a means for better living one's Christian life is a spiritual choice (the election is a spiritual choice received).

It is not a matter of choosing Christ because we already expressed this choice by our baptism. It is rather a question of choosing a better means to carry out one's vocation.

*To commit oneself is therefore to make an 'election' according to the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises, source and instrument of our spirituality: within the Exercises, Ignatius consecrates a large dossier to the election: a choice, a decision which commits us for the future (Sp.Ex. 169-189). The biblical term of election was preferred to better signify that the decision is not only the fruit of personal reflection, but that it is received as a feature of the covenant between two partners. On Sinai, God elected a people and commits to them insofar as the people ratify the covenant by choosing their God and committing themselves to obey God's law (Ex. 19:1-8).*

*Thus, the Exercises are not only a retreat where one comes to be nourished in silence and prayer. Their aim is to lead us to choose with a clear awareness of reason and by a free choice what God has already chosen for us. The rereading of the experiences of consolation and desolation for the duration of the Exercises faithfully accomplished, ordinarily, is enough to see where the desire for our encounter with God is leading us.<sup>6</sup>*

The commitment in CLC is, in some way, the election of the Church and, of the companionship to which I am brought by God's desire for me. "There is an election if there is renunciation; there is renunciation if there is shared love; there is shared love if there is shared poverty," clarifies Philippe Lecrivain S.J. It is also a better way of understanding the desire for a "simple style of life" proposed by the General Principles (GP #12b)

3. **Being Part of an Apostolic Body:** It is equally accepted to "be an apostolic body" with others who are given to me as "friends in the Lord".

- a. **Being a Body:** Coming to CLC, those who have already experienced the Spiritual Exercises, indeed the full Exercises, seek to join a group where they can share this same experience and continue to live it permanently. Those who have not already made the Sp. Ex. discover them progressively and verify that it is in this way that they are moved in their desire to meet and follow the Lord.

Jesus said: "*When you are gathered in my name I will be there in your midst.*" In his well-known discourse on the diversity and complementarity of the members, the apostle Paul clarifies this when he speaks of the community of Christians: "*Now you together are Christ's Body.*" The body needs each member and each member needs the body. It would be profitable to reread and meditate on the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Cor. 12) in the perspective of the process of commitment.

The Christian Life Community is a community of the Church which unites lay Christians having in common the experience lived in the Spiritual Exercises and who consider them as "*the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.*" (GP5) It has a history woven from the threads of meetings, world assemblies, national assemblies. The members of CLC and the national communities recognized the call to be a body on the way, to constitute one world community, (and not a federation) and to become an apostolic body. It is a gift to receive.

- b. **Being Apostolic:** The Spiritual Exercises have no other **aim** but the apostolate, as was insisted upon in the 2006 Jubilee of Lourdes. It is not only to decide to follow Christ but *to let oneself be sent* where the Lord calls us. For we laity, without exception, it is *where we live...* however seeing *differently* with a *larger vision*, *innovated* by the breath of the Spirit *without locking ourselves into the places and methods* which were chosen *earlier*.

At the 2003 world General Assembly of Nairobi, *four verbs* were proposed to the members of CLC to help them personally, in the midst of their local communities, to stimulate their apostolic commitments: *to discern* the spirits with attention to interior movements, *to send* or to let oneself be sent, that is to say *to confirm* or be confirmed in the mission where one feels called, *to support*, and *to evaluate*. This way of sharing individual mission is a way of making common the mission of each one.

- c. **Being an Apostolic Body:** But the body itself is invited to be **apostolic**, even beyond its members, because certain calls or needs cannot be taken into account by individuals or small groups. In order to respond to them, we need the

<sup>6</sup> J-C Dhotel: *La spiritualite ignatienne —points de reperes. Supplement Vie Chretienne n. 347 p 38-40.*

support of a larger body, a more credible body which can sustain its action and its commitment *for the duration and its stability beyond the individual*. Ignatius invites us *to discern* calls to the mission according to *three criteria*: the most urgent, the most universal, and where no one else is. It is this last criterion which conducts us to "*the frontiers*" in an individual way supported by the community or in a collective way on the community level which needs the support and the commitment of its members.

The tutelage of the spiritual centres of Hautmont and Biviers, the publication of La Revue, participation in the CISED of St. Denis, and in the Ignatian Youth network in partnership with the Jesuits and religious are usual works for CLC France. The decision to commit CLC France to these missions was taken with these criteria in mind and after discernment with the national committee. In many regions, we can say that the Spiritual Exercises retreat proposed each year, spread out over numerous weeks and open to all, derives from the same common mission put into effect by a partnership of CLC with the Jesuits and/or religious on the local level.

But the harvest is abundant. By reason of its charism, CLC France is regularly called upon to respond to mission calling for the body and not simply for individual members of the body. The Jesuits ask us to develop a greater partnership, some dioceses call upon us to put our methods of proceeding at the service of the formation or spiritual animation of parishes. The MEJ hopes for greater institutional sharing. At Lyons, in the dynamic of the jubilee of 2006, Jesuits and Ignatian Religious want to develop a social project with which CLC could be associated. *These eventual partnerships require from CLC a foundation, a stability and a greater credibility to commit for the duration of long-term missions.*

Today it is difficult for those responsible to commit the apostolic body along with other partners to a project, giving their word for the duration, if the apostolic body has not been supported previously by *a word of commitment which binds the members of the body in time*. It is a question of realism and incarnation. It is a major challenge. Today it is also difficult to accept many members if the apostolic body does not find members willing and committed to be formed to become guides of the Spiritual Exercises. *Our apostolic dynamism is a function of the interiority of the spiritual life of the members.* In being well formed, in a spiritual and pedagogical way, the members of CLC commit themselves to give to others what they themselves have received. To be committed to forming an apostolic body, to give one's word for the duration is to permit the body, in an incarnated way, to commit itself to the calls of the Mission of Christ.

The Christian Life Community is an ecclesial community canonically recognized (Canon Law art. 312 and following) as a public international association of the laity, of pontifical right. One is committed in the apostolic body of CLC even beyond the personal journey, which this approach represents, sending us out to follow Christ, and which also constitutes an approach having a community character which permits us to:

- give one's preference for CLC as the community of discernment
- make this preference known to the body so that it can be taken into account
- commit oneself to examine and discern all calls of the Body (*ad intra* or *ex intra*) without prejudging a priori its response in one sense or another.
- 

In no way is it a question of CLC conscripting its members, binding them into insupportable restraints, or causing them to renounce their lay character and their own liberty. It is rather a question of our giving, within a community structure, a sense of our liberty, and fullness to our baptism along with other "friends in the Lord".

4. **Public and Explicit Commitment:** A good number of CLC members could feel "committed" without having expressed it publicly. In many ways, the services that they accept and their availability can seem sufficient to show it: responsibility for a group, animation of a session, a position in the Church, in associations etc. In other words, companionship lived in actions without mincing any words. Nonetheless, it appears necessary to take into account the "person" in his/her globality. It is words and actions - both the words which describe and define and the actions which authenticate. "To be committed" is inseparable from giving one's word and ratifying it. We give meaning to our words by our actions.<sup>7</sup>

*A personal act, the formal commitment to the service of God adds nothing to our baptism and confirmation; it simply manifests our agreement, to better live the commitments of this baptism, the specific manner of CLC. It is neither a vow, nor a promise. It essentially deals with fidelity to the Christian life as such with the sole concern for greater perfection. This personal act is made in a specific community.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Remi Potvin in *Progressio n. 1*.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Le Du, *Comite consultatif - Nantes 1990*.

**a. So, why make a public commitment?**

- it is in the midst of the CLC group that I ask the Lord for the grace of being able to give this generous response to God's fidelity
- it is before the community to which I ask to be witness that I make this journey. I ask also its assistance and the prayer of the one accompanying me throughout the journey. (CLC Charism #197)
- it is a way that I have chosen to remain faithful to something which is important at this given moment and which I feel will remain. Through it I help myself and the community helps me
- it is the community which needs to understand explicitly my personal request, to accept it and to give me the necessary means to respond in a regulated manner
- it is to make a founding action of the community and become one body with it.

**b. Fruits of Commitment:** The observations received on different occasions, notably during the meeting of Hautmont or in other GVEs, are quite telling. The fruits received are unexpected or unknown graces for the members as well as for the community. Essentially, it seems rather difficult to transmit or communicate them until we ourselves have experienced them. We cite here some extracts from an anthology of responses of "*committed members*" from the survey of October 2004.

**i. Fruits for the committed person:**

- Recognition of what was given and received, and an opening without fear towards the future
- Pure and profound joy, one that is simple and durable in spite of the surface waves
- Response to a call received and understood
- Coloration of one's attachment to Christ, a specific orientation in a charism or spirituality
- Word which frees, gives sense and acts
- Receive companions "*It was my place, I wanted to be with them; without the others I am nothing, I wanted to let them know*"
- Recognition of an identity and the revelation of a vocation in my role as laity:
- *with the word of commitment CLC distinguishes doing from being.* It is rare and precious in the present world to be able to make and live this distinction. CLC offers the possibility to all its members without exception, to be fulfilled and recognized not for the services given, not for the "doing" but rather for the "being" of each one through the words spoken. Not for their activities and merits but for the simple desire to live as much as possible as a Christian according to the proposals and charism of CLC.
- Unification of one's life
- Anchorage or better, ballasting (keel of the boat). 'No longer fear of where I am going.'<sup>9</sup>
- Incarnation (with a time and place) which makes one accountable and permits us to leave behind all that is confused.

**ii. Fruits for the Community:**

- The commitment of the members "*establishes*" the community as an apostolic body. Having a charism is essential and that can only be ensured by an institution, a community because it is the institution alone which can assure duration. For this reason, the institution itself is a commitment beyond the individual persons and the promise of vitality beyond the limited means of its members. The community ensures permanence and fraternity. The community provides a place of incarnation. The one making the commitment chooses it, or a priori maybe does not choose it, but commits him/herself to a transcendent value which imposes itself on him/her. It is here that one believes there is hope, a promise of life. To commit oneself is to hope.
- Before being a body which progresses, the community can also be an educative and instructive way. It has need of committed members to act as markers along the way. If not, these riches can become devitalized or lost.
- The community needs its members, members to whom it can retransmit the calls which it receives as an institution: for the transmission of the charism, for the collective missions which await it - there where there is no one else. It knows that these calls will always be taken into consideration and discerned, even if they cannot in the end be answered. The word spoken to others by a committed member leads to understanding "you can count on me to examine and discern together".
- It is the word which gives and makes flesh. The prologue of St. John's gospel is luminous: "In the beginning, was the Word... and the Word was made Flesh." If the vocation of CLC is to form "an apostolic

<sup>9</sup> To specify the marine metaphor, one of the participants pointed out that anchoring immobilized the boat to a fixed "*dead-man*". To this image, he preferred that of the **keel** of the boat which has, as function, to counterbalance the force of the wind in the sails. The keel allows the boat to heel so that the sails take the maximum of wind allowing the boat to advance more quickly without capsizing. Engagement is like this **keel** which makes possible to dip to collect the maximum of the breath of the Spirit and to advance with large broad "*out of deep water*". Beautiful precision.

body" this body can only come about by the words of its members, and not only by their activities and their availability, no matter how generous these are. CLC can never be a fully apostolic body, a living community, if we do not propose to all members of CLC to pronounce after a certain time a word of , a word which "unites hearts and permits the body to support the dispersion" according to the formula of Philippe Lecravain S.J.

- Only an established body made up of committed persons can take lasting responsibility for apostolic works whose dimension and amplitude go beyond the actions and the initiatives of individual generosity. For Ignatius, the dimension of companionship is essential for acting apostolically. Without this body of committed companions, there are no concrete apostolic works.<sup>10</sup>

**5. *When and for how long?*** This is up to each one to decide, aided by his or her guide or the members of the community based on the experience and the proposals of the Community. The reading of the texts of the World Community especially chapter III of the document "The CLC Charism Revised" can give reference points.

For CLC France, it is vital that the proposed process not be confused with religious vows. They must retain the specificity adapted to lay members committed in the world. Whether they are temporary or permanent the form should be kept, and correspond intimately to what is lived by the members who commit themselves on the personal level and in regard to the community, neither more nor less.

Some wait 8 to 12 years to pronounce a permanent commitment without previously pronouncing a temporary commitment. This was done in France until 2005. Others want to pronounce a word earlier, but not before 3 to 5 years, going through a temporary commitment. In no case can the permanent commitment be subordinated to the obligatory antecedence of a temporary commitment. This was done with much flexibility, December 3, 2006 for the 40 commitments (10 of which were temporary) pronounced in the region of the Mediterranean Province.

Some years from now, with the renewed practice of commitment, based on the experience acquired, there will be time to clarify whether or not it is necessary.

**6. *What the Community Commits Itself to:*** If the members pronouncing this commitment say before the assembled community that they wish to request the assistance of their companions in their local community to clarify their decisions, particularly regarding the apostolic mission, the Community cannot be satisfied merely to receive this commitment, whether it be temporary or permanent, without furnishing the means for living it.

**a. *Help in Living the Exercises:*** "As a world community, CLC is to actively support all its members by providing the means and resources to fully experience the grace of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, in offering them models that are dynamic, progressive and continuous. Since all Ignatian sources are integral to our spirituality, we wish to read them all from a lay perspective. In this spirit we support the attempts to adapt the Spiritual Exercises."<sup>11</sup> This was recalled from the letter of Itaici in 1998 in the call for Means for Mission. It is the first means.

**b. *Composition and Re-Composition of the Local Communities:*** The function of the four words, discern, send and support, evaluate,<sup>12</sup> is central; this was summarized at the World General Conference of Nairobi in August 2003. So that this be done under the proper conditions, the regional service team must be concerned with the "composition or re-composition of the group in order to allow each person to find in their local community whatever they need at each stage and in their particular situation. This implies a good knowledge (and a good transmission) of the desires of the persons and their evolution

**c. *Continuing Formation:*** Formation is not only reserved to those who are discovering the community or who serve it. The community also has the task of allowing its committed members to continue to be formed.<sup>13</sup> For example, the regions can organize or urge the members to create or frequent places of formation on subjects such as the Exercises, the Bible, spiritual growth, different forms of prayer, apostolic commitments, etc.

**d. *Listening and Availability:*** This is an equally important function that the members of the regional service teams fulfill, collectively or individually, whenever necessary with the help of resource persons such as the committed members of their region.

**7. *Frequently Asked Questions:*** We must understand the reservations and fears of those who hesitate or refuse the commitment. They have much to say to us about the spiritual combat "before the election". Let us propose some elements for reflection regarding some of these questions:

<sup>10</sup> See Maurice Giuliani: taken from an article published in *Christus* n. 4 - October 1954.

<sup>11</sup> *Our Common Mission* (Lettre d'Itaici) -1998.

<sup>12</sup> *Projects* n°120 June 2002: before Nairobi.

<sup>13</sup> See GN -11: "*Likewise, in the same tradition and in view of the formation of its members and of other people, the Christian Life Community at all levels promotes workshops, seminars, courses, publications and other such initiatives*".

**a. Is the word commitment adapted to this process?** Maybe not when we consider the resonances and negative connotations that it carries with it. But what word can we find? (The Spanish have the same problem with the word "compromises"). If the word frightens people and gives people a real fear of broken or failed covenants, then it requires us to enter into a struggle where we trust an Other in order to have the strength to fight and to endure. It means seeing things differently than we saw them at first glance... Like Peter besides the lake: what a journey between the first call and the sending after the resurrection!

**b. Would such a process not create a two tier CLC?** We have heard this fear expressed a great deal during a certain period (especially between 1968 and 1973) when in order to conform to the law of 1901 our statutes had reserved the quality of the member, and therefore the right to vote, only to those "consecrated". The problem seemed to have lost much of its importance after the procedures for voting were applied more and more within the reality of more restricted groups, notably the national committee and the general assemblies, essentially composed of "those committed in fact". Elsewhere, it was clearly affirmed more than once that the commitment did not confer any particular rights and this is the lived reality.

The fear of this risk (we must dare to name it: comparison, jealousy) is evoked regularly and it really puts a brake on all progress. We know the historic reasons but this trap is particularly subtle and efficacious, because in reality, the project of the apostolic body advances very little and stumbles over it. To consider it carefully, is it a risk to create a two tier CLC when we try to live a CLC on 6000 tiers, as many tiers as there are members, wanting to accept each one "where they are". Let us consider rather that the moment to pronounce such a word is different for each one.

**c. To what criteria of needs must those who are called to pronounce a word of recognition and commitment respond?** Here also the trap is subtle, because it is not a question of fulfilling needs but of understanding the desire of the members who adhere to the CLC project, who have begun to live it and who want to live it more deeply with the help of their companions. Let us not confuse needs and the verification of the desire which is necessary to prevent illusions. It is that which made Father Pierre-Marie Hoog S.J. say that it was "an impossible commitment" if it was to be the result of our will instead of the welcoming of a desired grace.

The problem seems to be situated on another level, in a difficulty encountered by human communities made up of members not having the same statutes or the same degree of commitment in the larger sense, since the commitment is at the heart of the project: among permanent members, militants and adherents (unions and parties), among volunteers and salaried persons (associations) etc. There also exist, among members of the Community, sensible differences on the level of desire concerning the profound adhesion to the CLC project. Beyond the concrete management of the coexistence of these persons in the same local communities, this poses two questions:

- on the one hand, how can we discern in the midst of the groups the level of desire of each one and above all distinguish between what is a simple shift in time (persons who haven't yet considered it...) and that which is a choice, as we might want to define it, of a simple resource group?
- On the other hand, what attitude should we have towards those members who, after many years, indeed many decades, do not appear to consider joining "an apostolic community" one day?

**d. Aren't some attitudes or silences worth talking about?** Undoubtedly some speak more easily through acts than through words. Certain actions speak even more than misleading words. Like Jean Sullivan<sup>14</sup> we can be prudent and wise:

*Words are fragile bridges. I believe we have learned to say I love you too much. We innocently decide that we have arrived, that the project is accomplished when we have only begun. The people that I've met usually say nothing about what is essential, speaking of other things. We can but love what Jesus loves: heal the sick, raise the dead, hunger and thirst for justice, change our way of seeing, spiritually invert the order of things. Yes, it can be fatiguing to hear that Jesus is this or that. As if prudence in lieu of modesty should not be the same as in his time, when he told his disciples to say nothing. But then one would be quiet. Because how can we dare proclaim his words when we do not accomplish them except in our imagination or in rites within a cultural circle, without getting caught in our lies?"*

Nevertheless with the experience of our sharings in the local community and our encounters with our guides during the retreats, we know that a word, even one difficult to pronounce, is always possible and that it always surprises us by the energy that it sets free, the life that it brings to birth. We just need to be patient and to know how to wait. We need to know also that it is possible that some really do refuse to pronounce it. We have to have accepted this eventuality from the beginning and respect the liberty of each one, with its consequences on the way of living together in diversity.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Sullivan: Itineraire spiritual: Matinales p.79 - Ed. Folio essays - 1976

- e. **Who can propose and receive this process?** It may seem surprising that those responsible for the service teams have not yet pronounced the proposed commitment, yet receive the word of other members who make the commitment. However, they exercise this service not in their own name but as representatives of CLC. They can be helped if they so desire, by members who are already committed, preferably from their region or neighbouring regions.
- f. **Does the given word apply to a specific status, particular rights and duties in CLC?** Once again in this question, a wrong interpretation can be given. The response is evident: of course no, no more than before. It gives no privileges, no power. We may venture to say that it is simply the gift of more liberty for those on whom the Spirit has breathed and who accepted to be guided. We can cite Genevieve de Gaulle Anthonioz, of ATD-Fourth World: *'We do not alienate our liberty by committing ourselves; rather we renew through our commitment the sense of our liberty'*. Also *"It is profound commitment. Something which allows a person to be touched in the depths of their being and, unless one is completely unfaithful to what could be the very best of themselves, something they will try to follow for better or worse."* In other words the commitment is not a juridical question but a spiritual one, an interior process. It expresses the desire to be deeply animated by the Spirit, inhabited by his dynamism, marked by his creativity. Those who are committed have no specific "rights" but an explicit function: that of being in the Body with those who are in a constant search for what CLC should be today and above all tomorrow.
- g. **Is it a question of a commitment in CLC or a commitment to follow Christ from within CLC?** Certainly along the lines of baptism and confirmation, we are committed to following Christ and to participate in his Mission. The institution comes second in regard to Mission. St. Ignatius always said that he would not hesitate more than fifteen minutes to suppress the Institute (the Society of Jesus) if the Mission demanded it.

**Conclusion: Heirs, Founders guided by the Spirit:** To commit oneself to CLC is to live our baptism as Christians in the tradition of a founder, Ignatius, with the companions who are given to me. It is to accept and recognize the place which is given me to incarnate my baptism and to live my personal vocation. It is not without consequences for me and for the community in the way we live the Gospel together.

To return once more to the words of Philippe Lecravain, S.J.<sup>15</sup> and what he said on the subject of religious can apply to members committed to CLC desiring to become together founding heirs. *"If all people have the right to choose who they are, they would not choose to be just anyone..."* T. Radcliffe expresses it like this:

*In Christianity, there is no identity without vocation. Christians are 'invited subjects,' persons called to discern their conformity to Christ in the multiple decisions which mark their history, at the crossroads between what is permanence and change... But this identity cannot be discovered except during the meeting [...] of a 'live memory' sending one back to a past which is not static, and to an imagination which, coming from the order of desire, must open to newness. However, a just equilibrium must be maintained. We must not shrink from the space of experience; the past must always be reconsidered neither too open or too closed, 'the horizon of expectation' — too much Utopia or not desperate enough for action...the constitution of a Christian identity consists [...] in the unveiling of a common history worked by founding narrations.*

Christians read the present by remembering the past. They anticipate the future in the sharing of a same hope; they express their identity in a common narrative. To live the Gospel together in the manner of a founder, this is the commitment which religious take on with their profession. It is also that which gives their communities a singular physiognomy, by making them "laboratories" where they work to become brothers and sisters and believers, to discern the personal and community missions, to produce in a new-way the testament received.

Isn't that which is valid for a religious also valid for all Christians who desire to live their faith according to the Gospel and the Church? In his way, Cardinal Martini summarizes it in these words: *"We must allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit that is to not repeat in an absolute manner the facts and words of Jesus, but to let the Holy Spirit who is given by the risen Jesus raise up in us joy, courage, and the creativity to see what it means to live these words of Jesus today."*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Etudes -april 2005 pp 515-517

<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Martini - entretien au Jour du Seigneur/Croire aujourd'hui 40 avril 2006

## Appendix 2: The CLC Charism on Temporary Commitment

### *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.<sup>17</sup> 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:
- The choice of *a state of life* by those who have not yet done so (religious life, of course, excludes a Permanent Commitment to CLC);
  - *Amendment and reformation of lifestyle*, for those who have already decided upon their state of life.<sup>18</sup>
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"<sup>19</sup> 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.
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*<sup>20</sup>, 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.

### *Ways of approaching 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.

<sup>17</sup> GN 39a.

<sup>18</sup> SpEx 189.

<sup>19</sup> SpEx 97.

<sup>20</sup> GP 2.