



Christian Life Community

Australia

Suggested Process for Responding to CLC Enquirers

The purpose of this document is to provide some guidelines when an enquiry is received for membership of CLC.

It would be helpful if each Regional EXCO invited someone to be the link person for New Enquirers who could keep a list of names, addresses and contact details of Enquirers and arrange for these individuals to meet with an appropriate person to support them as outlined and who would ensure that they were kept informed of progress about arranging a small group experience of CLC.

There is a variety of paths whereby people come to know about CLC.

If the enquiry comes through the CLC website the Enquirer will be referred to a member of the Regional EXCO or the person nominated in that State as the New Enquirers Contact Person.

If the enquiry is made directly to a CLC member, the member might offer some basic information on CLC and share their own experience and offer to put the Enquirer in contact with New Enquirer's Contact Person.

RESPONDING TO THE ENQUIRER

This initial contact may involve one or more face-to-face or phone contacts

The aim is to help the Enquirer express what they seek, and to help them learn more about CLC. There is no specified timeline for this process.

SUGGESTED PROCESS

Making Contact

1. Get to know the person. Helpful introductory questions may be: *What led you to be interested in CLC? What are you looking for?* This conversation is not about doing a "hard sell" for CLC. It is important that we model one of the gifts of CLC, namely the gift of attentive listening.

In discerning the person's suitability the following profile may be helpful.



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A member of CLC is usually a person who is

- a) seeking a deeper experience of faith, life, people, or social reality within the Church
- b) seeking something more
- c) generous and open of spirit and open to service to others
- d) capable of facing personal and social reality
- e) open to making a commitment to a local CLC group and wider CLC community activities
- f) prepared to engage in a group
- g) open to a regular life of prayer.

Note: It is important to make it clear that CLC is not a Bible study or a therapeutic support group.

You may also like to refer to Appendix A - *CLC Charism*

2. Provide information about CLC. (Be conscious of the Enquirer's level of interest and do not overburden them with information.)

Some points to mention are as follows:

- a) Christian Life Community is an international lay community within the Catholic Church. Its members
 - i. meet regularly in small groups to help each other know and follow Christ both personally and communally in ordinary daily living
 - ii. participate in wider CLC community activities
 - iii. are formed in Ignatian spirituality – “seeking and finding God in all things”
 - iv. commit to CLC as a way of life.
- b) The spirituality of CLC is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.
- c) CLC exists in 66 countries including Australia (in five States).

3. Describe briefly what happens in meetings using the CLC Handbook (Components of a Meeting)

4. If it seems that CLC is not what the Enquirer is seeking, then you may wish to mention other options.

5. If the Enquirer wishes to go further, then the following steps can be followed:

- a) Arrange further meetings. Further content that could be useful in meetings or as a handout can be found in Appendix B – “Christian Life Community”
- b) Talk to them about their prayer life. If it seems appropriate you could offer them some notes about prayer e.g. “Praying with Scripture” (Appendix C) or the Awareness Examen (Appendix D). If it seems appropriate you could suggest that they pray with the passage Jn. 1:29-35 and respond to the question of Jesus “What do you want?”
- c) Provide them with the website address to explore CLC. www.clcaustralia.org.au
- d) Invite them to a forthcoming event such as a World CLC Day or an end of year CLC Eucharist/Gathering.
- e) Provide them with a copy of the calendar of events for the year.
- f) Give them or recommend literature.
- g) Provide them with a copy of the CIS (Centres of Ignatian Spirituality) brochure.
- h) Discuss with them their interest in completing one of the *First Spiritual Exercises* retreats.

Next step – Pre-CLC

If the Enquirer is interested in finding out more about CLC, it will be important to organise an experience of being part of a group.

Some possibilities of the ways a person may move into a group are:

- form another group;
- join an existing group,
- become part of a holding group.

If a group is not immediately available it is important to explain this to the Enquirer and **maintain regular contact** by phone or in person.

During this Period of Reception/Welcome – the person is referred to as a “Pre-CLC” member. This is the CLC induction period.

- The Pre-CLC member is invited to attend six meetings in a small group to “Come and See” the CLC experience. The first six meetings of “To Share in the Life of Christ” by Laurence L. Gooley SJ are recommended. At the end of this experience, the Pre-CLC member has an opportunity to discern if CLC is for them.
- If it is not possible to be part of a “Come and See” group, it may be suggested that the Enquirer join an existing group for about twelve meetings or six months using material from “To Share in the Life of Christ” by Laurence L. Gooley SJ as part of an existing CLC group. Alternatively other material may be used. Suggestions for content that is appropriate to this induction stage can be found in “The Process of Growth in CLC: Guidelines for Formation *October 2009* (Table 2: A Journey For CLC Formation – Its Stages)”. The guide of this group could provide some appropriate material and mentoring.

The induction period may continue for several months. At the end of this period, an Evaluation in the form of prayerful reflection takes place. The person decides if they wish to continue on the CLC journey or that it is not for them.

Induction is completed when the individual becomes registered as a member of CLC. This involves acceptance of the GPs which is a prerequisite for membership in CLC on any level.

If the person decides to become a member of CLC, discussion will take place to choose the group most appropriate to their needs. The person will be invited to complete a New Membership Form. There is a membership fee listed on this form and each is asked to contribute according to their means. Following this, the person receives a membership kit with basic CLC materials and is welcomed into the Christian Life Community family.

Beyond that CLC Membership

One makes a commitment to continuing with CLC with evaluations at least annually and is encouraged to experience wider CLC and the Spiritual Exercises. After a number of years one may consider Temporary Commitment and Permanent Commitment to the CLC way of life. CLC is a vocation to a way of life within the Church (General Principle 4).

Extract from "THE CLC CHARISM" (revised Dec. 2001)

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 Annotations offer us a picture of the adult exercitant. This picture is sometimes a point of departure and sometimes a point of 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*". 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*¹ to encounter and follow Jesus Christ;
 - *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.

¹ 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 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.

Christian Life Community

Christian Life Community is a worldwide lay association within the Church whose members seek to integrate their Christian beliefs with the realities of their everyday lives. This membership is lived out in a local community. **The purpose of CLC is mission-** 'reaching out to others.' The members commit themselves to a way of life that is Ignatian.

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

Ignatian spirituality is centred on Christ who invites us to develop our personal relationship with Him. CLC encourages us to pray regularly (daily) and so recognise that He is with us and calls us to carry on his mission in our world.

A local CLC community is made up of 6 to 8 members who meet fortnightly to share quiet prayer, usually from Scripture, followed by sharing experiences from daily life. A meeting concludes with a short evaluation and usually a cup of tea etc.

In between meetings, all members are encouraged to pray regularly. Committing to a CLC way of life involves a relationship with God through personal and communal prayer.

Christian Life Community calls us to a way of life in which we try to witness to Christ's values in our daily lives. By reflecting on our experiences, in the light of Scripture, we try to live a life of service to Christ.

St Ignatius spoke of "Finding God in all things". He gave us a method of prayer that helps us as we seek to find God in our lives – the Awareness Examen. If we practise the Examen, we will grow to know ourselves and our moods, and with the help of God, see in our prayer the way that God is moving in our lives. As our hearts become more sensitive, we will recognise God more quickly, so that eventually we will be sensitive to the God who is in **ALL** things.

Mission is the **core** and **essence** of Ignatian spirituality and CLC. Our mission is to carry on the mission of Christ. God the Father sent his Son to the earth. We are sent with Jesus. Our being sent with Jesus affects all that we do. Sharing the mission of Jesus means looking out at the world to feel the world, to be concerned with the world, to suffer and rejoice with those who suffer and rejoice.

As mission is something that I receive, fundamentally it is an openness on my part – an openness to the Lord to hear and see what I am called to do. It is recognising that in our daily activities, we are on mission with the Lord. It may be that he calls us to become involved in something else or it may be that I am called to do what I am already doing with a renewed spirit.

In our local CLC community the sharing of experiences and how we have encountered the Lord in our everyday lives helps us to discern the Lord's calls. The process is **Experience-Reflection-Action**.

Explain the World Common Mission of CLC that was the outcome of the World Assembly in Brazil in 1998 after worldwide reflection and discernment and the way in which the Australian areas of concern emerged.

First, we want to bring the freeing power of Christ to our social reality.

Secondly, we want to find Christ in all our varied cultures and to let His grace illuminate all that needs transformation.

Thirdly, we want to live Christ so as to bring Him to every aspect of our daily life in the world

Praying with Scripture

God Speaks To Us First

This fundamental truth makes it possible for us to pray. God has been concerned for each of us long before we became concerned for ourselves.

God desires communication with us in many different ways:

- in creation, which was through the Word (Jn 1:1)
- in the seeds of the Word present in all cultures and religions
- in God's self-revelation to the people of Israel
- in Jesus, God's own Word made flesh

This revelation in Christ is passed on to us in two main ways:

- in the living tradition of the Church
- through God's Word in the Scriptures.

The use of scripture in prayer is the mode of communication that we are concerned with here. Since God invites us to listen. Our response to God's initial move is to listen to what is said. This is the basic attitude of prayer.

How To Go About Listening

What you do immediately before prayer is very important. Normally, it is something you do not rush right into. Spend a few moments quieting yourself and relaxing, settling yourself into a prayerful and comfortable position. In listening to anyone, you try to tune out everything except what the person is saying to you.

In prayer this can be done best in silence and solitude. Select a short passage from scripture. Read it through a few times to familiarize yourself with it. Put a marker in the page. Try to find a quiet place where you can be alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence. Try to quiet yourself interiorly. Jesus would often go up to a mountain alone to pray with his Abba. In an age of noise, activity, and tensions like our own, it is not always easy or necessary to forget our cares and commitments, the noise and excitement of our environment. Never feel constrained to blot out all distractions. Anxiety in this regard could get between ourselves and God. Rather, realize that the Word did become flesh – that God speaks to us in the noise and confusion of our day.

Sometimes in preparing for prayer, relax and listen to the sounds around you. God's presence is as real as they are. Be conscious of your sensations and living experiences of feeling, thinking, hoping, loving, of wondering, desiring, etc. Then, conscious of God's unselfish, loving presence in you, address God simply and admit: "Yes, you do love life and feeling into me. You do love a share of your personal life into me. You are present to me. You live in me. Yes, you do."

God is present in you through the Spirit, who speaks to you now in scripture, and who prays in you and for you. Ask for the grace to listen to what God says. Begin reading Scripture slowly and attentively. Do not hurry to cover much material.

If it recounts an event of Jesus' life, be there in the mystery of it. Share with the persons involved, e.g., a blind man being cured. Share their attitude. Respond to what Jesus is saying. Some words or phrases may carry special meaning for you. Savour those words, turning them over in your heart.

When something strikes you, e.g.,

you feel a new way of being with Jesus or he comes to you in a new way (e.g., as healing or accepting you in a way different than other times)

- you are happy and content just to be in God's presence,
- you are struggling with or disturbed by what the words are saying,
- you experience new meaning,
- you are moved to do something loving. This is the time to....pause.

This could be a place God wishes you to rest, to savour what is happening. Do not hurry to move on.

Wait until you are no longer moved by the experience. **Don't get discouraged if nothing seems to be happening.**

Sometimes God lets us feel dry and empty in order to let us realize it is not in our own power to communicate or to experience consolation. God is sometimes very close to us in seeming absence (Ps 139:7-8). God is for us entirely, in a selfless way, accepting us as we are, with all our limitations - even with our seeming inability to pray. A humble attitude of listening is a sign of love for God, and a real prayer from the heart. At these times remember the words of Paul, "The Spirit, too, comes to help us in our weakness, for when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, it is the Spirit who expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words" (Rom 8:26-27).

Relax in prayer. Remember, God will speak to you in God's own way. "Yes, as the rain and snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do"(Is 55:10-11).

Spend time in your prayer just being conscious of God's presence in and around you. If you want to, speak about the things you are interested in or wish to thank God for, your joys, sorrows, aspirations, and so forth.

Summary _____ 5 `P's'. 1 `R'	
Passage of Scripture	Pick one and have it marked and ready.
Place	Where you are alone and uninhibited in your response to God's presence.
Posture	Relaxed and peaceful. A harmony of body with spirit.
Presence of God	Be aware of God's presence and acknowledge and respond to it. When you are ready turn to the ...
Passage	Read it very slowly aloud and listen carefully and peacefully to it ... pause ... Listen with your heart as you would a love-letter. Read aloud or whisper with pauses and repetitions when and where you are drawn. Don't be anxious, don't try to look for implications or lessons or profound thoughts or conclusions. Be content to be like a child who climbs into a caring person's lap and listens to a story. During the prayer exercise and, certainly, just before closing it is helpful to carry on a conversation with God or with Jesus or some safe wisdom figure concerning what you hear.
Review	After the period of prayer is over reflect upon the experience of prayer just finished. This review will help you notice what God is doing in your experience.

The Daily Examen

The Daily Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern his direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in our whole experience.

The method presented here is adapted from a technique described by Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. St. Ignatius thought that the Examen was a gift that came directly from God, and that God wanted it to be shared as widely as possible. One of the few rules of prayer that Ignatius made for the Jesuit order was the requirement that Jesuits practise the Examen twice daily — at noon and at the end of the day. It's a habit that Jesuits, and many other Christians, practise to this day.

This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practised.

- 1. Become aware of God's presence.**
- 2. Review the day with gratitude.**
- 3. Pay attention to your emotions.**
- 4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.**
- 5. Look toward tomorrow.**

