

*Spirit Express: Special edition*

*CLC National Gathering in January 2014*

*South Australia*

*February 2014*



## Christian Life Community Australia

### Important dates:

#### Guides training retreat at

Middleton: 28<sup>th</sup> February to 3<sup>rd</sup> March

#### World CLC Day: Saturday

29<sup>th</sup> March 1.30 to 4.30 pm

### CLC National Gathering 2014

It is difficult to express and communicate the experience of each of the SA members at the CLC National Gathering, 16-19 January 2014, but we are keen to convey something of the spirit, the content and the outcomes of the Gathering. We have chosen to write from different perspectives which we realise can still only give a glimpse of that experience. We hope it provides you with an entry point to connect personally and as groups to the wider National CLC body.

### Recognising Our Strengths as a National Community

The following points are what I consider to be some strengths of CLC Australia:

- CLC members are a diverse group of people with an openness and desire for growth in their relationship with God and how this love can be lived out in their daily reality. Over the years I have been to many different conferences for work, sport and church, but joining with CLC people sharing the Ignatian way offers something different. I find meeting with CLC people life giving and often inspirational.
  - CLC is a 'grass roots' organisation and although we sometimes struggle to keep connected to the processes honouring this, the good spirit nourishes those experiences that remain focused on respect and dignity of all members.
  - Being 'safely' vulnerable is a big part of CLC sharing. During one session at the Gathering, six members willingly agreed to be involved in a fish bowl experience, using a hypothetical question, to show the process of communal decision-making/ discernment.
  - Ongoing formation based around the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises is greatly supported and offers members the opportunity for continual growth. (eg Retreats/ FSE/ guides training/range of resources...)
  - The process of evaluation and reflection is a strength in CLC as it supports deep listening for the individual, the group and the wider community. We evaluate at the end of prayer times, meetings, the day, throughout the day ... This evaluation provides an opportunity to notice what's been happening, enabling the group/ individual to decide on direction. At the Gathering this process helped us be more attuned to the Spirit within the community.
  - CLC has a desire to build community at Local, Regional, National and World levels. There is great flexibility of 'how' this can be achieved but the personal 'face to face' opportunity certainly works best.
  - The National Community is able to have fun. The concert on the Sat. night involved much laughter and delight.
  - Participation in the Eucharist wherever possible and a daily practice of personal prayer is a great strength in CLC. At the Gathering each day we were able to celebrate Mass as a community. Celebrating the Permanent and Temporary Commitment of 14 members in Australia for the first time was deeply moving.
- Although I am sure many more strengths can be identified, these came to mind after reflecting on

my experience of the Gathering. I left Melbourne with feelings of warm affection for many people whom I had engaged with over the days of the Gathering and for the National Community as a whole. Our Community is not perfect but it is evolving with the certain intention of seeking 'God in all Things'. We are but companions on a journey trying to follow Jesus by living the way of Ignatian Spirituality.

**Judy Foster**

Chairperson SA Region

**Challenges identified during the Gathering.**

- 1 As a Lay Apostolic body, our challenge is to live our daily life with apostolic intensity (reflection, depth and sensitivity) with the tools of awareness, to rediscover its value by naming and claiming our mission in daily life. (100% of members committed).
- 2 To live our mission beyond ordinary life in apostolates (Vinnies, visits to the sick, soup kitchen etc... (70% of members committed).
- 3 To live our mission at an institutional level such as Migrant or refugee centres (10% of members committed).
- 4 To live our mission in Projects undertaken as a national or international body (1% of members committed).
- 5 To use a Wisdom language (like that of Pope Francis) that makes sense to believers and non believers, a language of common sense and meaning which helps all people see things in a bigger perspective and find God in all things.
- 6 To have a sense of our roots and history and to live our identity fully without becoming inward looking.

- 7 To write our documents newsletters and correspondence in a simple language accessible to all in the style of Pope Francis. Resist wordy and lengthy texts.
- 8 Reach out through technology to geographical isolation of members (country and old age).
- 9 Build horizontal networks at all levels through twinning (local groups, state and international), virtual interest groups (Facebook and Gmail).
- 10 Have a flow of communication from the bottom up, from the members to the EXCOs and NEXCO.
- 11 Renew our membership through contact with youth and First Spiritual Exercises.
- 12 Not be afraid to confront the challenges of talking about finances. At a national level, we have confronted a black hole due to unfortunate recent circumstances. Necessity of fundraising.

**Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson**

**What I Got From the Gathering 2014**

Celebration of the Eucharist is familiar anywhere in the World. A meeting of CLC members is also a familiar experience anywhere in the World. The CLC connection has been made more personal and the activities and news from reading Spirit Express and Annotations will have more relevance now.

**Jeff Cantwell**

[Photographer for SA]

**Communal Discernment – Process and Practice**

On Saturday at the National Gathering, Kay Hooper explained a model of Communal Apostolic

Discernment, which we put into practice with a “fish bowl” demonstration so we could see the process in action.

In this model of group discernment, you **start with a proposition**: a positive, relevant and specific declarative statement. You then **gather information and analyse** it. Then **spend time in prayer listing first the cons then the pros** of the proposition.

The statement chosen by NEXCO for this formative experience was: ***CLC will implement fund raising with the specific purpose of furthering the First Spiritual Exercises.***

I was one of six people 'in the fish bowl' and we went off individually to make our prayerful lists. Then we sat in a small circle with Kay as our guide to take turns sharing our lists, each giving cons first and then pros. The rest of the participants were the audience encircling us listening and observing. Once everyone in the fish bowl had shared, there was **time to reflect on each other's sharing, ask for clarification and comment**. Kay then asked whether we could vote on the proposition. Consensus was that we could not vote as more information was required. **The decision needed to be accepted by the majority, with a sense of peace**, recognising it to be consistent with group values. Then the audience was invited to share their observations of the process. Fr Koning pointed out that the pros and cons model is an analytical form and we must remember to focus on how the Spirit is moving throughout the process.

The session ended with further clarification on communal decision-making. It involves a question that concerns all the group members. Everyone

involved in the discernment takes part in the decision and shares responsibility for its implementation. Everyone needs to be unbiased as to the outcome of the decision.

Important pre-requisites are:

- deep faith in God's will directing the decision for the group;
- trust and confidence in each other;
- a prayerful approach;
- use of Ignatian discernment to sense the Spirit moving within each member and in the group;
- a guide is useful;
- awareness of strong resistance;
- prayer for freedom and peace;
- the group must have the authority to enact the decision.

I found the sessions to be very informative and stimulating. The proposition was appropriately relevant and aroused significant movement within me as I listened to others sharing.

**Paris Huffman**

**Reactions of a newcomer**

As a newcomer to CLC still under guidance from Louise Howell and having last December completed the six weeks introduction to the First Spiritual Exercises: "Inner Peace in Divine Love" it was a wonderful grace to take part in the CLC Gathering at Newman College.

The Program content was very full and well presented in trying heat. Talks covered a wide range of Ignatian Spirituality with much community involvement.

The highlights were:

- Welcome to Country Ritual,

- The Fishbowl discernment exercise,
- The Celebration Mass and Dinner including Anna Munari's mixed Choir and our own entertainment in the Coffee Lounge,
- Opportunity for Prayer wherever including Evaluation of the Day,
- The remarkable ability of Robin Koning SJ to sum up points raised immediately on his computer, present them on the big screen and edit as required,

For me the experience of being in such a wonderful loving Christian Community was very profound and extremely moving especially listening to the serious commitments made in the Chapel.

I learnt a lot about lay vocation, personal prayer, discernment, commitment and co-responsibility. I liked especially the Fishbowl approach to discernment which I observed for the first time.

**David Falkland**



Welcome to country ritual



Commitment at National level



Here we go again



Louise presenting a paper



Committed members from SA

**News:**

Our chair, **Judy Foster**, is getting married to her partner Don from Ardrossan on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. Congratulations Judy!

**Rachel Mc Loughlin**, our spiritual guru, has made the momentous decision to join the Loreto Sisters. Our love and prayers, dear Rachel.



Helen and Rachel