

Spirit Express

South Australia

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Christian Life Community Australia

WORLD CLC DAY CELEBRATION SA 2015



A personal view

In the mid-afternoon of a glorious autumn Saturday, Paris Huffman, Chairperson of EXCO, welcomed eighteen CLC folk to our special celebration of World CLC Day. Representatives from several groups were there, including John and I and Margaret from *The Encounters* at Victor Harbor. It was disappointing that Jocelyne and Rob could not be there to enjoy the spirituality and camaraderie, but it's not often that someone in one's family turns 100 years old, so I'm sure the Holy Spirit was with them at their family celebration.

Central to both the encircled participants and the theme of Wisdom Language were a

colourful throw, a candle, a bible, flowers and a petition "Lord, let us recognise your Wisdom in the mist of the everyday life."

After the normal CLC welcome and check-in, Paris acknowledged the Kaurna people of this area and welcomed John Lokowiak who



with some accompaniment from his son Jacob gave a smoking ceremony. John was a striking figure, deeply spiritual and I felt privileged to be a part of this ceremony. John expressed thanks for the welcome and acknowledgement and explained this part of his culture. He works with his people in the "Hope" program through Centacare, and also for the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry at the Otherway Centre. John's talk on the importance of family in his tradition, culture, education and spirituality struck familiar chords with most of us. He

commented that his great grandfather was an ANZAC, 10th Battalion, who survived Gallipoli. I found his talk both interesting and humbling.

Paris thanked John and his son and presented John with a box of chocolates and some of her home-made jam.

After an opening prayer, June Duffy read 1 Kings 19, 11:13 describing "Elija meets God at Horeb." This was read twice and we were asked to reflect quietly on the beautiful words in this passage. The term "wisdom language" proved a little difficult for some of us to grasp but certainly made us focus and think. June suggested that calling it "wisdom attitude" may help.

We were then invited to share our reflections, and to share our experience of God in our busy lives over the past week. On provided paper we wrote down one sphere of our lay vocation that had relevance to God's Wisdom, through work, family etc., and then our papers were placed with the prayer petition in the centre. For

me this added real focus, structure and meaning.

Time then for the speakers and Chris Hogan gave news of the World and Asia Pacific CLC. He talked of CLC as being a channel of grace, almost a sacrament with a small “s”.

He spoke of the cheerfulness of poor Africans, reflecting the face of God and the CLC spirit; of the youth of the Asia Pacific region and the sheer numbers – 1.2 billion people under the age of 25.

Helen Cantwell of NEXCO gave a (non-computerised) 3-D visual representation of the place of individual CLC groups in relation to the regional meetings, the National Assemblies and then looping outwards, but always interconnected, to the World CLC.

CLC has enjoyed 40 years in Australia and Helen spoke of the aim to make a national project (to be finalised at the National Assembly) of CLC’s ability to expand the use of the FSE (First Spiritual Exercises). We were asked to think of the relevance of CLC in our lives and community.

In these days of digital everything, I applaud Helen’s time and effort in preparing her presentation – it certainly gave me more of a handle on her talk.

Paris then gave a summary of recent news in our SA region, including the FSE activities and the upcoming events planned for this year: guide sessions, Sevenhill Retreat in August, the End of Year Gathering in November.

Paris was conscious of the rapid approach of 6 pm and the Vigil Mass, so our usual end of session Evaluation was limited to one word or brief phrase per person – the overwhelming response was “gratitude” and “thankfulness”. After our closing prayer we all walked to the magnificent St Ignatius church for Mass.

Back at the Mary MacKillop Room the shared meal idea worked very well; the atmosphere was comfortable and informal, within peoples’ budgets and without the endemic noise levels usually encountered in commercial restaurants. There was plenty to eat for all, including a number of CLC people who for various reasons had been unable to attend the afternoon session but had come for Mass and the get-together afterwards. For my part it was good to catch up with several people John and I met last year at the Sevenhill retreat. The evening wound up about 8.30.

The printed program for the day was rounded off by a quote from Mary MacKillop – “Be eager in your desires but humbly patient in their accomplishment.” Something to which we should all aspire!

Many thanks to Paris, June, Katie, Chris and Helen for an excellent celebration of World CLC Day SA 2015.

Wendy Baker
(*Encounters Group,*
Victor Harbor)

MELTON



Tasmania has a Melton Mowbray, England has a Melton Mowbray, but these are both towns. We (the MacKillop group at Millicent) have a real live Melton Mowbray who is our much loved and founding Guide.

How to convey the essence of our man?

What kind of picture can I paint?

Is he sinner or is he saint?

His sins I think are only faint.

So I can say without restraint

That as our guide he is

Soooo.... Good.

Melton is currently recovering from a triple bypass operation and we have missed both him and Teena at one of our meetings. You might say that to miss only one meeting is no drama, but it was enough for us to realize how important they are to us especially with the near misses that were involved in Melton’s condition and the effect of the stress on Teena as she lived through it with him.

Melton has warned me not to make this an emotional catalogue of compliments (not his words). He said “lay off the”) but I think I should go into his style and methodology of guiding because it has been an important element in the satisfaction in our group and

because guiding in general is such a dynamic ingredient in CLC life.

I think the main thing Melton brings to his guiding is a spirit of peace. I think this comes naturally to him which is fortunate for us but we now have to be conscious of this as we take it in turns to give him a break during his recovery. Another mark of Melton's work as Guide is the effort he makes to find uplifting and reassuring topics for the meetings. These provide opportunities to deepen our understanding of the faith set out for us by Our Lord and to bring common sense to bear in its application for living and loving.

Preparation of material is something that is always present in what Melton puts before us and this gives us an extra incentive to do it justice at the meeting.

I don't think I have overdone it with the compliments. Our group would have been disappointed with me if I had offered any less but this is also meant to be a compliment to all those who take on the role of guide, because this is an essential in the CLC life.

Teena and Melton were able to attend our last meeting and I don't think I have words to express how important this is to us and the pleasure it was. Liz and Terry prepared a deep and lovely paper on the Eucharist for us, which took us down familiar roads and made us appreciate again the love that has been lavished on us by the Lord. Teena seemed to be especially touched and it brought out of her some of the circumstances, beyond coincidence, that came to Melton's rescue at critical times in his danger. Teena reminded us of the power of prayer and that reminds

us that CLC is at heart a community of prayer.

Brian O'Connor

THE ENCOUNTERS GROUP at VICTOR HARBOR



When we moved down to Adelaide 6 years ago, Rob and I really missed belonging to a CLC group as we had done so for 15 years.

After an aborted attempt, we talked to people in our parish and individually asked them to come to our house for a presentation.

Several people joined in, some left, some joined later. Now we are 9 members all Catholics (2

Anglican-Catholic). From the very first meeting, we treated the

meeting as prayer and sacred space, following strictly the CLC process from the handbook. As a result, there is a deep listening to each other's sharing of our daily lives and prayer. The presence and movement of the Spirit is quite tangible and is often commented upon at evaluation time. What characterises our group is our friendship sustained by meeting each other at masses and church events. It makes our CLC life quite seamless. Personally, I value the love and support received, the example of deep faith and mission I see in the members, the trust and

honesty between us. The members value their belonging to the movement and are ready after 2 years to register officially.

Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson

CLC for ROB

For me, CLC, or the Ignatian way of living my life, is the natural progression of my ongoing faith journey towards God. In it I seek a sense of my unique value to serving Him, knowing the Trinity and sharing, with like-minded people, where God is in the ordinary things of my daily lived experiences. CLC has taught me how to listen to God's voice in my heart and to discern the consolations and desolations of the Spirit within it. As I form a new group in the Fleurieu, with Jocelyne, I am full of joy and enthusiasm for the new journey being undertaken by our latest CLC initiates.

Rob Randabel-Williamson

CLC for YVONNE

Through my personal experience with CLC my Father has given me a renewed awareness of me as a spiritual Christian woman. Deeply loved by him, and my CLC group, I continue to practice my journey of faith by self-reflection, with wisdom and discernment. I continue to look forward to each day with courage and hope and for the new experiences yet to come.

Yvonne Rossiter

CLC for HELEN

Belonging to CLC has helped me feel loved, safe & honoured as a

person. CLC is teaching me to listen to my desires and grow in my spiritual life. I'm learning to experience divine love, to grow in my relationship with the Trinity and, hopefully, to be of service to others.

Helen Blandford

CLC for MARGARET, WENDY and JOHN

I do believe that God gives us experiences in Life to be part of His Mission. For me CLC is part of the experiences needed to work. Amen.

Margaret Halton

CLC adds another dimension to my faith – that of sharing, of trusting and being trusted, of listening to others, of expressing verbally some of what I feel. Through the whole process of each meeting I am helped to see where God is at work in all of us.

Wendy Baker

For me CLC invokes the Holy Spirit through the disciplined Ignatian format of prayer, Lectio Divina, listening, sharing and intercessory prayers. The meetings are also a time of friendship.

John Baker

CLC for ROSEMARIE and HORST

We had been watching your group over a few years and noticed that you had real love for each other. Just like they said in the Acts of the Apostles. When you asked us to join you we were very happy to do so. Unfortunately, shortly after we joined you, I was diagnosed

with cancer. That slowed us down in taking part in all the meetings. But it did not stop the Group's help and support for us. I'm not sure what the last few months would have been like without the love and prayers. It really is Christianity as it should be, to be recognised by the way we love each other. We are both looking forward to be more involved when I am finished with my treatment.

Rosemarie and Horst Kuske

PASTORAL PLANNING in the age of FRANCIS

(Extracts from an address to the Parish Pastoral councils of the Diocese Father David B Couturier OFM, Cap, PhD, D Min)

There is nothing boring about our times. There is nothing normal about it. Our times are characterized by three things: A sense of urgency, the feeling that high stakes are involved and the experience of uncertainty.

The skill you need is called "pastoral planning", the strategic thinking and ordered process of reflection and decision-making that helps communities understand and stay true to their mission....the fundamental mission of the church. The group charged with this work of pastoral planning is the Parish Pastoral Council.

Pastoral planning is the process of praying and thinking together about the actions of the Body of Christ in a particular time and place. Dr William Pickett(2007)

It is primarily a process of discernment. It is a hard look at

trends and forces facing the church; what is likely to happen to the church as times, cultures and conditions change. It's about a proper response, a considered response, and a graced response to those changes.

The Francis Effect: Pope Francis sees his papacy as a critical and positive moment for deep reform and renewal of the whole Church. He is not interested in the status quo. He is a Pope who embraces lepers, stands up to the Mafia, refuses to judge the homosexuals and marries couples in irregular situations.

Francis is pivoting the Church away from privilege and towards the poor.

"Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our comfort zones to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel."

The Lord will never leave you adrift in a sea of confusion. No, the Lord will point out where He wants your parish to go, if you are willing to listen and obey His call.

But you have to realize that the Lord will call you beyond your comfort zones. He is not going to let you stay in your cosy ways of doing things. The Lord is going to send you to the peripheries of society and church, where the poor, the bruised, the excluded and the unacceptable sit with Lazarus at the gates of oppression.

Do we look comfortable or disturbed with the situation of the

poor and the problems facing our families? People, especially young people, will be rating us on the Francis scale from here on in.

Secularization

It is the most powerful and dangerous force ever to hit the church in its long history of salvation. In Australia, only 12% of Catholics go to church on a regular basis. Only about 2% of young people attend and are being socialised in the church. We no longer preach to them. We no longer confess and reconcile them. We rarely marry them or gather with them for funerals. The Millennial generation, young adults between the ages of 18 to 34, are already the most religiously unaffiliated generation ever. Optimistic, social, generous and with a social conscience, this generation has all but given up on religion. They don't think religion works for them. They have severe doubts about how Catholics live and what we say we believe in. They are crafting an ethic and social vision that has no reference to the divine. This generation doesn't see how the Christian narrative makes sense for the world they have to live, love and work in. They hear our dogma and doctrines but they don't know how to translate them into a strategy for a happy and fulfilled life in the commercial frenzy of their careers. Instead, they have come to believe in *the secular narrative* that says you must invent and re-invent yourself over and over again in any way you want and can, without the interference of old doctrines and traditions. They have accepted

uncritically the massive 'global work culture' that puts the first priority on career.

These young people are good people, generous individuals, men and women with a powerful social conscience who don't think religion works to bring peace, fairness and justice or help for a fulfilled life. Young adults are worried about the world. They see institutions failing them. They see marriages breaking down.... And so, they are walking away from commitments, all commitments. They are neither angry nor oppositional with religion; they are indifferent. They find religion unhelpful and therefore irrelevant to the way they live their lives. They are the unbound generation and religion is by nature a "binding" phenomenon. This wholesale trend to self-reliance is our deepest crisis, given the fact that we, as a Catholic community, are a people of belonging and communion by grace.

We need to tell the story of our lives and how the Christ we have met in the Catholic community saves us in the day to day traffic of life. We need to tell our deep stories of faith in God and in the Christ and how that story works in real time for us, when tragedy strikes, when heartache comes, when life turns sour and we are threatened to lose hope. Our task is to show the new generation the reasons for our hope.

We must avoid a theology based on scarcity and a view of God that is reticent and stingy in the face of our problems. St Bonaventure

reminds us that God is a fountainfulness of generous and abiding love, when he says that God is 'good, all good, supremely good, all the time and to everyone. Jesus told us that whenever we seek, we will find. And what we will get for our labours will be so much more that we expect or could ever imagine. God always exceeds our expectations. There is no darkness to which God will not bring light; no hunger that God will not satisfy; no prodigal child that God will not bring home. We simply have to believe and get to work. Believe in the goodness of God.

Précis by Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson

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Rob and Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson.

