



Christian Life Community Australia

Renewing Parishes and CLC

As a new kid on the block (to CLC and Adelaide Catholic community), I am not sure how connected CLC groups in South Australia are to their local parishes. I have been following the diocesan-led renewal with great interest over the last year or so, and am very involved at the local and regional levels in fostering interest in the document “Renewing Parishes” which has been put out by the newly established Office of Renewal within the diocesan administration. I think CLC’ers need to be contributing enthusiastically to this process, which will culminate in a diocesan gathering to affirm the principles under consideration, sometime in spring, 2016.

The document comes out of the 12-month process of New Directions forums on specific topics organised by a New Directions Task Force, set up following the visit of Fr David Couturier in 2014. The Task Force has taken a look backwards to various waves of renewal in the Diocese over the last 40 years, but takes its cues primarily from Pope Francis’ Joy of the Gospel. In particular, it is responding to Francis’ call for

Church-wide “pastoral conversion” which should be directed to a “missionary option” - “that is a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” (paragraph 27).

Bracing stuff, hey!

In the next paragraph, Francis goes straight to affirming the relevance of the parish as an institution. But it is conditional on “the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and community” (paragraph 28). He goes on to say, “we must admit though that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented” (paragraph 28).

The “Renewing Parishes” document puts forward eight points identifying “parishes in the process of renewal”, dealing with:
Discipleship,
Eucharist,
Scripture and preaching,
Community outreach,

Engagement with those in one’s local community experiencing poverty and other forms of marginalization,
Ecological consciousness,
Leadership that is team-based, and
Evaluation of the viability of Eucharistic communities.

The document stresses that this call to renewal is addressed not just to parishes, but also “to other Eucharistic communities”, which could be taken, I believe, to include CLC. Therefore, it is important for our groups to be focusing on this document as part of our collective discernment and missionary orientation in service of the local church.

Nevertheless, it is also important for CLC’ers to be actively leading the way with specific points in the document. Most notably, the **first** point, on **Discipleship**, offers this direction:

“Our parishes and their schools will need to be places where members can learn to pray, to know and understand the Scriptures, and to discern and use their gifts in the cause of the Kingdom of God in our world”.

This is clearly a way in which CLC can offer direction and new life to the local parish, whether through CLC itself, or through CLC’ers finding

relevant ways to kindle the fire of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of parishioners. To my mind, this is the most pressing difference between a parish community that is manifesting the “openness and creativity” Pope Francis is calling for, or one that is out of touch with its community, not alive and welcoming, and stuck in its ways.

Peter Laffan,

(Galilee CLC community, Aldinga)

Making a Formal Temporary or Permanent Commitment to the CLC Way of Life

What does it mean?

This was a question I had asked myself often since the conversation on Commitment had started in South Australia around 2014. It was a strange concept to grasp – the idea of a CLC member making either a “Temporary” or “Permanent” Commitment after (in some instances) being a dedicated member of CLC for several or many years - members who clearly were living the Ignatian idea of looking for and finding God in all things, working for social justice and fairness and being aware of the preferential option for the poor. So the question kept rising for me – why is there a need to make a public announcement about it?

It has taken some time, much reflection, discernment, sharing and prayer for me to begin to answer this “why”? In fact, I am still in the process of deciding whether I am being called personally to make a Commitment or not.

In essence, making a Commitment to CLC is about acknowledging that we are on an Ignatian journey and we are committed to it. It is about publicly proclaiming to God, ourselves and the CLC World community that we are serious in our desire to live the Ignatian way. This is where my

reasoning came unstuck. The reading material we were provided with in the Colloquy on Commitment (a four meeting preparation and discernment process for people considering Commitment) was informative and thought provoking, however, it did not seem to be talking about me and my experience! It seemed to be talking about people who were a lot further along in their spiritual quest than I was. People who were a lot holier than me. Therefore, my initial reaction to the idea was “obviously right for some people but not for me”. I am a cautious person by nature and there did not seem to be a calling to me at all.

However, I did have the desire to find out more, so I joined the Skype Colloquy with Helen Cantwell leading us and over four Skype meetings, we read some enlightening material and discussed our responses to them. Elements that are essential to both Temporary and Permanent CLC Commitment are: the acceptance of the General Principles, commitment to the CLC way of life, openness to apostolic mission, reference to the World Community and availability to cooperate in the activities of the Community. There is also some scope, in Permanent Commitment, for everyone to personalize the expression of the commitment one desires to make.

This all sounded daunting and I felt my experience of living with CLC was falling short of these seemingly “high achiever” spiritual goals. However, on reflection and with discernment, I began to see that most of the criteria for Commitment was in fact deeply embedded in my spiritual life. Making an annual retreat as well as short retreats throughout the year, working with others to facilitate others’ faith formation, being an active part of my CLC group, trying to

find time for daily prayer, attending the Sacraments, giving the First Spiritual Exercises to others, being involved in community groups and my working life were all spaces where I find opportunities to embrace and try to live the CLC way of life. I have come to recognise that my initial caution about Commitment was that I felt that “I wasn’t there yet”.....but by engaging in the Colloquy process I am seeing that I am not being called to present myself to the CLC community as a perfect example of the Commitment ideals - and I am still a work in progress as far as the Lord is concerned!

I have now begun the second stage of enquiry into the Commitment process, which involves another four sessions on Permanent commitment. This explores the history of our own CLC vocation, our Common Mission in CLC and the formulae for Permanent Commitment. I am still in the process of discerning whether I will make Temporary or Permanent Commitment at the General Assembly in Sydney in July 2016. I would encourage anyone who is wondering what Commitment is all about to seek further information – it’s not quite as mystifying or scary as I first thought it was going to be.

June Duffy,

(CLC Pilgrims group, Adelaide)

Community and CLC

Small Community:

Christ founded a Community, which is Church, and he prayed for unity. We worship - not as individuals but as a Community. In CLC, people come to it because they miss a sense of real closeness, support and a relaxed acceptance by their fellow worshippers. They also want to talk about their faith and their relationship with God. A CLC group is a place of trust where people want to hear how

God has been present in their everyday life since they last met. While each person shares their experience, everybody else listens deeply - putting aside their own thoughts and giving their full attention. As a result, the sharer feels accepted and unconditionally loved. For intimacy and trust to grow, a key agreement is that everyone will endeavour to make the meeting a priority in their lives and try not to allow non-urgent things stop them from attending. Community grows through openness, trust and commitment to each other. As a group, we try to help one another discover God in each of our experiences and notice where God is leading us. Together, we *discern* where God's Spirit is active in our lives. By *listening* to each person intensely, we are privileged to notice how God is at work in our companions. By *sharing*, we are helped to find God in the ordinary events of our own lives. (*Notes from CLC – England - Tony Horan SJ*).

After praying and reflecting on a Scripture passage, the *first* round of sharing responds to the questions: “*what has touched me since the last meeting?*” and “*where have I found God in my life since the last meeting?*”

We share our experiences at a deep, heart level. Since this sharing follows the praying about Scripture, it brings together prayer and listening. Prayer, basically, is surrender to the Father - **Let God be God in my life**. Listening is surrendering to the other - Let the other be free to be themselves. (*Patrick O'Sullivan - SJ*).

World Community:

The “experienced” life and energy of CLC is in the local and regional communities – our own group and the other groups in the State. From this perspective, it is difficult to see CLC

as a World Community - to feel connected to this bigger dimension. Being in CLC puts us in communion with all those other CLC members around the world who are working to be Christ for others. That is the *mission* of CLC. We are not alone: we are part of a worldwide movement, a broader church. What we do at our local level contributes to the work of the entire community and, conversely, what is done by the entire community supports us in what we do. We are truly sisters and brothers in Christ. We become the **Community of Christ**. (*from “Guideposts”*).

Community for Mission:

The Community is a place of apostolic discernment. It is where members come to seek support from one another as well as guidance in discerning their life choices – whether they be big or small. By sharing what they are actually doing *to be Christ to others* (their mission), the members take on the commitments of each other as part of their own commitment. Community in CLC is more than a support group. It does not exist for its own sake. It is the place that gives us energy to go out and follow Christ's invitation to work with him for love and peace in the world. It is the place from which we go out to share a Christ-like quality of presence to others and the place to which we return for nourishment. CLC community not only helps us to discern the Spirit's movements within us, it also invites us to be faithful to the Spirit's call. (*Lawrence L. Gooley - SJ*).

We live this way of Christian life in joyful communion with all those who have preceded us, grateful for their efforts and apostolic accomplishments. In love and prayer, we join those many men and women of our spiritual tradition, who have been proposed to us by the Church as friends and valid

intercessors; who help us to fulfil our mission. (*From the General Principles - General Principle 3*).

Rob & Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson,
(*from material developed by us for pre-CLC*)

Experiencing Community within new groups in the Fleurieu

“Community” in CLC for me is all about enriching and practising my faith by the sharing of life and prayer experience with like-minded Christians. Through the CLC format of listening – really listening – to others in the group and reflecting afterwards on how their sharing has touched an empathetic chord, I find the necessity to focus on others takes “me” out of the equation. It invokes a desire to reach out to others, to help through intercessory prayer, and sometimes, simply to reflect others' joy at something wonderful in their lives.

This community feeling is in its most concentrated form within our own group, but like a stone thrown into a pond, the ripples may spread wider and wider – to regional gatherings, to statewide gatherings, to weekend retreats, World CLC Days and beyond. Each small CLC group or its representative acts as a single member within these wider gatherings, all following the similar format, where people feel safe, loved, guided and trusted.

Personally, my spiritual needs are met in receiving Eucharist several times a week, but the CLC community adds a beautiful extra dimension and depth to my faith as well as the camaraderie that comes with being with and caring for and about other Christians.

Within this community, everyday distractions can be parked for a while,

as it were, as our minds, hearts and prayers are centred on our Lord.

Wendy Baker,
(The Victor Harbor Encounters Group)

Meeting twice a month with my fellow CLC members has become an important path in my faith journey.

It is also precious that my husband and I are able to be at the meeting together.

We initially met in the church meeting room, but when that space was needed, we offered our home as the venue.

We are very fortunate to have Rob and Jocelyne as our leaders extraordinaires, who have introduced and led us very gently and competently through the Ignatian way of spirituality.

Having a set pattern to the meetings has certainly helped with leading the meeting and drawing us naturally into a deep and meaningful sharing of our faith and experiences.

Often I am feeling the effect of my busy and stressful day but by the end of the meeting, I am feeling at peace with God and my part of the world.



We celebrated the start of this New Year with a shared lunch at Rob and Jocelyne's home in Victor Harbor and this was a happy time of getting to know and chatting with members of

the other CLC groups from the Southern Deanery.

Carmel Lawless,
(Noarlunga CLC community)

Mission in the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Rob and I have always wanted to be on mission together. About 6 years ago, we started 2 CLC groups, one in Brighton and one in Victor Harbor where we live. These 2 groups lasted six months each and stopped because people moved out of the area or had conflicting family commitments. Then three years ago, we started another group in Victor Harbor from personal contact with parish people. This group is still going strong. Two years ago, we founded a Spirituality and Formation Committee and, after advertising in the parish bulletin, we recruited four additional members who wanted to lead retreats and workshops in the parish. Last February, the dean of the Fleurieu peninsula, a firm believer in church renewal and spirituality, convened a meeting around the theme of Spirituality and Formation. As representatives of one of four parishes in the deanery, we attended and were very surprised when Father Charles Gauci asked Rob and I to start CLC groups straight away by first speaking about it from the pulpit.

With great trepidation but also strong conviction that we were doing Christ's work, we spoke and waited for responses. Eventually, four groups commenced the pre-CLC phase in Normanville, Aldinga, Noarlunga and another 1 in Victor.

It has been a blessing and a great reward to witness people's search for community as well as the opportunity to share their faith in a secular world and to discover Ignatian spirituality.

Rob and I subsequently developed a series of 12 Pre-CLC modules by accessing the wide number of resources we had gathered over the years as well as our own reading and experience of Ignatian spirituality and CLC. Each group, at input time, is given a handout on the key areas of CLC such as Community, Spirituality, Mission, Prayer, Discernment, etc. This is greatly appreciated as the groups thirst for greater depth and an understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ today is visible.

We realized that such an endeavour could be done more successfully with a partner, married or not. After all, Jesus sent his disciples in pairs! The support of Exco and that of our own CLC group was also most precious.

As we travelled back from meetings at night, 45-60 minutes away from home, careful not to hit any kangaroos, we were recharged. Our hearts were full of joy for we had been blessed by people's prayerful sharing, their reflections on the gospel, the music listened to and especially the deep friendships formed over the months.

There were frustrations of course along the way. Some people dropped out, not comfortable with the sharing, which they found confronting. Some people are tongue tied, not comfortable with naming a feeling let alone sharing it. Some are already committed with parish activities and are exhausted at the end of the day. Some think they don't want to change their way of praying or understanding of a new way of being a Christian in the 21st century. Confronted with these disappointments, Rob and I try to detach ourselves from the outcomes of our efforts and try to trust in the Holy Spirit to do her job. Just pray and let go!

As part of the church renewal in SA, and more particularly in the Fleurieu peninsula, we think that it is important to keep promoting the pillars of CLC at gatherings where we meet priests and deacons from other parishes. There is such a lack of knowledge about the treasures that CLC has to offer the modern church.

Our particular mission happened because the time was right, we were ready and available and we had the desire to use our gifts and talents for the work of God.

Rob and Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson.

A Natural Love Affair

God's love affair with me, through his creation, began with sand, shells and surf when I was a toddler and carried on in bamboo fort adventures in our canyon as a girl. In my youth there were hikes through "Fat Man's Misery" (narrow eroded gullies through cliffs leading to the sea at Torrey Pines in California). There were family camping holidays to the remarkable towering Sequoias, the mighty waterfalls of Yosemite, the amazing HooDoo sculptures of Bryce Nat'l Park ... God's wonders were everywhere!

God enticed me with his exotic flora, fauna and landscapes in Australia...intriguing me with his love of diversity and seducing me with the empty white sand beaches and sweeping coves of Waitpinga and Parsons and the cliff trails of Morialta Falls.

Eventually there was his abundant goodness of a lavish garden bearing food for our family table as we nurtured three boys to manhood. With the garden came acres of bushland to learn to manage. So there were

Permaculture books and bushcare courses.

Finally, I began doing my part to care for God's beautiful, generous creation – not just appreciate its lavish splendour.

I am well aware of threats to our precious environment. Advocates like Rachel Carson, Ralph Nader and David Suzuki have been sounding alarm bells all my life. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle have become habits of care. Teaching Environmental Studies to children from Reception to Year 7 has allowed me to share my passionate care for the environment. Organising Clean- Up Australia Day crews was part of my volunteer work at the Adelaide Hills Natural Resource Centre. For twenty years, my husband and I have been participants in the Sixth Creek Landcare Group – protecting native flora and fauna, revegetating creek lines and combatting weeds and pests.

I have always felt a deep respect and awe for the natural world God has gifted us with. Now, with Pope Francis' Laudato Si I feel a sacramental blessing on my affectionate care and joyous engagement with God's wonderful world – His wondrous Universe!

Paris Huffman,
(Chair, State CLC Exco)

South Australia celebrates 40 Years of CLC in Australia

An Invitation to do A Pilgrimage Walk in The Year of Mercy

CLC Members and friends are invited by Chris and Anne Maloney of Watervale, in the Clare Valley, in South Australia, to come to their cottage for refreshments before or after a Pilgrimage Walk along the Riesling Trail between Watervale and Sevenhill. The walk takes between 2-3

hours one way. Groups up to 10 are possible or it can be an individual or pair experience. Wednesday is their best day, but other days can be arranged. The Sevenhill Parish is still working out ways of offering pilgrims hospitality.

Fr Paul writes in the bulletin "One focus could be a monthly Mass celebrated on Wednesdays at 11.30am with a reflection on mercy. Other elements of the pilgrimage may be provided: the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the profession of faith and prayer for the Pope's intentions." Contact Anne and Chris to make enquiries:

candamaloney@bigpond.com

Our CLC community is warmly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. Members of your group may wish to conduct your own reflection on Mercy in the Sevenhill Chapel. Cars can be left at Sevenhill and at the Maloney's to allow walking in only one direction.



2016 dates for your diary

**Sept.9,10,11- Sevenhill retreat-
all members and Pre-CLCs**

**Nov 12. End of year gathering.
all members and Pre-CLCs.**

Editors:

Rob and Jocelyne Randabel-Williamson.