



Special Edition – Formation for Mission



Editorial

Dear CLC Members of Australia,

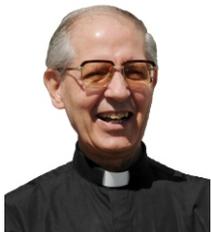
This Special Edition of Annotations, entitled “Formation for Mission”, is an initiative of the National Formation Group. The emphasis in it is to have a document which provides reflection on the many interrelated aspects of the CLC way of life. We do not see formation as an end in itself but a means to joining in the creative work of God in this world. In a very real sense all of us are already doing this, so our aim here is to share among ourselves the thoughts and reflections of some in our community. We hope this stimulates you further, as Ignatius says, to “help souls”.

Lisa Beer and Michael Gray have kindly edited this edition so I will hand over to them to talk about the menu.

Chris Gardner
 Co-ordinator of National Formation Group

This Special Edition begins with an explanation from our Ecclesial Assistant, Fr Robin Koning SJ, of Fr General Nicholas’ “Prophetic Lay Community” presentation at Fatima followed by Robin’s personal reflection on it. He draws on Fr Nicolas’ claim that ‘CLC community is not just for mission: it is itself mission’. There are a further three documents reflecting on Formation for Mission focussing on each individual calling, the Spiritual Exercises, role of being a Guide and Apostolic action. Ludmilla Milo’s formation experience through the Spiritual Exercises has led her to her mission. Chris Gardner shares his response to God’s call while working with people who have a mental illness. Michael Gray’s call to be a Guide is shared with us with stories of connection and ministry. Our last article on Commitment reflects on our long term membership of CLC and our mission.

We hope this Special Edition can be used as a source of formation both individually and in your small groups. The questions at the end of each contribution are intended to promote such further thought and prayerful reflection.



Prophetic Lay Community: Fr General's Talk at Fatima 2008

apostolic community sharing mission in the Church, which he sees as “an option to become a prophetic, missionary community, as community.”

To attain this goal, he highlights 10 action words in his talk. We might group these together in this way:

The challenge for CLC to live as a prophetic lay community was received by the CLC General Assembly as “*the defining grace of Fatima 2008*” (Final Statement 2.7). The World Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Adolfo Nicolas, put this challenge in his address to the Assembly. Interestingly, Nico did not consider he was putting forward anything terribly novel. While the term ‘Prophetic Lay Community’ may have been a new one, Nico saw this idea as flowing quite naturally from the major deliberation of the previous General Assembly in Nairobi. There CLC felt confirmed in a “call to become a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church”. For Fr Nicolas, being an apostolic community sharing mission in the Church *entails being prophetic*. Any such mission will have to be “a Prophetic Mission, done and carried out in the name of God and under his guidance”. It cannot be otherwise. Confirmation of shared mission for CLC is “one of God’s responses to the growing need of our world for concerted and enlightened action on behalf of people, justice and reconciliation.”

For Nico, the adjective ‘prophetic’ applies both to the word ‘lay’ and to the word ‘community’. He contrasts the traditional emphasis on people coming to faith by *hearing* the word with today’s “strong emergence of ‘sight’ in the search for deeper life and truth.” Many people in this generation “are tired and disappointed with empty words, campaign promises, dispirited and anemic homilies, words and words and words that ... are only clatter, sounding brass, or clanging cymbals. People today want to ‘see’ what they ‘hear’. They want to see ‘living words’.” It is here that “the living testimony of committed laity” is so important. “We respect Lay leaders as we did clerics in the past; we read the writings of lay theologians, we are inspired by the life and the testimonies ... of people who have found ways of holiness where before we only looked for secular ‘good life’,” including the lived witness of “couples who, through the years, have transformed difficulties, differences and conflicts into testimonies of greater love, Christian fidelity and creative hope.”

What is perhaps most challenging in Nico’s talk, is the call for CLC to be prophetic precisely *as a community*. The Church has always had “strong, gifted and visionary individuals” who have shaped the Church and society. This still happens – “A gifted person never fails to influence others” – but to a lesser degree. Now if we want real social change, we need to look at how to mobilise others – “whole Groups, Movements, Communities, Collaborative Projects and the like make the difference”. In our time, prophetic communities are “far more important” than prophetic individuals.

Personal prophetic witness remains crucial; but Fr Nicolas was calling CLC to the *magis*, to something more. “Can we, as a Community, live a Prophetic Vocation?” Again, he relates this to Nairobi’s commitment to CLC becoming an

Basic Attitudes:

1. Receiving – receiving especially the gift of the Spirit; being constantly aware of “living in God’s mercy and love, the gift of gifts”

2. Searching – “An apostolic and prophetic community is a community of very humble, ever-searching believers.”

Experience:

3. Listening – with the hearing, the ears of God. Listen to the Word, to the Spirit, to the people, especially to their “anguished clamour”. Lay people are often well-placed to hear what clergy will not hear.

4. Seeing – with the eyes of God; once again, lay people “very often see what ... priests do not, or cannot see”

5. Feeling – with the heart of God, “the pain and suffering of others”

Processing our experience:

6. Discerning – without discernment, there is no prophecy. “Fast food-like’ conclusions are only the expressions of False Prophecy.” The Spirit guides us from fear to confidence in God’s way forward: “when the Spirit comes to our community our fears are gone and we know what God wants from us”

7. Deciding – on the basis of our discerned experience, making decisions about how to respond and contribute to that reality that we have become a part of

Acting:

8. Doing – using our hands and feet “for action, service and compassion”

9. Being – people “for others” and “with others”.

10. Speaking – the Word of God, “word of mercy, compassion for those who suffer ... and a word of Conversion and Solidarity for those who can do something about that suffering.”

For Fr Nicolas all of this points to formation as “our greatest priority” in CLC – in fact, as “the priority of priorities”. The educational side of this formation needs to involve a real education, “measured by the ability to open the minds of people for greater and deeper realities”. Formation needs to be “in depth”. While it will include “anything that helps people grow as persons and as believing persons in love” (e.g. theology, psychology, anthropology), the main focus must be formation “in the Life of the Spirit”. This involves mastering the ways “to become interiorly free”; real discernment; and growth in “docile and joyful familiarity with the ways of the Spirit”.

Finally, and importantly, Nico notes that this sort of formation ‘in depth’ is the “main field of cooperation” between CLC and the Society of Jesus.

Reflections on Fr General's Talk on CLC as a Prophetic Lay Community

In an earlier article, I summarised the main points the World Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Nicolas, made at the Fatima General Assembly when he spoke about CLC as a Prophetic Lay community. Here I wish to reflect on that call, situating it in the CLC tradition and teasing out some implications.



Fr Robin Koning SJ

This challenge to CLC to be a prophetic *community* represents a development from previous CLC documents. "The CLC Charism", for example, speaks of prophecy solely in terms of *each person* being prophetic. Our baptismal call is to be not just priest and king, but also prophet, like Jesus (## 86-87). "Every Christian is consecrated for this prophetic mission." (##87). Mary is offered as an example of this sort of personal prophetic mission, which she lived out in "giving birth to the Son for our world," in setting out "to bring good news to Elizabeth", by being the poor of the Lord who put her hope in God alone, and in living a prophetically by her poor and simple lifestyle (##89-90).

The General Principles and other parts of the Charism document and the GPs do not use the words 'prophet' or 'prophetic'. But they do talk in significant ways of the life of the CLC member in ways which amount to being prophetic. They speak of the need to work for justice; to witness to values affecting the dignity of the person, the integrity of creation and the welfare of the family; to identify with Christ's mission to the poor; to change oppressive structures; to live a simple lifestyle as a way of expressing our solidarity with the poor. [See GP 4, 8; CLC Charism 92-94].

Again, though, all of these statements can be read as a call to *each individual CLC person* to work for justice in his or her own way, in his or her own daily situations, and to live simply. These aspects are important, of course, and will always remain so. But Nico was talking about being prophetic precisely as a community, as a body. As we have already noted in the summary of his talk, this is closely linked with having a common mission. For him, being an apostolic community sharing mission in the Church *entails being prophetic*.

While being prophetic as a community is linked to having a shared mission, though, it is not simply about that. It is also about how we live our CLC life in community. We should not forget how simply going about our usual CLC life, our group meetings and activities, is itself prophetic. Taking time to meet together with other Christians, to be silent and pray, to share faith and daily experience – these are all prophetic challenges in a world which can be individualistic, which can deny the value of spending time 'doing nothing', which seeks to keep us ever busy, ever 'connected', ever available. To act in a discerned way, and not compulsively or reactively, is prophetic. As Nico says, "'Fast food-like' conclusions are only the expressions of False Prophecy."

Another way of putting this is to recognise that community is not simply about supporting people to be apostolic and prophetic. It is itself apostolic and prophetic. The most recent General Congregation of the Jesuits made this point

about Jesuit community: "Jesuit community is not just for mission: it is itself mission." While CLC community is a very different sort of community from a religious community, the same point can well be made about CLC: "CLC community is not just for mission: it is itself mission." Or, in terms of Nico's talk, "CLC community is not just for prophetic witness; it is itself prophetic witness." The efforts taken to form community, to live and work collaboratively, are themselves a key part of our mission.

When it comes to mission beyond the community, though, what directions does CLC give us for our involvement in prophetic witness and the promotion of justice? The Fatima assembly, taking up Fr Nicolas' call, asked exactly this question: "in what issues is God's Spirit prompting World CLC to be prophetic?" It begins by referring back to the World Assembly in 1998 in Itaici, where "three important desires" were identified: "to promote family life as a basic unit in building the world into the Kingdom of God; to accompany young people on the way to meaningful life ...; and to integrate professional and other working activities into ... our Christian faith".

What is significant here is that the Assembly does not jump immediately to things we might usually define as justice issues – e.g. refugees, or poverty, or Indigenous reconciliation. It broadens our usual sense of what promoting justice and living prophetically might mean. Here CLC is fully in keeping with the Church's understanding of justice, which is broader and more solidly grounded than that of most secular groups. We have only to return to the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, or look at the *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church*, or read the most recent social encyclical of Pope Benedict, *Caritas in Veritate*, to see how the Church holds together what others would separate out – life issues and social justice issues; concern for the oppressed with concern for family; sexual ethics and social ethics. CLC documents manifest their thinking and feeling with the Church by not narrowing down social justice to secular ideologies, but offering a holistic view of the common good to be attained. This is evident already in the General Principles where # 4 seamlessly holds together "the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation". It is also implicit in the way Mary is presented as a model of justice in GP 9.

The other issues Fatima points to are ecological justice ("the dignity of creation and the environment"); women's issues ("a vision for women in society and in the Church, with Mary the mother of God as our model"); and dialogue within and between religions ("ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue"). All of these are key elements of justice in our time, and ones to which the Assembly draws the attention of CLC. Finally, the Assembly recommends that CLC be more visible at all levels in its "prophetic stances for justice and the poor" (#3.5).

So the challenge is there: to be an apostolic body, which means being a prophetic lay community; to see this not simply in terms of external mission but in terms of how we live our lives as CLC community; and when it comes to external mission, to allow our discernment of issues be shaped by the broadness of the Church's social teaching. In this way, we may hope to reach up to the task set before us, which, as Fr Nicolas pointed out, while certainly big, is "mostly deep".

My Experience of the Spiritual Exercises

Ludmilla Milo

It has been five years since I made the *Spiritual Exercises* and, with hindsight and through the richness of life that I have experienced since, I believe that my desire to undertake this retreat in daily life was prompted by God's Spirit. I am deeply grateful that I responded to God's invitation to make the Exercises during 2006; my life and life direction since has been transformed very gradually and steadily and, I can now see, radically. This outcome is not an isolated experience, but is hoped for in someone who makes this major retreat.

The *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, inform the spirituality that we call 'Ignatian spirituality' – the spirituality that the CLC way of life is steeped in. CLC foundational documents encourage members to deepen their discipleship of Christ and service in faith through experiencing the Exercises either in the 18th Annotation or in the full *Exercises* (19th and 20th Annotation retreats).

The *Spiritual Exercises* form a structured framework of retreat material that asks for a considerable and sustained commitment from the retreatant- a daily hour of prayer and weekly spiritual direction in the retreat in daily life (19th Annotation) over the better part of a year or a full month in a live-in retreat where the exercitant 'leaves the world' for that period to pray the entire day with daily direction (20th Annotation).

Before I started the Exercises I knew nothing about them beyond the fact that there was an eager voice inside of me saying "Yes, I want to do them". I had first come across the term on two short silent retreats at Sevenhill's Ignatian retreat centre (near Clare in SA) in 2005. I kept on quizzing my spiritual director as to 'What are these Exercises?' and 'What are the Annotations?' mentioned in the writings I had dipped into from the library of this Jesuit community. I was, thankfully, given no answers, but I didn't really need any explanation that would help me to decide to do the *Exercises* – the way you would choose a job, buy a car or house. The invitation knocking at my heart was from God.

As I write this in 2011, I have completed two years of formation in the Arrupe Program which forms spiritual directors in the ministry of giving the *Spiritual Exercises*. I know quite a lot about the retreat material, dynamics and graces that a director looks for in a retreatant who is making the Exercises. I was completely ignorant about all of this when I started and feel that this is possibly the best way in which to enter into this intense spiritual encounter with your God.

The only pre-requisite is to have a deeply felt desire to explore who God is for you and who you are for God. God is the real director of this retreat – the material touches each retreatant in a unique way. No two retreats are the same, even though the framework remains the same. And so it should be, because in Ignatian spirituality each person has a unique identity before God and a unique task and purpose for their life in faith. Your spiritual director

helps you recognise the movement of God's grace that arises out of the guided and sustained prayer that is at the core of the *Exercises*.

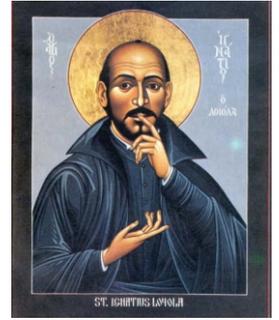
The *Exercises* help you to face yourself and the world you find yourself in before God and Christ. The experience is in the context of your own life, outlook, abilities and identity. The only preparation needed is to bring an open and generous heart. I think I had that desire and generosity – that I let God and Christ into my heart to transform me in the way that I needed to be transformed. God speaks intimately to each retreatant from the place where s/he finds her/himself in that present moment. However, the present place is not the place where God hopes to eventually lead each person in the service of Christ and in building God's Kingdom.

My experiences during the *Exercises* were particular to that time and the person I was then. The only thing that has not changed is my sincerity and commitment to engage with God and Christ in prayer and in finding God's will for me. I am now at a place of greater spiritual maturity, and, dare I say it, spiritual freedom. This has been wrought for me by God's grace as a result of the radical decision that I had formed by the end of the retreat to amend my life and to try to live out the 'Principle and Foundation' that St Ignatius places at the start of the *Exercises*. It was with this desire that I started my life after the *Exercises*. The fruits of the graces of the *Exercises* will be as diverse and as unique as the individuals who enter into the process.

If you feel called to make this retreat, let the desire mature. The desire comes from God and the exact time you actually make the Exercises will be a time of God's choosing too. Follow the call, but be prepared for a commitment to one hour of prayer (quality time) each day and know that your daily routine and priorities in life and family will have to change if you do the Exercises in daily life.

The *Spiritual Exercises* help you claim the true meaning of your life in faith and service and help you to fall into God's embrace, allowing God to say to you 'You are mine' Isaiah 43:1. Looking back, I can say that this was perhaps my deepest and truest experience in making the *Spiritual Exercises*.

1. Have you considered seeing a spiritual director regularly (say monthly) to deepen your relationship with God?
2. If you would like to commit yourself to following Christ more closely and finding God's desires for your life, you might consider making the *Spiritual Exercises*. Pray with this and ask God to lead you in your decision.



Apostolic action with people who have a mental illness

Christopher Gardner



I am writing to you from Perth, Western Australia. When I was asked for stories from those in CLC working with the poor and marginalised I wanted to share about my work with people with mental illness. I have worked with individuals and families as a Social Worker and Mental Health Practitioner over the past fourteen years.

Whilst I have had to deal with despair, suicide and self-harm, many people's stories are of real courage and of people reassessing their lives and values in light of their illness. Generally, these people are marginalised because of people's fear and lack of understanding of mental illness and a general attitude of not knowing how to help.

However, the vast majority of people with a mental illness are resilient, many rely on their family and friends for support and they find support through spiritual practices which are unique to their circumstances. For many, walking in nature or by the sea, listening to music or having coffee with friends helps them transcend the symptoms of their illness. Many pray, or find space in their lives, that allows them to be in contact with their true selves.

One 20 year old lad I worked with suffered from intrusive thoughts. He thought these were the work of the devil and he wished to be put in contact with a church group that contained young people, which had social activities and accepted him with his illness. He found such a church which had drama activities, liturgical celebrations and a mentoring couple who kept close contact with him. This has helped him on a personal and spiritual level. My role was to introduce him to the Church and support him through his engagement with this Church. He has been connected with the Church for seven years now.

The agency with which I was working, called Ruah (the Hebrew word for Spirit) was initially founded by the Daughters of Charity. Louise De Marillac, worked closely with St Vincent De Paul in France and she was the foundress of the Daughters.

Lay people carry on her charism in the present work with the marginalised, whether they be Aboriginal women in prison, those with mental illness living in the community or abused women seeking refuge in a shelter.

I have been privileged to work with people with mental illness and in the last five years Ruah has advocated for recognition of people with mental illness to be employed in our agency as 'support peer workers'. For me, it was important to give people with a mental illness some equality of opportunity to work and they have the lived experience of a mental illness.

As a Team Coordinator I was able to trial employing people with a lived experience in this support role and get them to run groups for others recovering from mental illness and to be support to individuals who had an illness.

As an agency we also worked closely with the Government to improve services for people with a mental illness and at this very time the Government has appointed a Commissioner for Mental Health. We are the first State in Australia to do so. Many believe this is a giant step towards bringing people with mental illness into a culture that is accepting and more understanding.

For me, I have been in CLC for twenty-five years, and the understanding that St Ignatius asked that we care for souls, ie, their whole self, has been my inspiration. I have felt called to work in this area because I have experienced depression within my own family as I grew up, and I have had some bouts of this to deal with during my life. I also have an adopted daughter who has a severe mental illness.

I have been privileged to work with many people who suffered from psychosis, depression, manic disorders or anxiety. Through the Ignatian way of proceeding and with the support of my local CLC Community, I have responded to God's call in the world.

Questions for reflection:

1. What lived experiences in your life story have led to a call from God to use them in building the reign of God ?
2. How has your local CLC supported and sent you, and helped you evaluate your call to this particular mission?

My Role as a Guide: Formation for Mission

Michael Gray



Seemingly chance encounters can have a profound influence. It was 1996, and my wife and I were in Rome for the first time. We had only recently joined CLC in Sydney and our guide had said “When in Rome make sure you visit CLC headquarters.” Almost by accident one day we did, and our eyes were immediately opened. There was a lot more to CLC than we had envisaged.

First was the warmth of our welcome. Roswitha Cooper, at that time the Executive Secretary at the CLC office in Rome, greeted us, offered us afternoon tea, enquired about our stay in Rome and offered advice and help. She and her staff flooded us with questions about our group and about the many CLC members they knew in Australia. The hospitality was extraordinary.

The other thing that shone through was the international character of CLC. On one wall was a large map of the world showing where CLC was active, and I could hear different languages being spoken elsewhere in the room. Clearly this centre was at the service of CLC worldwide.

As I was to learn later, the three dimensions of CLC are its spirituality, its building of community, and its apostolic mission. In that simple gathering in an office in a side street of Rome I had certainly witnessed these last two dimensions at work on a worldwide scale.

My initial experience of the spirituality dimension was also almost by accident. In the early 1990’s the school where I worked started offering to staff an annual directed three week retreat in daily life. Most years I accepted the offer. Apart from deepening my relationship with some Jesuit priests I already knew and was fond of, it reawakened a desire to pray regularly, to share what had happened in prayer, and to use the awareness Examen in particular.

In 2003 I was chosen to be guide of our CLC group. At first I felt quite inadequate and believed that I knew nothing. However, as I went to more CLC gatherings, and especially our local area cluster meetings for guides, I started to realise that I had been greatly blessed and had been prepared for the role almost inadvertently. At the same time at my school, I was offered and accepted a new role in educating new staff especially about its Ignatian and Jesuit roots, and in offering opportunities for formation in Ignatian Spirituality to all who wished for it.

So how do I see my mission, or as I sometimes prefer to call it my ministry, as a guide? Firstly it can be quite demanding. Individuals go through many stages in their spiritual journey, and so do groups. There is the need to respond to individuals who may be saying, for example, that they need a break from the group, or support in some crisis that they are experiencing. Equally in need of prayerful discernment lies the challenge to support the

group at times when it is struggling to find the joy and consolation it once took for granted, or when the group

realises it is time to clarify further its purpose and mission. Always there is the temptation for the group to focus only on itself, and to forget that we are part of, and are invited to embrace and support, a much larger CLC community than just ourselves. The joy in all this is that the group is there for me as well. Throughout our many changes, and the coming and going of quite a few members, our CLC group has been a steady group of companions, a safe place to pray, share and discern.

In the last few years I have also become involved in introducing individuals and groups to CLC. Now that CLC in NSW has adopted the model of six initial meetings based on the book “To Share in the Life of Christ” by Laurence Gooley SJ, leading to a point of making a personal choice of whether to join CLC or not, I find it a very rich experience and privilege to lead people through this process. Further afield there has been the opportunity to introduce others to Ignatian spirituality groups, whether in our local parish, or with groups in country NSW, often many hour’s drive from Sydney. Often there are not the resources, nor the knowledge needed among the people themselves, to establish CLC groups immediately. We have all come to CLC by many different paths. Helping those who request it to establish Ignatian spirituality groups, it seems to me, is a valuable apostolate in its own right, and through our work and prayer, one that can become a path that others will follow to join CLC.

I hope one day I run into Roswitha again, and have the opportunity to tell her all about the things that had their beginnings for me in that simple CLC office in Rome!

Some questions for reflection:

1. Do I sense that I may be ready to guide a CLC group?
2. Are there signs that my CLC community may be calling me to be a guide?
3. “You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.” (John 15:16) Might God be calling me, offering me a vocation, to become a CLC guide?

Commitment in CLC

Our General Principles include sections on Temporary Commitment and Permanent Commitment. [GP 10]

In our GPs, it is important to recognise that the issue of Commitment arises after people have been in CLC for some time (around 1-4 years) and are in a position to discern about the CLC way of life.

A recommendation from the CLC World Assembly at Fatima in 2008 was that:

- a) national communities evaluate their current approach to CLC Commitment; and
- b) the World ExCo make available documentation which evaluates the current national practices and articulates the concepts of vocation, apostolic body and commitment, drawing from already existing materials.

During our recent Gathering in Mittagong, 2010, a session in Open Space was devoted to Commitment in CLC and from this there was a request for further exchange on the topic.

In August 2010, the National Formation Group sent an initial reflection to all CLC members.

Members were asked to reflect on the following questions:

How do I express my commitment in CLC?

How would I like to make my Commitment in CLC? Formally or informally?

What do I see as important to consider in this National Discernment about Commitment in CLC?

We received thirty responses from groups and individuals all over the country.

CLC members raised many questions and expressed their thanks for an open approach to discerning the idea of Commitment. Even raising the topic, many said, helped them think about their life in CLC. There appeared to be some confusion about the meaning of Commitment in CLC. Some members asked whether the Commitment is to my local group or to the World Community of CLC. Others asked if this sort of Commitment is appropriate for a lay organisation in the Church, equating Commitment with the notion of the vows that religious take.

The most frequent response received related to the value of the CLC local Group, noting that it provided support, encouragement, and an opportunity to discern apostolic mission, to review one's life, to reflect prayerfully, to integrate faith and life.

There were also varied responses to the question to "How do you express your Commitment in CLC?" There were lists of ways in which people served their families, friends, parishes, the disadvantaged, society, the environment and the Church. The responses showed the richness and range of ways by which CLC members are living as 'Contemplatives in Action'.



The current situation in Australia is that many CLC members have made a decision to live the CLC way of life, even though this has never been formal or public. In response to the question "How would I like to make my Commitment in CLC?" the majority of CLC members said they wish for their Commitment to be informal. At the same time, responses showed that there are a small number of CLC members who want to make a formal Commitment and a further number who are open to the possibility of a formal, public Commitment being made to CLC.

The variety of responses suggests that we continue our journey of exploration of Commitment. Some further material for reflection is offered in another article in this edition.

Commitment in CLC – further discernment

In examining Commitment a bit closer, it is important to clarify more precisely the meaning of Commitment, its implications, its benefits and responsibilities.

When the word 'Commitment' is used in CLC literature it is with a capital C and is Commitment not to one's local group but to the World CLC Community as an apostolic body.

The CLC Charism (171) expresses it in this way:

"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."

Baptism is the first sacrament gathering us together into the Body of Christ and making us interdependent. It is the sacrament that underpins any Christian commitment. The Christian Life Community is one such commitment. The choice of this community as a means for better living one's Christian life is a spiritual choice, usually made as part of an election as proposed in The Spiritual Exercises.

The nature of the commitment to CLC is that of a covenant. According to the CLC Charism, it is a proclamation of our discerned intention before God and

Commitment in CLC

our companions (171). Public commitments are made by various people within the Church – lay people, vowed religious, and clergy. In fact, many lay communities within the Church make public commitments. CLC sees a number of values in Commitment: “Commitment gives fuller expression to personal vocation, to strengthening CLC apostolic capability, to building CLC identity and visibility in the world and more” (Projects 145).

Another essential element about CLC way of life is that it is communal, lived out in community and with its support. Membership of CLC is a gift of self which “finds its expression in a personal commitment to the World Community, through a freely chosen local community” [GP 7].

Given these understandings, what is the next step for Australian CLC on this question of Commitment?

We invite you, as individuals and groups, to reflect upon and pray about the following questions:

How have the reflections in this article touched you?

What are the next steps we need to make as a discerning national Community?

What suggestions, if any, do you have about a process whereby people might discern making Temporary or Permanent Commitment?

What suggestions, if any, do you have about the form such a public Commitment might take in the Australian context?

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, to God who loved us first. (CLC Charism 184). We are asked to discern something that will suit CLC Australia and we are aware that, like many countries, we have many varied understandings about Commitment. However, we would desire our reflections mirror the work of the Spirit within our community.

References and Comments: There are two documents on the CLC Australia website that will give CLC members who want to read about Commitment a fuller explanation. They are: “CLC Charism” (under Resources on website) and “Processes of Growth in CLC (2009)”, under Formation Documents on the website.



If you, or your group, would like to make any comments about your reflections on these articles, the National Formation Group, via Chris Gardner, would welcome them by 31 July, 2011.

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