

December 2012



Eurolinks Meeting – Visit to Melk Abbey



The year 2013 will mark 450 years of Ignatian Lay Communities. In Projects 152 World CLC announced the 450th Jubilee Year of Grace from March 25th 2013 to March 25th 2014

At European level this is an opportunity for us as both national communities and as European community to take time to reflect on “being CLC/CVX” and how we want to celebrate this gift we have been given. This is an important milestone in our history as an Ignatian Lay Community ...we have a treasure... how do we want to share this? Can we find ways ...even small ones of experiencing the joy of giving thanks together and celebrating with the wider community! If you are planning something as a national or regional community can you invite others beyond your borders? If so please inform the Euroteam of the events however small and we will ensure that the information is put on our website and circulated to other European communities.

Diary

Pilgrimage April, 2013

Dates and Contact Details:

Belgium: April 6-7
presidence@cvx-belgique.org

Switzerland: April 8-14
pelerinage@gmx.ch

Bivier, France: April 19 - 21
ma.jamin@free.fr

Rome, Italy: April 26 - 28
cvxit@gesuiti.it

Summer Camp, Transylvania, Romania. August 11-17, 2013
 Contact persons:
dusika@yahoo.com (english)
margitmolnar@yahoo.com (german)

Meeting for EAs (Regensburg) June 4 - 6, 2014 - followed by European Assembly: June 6 - 9

Further information on the CLC Europe website:
www.clc-europe.org

Eurolinks Meeting

Between November 1 and November 4, 2012, the Eurolinks of the European CLC National Communities met at Lilienhof, St. Pölten. You will find a brief report of this meeting, as well as photographs and comments from the participants on pages 4 and 5. The input from the guest speakers, Alan Harrison from CLC England and Wales and Daniela Frank, World CLC President start on page 6.

Pilgrimage April, 2013

In 1556 Jean Leunis' made a pilgrimage, from Liege (Belgium) to Rome (Italy), to meet Saint Ignatius and join the Society of Jesus. Six years later in Rome Leunis founded “Prima Primaria”, which was the origin of Sodality of our Lady and CLC. 450 years later our pilgrimage will be done to emulate Leunis' journey to the foundation of what we may call, the lay companions. The dates of the pilgrimage in the different countries, as well as contact details for each stage, are in the Diary panel on this page. For general information about the pilgrimage, please contact Sofia at the World Secretariat, sofia@cvx-clc.net

**You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge,
 in your eagerness to help and in your love for us.
 And so we want you to be generous also in this service of love.**

2 Corinthians 8: 7

Easter in Zimbabwe

Inge Höpfl

My Exercises

I was lucky to be able to make my Spiritual Exercises once more at Peter Faber House near Harare in Zimbabwe. It was like coming home to a familiar spot on Earth which had become very dear to me, and to meet again people, with whom I had shared a stretch of way and a very dense week a year ago. It was the kind of Exercises with input and sharing-groups, just as last year.

My prayer-times I spent either in chapel or in the open, sitting on one of the big stones that lie about in the area in a very inviting manner to just sit and relax. Most of all I enjoyed the silence at night, the sky full of stars, crickets chirping. Celebrations of Mass touched me deeply in their simplicity and sincerity.

CLC

By sharing I learnt a lot about the suffering experienced by CLCers as by so many others, caused by despotism of the rulers. Owing to high unemployment and low income many CLCers cannot afford Exercises. CLC groups exist in Harare, Bulawayo, und Gweru.

The Country

Abel and Elizabeth, whom I got to know last year, invited me for the afternoon of Easter Sunday. They showed me some of their beautiful landscape and invited me for supper to their home. They served wine from Zimbabwe and an Easter Cake for the dessert. On Easter Monday Fr Konrad Landsberg SJ took me to Kariba. Kariba Reservoir is the largest of its kind in the world: more than 220 kilometres long, 30 metres deep, and in places over 40 kilometres wide. We drove through green landscapes, past uncultivated fields, empty silos, stopped to see a more than 1000 years old monkey-bread tree. We saw an elephant by the roadside and a little later four zebras grazing near a cross road. In the evening we were given a hearty welcome by the Charity Sisters. They live on the 1st floor of a house overlooking the lake. The ground floor shelters a nursery for 120 children including 16 Aids-orphan, for whom the Sisters care until their 17th birthday. All the time I felt torn between admiration of the beauty of the land on one side, and sadness about the suffering and poverty on the other side; things which I saw and about which Konrad told me.

Support

I was able to personally hand over our World-Day collection of € 2400,-. Only recently I received an e-mail from Konrad Landsberg SJ, saying he would not have known how to continue in recent months without our contribution.

If you want to support CLC in Zimbabwe financially, this is what you can do:

- Give members of CLC the opportunity for Spiritual Exercises (about € 25,- per day)
- The assembly room of the Retreat Centre needs 20 new chairs
- The electric wires in the house need to be renewed urgently after now 10 years in use.

Any donations addressed to the CLC Secretariat in Augsburg will be transferred by the Jesuit Mission Procura to Fr Konrad Landsberg SJ.

Follow up

In August Chipo, who is running the Retreat Centre together with Fr Landsberg, came to Germany for a visit of five weeks. After a three weeks stay with Johanna Merkt in her Retreat House in Ahmsen, Chipo met the German National ExCo, a number of Diocesan Communities and the CLC Community in Brussels.

On the next page you find a report of Chipo and of Denis Dobbstein, Brussels.



Christmas reflection

THOU Light from Light
Image of the Eternal Father
Jesus Christ, Saviour of the World

in Mary's house in Nazareth
in the stable of Bethlehem
in the sepulchre in Jerusalem

into the midst of darkness
Light from above

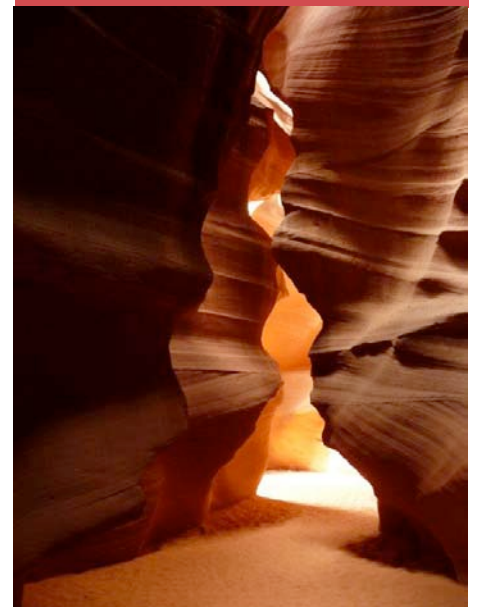
THOU
stoopest before me
that I may straighten up
that I may straighten out
towards the Light

supposing
I saw it
approached it
entered the stable
immersed in the Light
bent my knees
let myself be permeated by the
Light

and then
be bright and Light
as HE
the Light of the World.

Inge Höpfl

Translated by Gertrud Zeller, Austria



A visit to CLC in Germany and Belgium: Chipo Chagweda from CLC Zimbabwe

What return to Yahweh shall I make: for all the blessings I received from each member of the Germany and Belgium Christian life communities. David Fleming SJ suggests that Ignatius spiritual life developed around the idea of conversation. It is based on conversation with God in prayer. It is developed through conversation with others: spiritual directors and likeminded friends who share one's ideas and way of life. It is expressed in conversation as a ministry sharing the gospel with others. I had a deep conversation with myself and God in Ahmsen where I experienced extra ordinary moments of silence. We had a conversation with each other in different communities that I was hosted. The sharings nourished my relationship with God and above all my commitment to CLC. Let me again borrow the words of Femming SJ and say within CLC there is goodness and opportunity, a place that God created and sustains and loves. Yes CLC is on mission and it is part of that mission to give spiritual exercises that has made me to land in this beautiful country with grace filled people.

I take with me to Peter Faber the different programmes I participated in and also learnt at ahmsen. Africans are a celebrating community regardless of poverty and bad governance. It is also possible for us to experience this deep silence where one goes beyond words and experience the presence of God. We dance we make noise we are used to pray aloud but we can also be still and allow the creator to reveal himself to us. To the CLC I will tell my brothers and sisters that we are deeply rooted in the Catholic church and ignatian spirituality binds us together. Ahmsen embraced our work with youth. I shared with them that my experience with working with the youth is that we need to listen to what they wish to share on. They can suggest a theme and then we as adults add to their ideas. We should allow them to take ownership of a programme. It also Peter Faber's wish that Johanna Merkt also comes to Harare and strengthens the patternship by having an experience at the centre. I go home with a suitcase full of chocolates as well as programmes from ahmsen sharings from different communities love care laughter and challenges of language.

Let me conclude by saying hosanna hosanna kundenga denga. Thank you Evelyn for welcoming me at the air port in Humberg. Karim and Theresia the trip to Dinklage was full of humour such that I felt at home. Journey to muster by train was a good preparation for my own exercises. Ingeborg my retreat director the holy spirit connected us. My next home was in Osnabruck with Gerhild who reminded me of my sister. Thanks for your love and care. Augsburg was another home with Gerlinde what a lovely stay. Gerlinde made me laugh till I felt pain in my stomach. I really felt like the president of the republic of Zimbabwe when I was shown the secretariat and during the interaction with the exco. My gratitude to Thomas SJ for special prayers for Zimbabwe. Thank you national exco for the special time. Edina and community members in Mainz may God bless you in a special way. Daniela my prayer for you in thanksgiving is that God protect you. Denis and family as well as Marie in Brussels may God shower his blessings upon you. The broken pot is only an earthenware which can be broken but no one can destroy the spirit within the loved ones of Yahweh. Thank you so much.

Inge and Johanna I will thank my God each time I think of you and when I pray for you I will pray with joy. Blessed are those who can connect they will remain connected to GOD: Am so grateful for all that you did for me. Remain blessed.

Chipo Chagweda - CLC Zimbabwe



Chipo in Brussels

"I don't know what I have done to deserve this journey"

Referring to her long journey across Germany, that's the question Chipo asked herself and shared with us several times while she was staying in Brussels.

I'm sure that Chipo knows the answer : it was a gift. And you may enjoy the gifts you receive. You should not ask yourself whether you have deserved anything.

Though, I don't want to talk on behalf of Chipo.

What I would like to mention, is that the same question appeared very relevant for all those who had met Chipo.

Chipo had a short stay in Brussels, a few days before she had to travel back to Zimbabwe. This was a surprise for her because Belgium had not been scheduled when she was invited by the German CLC.

Thanks to Chipo, some Belgian CLC members had the opportunity to undertake an unexpected journey as well.

Chipo told us so much about Zimbabwe and the groups of the local CLC. Each anecdote, each piece of information immediately raised the next question from our side.

Who could say he knew much about Zimbabwe? Chipo's testimony was a journey in itself.

On the other hand, we had so much to tell about Belgium. We guided Chipo to the most typical spots in Brussels, including the "Grand Place", the most beautiful square in the world; at least the most beautiful Belgian square in the world ;-)

Above all, we shared about Belgium's soul, about the Belgian CLC groups, about our dreams and desires.

By her simple presence and her benevolent attention to our story, Chipo made the most precious emerge from our heart.

That was our very personal journey.

We don't know what we have done to deserve Chipo's gift.

Thank you very much, Chipo.

On behalf of the Belgian CLC, from Brussels,
Denis Dobbstein



CLC Holidays in Slovenia - 2012
Andreja and Igor Bahovec
(in the name of organisation team)

This year's CLC holidays took place in St. Stanislav's Institution Gymnasium in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The programme consisted of various activities. It was prepared in such way that participants could have met in different areas: at talks, prayers, in small groups, evening programmes, creative workshops, trips, informal meetings, at masses...

All the participants were ready to cooperate and communicate. Meetings were also enriching because we came together from a lot of different countries: Germany, France, Lithuania, Slovakia, Lebanon, Italy and Slovenia; for one day also Croatia. Despite broken English there were no problems at communication. No matter how many different cultures and nations we came from, we experienced what it means to have common roots, to belong to the same spirituality, to live the Ignatian way.

We were all surprised by enriching meetings in small groups, where trust and sincerity were soon created. We opened different themes in small groups. We started with very personal questions: who we are, where we come from, what we seek in our life, how we live in small groups, how we are connected to CLC and Ignatian spirituality. Second day we reflected issue "How to pass on faith" - in family, to new members of CLC, to people in neighbourhood, local Church ...; and shared with each other our experiences of faith and deepening of faith in personal, CLC and Church life.

At the beginning someone introduced us to the theme with short presentation. An excellent introduction to a theme How to pass on faith was presented by Françoise Garcin.

Euroteam's wish that one of the countries prepares holidays which would include work in small groups about the theme How to pass on faith to children encouraged us to open this particular theme.

The other two themes were: "How to live as a Christian at work or where I am voluntary engaged" (work and mission, work as mission); and "To work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple life style" (solidarity, relations to the others, including (forced) migrants). At the last one father Robin Schweiger presented to us Jesuit Refugee Service. After that we talked in small groups about how to practice solidarity in a world of economic inequality, injustice and how to answer to a problem of environmental pollution and how to live a "simple life style".



We spent a whole week together and had plenty of time to talk during meals and trips. We spoke with a lot of people and everybody touched us with his story.

Organisation team wished to present some beauties of our country. We visited Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital city. The bravest hiked on Viševnik, a 2000-metre high mountain; we visited Škocjan caves, some cultural heritage sites (Mediterranean city Piran, Romanesque and Gothic churches). The children from Lithuania and others enjoyed bathing in the Adriatic Sea and Lake Bled.

We admired two bigger mosaics of father Marko Ivan Rupnik (one in the chapel of St. Stanislav's Institution and one in the church Žale in Ljubljana) and met with his theology. He was also the one who started to gather us in a group Kres (bonfire) many years ago, and later we found that we have so much in common with a world CLC, that we joined it. We wanted to observe beauty and great God's mercy through these mosaics.

It was nice to pray and celebrate a mass together. It was nice to listen the text from the Bible in a language of those who prepared the prayer and sing a song, even in Arabic.

We got to know countries and cultures of each other at evening programme, and at the end even tried to dance a traditional dance from every country.

We were very glad that Rabih from Lebanon was also with us; his presence was a sign of connection with next World assembly (Lebanon 2013).

There weren't so many children among participants. However, together with the team, responsible for them, they created a really nice atmosphere, where weaker knowledge of English wasn't an obstacle.

We wish to thank Nadine Croizer, Françoise and Dominique Garcin from the French CLC, who stood by our side from the beginning and also partially helped us to prepare holidays

Eurolink's Meeting - Lilienhof



“Maria Ward Haus Lilienhof” –the house where we met.

At the beginning of November our Eurolinks together with the Euroteam gathered in the beautiful surroundings of St Pölten Austria for our bi-annual meeting of the Eurolinks. We were delighted to welcome as our guest speakers Daniela Frank the World President and Brother Alan Harrison SJ the EA of England and Wales. The theme of our meeting was “Being CLC/CVX” and our inputs and sharing centered on what it really means to “be” CLC and how we can live our calling as members of CLC particularly as we prepare for the World Assembly and the celebration of our 450th anniversary next year. The excellent inputs by Daniela and Alan gave rise to some very deep sharing in the smaller groups and at the larger plenary sessions. We were delighted to welcome several new eurolinks to this meeting as well as two observers from Romania, many of whom expressed surprise and joy at how quickly they experienced a real sense of belonging in the group. We were also extremely grateful for the excellent hospitality shown us by the CLC community in Austria who amongst other things arranged a visit to the Benedictine Monastery of Melk for the group and a social on the Saturday where we were delighted to have members of the Austrian CLC community also join us for the celebration of the Eucharist with the Bishop of St Pölten. Our time together was a time of real joy, encouragement and many graces where we really experienced a deep sense of community.

Press Release!



Comments from our participants

This is what it means to live in hope! Edward – Malta

Tasting the riches of linking with European CLC! Kath – England and Wales

This meeting was an important stop on my pilgrimage where I met wonderful people who take responsibility and are really committed to Ignatian Spirituality, Community and Apostolic Mission. I understand at a deeper level the meaning of CLC for me personally and for my community. Thanks be to God! Kinga –Romania

I have been really born as a eurolink at this meeting...thanks for the European candles who were shining brightly on my “birthday”
Jocelyne Luxembourg



More Press Releases!

Community.....friendship.....belonging.....variety.....
 similarity.....different but the same! Enthusiasm.....real
 sharing.....inspirations! Katarina –Slovakia

“from no man’s land to the land we’re promised!



Thank you for a good organised meeting...it has deepened
 my identity as CLC. We are all on our journey and this is a
 journey into God...the relationship is essential...we are grow-
 ing and dying, giving and receiving!! Mateja—Slovenia

Joyful..inspiring, fruitful result of all the pre- planning by the
 Euroteam. Participants were very friendly and witnessing
 Ignatian spirituality. To be of service in so many ways big or
 small, was evident. Mary –Ireland



“I have met the Holy Trinity at least during the dances-
 Helmut –Switzerland
 I learnt a lot...felt openness...this was a family, a com-
 munity session– Thank you! Geert - Belgium Fl.
 That was really a great experience! Thank you!
 Joanna –Poland
 A supportive meeting! Noelle -France

“ I enjoyed the time in the way Elizabeth experienced the visita-
 tion by Mary...something has moved inside of me, physically.
 The desire that I cherished turned like a baby does in the womb
 of his mother.....it’s the same desire but cherished in another
 way! Denis—Belgium Fr.

To leave “no man’s land“ would I dare say “enter promised
 land” Wolfram - Germany



What I have experienced here is that wherever I may go God
 gives me a home and family in CLC, therefore I would like to
 make my own the words of G.B. Shaw ..”my life belongs to the
 community and as long as I live , it is my privilege to do for it
 whatever I can” I m really thankful to God and to all of you.
 Teresa –Portugal

It was warm and sunny...I am touched by God’s Spirit which
 moves in our community! Loreta—Lithuania



'Taken, Blessed, Broken, Given'
CLC/CVX Eurolink Meeting St Polten Nov. 2012



**What does it really mean to be a member of the
Christian Life Community ?**

In trying to respond to this question I will offer first of all some thoughts on the origin of community in the experience of St Ignatius and secondly some reflections on what is central to the idea of Christian Community.

In order to approach the topic I found myself searching for some documentary material which would provide a clear indication of authentic CLC membership. There is of course no shortage of excellent documentation - the CLC Principles and Norms, the CLC Charism Document, the 'Process of Growth in CLC', and various recent issues of 'Projects'. The more I reflected however the clearer it seemed to me that something much more radical was called for; a return to the roots of community experience in the life of St Ignatius. For many the key incident in the life of Ignatius is his surrender to God after the battle of Pamplona. After that however there were to be other and equally significant incidents which, unlike the experience of Ignatius alone in his Loyola room, spoke to him of the power and centrality of community. I would like to deal with two of the most important of these, the experiences at Manresa and at La Storta.

Before that and as context for it I wish to go back in our faith history to the famous fourteenth century ikon of the Trinity by Andrea Rublev (1360's-1427).

This ikon depicts the scene at the oak of Mamre from Genesis 18 when three visitors are given hospitality by Abraham and his wife Sarah. These visitors are described as 'the Lord' and are the earliest scriptural indication of the Trinity. They share bread and a meal with Abraham and promise a son to Sarah and himself, a son who is of course to be ancestor of Christ and the ancestor of us all in faith. Rublev depicts the scene against a gold background with three equal figures seated at table. The figures

are carefully depicted as neither male nor female. To the right in the ikon is the Spirit in green, the colour of nature, in the centre Christ clad in the scarlet of his passion and the gold of kingship, to the left the Father in rose and silver, colours of transcendence. Each holds a magenta wand of office. The figures look intently at each other and appear to be in conversation, each attentive to the others. The eye of the beholder is led in a circular anti-clockwise motion into the ikon from the figure of the Spirit who appears to invite the viewer into the picture, towards the central figure of Christ and then towards the Father. The Spirit after all leads us to Christ, who in turn leads us to the Father. The setting appears to be Eucharistic with a chalice at the centre of the table which Christ is blessing. The seating arrangements leave a gap at the central front of the ikon, a gap which we as spectators are invited into, invited into the company, the companionship, the community that is God. In this way Rublev has dramatically indicated the mystery of the incarnation and the fact that since God has taken upon himself humanity we are called into divinity, that our destiny is the community of the Trinity in whom we have eternal life.

Now this may seem a long way from our experience of CLC but let us return now to Ignatius and to the roots of our spirituality. Ignatius tells us in his autobiography that whilst at Manresa in the midst of the experiences that were to become the Spiritual Exercises, God was teaching him '*as a schoolteacher teaches a child*' and that he regularly prayed to each of the persons of the Trinity. One day seated outside a church he unexpectedly had an experience of the 'Most Holy Trinity' in the harmony of three separate notes in a musical chord. So profound and consoling was this insight that he tells us it remained with him his whole life and resulted in a great devotion to the Trinity. (paragraph 28) Can we see here the origin of the Incarnation meditation in the Spiritual Exercises with its picture of the three divine persons looking down on the world and in conversation deciding to send the Son to save humanity? [102] This image of the Godhead as a discerning community of love reaching out to fallen humanity reminds one of St Augustine's great statement that God became human so that the human could become divine. Ignatius presses home his point by inviting us to savour and taste the sweetness of the persons of the Trinity and their 'infinite gentleness'.

This powerful Trinitarian image of Ignatius is reproduced in part as the opening part of the preamble to the CLC Principles and so becomes a foundational statement of what it really is to be CLC. The preamble if anything is even more radical in its expression than the text of Ignatius.

*'The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, **decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains. Out of love, the Word was incarnated and born from Mary, the poor Virgin of Nazareth...Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity within our human family'***

(Preamble to CLC Principles 1)

This total giving of God and the invitation to respond is a call to community with the Persons of the Trinity, a companionship in which divine and human intermingle and in which each is given to the other. Is it not this that is really at the heart of what it means to really be the Christian Life Community? An invitation to share in the companionship of the Most Holy Trinity and in the mission that flows from that companionship. A mission of service and self-giving in companionship. A service to the community of the Church and to and to the wider society. It is possible I suppose to dismiss this as an impossibly mystical approach far removed from the practicalities of ordinary life. Yet Ignatius was a great mystic and his way to God opens all of us to

the mystical. I am fond of the statement that a mystic is not a special kind of person but rather each of us is a special kind of mystic. What is beyond doubt is that Ignatius developed a spirituality which is characterised by a practical mysticism. He slowly, and with many failures, gathered like-minded but different people around himself who were formed in this practical mysticism of the Spiritual Exercises and eager in the service of the faith. This process continued through the years after his return from Jerusalem and culminated in the foundation of the Society of Jesus and in his development of the lay groups of men and women in Rome who represent the embryonic CLC.

Here we need to consider the second key insight of Ignatius one of the most decisive events of his life, that of La Storta. On his way into Rome with some of his companions he stopped to pray at the abandoned church of La Storta. There *'he saw so clearly that that God the Father indeed had placed him with his Son'* (paragraph 96). The words of the Father *'I want you to serve us'* where the 'you' was plural, confirmed for Ignatius the relationship of his group with the Trinity and the communitarian nature of his mission. He also heard the Son himself say *'I will be good to you in Rome'* which he took as an indication that the Church would bless such companionship. Subsequently as we know the Spiritual Exercises and the Jesuit Constitutions were indeed approved by Paul III, and in later years the lay groups of men and women were similarly to receive papal blessing.

At this point would I wish to suggest an answer to the question I have been asked to speak on 'What is it really to be CLC/CVX?' I suggest that it is to be committed to companionship in the service of the divine community of the Holy Trinity, where generous self-surrender continually formed by the Spiritual Exercises takes place according to the Ignatian charism of CLC.

The importance of the practical mysticism of the Exercises in this context cannot be over-estimated

'For CLC members the Spiritual Exercises are not an optional experience...they are a basic, vitalising experience constitutive of their very vocation' CLC Charism 50

'Our vocation calls us to live this Ignatian spirituality which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life'

General Principles 5

I would now like to move to a more reflective aspect of this whole question since there is another element in Rublev painting and in the vision of Ignatius at La Storta which helps to deepen our understanding of what it is to be really CLC. In the Rublev ikon the centre of the table at which the three divine figures are seated has a chalice which appears to be filled with wine, the imagery is undoubtedly Eucharistic: the meal at Mamre seen as foreshadowing the Eucharistic banquet. At La Storta Christ the Son was carrying his cross, the token of total self-surrender in the passion and death. At the centre of the Christian community lies the Eucharist, the re-enactment of that passion, death and resurrection. That the Eucharist makes and sustains the Christian community is a well established maxim. It is worth focussing on the words at the heart of the Eucharist since they tell us much about the process of God's dealings with us as individuals and as community and about the process of becoming and sustaining community. The words are Taken, Blessed, Broken and Given. I wish to reflectively explore each in turn.



TAKEN

Jesus takes us, chooses us. *'You did not choose me, I chose you' Jn 15. 16*

We have been chosen as St Paul tells us *'before the foundation of the world'* called at our Baptism and confirmation *'I have called you by name, you are mine'* (Is 43)

'I know what plans I have for you, plans for peace...to give you a future and a hope' (Jer 28). Further we have been called to CLC as

our way to holiness, our way into the reality of God. Do we feel at times our insignificance, our empty frailty and inadequacy as a member of CLC, indeed as a member of the Church? If so reflect for a while on this

inadequacy, bring it before the Lord, and place it in his hands. Take time to face the breadth and depth of any inadequacy and frailty in your experience of CLC/CVX, in your group or National Community, and time too to place such gently in the hands of the Lord in hope and trust to be held by him. Feel that holding and that taking. Our sense of frailty and inadequacy is a gift we can offer the Lord to be filled with his gifts of power and abundance and to be *taken* by him and used.

In the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises we realise just how loved and cherished and chosen we are in spite of our sinfulness - the mercy of God calls us and chooses us to enter into dialogue and relationship with God's own self. In response we ask.

What have I done for Christ, what am I doing, what ought I do for Christ?' (53)

Ignatius then asks us to cry out in wonder and thanksgiving that God has been so good to us. (60)

BLESSED

Not only does the Lord take each one of us. He has blessed us in the way that he blessed the bread at the Last Supper and again at Emmaus, and the way Christ in that Rublev ikon is shown blessing the bread and wine. He continues to bless us in spite of our apparent insignificance and our all too obvious frailty and littleness. Reflect for a while on the blessings in your life; family, relationships, health, friendship, work, companions, all the richness and goodness of the past, memories of being cherished and loved, of being accepted and encouraged. Allow one memory to trigger another and thank God for them. All have experienced the blessings and joy of the presence of the Lord in prayer and at key moments in life. The greatest blessing is surely the incarnation in our lives all those aspects of Christ's life, his healing and teaching that we pray and participate in the Second Week of the Exercises. God become human for me, for us, and who invites us to accompany him in his saving work.



As members of the Church at Baptism we were all blessed and anointed to accompany Christ as priest, sovereign and prophet, we have been blessed and healed time and again in the sacrament of reconciliation, and blessed and transformed in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Some have been blessed and empowered to love in the sacrament of marriage or called to ministry in the sacrament of ordination. To us all Christ has called and invited us to follow him and to know him intimately as members of CLC/CVX.



BROKEN

Here we are into the material of the Third Week of the Exercises.

The bread at the Last Supper is divided, broken open, separated out, the chalice is poured out, just as Christ himself was broken, drained and shattered in his passion. Often something of the sort of thing happens with our lives, one thing happens, or perhaps many different things occur, which, as it were, open us to pain and suffering, break us apart even, perhaps break our hearts, things that we would not choose. All of these can have a profound impact on us – we can either accept such things as blind fate, or in deep faith see that somehow in that mystery of our call as Christians, as members of CLC sickness, pain, misfortune, betrayal, disappointment and desolation, weakness, sinful tendencies, and failure, all have their value. Sometimes it is as if God uses these to deepen our understanding of who we are in relation to him, calls us like Ignatius at La Storta to walk the way of the cross in company with Christ carrying his cross.

All brokenness seen in this way can work to strengthen our sensitivity to God's care and love, and help us to learn compassion for others as well as giving us the language to communicate love at the deepest level of our being. In brokenness we share the brokenness of Christ, we are called to share in the saving mystery of his passion and death, and through such we are called to share the joy of the risen, gloriously wounded Christ.

GIVEN

We have each been, and are each being, taken, blessed and broken in our journey towards God, but the breaking is only so that there can be a giving, so that we can be given for others, given to others, or more exactly so that Christ working in us can give himself to others, can serve others, can feed others at many differing levels through and in us. Our brokenness is as precious as our being chosen and blessed by God, it is a necessary consequence of God's love for us, and as St Ignatius reminds us in the Fourth Week, Christ is the consoler whose love always wants to give. Christ gave himself to be wounded and broken in his passion for us. Christ glorious in his resurrection showed his wounds as a token of the reality and the cost of such brokenness. In the Contemplatio, that final coda to the Exercises, we see that all love wants to give, to serve, to minister, all love wants to surrender to the lover.

This dynamic process of taking, blessing, breaking and giving applies to the whole of our Christian life, to our prophetic and priestly call, to the whole of our Christian community, and is centred in the Eucharist where Christ takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it and in so doing gives himself utterly and entirely to us and through us to others so that as a community we are able to share his life, his blessings and his brokenness so that we become in God's good time utterly one with that Trinity of Love in whom we live and move and have our being.

That is our vocation, that is our destiny as members of the Christian Life Community, that is I suggest is at the heart of the question 'What does it really mean to be CLC/CVX?'



*This is an adapted version of a presentation given by
Alan Harrison SJ to a gathering of CLC Eurolinks at
St Polten Austria on November 2nd 2012.*

ajh Nov 10th 2012

Eurolinks' Meeting Nov 2012 St. Pölten (Austria)

"From our Roots to the Frontiers"

World Assembly Lebanon 2013



In the light of the 450th anniversary

450 years of Prima Primaria

45 years of CLC – approval of our General Principles

Recognizing our roots will strengthen our identity:

As CLC today, we are building our presence on 450 years of lay Ignatian communities. And we are laying the foundations that new generations can live and further develop our Charism.

A **brief review of our history** – for some of you possibly new, the others I invite to an exercise of "Ignatian repetition":

Our history goes back to the 16th century, to the origins of the Society of Jesus. Already right from the beginning, Ignatius of Loyola, and subsequently his first companions gathered lay people (at that time only men) to share with them the spirituality founded in the Spiritual Exercises and to cooperate with them in the apostolate.

It was the Belgium Jesuit Jean Leunis, who, in the 1560's, brought together a group of students in the Roman College to prepare them for apostolic activities in the City of Rome. His desire was to deepen the aims of education of the Roman College, marked by the spirit of St. Ignatius to search for God in all things. Thus, the groups of students came together to integrate all dimensions of their lives, their academic studies and their Christian faith. Obviously Jean Leunis SJ had special talents to encourage and guide them in their journey under the guidance of Mary as their patron saint – leading them to becoming the Marian Congregations: *"Ubi duo vel tres congregati sunt" ["... where two or three are gathered in my name" Mt, 18,20]. An impetus for this name came from a fresco in the Chapel of the Roman College of the Annunciation to Mary, integrated in the mystery of Incarnation, following one of the key contemplations of the Spiritual Exercises.*

The life of these Marian Congregations was marked by an intensive spiritual life with weekly community meetings and an active apostolic involvement, that was rooted in a fervent search for new and effective responses to the religious, social and political needs of their times.

From 1565 onwards, Jean Leunis SJ travelled to found new congregations. And only a few years later, there were almost no Jesuit Colleges in Europe and the mission areas entrusted to the Society of Jesus without Marian Congregations. These groups of lay people became a main pillar of the works of the Jesuits and, for a long period of time, contributed to the renewal of the Catholic Church following the spirit of the Tridentine Council (1545-1563).

Just a few days after the death of Jean Leunis SJ, Pope Gregory XIII confirmed the Congregation of Rome as the Head of all Marian Congregations (1584/1585). The "Prima Primaria" was to ensure the unity and authenticity of the Marian Congregations. As the first lay association in the Church, the Marian Congregations were granted the right of self-government. From a juridical point of view, they were under the General Superior of the Society of Jesus. An important instrument to support the unity in the same Spirit and the authenticity of the Marian Congregations were the first General Rules of 1587, put together by the General Superior Fr. Claudius Aquaviva based on the experiences of the groups in Rome. These General Rules, that would be valid for nearly three centuries, proved to be an important cornerstone for the dynamic developments of Marian Congregations world-wide.

Until 1773, about 2500 groups were affiliated to the Marian Congregations. In consequence of the suppression of the Society of Jesus, the Marian Congregations were re-established under responsibility of the local bishops. This decision caused an enormous growth of the Marian Congregations. In 1948, 80,000 groups exist but separated from their original inspiration. Thus, they developed in the Church as a mass movement, devoted to Mary. And until today, many people would identify Marian Congregations with this image. The original intention, of an integration of all dimensions of life, rooted in the spirituality of St Ignatius, community life and apostolic service, got lost.

In 1922, the process of renewal inspired by the original aims of the Marian Congregations began. Fr. Ledochowski, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, convened a meeting of Jesuits working with Marian Congregations which included approximately 5% of all existing groups. 40 Jesuits from 19 countries came together, to reflect about the possibilities of doing something for the restoration of the original spirit, being aware of the fact that the Marian Congregations were closely connected with the Jesuits from their very beginning. As a result of this meeting, a central secretariat was founded in Rome – at the service of Jesuits and the Marian Congregations.

Pope Pius XII followed the efforts of this central secretariat with great interest. He did all he could do to support the renewal of Marian Congregations. In 1948, he published an "Apostolic Constitution" called "Bis secolari", stressing the original Ignatian identity of Marian Congregations and calling all groups to return to these origins, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. As it was the Pope who made this call, it committed the whole Church – and not only those groups who had continued to be connected or those who were reconnected with the Society of Jesus. With his Apostolic Constitution, Pius XII gave an orientation towards the future and offered some guidelines on lay apostolate. Thus, he definitely opened new horizons!

To plan concrete steps, it would be important that not only Jesuits but also lay people come together to cooperate and share their ideas and reflections. To support this cooperation, the central secretariat – under the headship of Fr. Louis Paulussen SJ since 1951 – at the request of representatives of Marian Congregations prepared statutes for a permanent international contact between the groups. With the confirmation of these statutes by the Pope in 1953, the World Federation of Marian Congregations was officially founded. Connected with an

international congress on the occasion of the Marian Year, in 1954 the first world assembly of Marian Congregations took place in Rome, during which the laity themselves initiated their process of renewal, taking over the responsibility again and electing a first World Executive Council. With great enthusiasm, Marian Congregations in many countries re-discovered their original roots... leading in a process of nearly 14 years – shaped also by the II Vatican Council – to the development and approval of the General Principles in 1967 and their confirmation by the Holy See on March 25th, 1968.

Returning to the origins means to **re-visit the roots and re-discover and adapt their spirit to current realities**. There is no need to re-invent the wheel but to reflect carefully on how the original inspiration of the Marian Congregations can be lived today. What does Ignatian Spirituality, community life and apostolic service mean now for the individual member but also for the group?

- three “pillars” which mark our identity – from the early beginnings of MC until today
- living the tension of continuity and “aggiornamento” > develop, deepen and “up-date” the CLC way of life in response to the challenges we are facing ad intra and ad extra – within our community, in the world and in the Church, reading the signs of the times

Our history as CLC – over the past 45 years – can be read as a journey of discovery...

- how can we live Ignatian spirituality as lay people
- what does “communal life” mean for us – starting from the local groups up to a world wide body – see also the process from a World Federation of Christian Life Communities to the ONE World Christian Life Community (1979/1982)
- and how do we live our apostolic service and our mission as individuals and as community

Looking back to the processes lived in CLC during the past decades, one might be reminded of the image of an unfolding flower. Everything was present right from the beginning but only step by step, deeply rooted in ones specific sources, respecting the rhythm of each community and the characteristics of the respective periods in history and reading the signs of the time, the “flower” will come to full blooming.

The topics of the World Assemblies since 1954 (the first world assembly of Marian Congregations, held in Rome) reflect this journey as it has been lived by the world wide body. But also each individual member, each local and national community would travel a similar journey, discovering the different aspects of our vocation towards integrating them in what we call CLC way of life – based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the General Principles and the path travelled over these past decades and even centuries.

The best way to summarize our **present “state”** seems to be **“CLC – a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church.”** (Final Document, Nairobi 2003)

How did we reach this self-understanding?

Already in the 80's, "common mission" was an issue in CLC. During the 90's, the awareness of being an apostolic community deepened and was finally taken up by the **1998 Assembly in**

Itaici (Brazil), when the world community focused on "Deepening our Identity as an Apostolic Body – Clarifying our Common Mission".

The discernment process of the Assembly in Itaici, experienced and prepared in the national communities, was focused on three areas of growth in Christian life: Christ and culture, Christ and social reality, and Christ and daily life.

The final document "**Our Common Mission**" includes a broad range of criteria and orientations for the service and mission of CLC at its different levels, and guidelines concerning the means of our common mission.

Following the Assembly of Itaici, in many national communities, new apostolic initiatives were undertaken or those already developed by individual members or the communities were revisited, based on the "Common Mission" of CLC. In this process we noticed the rise of a fundamental question: Itaici gave an important input on the **WHAT** of our common mission uniting us as world community, but what is it that characterizes the way we live our (common) mission, i.e. the **HOW**?

In Itaici, the expression "apostolic body" was already being used, but to develop its meaning in daily practice more profoundly was the specific focus of the **Nairobi Assembly in 2003**. Under the theme "Sent by Christ, members of one body", the world community had a profound look at the consequences of living that call at all levels. As a key for sharing responsibility in mission as an apostolic body, we defined the four steps of discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating, known as "**DSSE**". In community, we discern the calls we receive; it is the community that sends us to live the discerned apostolic service and that supports it. After finalizing the service or, after certain periods of time, the community evaluates the mission with the person or the group sent. Thus, even an individual service becomes a "common mission", as the whole community shares responsibility for it.

Fátima 2008 further developed and reconfirmed that call and our deep desire to respond to it – at all levels. All around the globe, communities have tried to embrace it in their specific circumstances – your own experiences reflect this process lived.

We are definitely on the way... although aware of our struggles, weaknesses and doubts.

Perspective of the forthcoming World Assembly

The Assembly will develop around three moments:

- A grateful remembrance of our roots and how we have been guided over the centuries
- Deepen our self-understanding as a Lay Apostolic Body
- Touch the new frontiers that challenge and beckon us today

We talked already about the first moment – and of course, we are very keen to learn how you plan to celebrate our anniversary in your national community.

Concerning our self-understanding as a Lay Apostolic Body, so far we would like to focus on

- an appreciation that our mission lies at different levels (daily life, apostolic activities, institutional works, international works, etc.)
- an appreciation of DSSE as the dynamic that transforms all these levels into our Common Mission
- an appreciation that formal commitment promotes the growth of the individual and the body > see issue of membership

building e.g. on the tensions perceived between individual, communal and common mission, on the challenge of visibility and expectation – and the issue of CLC – SJ collaboration. We are currently inviting national ExCos and Assembly Preparation and Implementation teams to share with us as World ExCo the tensions and challenges they are facing in becoming and acting as a lay apostolic body (see also Projects 153) – so that we can base our further preparations in the current situation of our world wide body. And of course, I am also carefully listening to what you share here, during this Eurolinks' meeting.

How concretely is CLC living the challenges?

I would like to start with citing the final document of our Fátima Assembly 2008, as it develops how CLC is living "*Unity in diversity*":

"The Assembly vividly demonstrates both the unity and the diversity of World CLC. There is growing awareness that this is characteristic of our charism, a source of creativity and potentially a powerful instrument in mission. Because of this unity in diversity "the field of CLC mission knows no limits." (GP 8) The Assembly recognizes that it is not always easy to reconcile unity and diversity. As our common mission grows and our realities become more complex, only an ever clearer understanding of our charism will enable us to transcend the differences among us." (2.3f)

Our world body brings together communities of 20 (El Salvador) and more than 5000 members (France), communities with a history going back to the origins of Marian Congregations – and those only recently founded or in the process of forming a national community (Romania), communities of primarily older members – and those where the oldest might be now 50 years or even younger. We have communities recruiting new members mostly among students (especially from Jesuit colleges and universities) – and those where most of those getting in touch with CLC are in their 40s and 50s. We have CLCs where the major challenge is to develop a sense of the wider community and its importance for the individual growth – and those where the Ignatian spirituality invites the member first of all to discover the importance and value of the individual. We have communities very much involved in the pastoral work of the local Church – and others who seem to live apart – with a clear distance to other Church bodies and structures. And I could stress many more differences.

But: in all this diversity we form one world-wide community, called to live our common mission as lay apostolic body. And frankly, I am often proud of what is lived around the globe, how CLCers try to live our common vocation in their respective circumstances.

During the world assemblies, we try to discern the call for us as world-wide body: Which are the next steps our Lord invites us to take?

Based on the “framework” developed by the world community, our national communities are invited to discern the signs of the time - or their way of implementing what we discerned at world level:

An important first step seems to be to raise our own awareness of what we are and have to offer as CLC – embracing and gratefully recognizing what we are and live: our experiences and treasures, our strengths and weaknesses, our capacities and limitations.

Then our apostolic discernment could be guided by the following questions:

- what do we perceive as needs and challenges?
- which are our capacities to respond?
- is there something we could and should do in this concrete situation?
- and how could a concrete response look like?

Just a few examples of apostolic initiatives, demonstrating how CLC around the globe is living this process:

Initiatives taken by an individual or a local group could develop to a project of the wider community:

Kenya: From “Hands of Love” to Aloysius Gonzaga College

Korea: Centre for children from bi-national families - or Centre for Migrants

Community projects as a fruit of communal apostolic discernment at local or national level to respond to the “signs of the time” in the respective context - of Church and society

Ruanda: one of the biggest challenges in the country is the situation of HIV/Aids affected people

- which type of service can we as CLC provide, with our specific strengths and capacities: counseling

Ecuador: SIGVOL - Ignatian volunteers > meanwhile with a special programme for young people coming from overseas

“Formation Institute” in the Philippines or “Salt in the Group” of CLC Germany > share our resources (especially those related to the communitarian aspect of our way of life) with others - even outside the Church

Collaboration CLC – SJ – not just as individuals but as two communities/ bodies

Running schools in so-called popular (=poorer) regions and districts together – Chile

Baguio Retreat House, Philippines

Formation programme for spiritual and retreat guides – Germany

International Apostolic Networking

For the moment, we have regional advocacy networks developing in Europe (on forced migration) and in Latin America (for ecology and migration). And we are currently discerning whether we should join a project of Jesuits and other groups in the Amazonian region that could somehow be the base for shaping our world-wide advocacy on environmental issues.

Especially - but definitely not only - in these areas, our collaboration with the Jesuits and the "Ignatian Advocacy Networks" has become especially important for us.

We also participate in other networks such as World Social Forum and the Forum of Catholic-inspired NGOs, CINGO. We organized a workshop during the World Social Forum on Migration in October 2010 in Quito with experiences of working with migrants in Latin America and Spain - and were also present in the summit on environmental issues "Rio+20" last June.

For me, apostolic networking and advocacy is also an example that we need to continuously review our ideas and plans, our possibilities and new challenges - with the openness to admit our limitations and the readiness to try new ways to respond to the call we perceive.

Common actions

- "Our home in Rome" - the purchase of the apartment:

Our decision to buy an apartment was the fruit of a long discernment... - many consultations, many calculations, a lot of reflection on how to invite the community to join - according to the possibilities of the members and communities. This fundraising campaign was also an important sign that the world community is ready to act and to accept responsibility for the financial stability of our community. And it is also an important sign of sharing responsibility in mission - as the final aim was and is to make us more efficient in our apostolic service.

And I can clearly state that from outside - especially from the Jesuits - we get a lot of feedback that this purchase is considered as an important sign of our growing maturity as apostolic body.

- "Yellow Tuesday"

October 4th, 2011, we joined the campaign of the "Coalition for a Worthy Education", initiated by the Jesuits of Dominican Republic and about 200 other Church groups, fighting for a higher budget for education in the Dominican Republic. The CLC campaign was prepared by a working group at Latin America level and as far as we know, about half of the national communities of WCLC participated, presenting respective petitions to the Embassy or representatives of Dominican Republic in their country.

For us, this very positive feedback has been a great encouragement: yes, we can mobilize our world community and act together! And this also deepens our sense for the wider community and our common responsibility for justice and human dignity all around the world.

The challenges are many... and there is no "one fits all"-formula – but the invitation to a constant process of evaluating and discerning our response – in our situation and with our possibilities and limitations.

Therefore also two brief examples concerning reviewing CLC structures:

USA: Which new structures and processes do we need to live and act as a national community, marked by ethnic and cultural diversity? Aware of the challenge – but also accepting that the discernment and implementation of respective changes takes time

Latin America: we cannot build a continental team or afford to hold Latin American assemblies, but use a virtual platform for fostering exchange and collaboration among national

communities (CENAL); the core “network” among members has developed thanks to the MAGIS formation programme.

Role and importance of the regional level – as i.e. Europe

ONE world wide body... a gift in its richness and a challenge in its diversity

Continental level

- similar context because of common cultural roots
- Fall of the wall – coming together as Western and Central/ Eastern Europeans – a sign of hope for many in the world that even the “unthinkable” can happen!
- geographical and cultural closeness
- coming together is easier – also language-wise
 - Sharing experiences and learning from one another... freely expressing questions and challenges > how does your community deal with this problem , that concern?
 - Mutual support – offering our strengths and capacities to those who face limitations and weaknesses in the respective areas
 - Joint efforts – e.g. links between the “ecology networks” of France and Germany, formation initiatives – complementing one another
 - Europe is a politically, economically and culturally very relevant “entity” in our world. How do we live our European identity as part of the world-wide community? What can we offer and contribute as CLC to respective concerns – as e.g. migration?
 - Which are common spiritual and social challenges – and possibilities to respond together? See e.g. the situation of the Church in Europe... ecumenism, growing secularism on the one side and multi-religious reality on the other – how do we face these challenges? Again: sharing experiences and learning from one another

International dimension is essential for our CLC identity – thus, how to allow members to get a deeper sense of our international identity

- need of personal contacts and relations
- world community becomes concrete when I meet my neighbours – experiencing what unites us in all our diversity

European Assembly – Euroteam – Eurolinks > instruments for supporting our being one world-wide body!

Daniela Frank
November 2012