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Creating Ignatian Community in Educational Institutions

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The Place of Ignatian Spirituality in Education
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THE CALL OF OUR JESUIT COLLEAGUES

Fr. Peter Hans-Kolvenbach, S.J., Father General of the Jesuit Order has spoken most strongly in regard to Christian Life Communities. He has said, "There can be no doubt that the Christian Life Communities need stronger support from the Society and that, in some places, they cannot begin to exist unless the Provinces take the initiative. While drawing their inspiration from Ignatian spirituality, especially from the Spiritual Exercises, and seeking to deepen it, the communities readily recognize that they are in a state of growth and maturation and regret all the more that they do not always have well-qualified spiritual guides". He goes on to say, "The communities do wish to distinguish themselves by the seriousness of their apostolic commitment, with a sensitivity for people's needs and the Church's directives." And further, "By reason of the long common tradition and of communion in the same spirituality, the Society should show, insofar as it can, a clear preference for the Christian Life Communities when there is work to be done in an apostolate with and for lay people.

Please note Father General's words, **a clear preference**. What is this thing called Christian Life Community all about? Why does Father General see it as so usefully important? What does it have to contribute to a Jesuit institution? Should not all of us lay and Jesuit alike, interested in Jesuit education, emphasize the importance of Christian Life Community? Why has not more been done?

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind on this issue. Jesuit institutions of higher education must by their very nature, if they are to be true to their highest aspirations and uniqueness as Jesuit institutions, give the highest emphasis to Christian Life Communities and provide the resources necessary for them to thrive. In my opinion, the need for Christian Life Communities is greater today than ever in the history of Marian Congregations, Sodalties, or CLC. Let me explain.

FOUR KEY WORDS TO WHICH CLC RESPONDS

Today I wish to focus much of my talk on four words -- meaning and integration, community, and vocation as service. As I think of serving all we should serve in a Jesuit university, I believe these are four themes that grow out of our Ignatian charism that we should stress and proclaim daily -- always, in all we do, especially with our youth. Let us stress meaning and integration, community, and service. I ask, how do we especially through CLC promotion bring meaning and integrity, community, and service to others? Yes, CLC is a vehicle superbly designed to bring meaning and integrity, community and service into all of our lives. It's designed for the full spiritual development of those we serve -- our students, our faculty, our alumni, and the local community.

Let me begin by emphasizing these four needs as they manifest themselves in our highly individualistic, materialistic, and overly-competitive world.

Meaning and Interpretation -Some General Ideas

The theme of meaning and integration I desire to explore today was beautifully developed for me in 1990 at a conference I attended entitled "The Business Vocation.." Our keynote speaker was Emilie Dietrich Griffen, author of *Chasing the Kingdom*. We were exploring some rather interesting statistics pre-sented by Father Tom McMahon in an article in *Chicago Studies*. His research found that only 26 out of 1,166 business executives viewed their work as vocation; that is, as a summons or feeling of being called to their particular life's work, possibly even that their work has a religious dimension. Yet, as Robert Bellah remarks in his great book, *Habits of the Heart*, and by the way if you have time to read only one book in the next two months in an attempt to understand the U.S. society -- read this, a person's work is morally inseparable from his or her life. If there is a single outstanding quality that is missing in most of our lives today, it is integration. In my opinion, if there is any sign of a deep spirituality in our lives it is that we have a deeply integrated life.

The transformation of our lives from frenetic, disjointed, disoriented and splintered to an integrated focus whereby we see and find God working for us in all things is our spiritual journey. For most of us our work is a vitally important part of our being whole - of our being integrated, often of our self-definition. The greatest gift we can give our students is to help them to understand that being a student is a vocation, is their calling at this point in their lives. The greatest failure of college CLC's in the past I would argue is that their focus was too much on direct social action -- not on study.

Let's look at Ignatius. When he understood that God did not want him in Jerusalem he decided to study seriously "in order to be able to help others" (AUT. 50). From that time on in a way which was more and more explicit, "helping others" -- in all dimensions of their lives -- would be the source, the strong impulse for all his desires, projects, and accomplishments." (Kolvenbach, "The Journey of St. Ignatius and the Charisma of CLC," *Harvest*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 20).

I will return to this later, but our focus must ever more be on helping our students to be students. That is how they will find interpretation and meaning. Like Ignatius himself, our students will serve others best if they are students now. CLC provides a vehicle for supporting our students in their efforts and desires to be students. By the way, CLC for faculty should help them be better faculty in chemistry and accounting, or what have you, not only lay ministers of communion.

As Bellah notes in *Habits of the Heart*, a person's work, for a student, his or her study, is morally inseparable from his or her life. Work is our tie to the greater community, second only to our vocation of religious, single, or marriage; it is the vehicle through which we serve others. Of absolutely the greatest importance, work is the primary means through which we self actualize ourselves, through which we develop the fullness of our person. As Pope John Paul has emphasized time and again in *Laborum Exercens*, his other encyclicals, and his exhortation on the laity, the purpose of work is the growth of the individual person. But also, through our jobs and professions or our study we continue the unfinished work of Creation. Our jobs, our study, link our very selves to God's plan for Her world. CLC is a vehicle through which this linkage or sense of purpose can happen.

Meaning and Interpretation for Me

Let me reflect on this concept of meaning and integration for me personally. If we begin to see our work in the light of God's plans, of Her working through us, I think we see something of the magic of Garrison Keilor's rendition of the Christmas story. He notes that after the shepherds saw the Christ child that they went back to tending sheep, that they still drink too much, they still smelled and swore, and the nights were still cold and the summers hot, and the sheep were still sheep -- obnoxious creatures. But everything had changed, nothing was the same, there was meaning.

To Be Transformed

As Emilie Griffen reflected at our meeting on business as vocation and its purpose, and this holds for all of us, she made an act of faith. She said, "we are not here to change the world; we are not here to transform the world." As she said, We are here instead, to be transformed, singly and collectively, by the powerful presence of God in our midst. . . By the presence of God in the world He made and is willing to share with us." I am getting ahead of myself, but is this not what it is all about? Allowing others to be transformed by bringing out the presence of God. Is this not our aim for our students?

She went on to call us to deal with what she called "the terrible double-mindedness that is always with us. Double-mindedness that says some things are holy and pure but other things are unholy and impure. For these matters are matters for faith and those matters are matters for the world." She called for integration of our lives.

She quoted from an author that I do not know, Tad Dunne and his book *Lonergan and Spirituality*.

"From the point of view of the religious mind, the secular mind appears materialist. Even though the secular mind is rooted in highly analytical techniques, it is not satisfied with ideas. The secular mind wants tangible results and it wants them now. It relies on quantitative measures rather than qualitative. It regards the material surroundings of living rather than the spiritual core. It regards human conflicts as them-over-there against us-over-here. But the religious mind can equally be criticized by the secular mind. The religious meaning of knowledge, rooted as it is in a penchant for absolutes, tends to be idealist. So the religious mind speculates on what could be and it overlooks what is. It gets lost in grand theories in the sky while ignoring the plight of real people on the ground. It may be more qualitative and spiritual than the

materialist approach, but it is besieged by material evidence that belies its lofty visions."

Dunne was not speaking of two different groups of individuals warring with each other, but of two mentalities warring within ourselves:

"We are not speaking of two groups of people each with its own single-mindedness. We are speaking of single individuals with two minds at odds with one another -- a spiritual mind that clings to truth and a secular mind that seeks explanations for change. We are speaking of people who have to live in a culture that differentiates the secular and the sacred, but lacks the power to integrate them. We are speaking of ourselves."

Emilie concluded this portion of her talk by saying: "The two-ness of me is not so much a real duality as it is my way of expressing the inadequate humanity of who I am. I have learned to believe that the drive to perfection, the yearning for goodness that I feel, is the human condition, the longing for integration that will never be fully resolved here and now."

Most of us are persons who love the action. As spiritual as we might be, we thrive on results. As I reflected on what Emilie was saying, I could not help but remember the reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians: "For to me, life means Christ; hence dying is so much gain. If on the other hand, I am to go on living in the flesh, that means productive toil for me, and I do not know which of the two I prefer. I am strongly attracted by both: I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing; yet it is more urgent that I remain alive for your sakes."

Does this sum-up in a way the work of the Catholic university? Do we not teach our students to see all as good, to see God in all, and a love of neighbor leading to an intense desire to serve through computers?

I think that somehow we must all realize that in our jobs and studies we find God, we can find integration, and we must enthusiastically do the work in God. Most of us, myself included at one time, have been taught that the work of the marketplace is by its very nature only materialistic, that it must be spiritualized. But let me turn to Emilie's description of her conversion as developed in her book *Turning*:

"After I became a Christian I wished for a less worldly career; I wondered why God had not called me to some visible Christian occupation. As I began to act out my Christianity, it seemed to me that I could do a better job of it if God had 'sent' me to serve the church and my fellow man in some conspicuous way. Far from choosing God's will, I was using my own daydreams about holiness as a way of resisting His will . . . I was resisting the less conspicuous call to be good in the work I already had. Following the opinions of the world, I doubted whether I could be holy unless I was engaged in some work it calls holy. It was some time before I came upon that quotation from Newman, 'I shall be a preacher of truth in my own place;' still longer before . I could accept or understand it. And the statement of Dorothy Sayers hit me very hard: 'The only Christian work is good work well done'. "

I had to wrestle with that truth in my life at one point. When I left John Carroll University, a

Jesuit university, to go to Bradley University, a private but non-denominational school. It was obvious that it was the thing to do. It was good job at precisely a level of responsibility and challenge that fit me, there was a very large increase in salary, and I was struggling to raise six kids, and it was something I wanted to do. My wife, all of my friends, and my spiritual director all urged me to take the job. My progress was blocked at John Carroll. But I was daydreaming about what I could do at John Carroll. I was given great comfort one day when a very close priest friend of mine said, "and God's good work needs to be done in places other than Jesuit institutions."

Yes, we all find meaning and integrity as we go through life. The process may be slow, but let's help our students to find it through CLC.

THE CRY FOR COMMUNITY

Let me reflect for a moment on the next cry of our students, one of the great cries of today, the cry for community. Loneliness may be the greatest suffering in today's world. Community does not flow naturally from our society today. We do not live in homogeneous groupings. Families are deteriorating.

The individualism captured by Belleth also produces loneliness. He noted to the American Bishops last year, "In a highly-individualistic culture it is also essential that bishops as leaders help the whole church demonstrate what it is as a covenant community. For people caught up in the ideology of self-interest and minimal commitment to anyone else, the presence of a community based on radically-different premises can be salvific," he said. We should be helping our students to understand, experience, and build community as part of our educational process. We can do this in many ways. But CLC is one of the most important, if not the most important, ways of building community on our campuses. I think we should be attempting to build and provide the experience of covenant community not only for our students, but also for our faculty and the local community.

My guess is, however, that our students are implicitly, if not explicitly, ahead of us. Jean Vanier, founder of the world-famous l'Arche community for the mentally handicapped and their helpers has written on community in his book *Community and Growth*. He says,

"Today young people are seeking communities -- not ones that are closed-up and inward-looking but communities that are open to the universal, the international world; that are not limited to their own culture, that are not frightened ghettos but are open to the pain and injustices of the world. That is why so many flock to Taizé or join groups that are international. That is why so many new communities feel called to found sister communities in developing countries. It is as if a community cannot continue to exist in its own culture if it is not linked to similar communities in other cultures. This arises not just from the desire to 'do good' in the Third World, but also from the discovery and acceptance of the gifts of these countries, which may be less developed economically but which frequently possess a deep and true sense of humanity."

How should we or do we help our students form an experienced community on our campuses? , We often speak of the Marquette community or the Creighton community, but this is a fuzzy-wuzzy feeling -- it does not get to the heart of why we need community.

Forming the large community with the sense of belonging to a Marquette or a Creighton, or a Milwaukee or an Omaha, is important, but it does not provide for the deep belonging experience, the deep faith experience, that all of us need and desire.

What are the characteristics of community?

Community is Belonging

First, community is belonging as Vanier says. "It is a place where people are earthed and find their identity." In this sense true community is also liberating. To belong and be accepted is to be free to grow. Any community on a college campus first of all ought to free a student to become whom he or she really is. Our goals should be to build faith community on our campuses. And this is difficult to do without creating a concept in people's mind of campus ministry groupies, on one hand, or fraternities that are exclusive rather than inclusive and full of peer pressure on the other hand.

Community is Openness

True community also provides a climate of openness. To quote Vanier

"Communities are truly communities when they are open to others, when they remain vulnerable and humble; when the members are growing in love, in compassion, and in humility. Communities cease to be such when members close in upon themselves with the certitude that they alone have wisdom and truth and expect everyone to be like them and learn from them.

"The fundamental attitudes of true community, where there is true belonging, are openness, welcome, and listening to God, to the Universe, and to other communities. Community life is inspired by the universal and is open to the universal."

Community is Caring

One of the most important characteristics of community is caring. This caring focuses in on the individual. It is not abstract and it is not only for the community in total, as good as it might be. To quote Vanier,

"In community people care for each other and not just for the community in the abstract, as a whole, as an institution or as ideal way of life. It is people that matter; to love and care for the people that are there, just as they are."

As I deal with students, I am ever more convinced that we must deal with them as the individual persons they are and continually strengthen their will and ability to become all that God called them to be.

This focus on the person is a deeply Catholic idea. For instance, it is at the heart of Pope John Paul's writing on social matters. As Vanier says, "Community must never take precedence over individual people." As he also notes, "Community is for people and for their growth, not the other way around."

Community as Mission

Along with the focus on caring and belonging and openness, we must also recognize that community is mission. If it is true community, there must be purpose. The first mission must be that of the growth and liberation of the members of the community itself. But there is also a mission outside of the community - to be accomplished corporately or individually. As Bruno Bettelheim has said:

"I am convinced communal life can flourish only if it exists for an aim outside of itself. Community is viable if it is the outgrowth of a deep involvement and a purpose which is other than, or above, that of being a community." (Bruno Bettelheim, *Home for the Heart*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1914)

Communities Serve the Poor

Finally, I argue that somehow this mission and focus must be on the poor. If the option for the poor that we are called to as Catholics is not respected, I do not think we have true community.

In conclusion, as we think through community for our students, our faculty, and others, I believe that the following characteristics of community must be present.

- Communities provide a sense of belonging.
- Communities are open.
- Communities are caring.
- Communities provide mission.
- Communities serve the poor.

OUR LAY VOCATION - SERVICE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

A Personal Note

I had the great fortune to attend John Carroll University -- the Jesuit university in Cleveland. While there in the 1950s I had the opportunity of knowing and working with two great Jesuits -- Fathers Nick Predovich and Joe Schell. Nick died a very early death but Joe, in his mid-seventies, is still doing marvelous work in campus ministry. In particular, he has always understood, better than anyone else I have ever known, the use of the Spiritual Exercises in the development of authentic lay spirituality. They introduced me to the Exercises and the dynamic of the spirituality within these Exercises simply clicked with, spoke to, Tom Bausch. They gave meaning to my life. Further, the lay community needed to support: any authentic spirituality, was deeply present and dynamic at John Carroll in those days. Then it was called Sodality and today it is called Christian Life Community. Unfortunately, in this country there were very few authentic Sodalities fully grounded in the Spiritual Exercises and in the tradition of St. Ignatius. I think we are beginning to see a rebirth of the Sodality/Christian Life Community movement in the world today.

The Exercises brought to me many concepts, many insights, but none that were more meaningful to me than the very beginning of the Exercises themselves, which St. Ignatius calls his First Principle and Foundation. The utter logic of this, the economy of this, simply

clicked with a guy who was in love with studying economics simply because of its intellectual elegance. But within this Principle and Foundation, a concept of why I exist, the purpose of Creation and the fact that it is all good, and the indifference which could lead to enthusiastic embrace of the things of the world all simply sunk in. They gave me a foundation for spirituality that I think has served me well.

As the years have gone on, however, the part of the Exercises that speaks to me most as Dean of a college of business, as one who leads an active life, is the "Contemplation to Seek Divine Love," the concluding part of the Exercises. In this particular contemplation, not 15 minutes or an hour of prayer, but a lifelong of prayer, Ignatius asks us to remember two things about love: First, love is act, not talk; it shows itself in deed done, not simply in words spoken. Second, love works itself out in mutual sharing, so that the lover always gives to and receives from the beloved -- everything: gifts, money, convictions, honors, position. Ignatius then moves on to look at God and our relation to God in four ways. First, God has created not only all of the universe, but also for me personally. He plainly wants to and does communicate Himself to me. Second, God is always present to me. God is the ground of my being. God is the core of my self. Third, God is always busily working in all creation. But to be much more personal, God is laboring in my own existence moment to moment, day to day. And fourth, my own gifts come from my Creator and Lord. This is the solid foundation of love, a love that only a God could create, upon which my work as a business educator, is built.

GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR US A FOUNDATION OF OUR LAY VOCATION

God's great love for us is the foundation of our lay vocation as business persons, lawyers, doctors, or students -- whatever. This point always comes to me in one of the greatest Ignatian meditations in the Spiritual Exercises, the one on the Incarnation. The fact that God our Lover who emerged himself in the detailed business of being human simply burst through in a way that no one can ignore. God our Lover comes through. The fact that we have been unfaithful, we messed it up, and that She wants us back, comes through. Just picture for yourself the three persons of God, male, female, or whatever image you want, considering all of history. We are rich, we are poor, we are black, we are white, we are brown, we are at peace, we are at war, we exist in all different eras. We are also created by this Lover, and we are free. And as free beings, he cannot save us against our will. We are not achieving the happiness that he has for us. With that hungry hope and desire of the lover, God becomes one of us.

As a business scholar, I find all of this fascinating. A decision has been made by the Trinity that they are to accomplish a mission. Now think of the strategic plan that had to be put into place. God had intentionally limited Himself. She is now going to become human and that means that choices must be made. The infinity has turned itself into finiteness. Christ by definition can be but of one human person, of but one sex, at but one place, at one point in history, living out one day at a time. But the great mystery of all this is not how God can be both infinite and human at the same time. The great mystery of this is the meaning of divine love that led to this action. As God developed a strategic plan, she had to remember the mission that all people in all history must be saved.

The choices that God made are many and fascinating. Though his option for the poor is

always obvious, he did not choose to emerge Himself in the human condition in absolute poverty, but rather in what was maybe the middle class of the day. He did not choose to come as one of the despised classes. Even within the choice of coming to the time and place that he did, he could have been a leper or a Samaritan. What are the lessons?

But for us in many ways, the most interesting actor in the Incarnation is Mary. I sometimes think that God's greatest quality may be his sense of humor. And with that in mind, I ask that you remember the old Bob Newhart telephone calls, especially the one where he is the head of the trading company back in England listening to Sir Walter Raleigh on the other end of the line talking about this new thing he has discovered called tobacco. In that context, think of the conversations between Mary and Joseph and maybe of greater interest, Joseph and the Angel. "Now let me got this straight, Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit?" What an act of faith! But as we think of finding Christ in our work day by day as he reveals himself in what we are doing, also think of Mary and Joseph coming to understand who this Jesus is as he revealed himself to them day by day in the normal circumstances of life.

This Incarnation is also our call in another sense. As we are called to be Christ Incarnate in the world. And again I return to Emilie Griffen when she led me to an article in *Chicago Studies* by John McDermott where he articulated one of the crying needs of the Church. He said that mostly the Church defines the role of a Christian in relationship to the temporal order as that of an outsider, one who stands outside the system and whose task is to judge, protest, and call for change. This approach, he says, ignores the primary mission of insiders, as creators of temporal order, as Christ's people, the Church Incarnate in the world. And this message we must always convey to our students.

As an insider, it is clear that we must first articulate the living spirituality in the work we do, finding God in work which is managerial as well as that which is hand-labor or task-labor, seeing Christ in the labor and in the work itself. We must help our students to see God in their studies. And as Emilie says, From this experience of Christ Incarnate in the world and in the work we will draw strength for the greater task of bringing the world closer to the inner vision of truth and justice that shiners to us, the pillar of cloud and fire that goes before us in the wilderness."

In the course of responding to this greater love of God, this love that comes through in every detail of our lives and all that is done around us, we are called to do ourselves. And that leads us to Nehemiah. I have found the Nehemiah story to be a great example of how we should go about our work. I will always be thankful to the Reverend Ed Ruen, a Lutheran minister who is the Director of the Next Door Foundation in Milwaukee, for leading me to this particular story. Nehemiah's anguish for the destruction of Jerusalem reflects the same anguish that the Trinity had as they set out to save us. The motivation that grows out of the words, "On hearing this I sank down and wept; for several days I mourned, fasting and praying for the God of Heaven." This is what all of us should have. Nehemiah did not remain the prophet on the outside railing against the evils of the day, nor did he become a wimp, chained down by in-decision with false humility or an unwillingness to act. He acted. And remember, whenever we think we don't have the position to accomplish something, "at that time I was cupbearer to the King." As you read this story, note the careful planning, especially as they get the letters needed so that his journey could take place. Note the opposition to what he was doing that he overcame. Note how he ignores ridicule. Note how he used volunteers and all sorts of strange characters. He not only built the wall, but he built community. He built commitment to the task. As you read this story, you begin to see that

the resources to do the job, the latent power to do the job, was not missing. What was missing was the leadership provided by Nehemiah.

OUR LORD AS OUR HOPE

Why can't we like Nehemiah, or Mary and Joseph, or Moses take on great work? Certainly we can and I think the type of confidence we should have is based on a reading like Exodus 33:12-17. We know that God is with us. We know we has plunged himself fully into our work. We know that he will do what we ask "I will do what you have asked, because you have won my favor and because **I know you by name.**" Yes He has called us, yes the call is a vocation, that unfolds itself day by day as we grow to know God. Yes our job is to help our students find their authentic vocation so they can best serve God and the poor.

A Summary of the Needs

As I look at our work on Jesuit campuses and at adding the faith dimension to our education, I see us called to create an environment that fulfills the needs of our students, but also of our faculty, alumni, and friends for:

- Meaning and Integration
- Community
- Vocation as Service

CLC -- The Ideal Vehicle

Let me dwell on how CLC can do this.

CLC continues a long and glorious history of lay organizations that can be traced back to Ignatius and Faber. In a more specific way, CLC is a continuation of the Marian congregations started by John Leunis, S.J., and first officially-approved by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584. In his talk to the General Assembly of CLC Father Kolvenbach asked, "What was it which induced the founding fathers of the Society of Jesus to found other societies?"

"Above all else there was the experience of common life, of long years of friendship, mutual assistance, human and Christian development. The sharing of ideals, study, work, and prayer have been very fruitful for them. It led them to have a 'common purpose,' a 'common way of proceeding,' a 'unity in one body' for the greater benefit of souls."

All we need do is translate the medieval terms into modern language and all of this sounds very much like the meaning and integration, community, and service I have been discussing as the cries of our students.

I also found the following description by Kolvenbach of the personality of Ignatius challenging:

"The Society as formed by the first companions cannot be understood without taking into account the force of attraction of the personality of Ignatius. In Paris he was called a 'seducer of students' on account of the influence that he wielded

in the university atmosphere. This was so not only among the students but also among graduates and masters, drawing them towards God and towards a very radical change 'in their lives."

Note that he also talks about graduates and masters.

Unfortunately, the Marian congregations as directed by the Jesuits died-out with the suppression of the Order and when it was restored, the Marian congrega-tions or Sodalities had become pious groups attracted by the many indulgences assigned over the years. Not much changed until after Pope Pius XII wrote *Bis Secularis* and some authentic Ignatian CLC's began to emerge. The post-Vatican II years brought the change from Sodality to CLC as we know it today.

It appears to me that CLC is ideally-suited to meet the critical needs of meaning and integration, community, and service.

There are many characteristics of CLC that answer the crys and meet the needs of students and others seeking meaning and integration, community, and mission. They are the following:

- CLC is faith community.
- CLC is Ignatian.
- CLC is a way of life.
- CLC is intensely Christ-centered.
- CLC is mission-oriented.
- CLC is world community on the local level.
- CLC is identification with the poor.
- CLC is commitment.

CLC is Faith Community

The new General Principles as approved in Guadalajara this past fall and now approved by the Holy See read:

"Our community is made up of Christians, men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him in the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular location within the Church."

We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and gospel values within the Church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation. We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple lifestyle which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them. To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially In our daily environment, we assemble people in community who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimen-sions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our chrism. We seek to achieve this unity of life anti response to the call of our Christ from within the world in which we live.

The General Principle number 11 reads:

"As a primary means of formation and continuing growth, members come together on a regular basis in a stable local community, to ensure a deep sharing by members of their faith and human life, a true community atmosphere and a strong commitment to mission and service."

All of the characteristics of community are present in an authentic CLC. Very definitely the sense of belonging is part of CLC and a great deal of attention in a good CLC is spent in the bonding process.

And CLC is certainly an open community, always seeking new members, always encouraging and always seeking to create new community, new cells, new groups.

If there is a characteristic of CLC that is very very important to me it is that CLC is a caring community. This more than anything else is what faith community means. As time goes on, the members of the community come to share the same values and truly care for one another. The best CLC communities truly help each and every person within then to discern their lives and to make their important decisions. The CLC communities that I know are places where the members pray intensely for one another, become vitally concerned about each other as the various contingencies of life hit, and truly support each other. The mission aspect of community is developed over and over again in the General Principles and I will speak to that later as one of the primary characteristics of CLC. As noted in the words already quoted, CLC's identification with the poor is very very deeply ingrained.

CLC is Ignatian.

All of the characteristics of CLC that I have identified fit together and make it what it is, but if there is one charism, one mark of CLC that distinguishes it from all other faith communities it is the deep Ignatian characteristic. Principle Nine very specifically says, "We hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality. Our occasion calls us to live the spirituality which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life."

Our General Norm Four states, "An experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises in one of their several forms precedes permanent commitment to Christian Life Community." More than ever before the General Principles and Norms stress the Ignatian characteristic of CLC and the underlying logic of the Exercises.

As I have already noted, the Exercises are what attracted me to CLC in the first place. If there is one particular aspect of Ignatian spirituality that is more important than anything else in a good CLC it is that its members and the community in total are discerning. The Ignatian discernment concept of always seeking to find the will of God and then of doing it is always present. In the best communities the members continually help each other to discern the will of God in their lives. Obviously, true discernment does not come easily, especially communal discernment, and it develops over a long period of time in the best communities.

But other Ignatian characteristics that will be developed in the community include the constant search for doing what is more universal. There is always the desire to be open to whatever God wants and to move quickly to accomplish it. The intense spirituality of CLC draws very heavily on the full integration of examination of consciousness in one's life.

CLC's do see all as good. As Fr. Kolvonbach noted in Guadalajara, "Ignatian spirituality asks us to reconcile to Christ all that constitutes the real life of the people. The very name of Christian Life community seems to suggest this enhancement of daily life."

In other words, the Ignatian characteristic of CLC, more than anything else can help individuals to find meaning and integration, especially integration in their lives. All through my years as a Sodalist and CLC'er, finding a meaning and integration through the Ignatian aspects of CLC, the Exercises, has been vitally important to me. As Kolvenbach noted, "CLC also entails adapting to changes of time and place so the response may be guided by the 'magis,' that is, the greater good."

CLC is a Way of Life

CLC is not an organization. CLC is not just a faith community that comes together for prayer on a regular basis. CLC is not just our work or our mission. CLC is a vocation and a way of living. Let me quote again from the General Principles:

"a) The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human, and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God."

As a way of living it calls for prayer, discernment, the integration of all in Christ and seeing all is important, being willing to go wherever Christ calls us, of identifying with the poor, living out each one of those meditations and contemplation in the Exercises is important to all of us, but especially the spirituality of the contemplation of its fullness of love and understanding that love is reflected through actions.

CLC is Intensely Christ-Centered

General Principle number five very clearly states, "The spirituality of our community is centered on Christ and participation of the paschal mystery. It draws from the sacred scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our time." In many ways to say that CLC is Christ--centered is redundant with saying that it is Ignatian. CLC properly formed means each one of us simply wants to be in full communion and companionship with Christ as found in the second, third, and fourth weeks of the Exercises. The Eucharist simply has to be at the center of the rhythm of life of a CLC. As Fr. Arrupe says in *One Jesuit's Spiritual Journey*, Dietsch (page 9), "I cannot imagine a day without the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice." The interviewer kept trying to get to the heart of why Fr. Arrupe could accomplish so much. Fr. Arrupe seemingly never understood all of the probing into how he did so much. Finally Arrupe noted, "The Eucharist is a central point of a day, and it is only in relation to the Eucharist that the true problems are posed and resolved."

As Dietsch noted, "His 'manner of proceeding' depended on the privilege rendezvous with the mystery of the Son of God Incarnate." That, in my mind, is also very present in the life

of every CLC member.

CLC is Minion-Oriented

There are many words on mission and service in the General Principles. I think some of the most beautiful are as follows:

"Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits. It extends to both the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons in society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures."

There is a very definite emphasis on what we are called to do personally. The General Principles say, "Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places, and situations." At the same time, however, the General Principles emphasize that we are a community. "At the same, we exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organizations and efforts."

On the issue of apostolate, we are as Ignatian as the Jesuits. The emphasis on the universality of our call to do whatever it is that each of us individually can best do to further the Kingdom of God is deeply embedded throughout the General Principles. The concept of our faith communities supporting each of us in our individual work is deeply embedded in what we are. And, in particular, as I think about student CLC's, the necessity of formation, intellectual preparation, be it on the spiritual or intellectual level, is definitely a part of the CLC way of life. CLC by its very dynamic and all that it is about is supportive of the way of the life necessary for students to prepare to serve well.

CLC is World-Oriented

To understand this point one must understand the very important change and concept that is embedded in the new General Principles. We are no longer on the world level, a Federation of Communities, known as the World Federation of Christian Life Communities. Rather, we are the World Christian Life Community. As General Principle Seven says, to understand the dynamic, "Our gift of self finds its expression and a personal commitment to the world community, through a freely-chosen local community." Or, "Our responsibility to build the bonds of community does not stop with our local community, but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community."

I can assure you that the students who come to us at Marquette University are sensitive to the fact that we are one world. As one key expression of this understanding and interest I find that I am constantly amazed by the large number who are interested in our specialization in international business, even though it must be an add-on, additional hours usually, to the traditional specializations in the College.

One of the greatest experiences in my life took place this past fall when I spent a week in Guadalajara, Mexico at the General Assembly of the World CLC. About 55 countries were

represented from all parts of the world. The solidarity that I felt, the communion that I felt, with people from many cultures greatly different from my own, was very deep. The fact that we were all coming out of the same value base just pulled us together. Nevertheless, this world view was very concrete and manifest itself in doing something well on the local community level. For students, that is study.

CLC Is Identification with the Poor

One of the most particular manifestations of the world-wide dimension of CCC is the overall dimension of identification with the poor. The Preamble starts by, noting that in the Incarnation Christ inserted himself among the poor and shared with them their condition.

Paragraph four in our charism states, "We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple lifestyle which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them." This love of the poor which is to manifest itself in action permeates all of the General Principles. Yet the General Principles also states that we are not all called to be poor, that CLC is for all, and certainly CLC is for the middle class young men and women from professional families that we find in abundance on our campuses. CLC calls us to accept whatever it is that Christ desires for us be it poverty or riches, but begs us to consider the poor and the impact of our actions on them, in everything we do. For the most part, I find there are many students who can identify with this.

CLC is Life-Long Commitment

A Commitment to CLC is not to be taken lightly. As a matter of fact, I think the college CLC membership ought not in most cases to include a permanent commitment to CLC. To begin with, a permanent commitment to CLC requires an experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises. But I think permanent CLC commitment must evolve and become integrated in one's life through choices about marriage, profession, and geographic location. Remember that CLC is a way of life based on the Exercises.

How do we go about forming CLC's on our campuses? What are a few practical points to keep in mind?

1. There must be an institutional commitment to make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius available to students and faculty.

With the Ignatian Year, even before this, making the Exercises available to a broad-base of students and faculty has become a characteristic of many of our Jesuit institutions. The growing emphasis on 19th annotation retreats is indeed impressive. The growing understanding of the spirituality of college students is helping. I think a growing understanding in our institutions of what it means to be Ignatian or Jesuit and how that is to be continued through lay persons is helping. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go. Some places, like John Carroll University are putting as many as 50 students a year through the Exercises for 8 days and a handful each year through the full Exercises. But the key point is that CLC will not flourish without the availability of the Exercises. The CLC way of life is nothing more or less than living out the Exercises in daily life, in one's studies, in one's career, in one's family, in all circumstances of one's life. But I think it important also that the environment of the Exercises pervade the campus with many people, not just campus ministers, thinking about how various tools in the Exercises can be adapted to wide

ranges of students no matter their background or spiritual commitment at any given point. Unless resources are dedicated to more than the Exercises from either the institution or the local Jesuit community, nothing much will happen.

2. Institutional commitment to CLC must be present as well as the long-term commitment of individuals within campus ministry, the local Jesuit community, or the staff.

College CLC's, almost by definition, are formation CLC's. Most college students are in the formative years of their lives. CLC will not thrive, be successful, or be authentic, unless there are adults on the campus well schooled in the Exercises and in the dynamic of CLC who are willing to promote CLC and then do the intensive formation work necessary with both the individual CLC'ers and the group. But since I believe we must start small, especially in our resource-short environments, and show success, more important than institutional commitment is the individual commitment of adults who are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to make CLC grow. All of my experience certainly tells me that CLC is not built in a day and in this era when people are afraid to make commitments, it simply will take time and many false starts until it grows. But it can. I am not convinced that CLC should be formed as a student organization within the structures of the University. It might better be formed based in the local Jesuit community. Or maybe CLC could best draw from the model of *Opus Dei* and found houses on the periphery of some of our campuses. I can see a CLC where some live in community off-campus houses with many other attached in a variety of ways.

3. CLC must focus on the vocation of student.

Without any doubt, as I have emphasized above, Ignatian spirituality in CLC stress the integration of our lives and doing well what God has called us to do. For students that call is to be a student. Being a student is, of course, much more than what goes on in the classroom. It is finding oneself, but it is also preparing oneself. CLC must strengthen all of this. CLC membership is a way of life.

4. All four wheels must be appropriately inflated.

I have always seen CLC as an automobile with four tires. Each one of these tires must be inflated properly if the automobile is to do effectively what the automobile is supposed to do. The four wheels of the CLC vocation, way of life, and community are as follows. First, there is the wheel of our individual spirituality. The CLC way of life demands Individual prayer, participation in the Sacraments, reading, and spiritual direction and discernment. But there is no such thing as personal spirituality standing alone. There must be a strong group prayer life centered in the Eucharist and the Exercises. This is the second wheel.

Third, there is individual apostolate or mission or service for our students of being a student. Often our faith communities on campus must be structured to support individuals in their work.

But the fourth wheel must also be present. That is, and I think this is especially true in building community in a student group, often a transient group together for only a few years, a group mission or service must be in place. But the group is to be united through a concrete form of service, I believe it most difficult to keep it in existence.

The practical bottom line is that In' starting CLC all four of these elements must be present. It is better to start with fewer students and make sure the complete dynamic is present and have many students than do it sloppily.

5. Christian Life Community on our campus must be more than students -- it must include faculty, alumni, and friends.

I am not convinced that as we start to form a CLC environment on our campus that we should start with students. Except for here at Creighton, very little has ever been done to form faculty GLC. Investing limited resources in a good faculty CLC might have a multiplier effect beyond our imaginations. I think this is where Ignatius himself would start. Because people's lives are so busy, I see this as extremely difficult.

Yet, on another front, what fascinates me most is that some of the most successful sodalities in this country in the 1950's and early 1960's were groups of young alumni and other professionals in places like Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York. I wish to focus particularly on Cleveland for the successful alumni CLC was tightly tied to John Carroll University for a while and, although it was disbanded by the Diocese, the people it formed have done amazing work ever since. Further, I found that it provided the context and the resources within which the College CLC flourished. That is, days of recollections, retreats, and summer picnics were organized by these young professionals who had the automobiles, time, and connections necessary to do the legwork on an on-going basis. Remember, students are with us for a few years and their lives tend to be organized into two 15-week periods between which all initiatives disappear into black holes. Yes, I am arguing strongly that we give to our students, but in what sort of a context will it be most successful?

6. Formation must be thorough and authentic.

If a campus wishes to form Bible groups as a form of faith community, or groups focused around some specific type of social action, fine, they can accomplish immense amount of good and must be encouraged. But CLC for the college student is formation. The commitment to formation, and all sorts of material are available from the National Federation and other sources, must be central and a commitment to it must be made.

7. Authentic CLC is tied to the national and world community.

Each of us in CLC becomes a CLC'er in a local community at a local place, but at the same time we enter a world movement. The fullness and richness of CLC is not there, unless we all remember that we are in communion, in the same movement, with our brothers and sisters suffering in Africa, Latin America, and all other parts of the world. Further, from a very practical point of view, the types of resources needed to make CLC flourish for each of us as Individuals and each of our individual communities will not be present if there is not a tie to the national with the appropriate financial support so that formation and other resources can be developed.

A note of caution. CLC in the United States has been in dog days for the last few years. This does not particularly trouble me for we are human and everything human goes through cycles and periods of both flourishing and death. CLC in the United States has been aging rapidly. There is very little activity officially on our college campuses. There is beginning to be some good activity on the high school level. Fortunately, and the leading place in the

country is right here in Omaha, adult CLC's are beginning to come alive again. Our pattern is much the same as the pattern in Canada and most parts of Europe. Let me assure you that the real dynamic life of CLC in Guadalajara is coming from the poor of Latin America, Africa, and some of the Asian countries. There is strength and suffering in poverty. Nevertheless, we need a few brave souls committed to the establishment of college CLC's in this country. Let us go to work and make CLC flourish.

CONCLUSION

By the way, copies of this presentation are available and I also have some pamphlets that have been developed in Australia to tell the CLC story in a few words. We are now redoing these for the U.S. I think they are powerful. For further information on CLC, or to get on our mailing list, contact Pat Carter at the National Christian Life Community office in St. Louis. The address and phone number is: 3601 Lindell Boulevard, Suite 418; St. Louis, MO 63108; telephone: 314/533-3185.



[< Jesuit Identity Reading Material](#)

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