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Link between the Executive Council and the World Christian Life Community

World CLC Day 2013  
CLC a work of God

Dear friends in the Lord,

This year's World CLC Day, celebrated on the feast of the Annunciation, will be a special one. We are graced to be at the beginning of the 450th Jubilee of the foundation of lay Ignatian communities. We ask you, on this special day, to remember all the different members of the lay Ignatian groups and communities that have come before us, during these 450 years, and who have rejoiced in the richness of Ignatian Spirituality, serving the Lord with gladness in the building of the Kingdom.

This World CLC Day will also help us prepare the road for our coming World Assembly that will take place in Lebanon (July 30 to August 8, 2013). The previous World Assembly in Fatima (2008) reconfirmed us as being a lay apostolic body. It is therefore important that our preparation for the next World Assembly will recognize the grace we received and discern a deeper meaning of how we can be a more lay apostolic body.

### **CLC a Lay Apostolic Body**

In recent years, as CLC deepens its understanding of common mission, there have been calls to develop our collective awareness about the greater union within the community for a greater efficacy in mission. This is evident in our documents emanating from our World Assemblies, but it is especially to be found in the day to day life of our members of Christian Life Community living in community around the world. Indeed the lived history of CLC in various parts of the world offers much to guide our understanding of our identity, vocation and mission of CLC today. We see, hear and witness things that God does in our midst. CLC is truly a work of God. We invite the World Community to **walk together, rediscovering again what God is doing in our midst, and so strengthen our collaboration in God's action.**

Current ecclesial and world developments invite us to a collaborative ministry which is characterized by union and corporate responsibility within the World community. They also draw us as a community to the maturity and distinctiveness that enables us more and more to collaborate with other Ignatian and Ecclesial communities, and indeed other people of good will for the building of a better world<sup>1</sup>. As a world body we also recognize the fact that now-a-days

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<sup>1</sup> General Principle 7

local/regional issues can have a global reach/effect and global issues have a local effect, e.g.: global warming, deep national and regional economic issues, displaced persons as a result of war and persecution etc.

In the world and the Church today, there is an increasing sense of solidarity among peoples. This heightening sense of oneness is also a gift of the Lord to the community for the purposes of a new quality of presence and witness in the church and the world. We are thus invited to be always attentive to our vision of CLC and its common mission. Vision is about identity, and this in turn informs both our mission and the way we engage with it. With the use of DSSE as our primary tool for apostolic discernment, there is a growing sense of the world community as a body manifest at local levels. This is made more so by specific and on-going actions of common intervention. The position of the world community in solidarity with the Dominican Republic's fight for the right of fair government provision for education was an experience of this kind. The advocacy work in the service of the environment and on migration are among other common fronts on which the world community acts, or feels called to act and to share awareness. Another sign of growth at world level was a financial one: the success of our accommodation project in Rome. Our *Progressio* magazine and other means of sharing information are used to make us all aware of and interested in the various ways in which God is working in our world community. Also this March 25<sup>th</sup> – or around that date – as in other years, thousands of CLCers and friends and families will join in a common celebration over the world. Many communities and celebrations in different parts of the world, but only one body. These events teach us that we are growing in unity and eventually we become a world community who acts (as we did in the Dominican Republic campaign), shares financial responsibility (the accommodation project), prays and celebrates together (World CLC day).

At this given time, the Lord of history invites us to an ever deeper living of this vocation, in becoming a more prophetic sign through our stronger unity in diversity in a world also characterized by fragmentation and competition-driven 'collaborations'. Thus the identity of CLC is itself a prophetic sign of our times, of the call to fullness of life addressed to all people, irrespective of the various points of differences. In a unique and most timely way, the call to simplicity of lifestyle is felt in our community today, as an option for life on the planet and for justice within the human community<sup>2</sup>. **The Church and society are in urgent and universal need of authentic witness.**

The question must still be raised about the distinctiveness of the CLC vocation in the midst of the various gifts in the Church and in the Ignatian family in the world today. By describing itself as a lay apostolic body, does CLC lay claim to distinctive features? Is there ambiguity among ourselves in understanding what the CLC vocation means? In what way is CLC different, for example, from Ignatian meditation groups or from organised groups of Ignatian spiritual directors? In some cases, it can be observed that CLC members/communities might be like members of peace movements, women's justice groups or committed environmentalists, etc. While we must not begrudge others of the radicalism of their own identity, there can be some value in becoming aware of the particular grace which is ours, and implications for greater faithfulness. The question thus becomes crucial: What is our distinction as a Lay Apostolic Body, as CLC? Graced as we have been with so much wisdom and so many tools, we have an opportunity and obligation to share and learn from each other how to more effectively utilize and apply what we have to make "another world possible".

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<sup>2</sup> General Principle 12b

What is the shape and form of the CLC lay apostolic body? CLC, a lay Ignatian apostolic body, is part of the Body of Christ, the Church. The analogy of the Body as used by St. Paul (1Cor. 12) underscores that a human body has many parts and functions. It is an assembly of functions at the service of the whole organism and beyond itself. This analogy of the body as a symphony of functions and gifts can be helpful to us in deepening the sense of responsibility for the particular grace that Christ gives to the Church and the world through CLC. To understand our vocation well, we need to understand the Church deeply. What is the Church? What is the nature of this body of which we are part and within which our functionality and identity find meaning?

It is important to be aware that while the Catholic Church is the immediate ecclesial community in which the CLC is officially recognized, the experience of CLC life and membership is an ecumenical one. When we speak of our community as being part of the Church, we officially mean the Roman Catholic Church, and we embrace the ecumenical nature of the Church, drawing our membership from the catholic, universal church, the community of followers of Jesus Christ. Our General Principle 4 starts by responding to the question “Who is called?” Clearly the people called to this community are defined in the opening sentence “*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...*”. It can be said that one of CLC’s strengths is the fact of its unity in its great diversity which is a living reflection of the Church, itself a reflection of the human community and the community of life on the earth (cf. Romans 8:22-23).

enhancedA historical review of the concept of the laity in the Church helps to give a broader context to our CLC identity, especially for: (i) recognizing our lay vocation and (ii) providing helpful background to the understanding of the call of CLC to be a Lay Apostolic Body. The Christian community, the Church, is still making efforts to hear the call of Vatican II, which also brings a new vision of the world; “instead of looking at the world as the place of evil, which is in opposition to the Church it referred to now as the world which God is continually creating and upholding”<sup>3</sup>. In this perspective, not only the Church has to give to the world but the world has much to bring to the Church. A definition of the Laity is the one quoted in Aparecida: “*man and woman of the church in the heart of the world and man and woman of the world in the heart of the Church*”.<sup>4</sup> By this identity, lay Christians are especially placed in a position to be witnesses and mediators of hope in the world.

Reflecting on Ignatius’ life and ministry to and with laity, one can learn some lessons for the understanding of the Lay Apostolic Body today, beginning with the central place of **Love for and in the community**. We do not live our vocation in isolation or in a vacuum. Our personal vocations are flavoured by our participation in the various communities and groups of which we form part, such as our country, our religious tradition, our family, gender and the times in which we live. We are shaped by, and help to shape, the communities in whose lives we share or touch. Ignatius himself matured and experienced the gift, the challenge and tremendous potential of living a communal apostolic vocation. This is the gift, challenge and tremendous potential offered now to CLC

CLC is “apostolic”. As part of the Body of Christ, the Church, it receives the call of Christ and endeavours to respond to it ever more authentically. The call (or Common Mission), received in the Assembly of Itaici 1998, sent the World Community to bring Christ in three areas of our lives, our Social Realities, our Cultures and our Daily Lives. The two assemblies following Itaici were a confirmation and reconfirmation of the call and of our willingness to respond to this call, by

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<sup>3</sup> Progressio Suplemento 59

<sup>4</sup> Aparecida [225] Document from the V Conference of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Aparecida (Brazil) in May 2007

embracing the radical implications of acting together as one community, one body. The image of the body invites us to a qualitative leap in our conception of our identity, confirming the grace of the call of the Lord in our recent history.

For the celebration of WCLC day, we propose some questions for the communities to deepen and reflect on our understanding of being a Lay Apostolic Body:

- In your community, how is CLC recognized as being a work of God?
- If CLC is a body, what shape does it have? What part of that body is your community (draw that part if it helps)?
- Some characteristics that relate to CLC as being a Lay Apostolic Body are: Guides, Leadership, DSSE, Commitment, Simple Lifestyle, Financial Co-Responsibility, Apostolic Initiatives and Advocacy. In which of these characteristics does your local/national community have to work harder?
  
- What is your experience of community discernment that resulted in your National Community taking up an apostolic work?
- How do you find people to send and support this apostolic work?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your work, its continued relevance and the work of the people you sent?
  
- If you do not have any national apostolic works but you have practiced DSSE at a local or personal level in CLC can you share your experience about your process?

As in past years, we are grateful if you could share with us some of your reflections on the above questions.

### **The 450<sup>th</sup> Jubilee (March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013 to March 25<sup>th</sup> 2014)**

As we expressed in Projects 152, the year 2013 will mark **450 years of Ignatian Lay Communities.** We are delighted to see many communities are preparing some activities to celebrate this important anniversary. The most important activity will be, of course, our World Assembly in Lebanon. But also other international activities have been discussed. One already approved is a Pilgrimage in Europe. 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. There will be four short stages: Belgium (6-7<sup>th</sup>), Switzerland (8-14<sup>th</sup>), France (19-21<sup>st</sup>) and Italy (26-28<sup>th</sup>) in April 2013. Very soon you will find more detailed information of this Pilgrimage in our site. [www.cvx-clc.net](http://www.cvx-clc.net) and how you can join in

We kindly ask you to tell us about local activities on this celebration in order to prepare a calendar in our website. We wish you all a grateful remembrance of our roots and how we have been guided over the centuries to become today what we feel called to be: a lay apostolic body.

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