

PROJECTS:**World CLC Day 2018 –****“Caring for our gift, offering it more generously in joy”**

No.169, December 2017

*Original: English***Dear friends in the Lord,**

1. The theme of our next World Assembly invites us to look at CLC as a gift. A gift is something that may be either received or given, or, as in the case of our CLC graced experience, received in order to be given: “you received without charge, give without charge” (Mt 10, 8). In the preparation for the Assembly, we are asked to acknowledge with greater profundity and gratitude what we have been given, and increase our readiness to share it in service, in the Church and in the world. Our attention is pointed in two directions: to our history, a look that reminds us of who we are, and strengthens our foundation; to the future, following the vision of Pope Francis, with an openness to the challenges of witnessing and giving ourselves in a more generous and apostolically effective way.

**I. Caring for the CLC gift**

2. Our gift has been received progressively, through an already long and blessed history of 50 years. It has taken its present form step by step, through the reflected experience of so many CLC members, in a slow discovery of richness and uncovering of implications. We can look back now and see how the balance of the main elements of our Charism was gradually found. Let us remember some of the landmarks of that development. Let us look at some of the “loaves we have”, to refer to the passage of Scripture inspiring us for Buenos Aires 2018:
 - New identity, responding to the call of Vatican II: reinforcement of the lay character, with a new name and new General Principles.
 - Return to the Spiritual Exercises (Manila, 1976), both as inspiration, and as practice lived personally and in our small groups, and also proposed to others in ministry. They have become “the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality” (GP 5).

- Affirmation of the witnessing value of Community, moving forward from the federation model, to the acceptance and confirmation of the calling to become One World Community (Providence, 1982).
 - Discovery of the intrinsic missionary dimension of CLC (Hong Kong, 1994), to be lived primarily in our everyday lives. This was, then, developed in the discernment of a Common Mission (Itaici, 1998), and in the reception of the calling to become a Lay Ignatian Apostolic Body, that shares responsibility for mission, practices the method of DSSE (Nairobi, 2003), and desires to be present in the world as a prophetic community (Fatima, 2008). The last World Assembly (Lebanon, 2013) has elected some priority frontiers as criteria for the apostolic discernment of the whole Community.
3. Owning a history as gifted as ours demands responsibility and creative fidelity. We are responsible for keeping our tradition, nurturing it as we explore its elements ever deeply, and passing it on, in its fullness, to the new members of our Community. We have the duty to make this way of life known, so it may be recognized by those who search for such a way of following Christ and who identify themselves in this vocation.
 4. Nowadays, we often use, the term “Three Pillars” (Spirituality, Community, and Mission) to summarize the essential dimensions of our Charism, acquired through our history. We need to evaluate if each one, and all together, are deeply integrated and continue to be alive and strong everywhere in CLC. We want to avoid superficial readings of our history that may see the pillars as just steps in a chronological sequence, or a juxtaposition of layers in a hierarchy that values one over the others. This triad must constitute a lively, mutually reinforcing circle, whose integrated power is perceptibly expressed in the daily CLC life of each member, each community, and the whole Body. This is the “greater depth and integration in the living out of the CLC Charism” that we have set as the grace desired from the next World Assembly.

5. Evaluation questions

- a. *Is this whole and comprehensive gift– the main documents, the history – well known by all in CLC today? Do these sources of our Charism continue to be studied, assimilated, valued as a treasure of wisdom and inspiration?*
- b. *Is the commitment to CLC being expressed in the daily life of all members and continually grounded and nourished by a regular experience of the Spiritual Exercises?*
- c. *Are the three pillars being lived with depth and profound mutual integration at all levels?*

As we move to the World Assembly, one of the tasks of the Delegates will be to evaluate how their National Community is caring for the CLC gift, and bring that information with them to Buenos Aires, as basis for the communal discernment they will be invited to engage in at the Assembly.

II. Getting ready to offer our gift more generously in joy

6. Creative fidelity demands that we do more than preserve the gift. It calls forth imagination and generosity to develop it, to make it ever more valuable and fruitful, in the example of the “good and trustworthy” servant of the parable of the talents (Mt 25, 21-23). It requires also that we be attentive to the signs of the times, always searching in readiness and indifference, desiring and choosing “only what is more conducive” (Sp. Ex. 23) to bring the gift of our Charism to bear greater fruit, concretely, in each place and each time.
7. Today, we live a special time, a “Kairos” moment, with the way Pope Francis is pushing for a renewal of the Church, as it was already described in Projects 168 (especially nn. 8-17), to which we here refer. CLC feels challenged, in many ways, by the vision and the action of Pope Francis. Suffice it to point to the Pope’s constant injunctions to use discernment, learn discernment, teach discernment, which we cannot hear without feeling summoned to action. The choice of Buenos Aires had much to do with the desire to respond to Pope Francis, to find in the place of his pastoral roots the same Spirit and light that may lead CLC to put its gift at the service of the Pope’s renewal project.
8. The inspiration of Pope Francis, however, must guide us in the preparation for the Assembly. His actions are eloquent. His words are rich in depth. We read them again carefully, letting ourselves be confronted and defied, guided by questions like these:
 - a. *How should these suggestions and appeals be heard and received by CLC, a Lay Ignatian Apostolic Community?*
 - b. *How do we feel challenged by Pope Francis’ dream for the Church?*

We propose four main texts of Francis’ magisterium, so far, offering, for each one, a suggestion of respective connection to one central aspect of the CLC Charism, as stated in General Principle 4.

9. Evangelization and Renewal – *Evangelii Gaudium*¹. This Exhortation challenges the Church to come out of itself, to “go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20). And, for their evangelizing mission, Pope Francis wishes that all may “find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness” (EG 89), a sentence in which we easily find resonance in our three pillars. Effective apostolic witness and service, and integration of Christian faith with the different dimensions of life is precisely what CLC desires for its members: *“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 dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism”* (GP 4).

¹ <http://bit.ly/EvangeliiGaudium>

10. Ecology, justice, and poverty – *Laudato Si'*². This Encyclical proposes a new “integral ecology”, which responds in an unified way to the two greatest challenges of our world today: “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (LS 139) Therefore, “we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49). Caring for creation, option for the poor, and a simple life style are essential elements of the CLC way of life: “*We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect ... 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 life style, which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them*” (GP 4).
11. Family – *Amoris Laetitia*³. The Exhortation challenges CLC families to deepen their experience of love in family, and it also calls CLC to be agents of this new family pastoral. As a lay association of faithful, the wellbeing of the “diverse family realities” (Lebanon Final Document) has to be always in the center of our concerns. “*We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society, which affect ... the welfare of the family*” (GP 4).
12. Youth – *Preparatory Document for the 2018 Synod of Bishops*⁴ (not from Pope Francis directly, but according to his ideas). Solicitude for young people and the importance of serious vocational discernment, for all vocations, are also constitutive elements of CLC: “*Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and youth ... who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church*” (GP 4).
13. One word has been present in the titles of all Pope Francis’ most important documents: Joy! (“*Laudato si'*” is itself also a shout of joy.) This surely did not happen by chance. There is a deliberate underlining of this idea, as a summary of his dreams and his style. It is like a code word for that newness that he is trying to bring about in the Church. It means more than being happy; it signifies fullness of life and freedom, that which “fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus” (EG 1). It is a word that may work for us as a criterion of discernment:
 - a. *Is being CLC a joy-giving experience for me?*
 - b. *Do we find and share joy in our CLC Community, at all levels?*
 - c. *Is CLC a living witness to joy?*
 - d. *Finally, a more directly relevant question for our preparation for the World Assembly: how is the joy proposed by Pope Francis challenging CLC?*

There can be no true gift – given or received – without joy!

² <http://bit.ly/LaudatoSi-en>

³ Download link: <http://bit.ly/AmorisLaetitia-en>

⁴ <http://bit.ly/YouthSynodPrepDoc-en>

14. Suggestions for celebration of the 2018 CLC World Day

- a. The 2018 CLC World Day falls in the middle of our 50-year Jubilee Celebration. It may be the opportunity to celebrate the many ways in which our Community (National or Local) has been graced. Nevertheless, we propose that it be an opportunity to focus the attention of the Community on the upcoming World Assembly in Buenos Aires, and on the CLC response to the prompts of Pope Francis.
- b. Encourage the appropriation of Pope Francis' documents referenced above by our members and our small groups. For example, make a creative presentation of each one, or some of them, to generate the desire of further reading and discussion, following the guiding questions we have suggested.
- c. This celebration is also a perfect occasion to introduce to the whole National Community the delegates to the World Assembly, and for them to be missioned by the Community where they are present. It is expected that the delegates will gather the reactions of the Community to the different preparatory proposals and all relevant information for the Assembly. The candidates to the new World ExCo could also be announced.
- d. And, of course, it is also an excellent opportunity to pray for, and to motivate all members to follow and participate, in the form possible for each one, the works of our World Assembly 2018, such an important event for the whole Community.

United in delight in, and gratitude for, our gift,

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With and on behalf of CLC World Executive Council