

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

*Approved by the General Assembly on September 7th, 1990
Confirmed by the Holy See on December 3rd, 1990*

PREAMBLE

1. 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.

Inserted among the poor and sharing with them their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity within our human family. This gift of God to us and our response continues to this day through the influence of the Holy Spirit in all our particular circumstances.

Therefore we, members of the Christian Life Community, have composed these General Principles to aid us in making our own the options of Jesus Christ and taking part through Him, with Him and in Him in this loving initiative which expresses God's promise of faithfulness forever.

2. Because our Community is a way of Christian life, these principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text but rather by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love. This law, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of daily life. It respects the uniqueness of each personal vocation and enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God. It challenges us to see our serious responsibilities and to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work together with the entire People of God and all those of good will for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.

3. The Christian Life Community is a public world association whose executive centre is presently in Rome. It is the continuation of the Marian Congregations, started by Jean Leunis s.j. and first officially approved by Pope Gregory XIII's bull, Omnipotentis Dei, of December 5, 1584. Going back beyond the Marian Congregations we see our origin in those groups of lay people that developed after 1540 in different parts of the world through the initiative of Saint Ignatius Loyola and his companions. We live this way of Christian life in joyful communion with all those who have preceded us, grateful for their efforts and apostolic accomplishments. In love and prayer we relate to those many men and women of our spiritual tradition who have been proposed to us by the Church as friends and valid intercessors who help us to fulfill our mission.

PART ONE OUR CHARISM

4. 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 for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation 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 life style 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 dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism.

We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live.

5. The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in 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 times.

Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.

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

We recognise particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.

6. Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues his mission of salvation. By making ourselves sensitive to the signs of the times and the movements of the Spirit, we will be better able to encounter Christ in all persons and in all situations. Sharing the riches of membership of the Church, we participate in the liturgy, meditate upon the Scriptures, and learn, teach and promote Christian doctrine.

We work together with the hierarchy and other ecclesial leaders, motivated by a common concern for the problems and progress of all people and open to the situations in which the Church finds itself today.

This sense of the Church impels us to creative and concrete collaboration for the work of advancing the reign of God on earth, and includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand.

7. Our gift of self finds its expression in a personal commitment to the World Community, through a freely chosen local community. Such a local community, centered in the Eucharist, is a concrete experience of unity in love and action. In fact each of our communities is a gathering of people in Christ, a cell of his mystical Body. We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother. Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will.

8. As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have received from Christ the mission of being his witnesses before all people by our attitudes, words and actions, becoming identified with his mission of bringing the good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, setting the downtrodden free and proclaiming the Lord's year of favour.

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

- a) 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.
- b) At the same time, 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.
- c) The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the "Review of life" and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.
- d) The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sort of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians. Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

9. Since the spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ: she is the model of our own collaboration in Christ's mission. Mary's co-operation with God begins with her "yes" in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation. Her effective service as shown in her visit to Elizabeth and her solidarity with the poor as reflected in the Magnificat, make her an inspiration for our action for justice in the world today. Mary's co-operation in her Son's mission, continued all through her life, inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary, who by accepting the designs of God became our mother and the mother of all. Thus we confirm our own mission of service to the world received in baptism and confirmation. We honour Mary, the Mother of God, in a special way, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.

PART TWO LIFE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

10. Members

Becoming a member of Christian Life Community presupposes a personal vocation. During a period of time determined in the General Norms, the candidate is introduced into the way of life proper to CLC. This time is allotted for the candidate and the wider Community to discern the candidate's vocation. Once the decision has been taken, and approved by the wider Community, the member assumes a temporary commitment and, with the help of the Community, tests his/her aptitude for living according to the end and spirit of CLC. After a suitable period of time, determined by the General Norms, permanent commitment follows.

11. Community Bonding

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

12. Way of Life

- 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.
- b) Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the advancement of God's reign, all individual members are called to an active participation in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the

ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence, concretely, to our world. Our broad and demanding mission requires of each member a willingness to participate in social and political life and to develop human qualities and professional skills in order to become more competent workers and convincing witnesses. Furthermore, it demands also simplicity in all aspects of life, in order to follow more closely Christ in His poverty and to preserve inner apostolic freedom.

- c) Finally, each one assumes responsibility for participating in the meetings and other activities of the Community, and to help and encourage other members to pursue their personal vocation, always ready to give and to receive advice and aid as friends in the Lord.

13. Government

- a) The World Christian Life Community is governed by the General Assembly, which determines norms and policies, and by the Executive Council which is responsible for their ordinary implementation. The composition and functions of these bodies are specified in the General Norms.
- b) The National Community, constituted according to the General Norms, comprises all those members who are striving to live out the CLC way of life and mission within a given country. The National Community is governed by a National Assembly and an Executive Council. Their aims are to ensure the structures and formation programs necessary for responding effectively to what is needed for the harmonious development of the whole Community, and for an effective participation of Christian Life Community in the mission of the Church.
- c) National Communities may, if they find it helpful, establish or approve regional or diocesan communities or centers, comprising the local communities of a given region, diocese, city or institution. They are constituted according to the General Norms and the National Statutes.

14. Ecclesiastical Assistant

Christian Life Community on each level has an ecclesiastical assistant, designated in accordance with Church law and the General Norms. The assistant takes part in the life of the community in its various levels according to the General norms. Working in collaboration with other leaders of the community, he is principally responsible for the christian development of the whole community, and helps its members grow in the ways of God, especially through the Spiritual Exercises. In virtue of the mission given him by the hierarchy, whose authority he represents, he also has special responsibility for doctrinal and pastoral concerns and for the harmony proper to a Christian community.

15. Property

Christian Life Community on each level can, if it is useful, own and administer property as a public ecclesial person, in accordance with Church law and the civil laws of the country in question. Ownership and administration of such property belongs to the specific community.

PART III

ACCEPTANCE OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES

16. Modification of the G.P.

The General Principles, which express the fundamental identity and charism of the Christian Life Community and therefore its covenant with the Church, have been approved by the General Assembly and confirmed by the Holy See as the fundamental Statutes of this World Community. Amendments to these General Principles require a two-thirds majority vote by the General Assembly and confirmation by the Holy See.

17. Suspension and exclusion

Acceptance of the General Principles of the Christian Life Community is a prerequisite for membership in CLC on any level. Significant failure of a member or a local community to observe them is cause for suspension and eventual exclusion by the National Community. Significant failure of a National Community to act when one of its local communities is not observing them is cause for its suspension and eventual exclusion from the World Community. There always remain a right of appeal from a local or regional decision to the national community, from a national decision to the World Community.