



## Christian Life Communities

# Belen Jesuit Preparatory School Miami, Florida



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## CLC HISTORY <sup>1</sup>

Christian Life Community traces its roots to St. Ignatius of Loyola, who, as a soldier recovering from his battle wounds, was given an extraordinary grace of conversion. That mystical experience of God led to his total dedication to Christ and his mission. After his conversion, Ignatius sought to help others by speaking with them in groups about the work of God in their lives. He guided many towards God by drawing on his own spiritual experiences and gradually formulated the Spiritual Exercises to help future guides lead others to God. The Exercises thus helped the development of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the congregation of lay persons, which became the Sodalities of Our Lady, from which the Christian Life Communities developed after Vatican II.



In 1563 in Rome, a young Jesuit, John Leunis, founded the first CLC by gathering a group of young lay students at the Roman College to help them unite their lives — jobs, studies, families, relationships, etc. — with Christian values. The movement, originally called the Sodality of Our Lady, grew and was confirmed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584. Over the years the movement spread dramatically. In 1920 there were 80,000 sodalities worldwide. In the 1950s in the U.S., there were over two million teenage members and numerous adult members. When Vatican II urged groups like the Sodality to rediscover their original roots, some sodalities continued as before, while others became Christian Life Communities. The main difference is in the size (6 to 12) and the regularity of meeting (weekly or biweekly).

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the material that follows is from a Handbook for Youth and Young Adults, edited by Steve Arriga, S.J., Shane Martin, S.J. and Sonia Serrania.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Response to God's Love.**



Out of love, the Word became human and was born of Mary, the humble Virgin of Nazareth. Living with the poor and sharing their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity in our human family. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we respond with gratitude to God for this gift of Jesus in every circumstance of our lives. Therefore we, members of the Christian Life Community,

have composed these General Principles to aid us in making our own the choices 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. Guided by the Spirit.**

Because our Community is a way of Christian Guided life, these Principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text as by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love. This law of love, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of our daily lives. This Spirit-inspired love 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 responsibilities, to constantly seek answers to the needs of our time and to work together with the entire People of God and all people of good will to seek progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and dignity for all.



### **3. Graced History.**

The Christian Life Community is a world association whose executive center is presently in Rome. It is a continuation of the Sodalities of Our Lady, started by Jean Leunis, S.J., and officially approved by Pope Gregory XIII's bull, *Omnipotentis Dei*, of December 5, 1584. Prior to these Sodalities of Our Lady we find our origin in those groups of lay people that developed in different parts of the world both before and after 1540 through the initiative of St. 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 join 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.

#### **4. Missioned Communities.**

Our Community is made up of Catholic Christians: men and women, adults and youth, of all social conditions; Christians who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely by working with Him for the building of the Kingdom, and who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church. We propose to commit ourselves as Catholic 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 especially aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple life style that expresses our freedom and solidarity with them. To prepare ourselves more effectively for apostolic witness and service in our daily environment, we assemble in community those persons who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith. Responding to the call of Christ and following our charism, we seek to achieve this unity of life in the world in which we live.



#### **5. Discerning Communities.**



The spirituality of our Community is centered on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. Our spirituality draws its life 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 recognize 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. Sense of Church.**

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 in 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. World Community.



We express the giving of ourselves by a personal commitment to the World Community through a freely chosen local community. Such a local community, centered in the Eucharist, offers 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. Our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother bind us together. 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. Apostolic Life.

Christ has sent us on mission as members of the pilgrim People of God to be His witnesses before all people by our attitudes, words and actions. We are to become identified with His mission of bring 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 favor. 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. CLC members open their hearts to conversion and struggle to change oppressive structures.



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, 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. Through the daily faith-consciousness examen and through personal and communal discernment, we try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.

The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of unjust structures in society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelization of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, prepared 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. Union with Mary.



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 cooperation 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 our inspiration to act for justice in the world today. Mary's cooperation 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 honor Mary, the Mother of God, in a special way, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.

Community

Mission

Spirituality

## **CLC SPIRITUALITY**

What makes CLC different from every other way of following Christ is our Spirituality, which is according to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. The Spiritual Exercises are not just a retreat experience, but a whole way of life that incorporates the spiritual dynamics of the vision of Saint Ignatius. Five points are worth mentioning.

### **Finding God in All Things**

By this, St. Ignatius means openness to God in each concrete situation of our daily life. For St. Ignatius, and for us, this is the purpose and central element in our way of life.

### **Following the Spirit**

In order to find God in all things, the person and the community must be able to hear and respond to the callings of God's Spirit. This means attentiveness to the flow of interior moods, desires and feelings and the thoughts that accompany them. There is a need for vigilance because the powers of good and evil influence us from within and without, through persons, cultural values, etc.

### **Collaboration with Jesus**

Following the Spirit is only possible for a person rooted in the knowledge and love of Jesus. God's Kingdom was established through Christ's life and victory on the cross, and it is coming to fullness in the world in each person and situation through the Lordship of Jesus. Collaborating with Jesus in this struggle leads to intimacy with Jesus who is poor, rejected, and powerless. The peace brought by this realization enables us to sense how we may be enslaved, especially with regard to wealth, power, and esteem.

### **Ordering Relationships**

Living and making choices in loving collaboration with Jesus means, too, that my life with others will be 'together'. God has created us in relationships: with himself, other persons and the universe. We are to be part of his continuing creation. Where there is alienation we are called to be a force for God's healing: a force for peace born of justice.

### **Living in True Freedom**

Gathering all of the above elements together naturally leads to living in the freedom for which we are created. Part of the gift of creation is that we are free to plot our course, but we are also called to a freedom that is an authentic, living, loving, collaboration with Jesus. It is a freedom from all that threatens Christ's Kingdom in us and in the world that makes us free to respond to concrete situations



## **RETREATS**

As a retreat experience, the Spiritual Exercises are another particularly rich and powerful experience of the same way of living, now in the context of retreat, prayer and reflection. Their purpose, says Ignatius, is to lead a person to true spiritual freedom. There are several formats for experiencing the "full" Exercises. One is experiencing them in a thirty-day period during which one meets daily with a spiritual director and has regular prayer periods. Another format that is especially popular with lay persons is the "retreat in daily life", in which the retreatant meets regularly with a -spiritual director, has daily prayer periods, but continues living in his/her usual environment. This retreat experience lasts for several months.

During an experience of the Exercises, the five marks of our way of living are sought and deepened as personal gift in an encounter with God. The freedom we have been given is to be transformed as our relationships are in order, as Christ becomes a personal friend with whom we can collaborate, attentive to follow His Spirit in building the Kingdom - all this so that we will be truly free to find God in all things.

God comes to meet us where we are now, and transforms our freedom, drawing us to know and love him more, enabling us to better find Him in all things and in every situation of our life.

Retreat and daily existence: Two different ways of living the same loving collaboration with Jesus that is characteristic of our CLC spirituality.

## **CLC MEETING FORMAT**

Our groups are small, usually six to ten members. We meet regularly in order to develop friendship and a community spirit among ourselves by praying, sharing some of our life experiences together and helping and supporting each other in our Christian faith and our daily lives. Since our communities are based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, groups try to include elements of the Exercises in their group meetings. The pattern of meetings varies, but most of the following are normally included in ongoing groups:

Short check-in: How has God been present in my life since the last meeting? Where have I experienced God's presence? When did I feel disconnected from God?

Opening prayer

Praying for a grace: The community recalls the grace that it formulated at its previous meeting and how it has experienced that grace.

Reflection and sharing on the day's topic.

Formulate grace for next meeting.

Business

Review of meeting: How was I moved during this meeting? Where did I feel positive energy? Where did I feel discomfort?

Closing Prayer

Social

Each community aims to embody the characteristics of **community, spirituality and mission**. In each meeting, during the sharing and planning, members review their individual and corporate mission that is carried out primarily outside the meetings.

## **PRE-COMMUNITY STAGE**

### **PHASE I and PHASE II**

Most Youth and Young Adult CLCs will go through two phases of Pre-Community. Phase I is a brief, introductory stage that lasts for the first three to six meetings. This stage is a cycle of orientation led by the Guide and followed by a decision process.

Phase II follows the orientation cycle and begins with a decision for each member to continue in the CLC group. It includes Community building activities, spiritual aspects and further introduction of Mission. Community building is emphasized in this stage so that members may come to know one another better and be able to share more intimately. A sense of the Spirituality is always included. As groups get to know one another better and move more deeply into the Spirituality, they begin to move into the Initiation stage.

## NUMBER of MEMBERS

Because school CLCs are often influenced by other clubs on campus, there can be a tendency to think that more is better in terms of numbers for membership. This is not true with CLC: quality should be stressed rather than quantity.

Initially, some groups begin with large numbers only to have fifty percent or more drop out at the end of Phase I. This is very common in high school CLCs, so a guide should not worry if this happens. CLC is not for everyone and the membership will always be select. Groups generally should have at least five members, with ten being the average. Some larger groups of twenty or more try to work with two or three guides, but it is difficult for the members to get to know each other intimately. Generally fifteen should be the largest that a Youth and Young Adult CLC should be, although some groups with several guides are larger.

## ROLE OF THE GUIDE

The role of the guide is greater in the Pre-Community stage, and particularly in Phase I. It is characteristic of this stage that the Guide lead all meetings, model prayer, and instruct regarding the CLC way of life. This stage is an overview and introduction to CLC; therefore, the Guide is the group's focus. It should be noted here that the guide instructs and models with the desire that the members will soon take on more leadership within the group.

In Phase I, the Guide calls the group together, plans and leads the meetings, models prayer and Spirituality, teaches and explains the CLC way of life, and organizes Community activities. After the introductory meetings, members are asked to make a commitment to the group and to continue learning about the CLC way of life.

In Phase II the Guide continues calling the group together, planning and leading the meetings, modeling prayer and Spirituality, teaching and explaining the CLC way of life, and organizing Community activities. The Guide has to be careful not to control or make it his or her group. During Phase II, the guide acts with the aim to "let go" as soon as possible, always trying to empower and enable the members to do more by themselves.

## MEETINGS



Meetings in the Pre-Community phase are organized and led by the Guide. In Phase I, the meetings are more instructional- "what is CLC"- type meetings. At the final meeting of Phase I, the Guide should ask all members to consider moving into Phase II. Members should have some time to reflect on their commitment and desire for CLC, and those who wish to continue should attend the first Phase II meeting.

In many high school settings, CLCs meetings in Phase II deal with three types of agenda aspects: business, instructional and spiritual, which may be combined or not in any one meeting. Business agenda will consist of planning Community activities and evaluating the CLC program. Instructional agenda will continue what was begun in Phase I. Spiritual agenda will include prayer sessions, meditation times, Eucharist, faith sharing, and retreats.

If high school CLC's are going to meet during the lunch periods , it is important to provide a meeting place that is both quiet and away from other activities. It is also important that the seats be arranged so that all members can see one another. The school chapel may be an ideal place for meetings. Most meetings in this stage run about twenty minutes and generally should not go beyond thirty minutes. In parishes or university settings it may be preferable to meet at night and for a longer period of time. The length of the meeting should be geared to the attention span of the participants

Communication with members is important; all must know when and where the meeting will be. Some schools allow notes to be passed to members, or an announcement of the meeting to be made.

## **COMMITMENT AND EVALUATION**

Commitment is an important aspect of Youth and Young Adult CLC and should be talked about regularly in meetings. Most Youth and Young Adult CLC groups, at one time or another, experience a problem with commitment by members: not everyone comes to all meetings, some do not participate, etc. It is important to regularly evaluate meetings and the group's commitment.



Why is there a problem of commitment in a certain CLC? Perhaps the meetings are not addressing the needs of the members. Perhaps some members do not really want to be in the group and need permission to leave. In some cases a group may decide not to continue as a CLC. All of the above are acceptable. CLC is not a program for everyone. However, those members who wish to be a part of CLC must attend meetings regularly for the group process to work.

Members should be accountable in some way for their participation. The group itself can decide how best to deal with this issue if it becomes a problem. Some groups have a rule that any member who misses a meeting must personally tell the Guide or Coordinator. Some groups have a rule that anyone who misses more than three meeting a semester will be dropped from the group. Each group should talk about commitment and decide how it will live out its commitment to CLC.

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

The three aspects of CLC (Community, Spirituality and Mission) should be explained in Phase I and then continually reemphasized. It is good for Guides to explain the framework and process of CLC so that members understand the direction in which the group is going.



Community building is the most important task of Pre-Community. It is essential that the group develops deep and trusting relationships with each other in order to enter into the next stage. It is equally important that CLC be a way of life that is inviting and fun to youth and young adults. Generally, a community building activity should be held at least once a month.

Social activities are excellent ways to foster community. Many youth and young adult groups have barbecues, volleyball games, picnics, beach outings, pizza and movie nights, etc. These activities should be designed to allow all to participate and feel comfortable.



At the beginning, the Guide plans the activities, but very soon the entire group should plan and coordinate them. Activities can be tied to CLC values. For example, movies such as “The Mission,” “The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez,” “Ordinary People,” etc. that present important values can be used for social activities and then used for discussion at the next meeting.



## **CLC at BELEN JESUIT PREPARATORY SCHOOL Miami, Florida**

At the initiative of Fr. Marcelino Garcia, S.J., President/Principal of our school, Christian Life Communities began to be formed at Belén in the school year 2001-2002. The project began as an after school activity, but it was soon discovered that, given the commitment that the majority of our students have to their different sports and clubs, after school was not a viable option. In 2003-2004 the school schedule was adapted to make room for a 45-minute time period during the school day, once a week (conveniently called “CLC Tuesday”) to allow for small group and community meetings.

CLC began at our school with one small group community in each grade level. It has now since expanded, so that there are, in fact, four grade levels with more than one community, each with a membership that fluctuates between 10-15 members, depending on the group. New smaller groups within each grade level continue to be formed. Whereas the membership was not steady at the beginning, it has, however, remained stable after the first two years of the establishment of the program.

Each small community is assigned two adult guides that serve to coordinate each group. The adult guides meet together once every month to discuss the progress of their groups and joint activities; to evaluate events and set goals; to share their faith with other guides and deepen their knowledge and practice of Ignatian spirituality. They receive religious formation/renewal, especially on Ignatian Spirituality, as well as opportunities to participate in faith sharing experiences as a CLC community.

In order to facilitate group coordination for adult guides who are just beginning in the process of CLC participation, we have prepared a set of thirty group meetings, which enable whoever is leading the group to guide the initial process. With time and experience, the student members are encouraged to take responsibility for their own community meetings.

The members are encouraged to make a public commitment to Christian Life in a school-wide liturgy that takes place every two years. Prior to making the commitment, they evaluate themselves and their relationship with Christ with the help of the adult guides. Keeping in mind the Profile of the Graduate of a Jesuit School at Graduation, and the mission of CLC, we have reflected on the developmental process of our student members and developed attitudinal and behavioral goals that encompass the Christian vocation. The following areas of human, spiritual, communitarian and apostolic dimensions are included: Personal maturity, Christian Ethics, Being with Jesus, We are One People of God, Ignatian Identity, Being and Sharing with Others, Growing in Universality, Sense Within the Church, Proclaiming the Gospel, Apostolic Community, Co-responsibility, Preferential Option for the Poor. These aspects of the Christian Vocation have been translated into developmental and observable behaviors that the

CLC member and his guide can use as tools in this personal evaluation prior to his public commitment.

In March of 2004 a general meeting was held with two representatives from each CLC community in order to discern the mission of CLC Belen. Since its inception, and following the standard pattern for the formation of CLC communities, our groups were individually moving toward the discernment of mission, but it was imperative that all groups moved toward the same mission. Thus,

***The mission of the Belen CLC is to foster the sharing and discerning of Christian life among our members (community), in the style of St. Ignatius of Loyola (spirituality). We aim to accompany one another as we grow in a deeper knowledge and love of Christ, a more committed sense of justice and a renewed practice of servant leadership (mission). This mission is specifically geared to the poor and the immigrants among us.***

The different communities have grown consistently in maturity and Christian life. They have solidified their sense of community (as a school) by participating in several annual and bi-annual events, such as: Dinner and Movie Night, Beach Picnic and CLC Community Days for the Middle School and High School respectively.

CLC Belén is a successful addition to our pastoral endeavors. It is an important way to further our students' life in Christ and their growth in the Ignatian vision of humanity. It has become a positive channel for exposing our students more directly to Ignatian spirituality, and through it, to the knowledge of Christ, so they can grow to love him more and serve him better.

**A.M.D.G.**

**APPENDIX A**  
**CLC MEETINGS**





## **PRE-COMMUNITY PHASE**

### **Meeting # 1**

#### **Theme: Introduction to CLC**

1. Welcome everyone and make sure everyone knows everyone else by name.
2. You are beginning to explore Christian Life Community. You are invited to begin by sharing three things about yourself, including what brought you to CLC. After a few moments, anyone may begin.  
(Remember that at this stage we are simply listening to one another.)

3. Prayer: John 1: 35-39 Jesus tells the disciples to “come and see.”

Reflect on the Scripture reading, emphasizing that perhaps the Lord is calling them to ‘come and see’ if CLC is a way of life for each of them. Affirm feelings of insecurity or feelings of those who might have come out of curiosity, but do not yet know what they are looking for.

4. Brief introduction by the guide on what CLC is, including the three aspects of community, spirituality and mission. Answer any questions they may have. Emphasize the commitment that will be asked of them.
5. Invite them, at this point, to commit to the next four meetings, where we will explore community, spirituality and mission. At the fifth meeting, they will be invited to continue their commitment to CLC.
6. Since the next meeting will be about community, invite them to each bring something to eat and drink, to be shared together.

PRE-COMMUNITY PHASE  
**Meeting # 2**



**Theme: Community**

1. Welcome. Ask everyone to share how they are feeling as they begin the meeting.
2. Song: “Companions on the Journey.”
  - a. Discussion: What strikes you about this song? Who or what comes to mind when you think of ‘companions’? How does this song speak to you?
3. Scripture: Acts 4: 32-35
  - a. What do you find interesting about this reading?
  - b. If you had been asked to join this type of community, what would have been your initial reaction?
  - c. Is there anything you find disturbing?
  - d. Is there anything you find attractive?
  - e. What is your experience of community?
4. Reflection on Community: A community is a group that gathers to share life. A Christian community has Christ at its center and gathers to share Christian life. CLC, as the name says, is a way of living that Christian life that has its roots in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. We at Belen make up one nucleus of CLC, because CLC exists all over the world, at the local, national, and international levels. There are CLC conventions and meetings at the different levels every once in a while, where members gather to discuss issues pertinent to making their Christian life more centered in Christ and more open to those in need. CLC requires a commitment to community life: that is, that we decide, at some point, that we need other people with our same desire to take Christian life seriously in order to commit more readily to Christ. The experience of community is a universal desire. What lifts us up and brings us down most often comes from our relationships. Family, neighborhoods, co-workers, soldiers in combat, gangs- the sense of community is found everywhere there are people who bond together. What is unique to Christian community is the person of Jesus. What is unique about Christian community is living out his values and choices. The community is truly Christian when the poorest, the outcasts, the unfit are welcomed as graciously and lovingly as the rest. At our fifth meeting I will invite you to commit to CLC; for now, I invite you to join us in sharing food and drink as a sign of what we want to share in the weeks and months to come.

Feedback: What are your feelings about belonging to a community that has Christ at its center.  
Agape: Share a meal.’

6. Conclude with a closing prayer of thanksgiving and announce that next week we will explore CLC spirituality.



## Meeting # 3

### Theme: Spirituality

1. Welcome. Recall what took place in the last two meetings and why we are gathering this time.
2. Ask for each person to briefly share how they are feeling as they begin today's meeting, and what their expectations are.
3. Scripture: Mk. 8: 27-30 "Who do you say that I am?"
  - a. Briefly comment on the Scripture passage, saying that even the disciples had different ideas of who Christ was; that we are to ask ourselves who is Christ for me? Where do we find Christ in our lives today? How do we respond to him?
4. Give brief overview of CLC Spirituality: (Do not give this to them as handout- explain it in your own words)

### CLC SPIRITUALITY

What makes CLC different from every other way of following Christ is the characteristic of our Spirituality which is according to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. This doesn't mean just a retreat experience but a whole way of living in the world which incorporates the spiritual dynamics of the Exercises. Five points are worth mentioning.

#### **Finding God in All Things**

By this, St. Ignatius means an openness to God in each concrete situation of our daily life. For St. Ignatius, and for us this is the purpose and central element in our way of life.

#### **Following the Spirit**

In order to find God in all things, the person and the community must be able to hear and respond to the callings of God's Spirit. This means attentiveness to the flow of interior moods, desires or feelings and the thoughts that accompany them. There is a need for vigilance because the power of good and evil influence us from within and

## Meeting 3- continued (page 2)

without, through persons, cultural values, etc.

### Collaboration with Jesus

Following the Spirit is only possible for a person rooted in the knowledge and love of Jesus. God's Kingdom was established through Christ's victory on the cross and it is coming to fullness in the world in each person and situation through the Lordship of Jesus. Collaborating with Jesus in this struggle leads to intimacy with Jesus who is poor, rejected, powerless. The peace brought by this enables me to sense how I may be enslaved, especially with regard to wealth, power, esteem.

### Ordering Relationships

Living and choosing in loving collaboration with Jesus means too, that my life with others will be 'together'. God has created us in relationships: with himself, other persons and the universe. We are to be part of his continuing creation. Where there is alienation we are called to be a force for God's healing, a force for peace, born of justice.

### Living in True Freedom

Gathering all these elements together naturally leads to living in the freedom for which we are created. Part of the gift of creation is that we are free to plot our course, but we are also called to a freedom which is an authentic, living, loving collaboration with Jesus. It is a freedom from all that threatens Christ's Kingdom in us and in the world, that makes us free to respond to concrete situations

### Retreats

As a retreat experience, the Spiritual Exercises are another particularly rich and powerful experience of the same way of living, only now in the situation of retreat, prayer and reflection. Their purpose, says Ignatius, is to lead a person to true spiritual freedom. There are several formats for experiencing the "full" Exercises. One is experiencing them in a thirty-day period during which one meets daily with a spiritual director and has regular prayer periods. Another format that is especially

### Meeting 3- continued (page 3)

popular with lay persons is the "retreat in daily life", in which the retreatant meets regularly with a -spiritual director, has daily prayer periods, but continues living in his/her usual environment. The retreat experience lasts for several months.

During an experience of the Exercises, the five marks of our way of living are sought and deepened as personal gift in an encounter with God.

The freedom I have been given is to be transformed as my relationships are in order, as Christ becomes a personal friend with whom I can collaborate, attentive to follow His Spirit in building the Kingdom - all this so that I will be truly free to find God in all things.

God comes to meet me where I am now and transforms my freedom, drawing me to know and love him more, enabling me to better find Him in all things and in every situation of my life.

Retreat and daily existence: Two different ways of living the same loving collaboration with Jesus which is characteristic of our CLC spirituality.

5. Introduce the topic of prayer. Ask how they pray, when? Why?
6. Briefly introduce them to different forms of prayer (prayer of petition, thanksgiving, praise, reading Scripture (*Lectio Divina*), adoration, Rosary, contemplation, etc.)
7. Encourage them to continue living a Christian life and invite them to the next meeting, where we will examine mission in CLC. **Tell them to bring a Bible for meeting # 4.**



PRE-COMMUNITY PHASE

**Meeting # 4** (Will probably take more than one meeting)

**Theme: Mission---** STUDENTS WILL NEED BIBLE

1. Welcome. Recall what took place in the last three meetings and why we are gathering this time.
2. Ask for each person to briefly share how they are feeling as they begin today's meeting,
3. Make an invocation to the Holy Spirit to begin the meeting.
4. Distribute Hand-out "Jesus and Popular Wisdom".
  - a. They may work alone or, preferably in groups of two or three.
  - b. Play soft music while they work.
5. Facilitate General sharing on what they found.
6. Read Matthew 25: 31-46
  - a. The Catholic Youth Bible (that we are using at Belen) has a section under this passage of Matthew, entitled: "YOU DID IT FOR ME." Read it with them and discuss the questions you find there.
7. Finish with a closing prayer that may be one of general intercessions.
8. Remind them that the next meeting will be about discernment: making decisions.

**Meeting 4 (continued) page 2 of 2)**

HAND-OUT (mission)

JESUS AND POPULAR WISDOM

Read each of the following passages and name a popularly held belief that the passage contradicts.

1. Matthew 19: 16-30

2. Matthew 25: 31-46

3. Mark 1: 16-20

4. Mark 12: 41-44

5. Luke 2: 8-12

6. Luke 12: 13-21

7. Luke 16: 19-31

**Meeting # 5**



**Theme: Discernment and Decision in CLC**

1. Welcome. Recall the past four meetings
2. Ask them to share how they have felt during the past four meetings.
3. Scripture: Jer. 29: 11-14 Comment briefly on this passage)
4. Briefly explain Ignatian discernment: Use as much or as little of the following material as necessary. (The following material is from David Lonsdale, S.J. Listening to the Music of the Spirit, Ave Maria Press, 1992).

*The word discernment literally means “the quality of being able to comprehend what is obscure;” a power to see what is not evident to the average mind.*

*Religious discernment is much more than any insight. In St. Ignatius’ life discernment resulted in a deep change of heart, and in outer changes in daily living and relationship with others. Religious discernment took Ignatius where he had never been before, this is, the realization that his whole life was and would ever be inserted into the Kingdom of God and servicing that which was for God’s greater glory. Changes like the one Ignatius experienced occur from the inside out. From his experience, Ignatius identified five key dynamics of the spirit from which he later he derived his “Rules for Discernment.” These dynamics are:*

1. *Different movements of consolation and desolation,*
2. *God’s action causing inner reactions in heart and spirit,*
3. *Understanding as an affective, intuitive reaction in pondering the things of God and of the world that grows as one ponders and wonders,*
4. *Recognition of inner reactions to God’s movements, and of one’s inner motions, and,*
5. *Acceptance of God’s invitation to receive those feelings that bring us closer to God, and rejection of those that move us away from God.*

*Discernment resembles sifting through; separating and dividing inner movements that result from God’s personal involvement with us. God’s touch, ‘though taking place in a moment in time, lives with us forever. When we experience God’s love and God’s self-giving we are never the same. Our free will might take us back to our sinful ways, but deep inside we are no longer who we were.*

*Throughout his Rules for Discernment Ignatius’ experience of God suggests that the movement toward God (acceptance) and the movement away from God*



## Meeting 5 - continued

*(rejection) are rooted in felt awareness and understanding of God's movements deep within. These movements or "motions" of the Spirit produced in Ignatius a) differences of affective responses; b) changes in deep-rooted attitudes, thought and feelings, and c) shifts in behavior.*

*The key words are accepting and rejecting. God loves us always and initiates communication with us always. God will also always respect our free will that chooses to accept or reject God's initiatives. In the life of Ignatius his choices originated not from willpower or self-control, but from his powerful experience of God.*

*In lay terms, good discernment aims to reach conclusions from every day common sense events. Good discernment, for instance, is a process by which the decisions of the normal business world are reached, perhaps even nationally or internationally. Christian discernment goes beyond all that because the reign of God is not territorial; the reign or "kingdom" of God is a way of life, both individually and communally. Christian discernment moves us to allow God to be at the center, to look to God to guide our choices and actions, and to respond readily to God's love. Because the reign of God is not an individual matter, Christian discernment applies to social structures, systems, and institutions that are to reflect the love and justice of God.*

*In his letters to the early Christians Paul insists time and time again that we have a choice to live "according to the flesh" or "led by the spirit." Christian discernment has to do with acting in the power of the Spirit as sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Christian discernment leads us to live in such a way, that all our decisions, great and small, are shaped by our insertion in the Trinity.*

*To live in a continuous Christian discernment we need to:*

- 1. Engage in assiduous prayer,*
  - 2. Procure adequate information about the matter at hand,*
  - 3. Allow ourselves to be involved in affective responses to God,*
  - 4. Weigh reasons for the different options, and*
  - 5. Confirm or reject life options.*
6. Give them opportunity to comment and ask questions.
  7. Ask members to pray over their decision during the next week, and that those who wish to make a greater commitment should return to the next meeting.
  8. Conclude with prayer.

## Meeting # 6



Theme: **God Calls Us by Name**

1. Welcome. Begin by recalling the previous meetings. Ask everyone how they felt. Ask them how they feel about continuing in CLC.
2. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
3. Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27 (We are made in the image and likeness of God, and as such, should reflect His image and likeness in all we say and do.)  
- AND/OR: Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18 (God knows us even more intimately than we know ourselves.)
4. After silently reflecting upon the passage(s) – it might help to read it a couple of times - ask them to share what the passage(s) meant to them. Do they feel God called them by name to be a part of CLC? If so, how do they feel they can contribute to the group? What do they think they will get out of it?
5. God is always calling us by name. Ask them to reflect upon their own names. Share what your names mean (Are you named after Apostles? Saints?) See Proverbs 22:1 – “A good name is more desirable than great riches, high esteem, than gold and silver.”
6. Using some of the methods of Ignatian discernment (discussed in Meeting #5), ask them to come up with a name for the group that *reflects the character of the group*. Everyone's input is important.

Song: *Overjoyed*, by Jars of Clay

## Meeting # 7



### Theme: **Jesus Calls Us to Wash One Another's Feet**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Scripture: John 13:1-15 (Washing of the Feet)
3. Discuss Scripture passage. Why would Jesus wash His disciples' feet? What is the symbolism of this act? Do we see ourselves in Peter?
4. Set the mood with music, etc. and then explain what is going to happen. Bring a few towels, a cup and a large bowl filled with water. Invite them to wash one another's feet (or hands.) One person begins by washing the foot or hand of another. Make sure that the person's foot or hand does not get dunked into the water. Instead, the person who is washing should use the cup to pour the water on the person's hand or foot. Then, he can use a towel to dry the hand or foot. The person who has just been washed should in turn wash the hand or foot of the next person, and so on. (Guides should also participate in the activity.)
5. Discuss the activity. How did they feel once they were put in Peter's shoes? Did they prefer washing or being washed (serving or being served)? Explain that although sometimes we may experience times of need and we must accept being served or helped, we must also be like Jesus, who came to this world not to be served but to serve. Ask them to think about and discuss how the washing of the feet is a symbol of the life and death of Jesus. (Stress the crucifixion.) Invite them also to use the washing of the feet to reflect on their Lenten sacrifices. Washing another's feet is humbling - it's a sacrifice. A sacrifice is something that's not easy to give up. A sacrifice means giving up something that's tough, otherwise, it wouldn't be a sacrifice. (Their sacrifices are personal and not necessarily to be discussed, just for reflection.)
6. Close with a prayer inviting them to reflect on the washing of the feet during Lent in order to prepare for the death and resurrection.

## Meeting # 8



Theme: **The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Guided meditation of Christ on the cross (see attached). Set the mood with soft music and invite them to close their eyes while you read (or paraphrase) the meditation. Allow about 10 minutes (or however long is necessary) for the meditation. You may invite them to share their conversation with Christ on the cross.
3. Christ may have been crucified thousands of years ago but He is still crucified even today. Where can we see Christ crucified today? How do we feel when we see Christ crucified in the world? (How do we reply? Apathy? Empathy?)
4. Reflect on suffering in the world in light of the crucifixion but remind them that there is life after death. Jesus resurrects. Had he remained in death on the cross, there would have been no purpose for His death. He gives us life everlasting, life in abundance.
5. Ask them to reflect upon and share who Jesus is in their lives— people who give their love freely, unconditionally. (ex: parents). Explain to them that actions speak louder than words. Sometimes we may tell our parents, for instance, that we love them but our actions would indicate otherwise. The great thing about Jesus is that He showed us through His death on the cross and His rising to new life just how much He loved us.
6. Challenge them (during Lent, Spring Break) to **show** the people they love how they feel about them. If we are going to talk the talk, we must also walk the walk, as Jesus did. Challenge them also to **do something** about the Christ that we see crucified in our daily lives in the face of the poor, ill, unemployed, etc.

Song: *Love Song*, by Third Day

## Meeting # 9



### Theme: **The Principle and Foundation of St. Ignatius**

1. Welcome. Begin by asking them to share how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Hand out copies of the Principle and Foundation (see attached.) Explain that the Principle and Foundation is the introduction to the Spiritual Exercises that Ignatius wrote. Ignatius wrote the Principle and Foundation to explain the origin of existence and to offer an answer to the question, "What is my purpose in this world?" Select someone to read it out loud.
3. Discuss the Principle and Foundation. What did they like about it? What didn't they like about it? Why do they think St. Ignatius wrote this? Do they think it is easy or hard to live a lifestyle described by Ignatius in the document?
4. Explain that the Principle and Foundation was very important to St. Ignatius. It was his mission statement. He needed to know what he stood for to know where he was going. Ask them to take some time to write their own mission statements. Ask yourself, What do you live for? What does God want us to live for? What do we want to accomplish as a Christian? Give them some time to do this. Play some soft music to set the mood. (Another possibility is group discernment of its mission statement. We can ask ourselves where we want to go on this faith journey together)
5. After about 15 minutes (or however long is necessary), ask them to share their mission statements.
6. Close with prayer and Scripture reading. Some options: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 / 1 John 3:2-3 / Luke 10:25-28

Song: *Day by Day*, by dc Talk



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## **Meeting # 10**

### **Theme: Sin**

1. Welcome. Begin by asking them to share how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Begin with a discussion on sin. What is sin? Why do we do it? How bad is it really? How do we feel when we sin? What are the consequences of sin? (It breaks our relationship with God, harmful not only to ourselves but to the entire Church community.)
3. Scripture: Psalm 51: 1-19
4. Explain that we must see sin through God's eyes, not through the eyes of the world. We may think that our own personal sins don't affect anyone else but they do. Example: Consider some of the disastrous effects resulting from the sin of one person: Adam, Eve, Judas. (Ask them to come up with their own and discuss.) Contrast this with the good that has come from one act of God's love: the conversion of St. Paul, Mary's yes at the Annunciation, Jesus' death on the cross. (Ask them to come up with their own and discuss.) Refer back to the Principle and Foundation of St. Ignatius. Sin goes against the Principle and Foundation.
5. Activity: Hand students the envelope containing the picture of Jesus and a nail. Tell them not to open the envelope. Even if they ask what's inside, don't tell them. Read through an examination of conscience out loud. As they listen to the examination of conscience, they should poke a hole through the envelope each time they hear a sin they can identify with. (You might want to ask them to spread out first so that they don't begin to compare how many holes each one has in his envelope.) Once you are done reading the examination of conscience, ask them to open the envelope. Ask them to reflect on the picture of Jesus silently.
6. Return to the group and discuss the activity. Explain that this is our reality. Every time we sin, we hurt Jesus and poke another hole in him. We crucify Him all over again. Close with a prayer, asking God to help us go and sin no more.

Song: *Go and Sin No More*, by Rebecca St. James

## Meeting # 11



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### **Theme: Trust**

1. Welcome. Begin by asking them to share how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Begin with a basic discussion on trust. What does it mean to trust? Who do you trust? Why do we trust some people more than others? How do we feel when someone breaks our trust? Do we trust ourselves?
3. Jesus and his disciples gave us the greatest example of what it means to trust. Read: Matthew 14: 22-32
4. Reflect on this passage while we do the following activity: TRUST WALK. Pair the students up in twos and have one student blindfolded while the other leads him. After 5 minutes, switch places. (Make sure they are walking in safe areas.) The entire activity should take no more than 15 minutes. (Otherwise, it can get out of hand.)
5. Discuss the activity. How did they feel to be lead blindfolded? Did they begin to trust their partner a little more the longer they were blindfolded? How did the activity relate to the Scripture reading?
6. Discuss what steps we can take to trust more – trust God, trust our families, trust our friends.
7. Ask for a volunteer to do the closing prayer.

Song: *Walk on Water*, by FFH



## Meeting # 12

### Theme: Discipleship

1. Welcome. Begin by asking them to share how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Ask if anyone has ever gone fishing. Have them discuss their experiences fishing. (What supplies or tools did you need? Was it easy? What kinds of challenges could one face when going fishing?) If nobody has gone fishing, ask the previous questions anyway.
3. What does it mean to be a fisher of men? How different is it from regular fishing?
4. Scripture: Mark 1:16-18
5. What does this passage mean to us? Are we any different than those fishermen? Are we called to be fishers of men? How do we do this? ("Preach the Gospel always. Use words only when necessary. – St. Francis of Assisi)
6. Explain that Jesus asked the fishermen to follow Him, for He would make them a fisher of men. The fishermen asked no questions – they simply left their nets and followed Him. What are the nets that we have to leave behind in order to follow Him?
7. Closing prayer: Ask God to help us leave our nets behind and follow Him. Ask God to give us the strength to be a witness to His love and in so doing, to make other people His disciples as well. We must be examples in order to bring other people to Christ.

Song: *Send Me*, by Winans Phase II





## **Meeting # 13**

Theme: **Mary, Our Mother and Guide**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Explain that May is the month in which our Church honors Mary. It is also a good opportunity for us to reflect upon her role in our lives. Mary is a wonderful example for Christians. Although completely human like us, she risked a lot and faced many challenges. Ask them if they can think of some of the challenges that Mary had to face. Discuss.
3. By looking directly at Scripture, we can see many examples of how Mary was challenged and how she dealt with these. You may photocopy the attached passages and reflection questions and distribute them to the students for silent reflection and/or read the passages out loud and discuss them.

### **Annunciation (Luke 1:28-31, 34-35, 37-38)**

And coming to her, the angel said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus." ... But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God... for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

*Do I feel called to do something I may not understand? Am I prepared to trust and obey my Heavenly Father and allow it to "be done to me" according to His will? How can I ask Mary for guidance in this matter?*

### **Jesus is lost in the Temple (Luke 2:43, 46, 48-51)**

The boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem but his parents did not know it. ... After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions ... When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him,

#### **Meeting 13 (continued)**

"Son, why have you done this to us. Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why are you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

*When, like Mary, do I feel as if I've lost Jesus? How do I feel when I find Him again? How can I take Mary as my example and "keep these things in my heart?"*

### **Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-5)**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

*Do I, like Mary, have the courage to ask God for my deepest desires? How can I keep my eyes and heart open to the world around me so I can help others in need?*

### **John and Mary at the foot of the cross (John 19:26-27)**

Standing by the cross were his mother and John. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

*How will I take Mary as my Mother today? How will I welcome her into my heart and home? How can I bring others to know the love of their Mother, Mary?*

## MAGNIFICAT (Mary's Song of Praise)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For He has looked upon the lowliness of his handmaid; Behold from now on all generations will call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy endures from age to age to those who love him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to the promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

## Meeting # 14



Theme: **Meditation and Discussion of “A Testament,” by Anthony de Mello, SJ**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God’s presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Explain that Anthony de Mello, SJ (1932-1987) was a Jesuit from India who conducted countless workshops throughout the world on the subject of prayer and reflective living. Among his writings, he wrote “A Testament,” which is a guided meditation that is a creative alternative to examining one’s conscience.
3. The meditation is attached. You may use it as a guided meditation (inviting them to close their eyes and listen as you read the text, pausing to allow them to reflect) or as a group discussion, or both. It may be adapted and modified to make it appropriate for each group.

## **A Testament** by Anthony de Mello, SJ

I imagine that today I am to die.

I ask for time to be alone and write down for my friends a sort of testament for which the points that follow could serve as chapter titles.

1. These things I have loved in life...  
Things I tasted,  
looked at,  
smelled,  
heard,  
touched.
2. These experiences I have cherished...
3. These ideas have brought me liberation...
4. These beliefs I have outgrown...

5. These convictions I have lived by...
6. These are the things I have lived for...
7. These insights I have gained in the school of life...  
Insights into God,  
the world,  
human nature,  
Jesus Christ,  
love,  
religion,  
prayer.
8. These risks I took,  
these dangers I have courted...
9. These sufferings have seasoned me...
10. These things life has taught me...
11. These influences have shaped my life  
(persons, occupations, books, events)...
12. These scripture texts have lit my path...
13. These things I regret about my life...
14. These are my life's achievements...
15. These persons are enshrined within my heart...
16. These are my unfulfilled desires...  
I choose an ending for this document:  
a poem – my own or someone else's;  
or a prayer;  
a sketch or a picture from a magazine;  
a scripture text;  
or anything that I judge would be  
an apt conclusion to my testament.

## Meeting # 15



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### Theme: **Guided Meditation on Creation (Application of Senses)**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Explain that St. Ignatius suggested a method by which to meditate called "Application of Senses." The Application of Senses involves just that: applying all of our five senses – sight, sound, taste, touch, smell – to immerse ourselves fully within the scene of a Scripture passage or reflection. He taught that the person meditating should enter into and picture the various scenes in the Scripture or reflection being meditated upon. The person places themselves within the passage and in their imagination listens to what is said by those in the scene and reaches out with the senses to experience the scene. The main approach here is not one of reasoning but of touching God's Word with the senses and the heart.
3. Invite the group to close their eyes and assume a prayerful and comfortable position. Read the meditation on the attached page slowly.
4. Discuss their experience of prayer during the Application of Senses. Ask them the following questions (feel free to add others):
  - Was it easy to employ all of your senses?
  - Were you able to effectively place yourself within the scene?
  - How did you feel during the meditation?
  - How do you feel to be so loved by your Creator?
  - When is it hardest to feel this love from Him?

### Application of Senses: Creation

I imagine myself watching God during His period of creation of the world. God has created the heavens and the earth and all living things on it. I feel His angst as He looks at all He has done and is not completely satisfied. His love is so great that He desires to create a creature to rule over all of his creation. This creature is so special that He creates it in *His* image and likeness. He gathers dirt from the ground and molds it into a human being. He gives it eyes

so that it might see the beauty of His creation. He gives it a brain so that it can think and choose freely. He gives it feet so that it can move and walk and run and jump. In order for the creature to live, it must have one final thing – breath. God looks at this creature carefully before giving it life. He looks at its hands – hands that He knows will one day crucify His son but hands that will also bless many others. He looks at the heart – a heart that was made for loving, and He hopes that His creation will realize where the only true love lies. After taking in all that this human being is, He is satisfied. He breathes His spirit into it. I am now this creature that God has been creating with such love and care. This Spirit of God comes into me and I feel it fill my lungs and slowly reach every other part of me. The sensation is without parallel. He has counted every hair on my head and made sure that everything about me is in accordance with His plan. I feel the love that it must take to put so much into creating something and then letting it go. I take comfort in knowing my Creator.

## Meeting # 16



### Theme: **Becoming Peacemakers**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Explain that peace is a concept that is cherished in every culture, although it has not necessarily been put into practice during different periods in human history. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines peace as "freedom from war and a state of calm." Catholic Bishops note in a 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace that Catholic teaching has always understood peace in positive terms. They quote the words of Pope John Paul II which state that "Peace is not just the absence of war...Like a cathedral, peace must be constructed patiently and with unshakeable faith."
3. One of the most common expressions that Jesus used was, "Peace be with you." Read John 14:27 – "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

What does this say about Jesus? Are we living our lives being troubled and afraid? This passage shows us that He is giving each of us the direct command to bring peace to others, but it must begin with each of us. Although our world might be filled with conflict, we are all called to bring peace to our homes, to our country, to the world.

4. Other than Jesus, who are some well-known peacemakers and what did they do to bring about peace? (Some examples may include St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and others.) What qualities and characteristics made their approach to war and peace unique? How can we adopt some of these qualities so that we, too, can become peacemakers? What can I do right now to bring peace into my heart and into my home?
5. To conclude the meeting, slowly read together the attached Prayer of St. Francis (or play the song.)

## Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make us instruments  
of your peace.  
Where there is hatred  
let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not  
so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood  
as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving  
that we receive;  
It is in pardoning  
that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are  
born to eternal life.

Amen



## Meeting # 17



### Theme: **Mission**

(NOTE: This meeting may need to be divided into two meetings.)

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Invite them to think about the word, "mission." What does it mean to you? What experiences have you had with mission? Do you know your mission?
3. Mission is very important to Christian Life Communities. So far, we have been focusing on spiritually preparing ourselves both individually and as a community. It is now time to begin preparing ourselves for mission – going out into the world, our greater community, to share our faith and love for God and others. Each one of us is called to fulfill a particular mission in the world and in the Church.
4. But even before we can go out on mission we need to **discern** our mission. **Discernment** is a term that St. Ignatius used to describe decision making that is done with God's will for us in mind. It is our job, as a CLC, to discern our common mission. "Common" mission is that mission for which all members share the responsibility. This mission is Christ's, not ours. The way of fulfilling the mission must then be Christ's way, too.
5. The search for Mission and its expression in our CLC are influenced by:
  - today's situation – the needs of our families, school, community
  - the history, culture and spirituality of our school – the fact that we are grounded on Ignatian spirituality, for example
  - the distinctive traits of each CLC – its levels of commitment, talents of each member, etc.
6. This way of living our mission will give us, at least, two positive results:
  - CLC becomes identified as a true community and unified body. This enables others to count on and collaborate with CLC as a body and not only with individual members.
  - CLC, through the service of its members, becomes more visible and present as an organized community. Whatever future mission we do can be identified with CLC and

the Ignatian way of life. This allows us to be a stronger voice in our vocation to be witnesses of Christ.

7. Invite the CLC members to take some quiet time to reflect upon and pray about the talents that God has given the group. Ask them to reflect on how these talents can best be used to serve others in the community. Their personal reflection may be shared either at this meeting or they can be given time until the next meeting to think about and then share what they feel their CLC may be called to do as a common mission.

## Meeting # 18



### Theme: **Holy Spirit**

(NOTE: This might be an appropriate meeting for preparation for Confirmation and/or before Pentecost.)

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Invite them to think about and share their thoughts on who the Holy Spirit is.
3. Read **Acts 2: 1-6** (Pentecost)
4. Discuss how those first apostles must have felt after Jesus had died and resurrected and left them to do His work here on earth. Why do you think the Holy Spirit's presence was important among them? What does the Holy Spirit do for us? As we saw on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down visibly on the Apostles. He gave them the power to speak in strange tongues to the crowds that came to Jerusalem for that Feast. He also transformed them, from selfish and timid men into giants of courage and faith.
5. The Holy Spirit also makes us more holy by his presence. He transforms souls with his seven gifts. These gifts make the soul capable of taking in his special graces and inspirations. We may not notice much of any effects from these gifts until we have advanced further in our spiritual lives but they are definitely working within us to make us grow in the love of our Lord.
6. Discuss the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and what they might mean to them: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. How might these gifts help them, like the apostles, be transformed from "selfish and timid men into giants of courage and faith"?
7. Close with the prayer on the following page. Another alternative might be to play a reflection song on the Holy Spirit, such as "Veni Sancte Spiritus," by Taizé.

## ***Come, Holy Spirit***

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Your love.

L. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, Who instructed the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation, through Christ our Lord.

Amen

## Meeting # 19



### Theme: All For God's Greater Glory

1. Check-In: Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)

2. Opening questions:

- Who are the heroes of today?
- Who do people admire? For what reasons?
- Do you have any heroes? People that you look up to?
- Do you try to mold your actions after those of people you admire?

3. In your own words, narrate the following:

As a child, Ignatius listened with amazement while his father and eldest brother told stories about how their ancestors had served with distinction the kings of Castile, how they had identified with and dedicated themselves to the monarchy, and how they had been richly rewarded for their devotion. After his conversion, Ignatius strove to serve the greater glory of the one true ruler of the world: Christ.

Human rulers have human flaws. They can be greedy or profligate, brutal or weak, arbitrary or narrow, petty or insensitive. Nonetheless, most of us follow these human rulers.

Ignatius reminded us that the only ruler truly deserving of total dedication is Jesus the Christ. Only Jesus merits our complete attention, obedience, service and worship. Only Jesus gives unconditional love, is eternally faithful, and is the best source of hope. In the exercises, Ignatius invited us to enter into Christ's service wholeheartedly. If we can serve human rulers well, we should serve Christ without reserve.

4. For Reflection:

- Ignatius was consumed with the honor and the glory of God. He would do, sacrifice, or suffer anything for the coming of God's reign. What focuses your energies? How is what consumes you or gives your life focus related to the call of Christ? What does the call of Christ stir within you?
- Note this from Ignatius' Autobiography, responding to a lady who, on seeing him in prison, spoke words of compassion: "By this you show that you do not wish to be imprisoned for the love of God. Does imprisonment seem to be such a great evil to you? Well, I will tell you that there are not so many grills and chains in Salamanca that I would not wish for more for the love of God." What "grills and chains" do you suffer for the

love of Christ? What chains within yourself shackle the inner stirrings you may feel to follow Jesus more completely?

- Where are you being stretched to be more than your culture or family has programmed you to be? To do things you never dreamed possible?
- What will you do to live freely in Christ, to love generously, to forgive magnanimously, to serve even your enemies with joy?

5. Closing Prayer:

Teach us, O Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Meeting # 20



### Theme: Discerning God's Will

1. Check-In: Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Opening questions: What was the last important decision you made? How do you go about making decisions? Who do you usually get advice from? How much of a part do your feelings play? How much of a part does your reasoning play? What is a very important decision you have to make within the next two or three months?
3. (In your own words) For St. Ignatius, life is a battleground and the stakes are enormous. Each one of us can identify with this statement; our tents are also pitched on that battleground. At times, we are thrown into confusion as we try to sort out our feelings, promptings, and desires in the decisions that we face each day. We go back and forth in an inner dialogue that can be paralyzing: "What should I do? What do I want? What does God want from me? What if I fail?"

In making decisions, Ignatius encourages us to examine the promptings of our heart, to be sensitive to whether they are of the Spirit of God or from a spirit of darkness and evil. Ignatius reminds us that it is not always easy to tell the difference. He taught that if we are to grow in wholeness and freedom, discernment of the movements of the Spirit is essential.

So important was discernment to Ignatius, that he insisted that the companions make a daily examen of consciousness. What retreat is to a year, what prayer is to a day, the examen is to the moment-by-moment discernment of God's spirit in the circumstances and events of our everyday life.

► Consider the following "rules" for making a decision, and explain them in your own words, keeping in mind the age level of your CLC'ers.

1. The love which moves and causes one to choose must come from above, that is, from the love of God, so that the one who is making the decision first feels that the greater or lesser attraction to the object of choice is actually love for the Creator and Lord.
2. I should imagine a person whom I have never seen or known, and whom I would like to see practice all perfection. Then I should consider what I would tell that person to do and choose for the greater glory of God. Then I will do the same, myself keeping the rule I have proposed for another.
3. This is to consider what procedure and norm of actions I would wish to have followed in making the present election if I were at the moment of death..

4. I should picture and reflect myself standing in the presence of my Judge on the last day, and consider what election in the present matter I would then wish to have made. I will now choose that rule of life that I would then wished to have observed, that on the day of Judgment I may be filled with happiness and joy.

4. For reflection:

- Would these rules be helpful in making a decision right now?
- Would my life have more focus and meaning if I discerned important decisions with a method like the one developed by Ignatius?
- Would receiving spiritual accompaniment be helpful in discerning the movement of God's Spirit in my life?
- Is there a decision you would like the CLC community to help you with right now?

5. Closing Prayer:

From the First letter of John: "My dear friends, not every spirit is to be trusted, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets are at large in the world. This is the poof of the spirit of God: any spirit which acknowledges Jesus Christ, come in human nature, is from God, and every spirit which does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God." Give me, O Christ, the courage of faith. Pierce the hidden depths of my spirit like a two-edged sword. Give me your clear light to guide my conscience. Give me that love which delights me in the seclusion of my timid heart and without which I cannot know you as the Lord of all things, of atoms and stars, of human bodies and spiritual worlds. Then shall I be truly blessed in you, then shall I have my heart's desire and the purpose of my existence. – (Prayer of Hugo Rahner, in Castle, *Christian Prayers*, p. 40)



## Meeting # 21



### Theme: **Companions on the Journey**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Ask them to share a time when you went through a lot of trouble to get your friend(s) to go somewhere or to participate in something that you knew he/she would really like.
3. Comment that something like that happened in the Gospel story you are about to read:  
Read: Mark 2: 1-12
4. This passage is about Jesus' authority to forgive sins, but there is other material that can be of benefit to us:
  - a. What can you say about the four friends who carried the paralyzed man to Jesus?  
*(their actions showed they were convinced that Jesus could do something for their friend; they were committed to their friend; they didn't let a seemingly insurmountable obstacle (the blocked doorway) prevent them from getting their friend to the feet of Jesus)*
  - b. What people in your life have brought you to Jesus?
  - c. What people have you been able to bring to Jesus?
  - d. Who are some others whom you might bring to Jesus?
5. Introduce the song: "Companions on the Journey" by saying something along the lines that we are all on the Journey to Jesus, and that we need to help on another along the way.
6. Thank God for the people who have brought you to Jesus.

## Meeting # 22



### Theme: **Building Community**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Invite them to share some attitudes that build community and some attitudes that destroy that community (*openness, sharing, listening, being attentive to others' needs, and conversely, being selfish, criticizing, judging others, name-calling, etc.*)
3. Can you share an experience when you felt left out, judged unfairly – (*you are this or that*), unwanted and/or unloved by others, made fun of, ???
4. Let's listen to what Jesus has to say: Read Matthew 7: 1-11—
5. Remind them that this is not a prohibition against recognizing the faults of others, but against passing judgment in a spirit of ignorance, forgetful of one's own faults. The governing thought in this passage is the correspondence between conduct between one's fellows and God's conduct toward the one so acting.
6. Do you see yourself reflected in this passage? What is the Christian way of correcting others' behavior? : (in order: *pray for him, speak to him privately, speak to him with two others, bring him before the community, etc.*)
7. Finish with a prayer of thanksgiving.

## Meeting # 23



*Christian  
Life  
Community*

### THEME: THE CONSCIOUSNESS EXAMEN

1. Check in
2. Opening Questions: (Perhaps you might want to play soft music while the students quietly ponder these questions). How do you relate to God on an everyday basis? How often are you aware of God acting in you? How do you know if you are responding to His grace in you? How often do you turn to Him during a regular day?
3. **Presentation of Topic:** The Consciousness Examen is sometimes called the Discernment Examen or an Awareness Review. By whatever name, the Examen is a simple prayer exercise that makes us more aware of our inner movements- feelings, motives, and inspirations – that deepen and order our lives to God. Looking at these movements makes us more attuned to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and more alert to the promptings of evil.

*Through the daily faith-consciousness and through personal and communal discernment, we try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.*

General Principles, # 8b

This examen – the one prayer that St. Ignatius insisted that his men never omit- is THE prayer exercise in Ignatian spirituality. Since it is a discernment reflection, it is the prayer of CLC. Of all the prayer and reflections offered to us, this is the one to keep doing: in season and out, in noisy places and in quiet, during the day and during the night, in good times and in hard times (especially in hard times). It is to be done always, because it strengthens our awareness of God's awareness of us.

The Consciousness Examen is not about good or bad actions, but about how God is moving me. Its focus is not on me, it is on God IN me; it is not about knowing how well or poorly I do, but about how generously I respond to God's loving me. The goal of the examen is to develop a heart with a discerning vision, which will be active not only during examens, but continually in my life, a gift to be prayed for. Finding God in all things for Ignatius was what life was all about. My life is no longer an "I", but rather a "we".

The examen is quite simple and natural. It can be done twice a day, once a day, every few days- however often a person feels moved to do it with the greatest fruit. The more we do it, the more natural it becomes for us, and it eventually becomes a way of consciousness, a way of being in ever-closer relationship with God. Performing it can take anywhere between five and fifteen minutes. It doesn't really matter how long you spend; the important thing is that you open yourself up to recognizing and responding to God's movements in you. However, it is better not

to go longer than fifteen minutes; anything beyond this time begins to move the Examen's focus away from being a review of our relationship with God during a period of time.

### **The consciousness EXAMEN (continued)**

St. Ignatius suggests five steps to the Examen. Before looking at those, however, it is well to realize that eventually one needs to structure the examen in a way that is most helpful and natural for each given person. There is no one right way to do it; nor is there a need to go through all of St. Ignatius' five points each time, You might, for instance, find yourself spending time on the first point at one time, and on the fifth point at some other time. Go to wherever you are drawn.

St. Ignatius' five points are as follows:

- *Prayer for Light:* I am before God who loves me and welcomes me, who enlightens me and guides me. I embrace God who lives and grows in me.
- *Gratitude:* I give thanks for what I have done and for what I have received this day, both pleasant and difficult, for the word of encouragement and the generous gesture, for my family and work, my community, for the time to pray and to laugh and to cry.
- *Review of the Day:*
  - What has happened to me in my life, my work, my relationships? What feelings have been stirred in me? How has God been working in me? What has God asked of me?
  - What has been the quality of my response: with love or selfishness, with honesty or deceit?
- *Ask for Forgiveness:* I ask pardon for when I refused to understand my sisters and brothers in their pain, for passing up the opportunity to be useful, for my failure in loving, for injustices, for oppression. I ask pardon for not loving God and all creation in every part of my life.
- *Hopeful Recommitment:* I seek to respond and trust God, aware of my weakness but confident for my sisters and brothers. I renew my commitment to follow the path that God offers me to be a source of light for all creation. St. Ignatius suggests ending with an *Our Father*.

4. Take 5 minutes to actually do the Consciousness Examen.

5. How has God touched you in this exercise? How were you moved?

## Meeting # 24

Theme: **Praying with Scripture**



1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Explain that this meeting is about developing the relationship between scripture and prayer. God is continually reaching out and inviting us to respond; continually speaking to us and inviting us to listen. In the case of other people we hear words directly. With God we become aware of the divine presence and of being open to this presence in scripture.
3. Ask them to share their ideas on how to go about listening to God.
4. With the help of the following scriptures, pray for the grace of openness and surrender to God in prayer. Is 55:10-11 (Yahweh cannot fail); Rom.8: 26-27 (The spirit helps in our weakness)
5. Explain that praying with the scripture is a specially graced way of listening to God, of becoming aware of God's presence. There is a power in scripture that goes to the heart, and praying with scripture opens our heart to its saving power. When we relax and let go of our concerns and anxieties, our projects and worries, we are entering into prayer. It may take some time and experience to become used to praying with scripture. Our focus is on loving God and God inspire and inform our prayer. Praying with scripture is quite simple and natural and there are many ways in which to do so. The five steps below suggest one way.
6. The Five "P's":
  - a. *Passage. Select a passage that you feel moved to spend time with.*
  - b. *Place. Choose a place that is conducive to becoming quiet, and calm and free.*
  - c. *Posture. Become relaxed and peaceful – in a harmony of body and spirit.*
  - d. *Presence. Be aware of the presence of God; acknowledge it and open your heart to it.*
  - e. *Passage. Read the passage slowly and with care, aloud or in a whisper, in rhythm with your breathing, or by phrase and word. There is no need to finish the passage.*
7. Activity for the week. Spend some time reading scripture as a way of enhancing your experience of praying with scriptures. Pray using the passages suggested today. As you finish ask yourself: What struck me about this exercise? What was God trying to say to me? What was the grace I received?

## Meeting # 25



### Theme: **Praying for a Grace**

1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Start this meeting reading the following scriptures: Ex. 17:12-13, Lk. 11:5-13.
3. Explain that this meeting is about praying for a grace. Praying for a grace is a matter of the heart. It is praying with emotion. There is no need for an appropriate place or time. We pray with insistence over and over again. Good models for this are the Psalmists and Jeremiah, who poured out their needs to Yahweh. They knew that God would understand. They stood before God in total vulnerability and passion. This prayer is about throwing ourselves into abandon and trust, like a child who without hesitation or fear crawls into the lap of a loving mother or father. This prayer helps inspire and make real that for which we pray; it develops our inner freedom to be open to the gift of the grace.
4. Discuss these questions:
  - a. How does living for others affect your experience of praying for a grace?
  - b. Do you really desire the grace to live for others?
  - c. Give some examples of what St. Ignatius meant when he said that if we do not desire a grace we should pray to desire it.
5. Prayers of petition: Very often we know of people who have asked for or need our prayers. Prayers of petition connect us to all in the Body of Christ. This type of prayer widens the circle of our lives and includes those who need or have requested prayers from us.
6. For what should we pray today? (Spontaneous petitions)

## Meeting # 26

Theme: **Advent**



*Christian  
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1. Ask them to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Start this meeting with a reflection: It is easy to get caught up in the Christmas nostalgia and forget the central truth of the season: *God is breaking into our troubled world*. The scripture readings for the first Sunday of Advent urge us to wake up to what is happening here and now. This is hour of salvation, St. Paul tells the Romans. He echoes Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel: we must be prepared, focusing on making our hearts ready to receive God at every moment of our lives. We should try to focus more on the good news, which the season celebrates, *the birth of hope into our midst*. This thought might make a difference in how we relate to all the frantic preparations for the externals of Christmas. A true change of heart will open us to the peace promised by Isaiah in the first reading, and peacemaking activities will heal our nation and our world.
3. Choose three students to read the scripture passages for the first Sunday in Advent:
  - Is. 2:1-5; Rm. 13:11-14; Mt. 24:37-44
4. Group students in pairs. In each pair, students propose to one another and discuss peacemaking ideas (the following or any other that comes to mind):
  - a. I will reach to someone I disagree with.
  - b. I will befriend an enemy.
  - c. I will learn what it means to really forgive.
  - d. I will presume goodwill in everyone.
  - e. I will listen compassionately.
  - f. I pledge to forgive and pray for those who have hurt me.
  - g. I will learn to express my anger in healthy, not hurtful, ways.
  - h. On Fridays I will fast for world peace.
  - i. I will learn more about the troubles of peoples and nations of different cultures.
  - j. I will recite the prayer of St. Francis every day.
5. Ask pairs to share with the whole group the activities chosen. Write them down and read each one while placing them in a box.
6. Tell students that only days into his papacy, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of peace as a gift. Our world, marked by conflicts and war earnestly longs for peace. All who profess a religious faith and all who seek the truth with a sincere heart are called to promote understanding, respect and love, turning themselves into peacemakers by engaging in peaceful, positive responses in action. (Taken from Pledgepeace.org.)
7. Take the box to the chapel, and every day find the time to make a visit to the chapel and pick one to practice that day.
8. Activity: log on to <http://www.pledgepeace.org> and submit your pledges for peace to be added to what is being done around the world.

## Meeting # 27

Theme: **Choose Life**



*Christian  
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1. Ask students to reflect upon and discuss how God has been present in their lives since the last meeting. (Where have you experienced God's presence? When have you felt disconnected from God?)
2. Read scripture: Deut. 30:19
3. Reflection: We live in an extraordinary moment on earth. We possess more technical prowess and knowledge than our ancestors could have dreamt of. Our telescopes let us see through time into the beginnings of the universe; our satellites reveal global patterns and behaviors of remote nations. At the same time we witness destruction of life in dimensions not known by previous generations. Not only dying ecosystems all over the globe, but poisonous by-products that affect our bodies and our minds. Yet Yahweh's words through Moses continue to bear a liberating truth: *"I have set before you life and death, therefore choose life."*

We could engage in the analysis of the causes of personal and global destruction and creation of alternatives, but what the world really needs is a *fundamental shift in worldview and values* that will find a number of ways for working individually and in groups to affect peoples' ability to create a generation of life.

The *greatest danger* is apathy, which results in the death of mind and heart. The *greatest miracle* is our true nature as children of God and our true power in the power of God. We need to own our pain, develop an attitude of gratitude, and see life and death with new eyes. Traditionally this vision has been referred to as "Seeing with The Eyes of faith".

4. Activity: Organize the students in groups of three. Each group will brainstorm and write a statement depicting moments in people's personal lives when we choose death. Examples are:
  1. Alienation, displacement, blaming and scapegoating, avoidance of painful information, burnout, diminished intellectual performance, sense of powerlessness, giving in to anger, considering abortion, drugs or suicide.
5. Breaking free: For each statement written, the groups will point out a way to break free from the power of "death" and choose life, by considering each statement in the light of God's promises in scripture.
6. Sharing of work in groups.
7. As a whole come up with a pledge to choose life and carry a copy on your wallet.



## Meeting # 28

**THEME: CLIQUES WITHIN A GROUP**  
**(This may take more than one session)**



1. Check-IN
2. Address the issue openly. Have group members define cliques and real friendship. What are the effects of each? What is their experience of each?
3. On paper, have each one evaluate his group of friends. Divide into partners and have each person learn something about friendship from someone else they do not know well in the group.
4. Have some reflection time on how each one feels when he is left out of a group. Possibly do some role playing in the lower grades.
5. Have the group view a movie together , such as “The Breakfast Club”, which deals with the issues of cliques and friendship. Discuss the movie
6. Discuss what they learned in this process of finding out more about cliques, and how they feel about the issue now.
7. Ask the group to think about writing a prayer or an activity that concretizes the new attitude.

## Meeting # 29



*Christian  
Life  
Community*

### **THEME: CHEATING IN SCHOOL**

(May take several sessions)

1. Check-IN
2. Begin with general questions: Is this something that's really common in our school? What are some moral principles involved here.
3. If you have a board: Write:
  - a. Forms of cheating (in general)
  - b. Causes of cheating

The point is to get to the deeper, underlying issues and feelings

Discuss the value of honesty. What role does honesty play in CLC? What are examples of honesty and dishonesty in Scripture?

4. Follow up more in-depth:
  - a. Why do students feel they *have* to cheat? – the first time.
  - b. What happens to people when they cheat? How do they feel about themselves? What changes can take place in a person who cheats?
  - c. What happens to a person who gets caught cheating? How does that person feel about himself?
  - d. What happens to the person who does not get caught?
  - e. How does cheating affect the group? The school?
  - f. Have you ever cheated? How did you feel about yourself?
5. Have the group members come to some decision about cheating.
6. Conclude with a prayer.



**THEME: Commitment**  
**(over a period of time...) – If some members are not living up to their commitment.**

1. Check-IN
2. Guide and group coordinator should meet (supposing, of course, that this is a high school group and it has a coordinator or leader). What is the real situation? If it involves only one or two people, it can be addressed individually or separately. If the problem affects the whole group. Then all members should be contacted, and told that they **MUST** attend the next meeting where the future of the group will be discussed.
3. At that meeting, the coordinator can lead an evaluation of the group. If there is a board available, he can list the strengths and weaknesses of the CLC group. What do people find helpful/ not so helpful? Move into a discussion of where the group wants to go—to work out its commitment or to disband?
4. Another approach would be to have a survey sent to each member asking for input on his needs. How is CLC meeting these needs? What could be done differently?
5. A third approach is to have members discuss the CLC group with only another member, one-on-one. Then bring the concerns back to the large group.
6. Whichever approach you decide to take, the important thing is that the group must set a standard for themselves. The solution must involve the group, and must emerge through the group's interaction. **Periodic evaluation of commitment is very important.**
7. Finish with a prayer of Thanksgiving.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

## **Evaluation Guidelines**

St. Ignatius left us a legacy of spiritual life unequaled in all of Christian history. The Spiritual Exercises, which are to be practiced periodically, form the basis for this spiritual life. In addition, Ignatius left us the Consciousness Examen, which is to be practiced on a daily basis. Meeting # 23 of this pamphlet explains in greater detail the crux of the Examen. Its purpose is, of course, to aid us in our spiritual life so that we may become more and more aware of those attitudes and actions that lead us to Christ and away from Christ. In so doing, we become more capable of living a life of grace.

As we know, our actions point to attitudes that signal our progress in the spiritual life. What we do reflects what we think and how we feel. Thus, it makes sense to observe what we are doing in order to approach our spiritual life with greater intentionality. Reflecting on these actions can lead us to greater and greater growth.

Included below are charts that present behaviors which can be observed in CLC members and which can help us evaluate our growth through the different stages of CLC- from Pre-Community to Committed Member. Prior to making any commitment to CLC, members and their adult guides should consider these behavioral aspects carefully and prayerfully.

The following areas of human, spiritual, communitarian and apostolic dimensions are included: Personal maturity, Christian Ethics, Being with Jesus, We are One People of God, Ignatian Identity, Being and Sharing with Others, Growing in Universality, Sense Within the Church, Proclaiming the Gospel, Apostolic Community, Co-responsibility, Preferential Option for the Poor. These aspects of the Christian Vocation have been translated into developmental and observable behaviors that the CLC member and his guide can use as tools in this personal evaluation prior to his public commitment.

## **APPENDIX C**

**Principle and foundation**  
**Awareness examen**  
**Take, lord, receive**  
**Lord, teach me to be generous**

## **PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION**

Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his life.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man, to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in so far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in so far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive for the end for which we are created.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

## AWARENESS EXAMEN<sup>2</sup>

1. I AM BEFORE God, who is creator, who welcomes and guides, who is Spirit, who enlightens our faith, and who is Jesus, who lives and grows in us.
2. I GIVE THANKS for what I have done and for what I have received. I recall what I have experienced in the course of the day, what I have done, the people I have encountered, a remark that struck me, an encounter with someone. Was there something new for me? I give thanks for concrete things that have happened to me. I am aware of the Lord's presence.
3. I ASK FOR OPENNESS, LIGHT AND STRENGTH. I ask the Lord for the grace I need to see my day through God's eyes.
5. I EXAMINE MY ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES as God reveals them to me. I try to reply in all honesty to the following questions:
  - a. Have I recognized and accepted signs of God's love towards me today?
  - b. Have I trusted God, or have I hesitated when I have met difficulties?
  - c. How have I behaved toward those around me—those who love me and those who reject me?
  - d. Have I helped those who needed me the most today?
  - e. What are the motives behind my actions – personal success or the desire to give myself generously?
  - f. Am I honest with myself?
  - g. Have I acted according to my principles?
  - h. Have I worked with enthusiasm, not put off by difficulties, or have I felt beaten, wanting to give up?
6. I ASK PARDON for my failure to love, for my failure to respond to God. I need God in my life, but that is not why I ask God's pardon for all the times that I have said no to the call. I ask pardon for not understanding my sisters and brothers in their pain. I ask pardon for passing the opportunity to be useful. I ask pardon for peoples' failure in loving, for injustices, for oppression. I ask pardon for not responding to love.
7. I ENTRUST MYSELF TO THE LORD. If I want to continue to follow the Lord, I seek to respond fully, from the heart, with all my strength. I trust in you, Lord, aware of my own weakness, but confident in your strength. I want my decision to follow you to continue and to flourish for my sisters and brothers. I renew my decision to follow the path that the Lord offers me, and I ask for God's help. I renew my resolution in some areas that I need to improve.

LOVE IS SHOWN MORE IN DEEDS THAN IN WORDS.

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<sup>2</sup> From "Handbook for Youth and Young Adults", edited by Steve Arriga, S.J., Shane Martin, S.J., and Sonia Serrania



## **TAKE, LORD, RECEIVE**

Take, Lord, receive all my liberty,  
My memory, my understanding, my entire will,

All I have and possess.

You have given all to me.

To you, O Lord, I return it.

All is Yours;

Dispose of it wholly according to your will.

Give me only your love and your grace,

For this is enough for me.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

## **LORD, TEACH ME TO BE GENEROUS**

Lord, teach me to be generous.

Teach me to serve you as you deserve.

To give and not to count the cost;

To fight and not to heed the wounds;

To toil and not to seek for rest;

To labor and not to ask for reward

Save that of knowing that I do your will.

St. Ignatius of Loyola