



**Christian Life  
Community**  
*praying our life  
and living our prayer*

# FOCUS

## Let our hearts burn within us (Lk24:32)

I have been reflecting on a sense that we are at a “tipping point” in our journey as CLC. As Una mentioned in her December Focus article our community life has been graced with many gifts, but there is also the reality of challenges we have to face, that will become more acute in the next couple of years, such as :-

- How do we make CLC more accessible to families with young children?
- How do we support older people, e.g. less able to travel, to still be an active part of the CLC community?
- Everyone is busier, personal time is precious, people are less keen, or able, to volunteer for roles to build and support the community.

Despite these realities, which we must face and discern solutions together, I feel we stand on the cusp of an adventure. Like many, I am inspired and engaged by Pope Francis and his approach to the Papacy. I have a strong hope for a reinvigorated Church and that CLC can play its part in this. The quote from Peter Pan “to live - that will be an awfully big adventure” has overtones of the St Irenaeus quote: “the glory of God is a human being fully alive” and resonates for me at the moment.

As I looked back at our 450year history as a Lay Ignatian organisation and reflected on the experience of the World Assembly at Lebanon, I have been struck by the importance of maintaining a balance within our hallmarks:-

COMMUNITY: SPIRITUALITY: LOVING SERVICE

Those times in our history when one element was lost or minimised were detrimental. Being held in balance enables us to be more sensitive to the Lord’s call in our daily lives.

One of the gifts, of the gathering of the World Community, was the affirmation of the primary mission of Lay people and putting into context other service we may be called to. For CLC, as Lay Ignatian people, we are guided through Ignatian Spirituality ( e.g. by use of the

Review of the Day) to be more sensitive to and really “present” in our day to day lives. Our presence in the “marketplace” of life means we are often privileged to be able to show God’s healing love; able to respond to Pope Francis’s call to go out and meet people where we find them.

Pope Francis, preaching on the occasion of the canonisation of Peter Faber sj, reminded us:- *“that the strength of the Church does not reside in herself or in her organisational ability, but is instead concealed in the deep waters of God. And these waters agitate our desires, and our desires expand our hearts. It is as St Augustine said: pray to desire and desire to expand your heart.”*

I enter 2014 with a strong sense of hope for our community’s growth and development. We will need prayerful courage and good will, to be open to the changes that we will inevitably face. May we be big hearted!

A bit about me ... I have been a member of Fairfield CLC group in Liverpool, for around 14years. Like many of you, I had heard of CLC on a number of occasions before I felt it was the right time for me to enquire. I have a clear memory of my first meeting, and having an overwhelming sense of “coming home”. I have previously been the CLC Regional Rep for the North West and more recently the National Secretary. I recently attended the World Assembly in Lebanon, which was an amazing experience. By profession, and vocation, I am a pharmacist and have just returned to a “hands on” post, after 20 years as manager / professional lead for various NHS organisations.

**Monica Francomb, President of CLC EW**



# European CLC Assembly—Preparing for Regensburg

*The next CLC European Assembly, the gathering for representatives from CLC communities across Europe, takes place in Regensburg, Germany from 6-9 June 2014. In this article the Euroteam tell us about preparations at their meeting in Croatia in November. We will be looking for a CLC member to join the President & Chaplain to represent England and Wales at the gathering. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Monica Francomb.*

On arrival in Rijeka we were welcomed by several members of the community from the area and spent an enjoyable couple of hours with them sharing food and getting to know one another. From here we were taken to our accommodation which was at the Jesuit house in Opatija overlooking the Adriatic Sea. On the Saturday we spent most of the day planning the European Assembly. We are very grateful to those communities who responded to our requests for information about their priorities and who also sent nominations for the election of the new Euro team which will take place at the Assembly. By the end of the Saturday we had established a theme, and worked on the preparatory material for the national communities, and also drafted an outline of the program for our days in Regensburg.



Following the evening meal we once again joined the Rijeka community, first to visit a Marian shrine at Trsat and then to gather for an evening of sharing, and answering questions put to us by members of the community. We as a team are very grateful to both the CLC Community and the Jesuits in Rijeka for their hospitality over this weekend !! On the Sunday morning the team continued with its work of planning, this time focusing on the Ecclesiastical Assistants' meeting which immediately precedes the Assembly. By the time we finished our meeting at lunch time we had completed quite a lot of the preparation work but there is still much to be done so we ask for your prayers as we continue to plan for this important meeting.

Following Mass and lunch, Inge had to depart for the airport, whilst the remaining members of the team had a little time to enjoy the local promenade before being driven back to Trieste to meet up with the local CLC community there. On our arrival we took time to pray with the community before sharing with them and hearing further information on "Adriatica", a meeting planned by CLC members in the region to be held in Trieste just prior to our European Assembly. This initiative is really exciting and has come about from the desire to bring together CLC members from neighbouring countries to pray together and share something of their experience of being CLC. It was wonderful to see members of CLC Trieste and Rijeka coming together for this evening and looking forward to possibly planning further exchanges. Once again the team members were very grateful for the hospitality offered by the Trieste Community and also by the Jesuit in Trieste for accommodating us.

Our weekend proved to be very full and quite hectic but also very rewarding, it was a time of many good conversations and encouragement to witness the enthusiasm and willingness of two local communities as they strive to grow in their CLC way of life.

## Input to the European Assembly

As part of the preparation for the European Assembly, each National community has been asked to provide details of their current priorities, and to nominate candidates for the EuroTeam.

### Our priorities:

Alongside continuing to grow CLC, our priorities as discerned at the last extended national team are:

1. Support for Group guides/accompaniers
2. Service "within community"
3. Formation for Mission - DSSE
4. CLC at different stages of life eg family, young adults

### Our nominations:

Evelyne Maloret (CLC England & Wales) - Euro Team Convenor  
Saviour Borg (CLC Malta) - Consultor  
Kristina Rankelyte -Lithuania

## A Prayer for the New Year

Heavenly Father,  
Give me the strength  
To serve you as you will,  
To be challenged  
For your discipleship,  
To use the gifts revealed.

Give me the courage,  
To share with those  
Who have not heard of you  
Or believe in you;  
The rejected by society and family  
The suffering in body, mind and spirit  
The lonely who have no-one  
And nowhere to turn.

Bestow on them the love  
You shower upon me daily.  
By your Holy Spirit  
Draw them close  
And bring them home to You.  
To the glory of Your name.  
Amen.

Swaren Baden, Magdalene CLC, Coventry

## Hope and Life among the refugee families of Syria



*Sarah Teather MP is a member of a CLC group in Farm St, London. Here she recounts her recent visit to Jordan with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), where she learned first hand about the experiences of Syrian refugees.*

As Chair of a parliamentary group that promotes the welfare of refugees, I wanted to know more about what life is like for ordinary Syrian refugee families. I spent the first day with the UNHCR in Za'atri camp, home to 113,000 Syrians. It is Jordan's fourth largest city. Around 300 refugees come to the camp each night. I met families who had made the journey the night before. Most were thin and arrived covered in dust from the desert. They had already been on the move within Syria for over a year. The final journey was the most perilous: some had spent as many as 15 days in the desert with no shelter.

Families lead a meagre existence in the camp. Their new home is a desert in a country where water is sparse. UNHCR are trying to replace tents with mobile homes, but even these are poorly insulated and they won't complete the transfer before winter. Then there are the toilets. Routes at night are poorly lit. Rumours of sexual violence in the camp are rampant and women and girls are frightened to leave their tents to use toilet facilities after dark. Difficult camp conditions and security fears mean that many families opt to leave very quickly. Three-quarters of the refugees in Jordan live outside the camp in host communities. But while moving out of the camp settles some of the families' immediate security fears, it raises other problems: how to make ends meet, and how to make a life for themselves and their children.

Many NGOs support refugees in Jordan, but I was particularly keen to visit Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). All of the families I visited with JRS outside the camp had few belongings. The UNHCR tent had now been exchanged for a damp, unheated, unfurnished breeze-block apartment in a run-down district of Amman. Families who had been in Jordan longer were sometimes giving shelter to recent arrivals. One family visit I made to a home with just one bedroom and a small living room contained 15 people, including seven children and a very sick pensioner. Jordan prevents refugees from working. UNHCR registration entitles them just to food coupons, but there is no assistance for rent. Many people work illegally for very low wages. Others, particularly in families without an adult male, send their children to work.

Child labour is endemic amongst refugees in Jordan. In Amman I met ten year-old Bashir who is the sole

bread-winner for his family of six. His father was injured when a bomb blew up their house in Syria and with two severely disabled young brothers and an older brother with arthritis, he is the only one who can work. He sells vegetables from 8am until 10pm every day outside the supermarket opposite their apartment. Bashir was proud to support his family, but he should be in school. Internal displacement forced most children out of formal schooling in Syria, but schools in Amman are already oversubscribed. With no cash to travel, children cannot access schools elsewhere. But undoubtedly the main barrier to school for most children is the need to earn the money to pay the rent.

*JRS Jordan's Rueena Diaa with a Syrian family*



Against this story of struggle, I also saw energy and hope. This was apparent in JRS's educational project in al-Ashrafyeh. It provides classes in computing and English and is a point of social contact for hundreds of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan. It is hard to put a finger on what was so special about this project. Perhaps it is the mix of volunteers and paid staff, many of whom are refugees themselves. It may be the stability and routine that the space provides; the friendly welcome for children and their parents. Real friendships flourish there - ones that extend across national and religious barriers - and infectious laughter.

Since returning, I have raised issues around the coordination of aid on the ground with the International Development Secretary. I am concerned about the implications for Syrians if surrounding countries further restrict border crossings to refugees. There is an urgent need for EU countries to offer protection and to resettle refugees in Europe. NGOs and the UN must financially support families so that children can go to school. But what abides in my mind more clearly is something of the spirit of the refugees themselves - particularly the women who I met. There is a resilience to them that is much richer and deeper than rudimentary survival against the odds. There is something else - an enthusiasm for life and a hope of something better. It is that hope and energy that we must nurture, because one day they will need to rebuild their broken country. And in the meantime, they have much to give to anyone who is willing to journey with them.

# Noticeboard

## CLC Holiday

at the Jesuit House, Barmouth, Wales

28 June - 5 July

The decision has been taken that, as a result of the recent Retreat Survey, we will not be offering a week-long Retreat next year. This means that we can use the facility for another venture.

So we are going to have a shared holiday with possibly another gathering or course. Cost not more than about £150 per person for the week! **Please book your place or express your interest NOW.** We do need to know numbers by the end of January.

Dates 28 June - 5 July 2014

[info@clcew.org.uk](mailto:info@clcew.org.uk) or 01926428635

## A Rome Experience 2014

23 -26 May

Those of us who went to Rome to celebrate our 450 years were thrilled with the experience. Alan Harrison SJ has offered to repeat his 'guided tour' of the Ignatian sites in 2014. **Would you be interested?** Please book your place NOW.

Dates: May 23-24-25-26 2014

Express interest for further information from:

[info@clcew.org.uk](mailto:info@clcew.org.uk) or 01926428635

## HELP WITH RESOURCES

Each month we are sharing ideas to expand our horizons, collaborate and help us to grow in faith. Please send us your ideas.

Recommended by Monica Francomb— to reflect on the recent Papal Apostolic Exhortation

This link is for the Vatican information service—which has an imbedded link for a full PDF document and a summary of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel" (Evangelii Gaudium)

<http://visnews-en.blogspot.co.uk/>

Then look in the Archive for 26th November to find the summary.

Below is a link to 'Focus' a website for American Catholic Students—giving a summary of the Papal document— in easy stages

<http://www.focus.org?blog/posts/evangelii-guadium-summary-pope-francis.html>

Send your suggestions to  
[jenarmstrong@talktalk.net](mailto:jenarmstrong@talktalk.net)/01926 885347

## CALENDAR 2014

15 JANUARY CLC Information Evening Mount Street

15 FEBRUARY Midlands Regional Team Meeting  
St Peter's, Leamington Spa . Start 10.30 am.

22/23 FEBRUARY Extended National Team Meeting  
Handsworth, Birmingham

15 MARCH Midlands Regional Day  
St Peter's, Leamington Spa

22 MARCH North West Regional Day, Loyola Hall, L35 6NZ

10 MAY National Team Meeting venue tbc

23/26 MAY Rome Ignatian Experience

20/22 JUNE National Assembly, High Leigh, Herts.

28 JUNE—5 JULY Barmouth Holiday

13 SEPTEMBER National Team Meeting venue tbc

22 NOVEMBER National Team Meeting venue tbc

## CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

Inspired by St Ignatius Loyola and his Spiritual Exercises, CLC is a lay organisation, a world community of small groups of 4-10 people, helping members from all walks of life to integrate prayer and action in daily life, to respond more fully to God's loving desire for them.

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