



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

FOCUS

INTO THE WILDERNESS – A LENTEN JOURNEY

I have been reflecting on my preparation for Lent, and the words ‘The Spirit drove Him into the desert’ from Mark’s gospel have been foremost in my mind for the last few weeks.

So, I am going into the wilderness with Jesus as my guide. I wonder what I will learn there?

This is a lonely place, an inhospitable place, where few of my resources are available. My life skills, honed over so many years: house-keeping, computer competence, prayer guiding experience, baby rearing, bringing up family, cooking, sewing, decorating, gardening – none of these can serve me in the desert space that I am now walking in.

In his writings, St Paul tells us about the many gifts that God lavishes upon each one of us and stresses that these are tools for building up and supporting the community. (1 Cor 12:7) I can see how the skills I have been using till now have served this purpose, but now that I am less able, less mobile, and not free to go out and about in the same way, what skills can I now find in myself? I have some experience in meditative prayer and contemplation gained in many retreats over the past 25 years. These were gifts to use in deepening my life in the Spirit. Perhaps these are the tools for a journey in the desert of Lent?

I feel at a loss in this new world of solitude.

I have come to depend much more on our regular CLC meetings to keep me thinking and praying, but somehow there is a missing piece in my jigsaw. I feel like the blind man who stood at the road side calling to Jesus ‘Help me, Lord’. So the first task is to hold out my hand to Jesus and ask his guidance in the wilderness.

I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the wonderful world around me: the trees, flowers, sky, wind, the people, birds, all the glory of God’s creation, and these reflections strengthen me and give me joy. Perhaps resting

in the world and being constantly amazed by all the beauty and grace is also what I can learn in the desert? As I write I can recognise the temptations to darkness, defeat, and death – and I am suddenly understanding what is needed for this part of my journey – I need to hand all to God –

‘Take, Lord, receive all I have and possess, you have given all to me, now I return it – do with me what You will.’

I remember the shout of astonishment and joy that I experienced at the end of my long retreat (the earlier desert experience!) and I am filled once again with amazed delight in God’s love.

In this journey I have realised that all I have to do is to be open to what God wishes to show me, what the Spirit is showing me, and to understand that the work is God’s work. There is no need to be anxious and afraid – He will guide me, show me what to do, how to love and serve Him wherever I am in my life. What joy is this, how wonderful is the Lord.



Hilary Beck, Prescott CLC

A new World CLC Secretary

After a long process of deliberation and discernment, The World ExCo has selected a new Executive Secretary for World CLC. The couple selected for this post are **Alwin and Rojean Macalalad, from the Philippines.**

Mauricio López, CLC World President and Edel Churu Vice President write...

"12 applications were received in total - surely a sign of the Lord's blessings on our world community! Members of the World ExCo conducted skype interviews with each of these candidates and, where necessary, requested further written information. This was a grace-filled process for both the candidates and the ExCo. It made us more aware of the richness in our world community and strengthened our own sense of commitment. For the ExCo, the whole selection process was a time of communal discernment which left us deeply consoled.

We thank all the candidates for their generous self-offering and continue to count on their talents and availability for different tasks in the future.



We offer a warm welcome to Alwin and Rojean and their little daughter Aerae. We also express our heartfelt thanks to the current Executive Secretary, Franklin Ibáñez and Sofía Montanez who will continue in office till the new couple arrives and officially takes over. Franklin and Sofia have brought great passion and dedication to this work and we owe them a deep debt of gratitude."

Please remember Alwin and Rojean and Franklin and Sofía with our prayers and best wishes.

CLC Syrian Solidarity Fund final report

In the October FOCUS we told you about this fund that was a response by our delegates at the World Assembly in Lebanon, who were very moved to hear the personal accounts from CLC members in Syria and Egypt. They said "Our hearts were deeply saddened by their stories of suffering and forced migration due to the violence in their countries, as well as by the recent chemical weapons attacks. Despite all of this suffering, CLC members do their best to use skills to help other people, eg. supporting refugee work, helping in crisis centres and sharing food with neighbours."

Our world CLC community therefore set up this **CLC Syrian Solidarity Fund**. These funds were to be dedicated to support projects proposed by CLC Syria. The funds would be dispatched only when there was a clear proposal for their use.

CLC England and Wales have collected a total of £1763, which, together with Gift Aid to be reclaimed of £317.50, makes a total of **£2080.50** for our contribution. This has now been transferred to World CLC.

Today, in total, \$15,000 (£9000) has already been sent to CLC in Syria and the purpose of that was for some relief work using a methodology called **The Leaven in the Dough**. It means it has been distributed to grassroots CLC members, about 180, in Aleppo, Damascus, Homs and Lebanon to use the money according to his/her

personal discernment and they would report later about how they used it. **This has the advantage of touching someone who none can identify previously and focus on urgent needs.**

In the practice, some members decided to help other families or individuals. In Damascus members identified poor families who were abandoned and gave them clothes, food, etc. Other members have helped poor families and individuals who needed medicines. Our Syrian members who are in Lebanon helped refugees there with basic needs.

On the other hand, some members used it for their own needs. Some paid for the rent of their houses and/or school expenses (clothes, supplies, etc). In Aleppo, many members used it to pay for fuel, which was most needed in winter and the price had increased. Also six members used it to pay their debts because they are unemployed.

Other funds supported one school in Aleppo: "*Espace du Ciel*". Our members there have identified this school as doing amazing work to support poor children to continue their education in times of war, especially as this school does not receive external support.

Our thanks go to everyone who contributed and made this possible.

CVX France is organising an international day in Paris, Saturday, April 26, 2014 to share the experience of the World Assembly and look for ways to live more as a global community (sharing experiences, stories, brainstorming....) They hope for companions from other communities to attend. If you may be interested, please contact anne.lemant@free.fr



International Hiking Retreat in the French Alps!

- organised from the St Hugues Centre, a CLC Centre for Ignatian spirituality
- discover several mountain chains
- an international group
- walking with God with reflection and sharing in French and English
- August 23rd-30th 2014
- you need to be in shape!
- you need to speak either French or English fluently, and a bit of the other language.

Contact:

administrator@clcew.org.uk



National Assembly June 20-22 2014 High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts. EN11 8SG

The National Assembly is an annual weekend gathering for the CLC community in England and Wales. It is an opportunity:

- to meet other CLC members
- to learn more about Ignatian spirituality and the CLC way of life
- to gain a broader perspective of CLC nationally and worldwide
- for listening, private prayer, reflection and small group sharing
- to relax, and enjoy full board at a reasonable price in beautiful surroundings.

The Assembly is open to all CLC members and anyone interested in Ignatian spirituality or CLC. The theme of the assembly is "From our Roots to our Frontiers" echoing our World

Assembly in Lebanon. The Annual General Meeting and election of national officers will also take place.

The cost of the weekend is £150 or £130 for those on low income. The rate for day delegates is £45 for Sat only, £70 for Sat and Sun (no room).

We do not want cost to prevent anyone from attending and bursaries are available. We especially welcome families and can provide a discounted rate. Please contact us to enquire.

High Leigh Conference centre is easily accessible by rail and road. Arrivals are from 4pm on Friday 20 June (programme starts 7pm) and the Assembly will finish after lunch on Sunday 22 June.

To book, download a form from the website or contact Pat Fitzpatrick patfitz60@btinternet.com or call 01326 316566 to get a printed copy. If you can help with the assembly in any way, please contact Shola Adegoroye on 07727 898411 or email sholaadegoroye@yahoo.co.uk

Spiritual Conversation

M looks after an adult with autism. We meet for coffee every 2/3 weeks in one of her respite time slots. When we first met we immediately 'chimed'. We got on well and we soon discovered that we were able to share faith and life. We call this spiritual conversation. It's such a delight when you find someone with whom you are comfortable, someone who understands where you are coming from. We can listen to each other and respond to each other in a spiritual context. We have spiritual conversations.

So how is this different from 'ordinary' conversations? We really listen to each other in that loving way that Ignatius suggests. We respond sympathetically from our own experience and we don't tell each other what we should do. We talk about anything and everything, two Ignatian people finding God in all things.

Do you find that you feel very

comfortable with some people? I can have spiritual conversations with some friends, with others it just doesn't seem to happen. It's strange how one often knows quite quickly that you can have a spiritual conversation with someone. The person may be a friend or even sometimes a complete stranger. M had a conversation with a woman on the bus and was able to share quite simply a little about her Christian life.

We are both older. We have shared conversations about slowing down, having less energy, moving from doing to being. Together we discerned a ministry of encounter. There is time to be more aware of others and to engage with them. We try to keep our spirit eyes and ears open and because we are less time pressured we can take time with people. A friendly word to the woman on the checkout perhaps commenting on her hard work and

asking when she will get her break. In the street time to listen carefully to a distressed acquaintance. These encounters may lead to spiritual conversation.



We discovered that we are following in Ignatius' footsteps. In his Autobiography we read of his response to the Dominicans: 'We do not preach but we do speak familiarly of spiritual things with some people, as one does after dinner, with those who invite us'. There's much more in Thomas H Clancy SJ's book *The Conversational Word of God*.

Judith Collin, Bethany, Yate

Noticeboard

NORTH WEST REGION WORLD CLC DAY

at Loyola Hall, for the last time!

Memories and New Beginnings

Saturday 22nd March, 10am for 10.30am start till 4pm

Cost £10 (tbc). Please bring food for a shared lunch

Contact Tony and Betsy Jones 01706 845164

tonyvjones@ntlworld.com

MIDLANDS REGION WORLD CLC DAY

CLC and the Family

with Br. Alan Harrison SJ

Saturday 22nd March, 10am for 10.30am start

St. Peter's, Dormer Place, Leamington Spa, CV32 5AA

Mass 4pm celebrated by Fr. Simon Bishop SJ

Cost £7. Please bring food for a shared lunch

and home-made produce/groceries for Bring & Buy

Contact Peter & Margaret Dimambro 01926 428399

mdimambro@hotmail.co.uk

INTERESTED IN WRITING

and EARNING A FEW POUNDS?

**THE PIONEER - AN IRISH JESUIT PUBLICATION SINCE 1948
ARE SEEKING WRITERS ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS.**

Articles on Religion and spirituality, history, general knowledge, science, nature, health and fitness and other subjects all welcome.

Contact : pioneerroisin@jesuit.ie

HELP WITH RESOURCES

Recommended by Maria Evans—as an inspirational exploration of Ignation spirituality either for personal use or as material for a group.

'Rooted in Love' by Margaret Blackie

Available on Amazon either as paperback or ebook

Or app on ipad or iphone as 'Peace Quest'

More ideas please to:

jenarmstrong@talktalk.net / 01926 885347

A Rome Experience 2014

Friday 23 - Monday 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.

Please book your place NOW.

Dates: May 23-24-25-26 2014

Express interest for further information from:

info@clcew.org.uk or 01926 428635

CLC Holiday

at the Jesuit House, Barmouth, Wales

Saturday 28 June - 5 July

We are having a shared holiday with the possibility for other meetings during the week. We can arrange some spiritual input, too.

Cost around £175 per person for the week!

Please book your place or express your interest NOW.

info@clcew.org.uk or 01926 428635

CLC TREASURER

Brian Austin's term as Treasurer ends at the AGM in June. He has written up the job in detail and invites people to think whether they could consider the role – could also be a job share.

Contact treasurer@clcew.org.uk /01926 428635

C A L E N D A R 2 0 1 4

22 MARCH	Midlands Regional Day, 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 (see above)
20/22 JUNE	National Assembly, High Leigh, Herts.
28 JUNE - 5 JULY	Barmouth Holiday (see above)
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.

Address for all correspondence, including subscriptions and membership, contributions to FOCUS and orders for literature:

CLC England & Wales: 114 Mount St, London W1K 3A

email: info@clcew.org.uk

website: www.clcew.org.uk

World CLC: www.cvx-clc.net

National President: Monica Francomb, tel: 0151 270 2128 email: president@clcew.org.uk

National Chaplain: Br Alan Harrison SJ, tel: 020 7493 7811 email: alanh46@gmail.com

CLC Treasurer: Brian Austin tel: 01926 428635 email: treasurer@clcew.org.uk

Administrator: Admin Team: administrator@clcew.org.uk

The annual subscription for Focus only (non-members) is £10 for postal copy or £5 for e-FOCUS

Christian Life Community is a Registered Charity, Number 1056891

Next FOCUS

Deadline

Please send

contributions for the next FOCUS

to

ubuckley@gmail.com

by **Monday 24 March**