



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

FOCUS

Reflections from Silence

April 2013

A mere stripling of sixty, I am a chai -wallah and general factotum to the ladies of the Prescott CLC in Merseyside.

The following thoughts came to me in a small chapel set aside for silent prayer in Hexham Abbey. The feelings were so powerful that I scribbled them down on a piece of paper as soon as I left the Abbey. I shared them with the other members of the CLC group I attend. Hilary Beck asked me to share them with you.

Graces from God pour down on me like a gentle rain from heaven. Eagerly I cup my hands to catch each life-renewing drop. I am mistaken in trying to just preserve this pool of life in my hands, for it will seep away and be no more. Instead like a thirsty man, finding water in the desert, I must take it to my lips and gulp it down. Only then will this living water become part of me. Only then will it renew and refresh me. Only then will Christ be there in me for others; others near to me, and others far away. Graces from God pour down on me and I must cup them in my hands and drink down every drop I can.

Upon reading these words later, I knew that the starting point of my prayer had been thanking God for all the graces and blessings I receive, but which I too often take for granted. I am fortunate enough that I can attend Mass or a Eucharistic Service nearly every day of the week. These opportunities for the reception of grace are manifold and, on one level, obvious. I appreciate that graces from God abound in our encounters with others in our everyday lives away from the confines of religious services and church buildings. I think God was dropping me a gentle hint that maybe I, and I suspect others, can focus on and treasure the obvious forms of the transmission of graces in liturgical settings, whilst seeing these as wondrous ends in themselves rather than a beginning, an impetus for change in our own lives and for going out and being Christ for others and acknowledging and respecting the Christ in them.

In his book, *The Transforming Power of Grace*, Thomas C. Oden says: "Grace is God's way of empowering the bound will and healing the suffering spirit", and it is with this quotation, from a book I must admit I have not yet

read, that I share one last experience of God's grace in my life which took place over 30 years ago and which strangely enough also took place in a church building.

I was a young assistant manager in a large town centre branch of a bank. Changes were rapid, customers were valued only for profit and I was constantly making decisions that went against the grain as a Christian. My lunch hours were curtailed and constantly interrupted by

staff asking for decisions. One particular day I was at the end of my tether and feeling pretty bad about myself.

I thought I had become someone I didn't like in carrying out the bank's dirty work, and at other times, stupid and worthless because I was struggling to cope with my workload. I decided to escape another interrupted lunch break and call into the Catholic Church across the road from my workplace. It was empty but open [as churches were in those days]. I knelt in a bench towards the back facing the altar. I tried to pray but just found myself staring at the altar, or rather at the cloth that was draped over it. It was so drab, a

dull murky looking brown. I thought how sad it looked, considering the miracle that took place atop it every day. It seemed to add to the gloom that oppressed me. Just then, on what had been an overcast day, a shaft of sunlight burst through the window and illuminated the front of the altar piece. It was transformed, it was gleaming and radiant. The gold and silver threads previously hidden in the shadows were now shown in all their splendour. I was suddenly struck by the thought that all my ideas about how useless and pathetic I was could be transformed if I just let the light of God shine into my life. I too could be special and splendid. In fact I realised that I was special to God already and he was just reminding me of the fact.

Now I'm just a chai-wallah and general factotum to the ladies of the Prescott CLC in Merseyside, but they, amongst others, help me to let God's light shine into my life.

Ken Fidler, Prescott CLC

The photo is the interior of Hexham Abbey



Closure of Loyola Hall

The British Province of the Society of Jesus has announced their intention to move to one residential retreat centre, based at St Beuno's North Wales and to close Loyola Hall on Merseyside from the end of April 2014.

In his letter about the decision, Fr Dermot Preston SJ emphasised that this was in no way a reflection on the standard of the ministry and work that the staff and team have been engaged in over the years, which he praised as being 'of the highest quality'. He explained that it rather reflected changes taking place outside Loyola Hall, and principally because fewer Jesuits were now available to provide a community and to direct more than one large retreat centre.

The decision was taken during a long and detailed consultation. In CLC's response, we noted the particular



resource Loyola has provided within the North West, and what a loss it will be within the region. We also reiterated our desire to work with the Jesuits to make the gift of the Spiritual Exercises more widely available and stressed our continued support for the Society in whatever decisions need to be taken to enable that.

The Provincial's intention is to develop a broader plan for Spirituality in the years to come - including greater emphasis on providing non-residential retreats, spiritual guidance and training from city centre bases. This provides a great opportunity for further SJ-CLC collaboration.

Please remember the Loyola Hall Team, Auxiliary Staff and the Jesuits in your prayers, at what will inevitably be a difficult time of transition for them.

Una Buckley, CLC President

Are you Hungry for change?

Hunger is the greatest scandal and the greatest challenge facing our generation. We produce enough food to feed the world – but 870,000,000 people, or one in eight, don't have enough to eat. The way that food is grown, sold and shared out is not working for the world's poorest people. But we do have the power to change this injustice and to tackle global hunger.

Since the UK will be hosting the G8 this year (June 17/18), it's a crucial opportunity to work together to call for more to be done to end the global food crisis. That's why nearly 100 leading charities, including CAFOD, Christian Aid and Oxfam, want to make 2013 the beginning of the end of the global hunger crisis. Recently a new campaign was launched called '**Enough Food for Everyone IF ...**'. Hopefully you have heard about this already.

CAFOD has its own '**Hungry for Change**' campaign, alongside 'Enough Food For Everyone IF', so do read more about this vital topic of food and hunger - there's plenty of information on the [CAFOD website](#)

However, it must be noted that **War on Want** and others have decided they cannot sign up to the IF campaign, because they see the G8 as part of the problem rather than being able to supply the solution and they regret that the IF campaign has not been developed with the involvement of world farmers' movements! Read more at [War on Want](#)



Should CLC be involved?

That is for us to discern for ourselves! Is this something that I, or we as a group, could be, or should be, involved with? Should we initiate action or support activities that are already happening? Is our own parish doing anything?

World CLC is very keen that CLC groups around the world are more involved in changing unjust structures in society in this way, which they refer to as 'advocacy' (although we tend call it 'campaigning' here) and our General Principles say: "...We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor ..." (GP4)

Over to you!

Brian Austin, Leamington Spa CLC



Retreats Questionnaire

Hopefully you will have received the questionnaire emailed/posted out over the past month.

The deadline for response is:

6 April

If you would like to complete it online please go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/CLC-retreats

An example of CLC - Jesuit collaboration

Jesuit Support for Social Mission

Almost every Saturday since 2009 the Salvation Army Drop-In centre here in Leamington Spa has opened its doors to 20 or more homeless and vulnerably housed people in addition to the provision during the week. Here food, warmth, opportunities for showering and washing clothes, but most of all, friendship and advice are available, together with activities such as gardening, cooking and a meal together.

The '**Saturday Friendship Group**', which is a collaboration between our Parish and the Salvation Army, was launched after Justice and Peace in the parish encountered a distressed man left outside in the cold, an experience which can only be described as a 'Call'. It took a whole year to get things going, especially as we were so inexperienced and ignorant of the lives of homeless people. We prayed and discerned, set up a Forum during Poverty and Homelessness Week and took it from there. Everything fell into place with the young Salvation Army Drop-in manager agreeing to manage Saturdays and an Ecumenical Planning team was set up to oversee the project.



Now came the challenge. How were we going to finance the Saturday, even with volunteers helping? A parish appeal launched us and we set about applying for grants. A CLC member from the South had previously suggested we apply to the **Jesuit Social Fund** for help and we decided to try this, the project being in harmony with the Society's preferential option for the poor. At that time 3 of us were CLC members and we had the support of Fr Tony Horan SJ and Fr Ron Darwen SJ. As a result we have received £6,000 over a period of 3 years and we cannot express our thanks enough. Without it we would have been very challenged indeed and now face the prospect of finding other sources of funding.

But the work goes on and the numbers of deprived people are increasing but we have more experience, so hopefully we will find the money needed. Now we have 5 CLC members and a further 6 members from the parish working as volunteers, not only on Saturday but also during the week, with others showing interest.

This support from the Jesuits seems to me an example of how the Society is prepared to help CLC and enable us to carry out our discerned mission and we are very appreciative and thankful. This is certainly an example of CLC -Jesuit collaboration.

Janice Austin, Leamington CLC

A Jesuit Pope - lowly but chosen

The Roman Catholic church has a new Pope, one who has spent his life walking in the footsteps of St Ignatius Loyola, on whose spirituality Christian Life Community is based.

Pope Francis has chosen the motto *Miserando atque eligendo*, meaning *lowly but chosen*; literally in Latin 'by having mercy, by choosing him'.

The motto, which the Pope first chose as a bishop in Argentina is taken from the homilies of the Venerable Bede, the 7th century English monk, on the call of Matthew: 'Jesus saw the tax collector and by having mercy chose him as an Apostle saying to him: Follow me.' This homily, which focuses on divine mercy and is reproduced in the Liturgy of the Hours on the Feast of Saint Matthew, has taken on special significance in the Pope's life and spiritual journey. In fact it was on the Feast of Saint Matthew in 1953 that the young 17 year-old Jorge Bergoglio was touched by the mercy of God and felt the call to religious life in the footsteps of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

Beyond the motto, the coat of arms has a blue field and is surmounted by the mitre and the papal keys. On the crest itself at the centre is the symbol of the Jesuits, a flaming sun with the three letters recalling the name and the salvific mission of Jesus.



Noticeboard

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2013



**Let's Celebrate Our CLC Journey!
Past Gifts, Present Blessings, Future hopes**
12th –14th July

The Hayes Conference Centre,
Swanwick , Derbyshire DE55 1AU

[Booking form on CLC website here](#)

or contact Debbie Cottam 01452 416987

deborahcottam@blueyonder.co.uk

Cost £150, Low income. £130 Non-residential £75
(financial assistance available)

Please send cheque and form to Debbie by
3rd May latest

PLEASE BOOK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
CLC Individually Guided Retreat
Barmouth, Wales

27 July—3 August 2013

Information from Pat Fitzpatrick

01326 316566/07407673686

Email patfitz60@btinternet.com

£275 totally inclusive for the week
(financial assistance available)



Towards a Prophetic Community

A new set of meeting plans

The set of six leaflets contained in this pack can be used either by individuals or by groups for prayer and reflection. They attempt to highlight the significance for all of us of the journey that the World Community has been making since the World Assembly in Italcia in 1998 to understand our identity as Christian Life Community. Obtainable from the address below.

C A L E N D A R 2 0 1 3 - 1 4

6-28 APRIL: CLC EUROPEAN PILGRIMAGE

19 APRIL: WORLD ASSEMBLY PREPARATION TEAM, Mount St.

20 APRIL: NATIONAL TEAM MEETING, London

27 APRIL: Formation-Retreat Team, Birmingham

24-27 MAY CLC VISIT TO ROME - 450 YEARS PILGRIMAGE

12-14 JULY

CLC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY & AGM, Hayes Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. 'Let's celebrate our CLC journey—past gifts, present blessings, future hopes'.

27 JULY - 3 AUGUST: Ignatian Individually Guided Retreat Barmouth, Wales

30 JULY - 8 AUGUST

WORLD ASSEMBLY of CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY, Lebanon

11-17 AUGUST: CLC HOLIDAY IN ROMANIA

21 SEPTEMBER, National Team Meeting

20 –22 JUNE 2014 National Assembly High Leigh , Herts.

CLC Roman Experience

A CLC Visit to the Ignatian Sites in Rome,

Friday 24th, Saturday 25th, Sunday 26th,

Monday 27th May

We have an **Information Sheet** about this
available from

clc@31cv311tp.freeserve.co.uk or mo-
bile 07989667106

**If you are interested in joining the
party, please let us know ASAP**



A WEEK LONG HOLIDAY IN TRANSYLVANIA 11–17 August 13.

ORGANISED BY ROMANIAN CLC

An invitation to all CLC members, interested friends and family to join them on a picturesque campsite and to enjoy an intimate encounter with God, through recreation, prayer, games and community .

Contact Magda Robu dusika@yahoo.com 0040743123464.

Boglarka Balazs Petz balazspetz@freemail.hu 0040744621806

Camp website www.protraditio.ro

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 3AH

email: info@clcew.org.uk **website:** www.clcew.org.uk **World CLC:** www.cvx-clc.net

National President: Una Buckley tel: 07816 754443 or 020 7831 5081 email: ubuckley@gmail.com

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

CLC Secretary: Monica Francomb, tel: 0151 270 2128 email: secretary@clcew.org.uk

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

Administrator: David Formosa: CLC 114 Mount Street, London W1K 3AH administrator@clcew.org.uk

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

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by 22 APRIL**