



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

# FOCUS

## Gratitude Joy and Love

Another National Assembly, 2013. I've been to a few. My first was 16 years ago, when Pat Fitzpatrick was elected President. I was a very new CLC'er and unsure about the whole thing. I discovered a great community. I've known four wonderful and generous presidents Pat, Rita, Evelyne Una. I know the Holy Spirit will give us another. As I travelled towards Swanwick I felt again that attraction, that excitement when God is calling and gratitude for all the gifts received through CLC, especially for the people in the community. So much love and joy. I prayed for everyone to have safe journeys, for the Midlands team and for the many people who have helped me on my journey.

450 years, how fresh the message from Ignatius is for today. Brother Alan gave an eloquent and succinct account of the history of CLC from Jean Leunis in 1563 to the present day. I felt inspired by the men and women who are part of that history.

I could see God's hand at work. I felt re-invigorated by the reminder of the community of The Trinity and how I am invited to be part of that community. For me the wonderful and diverse symbols of our various communities said so much more than words. Our Apostolic Lay Community feels so right for this time and collaborative ministry with the Jesuits is surely the way forward. Brother Alan and all the Ecclesial Assistants I've had the privilege to know have been real gifts from the Jesuits. I'm particularly grateful to Cos (Robert Costello, SJ), who set me 'free to fly'.

Saturday morning's prayer focused my thoughts on Mary. I was glad to have this simplicity. There was a richness of material to pray on. Mary pondered things in her heart. This reminded me to go slowly and meditate on one thing at a time. I found myself praying with Pedro Arrupe's words (paraphrased) *see everything with new eyes, read the signs of the times, relish what is God's, communicating that to others*. I was led to this by the wonderful open and generous sharing from Katherine, Joyce, Shola and Chris. Four unique people, four individual journeys, which for me illustrated just how much God loves each one of us in a way that is particular to each person. I have my own wonderful experience of walking

with a loving God. So what is my response to such love? How can I show my love, how can I serve?

Now confession time: with the heat and granny duty for the previous ten days, I slept through the workshops. Never mind; trust in Psalm 127. The feed back from the groups illustrated the talents, depths and originality of CLC'ers. I hope the material on the flip charts will be available to the Community. ALL GOOD STUFF!

I was excited by the 'how' of CLC becoming more visible and by looking to spread Ignatian Spirituality outside the local community. Spiritual Conversation, bring it on! It's such a joy to welcome so many younger CLC'ers. What a sensible idea to approach people when there are jobs that need doing as there are so many more of us than the 50 or so who can be at the assembly. Practical, like Ignatius.

There was a deep peace and quiet joy in the Mass we celebrated with Bishop Brian. There was a more exuberant joy in the evening 'partying', ably compered by Kathy Moore. What a blessing, to laugh with friends.

The business of the AGM was despatched quickly and efficiently. Gratitude for the people who can make these things work; gratitude for Una's generosity and for Monica who will be taking on the role of president; gratitude for the quiet efficiency of the Midlands team.

I found the commissioning of our delegates for the World Assembly moving. The symbol of the diamond that our delegates were to take, came from the Fatima treasure chest and was an inspired choice. I pray that CLC England and Wales will continue to sparkle from our depths sending God's light out to those around us.

As thoughts began to turn towards farewells I knew that I would have much to reflect on in the coming days and weeks. What have I received, what have I discovered, what will I take away? I have received nourishment for my spirit, love and friendship. I take this with me, wondering am I gratefully joyful or joyfully grateful? Perhaps both and over everything is love.

*Judith Collin, Bethany CLC*



## Many Blessings

Judy Makin and Veronica Grant share their reflections on the recent Barmouth retreat, shared with Anne Shelley, Fiona Craven, Fr Dushan Croos SJ, Peter and Margaret Dimambro, Veronica Valdez, Rita McManus, Jacqui Gill and others.

### Many Blessings

Blessed by the sun

Blessed by the rain

Blessed by good food

And blessed by good rest.



Blessed by a guide

So thoughtful and prayerful.



Blessed by a priest

Inspiring and healing.

Blessed by the sea

Blessed by silent mountain



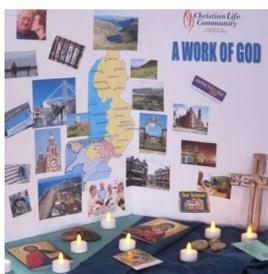
Blessed by the Father, Son and Spirit

In a Blessed Silence

Barmouth 2013, 'A good place to be'

*Judu Makin and Veronica Grant*

## Thank You!



A **BIG** Thank You.....from Peter and Margaret to all who attended this year's National Assembly and especially those who so ably contributed to the running of the weekend: those who gave input, the leaders of the Way Ahead and small sharing groups, Bishop Brian Noble for celebrating

Mass and participating in the weekend, Kathy our compère and all those who entertained us! Finally, many thanks to our brilliant planning team, without whom the Assembly would not have happened.

Thank you to those who completed feedback sheets. Our task is to summarise them as they will help with future Assemblies. There is always room for new ideas, improvement and growth.

If anyone would like a copy of the prayer material used at the Assembly, and/or Brother Alan's summary of CLC history, email [mdimambro@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mdimambro@hotmail.co.uk)

*Peter and Margaret Dimambro, Midlands Regional Reps*

## MY PRAYER LIFE (A JOURNEY)



When I was a child, my prayer time was at night in bed. Praying for me was a private matter.

I don't think I prayed with my parents, but they made sure I went to Mass on Sunday morning and in the afternoon to the Catechism instruction.

I learned all the prayers of the Church; Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, plus praying intercessory prayers for the souls in purgatory, for the Pope, the priests, the sick, for my family etc.

That was what was expected of me as a good Catholic. God was in Heaven and I was on earth. Therefore there was a distance between God and me.

When I was a teenager at High school, my prayer time became erratic and like all teenagers, I was questioning everything with my R.E. professor. Of course I thought I was always right!!

The years passed and after teaching for five years, I married an English man and came to live in England.

Eventually I had four daughters and my prayer time took a different format and timing.

We went to mass together as a family and I realised then that churchgoing in England was very different to that in Italy. I got involved in many of the Church's activities and different groups.

When the Charismatic Renewal started after Vatican II, I joined it. I thought that I was in my element, it was lively and that was what I needed at the time. Eventually a friend of mine asked me to 'COME AND SEE' a group which at the time was called Christian Life Movement and is now CLC.

After struggling with the meetings for about three years, I finally knew for certain that this was for me.

I have now been in CLC since 1971 and during those years, I have meditated, evaluated, contemplated and imagined etc. I have had one day retreats, weekend retreats, silent retreats and spiritual exercises.

I am now 93 years old and I realise now that gradually my prayer time resembles that of my childhood; I pray at night when I go to bed, I say the prayer of the Church, Our Father, Hail Mary etc; but with one difference.

Now I KNOW that I am aware that God is with me at all times and there is no more distance between Him and me.

*Anna Browning*

*As part of our 450 year celebrations, you are invited to share your personal Journey in CLC.*

## “Ask not for understanding but for Fire...”

*Christine Hobden, A CLC Member from Oxford University Chaplaincy writes about an event they hosted earlier this year.*

The Newman Society: The Oxford University Catholic Society was privileged to host Sr Helen Prejean CSJ as the speaker for their St Thomas More Lecture on the 25th May. Sr Helen is a leading anti-death penalty advocate in the United States, and is most well known for her book, *Dead Man Walking*. The book was made into the same titled film starring Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon. The evening included a beautiful mass, the talk, a drinks reception and a wonderful dinner cooked by the Newman Society committee.

Sr Helen spoke for just over an hour and a half to a captivated crowd. The only movement was the occasional attempt to find a tissue to wipe away a tear as we were taken on an emotional journey. The title of the talk was “Ask not for understanding but for the fire”: my journey into the life of Christ’.

And indeed the most remarkable aspect of the talk was the way in which she drew us into her story: from a privileged Catholic childhood where she had not met any poor people beyond those who worked in her house, to a life living among, and campaigning for, the marginalised; walking alongside those on death row. She opened our eyes to not only how vital, but how possible, this journey is with the grace of God.

Often when we think of the pursuit of justice we think in terms of harsh words like ‘fight’ and ‘battle’, and in many ways the road to justice is one that requires strength and resilience. But what really struck me was that Sr Helen’s talk was so completely about the pursuit of justice but told as a story about love, grace and dialogue. She spoke of how we can only act out of guilt or fear or anger for so long; the only sustainable inspiration for our actions is love. And when we come to act, we need to remember ‘not to step out in front of grace.’ The idea of grace was compared to the locks she had seen that day at Iffley in Oxfordshire. The slow filling up of the water until it was possible for the boat to move on. This image really struck me: it illustrated to me the ways in which we need to trust each step in the journey as the grace that is preparing us for something further along. Not all we do will be great or grand, but the rising of grace enables us to act when opportunities arise to step up to the call of the gospel: a message that is clear in Sr Helen’s story.

Sr Helen speaks of her unwillingness to become a “justicey nun” and how it was only through the post Vatican II movements within her own order that she came to really understand the gospel for the first time. She heard the message that Jesus came to bring the good news to the poor, and integral to the message was that they would be poor no more. Ignited by this message she moved to a marginalised area and gave adult education classes. She agreed on a whim to write to an inmate on death row, never imagining that she would ultimately witness his death. And as she stayed with

him through the last hours and minutes of his life, she was supported entirely by grace. It was this experience that lit a fire in her heart and redirected her life toward this mission. She believes that if people were able to witness executions they would not support them, and so while they are unable to observe these deaths she will witness to the injustice, and walk alongside those who suffer.

Another image that has stayed with me is that of the two arms of the cross. Sr Helen refers to the challenge of her work as being stretched out between the families of the victims and the inmates of death row. While she admits she made mistakes along the way, she has worked to resolve this tension and be there for both groups who need her support. The message is an important one I think. Pursuing justice and attempting to love those who need it most is often filled with tensions - it is not straightforward and we need to work hard to ensure we are treating all involved with love and respect. In order to do this it is vital that we talk to each other. This theme of dialogue was continued in Sr Helen’s thoughts on motivating others to join this journey. In all matters of justice it is important that those who have come close to it, witnessed or experienced injustice, are able to speak about it so that we can learn from each other, and rise together to go forward as a church.

Sr Helen is an inspiration; her story speaks of complete trust in the grace of God, a life lived out of love and a desire to communicate her passion to others.



### Peter

The Lord had abandoned me, and I him  
I was left in darkness.  
But in the morning I heard His call  
To struggle further to reach Him  
Where he stood upon the sea.  
I tried but failed, and was helplessly lost  
But I felt His hand, strong and firm,  
Raise me up.  
He lifted me out of the darkness  
And set me upon the sea.  
I trod upon it and it did not yield to my step.  
Firm in faith, helped by my Lord,  
I walked with Him across the sea  
To a safe place of absolute calm



*Althea Hayton*

## Noticeboard

### \*NEW— HELP WITH RESOURCES

Does your group have a tried and tested resource material that you could recommend to another group? Each month we hope to share ideas to expand our horizons, collaborate and help us to grow in faith. Please send us your ideas.

TO START — do try the Jesuit service [pray-as-you-go](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org). A daily Ignatian reflection for you to download and listen to wherever you are: [www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org).

The CLC publication 'Progressio' is now available electronically. It provides reflections on Justice from an Ignatian perspective in a world CLC context. [www.cvx-clc.net](http://www.cvx-clc.net)

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

### OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

The National Team is changing— giving fresh opportunities for service - could you give a few hours a month for a new challenge? Could you undertake a role such as National Secretary or as member of the Focus Team? Some computer skills and a willingness to get involved in helping the team is all you need! Please give it some consideration.

Support and training given.  
Contact: Brian Austin, Una Buckley or Monica Francomb

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL TEAM MEETING**  
Sunday 8th September 2p.m. – 4p.m.  
Loyola Hall L35 6NZ

**MIDLANDS REGIONAL TEAM MEETING**  
Saturday 14th September 10.30  
At St Peter's Church, Leamington Spa.

A warm welcome for lone members and reps from local groups

## MIDLANDS REGIONAL DAY

Thoughts from the World Assembly in Lebanon

By Monica Francomb

At the University Chaplaincy, Oxford.  
Saturday 19th October 10 a.m. – 4pm.  
Contact Margaret and Peter Dimambro  
[mdimambro@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:mdimambro@hotmail.co.uk) / 01926 428399

## NORTH WEST REGIONAL DAY

Feedback from the World Assembly  
in the Lebanon

By Brother Alan Harrison and Monica Francomb

Saturday 9th November Loyola Hall L35 6NZ  
Tea/coffee 10 a.m. Start 10.30 - 4 p.m.  
Please bring food for a shared lunch and books for  
Bring and Buy. Suggested donation £10.  
Contact Kathryn Lydon 0151 733 2806.

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

8 SEPTEMBER	North West Regional Team meeting, Loyola Hall
14 SEPTEMBER	10.30 a.m. Midlands Regional Team Meeting St Peter's Leamington Spa
21 SEPTEMBER,	Accompaniers and Group Guides Meeting Manresa House, Birmingham.
21 SEPTEMBER	Le Group Walk by train from London. 9 miles.
25 SEPTEMBER	CLC Information evening 7.30 p.m. Mount Street
28 SEPTEMBER	National Team Meeting Mount Street
19 OCTOBER	Midlands Regional Day at Oxford Uni Chaplaincy
26 OCTOBER	National Formation Team meeting Manresa House
9 NOVEMBER	North West Regional Day at Loyola Hall
30th November	National Team Meeting Manresa House
22nd /23rd February	Extended National Team Meeting, Handsworth, Birmingham
20th/22nd June 2014	National Assembly, High Leigh, Herts.

### 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:

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

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