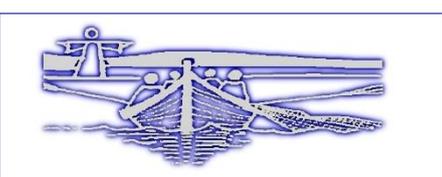
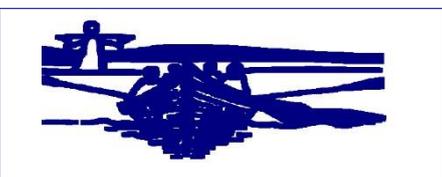
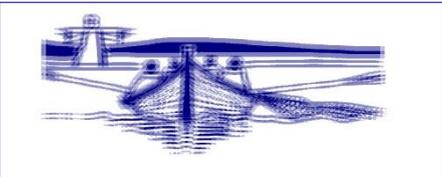
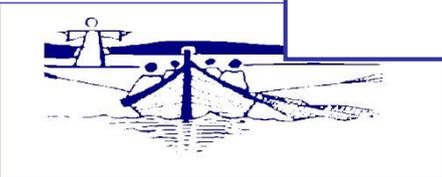
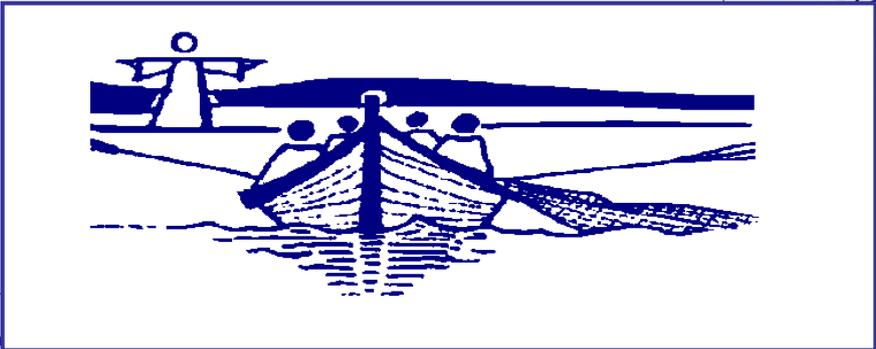
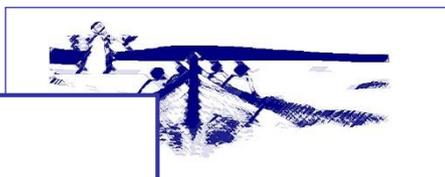
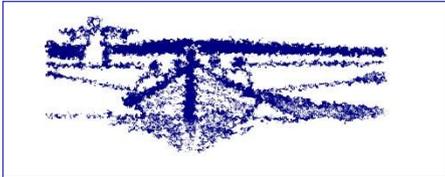
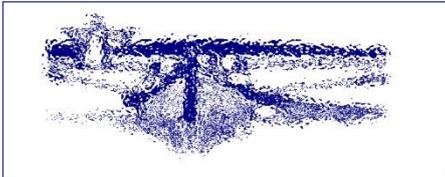


CLC COMMITMENTS

TEMPORARY – PERMANENT



handbook

Formation Team CLC-Portugal
October 2006

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Introduction

The CLC recent evolution as an apostolic community – “apostolic body”, in the designation of Nairobi 2003 – has given more and more relevance to the meaning of CLC Commitment. The public expression of the Commitment usually carries with it a greater consciousness of CLC identity and a greater involvement with the apostolic mission and in the life of the Community.

Although we may see a much clear pertinence of the Commitment nowadays, in the context of the apostolic community CLC wants to become, the first reference to Commitment dates from the approval of the first General Principles, in 1967¹. Already at the beginning of its regeneration, the CLC – at that time still a federation of communities – thought it crucial to underline the bond tying each member to the whole, through a certain way of life. Today, it continues to specifically consecrate a chapter (GP 10) to the value of that bond.

Along its history, CLC went on creating and identifying a path of growth in which the desire to make the Commitment has been recognised, in the experience of many, as a sign and an incentive for a growing adhesion to the CLC way of life. It’s the role of the Community to help and encourage all to a permanent development, respecting, however, the calling experience and the kind of response each one feels moved to give.

Having as background this long journey of CLC as a community more and more focused on mission, it seemed fit to us, to present the concept of the Commitment, in its many angles, in a Handbook expressly formulated for that purpose.

The idea to offer a practical and specific document about the Commitment to the Community emerged in the sequence of the One-Day CLC Meeting 2006 (January, Cernache), which was dedicated to this subject. The Meeting was a moment of formation but also an opportunity to listen to the general feeling of the enlarged Community, their desires and their anxieties on this subject. It brought to the surface the great questions the Commitment rises, the horizons it opens, the boundaries it sets. Thus, after reflexion on the intensity of that moment lived in Community, the Formation Team produced the present document which, we hope, may clarify and illuminate the way for those who feel called to deepen their belonging to, and their way of being, CLC. It intends to establish the conditions to welcome, with greater personal and communitarian fruits, the celebration of the Commitments by those who feel a calling to do so publicly.

Why does it make sense to talk about CLC Commitment?

The very expression “apostolic body” contains in itself the perception of union, link, and bond, that is to say, “commitment”. We are a “body” as long as we are, not only united, but above all *committed* by the same spirituality, by the same way of proceeding, by the same ideals and by a common mission. “A body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body” (1 Cor 12, 12) says St. Paul, adding further: “There are different

¹ GP of 1967, approved by Paul VI in 1968 and confirmed in 1971, n. 10: “Admission includes commitment to this way of life and to membership in a particular group. To give candidates, especially the young, time to grow in understanding their vocation, all ordinarily make a temporary commitment which can be renewed. Permanent commitment is made only after a suitable period of time when the candidate has given proof of satisfaction” – *Progressio* 1968-2, p. 72. The current *General Principles*, revised from those of 1967, were approved in 1990.

kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.” (1 Cor 12, 4-6).

We are united in this apostolic body by many affinities and things we share in common, but, fundamentally, one belongs and desires to belong to it because, at the beginning, before all else, there is a personal call from God to the person each one of us is, there is a personal challenge from God to each one of us: “I call you! Is it HERE that you want to serve me?”

Vocational Discernment

To discern over the importance of the Commitment in the scope of our CLC journey demands, therefore, a previous but crucial step, even if lengthy: vocational discernment. This is not an invitation addressed only to those called to consecrated life, but rather a process opened to all Christian willing to deepen their baptismal call, which yields immeasurable fruits: to be able to say who one is before God, to be able to assume clearly the reasons of one’s own faith, all that makes each one to be who he/she is as a Christian. This is to discover a vocation.

And to discover a vocation is also to understand where one is called to be actively Christian, the mission one is called upon to accomplish in this world in order to collaborate in the building of the Kingdom as a follower of Jesus. The discovery of the vocation opens the way to the mission and it’s in this binomial vocation / mission that the identity of each one as a Christian takes shape.

Particular vocation in the Church

The Church – community of the followers of the Resurrected Jesus Christ – is the first and largest community to which we, as Christians, belong; it’s our primordial community. Within the Church, many smaller communities have appeared, with their own identities, which, without overshadowing the whole, are an inexhaustible source of richness and diversity for the Church in its entirety.

CLC fulfils those requirements: it has a history, its own style, a way of life and its own language and spiritual pedagogy. Beyond the limit of each small local community, there is a vibrant group of people journeying through their life guided by the same principles and rooted in the same fruitful stump of Ignatian spirituality. All over the world, there is a wide network of people partaking the same way of life and sharing the conviction that CLC is their vocation; people for whom CLC is their privileged place within the Church, where they respond to the Lord’s call and from which they are sent in mission.

When anyone feels a strong personal identification with this path and senses a personal call to be part of this body, then it would make no sense not to speak of CLC Commitment.

Having reached this point, hopefully the significance of CLC Commitment has been grasped. There remain now several questions regarding specific aspects, such as the reason for the distinction of two types of commitment (temporary / permanent) or the conditions it makes sense to require in terms of time and spiritual preparation before making each one of them.

Thus, this Handbook aims to clarify the foundation of CLC Commitment, but also to give practical help, such as setting specific procedures and offer proposals for prayer and, for those who wish to advance in this way of greater personal commitment with Christ and His Church’s mission through their CLC Commitment.

Commitments: Temporary and Permanent

The differences

The CLC General Principles foresee two kinds of commitments: the **Temporary Commitment** and the **Permanent Commitment** (GP 10). However, in spite of the language, the distinction is not primarily of time duration. The relation between them is not like a promise given, at first, in a tentative, experimental, provisional way (what would be the Temporary Commitment) and, later on, the same promise being definitively ratified (Permanent Commitment). The difference goes much deeper, it touches the matter, the object of each of the commitments. To make the Temporary or the Permanent Commitments is to commit oneself to very distinctive things, with aims, implications and consequences entirely diverse for each one of them. This distinction comes from the fact that they refer and serve different stages of the progressive personal journey in CLC.

According to *CVX-P Plan of Formation*, the Temporary Commitment corresponds to and marks the end of the Initiation stage. After having been introduced to the CLC way of life and being sufficiently at ease with its spirituality and apostolic service model, the CLC member makes an option to deepen the search and the discernment, following a desire to clarify his/her adhesion to the totality of CLC way of life. It's a step in a formation stage, marked as yet by the search for a decisive enlightenment of one's personal Christian vocation.

Permanent Commitment, on the other hand, corresponds, in the *Plan Formation*, to the consummation of the Identification stage and frames the following endless stage of Mission. It concludes the initial formation (but not the continued one), finishing the process of vocational discernment. The search was fulfilled by encountering a thorough personal identification with CLC way of life and a desire to adhere to it in a complete and definitive way. Consequently, one shows publicly that adhesion with joy, which signifies, at the same time, the personal assent to the personalized call from God to follow Jesus Christ and to serve the Kingdom through the apostolic way of CLC.

As it is plain to see, the motivations and the importance of each of these Commitments are very different, as *The CLC Charism* expresses by focusing the concise definition given of each one of them, in one case, on the search for a vocation, and, in the other, on the availability to be sent:

Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life. This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation*. (*The CLC Charism*, 177)

Permanent Commitment is the culmination of our vocational discernment in which we express our desire to discover God's will and fulfil it in our apostolic life, in answer to our specific call and our readiness to be sent on mission. (*The CLC Charism*, 192)

The bearing of each of the Commitments on the personal life of the CLC member and of the Community is, thus, markedly distinct and, therefore, the demands required for the personal discernment and the degree of involvement of the Community in the confirmation and in the acceptance of the Temporary Commitment or of the Permanent Commitment are also quite different.

Temporary Commitment

The Temporary Commitment is an expression of the effective will of the CLC member to look for the means to clarify whether he/she really wishes to commit him/herself with CLC; whether CLC is where the quest for his/her personal Christian identity will end; whether CLC will reveal itself in a conclusive manner as his/her own right place in the Church, his/her setting for the service of the Kingdom.

At the beginning of CLC journey, the notion of calling (vocation) is felt – in most cases – in a vague and diffuse manner. However, as the candidate progresses in integration into the Community, gets to know the respective spirituality and becomes familiar with the means for growth in the Spirit proper to CLC, he/she can't miss the "motions" that will allow him/her to see if CLC is or is not the way to help him/her to become closer to God and God's will.

The Community, at its different levels, in this first period, accompanies and encourages the candidate in his/her personal search, promoting an atmosphere of integration and discernment, inviting him/her to give new steps in a perspective of growth and commitment. There may be various successive "small commitments" proposed and which the candidate feels challenged to: attendance and fidelity to group meetings, respect for the opinion of others, experience of the Spiritual Exercises, daily practice of personal prayer, revision of one's own life ("the exam"), intense sacramental life, volunteer service, participation in apostolic activities...

There will come a moment, once the Welcoming stage is over, fully in the stage of Initiation (cf. *Formation Plan of the CVX-P*), when the candidate should question him/herself whether, in conscience, he/she considers (or not) CLC way as a very likely calling and as a grace from God for him/herself. It's an opportunity that might come spontaneously or may be provoked as part of pedagogic guiding. If the answer is yes, it's time for Temporary Commitment.

Whilst a step in the process of growth in CLC, the Temporary Commitment configures a challenge by the Community to the CLC member going through Initiation for he/she to decide, to clarify his/hers wishes and to stimulate his/her search, looking for the liberty to discover and determine him/herself before God. The making of the Commitment signals, for the CLC member and for the Community, a decisive pledge to invest in the clarification and confirmation of a vocational discernment regarding CLC. It is a process, now opened or simply intensified, of finding freedom ("indifference") to see with clarity God's proposal and to choose it wholeheartedly.

The Temporary Commitment is a commitment for a search for confirmation, but still an open search. It may be that what seems to be in the beginning, might not be, after all, and it may result in choosing a way other than CLC. It is, thus, playing with words, a Commitment "without commitment". Drawing a parallel with the Exercises, the Temporary Commitment will correspond to the meditation of the Call of the King (SE 95): a manifestation of a will to follow which will dispose oneself for a process of discovery of the way and place where, concretely, that following of Christ will become substantiated. Before the CLC, it means to position oneself in the attitude of "come and see" (cf. Jo 1, 39), wishing to know better, in order to be able to choose to stay definitively.

The Temporary Commitment implies, for the person taking it, the search for the fidelity to the calling of the Lord about oneself and to enter in a process of discernment about that vocation. It also makes more explicit, however, the desire to adopt, even if provisionally, the CLC way of life, while awaiting and searching for a clear and definitive decision, through a deeper experience of God via the Spiritual Exercises, with the support of the Community.

The Community, on the other hand, when receiving the Temporary Commitment of one of its members, welcomes this interest and pledges to help, by making available the means under its responsibility, in such a way that the goals of the commitment may be reached.

Permanent Commitment

The Permanent Commitment is an affirmation of full Christian maturity made by a disciple who recognizes him/herself called to be also an apostle. It is a public proclamation of someone who, in a clearly discerned and confirmed way, has discovered in CLC his/hers specific identity before God, and a personal way of being in the Church and in the World. The recognition and assumption of this personal vocation structures an identity that sees itself reflected in the CLC way of life. It is expressed by an offering of oneself that gives apostolic meaning to the one's whole life, in availability for service to the mission CLC, as an apostolic body, discerns as its own.

Charism and mission, calling and being sent, personal identity and active belonging to an apostolic body, these are the polarities present in a harmonious way in the spiritual experience of a CLC member who is ready, and feels moved, to make the Permanent Commitment.

Concluding the process the Temporary Commitment had opened up and sustained, the Permanent Commitment culminates and accomplishes the vocational discernment. Now, it points the desire to search for God's will and to realise it in the direction of the apostolic life, in which, aware of one's qualities and limitations, one wishes to remain available to be sent and to live in mission. It's a moment of a peremptory determination of liberty, when one risks all one's life in a "Christian way of being in the world", recognized and personally owned, and in the definitive integration, publicly affirmed, in an ecclesial community sharing a mission. Setting a parallel with the movement of the Spiritual Exercises, it is the step of the election at the end of the second week (SE.169), when the specific personal mode of each one to identify with Christ and to serve His Kingdom takes a concrete form. This definitive decision liberates the person for the experience of confidence that allows one to savour the presence and the love of God in all things and, in all loving and serving, to collaborate with God in the work of the creation, according to the dynamics of the Contemplation to Attain Love (EE 230).

Once encountered the identity before God and in the Church, this Commitment marks and signifies, in the spiritual journey of the person making it, a definitive turning outwards. Concretely, one redirects the effort for spiritual growth and discernment to the search for greater collaboration in the building of the Kingdom. It rallies the totality of the CLC person for service in the World.

Mission is the essential characteristic and distinctive sign of the Permanent Commitment. It corresponds to the stage of the apostolic life in all its fullness. In the *Formation Plan*, it is one of the signs of the end of the Identification Stage and the threshold into the Mission Stage, where the formation is now conceived as a permanent formation, a means to be in "good apostolic shape" and increasingly at the disposal of God, living Ignatian Spirituality as a gift that must be put at the service of the Church and of humankind.

In short, the Permanent Commitment is the public proclamation that the Christian Life Community is the apostolic body where we wish to live the charism to which the Spirit of the Lord is calling us, committing ourselves with its spirituality and its way of life, and becoming available to be sent and taking responsibility for the mission of the whole body.

Commitments with whom and what for

It's important to keep in mind always that the Commitments are not made with CLC. Those making them, when they do so, are making a commitment with God. CLC is just the ecclesial space of recognition of God's calling and the Community that mediates the support and the concrete realization of the response to that vocation.

It is also necessary to remember that the availability for mission promised in the Commitments does not refer primarily to a service to CLC as an organization. It can and it should include that service, but that is not neither its first objective nor its fundamental purpose. Especially in the case of Permanent Commitment, the dimension of apostolic availability, essential to and constitutive of the Commitment, regards the mission of service to the Kingdom in the Church and in the World. CLC is elected – in response to a calling, result of a confirmed discernment that has recognised there one's personal vocation in the Church – as the place of spiritual identification, it functions as a model for a way of life and as the mediation of the apostolic mission entrusted to the one making the Commitment. However, the tasks of the mission for which one offers him/herself to God are not restricted to the internal boundaries of CLC and they do not concern CLC in the first place.

To have CLC as reference for my spiritual and apostolic identity, and the actual living out of discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating of my mission as a Christian within CLC, all that does not mean that I can't work apostolically with other people and other movements of the Church or collaborate in initiatives and missions that have not originated in the Community, or are realized in contexts outside of it.

However, and on the other hand, it makes no sense for somebody affirming to be CLC, meaning a strong identification with a spirituality, a way of Christian life and a style of apostolic service and, with the same intensity and at the same time, to follow or refer oneself to another spirituality or another way of life or another manner to consider life as mission, characteristic of other ecclesial movements or groups.

Especially for someone who has made the Permanent Commitment, CLC has been elected definitively as his/her place of apostolic mediation, where, and through which, he/she wants to receive the mission given by God, and where, primarily, he/she will discern, evaluate and will find support for its realization. This option has, necessarily, at its fundamental level, a character of exclusivity. But it does not imply any exclusivities or incompatibilities when we are dealing with concrete areas of action, missions or specific apostolic works in wider fields of the Church's life or the service of the Kingdom. Here, collaboration with others might be an excellent means to accomplish or improve the fruitfulness of the mission of a CLC member.

Mission, missions, and apostolate

It's also advisable not to mix up Mission with "missions", nor to interpret the concept of CLC Common Mission as demand for uniformity at the level of each one's missions, or to reduce Mission to apostolic work.

The CLC vocation is an apostolic vocation, a call to the Mission, but a Mission that is not strictly circumscribed (cf. GP 8). Even the definition of a Common Mission (cf. *Our Common Mission*) configures mainly proposals of criteria of discernment and challenges, formulated in terms of the general priorities seen by the Community at the global level, heeding to the action of the Spirit in the reality around us. The objective of these proposals is not to make all CLC members to do the same things or, even less, to live their mission just as a mission worked out in group. For CLC members, it becomes natural to make the discernment of their concrete apostolic service in the light of CLC spirituality and its way of life. That, by itself alone, guarantees that their missions and apostolic works will be undertaken and integrated in their personal mission,

and these personal missions become part of CLC Common Mission. If CLC seeks to become one apostolic body, it will be so by keeping the variety of its members and in the realization of the different functions each one has in the service of that one body. The union comes much more from a communion of in a same way of proceeding and in a common way of life, than from external uniformities.

Moreover, if CLC mission is not limited, or referred primarily, to tasks performed inside the CLC and at its service as such, mission in CLC should not be identified with "apostolate", that is, taking part in the explicitly evangelizing mission of the Church. As a lay vocation, the original mission of CLC is to be lived, before anything else, in the family, the profession and the civic life. Notwithstanding, it should be open, according to the possibilities and gifts of each one, to collaboration in ecclesial work of apostolate and evangelization, whether in the announcement of the faith, the liturgical celebration or the works of charity.

Expression of the Commitment as service to the Community and the Church

Finally, we will consider the question raised many times about the usefulness or the need for the public expressions of CLC Commitment.

First of all, the public expression responds to a desire personally felt to reveal and share what one strongly experiences. It is also helpful for the one making the Commitment, as a deepening of the meaning and the grasp of one's own desire and a way of staking more of oneself in that commitment. And it is also a form of service to the Community and the Church, confirming them in their charisms and missions.

In the experience of many CLC members, the decision to publicly celebrate the Commitment arises from a natural desire of those who, having made a journey in CLC, recognise in CLC their particular vocation in the Church, and live that recognition in the manner of a "found treasure", which makes them eager one to share their joy with others. And it is this way that it should always be: to make a Commitment is a response to an inner spiritual motion that impels them to express how much they live the experience of a special gift; it can never be ruled by imposition or driven simply by mimetic behaviour.

The Commitment is the counterpart of a calling. It is, therefore, the response to a movement of Grace. And Grace's own dynamics leads to incarnation, to the concrete realization, the visibility, to the forming of a body. We are corporal beings, not pure spirits. We need material references for our experiences. The outside gestures help, clarify and reinforce what goes on inside. This is why, in the Christian life lived ecclesially, the important steps of our existence are marked sacramentally, with material actions that are significant and efficient. Similarly, but just similarly, this also applies to CLC Commitments. When celebrating it, we translate, by a sign, our deep and interior wish to follow the Lord, through a specific path and a defined spirituality, within a concrete Community. We make clear that the Community is help, incentive and challenge for our fidelity.

And the Commitment is also a way to help others, to strengthen the apostolic body. When someone makes a Commitment with the spiritual journey, the way of life and the mission of a Community, he/she is showing for all to see the continued validity and vitality of its charism. Such a public action offers a concrete and visible proof that the Spirit continues to grace this way in the Church, calling more people to follow it. The public expression of the Commitment is, thus, a mutual service of confirmation, identification, support and renovation between the CLC member making his/her Commitment and the Christian Life Community receiving that member..

Process and Procedures

The process leading to the Commitment is eminently personal. It begins with the desire of a CLC member who feels moved to express publicly his/her commitment to Christ in the Christian Life Community, encountered – whether with a definitive character or just as a very attractive possibility – as his/her own specific place for the following of Christ and the apostolic service in the Church..

However, CLC Commitment is not just a question of personal desire. It is, at the same time, a grace from God expressed in a service to the community, confirming publicly its identity and the vitality of its charism, and driving it, as well, to a greater fidelity to the common vocation and mission.

The discernment itself regarding the Commitment, although being personal, cannot just be individual. Because it concerns someone belonging to CLC and it is about CLC, it should also be done in CLC, referring to, involving and making use of the help of the Community, especially of the local community, with particular role for the group coordinator and the guide.

Lastly, as in any ecclesial discernment, there is an instance that ratifies in an authorized way the process and the result. That will be the role of the Regional and National Councils, accordingly to the Commitment in question. Thus, the Community, who helped the CLC member to make his/her path of discernment concerning the Commitment, welcomes and confirms his/her decision, and organises the celebration where it will take place.

The World CLC has established some norms referring to the Commitments (GN 2-6, to which GP 10 refers to) and the *Statutes of CVX-P* also make some determinations (nn. 9.5 and 15.4). Here, in this Handbook, we try to render concrete the application of these general frameworks, with the view to make easier the practice of the Commitment for all CLC members and safeguarding the organization of the whole process at the community level, so that it may take place in a clear and good order, assuring the best fruits for each person and for CLC.

In his conjunction between the personal rhythms of each person’s spiritual development and the liberty of the Spirit, who blows where and how it wishes, on one hand, and the advantages of a certain order, helping to clarify personal discernments and institutional organization needs, on the other, we must interpret the more formal indications here systematized, always in the spirit that “the Sabbath is for the person and not the person for the Sabbath”.

The times

General Norms mention a period from one to four years to take the Temporary Commitment after entering CLC; and not less than two nor more than eight years after Temporary for the Permanent Commitment. In the *CVX-P Formation Plan*, the Temporary Commitment is one of the signs ending the Initiation Stage and the Permanent Commitment is the consummation of the Identification Stage. More important than to abide by formally appointed periods, it is to take into account that the adhesion and integration in CLC is a process of growth that involves search, discernment and decision, accordingly to the Ignatian logic of the magis. To mark with exterior signs (the Commitments being the most expressive) the progressivity of the journey,

with an increasing clarification of personal choice and growing commitment goes a long to help falling into routine or stagnation.

Permanent Commitment without having taken the Temporary

If anyone has been in the CLC for a long time without ever taking the Temporary Commitment, but has plainly assimilated the contents of Initiation and Identification Stages and already lives the spirituality, way of life and apostolic engagements, characteristic of the CLC as his/her definitive personal option, it makes no sense to propose himself/herself for the purposes of the Temporary Commitment, which have already been clearly fulfilled. Thus, that member may, with the established agreement of the respective Regional CLC Council, propose himself/herself to the National Council to make immediately the Permanent Commitment, at an exceptional title, without having to make the Temporary.

Ambits for the celebration of the Commitments

The Commitment, even the Temporary one, is always with the CLC – World Community, accomplished through the mediation of local and national Communities (GP 7). It is proposed, however, that the celebration be take place in distinctive ambits, in order to mark the progressive deepening of the bond with CLC and to help distinguish the particularity of each of the Commitments. Thus:

- The Temporary Commitment should take place, ordinarily, in celebrations at regional level, in the authorized presence of the respective Regional Council;
- The Permanent Commitment must be celebrated on the occasion of a meeting at national level, in the authorized presence of the National Council.

Procedures for Temporary Commitment

Each regional CLC will establish a yearly date (a celebration that will bring the regional community together) for the making of Temporary Commitments.

Those wishing to make the Temporary Commitment should, in good time, share their intention with their group, asking for the prayed and discerned help of all for their decision process.

Those proposing themselves to make the Temporary Commitment should already be familiar with the practice of the Spiritual Exercises and determined to use them as means for the search and discernment to which they want to commit themselves. The knowledge of the fundamental traits of Ignatian spirituality and of the spiritual journey of St. Ignatius of Loyola himself are also relevant references for the deliberation about Temporary Commitment.

During the time of immediate preparation for the Temporary Commitment, it is essential to become acquainted, through a pondered and meditated reading of the CLC essential documents, namely the General Principles and The CLC Charism, striving to bring together a growing adherence of the heart with cultivated intellectual knowledge. The readings and questions for the "Preparation for the Temporary Commitment" presented in this Handbook intend to guide the prayer during the decision's preparatory period.

Having made a decision, their intention should be made known to the Regional Council well before the established date for the Commitments, making sure they have the support of the coordinator and guide of each one's respective group.

Procedures for Permanent Commitment

The yearly national celebration of the World CLC day (around March 25th) will be the usual date for making Permanent Commitments in CLC-Portugal.

To be admitted to make the Commitment on the yearly date, the CLC member should warn the National Council of that intention at the beginning of the school year (previous October), through the respective Regional Council. Previously, that decision must have already been shared with the one's group, requesting the prayers of all and their help to discern the rightness of the professed intention. One must also be sure of the unmistakable support of the respective group coordinator and guide.

Whoever intends to make the Permanent Commitment must have ended his/her vocational discernment process with the conviction of having found in the CLC his/hers particular vocation in the Church, the place where he/she desires to follow Christ and to work for the building of the Kingdom. In this formation and discernment journey, there are essential elements of the spirituality and of the CLC way of life which must have been well assimilated:

- A profound experience of the Spiritual Exercises, acquired by the experience of the complete Exercises in any of its modalities, by the reflection over that experience and by a clarified knowledge of the language and pedagogy of the Ignatian method, in such a way that the movements and graces of the different weeks have been lived and assimilated, and the dynamics of the Exercises have become a reference matrix and guide for the reading of all experience of life in the Spirit;
- A deep knowledge of the CLC charism – identity and mission – as it is, at present, formulated in its most significant documents: *General Principles, The CLC Charism, Our Common Mission and Recommendations of the World Assemblies*;
- In particular, he/she must be conscious of the apostolic ideal of CLC and embrace it without reservations, desiring to make the definitive personal option of having CLC as the place of apostolic mediation, where he/she is ready to discern, to be sent, to receive support and to evaluate his/her mission.

It is convenient to make a review and evaluate his/her journey in the CLC in the light of the indications in the CVX-P Formation Plan.

As a closer preparation to make the Permanent Commitment, it is required:

- The following of the proposed "Preparation for the Permanent Commitment" in this Handbook as matter to be prayed and discerned;
- A deepening renewed spiritual reading, all through the year, of CLC most significant documents;
- The participation in regional level meetings (2/3 times) with other CLC members contemplating the same decision, to share the process and fruits of the journey. These meetings are accompanied by a guide. It is the duty of the National Council to propose the places and dates, once the yearly list of candidates for the Permanent Commitment is known.
- To make the Spiritual Exercises for at least seven days during the year preceding the Permanent Commitment;
- To have assiduous spiritual accompaniment to help the spiritual reading of the spiritual fruits of the process.

Manner of celebrating the Commitments

The Commitments must take place during a largely participated Eucharist, open to all, and for which the whole community is invited.

The moment for the celebration of the Commitment is after the Homily, before the Prayers of the Faithful.

If the number of those taking the Commitment allows it without extending the celebration too much, each member making the Commitment may be introduced to the Community by another CLC member who knows him/her well and, immediately afterwards, pronounce his/her commitment formula.

This formula must be written in three samples, to be signed by the person making the Commitment and the National or Regional Council representative accepting the Commitment. One copy is for the person making the Commitment, other for the archives of the Regional Council and the third for the archives of the National Secretariat. (In the Temporary Commitments, the Regional Council is responsible for sending it to the National Secretariat)

Commitments Formulae

Formula for Temporary Commitment

I, _____,

experiencing the path already walked in CLC as a grace, and moved by the desire to search and find the will of God in my life;

wish to express publicly my adhesion to the Ignatian charism of CLC, as a spirituality, a way of life and a manner of apostolic availability, accordingly to its General Principles;

and affirm determination to search for a definitive confirmation of the CLC way as the specific vocation I am called to live in the Church.

Thus, before God, I make my Temporary Commitment with the Christian Life Community, through my local community and the national community of CVX-P, committing myself:

- *To advance my spiritual growth, through prayer, sacramental practice and discernment, using the specific means of CLC, namely the Spiritual Exercises and having Mary as example and life model;*
- *To order more and more my life, in all its dimensions, according to the CLC way of life;*
- *To search for concrete ways of participation in the building of the Kingdom, discerning my personal mission in family life, profession, civic life, and ecclesial service;*
- *To participate in the activities of the Community and support it, within the limits of my abilities.*

I pray to Jesus and Mary, His mother that they may obtain for me the grace of fidelity to the commitment I have just assumed.

[Local], [Date]

Signature

President of the Regional Council

Formulae for Permanent Commitment

There are elements that must obligatorily integrate the formula, because they are essential to the CLC commitment: the acceptance of the *General Principles*, commitment with the CLC way of life, openness to apostolic mission, reference to the World Community, availability to cooperate in the activities of the Community. But there is also a margin, in the case of the Permanent Commitment, for everyone to personalize the expression of the Commitment one desires to make. In this case, the formula must be previously ratified by the National Council.

Therefore, the formulae we propose in continuation, which have been used in our National Community, are mere examples.

When choosing to write one's own formula, it is necessary, however, to take into account the value of maintaining a certain level of uniformity (the external uniformity was very important to St. Ignatius as an aid to interior union...) and to be careful not make it too lengthy.

Formula A:

Eternal Lord of all things, I, _____,

desiring to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, having recognized in the Christian Life Community my particular vocation within the Church, accepting its General Principles and counting entirely on your love and grace,

commit myself to search for and to follow your will, with generous and humble fidelity.

Having the Virgin Mary, mother of the Church and my mother, as life model, I commit myself:

- To embrace a simple life style, in the follow of Jesus poor and humble;*
- To make of the Eucharist, the personal prayer, the Spiritual Exercises and the discernment the privileged means to "seek and find God in all things and all things in God";*
- Thinking with the Church and "mindful of the signs of the times", to endeavour, through my attitudes, words and actions, to proclaim the faith and promote the justice, uniting myself, in this way, to Jesus' apostolic mission;*
- To definitively elect the CLC as the place of apostolic mediation, where I will look for, in a primordial way, to discern, to receive the "sending", to find support and to evaluate my mission.*

Thus, I make my Permanent Commitment with the Christian Life Community, through my Local and National communities, striving to contribute, in everything and always, for the greater glory of God, cooperating, within my possibilities, in all its activities.

Assured by Your kindness and love, I ask Jesus and Mary, His mother, to obtain me the grace of fidelity to the commitment I have just assumed.

[Local], [Date]

Signature

National Council President

Fórmula B

I, _____,

member of the Christian Life Community, accepting its General Principles, commit myself in a permanent way to surrender my life to the Lord, with ever greater generosity and to work, in a spirit of service and united to the whole people of God, for justice peace among all humankind, as witness to my faith.

I commit myself to assume a simple lifestyle, in the following of Christ poor and humble, to maintain an intense sacramental life, to meditate the Sacred Scripture, to spread the Church's doctrine and to cooperate with his shepherds, to persevere in a life of prayer and to centre myself more and more in Christ, looking for inspiration in St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises and having always present our Lady as a model of all my activities of mission and service.

I commit myself to a definitive personal option for the Christian Life Community as a place of apostolic mediation, where I will look for, with all my availability, to receive my mission, accept the "sending" and find the primary support in discernment and evaluation.

Feeling with the Church, I wish, through this way and with the grace of God and united to Mary, mother of Jesus, to be a faithful witness to the renewing action of the Spirit in the work for the building of the Kingdom, and, united to my community, in whose life I commit myself to participate, to look for the ever greater glory of God.

I ask the Lord and Mary, His mother, to obtain me the grace of fidelity to the commitment I have just assumed.

[Local], [Date]

Signature

National Council President

Preparation for Temporary Commitment

In addition to the following more elaborated proposals for reflexion and prayer, the meditation of certain particularly appropriated evangelical texts may help during the time of this preparation. Some examples:

- Jo 1, 35-49: "Come and see"; fascinating meeting with Jesus
- Lk 19, 1-10 : Zacchaeus and the fecundity of following faithfully our most profound desires
- Mk 1, 16-20: the calling of the disciples

PROPOSAL I: ABOUT THE SENSE OF VOCATION

A. A. TO SEEK AND FIND ONE'S VOCATION IN THE CHURCH

1. The personal vocation

- 3** We hope that all CLC members will participate in the mission of Christ according to their own vocation in the Church. *"Our Community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions, who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and to work with Him for the building of the Kingdom, having recognized the Christian Life Community as their special vocation within the Church". (GP 4)*
- 4** The foundation of CLC formation and renewal is *the value of each person* and the conviction that each person has a *divine vocation*, which embraces all dimensions of that person's existence. God calls everyone. God takes the initiative, but respects our personal freedom. Each individual discovers this call when he/she listens to it and accepts God's wishes. This call of God is a personal vocation, which reveals itself in our deepest inclinations and our most authentic desires. Our free response to God's call is what gives meaning and dignity to our existence.
- 5** Understanding our personal life, our family, work and civic life as a response to the call of the Lord frees us from any inclination to resign ourselves to the situations in which we find ourselves. Equally, it brings us to react against that conformity which seeks to impose a state and style of life on us.
- 6** Each person finds in his or her own personal vocation the concrete way to live the *universal vocation* of the human family, which is a call to communion with the Father through the Son in the Spirit of love. In fulfilling his mission as a loving response to the call of the Lord, the individual progressively fulfils his or her destiny of developing a full communion with God and with the human family.

(...)

- 15** Vocation is intimately linked to mission. When a Christian deepens his or her bonds of friendship with the Lord, He entrusts a mission to them. Vocation has its origin in the entering of God into their lives and needs time to transform their hearts, binding them totally to Christ. The mission entrusted to them by Christ is a deep, permanent and growing desire born out of this bond.
- 16** CLC members recognize their personal vocation within the Church in this particular form of Christian life. The particular vocation of CLC members is closely related to the discernment of their apostolic mission, that is, the type of service each Christian is being called to render in the Church for the evangelization of the world.

In *The CLC Charism*

Points for meditation:

- 1.** *“This call of God is a personal vocation, which reveals itself in our deepest inclinations and our most authentic desires. Our free response to God's call is what gives meaning and dignity to our existence.”*

Do I feel that I have already encountered God and the desire of salvation and happiness God has for me?

- 2.** *“Understanding our personal life, our family, work and civic life as a response to the call of the Lord.”*

To reflect over my living of each of these areas. In which of them does my faith emerge as the main motivation and aggregation factor? In which areas do I find greater meaning in light of my faith? To which areas do I feel Jesus is calling me to cooperate actively with Him?

- 3.** *“CLC members recognise their personal vocation within the Church in this particular form of Christian life.”*

Up to what degree do I make these words mine? Which feelings / ideas / motions does this sentence awake in me? To answer without preconceptions...

PROPOSAL II: ABOUT CLC VOCATION

3. The specific CLC vocation

17 The CLC vocation makes the universal Christian vocation specific by means of three principal characteristics:

3.1. An Ignatian vocation

18 The charism and spirituality of CLC are Ignatian. Thus, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are both the specific source of this charism and the characteristic instrument of CLC spirituality.

19 The General Principles emphasize the Ignatian character of CLC by using phrases throughout the text, which refer to the experience of *The Exercises* or to the Ignatian charism. They emphasize the central role of Jesus Christ. Their explicit references to the Ignatian origins of the CLC way of proceeding and to the importance of *apostolic discernment* in opening oneself to the most urgent and universal calls of the Lord make it clear that discernment is to become the normal way of making decisions.

20 The CLC way of life is shaped by the features of *Ignatian Christology*: austere and simple, in solidarity with the poor and the outcasts of society, integrating contemplation and action, in all things living lives of love and service within the Church, always in a spirit of discernment. This Ignatian Christology springs from the contemplation of the Incarnation where the mission of Jesus is revealed. It springs forth from contemplating Him who is sent by the Father to save the world; who personally chooses and calls those He wants to collaborate with Him from among those who recognize themselves as being weak and sinners. It arises from following Jesus the Eternal King who emptied Himself in order to live a life of poverty and humiliation, in union with Him in his passion and resurrection, when the strength of the Spirit forms the Church as the Body of Christ.

21 Ignatian Spirituality also explains the *Marian character* of the CLC charism. The role of Mary in the Community is, in effect, the same role that she has in the Exercises and in the spiritual experience of Ignatius. The mother of Jesus is constantly present at the side of her Son, a mediator as well as an inspiration, and a model of response to His call and to working with Him in His mission.

22 In the light of the founding experience of the Exercises, the CLC has as its vision the integration of faith and life in every dimension: personal, social, professional, political and ecclesial.

23 The spirituality of the Exercises strengthens the distinctive character of this Christian vocation:

24 ▶ The Ignatian *magis* sets the style of our response to the universal call to holiness, seeking the "greater glory of God", by following Jesus Christ more closely through "offerings of greater worth and importance".

25 ▶ Christ, moreover, reveals Himself in Ignatian Spirituality as "a man for others", and to follow Him is to put ourselves at the service of our brothers and sisters: a distinctly *apostolic* way of understanding the Reign of God. CLC members are Christians who "want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with Him in the building of the Kingdom".

26 ▶ Finally, the Exercises, and hence our spirituality, underline the *ecclesial character* of apostolic service. In as much as it is a mission received from Christ, it is mediated through the Church. *"Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues His mission of salvation"*.

27 The Ignatian character of CLC and its members finds expression in the regular practice of the Ignatian way of prayer, examen, evaluation and apostolic discernment (personal as well as communal), and by frequent participation in the sacraments.

3.2. A Communal Vocation

28 CLC members live Ignatian Spirituality in community. The help of brothers and sisters sharing the same call is essential for our growth in fidelity to our vocation and mission. In addition, community itself is a constituent element of the apostolic witness of CLC.

29 *"To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we form communities of those who strongly desire to unite their human lives completely with their Christian faith according to our charism"*.

3.3. A Lay Vocation

30 CLC is defined in the General Principles as an association, not of laity, but of the faithful: *"Our community is made up of Christians: men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions..."*

31 With maturity, however, at the time of Permanent Commitment, the CLC vocation is specifically lay, with its objectives and its characteristics: *"We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live."*

In O Carisma CVX

Points for meditation:

1. *"The charism and spirituality of CLC are Ignatian. Thus, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius are both the specific source of this charism and the characteristic instrument of CLC spirituality."*

In my journey in CLC, what has been the importance of the specific instruments Ignatian spirituality offers (prayer, examen, evaluation, apostolic discernment)?

2. *"CLC members live Ignatian Spirituality in community. The help of brothers and sisters sharing the same call is essential for our growth in fidelity to our vocation and mission."*

To what extent does my CLC group work as a disseminating point for my experience of mission? What is the level of my sharing with the other members of the group regarding my decisions and apostolic experiences, the joys, dilemmas and difficulties that mission always brings along?

3. *"We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live."*

Someone said that Ignatian spirituality is "a spirituality for busy people". The same can be said of CLC. How does being CLC help me to live everyday life, in all its dimensions, in a unified way in light of faith?

PROPOSAL III: ABOUT THE PROFILE OF THE CLC PERSON

4. The profile of the CLC person

- 32** The CLC vocation presupposes certain conditions, essentially those required to make the Spiritual Exercises. This aptitude is recognised in those characteristics, which allow the individual to encounter God. It is not so much a question of something already acquired as the potential. To indicate such an aptitude St Ignatius uses the expression "*tener subiecto*". *Tener subiecto* has a dynamic sense: an individual becomes progressively "subiecto" (disposed) or, conversely, not disposed; we may move forward or backwards, but we are never static, we never remain in the same place.
- 33** The Annotations offer us a picture of the adult exercitant. This picture is sometimes a point of departure and sometimes a point of arrival. These are the minimal conditions, laid down by Ignatius, for undertaking the adventure and also, more fully, the result of the undertaking. In other words, the characteristic traits, which define a suitable individual, must in some manner be present in the beginning. Ignatius adapted the Exercises to each individual, but at the same time, he recommended that the question of an election should not be put to everyone indiscriminately. Moreover, in describing both the exercitant and the conditions required for undertaking the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius presupposes that whoever wishes to have this experience wants above all "*to love and serve the Divine Majesty*". These are also the distinctive characteristics of the individual best fitted to become a CLC member.
- 34** These personal characteristics, which must in some way be present at the beginning of the Ignatian experience, can be put into two categories:
- 35 From the human point of view:**
- ♦ *capable of facing reality, sensitive to the social and political world in which he or she lives, able to communicate and render service to others in a significant way.*
 - ♦ *with strong desires to lead a passionate and dynamic life, even if these ideals are, at least for a short time, mingled with personal ambition;*
 - ♦ *not self-satisfied with their own little world but ready to modify their points of view and lifestyle.*
- 36 Concerning their experience of God:**
- ♦ *moved by the desire to encounter and follow Jesus Christ;*
 - ♦ *in love with Jesus and His mission, yearning for a deeper personal relationship with Him that will redirect and correct, if necessary, their needs and aspirations, and heal their wounds and weaknesses;*
 - ♦ *aware of being a sinner, but loved and chosen by Christ;*
 - ♦ *open to the needs of others, ready to serve them and to join with all who seek to build a world both more human and more divine;*
 - ♦ *conscious of being a responsible member of the Church, identified with its message and committed to its mission.*

In *The CLC Charism*

Points for meditation:

1. [The CLC person is] “moved by the desire *to encounter and follow Jesus Christ*” and “in love with Jesus and His mission, *yearning for a deeper personal relationship with Him that will redirect and correct, if necessary, their needs and aspirations, and heal their wounds and weaknesses.*”

How do I describe my relationship with Jesus? Do I call Him ‘friend’ or ‘companion’? What role does He have in my spiritual journey?

2. [The CLC person is] “*not self-satisfied* with their own little world but ready to modify their points of view and lifestyle”. He or she is “*capable of facing reality*”, sensitive to the social and political world in which he or she lives, able to communicate and render service to others in a significant way”.

How do I live the dynamism of the Magis in my life? How do I approach everyday problems? Where is the focus of my affective attention among the realities that surround me? How far does my regard extend to, what horizons is my heart able to embrace?

3. [The CLC person is] “conscious of *being a responsible member of the Church*, identified with its message and committed to its mission”.

As a Christian, called by the Father before all time and follower of Jesus “here and now”, I am also the Church. How do I identify myself with the larger Church? In what degree the way I live and build community in my “several communities” is a healthy example of life in the Church? How do my small and larger missions make real the big mission of the Church, which is to spread the Gospel?

PROPOSAL IV: ABOUT TEMPORARY COMMITMENT

2. The purpose and meaning of Temporary Commitment

- 177** Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life. This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation*.
- 178** In those individuals who already have the necessary disposition, this vocational discernment takes place on two levels:
- ▶ The choice of **a state of life** by those who have not yet done so (religious life, of course, excludes a Permanent Commitment to CLC);
 - ▶ **Amendment and reformation of lifestyle**, for those who have already decided upon their state of life.
- 179** This discernment of vocation does not take for granted a definitive CLC vocation, but tries to remain open to whatever state of life we are being called by the will of God. The process, lived in the CLC way, implies that the person already belongs to a community to which he/she has made a temporal commitment, even if the individual vocation has not yet been clearly defined.
- 180** An important aspect of such discernment is the question "do they want and desire" to seek and find the will of God in their lives and to follow His call? This presupposes an ever-deepening experience of God fostered by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, with the support of the community, for greater service. They discern whether or not the CLC way is what God wants for them and if they are "open, free and ready" to go on this journey with a "deliberate determination" toward an apostolic way of life..
- 181** This vocational stage as such is open to different options. For a married adult, for instance, the question will be whether he/she is called to live a CLC lifestyle in married life. Young people will ask themselves, what style of life (lay, religious or clerical) they are called to. A good number of adults and young people will feel called to live according to the CLC style of life. Others find that their motivation for joining was rather social or affective and, acknowledging that they have no desire to continue further, seek other ways of belonging to the Church.
- 182** For those young people or adults who come to the conclusion that the community answers their deepest aspirations, this stage brings a renewed commitment to the CLC way.
- 183** Thus, "Temporary Commitment", made within the community and accepted by it, is the expression of the individual's determination to seek God's will by employing Ignatian methods and the community's offer of its own Ignatian process of formation.
- 184** It is important that "Temporary Commitment" should not be reduced to a set of obligations but should be our loving answer, in *the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love*, to God who loved us first.
- 185** The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius play a key role in the discernment of vocation. At this stage of formation, Temporary Commitment fosters in them the dispositions needed for making the Spiritual Exercises well, bearing in mind their apostolic vocation.

In *O Carisma CVX*

Points for meditation:

1. *Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life.*

How is my adherence to each one of the points of CLC way of life referred by GP 12, as follows?

- a) *The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active sacramental life; daily practice of personal prayer, especially that based on Sacred Scripture; discernment by means of a daily review of one's life and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God.*
 - b) *Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the advancement of God's reign, all individual members are called to an active participation in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence, concretely, to our world. Our broad and demanding mission requires of each member a willingness to participate in social and political life and to develop human qualities and professional skills in order to become more competent workers and convincing witnesses. Furthermore, it demands also simplicity in all aspects of life, in order to follow more closely Christ in His poverty and to preserve inner apostolic freedom.*
 - c) *Finally, each one assumes responsibility for participating in the meetings and other activities of the Community, and to help and encourage other members to pursue their personal vocation, always ready to give and to receive advice and aid as friends in the Lord.*
2. *This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the discernment of this vocation.
An important aspect of such discernment is the question "do they want and desire" to seek and find the will of God in their lives and to follow His call?*

How is my availability to seek and find the will of God for my life? How am I going to undertake, concretely, the discernment of my vocation?

Preparation for Permanent Commitment

In addition to the following more elaborated proposals for reflexion and prayer, the meditation of certain particularly appropriated evangelical texts may help during the time of this preparation. Some examples:

- Mt 10, 1-15: Mt 10, 1-15: election of the disciples sent as apostles
- Lk 9, 10-17 : multiplication of the loaves; collaboration with Jesus in the service of others
- Mt 28, 16-20: the mission of the followers of Jesus, mission of the Church
- Jo 21, 15-22: the foundation and support of the sending

PROPOSAL I: THE HISTORY OF MY CLC VOCATION

At the beginning of the final stage of the process of discernment for the Permanent Commitment, enlightened by faith, we are invited to revisit the memories of our interior path of progressive discovery of CLC as the specific mode to which we have been, and are, called to live our lay Christian state.

Being the Spiritual Exercises “the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality” (GP 5), this heritage profoundly moulds our spiritual itinerary.

We propose ourselves to read our vocation to the CLC – initial adherence and progressive identification with its charism – using as reference Ignatius of Loyola and the way he was guided by the Lord in his conversion, in the clarification of his vocation and in the missionary profile of the community formed by the first Jesuits.

A) Change of direction. God enters the life of Ignatius and calls forth his profound conversion

The spiritual awakening of Ignatius, at the age of 26, and the first interior insights about the way God is communicating with him happen in the shadow of the battle incident that forced him to confront his interior world, starting to comprehend the experience of the spontaneous movements of his thoughts and affections, and its consequences on the dispositions of the soul. The spiritual readings set this process in motion and turned Ignatius into a new man.

This succession of thoughts occupied him for a long while, those about God alternating with those about the world. But in these thoughts there was this difference. When he thought of worldly things it gave him great pleasure, but afterward he found himself dry and sad. But when he thought of journeying to Jerusalem, and of living only on herbs, and practicing austerities, he found pleasure not only while thinking of them, but also when he had ceased. This difference he did not notice or value, until one day the eyes of his soul were opened and

he began to inquire the reason of the difference. He learned by experience that one train of thought left him sad, the other joyful. (...) gradually he recognized the different spirits by which he was moved, one, the spirit of God, the other, the devil (Autobiography, 8)

The experience of God stirs in Ignatius a great desire of detachment and total emptying of himself. After he had recovered his health, on his way to Montserrat (17-18), he 'sacramentalizes' his conversion according to costume proper to the ideals of Chivalry. He will continue to be a 'knight', but in a radically different way. The Lord counts on him as he is, and starting from what he is. Ignatius is now donning the "armor of Christ" (Eph 6, 11). Thus, he "*resolved to prepare himself for a noble knighthood by passing a night in vigil before an altar of Our Lady at Montserrat. He would observe all the formalities of this ceremony, neither sitting nor lying down, but alternately standing and kneeling, and there he would lay aside his worldly dignities to assume the arms of Christ.*" (17)

At Manresa, he confronts probation and temptation. It is a time of struggle, of crisis and learning. "*There flashed upon his mind the idea of the difficulty that attended the kind of life he had begun, and he felt as if he heard some one whispering to him, 'How can you keep up for seventy years of your life these practices which you have begun?' Knowing that this thought was a temptation of the evil one, he expelled it by this answer: 'Can you, wretched one, promise me one hour of life?' In this manner he overcame the temptation, and his soul was restored to peace.*" (20)

He feels himself confirmed in his purposes, and realized that "*At that period God dealt with him as a teacher instructing a pupil.*" (27)

Points for meditation

1. What does the experience of Ignatius' conversion stir in me?
2. Going through the memories of the history of God in my life, how have I lived this "spiritual awakening"? In what circumstances, and through whom, have I felt personally touched by God?
3. What role had CLC in my interior process of conversion and in the discovery of God?

B) Discovering his vocation – "helping souls"

The expression "helping souls" reveals the specificity of the way Ignatius feels himself called to follow the Lord – his vocation – and it configures the ideal that will guide all his life. "*Besides the seven hours devoted to prayer, he spent a portion of his time in assisting souls who came to him for advice. During the rest of the day he gave his thoughts to God, pondering on what he had read or meditated that day.*" (26)

This expression sets also the final point of a time of purification of his image of God, and of acceptance of himself and his history. The overcoming of voluntarism and stoicism, which kept him turned to himself, and the acceptance of himself as a forgiven sinner, docile to the action of God in his life, and opening himself to others.

The mystical experience of Cardoner is a breakthrough of the Spirit that confirms and deepens his experience of God, and becomes a turning point in the apostolic vocation of Ignatius.

One day he went to the Church of St. Paul, situated about a mile from Manresa. Near the road is a stream, on the bank of which he sat, and gazed at the deep waters flowing by. While

seated there, the eyes of his soul were opened. He did not have any special vision, but his mind was enlightened on many subjects, spiritual and intellectual. So clear was this knowledge that from that day everything appeared to him in a new light. Such was the abundance of this light in his mind that all the divine helps received, and all the knowledge acquired up to his sixty-second year, were not equal to it. From that day he seemed to be quite another man, and possessed of a new intellect. (30)

This interior illumination unifies and condenses a sequence of spiritual discoveries that took place before and are recounted in the Autobiography: the Trinity (28), Creation, Eucharist, Humanity of Christ (29).

Since that moment, the apostolic vocation of Ignatius will determine all his steps. The Spiritual Exercises become possible here: the possibility that others take advantage of his own experience "to seek and find the will of God in their lives".

In spite of all the desires and consolations associated with his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the Lord went on confirming Ignatius in the ministry of helping souls, faithfully accepting whatever the Church may mission him into.

He decided to remain in Jerusalem, in order to visit the holy places often. For this purpose he had taken with him letters of recommendation to the Father Guardian. On presenting them, he said that he intended to remain there to satisfy his own devotion, but said nothing of his purpose of helping others. (45)

Ignatius understands that, in order to help souls, his own will does not suffice. He lacks adequate formation. Therefore, the Pilgrim must get into a new adventure, doing the studies necessary to empower him for a greater apostolic efficacy.

When Ignatius understood that God did not wish him to remain at Jerusalem, he began to consider what he should do. The plan he approved and adopted was to enter upon a course of study in order to be better fitted to save souls. For this purpose he determined to go to Barcelona, and setting out from Venice he traveled toward Genoa. (50)

Points for meditation

1. What does the story of the way the Lord went on "sculpting" the features of Ignatius' vocation awaken in me?
2. What challenges of purification of faith have defined my interior certainty of having been called to collaborate with the Lord under His Standard?
3. How do I feel CLC helped in the calling and clarification of my vocation as a Christian?
4. What fruits and graces am I discovering in this time of common journey with other CLC companions?

C) The Society of Jesus – formation of an apostolic community

Ignatius, together with other companies who had also made the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and the election, feels the need to express, in a "sacramental", visible, form his most profound desire: "By this time all had determined on their future conduct, namely, to go first to Venice, and then to Jerusalem, where they would pass their whole life in helping souls. If, however, they should not be allowed to remain in Jerusalem, they were to return to Rome and

offer themselves to the Sovereign Pontiff, Christ's Vicar, that he might use their aid as he thought would be for God's glory and the salvation of souls". (85)

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was definitely excluded, but the other provisions of the vow of Montmartre. The companions go into Rome moved by the desire to help souls. The main criterion is the service of the Church: the Pope is the reference and the expression of the mission of the Church.

"They set out on their way to Rome, divided into three or four parties. On the journey Ignatius experienced singular visitations from God. After his reception of the priesthood, he had resolved to put off the offering of his first Mass for one year, in order to prepare himself better, and to ask the Most Blessed Virgin to place him near her Son. One day, when he was a few miles from Rome, he entered a church to pray, and there felt his soul so moved and changed, and saw so clearly that God the Father placed him with Christ His Son, that he did not dare to doubt it." (96)

Other sources report that the "message" he received in the vision of La Storta was the image of Jesus, carrying the cross, that aid to him: "I want you to serve us". Fr. Lainez refers to this vision in the following way:

"Ignatius told me that it seemed to him that God the Father imprinted in his heart these words: 'In Rome I will be favorable to you' (...) Then, another time he said that he seemed to see Christ with the cross on his back and the Eternal Father next to Him telling him: 'I want to take this one as your server'. And Jesus took him and said: "I want you to serve us'. With this, gaining great devotion to the name of Jesus, he wanted the Congregation to be called Society of Jesus. This name, thus, received confirmation from heaven." (96, n. 30)

In its spiritual maturity, Ignatius offered to the service of the Church everything that had been useful to him as source of inspiration: the Exercises, election, discernment and understanding of the motions. In his "spiritual anatomy" stick out is attitude of contemplative in action, seeking and finding God in all things.

"That same day, before supper, he called me looking like a person more silent than usually and made a kind of oath which substantially wanted to show the intention and simplicity with which he had told me these things, saying that he was certain that he was not telling anything unwarranted. And that he had committed many offenses against God Our Lord after he had begun to serve Him, but had never consented to mortal sin. Moreover, he had always grown in devotion, that is, in easiness in finding God, and now more than ever in his life. Always, at any time he wanted to find God, he found Him." (99)

Points for meditation

"Permanent Commitment follows from the CLC way of life, and is in harmony with the trustful surrender of the Contemplation for attaining Love. Commitment is the "Take, Lord and receive..." as a response to the commitment of God who 1) has given me so much; 2) dwells in me, giving me existence and meaning; 3) labours and works for me; 4) seeing how all good things and gifts descend from above... just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source, so too from God comes power, goodness, justice, mercy and the necessary desire to live out our commitment (The CLC Charism, 191).

- 1.** How have I turned my vocation into apostolic mission?
- 2.** How do I recognize the mediating role of CLC?
- 3.** What does it mean for me to live in apostolic discernment? How have I lived the Ignatian ideal of being contemplative in action?

PROPOSAL II: MISSION IN CLC

The CLC mission field

92 Given the lay character of the CLC vocation and given today's world situation, marked by serious structural injustice and by the marginalization of a large part of the human family which lives in poverty and misery, the service to which CLC is called to give priority, in the light of its preferential option for the poor, is the *promotion of justice*.

(...)

94 Work for justice takes different forms according to regional and cultural circumstances, and different socio-political situations. However, this priority must show itself in our style and standard of living. In the Spiritual Exercises, we ask for the grace to follow Jesus, poor and humble, and our hope is to obtain this grace from the Lord. To *believe* in Jesus, therefore, means to follow Him more closely; to share His poverty means to live a life of faith, which promotes justice and takes an option for the poor. A simple lifestyle safeguards our apostolic freedom, expresses our solidarity with the poor and makes our faith credible. This option cannot remain theoretical. Ignatius, speaking of poverty, asks of Jesuits that "*...all should when occasions arise, feel some effects of it*".

(...)

96 As community, CLC receives a specific charism (Ignatian) at the service of the Church's mission. It is expressed by the sending of its members on mission, the fruit of communal apostolic discernment, on specific forms of apostolate. It will not always be easy to do so, but one thing is certain: those who have opted for the Ignatian charism are, above all, apostles on the Church's mission and therefore they are sent by the community which shares their specific vocation. It is their right to know that the community explicitly sends them and at the same time accompanies both the apostolic discernment and the mission as it unfolds.

Individual mission

98 (...)The initial vocation to follow Jesus will unfold in specific activities. But, for these activities to become mission, it is necessary that the community assume the call, help to discern and, finally, send each one on mission. In this sense perhaps, it would be more correct to speak of *personal involvement in the Church's mission*.

Group mission

100 Action can be not only on a personal level, but also on the group level according to circumstances and in response to the needs perceived by the members of the community. These apostolic actions are also the expression of the personal vocation each one has received from the Lord. In this case, the community, in one way or another, will tend to translate the action, which it assumes and discerns, into mission. Therefore, we can speak of *group involvement in the mission of the Church*. Working as a team, with the grace of God, will have greater apostolic efficiency

Common mission

102 The common mission of CLC is the mission, which Christ entrusted to CLC as a Church association. This mission is the response, which CLC feels called to give to the great

needs and aspirations of today. It is its way of announcing the Good News of God's love in this present historical time. The common mission is made concrete by identifying apostolic priorities and lines of action.

103 It does not mean that all CLC members must do the same thing. It is mission that is common: the tasks are different. This is not only because of the origin of mission, but also because of its direction. All of us, each in his/her own way, stand for the same values, follow the same aims and have the same priorities. We can speak of *common involvement in the Church's mission*.

(...)

144 Even when apostolic service is offered on an individual basis, the service is always part of the mission received in CLC. Mission is always communal.

Community as mediation in the sending conferred by the Church

145 It is the *being sent by the Church* that gives a sense of mission to the apostolic tasks and humanitarian services of the members of CLC. The world community, integrated in the life and the mission of the Church, is the fundamental mediator of our mission. We receive this mission in our local and national community.

(...)

148 Apostolic communal discernment is a way of implementing what Vatican II called *discerning the signs of the times*, and involves the following stages:

- ▶ que a comunidade esteja *atenta e capaz de se abrir* às necessidades aos outros (...) para descobrir quais são as tarefas mais urgentes e mais universais que devem ser assumidas, e para oferecer soluções mais eficazes, mais radicais e mais globais para estes problemas.
- ▶ the community *prays for the grace of availability*. (...) This personal prayer is shared with the group.
- ▶ the community that *deliberates, sends and confirms our mission* is able to make decisions, to make choices and assume apostolic tasks in which, one way or another, all the group members are engaged.

(...)

161 b. Participation in the life of the Church

The CLC does not exist in isolation from the rest of the Christian community (parish, diocese, national and universal Church). It is, on the contrary, an integral part of this community and this finds its expression:

- ▶ in a liturgical and sacramental life, which, centred on the Eucharist, is "a concrete experience of unity in love and action".
- ▶ in the ordinary life of the Church, by participating in Church activities and identifying, effectively and lovingly, with her needs and problems, and supporting her progress.

162 c. Collaboration in the mission of the Church

Having received its mission *in the Church and from the Church*, CLC, in accordance with its directives and its pastoral priorities, brings to the people of God and their pastors the gift of its apostolic service and its rich and original charism in a spirit of discernment and shared responsibility.

In *The CLC Charism*

Points for meditation

1. *"To believe in Jesus, therefore, means (...) to live a life of faith, which promotes justice and takes an option for the poor. A simple lifestyle safeguards our apostolic freedom, expresses our solidarity with the poor and makes our faith credible". "the service to which CLC is called to give priority, in the light of its preferential option for the poor, is the promotion of justice"*
 - How has the following of Jesus more closely been translated into my actions and decisions?
 - In what degree do I identify myself with the election made by CL of promotion of justice as a priority field of mission?

2. *"The initial vocation to follow Jesus will unfold in specific activities. But, for these activities to become mission, it is necessary that the community assume the call, help to discern and, finally, send each one on mission".*
 - What role has my local, regional and national community had in this process?
 - How do I see this "de-individualization" of mission?

1. *"The common mission of CLC is the mission, which Christ entrusted to CLC as a Church association. This mission is the response, which CLC feels called to give to the great needs and aspirations of today. (...) The common mission is made concrete by identifying apostolic priorities and lines of action."*
 - What experience do I have of the three levels of involvement (individual, group and common) in the mission of the Church?
 - How have I, in my CLC journey, identified the priorities and the apostolic lines of action?

PROPOSAL III: OUR COMMON MISSION

Apostolic discernment as a permanent attitude

122 The CLC General Principles underline the need for apostolic discernment. They also propose a number of criteria, inspired by those drawn up by St Ignatius, for choosing our ministries and specific missions. Everything, which comes to us from Ignatius, in this case apostolic discernment, is marked by the "*magis*" (*the more effective*). His zeal for the greater glory of God enabled him to seek the most effective means for helping others.

(...)

124 (...)Ignatius makes a systematic presentation of the criteria for choosing ministries. These criteria can help us in CLC to define our own apostolic mission; for example, that CLC members should be open to what is more *urgent and more universal*.

(...)

148 Apostolic communal discernment is a way of implementing what Vatican II called *discerning the signs of the times*, and involves the following stages:

- ▶ the community is *attentive to and capable of opening* itself to others, (...) to discover the most urgent and universal tasks which should be undertaken, and to offer more efficient, radical and global solutions to these problems.
- ▶ the community *prays for the grace of availability*. (...)This personal prayer is shared with the group.
- ▶ the community that *deliberates, sends and confirms our mission* is able to make decisions, to make choices and assume apostolic tasks in which, one way or another, all the group members are engaged.

In *The CLC Charism*

The formulation of a Common Mission for the World Community 1

According to the spirit of GP 8, beyond the individual and personal dimension of mission, which "*is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of persons, places and situations*" (GP 8a), we are called to "*exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms*" (GP 8b). This form of apostolate is not just a better answer to the complexity of the world in which we live and to the challenges it raises, but also, and more importantly, represents the essence of what means to be Church, that is, to live in communion. This way, CLC becomes more visible, more credible and attractive to others.

Independently of the way we exercise this group or corporative apostolate – "*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*" (GP 8b) – the criterion to receive this qualification lies in that we all deliberately want to work/collaborate with others and all those involved live a form of "obedience" adjusted to the lay vocation. This means a fidelity and perseverance lived in the framework of an apostolic body that works as the mediator of the significance and direction of our lives.

Guidelines for the formulation of *Our Common Mission*

The document *Our Common Mission* "is the outcome of the XIII General Assembly of the Christian Life Community in Itaici 1998. (...) This XIII Assembly inscribes itself in the line of all - and especially the last four - World Assemblies. In Loyola 86, it became clear that, as we were a World Community, we were community for mission. In Guadalajara 90, we felt ourselves sent to bear fruit as an apostolic body. In Hong Kong 94, we recognized and integrated the context from and into which we are sent. In Itaici we defined our common mission in the context of our world."

"The process resulted in discovering three areas of mission and a set of necessary means for this mission."

This text "is now offered to all national and local communities, all individual members and Ecclesiastical Assistants of CLC all over the world".

[What follows is a synthesis, but we recommend the reading of the complete CLC document].

I. CHRIST AND SOCIAL REALITY

We want to bring the freeing power of Christ to our social reality.

- To participate in the prophetic standing of the Church, as prophets of hope and justice.
- To make the option for the poor, not as an idea, but by making serious analysis and adopting a responsible and effective attitude towards poverty and its causes.
- To assume the perspective of the poor and to grow in the capacity to meet them and to take part in their struggles
- To examine our lives from the following viewpoints: simple lifestyle, spirit of solidarity, refusal of consumerism, rejection of pride and greed of possession
- To share the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and learn how to contribute with the process of discernment and those listening and dialogue skills that we learn in our community

II. CHRIST AND CULTURE

We want to find Christ in all our varied cultures and to let His grace illuminate all that needs transformation.

- To value the unique character of local cultures, which enriches the individual with particular contributions and with symbolism and creativity.
- To abhor the harm, which the sinfulness of each culture can cause in breaking persons and in splitting community, developing capacities for critical analysis and being countercultural when necessary.
- To seek the positive integration of peoples of different cultures in one world which respects the unique contribution of each one, resisting to the tendencies for uniformity.
- To be mediator of the manifestation of Christ through respect, dialogue and transformation of what is negative, in the multiplication of the good and in caring for the community which asks us to move beyond our narrow horizons.
- To stand up against individualism, marginalization, consumerism, with dialogue and reconciliation, integrating faith and life.
- To apply these practices also within the Church.

III. CHRIST

We want to live in union with Christ so as to bring him to every aspect of our daily life in the world.

- To value daily life as an opportunity to grow in faith and service.

- To express unconditional support to the human person, creating authentic interpersonal relationships, living a healthy affectivity, welcoming and being appreciative, behaving as agents of inclusion.
- To cultivate family life and the maturity of authentic relationships at home, between parents and children and between the generations.
- To offer the richness of our faith, striving for making the way of Jesus attractive and challenging for young people.
- To value work and the dignity of every collaborator.
- To overcome or reducing distance between our faith commitments and our professional activities and other occupations.

These three areas of mission were illuminated by the spiritual source that feeds us and makes us ready for mission: the Spiritual Exercises that help us to grow in our Christian life. Moreover, we have to attend to our formation for mission, so that our community may become an ever more apt instrument for service.

Points for meditation

1. *"Apostolic communal discernment is a way of implementing what Vatican II called discerning the signs of the times, and involves the following stages"*
 - *That the community be attentive to and capable of opening itself to others*
 - *That the community pray for the grace of availability*
 - *That the community deliberate, send and confirm our mission*

What new methods and proceedings must I assume so that my community may act evermore in accordance with the four pillars: to discern, to send, to support, to evaluate?

2. What relevance have for me the areas of mission and guidelines of the document Our Common Mission? What weight have they had in my individual and communal discernment and what influence have they exercised on the three levels of involvement in the mission of the Church?
3. May I / is it opportune to make more concrete my / my community's apostolic project?

AREA	DECISION / OPTION	PRACTICAL MEANS
1. Social Reality		
2. Culture		
3. Daily life		
EVALUATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When? • How? 		

PROPOSAL IV: PERMANENT CLC COMMITMENT

171 Thus our commitment is to present ourselves freely before the Lord and His people and to give a visible sign of that which we have lived and discerned in our hearts. It is a gesture somewhat similar to a marital engagement. In proclaiming before God and our companions that we have committed ourselves to a spirituality, a way of life and a mission, we are confirming before them our discernment and the gift of ourselves. We proclaim publicly, that the Christian Life Community is the body within which we live the charism that the Spirit of the Lord has given to us.

(...)

190 *Permanent Commitment* corresponds in the vocational process of the CLC member, to the stage of full apostolic life: when personal vocation is lived as apostolic mission. The unfolding and expression of all vocations is mission. Those who make their Permanent Commitment are those members who have completed their vocational discernment and have offered themselves to and embraced the CLC's lifestyle. This stage is necessarily linked to *apostolic discernment*, as an indispensable element for developing mission.

(...)

193 Rather than seeing Permanent Commitment as a risky decision, which limits future freedom, it is important to realise that inner freedom is the foundation of this decision and one of its fruits. Real freedom exists when people are able to direct their lives according to their deepest desires. Thus, they are free inasmuch as they are able to live according to the deep desires the Spirit of the Lord has awakened in their hearts.

(...)

195 For this reason when CLC members reach the conclusion that proclaiming Christ and His Good News to the world around them is what *"I want and desire, and it is my deliberate determination"*, they know that the Lord has guided their steps through a long journey. Freedom to commit themselves does not just mean being ready to choose. It really means giving themselves, surrendering to God, and trusting Him totally..

(...)

197 By bearing witness before the CLC, those making a commitment ask the Lord for the grace that they may give their generous response to His fidelity. By doing so in front of the whole community, they are asking for its help: that the community may accompany them on their journey. The external expression of this internal offering somehow gives it a sacramental character.

198 For the rest of the community, the public celebration of commitment bears a certain sacramental dimension. It is a visible sign of the Spirit at work in each member leading, him or her, to a greater commitment to their mission. It is also a sign building and strengthening the community in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, sent by the Father. With a spirit of faith, the public commitment of a member of the community is an invitation to *"rid ourselves of every burden and persevere"* in the service to the one who has called us into community, *"keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith"*.

In *O Carisma CVX*

Points for meditation

1. *"In proclaiming before God and our companions that we have committed ourselves to a spirituality, a way of life and a mission, we are confirming before them our discernment and the gift of ourselves. We proclaim publicly, that the Christian Life Community is the body within which we live the charism that the Spirit of the Lord has given to us."*
 - What evidences lead me to say that it is CLC that I may live the charism the holy Spirit has given me?

2. *"Real freedom exists when people are able to direct their lives according to their deepest desires. Thus, they are free inasmuch as they are able to live according to the deep desires the Spirit of the Lord has awakened in their hearts."*
 - What role do I recognize to CLC as intermediation of my apostolic discernment? How do I respond to its appeals?

3. *"By doing so [the Commitment] in front of the whole community, they are asking for its help: that the community may accompany them on their journey. The external expression of this internal offering somehow gives it a sacramental character."*
 - As I prepare myself to publicly express my Permanent Commitment with CLC, how do assimilate the "sacramental character" of this act? What does it mean for me?

III. COMMITMENT IN CLC

COMMITMENT IN THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

- 164** *"Membership of the Christian Life Community requires a personal vocation. For a period of time determined in the General Norms, the candidate is introduced to the CLC way of life. This time is allotted for the candidate and the wider community to discern the candidate's vocation. Once a decision has been made, and approved by the wider community, the member makes a Temporary Commitment, to allow time to test, with the help of the community, his or her ability to live according to the end and spirit of CLC. Then, after a suitable period of time, determined by the General Norms, a Permanent Commitment is made."*
- 165** *"In whichever way admission takes place, the new members must be helped by the Community to decide whether a call, together with an ability and a willingness to live it, are present, and to become identified with the wider Christian Life Community. After a period of time, normally no longer than four years and no less than one, they assume a Temporary Commitment to this way of life. An experience of the Spiritual Exercises is strongly recommended as a means of arriving at this personal decision."*
- 166** *"The temporary engagement continues as such until, after a process of discernment, the member expresses his or her Permanent Commitment to CLC, unless he or she freely withdraws from the community or is excluded by it. The length of time between temporary and Permanent Commitment should ordinarily be no more than eight years and no less than two"*.
- 167** *. "An experience of the complete Spiritual Exercises, in one of their several forms (in daily life, a closed month, retreats over several years), precedes Permanent Commitment to the community"*.

A. REASONS FOR COMMITMENT

There are many reasons for commitment, the most important being:

- 168 1 - *The fundamental Trinitarian Theology.*** The roots of commitment in CLC are found in God. The Principle and Foundation of our commitment is that God establishes an unbreakable covenant with His people. The Lord is the first to commit Himself in a permanent and visible way. God has been faithful to this covenant again and again throughout history as witnessed by His liberating deeds. But, it is in the Incarnation that He shows us "without a shadow of doubt" the greatest and irrevocable sign of this covenant.

- 169 2 - Anthropological basis:** Human beings are not pure spirit and need to express their deepest experiences through the senses. Our relationship with the mystery of God is best expressed in visible, sacramental signs. We are, equally, part of the times in which we live, so our spiritual and apostolic experiences are lived in these times. Thus, Temporary or Permanent Commitment with the CLC is perceived through the senses. Permanent Commitment signifies that, within time, we pattern our response according to the faithful love of God and the fullness of the mystery of Christ who brings all things to Himself.
- 170 3 - Communal basis - the Church.** We do not live our vocation and mission as isolated individuals. We live them in community and we proclaim before that community of friends and companions in the Lord that we are in and with the Church. The community has the right to see, hear, feel and appreciate our commitment. This helps us to live coherently the way of life to which we have committed ourselves.
- 171** Thus our commitment is to present ourselves freely before the Lord and His people and to give a visible sign of that which we have lived and discerned in our hearts. It is a gesture somewhat similar to a marital engagement. In proclaiming before God and our companions that we have committed ourselves to a spirituality, a way of life and a mission, we are confirming before them our discernment and the gift of ourselves. We proclaim publicly, that the Christian Life Community is the body within which we live the charism that the Spirit of the Lord has given to us.

B. TEMPORARY COMMITMENT

i. The process leading to Temporary Commitment

- 172** A reading of the General Principles and General Norms shows that CLC life originates in a call from the Lord to each individual member and that such a vocation is apostolic and universal lived in the Church and within a local community.
- 173** This emphasis on vocation can inspire, better than anything else, the initial steps in CLC. The new members *"must be helped by the community to assimilate the CLC way of life, and to decide whether a call, together with an ability and a willingness to live it, are present"*.
- 174** Vocation - or calling - is perceived in the beginning as a vague and diffused longing that is, however, strong enough to encourage the person to make contact with CLC. When a person first becomes a member of a community, he/she begins to become familiar with the CLC's way of life and growth. These ways are introduced gradually, as part of a formation process during which spiritual guidance plays an important role.
- 175** During this growth stage, the person has to make certain decisions: to join in days of recollection, to participate in a local community, to assist regularly at group meetings, to meet with a spiritual guide, to take part in an apostolic activity, to undertake the Spiritual Exercises or a short retreat of 4 to 8 days etc. In making these decisions, candidates commit themselves progressively to the CLC way of life. On their journey, they will experience different emotions, and these will help them to realise whether or not this is the way for them to enrich their relationship with God. The community, for its part ¹⁵⁰, sustains the person with an attitude of discernment and encourages them to take further steps towards growth and commitment.

176 At length the moment arrives when the person must ponder in prayer whether the path along which he or she has been taught and guided for some time (1-4 years according to GN 2), is truly a call and a grace from God. This moment of discernment can arise spontaneously, or it can be a response to a deliberate invitation.

2. The purpose and meaning of Temporary Commitment

177 Temporary Commitment is the expression of a desire to live according to the CLC way of life. This commitment implies a search for the vocation to which the Lord is calling the individual, and the *discernment of this vocation*.

178 In those individuals who already have the necessary disposition, this vocational discernment takes place on two levels:

- ▶ The choice of **a state of life** by those who have not yet done so (religious life, of course, excludes a Permanent Commitment to CLC);
- ▶ **Amendment and reformation of lifestyle**, for those who have already decided upon their state of life.

179 This discernment of vocation does not take for granted a definitive CLC vocation, but tries to remain open to whatever state of life we are being called by the will of God. The process, lived in the CLC way, implies that the person already belongs to a community to which he/she has made a temporal commitment, even if the individual vocation has not yet been clearly defined.

180 An important aspect of such discernment is the question "do they want and desire" to seek and find the will of God in their lives and to follow His call? This presupposes an ever-deepening experience of God fostered by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, with the support of the community, for greater service. They discern whether or not the CLC way is what God wants for them and if they are "open, free and ready" to go on this journey with a "deliberate determination" toward an apostolic way of life.

181 This vocational stage as such is open to different options. For a married adult, for instance, the question will be whether he/she is called to live a CLC lifestyle in married life. Young people will ask themselves, what style of life (lay, religious or clerical) they are called to. A good number of adults and young people will feel called to live according to the CLC style of life. Others find that their motivation for joining was rather social or affective and, acknowledging that they have no desire to continue further, seek other ways of belonging to the Church.

182 For those young people or adults who come to the conclusion that the community answers their deepest aspirations, this stage brings a renewed commitment to the CLC way.

183 Thus, "Temporary Commitment", made within the community and accepted by it, is the expression of the individual's determination to seek God's will by employing Ignatian methods and the community's offer of its own Ignatian process of formation.

184 It is important that "Temporary Commitment" should not be reduced to a set of obligations but should be our loving answer, in *the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love*, to God who loved us first.

185 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius play a key role in the discernment of vocation. At this stage of formation, Temporary Commitment fosters in them the dispositions needed for making the Spiritual Exercises well, bearing in mind their apostolic vocation.

3. Ways of approaching Temporary Commitment

186 It is important that *those who make a commitment* find a sacramental expression (a sign that does what it signifies) of their desire to seek and find God's will, through the use of Ignatian methods and in the company of the community. At the same time, the *local community* commits itself to accompany and encourage them, offering them the Ignatian methods. It is also important to make an explicit reference to their commitment to the *World Community*, an apostolic body in the Church.

187 Temporary Commitment can be implemented in different ways. One way is to have a yearly meeting for those who have been taking part in CLC for some years at which they could be invited to reflect on the significance of Temporary Commitment. Discernment is thus provoked and those who wish to make their Temporary Commitment can agree on the best way to express it (occasion, form and formula). Another way might be to have each year, as a National or Regional tradition, a procedure, a formula and a fixed date (e.g. World CLC Day, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Pentecost), when those, who wish, express their Temporary Commitment.

188 In a well-guided CLC process, this time of discernment of an explicit Temporary Commitments is inevitable. If this is not the case, it could be for one of the following three reasons:

- ▶ the process stops at some stage and becomes repetitive;
- ▶ commitment is not properly understood, has the wrong meaning or connotation;
- ▶ difficulties arise from the way in which commitment is expressed and celebrated.

189 Our challenge today is to find visible ecclesial signs for what we are trying to live and believe that express a theological and spiritual point of view in keeping with our formation.

C. PERMANENT COMMITMENT

190 *Permanent Commitment* corresponds in the vocational process of the CLC member, to the stage of full apostolic life: when personal vocation is lived as apostolic mission. The unfolding and expression of all vocations is mission. Those who make their Permanent Commitment are those members who have completed their vocational discernment and have offered themselves to and embraced the CLC's lifestyle. This stage is necessarily linked to *apostolic discernment*, as an indispensable element for developing mission.

191 Temporary Commitment in CLC is linked to the formation process and corresponds to the call of the Eternal King and the "election". *Permanent Commitment* follows from the CLC way of life, and is in harmony with the trustful surrender of the Contemplation for attaining Love. Commitment is the "*Take, Lord and receive...*" as a response to the commitment of God who 1) *has given me so much*; 2) *dwells in me, giving me existence and meaning*; 3) *labors and works for me*; 4) *seeing how all good things and gifts descend from above... just as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source, so too from God comes power, goodness, justice, mercy and the necessary desire to live out our commitment.*

192 Permanent Commitment is the culmination of our vocational discernment in which we express our desire to discover God's will and fulfil it in our apostolic life, in answer to our specific call and our readiness to be sent on mission.

1. Permanent Commitment

193 Rather than seeing Permanent Commitment as a risky decision, which limits future freedom, it is important to realise that inner freedom is the foundation of this decision and one of its fruits. Real freedom exists when people are able to direct their lives according to their deepest desires. Thus, they are free inasmuch as they are able to live according to the deep desires the Spirit of the Lord has awakened in their hearts.

194 Our free acts are not simply based on will power, but are acts of faith and hope. The radical quality of our commitment is not so much based on our capabilities, but on *"the freedom with which Christ freed us and means us to remain free"*.

195 For this reason when CLC members reach the conclusion that proclaiming Christ and His Good News to the world around them is what *"I want and desire, and it is my deliberate determination"*, they know that the Lord has guided their steps through a long journey. Freedom to commit themselves does not just mean being ready to choose. It really means giving themselves, surrendering to God, and trusting Him totally.

196 It is in this spirit that St Ignatius prays: *"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will - all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours. Do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace, for that is enough for me."* Our freedom comes from God's love and is offered to Him. God loved us first; God committed Himself to us first.

2. Public Commitment

197 By bearing witness before the CLC, those making a commitment ask the Lord for the grace that they may give their generous response to His fidelity. By doing so in front of the whole community, they are asking for its help: that the community may accompany them on their journey. The external expression of this internal offering somehow gives it a sacramental character.

198 For the rest of the community, the public celebration of commitment bears a certain sacramental dimension. It is a visible sign of the Spirit at work in each member leading, him or her, to a greater commitment to their mission. It is also a sign building and strengthening the community in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, sent by the Father. With a spirit of faith, the public commitment of a member of the community is an invitation to *"rid ourselves of every burden and persevere"* in the service to the one who has called us into community, *"keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith"*

199 This is the time for confirmation of the Election, to ensure a strong commitment to mission and service. The Spiritual Exercises should play a key role in this life process of living mission helping us to follow, more perfectly, the poor and humble Christ.

200 At this stage, formation should be considered as "ongoing formation" so that we are always "in good apostolic shape", and thus able to give at any time the most adequate response to the question: *What shall I do for Christ?"*

In O Carisma CVX

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