



Christian Life Community

Australia

The Hidden Treasure of Ignatian Spirituality

Good evening

I was out with friends recently and the conversation turned to movies and in particular, blockbuster movies such as Indiana Jones and his larger than life adventures, and the *National Treasure* series. Searching for hidden treasure is a common theme in legend and fiction and blockbuster movies, but real-life treasure hunters do exist.

Treasure lost from the Spanish fleet consisted of gold, silver, jewels and also cocoa, vanilla and Brazil wood. Tonight/today I am going to take you on a hunt for Spanish treasure but you will not have to crack whips like Harrison Ford or wear a funny hat. The treasure we are going to find is Ignatian spirituality and we will find this treasure through Christian Life Community.

So what exactly is Christian Life Community?

Christian Life Community is an international lay organisation in over 60 countries in 5 continents with more than 65,000 members.

- We meet regularly in small groups to help each other know and follow Christ both personally and collectively in ordinary daily living; and
- we are formed in Ignatian spirituality
- It has a close relationship with the Jesuits and
- Is of global significance: It is an international lay organization within the Catholic Church. It has an NGO status at the United Nations

How did CLC begin?

- In 1540 St Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus
- After his death in 1556, the Marian Congregation, the forerunner to CLC, was founded
- Christian Life Community was officially named in 1967 and confirmed by Pope Paul VI in 1968

And who is this Ignatius whose life and actions still influence us today?

Ignatius was a minor nobleman, born Inigo Lopez in 1491 in the family castle of Loyola in the Basque region of northern Spain. He was the youngest of thirteen children and at the age of fourteen, he was sent away to train as a royal page to the King of Spain. It was there that he was introduced to the ideals of chivalry and knightly valour. In his autobiography he sums up the first twenty-six years of his life

in one sentence: "He was a man given to the follies of the world; and what he enjoyed most was warlike sport, with a great and foolish desire to win fame." The desire to win fame brought Ignatius to Pamplona to aid in the defence of that frontier city against French attack. On May 20, 1521, he was hit by a cannon ball which shattered one leg and badly injured the other. Ignatius and the city of Pamplona both fell to the French forces.

French doctors cared for the badly-wounded Ignatius and returned him to Loyola, where he spent a long convalescence. In this forced period of inactivity he asked for books to read, and out of boredom, accepted the only ones available - *The Lives of the Saints* and *The Life of Christ* (probably not the usual kind of reading matter for a twenty-six old man fond of the follies of the world). When not reading, the romantic knight dreamed at times, of imitating the deeds of St Francis and St Dominic, and at others, of knightly deeds of valour in service of "a certain lady".

After a time, he came to realise that some things left him dry and dissatisfied, while other things were life giving. His eyes were opened and he began to marvel at the difference and to reflect upon it. Little by little he came to recognise the difference between the good and bad spirits that were stirring within. Ignatius was discovering God at work in his life; his desire for fame was transformed into a desire to dedicate himself completely to following Christ and helping others.

Eventually this led him to form the Jesuits in 1540.

His road to sainthood was not easy, but despite this he became St Ignatius in 1622.

So, what is Ignatian spirituality and how will it benefit me?

It's for those who seek:

- a deepening, of our relationship with God/Jesus/The Holy Spirit.
- greater inner freedom
- deeper inner healing, integrity and authenticity
- renewed energy for Christ's mission
- a renewed sense of purpose, direction and meaning.

It also leads to:

- a clearer sense of God's presence and activity in one's life
- a greater sense of connection with oneself, the human family, and all creation
- a thirst for justice and peace
- a greater openness to "helping others"

CLC for me is the opportunity to meet with close and loving friends who share and challenge my values and my beliefs. It is being supported in my search to know God more deeply. It is about discovering who I really am; directing myself toward God; noticing God's action in my life; connecting my lived experience with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; It helps me to grow, like Ignatius, who dedicated himself completely to following Christ and "helping others".

The essence of Ignatian Spirituality is finding God in the everyday-In the midst of our lives as we live them, in our employment or unemployment, in our homes and

mortgages, our family, our children, and the routine of daily life. Or standing here talking to all of you.

And how do I experience these privileges?

You are invited to become a member of the World Christian Life Community.

You may ask - What's in it for me?

CLC way of life will help you:

1. discover "the more" in life
2. experience the unique relationship God has with each of us
3. be part of an active, supportive community of like-minded Christians
4. share the challenges of living and believing
5. integrate your faith and life and build the Body of Christ within the Church
6. make God-centred decisions in your life.

What are the next steps in the journey?

1. Give it a try
2. Make contact with the local CLC person in your State to discuss how you can have an experience of CLC
3. It is a gradual process so that you can taste and see whether CLC is for you. You are invited to attend some meetings. The process happens over a period of 6 months at which point you can decide whether you wish to join.

How do you join?

The CLC brochure I am handing you has the contact's details on the back. Give him/her a call and you've taken the first step to enriching your life.