

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY (CLC)

## LOOKING BACK TO 40 YEARS OF DEEPENING ITS SPECIFIC IDENTITY

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**I**n 2007, CLC celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval of its General Principles. 40 years are a long time – and a short one, seen in the context of our roots going back to the times of St. Ignatius of Loyola. In all these decades and even centuries, many people have received the call to follow Jesus Christ as lay people inspired by the Spiritual Exercises in community. Their generous day to day response, their individual and communal discernment and their commitment to this way of life in the Church made CLC what it is now. We thank God wholeheartedly for their lives and their responses to our Lord's call – and personally, I am very grateful for their sharing of the graces received, the limitations and challenges faced, the struggles gotten through.

Compared to the past more than four centuries, my own history with CLC is definitely shorter but the possibility to talk with and listen to witnesses in many parts of the world has allowed me to develop a sense of the processes lived. Of course, there would be many ways of sharing about these past 40 years, as the “mosaic” of CLC at all its levels is manifold. I can only try to present some outlines as to how, from a world perspective, I perceive these past 40 years now, being aware that it won't be possible to portray adequately the many “small steps” at local, national and international level that finally made up our growth process as CLC.

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Sharing with members of new ecclesiastical movements, we are sometimes asked whether we really form part of these groups, as we as CLC are neither a movement (but a world-wide lay community) nor new: Our history goes back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to the origins of the Society of Jesus. Already right from the beginning, Ignatius of Loyola, and subsequently his first companions gathered lay people (at that time only men) to share with them the spirituality founded in the Spiritual Exercises and to cooperate with them in the apostolate.

### *The apostolic origins of CLC: The Marian Congregations*

It was the Belgian Jesuit Jean Leunis, who, in the 1560's, brought together a group of students in the Roman College to prepare them for apostolic activities in the City of Rome. His desire was to deepen the aims of education of the Roman College, which was definitely a European Centre of profound academic formation, of science, research and culture, marked by the spirit of St. Ignatius to search for God in all things. Thus, the groups of students came together to integrate all dimensions of their lives, their

academic studies and their Christian faith.

Obviously Jean Leunis SJ had special talents to encourage and guide them in their journey under the guidance of Mary as their patron saint

*Marian Congregations: intensive spiritual life, community meetings, apostolic involvement*

– leading them to becoming the Marian Congregations: “Ubi duo vel tres congregati sunt” [“...where two or three are gathered in my name” Mt, 18,20]. An impetus for this name came from a fresco in the Chapel of the Roman College of the Annunciation to Mary, integrated in the mystery of the Incarnation, following one of the key contemplations of the Spiritual Exercises.

The life of these Marian Congregations was marked by an intensive spiritual life with weekly community meetings and an active apostolic involvement, that was rooted in a fervent search for new and effective responses to the religious, social and political needs of their times.

From 1565 onwards, Jean Leunis SJ travelled to found new congregations. And only a few years later, there were almost no Jesuit

Colleges in Europe and the mission areas entrusted to the Society of Jesus without Marian Congregations. These groups of lay people became a main pillar of the works of the Jesuits and, for a long period of time, contributed to the renewal of the Catholic Church following the spirit of the Tridentine Council of Trent (1545-1563).

Just a few days after the death of Jean Leunis SJ, Pope Gregory XIII confirmed the Congregation of Rome as the Head of all Marian Congregations (1584/1585). The “Prima Primaria” was to ensure the unity and authenticity of the Marian Congregations. As the first lay association in the Church, the Marian Congregations were granted the right of self-government. From a juridical point of view, they were under the General Superior of the Society of Jesus. An important instrument to support the unity in the same Spirit and the authenticity of the Marian Congregations were the first General Rules of 1587, put together by the General Superior Fr. Claudius Aquaviva based on the experiences of the groups in Rome. These General Rules that would be valid for nearly three centuries, proved to be an important cornerstone for the dynamic developments of Marian Congregations worldwide.

Until 1773, about 2500 groups were affiliated to the Marian Congregations. 1773 is the year when Pope Clemens XIV abolishes the Society of Jesus and their apostolic works. At first, this also included the Marian Congregations, but after a few months, they were re-established, now under the responsibility of the local bishops. This decision caused an enormous growth of the Marian Congregations – in 1948, 80,000 groups exist but separated from their original inspiration. Thus, they developed in the Church as a mass movement, devoted to Mary. And until today many people would identify Marian Congregations with this image. The original intention of an integration of all dimensions of life rooted in the spirituality of St Ignatius, community life and apostolic service, got lost.

***“Go back to your roots”***

In 1922, the process of renewal inspired by the original aims of the Marian Congregations began. Fr. Ledochowski, then Superior General of the Society of Jesus, convened a meeting of Jesuits working with Marian Congregations which included approximately 5% of all existing groups. 40 Jesuits from 19 countries came together, to reflect about the possibilities of doing something for the restoration of the original spirit, being aware of the

fact that the Marian Congregations were closely connected with the Jesuits from their very beginning. As a result of this meeting, a central secretariat was founded in Rome – at the service of Jesuits and the Marian Congregations.

Pope Pius XII followed the efforts of this central secretariat with great interest. He did all he could do to support the renewal of Marian Congregations. In 1948, he published an “Apostolic Constitution” called “Bis seculari”, stressing the original Ignatian identity of Marian Congregations and calling all groups to return to these origins, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. As it was the Pope who made this call, it committed the whole Church – and not only those groups who had continued to be connected or those who were reconnected with the Society of Jesus. With his Apostolic Constitution, Pius XII gave an orientation towards the future and offered some guidelines on lay apostolate. Thus, he definitely opened new horizons!

How was “Bis Saeculari” to be put into practice? To plan concrete steps, it would be important that not only Jesuits but also lay people come together to cooperate and share their ideas and reflections. To support this cooperation, the central secretariat – under the headship of Fr. Louis Paulussen SJ since 1951 – at the request of representatives of Marian Congregations prepared statutes for a permanent international contact between the groups. With the confirmation of these statutes by the Pope in 1953, the World Federation of Marian Congregations was officially founded.

Connected with an international congress on the occasion of the Marian Year, in 1954 the first world assembly of Marian Congregations took place in Rome, during which the laity themselves initiated their process of renewal, taking over the responsibility again and electing a first World Executive Council. With great enthusiasm, Marian Congregations in many countries re-discovered their original roots. In 1959 in Newark (USA), members looked for ways to renew the Marian Congregations and adapt them to current requirements. The delegates were ready to accept the challenges and deeply desired a profound renewal according to the original inspiration of Marian Congregations. First steps towards developing new “General Principles” were taken. Both, Fr. Paulussen and Fr. Janssen, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, were aware that, canonically, only the Superior General would have the right to issue new rules. But, Fr. Janssen strongly supported the move forward to an independence of Marian

Congregations – confirmed by the Holy See only eight years later by approving the new General Principles of CLC.

Returning to the origins means to re-visit the roots and re-discover and adapt their spirit to current realities. There is no need to re-invent the wheel but to reflect carefully on how the original inspiration of the Marian Congregations can be lived today. What does Ignatian Spirituality, community life and apostolic service mean now for the individual member but also for the group?

A first challenge was definitely the rediscovery of Ignatian Spirituality. In the early 1950's, eight day Ignatian retreats and, later on, even the full 30 days Spiritual Exercises were given to lay people for the first

*What does Ignatian Spirituality, community life and apostolic service mean but also for the group?*

time with great success in the USA. Eventually, other continents offered Ignatian retreats to lay people. Jesuits and other theologians helped the Marian Congregations to re-connect with the Spiritual Exercises as the foundation of their spirituality and to deepen their understanding.

In 1964, it would have been possible to present the new General Principles to the delegates' assembly taking place in Bombay. But in the midst of the II Vatican Council, the importance to wait in order to allow the World Federation to approve new Statutes which would fully correspond to the outcome of the Council of Renewal for the whole Church was evident.

***New General Principles and the change of name:  
Christian Life Communities (CLC)***

During the 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Federation on October 1967, the final draft of the new General Principles developed through a world-wide consultation since the end of 1959, was presented to the 140 delegates from 38 countries. Quite a number of amendments had still to be discussed. Each sentence was voted on separately, in order to come to a full agreement on the whole text which would express a new beginning. Finally, on October 21, the participants, moved by the Spirit of our Lord and influenced by the

rediscovery of the Ignatian sources and by Vatican II, approved the full “General Principles”. It was an extensive programme of “aggiornamento” for this 400 years old organization.

***The preamble can be seen as the core – not just an introduction:***

*“1. In fulfilment of his promise, God became man, born of Mary in order to give himself continuously to all men and invite all men to give themselves continuously to him in and with Christ. This gift of God to men and of men to God, moved by the Spirit, is always conditioned by the circumstances of each situation. Therefore, we members of the World Federation of Christian Life Communities have composed these General Principles to aid us to give ourselves always more generously to God in loving and serving all mankind in the world of today.*

*2. Because our movement is a way of Christian life, these principles are to be interpreted not so much by the letter of this text but rather by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love. This law, which the Spirit inscribes in our hearts, expresses itself anew in each situation of daily life. It respects the uniqueness of each personal vocation and enables us to be open and free, always at the disposal of God. It challenges us to see our grave responsibilities; it aids us to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work together with the whole People of God for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all men.”*

The first part concretises the characteristics of the way of life: spirituality, community, unity with the Church, service for justice and peace, inspiration drawn from the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ, union with Mary. In the second part, the elements of the way of life are outlined in more detail. Paragraph 11 of the General Principles summarizes how the three pillars of spirituality, apostolic service and community mark and inspire the life of a member.

*“11. This way of life commits the candidate, with the help of the group, to strive for a continual development which is spiritual, apostolic and human. In practice this involves: frequent and even daily participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, an intense 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 regular spiritual direction, an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality, a love for the Mother of God.*

*Furthermore, it requires of each member simplicity in all aspects of living in order to follow more closely Christ in his poverty and preserve interior liberty in the midst of the world. It demands of him an apostolic commitment, especially to the renewal of the institutions of society, and an effort to strive to develop human qualities and professional skills so as to become ever more competent and convincing in his witness.*

*Finally, each one takes upon himself the responsibility for participating in the meetings and activities of the group, and each helps and encourages the other to pursue his personal vocation, always ready to give and to receive fraternal advice and aid."*

The juridical requirements reflected the "new spirit" of the General Principles as well: It would no longer be the Prima Primaria in Rome and the General Superior of the Society of Jesus who would accept a local community or national federation as member, but that role would now rest on the regional and world Federation.

To this day, witnesses of this 1967 Assembly emotionally share that the approval of these new General Principles seemed to be a miracle – in spite of their long and profound preparations. Struggles continued up to the last phases of voting as to whether it was really possible and would correspond to the Spirit of renewal to opt for such a radical way of life. Finally, it was those lay people who had lived the renewal as inspired by Pope Pius XII who, through the sharing of their own experiences and witnessing of the fruits in their family, professional and apostolic life, paved the way to a communal "Yes". When the new General Principles were brought to the altar at Mass after the concluding vote, it was akin to sealing the way the Sodalties had been guided during the past years: Through the transforming power of God, these words would be filled with Spirit and Life for all Sodalties in the world. *On March 25, 1968, Pope Paul VI confirmed the new General Principles for a trial period of three years. On March 31, 1971, they were finally approved by the Holy See.*

Finally, the 1967 Assembly also decided to change the name: Many countries had underlined that it would be impossible to live a profound renewal while keeping the name of Marian Congregations. Many groups had looked for ways to express the renewal but the final name for the world

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Federation (but not automatically for all affiliated groups!) as “Christian Life Communities” came from among the participants. *Thus, CLC started to live their renewed vocation: as laity, rooted in the Ignatian Spirituality, in community and at the service of justice and peace.*

In the following years, the enthusiasm of 1967 was put to test at various levels: tensions on the part of members, criticism and resistance from some Jesuits as well as from some bishops. But despite such set-backs, by the next General Assembly in Santo Domingo in 1970, it was clear that there was no going back. After acknowledging the ideal in the new General Principles, after having accepted the concept of our vocation and the elements of the corresponding way of life, it was necessary to humbly take small steps in human and spiritual development – as individuals and as community – to live this vocation. In Santo Domingo, it was planned to live a communal discernment of decision-making, a true “*deliberatio*” but it simply did not work. The delegates were supposed to study the role of CLC in the crisis of the Church and in the challenge of development, but instead they themselves lived the crisis. In fact, the catastrophe of this Assembly weighed heavily on the participants as well as on the Executive Committee. Yet, in a spiritual sense, it proved to be an invitation and provocation that facilitated an enormous learning process.

Accordingly, the following 1973 Assembly in Augsburg was designed in a way that would help the delegates to grow into the way of life of CLC, step by step. The theme “*CLC, a community at the service of liberation of the whole person and all persons*” was an answer to the challenge from within and outside CLC. For the first time, a 14 days international formation course preceded the Assembly that was attended by two thirds of the 170 delegates representing 40 countries. Thus, people could experience both a CLC formation programme (which would offer a model for formation at local and national levels) as well as familiarity as members of a world-wide community. Based on the chosen theme, the assembly led the delegates to concrete points of direction and action:

- *Commitment to the transformation of political, economic, social, cultural and religious structures, using discernment to determine priorities and methods of action;*

- *Openness to the world by presence, by action and by collaboration with all persons of good will, and solidarity with the very poor and the oppressed;*



- *Recognition of the capital importance of a formation rooted in the Spiritual Exercises and in the cultures of the different countries;*
- *A community life in which sharing and mutual help extends to all communities, to other nations and to the poor.*

During the next General Assembly in Manila 1976, the theme “*Poor with Christ for a Better Service*” called to mind our social responsibility and became more alive than ever. Again, the Assembly was combined with formation courses before and after, including exposure experiences in the slums of Manila and 8 days Spiritual Exercises. The immediate connectedness of formation and service with a clear option in favour of the poor was not just a concern for discussion, it was a concrete experience marking the delegates, the Assembly and the follow-up processes lived at national and local level. At all levels, CLC looked for ways to deepen both the individual spiritual growth process as well as the group process, following the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It was imperative to be grounded in concrete situations, open to be touched and challenged by the reality of the poor in our countries and in the world, in order to respond to the needs of the times and to collaborate in the construction of the Reign of God.

### ***From the Federation to One World Community***

The fruits of the processes lived became visible in Rome '79. It was evident that we belonged together more deeply than the word “federation” expressed. The Assembly could move forward “*towards a world community at the service of one world*”, but not all national federations could yet agree. Three years later, in Providence 1982, the common search resulted in a clear “Yes” to “*the Call to World Community*”.

The Assembly of Providence was not only topic-wise focused on ONE world community, but there was a living out of this world community, bringing to birth a new sense of communion. This included, on the one hand, a greater awareness of and participation in the community, on the other it opened up towards communal discernment, looking for ways of a common response to the demands emerging in particular situations. During the years following Providence 1982, CLC being ONE Community converted in reality, opened itself to its mission perceiving it, for the first time, as a “*common mission*”.

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Consequently, the Assembly of Loyola 1986, bringing together delegates from 50 countries, focused on apostolic mission: “*Do whatever He tells you – Mary, Model of our Mission*”. Supported by the grace of meeting in that place where Ignatius himself experienced his conversion towards a

*it is the entire community  
which is sent, united in mind  
and heart*

deeper relationship with our Lord, CLC received a confirmation of its identity as rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: sent in mission in union with Christ poor and humble and in imitation of Mary – in freedom, poverty and solidarity. Sent on

mission by the Lord and His Church, CLC also “recognised that we are not able to be faithful to our mission without situating it in the context of our community, feeling that it is the entire community which is sent, united in mind and heart.” (The Grace of Loyola '86)

Four years later, in Guadalajara (Mexico), the community was invited to reflect more profoundly on its being “*at the service of the Kingdom*” as a missionary community of Ignatian laity in the Church, with a deep personal sense of mission and with a growing communal involvement in mission. Also in 1990, the revised General Principles presented reflected the being ONE community (instead of a world federation) and the experiences lived and the challenges received since 1967. Through the deliberations and votes on these revised Principles, CLC not only thankfully faced the graces received, but also its limitations, humbly acknowledging that we still need to learn better how to be led by God's Spirit both as individuals and as a World Community: “We have experienced a grace of knowing ourselves as moved by the desire to serve Christ in the work of the Kingdom, and we have been confirmed in this call. At the same time, we have come to know ourselves as still in need of greater unity and spiritual freedom as a community of disciples.” (The grace and call of Guadalajara '90)

In 1994, delegates and observers from 59 countries met in Hong Kong as “*CLC – Community in Mission*” with the purpose and goal of the Assembly being an examen of conscience as to mission on a community level. Having grown as community over the years, CLC also desired a deepening of understanding of where it was being called as community to develop. The grace received during this Assembly recalled again the need for a deep ongoing conversion with regard to mission: “As a World

Community we have to integrate social realities, with all their problems and challenges, more and more into our life and action. (...) HIS SPIRIT, who governs history, moves us to read the signs of the times and put into practice our spiritual experience as a service for building justice and peace. We have to live this not only in words but in deeds and in truth.”

### *Answering the call to become an apostolic body*

Looking back to the processes lived in CLC during the past decades, one might be reminded of the image of an unfolding flower. Everything was present right from the beginning but only step by step, deeply rooted in ones specific sources, respecting the rhythm of each community and the characteristics of the respective periods in history and reading the signs of the time, the “flower” will come to full blooming. Already since the midst of the 80’s, “common mission” was an issue in CLC. During the 90’s, the awareness of being an apostolic community deepened and was finally taken up by the 1998 Assembly in Itaici (Brasil), when the world community focused on *“Deepening our Identity as an Apostolic Body – Clarifying our Common Mission”*.

The discernment process of the Assembly, prepared in the national communities, was focused on three areas of growth in Christian life: Christ and culture, Christ and social reality, and Christ and daily life. Looking at the Ignatian criteria for mission, the needs we perceive in the fields selected and at possibilities of fostering the Lay-Jesuit collaboration, the process resulted in discovering three areas of mission and a set of necessary means for this mission:

“First, we want to bring the freeing power of Christ to our social reality. Secondly, we want to find Christ in all our varied cultures and to let His grace illuminate all that needs transformation. Thirdly, we want to live Christ so as to bring Him to every aspect of our daily life in the world.

These three areas of mission were enlightened by the spiritual source which nourishes and empowers us for mission: the Spiritual Exercises which help us grow in Christian life. In addition, we must attend to our own formation for mission, so that our community may ever become a more effective instrument of service.”

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The final document “Our Common Mission” includes a broad range of criteria and orientations for the service and mission of CLC at its different levels, and guidelines concerning the means of our common mission. Following the Assembly of Itaiçi, in many national communities, new apostolic initiatives were undertaken or those already developed by individual members or the communities were revisited, based on the “Common Mission” of CLC. In this process, a fundamental question came up: Itaiçi gave an important input on the WHAT of our common mission uniting us as world community, but what characterizes the way we live our (common) mission, i.e. the HOW?

In Itaiçi, the expression “apostolic body” was already being used, but to develop its meaning in daily practice more profoundly was the specific focus of the Nairobi Assembly in 2003. Only there, the community “*felt confirmed in our call to become a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church.*” (Recommendations Nairobi 2003 as published in Projects 124)

Under the theme “*Sent by Christ, members of one body*”, the world community had a profound look at the consequences of living that call at all levels. As a key for sharing responsibility in mission as an apostolic body, we defined the four steps of *discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating*. In community, we discern the calls we receive; it is the community who send us to live the discerned apostolic service and who supports it. After finalizing the service or, after certain periods of time, the community evaluates the mission with the person or the group sent. Thus, even an individual service becomes a “common mission”, as the whole community shares responsibility for it.

In order to live and act as an apostolic body, CLC needs to revise its structures and processes so as to better respond to the call received. Among the cornerstones, our concept of formation and our way of leadership need to be particularly stressed, as well as other aspects such as e.g. regional co-operation or promotion of advocacy for social justice. The world Executive Council was asked to develop ways and structures to support the world community at all levels. Of course, this is not only an on-going task and challenge at the world level, but also one for national communities and the existing regional coordination structures. Last but not least, this also is a challenge for the local groups.

Looking back at our history, the fundamental pillars of CLC (and previously Marian Congregation) way of life: Ignatian Spirituality –

Community – Mission have been re-confirmed through the processes lived. In each stage of our history, we were called to deepen a different aspect – e.g. in the first years of the renewal it was our rootedness in Ignatian Spirituality, end of the '70s and beginning of '80's it was the communitarian dimension of our vocation. At each stage, it has been crucial not to forget the other pillars. *When focusing on our apostolic service, mission cannot be understood without being linked with the Spiritual Exercises and the communitarian dimension of our way of life.* Accordingly, the formation process of CLC also interconnects these three dimensions, assisting the individual towards integrating his/her faith with their lives. The local groups, but also the wider community at national or regional levels support and continue the dynamics generated by the Spiritual Exercises, leading us to an essentially apostolic life. Even when apostolic service is offered on an individual basis, the service is always part of the mission received in CLC. In this sense, our mission is always communal – participating in the mission of the Church (see also “The CLC Charism”, revised version of 2001).

CLC is an Ignatian vocation. The charism and spirituality of CLC are Ignatian. Thus, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are both the specific source and the characteristic instrument of CLC spirituality, leading to the integration of faith and life in every dimension: personal, social, professional, political and ecclesial. CLC members live Ignatian spirituality in community in the local group, at the national level and as a world community. The support of the others sharing the same vocation is essential for our human, spiritual and apostolic growth. In addition, the community itself is a constituent element of the apostolic service and witness of CLC, being essentially a community for others.

### ***Collaboration within the Ignatian Family***

CLC is a lay vocation. During the Nairobi Assembly, focusing on CLC as a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church, we paid special attention to the collaboration of CLC and Jesuits. As CLC, we are very grateful for the gift of Ignatian Spirituality that Jesuits have generously shared with us following the example of St. Ignatius. Jesuits helped us to rediscover the lay expression of Ignatian Spirituality when we moved from Marian Congregations to CLC and their support has made possible the establishment and strengthening of communities in many parts

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of the world. One way of collaboration between CLC and Jesuits are the services Jesuits offer to CLC as Ecclesiastical Assistants. This expression also underlines that CLC is a lay community governed by the laity. The

*a lay apostolic body that shares responsibility for mission in the Church... discerning, sending, supporting and evaluating*

Ecclesiastical Assistant (a Jesuit in most, but not necessarily in all cases) “working in collaboration with other leaders of the community, is principally responsible for the Christian development of the whole community, and helps its members grow in the ways of God, especially through the

Spiritual Exercises. In virtue of the mission given him by the hierarchy, whose authority he represents, he also has special responsibility for doctrinal and pastoral concerns and for the harmony proper to a Christian community.” (General Principles of 1990, #14) Thus, he cooperates closely with the elected persons; he forms part of the Executive Council and is asked to contribute his specific competence but has among the leaders no dominant role to play.

In Nairobi, the desire of CLC to respond to the call of becoming and acting as an apostolic body, points to the second dimension of collaboration between the Society of Jesus and CLC. It is towards collaboration in the apostolic field, fostering a growing partnership of both apostolic bodies including joint discernment and common activities.

Although the desire to grow in apostolic collaboration is quite clear, we still have a long way to go. For CLC, this perspective is first of all a challenge to deepen our own identity and to grow in maturity: spiritually, as a self-responsible community, in our apostolic services lived as a common mission. At the same time, we should not hide what we have to offer: our experiences, the specific talents and charisms of our members, our presence in the professional, social and political field.

Looking around the globe, many concrete experiences of collaboration with the Jesuits as well as with other members of the Ignatian family – Ignatian congregations and other lay groups inspired by the Spiritual Exercises – could be stressed. In most cases, activities take place in the field of spirituality: formation courses and training programmes offered for Spiritual Guides, CLCers cooperating as Spiritual Guides in Centres of

Ignatian Spirituality, administrating Society of Jesus retreat centres etc. In most cases, people involved would stress the mutual enrichment; not only in favour of the concrete activity but also for deepening ones own identity as religious or as lay person.

As Ignatian family, we have a lot to offer to the Church and to the world. In our communities, be it the Society of Jesus, CLC or other congregations and organisations, we can rely on a great variety of expertise and experiences, on a profound Ignatian formation and availability, and a deep commitment “to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims from all sort of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor” (General Principles #8d) in unity with the mission of the Church. On the way towards a more natural cooperation, we still might have to move away many stones – on both sides – but each concrete experience we are able to put into practice will help us to develop a deeper understanding of collaboration and the specific vocation and identity of each one of us as individuals and as communities. Last but not least, *as two (or more) Ignatian bodies, we have the opportunity to be signs of hope, presenting ways of cooperation between lay and religious in communion with the Church.*