

# **CLC CANADA**

## **FUNDAMENTAL STAGES OF CLC FORMATION**

---

- a) Revised Oct., 2008
- b) Revised Apr., 2009
- c) Revised Feb., 2010 (highlighted in yellow)

### **PREAMBLE**

The National Leadership Formation Working Group (LFWG) has developed this Formation Document with the objective that the content be used as an aid or a tool by the CLC Group Formator(s) (Group Coordinators, Guides, etc) as they begin guiding groups of persons in and through the 5 Stages of CLC Formation.

As such, this Formation Document is to be included in the revised CLC Leaders' Manual as a Formation resource material for the CLC Formator(s) when they begin the CLC journey with a new local group.

In all three Leadership Formation Encounters that took place in years 2007 & 2008 in the 4 CLC Canada Regions, it was noted that the CLC Formation Manuals were extremely important for the formation of CLC Groups. The fact that the Manuals' initial inception was in 1981, they now all need to be revised and updated.

While we recognize that the CLC Canada Leader's Manual does describe the different Fundamental Stages of CLC Growth (pages 22-36), the most recent revisions to the CLC Canada Formation Document includes additional information resulting from our experiences since the last number of World Assemblies regarding Formation in CLC<sup>1</sup>. The CLC Canada Formation Document, while respecting the process of growth noted in the Progressio Supplement # 64, includes an explanation of the goals and signs of moving on throughout the 5 traditional stages that coincides with our CLC Canada Formation manuals. These 5 stages are considered to be an essential part to CLC maturation. Therefore, it is our intention that by adding this document to the CLC Canada Leaders Manual it will enhance what has already been given.

### **CLC FORMATION AND TRAINING**

CLC formation and training is an introduction to a way of life (vocation) leading to a total gift of one's self through the progressive identification with the person of Christ<sup>2</sup> and His mission in the modern world. This way of life supposes, requires, and is rooted in a sharing between individuals in a community of persons<sup>3</sup> who participate in the same vocation. For this reason, the formation and growth process in CLC follows the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius<sup>4</sup>. Just as the Spiritual Exercises' goal is to foster union with God in Christ through a self-discipline of

---

<sup>1</sup> See "The Process of Growth in CLC", *Progressio Supplement #64*

<sup>2</sup> G P 4

<sup>3</sup> G P 11

<sup>4</sup> G P 5

mission, CLC in the same way offers a specific spiritual way or path of mission<sup>5</sup>. That is why CLC members with the help of the community<sup>6</sup> make every effort to be actively engaged in a continuing personal and social formation and growth. This document has been written for Group Guides, Group Coordinators, and all those responsible for CLC formation and growth. These persons are given the title of “CLC Formators”.

From the point of view of individual growth and the way in which the individual progressively responds to his or her vocation, the CLC life has three inseparable and mutually supportive dimensions:

- **Spiritual Exercises**
- **Community**
- **Apostolic (mission) Action**

After several years of experience, what we have come to understand is that the “Come and See” stage (the first 13 SESSIONS in Manual I), the Group would normally enter into the “Sense of Discipleship” (Table of content in Manual I). Upon reaching that phase, the Group Formator(s) is to assist the Group by moving into SESSIONS 14 to 18 with a specific focus: preparing the individuals in the Group to discern a personal decision to an “initial commitment” to the CLC way of life (Temporary Commitment).

When entering into the Temporary Commitment phase of the formation process, it is advisable that the Group Formator(s) use an adaptation of the Spiritual Exercises based on the dynamics of the Kingdom and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week key meditations (The Two Standards, Three Types of Persons and Three Kinds of Humility) (see Charism # 61 to 68). That is the reason why it is crucial that all persons that are called to guide groups in the CLC way become well formed as CLC group leaders on how and when to use the graces of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

During the stage of formation considered to be Pre-Community, or sometime before ending SESSION 18 (Sense of Discipleship in Manual I), the individuals would be asked to share with the Group their discerned decision on their **initial** commitment to CLC. When all members of the Group have agreed to enter into a “Temporary Commitment” phase, a form letter is to be sent (names and signatures) to Regional Leaders expressing their initial commitment. (A form letter is inserted in the Leaders Manual, as an aid for this notification of commitment). It is also advisable that this decision be celebrated at a CLC public gathering such as a CLC Regional meeting.

When the Group is in this initial stage of discernment, there could be some members that have not yet decided and need more time to discern. In this case, the Group Formator(s) would need to allow more time for discernment but always being aware that this period of decision-making must be given a deadline agreed upon by the CLC Group. Once again, a communal discernment process is important. If there are individuals that still continue to indicate that they cannot or will not make the initial commitment, they would be invited by the Group Formator(s) to continue their faith journey in other ways (Prayer Groups, Cursillo groups etc).

---

<sup>5</sup> GP 12

<sup>6</sup> GP 7 and CLC Charism Part II, pages 2-5

This “suggested method of proceeding” can be a very challenging time for the individuals in the Group and could bring about anxiety and/or tension. The Group Formator(s) must proceed with great sensitivity and care for all individuals. At the same time, it is critical that this course of action is taken for the greater good of the Group and for the members that have indicated a desire to go on in their CLC formation. This step must be facilitated in a courageous but yet caring way thus allowing those persons the freedom to continue the process in discerning their call to the CLC way of life. This proposed way of proceeding is, to our mind, dealing concretely with the important question of discernment and commitment to the specific vocation of CLC. When discerned in a loving and honest way, members are given the freedom to move forward through the other 4 stages of formation (Initiation, Redemption, Deepening, and Apostolic Community).

Our experience has taught us that the remaining 4 stages (Communal Graces) could take, under normal circumstances, approximately 4 to 6 years for the Group to complete. We are well aware of the fact that the GN 3 does state up to 8 years and no less than 2 years from Temporary to Permanent Commitment. While keeping this guideline in mind, we are of the opinion that by using the CLC Canada formation manuals as recommended, along with appropriate guidance, this would allow the Group to complete the entire formation process within the 4 to 6 year time frame.

The Formation Manuals I & II are formulated in such a way as to give each individual in the Group a preliminary exposure of the dynamics of the entire Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. When the Group is ready to move into the stage of “Apostolic Community”, the Group Formator(s) will offer the Spiritual Exercises in the form of Annotation 19 by using Manual III. We have come to recognize that there may be circumstances that could arise that would allow the CLC Formator(s) to facilitate the Group in its on-going formation by offering the Spiritual Exercises following the completion of Manual I. If that is to occur we would suggest to seriously look at the need to return to Manual II (social reality/signs of the times) after the completion of the Spiritual Exercises.

When entering into the 5th stage, Apostolic Community, individuals and/or the Group will be invited to begin the entire Spiritual Exercises (Ann 19). They will be reminded by the Group Formator(s) to enter into the Spiritual Exercises with a focus and desire to discern the question of a deeper commitment to the CLC way of life (Permanent Commitment). However, it must always be remembered that this movement and call is inspired by the rhythm of the Holy Spirit working in and through individuals. As we know this deeper commitment (Permanent Commitment) follows from the CLC way of life, and is in harmony with the trustful surrender of the Contemplation for attaining Love (4<sup>th</sup> week grace). The expression of that commitment is the *“Take, Lord and receive...”* prayer.

The 4 weeks of the Exercises conclude with the Contemplatio which gathers up the themes of the Exercises in their entirety inviting one to work its insights and attitudes into the texture of everyday life (mission). The same can be said of the CLC member along with her/his Group that has arrived at the stage of Apostolic Body. The pilgrimage of life continues, joining Christ in the here and now. However, the individual and/or the Group could very well find itself re-living and deepening the insights and attitudes of the earlier stages of growth.

## THE CLC CHARISM

### **I A SPIRIT OF DISCERNMENT**

One of the dangers that can kill the life and creativity of our CLC groups, especially among adults, is settling down into a routine of simply having a group meeting and passively accepting what we have always done without questioning and evaluating. That type of attitude blocks the spirit of discernment and smothers the life of the Spirit. We should have mobility in mission; we can't turn what we achieve for others into an idol. Rather we should review and evaluate mission on the basis of analysis and discernment of the needs of our time, remaining open to the changes which the Spirit keeps prompting in us.

### **II APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY**

At the World Assemblies in Nairobi in 2003 and in Portugal in 2008 CLC we discerned that there was a great urgency to move from being “Second Week” groups (community of apostles) to “Third and Fourth Week groups” (apostolic community). However, we need to be attentive to the reality that, when moving into “3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Week Groups, internal tensions and unconscious dynamics could sow dissension, misunderstanding, and projections in the good wheat (cf. Matt. 13: 24-30). The 5<sup>th</sup> stage, **Apostolic Community**, has been a recent insight to the Fundamental Stages of CLC Formation. It is by giving its “graced identity” that we can come to understand; “*what does it look like*” in a local CLC Group.

Moving from the stage of Deepening to **being an Apostolic Community** calls for **skilled leadership**. This leadership must be willing to hold sacred that each community has its own ‘flavour’, and its own unique journey. There must be a discernment process, always asking the questions, “What have I/we done for Christ, What am I/we doing for Christ, What ought I/we do now for Christ”.

### **NB**

**If the Group Guide and/or Coordinator is not aware of the fundamental goal of CLC Formation, its process and its prime rule for collective apostolic discernment could be thwarted.**

### **III THE FORMATION OF WOMEN AND MEN**

**In the Survey published by an international team (1981) we read: “...let us stress that this document (Survey) has been developed, having in view those who are responsible for CLC formation... it offers a clear and overall vision of what is at stake in the formation of our members and communities to those persons who have already experienced the CLC way, and have the responsibility for handing it on to others... The aim of CLC is to form communities of men and women of discernment for apostolic service in all spheres of life especially where lay persons are most actively engaged: family, profession, politics etc This entails a rather lengthy process of formation which includes the following phases:**

1. **PRE-COMMUNITY** - “Lord, where do you live: (Jn 1:38)
2. **INITIATION** - “Come and see” (Jn 1:39)

3. *EXPERIENCE OF REDEMPTION (2 phases)*
  - “*Though our conscience may condemn us God is greater than our hearts.*” (1 Jn 3:20)
  - “*The glorious freedom of the children of God.*” (Rom: 8:21)
4. *DEEPENING* - “*This is eternal life, to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*” (Jn 17:3)
5. *CONTINUING GROWTH* – “*As the Father has sent me...*” (Jn. 20:21)

## IV HISTORICALLY LINKING<sup>7</sup> CLC GROUP FORMATION

### FIVE COMMUNAL GRACES

CLC Formator(s) and all those persons in leadership roles need to have before them a formation “roadmap”. This document is offered as a map for those given the responsibility of group leadership by describing goals, characteristics, and signs of moving on through five stages of growth in CLC formation<sup>8</sup>. It is therefore the goal of this document to describe, for the sake of clarity, each stage as five **movements**<sup>9</sup> or what could be referred to as “**five Communal Graces.**” **Each stage begins with a desire moving into an ever deepening process of search, discovery and confirmation propelling the CLC member/group from the current stage to the next stage of goals and characteristics. This is a similar dynamic to the “Graces” of the Spiritual Exercises.**

It is our hope that, with a greater clarity of goal, the Group Formator(s) will not only be given a sense of direction but also have before them the “what” and “how” of CLC formation. Flexibility and creativity are always encouraged but the goals of each phase of CLC Formation must be kept in mind by those responsible for the Group’s growth and development<sup>10</sup>.

**“We learn by going but to have some sense of where one is going always helps to get there.”**

### A CLC CANADA PRAXIS

---

<sup>7</sup> The framework attempts to make the connection between; CLC SURVEY Formation Stages, CLC Canada Formation Manuals, and the Ignatian Sp. Exx.

<sup>8</sup> See CLC Canada Leaders Manual pages; 18-20

<sup>9</sup> CLC Canada Leaders Manual page 21, “Stages of Community” refers to a 5<sup>th</sup> stage as, Continuing Growth. It is this documents contention that the continuing growth has been more clearly defined by the World Assembly held in Nairobi and its “Recommendations” that the 5<sup>th</sup> stage is “Apostolic Community”

<sup>10</sup> CLC persons that have been trained and are given the responsibility of CLC formation

The following is an attempt to update the successive formation stages given in the SURVEY publication by complementing and adding what has surfaced through our Assemblies and documents since 1981. Since that time, there have been other National CLCs that have adapted the formation stages from their own perspective. An example of this is CLC Australia<sup>11</sup>.

This is a CLC Canada Formation Document resulting from several years of research and adapting the five formation stages from our experiential context. It is the National Leadership Formation Working Group's hope and desire to assist CLC Leaders in describing the five successive stages by briefly sketching their goals, characteristics, and signs of moving on to the next stage. **For a more comprehensive and lengthy description of developmental stages see *Progressio Supplement #64*.** The CLC Canada material honours the insightful work done by John English SJ as the founder of the Institute for Communal Living (ICL 1990) with a small group of persons (Carolyn Arnold, Marita Carew, Margaret Kane, Jack Milan).

<b>Formation Stages<sup>12</sup> →</b>	<b>Formation Manuals<sup>13</sup> →</b>	<b>Spiritual Exx.<sup>14</sup></b>
<b>SURVEY PUBLICATION</b>	<b>CLC CANADA</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL EXERCISES</b>
1. Pre-Community	Phase I Sessions 1- 13	Disposition Days
2. Initiation	Phase I Sessions 14 - 18 Initial/Temporary Commitment	P. & F.
3. Redemption	Phase I Sessions 17 to 37 Deepening Commitment	S.E. wks. 1&2
4. Deepening	Phase II Sessions 1 to 46	S.E. wks. 3&4
5. Apostolic Community (Prophetic)	Phase III <sup>15</sup> Permanent <sup>16</sup>	Communal S. E. (Ann. 19) Commitment <sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See CVX-CLC Web site and link CLC Australia.

<sup>12</sup> ...formation in CLC Canada can be taken over a period of 4 years and includes a succession of stages that are necessary to discern one's vocation in CLC( see Survey, 1981). In the CLC G.N. 3 it states that the length of time between temporary and permanent commitment should be ordinarily no more than eight years and no less than two years.

<sup>13</sup> Canada CLC Formation Manuals; phase I, II, and III

<sup>14</sup> Spiritual Exercise of St. Ignatius basic division is four "phases", called weeks.

<sup>15</sup> Communal Spiritual Exercises in the form of ANN. 19

<sup>16</sup> The word "Permanent" is explained in the CLC Charism publication #191.... *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...*"

<sup>17</sup> The CLC Charism pages 62-63... CLC Canada Leaders Manual pages 37-42

## **V FORMATION STAGES GOALS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND SIGNS OF MOVING ON**

### **1. Pre-Community: enabling persons in any given group to become community.**

This is a group of persons just beginning and who are searching to deepen their faith.

#### **GOAL**

The goal is to discover whether or not they are drawn to move further in this way of living out their Christian faith by forming community.

#### **CHARACTERISTIC**

The characteristic of the group is that the persons come from diverse backgrounds. This will create a degree of instability and a vague sense of identity. Members depend on the “CLC Formator(s)” for guidance and leadership.

#### **SIGNS**

The signs that this cycle is ending are when members are developing a sense of identity and they have a sense of belonging. Some members may at this time indicate that they wish to continue meeting as a community.

### **2. CLC Initiation: giving persons who have shown an interest and appear to have the necessary disposition and desire for the CLC way of life.**

At this stage the group members are getting to know CLC Spirituality and its history; General Principles/Norms, CLC governance, organizational structures and financial responsibilities<sup>18</sup> etc.

#### **GOAL**

The goal of this cycle is to know and experience the CLC charism on a personal level and as a Community<sup>19</sup>.

#### **CHARACTERISTIC**

The emerging characteristics are that members are integrating life and faith; there is a growing honesty, and they accept each other’s strengths and weaknesses.

#### **SIGNS**

A sign that this cycle is ending is when members are showing a readiness to make personal decisions in a communal discernment mode. Members could be ready to make a “Temporary Commitment” to the CLC way of life.

This cycle may cause some members to leave and seek other ways of living out their faith (celebrating this moment in appropriate ritual form is a sign that God calls each one of us in a variety of ways).

---

<sup>18</sup> See CLC GN 33 & 34

<sup>19</sup> cf: THE CLC CHARISM (revised) *Progressio Supplement* no. 56 Dec 2001

### **3. Redemption: To experience and learn how to evaluate this way of life within a community and see CLC as One World Community.**

The group is experiencing the 1st week of the Spiritual Exercises with a growing awareness of personal and collective sinfulness.

#### **GOAL**

The goal of this stage is to discover and develop an awareness of personal and collective sinfulness and limitations. To experience the need for Christ's redemptive love, and God's mercy in acceptance of one another's personal limitations and the limitations of the group.

#### **CHARACTERISTIC**

The special characteristics of this cycle are: members are becoming more at ease with using the tools of discernment and decision-making; the experience of individual and collective Consolation and Desolation are becoming more real. **They are becoming aware of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week Rules of Discernment of Spirits (Sp. Ex. Rules 313 – 327).** The **Communal Awareness process** is helping the group to name conflict within the group and service is becoming an imperative.

The group could be moving into experiencing the dynamics of the 2nd week (Kingdom meditation, the Two Standards, Three types of Persons, Three Kinds of Humility).

#### **SIGNS**

The signs that the community is evolving are that the members have a greater sense of gratitude and a growing commitment to CLC as call/ vocation and to Ignatian Spirituality as a way of life. Members can now face conflict and tension more easily since they are moving toward a deeper sense of inter-connectedness with all Creation and with Jesus who is journeying with them.

### **4. Deepening: Deepening the experience on the personal and community level with special attention given to all aspects of daily living, particularly focusing on mission and service.**

There is a growing intimacy with Christ, the Church, and the world leading members to respond with love with a deeper commitment to the mission of Christ especially as He labours in Creation and moves among the suffering and poor of our world (3rd week of the Sp. Ex.)<sup>20</sup>.

#### **GOAL**

The goal of this cycle is to have the group operate as a discerning body. The group is assisted in becoming a discerning apostolic group by introducing communal diagnostic tools such as: Rules on Consolation/Desolation in the 2nd week form, Communal Power Cycle<sup>21</sup>, Social analysis etc.

---

<sup>20</sup> Many apostolic and leadership groups grow to be “Second Week” groups; the challenge for CLC groups is to grow into a “Third” and “Fourth” week group. (ISECP manual page iii)

<sup>21</sup> See APPENDIX: The Communal Power Cycle (adapted from ISECP manual pages 49-51)

### **CHARACTERISTIC**

The characteristics at this stage are: group members are coming to know the many faces of Christ as He challenges but also comforts; members are growing in discerning mission and service by recognizing the signs of time. **They are becoming aware of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Week Rules of Discernment of Spirits (Sp. Ex. Rules 328 – 335)**

### **SIGNS**

A sign that the group is ready to evolve is when members are considering “Permanent Commitment” to CLC vocation. The Group Guide could, at this time, offer the group or individual members the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (Ann. 19<sup>22</sup>, 20, individual or communal).

## **5. Apostolic Community<sup>23</sup>: Living DSSE by discerning decisions in community with all members and by sending, supporting, and evaluating the implementation of the mission.**

The members of the group continue to deepen their understanding of the General Principles especially GP 8. This principle clearly defines CLC in mission while challenging us as individuals and communities.

At this stage, the Group Guide facilitates the process by encouraging communal evaluation and appropriation which would help to extend the group’s apostolic involvement (4th week Sp. Ex. 230).

### **GOAL**

The goal of this cycle is to live in mission, moving from a community of apostles to an apostolic community and to have each member of the group see her/his apostolic activity in light of the group’s apostolic commitment.

### **CHARACTERISTIC**

The characteristics of the apostolic group are a greater awareness of Christ resurrected and a greater sense of hope that Jesus is with them, labouring with them in bringing about God’s reign in the world.

The members are learning to live in a communal discernment stance; discerning, sending, supporting, and evaluating the common mission<sup>24</sup> by using instruments of social analysis in their group meetings (Power Cycle<sup>25</sup>).

### **SIGNS**

---

<sup>22</sup> CLC Canada Formation Manual III

<sup>23</sup> The World General Assembly (2003) held in Nairobi in its “Recommendations” (<http://www.cvx-clc.net/Documents>) drew our attention to the fact that CLC should strive to move toward and mature to the stage of Apostolic Community and consequently pointed out, “*We have identified strong formation and leadership at all levels in our World Community as essential requirements in a move towards a more apostolic body.*”

<sup>24</sup> See Document, “Our Common Mission” *Progressio* nos ,2,3,4, 1998 ( pages 130-139)

<sup>25</sup> Cf: CLC CANADA LEADERS MANUAL pages 104-105

Signs of digression and/or doubt are always a concern and if this is not addressed and dealt with, the group will eventually die and disband. The “Life-Death-Resurrection<sup>26</sup>” process can be a very important instrument in helping the group to discover why they are struggling and why they might go out of existence. At this time, the Group Guide would play a pro-active role in facilitating and/or challenging the group to move forward to a more life-giving stance.

## CONCLUSION

A Jesuit historian, Michael Maher SJ, has written extensively on the history of the Marian Congregations. In his research, he has noted that the Marian Congregations and their transition into Christian Life Community have never deviated from their original charism; *to gather, to form, and to send*. These CLC characteristics are shaped by the features of the Ignatian Christology. This is the reason why the local CLC group is *the most appropriate for a communal continuation of the dynamics of life generated by the Spiritual Exercises*.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is crucial that Formators of CLC groups remain faithful to the CLC formation process.

The CLC group, as it sets its sail toward being an Apostolic Community, should always be mindful of the prevailing winds on the ocean of the mystique of action. Those dominant winds are always coming from the direction of **Contemplating the signs of the times**, the **Dynamic of Discernment**<sup>28</sup> and an **Awareness Examen** that sends us in mission, mission which Christ entrusted to CLC as a Church association.

Submitted by  
Gilles Michaud  
COORDINATOR OF LEADERSHIP/FORMATION WORKING GROUP

---

<sup>26</sup> CLC Canada Leaders Manual page 106

<sup>27</sup> Cf GN 39a)

<sup>28</sup> Experience, Reflection, Articulation, Interpretation, and Decision-Action: see, Spiritual Intimacy and Community, John English sj, pages 29- 41