

Starting Young

Sharing the CLC Vocation during World Youth Day, Krakow, 2016

The young people of our community took part in World Youth Day in Krakow and in preparing the CLC Booth in the Centre for Vocation in Cracovia Stadium. Thanks to the experience of working with people from countries of almost all continents, they felt like a real part of the World Christian Life Community. Through the coordination of Najat Sayegh (World ExCo Secretary and Youth Commission Head), the following participated: Barry Serafin, Marta Ratkiewicz, Ania Kołtunowska, Basia Gąsiorek, Magda Jarząbkowska, Margaret Sulej and Ania Wilamek. Also with them were Waliszewska Kinga, Anna Haltof and Ewa Nawalka. Together with members of CLC Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands, Spain, Hong Kong, England, Lithuania, Sweden, Portugal, Romania and France we talked with the youth who came. For most of them it was the first encounter with the global community. They experienced closeness, shared experiences and a similar commitment. We experienced a pleasant surprise, as many people from all over the world, especially from Asia, participated in the Spiritual Exercises. Our booth was usually teeming with numerous conversations and meetings with youth visitors. It was also a place for exchange of experiences from different countries from the EU and for mutual understanding. Young people had the opportunity to talk with us about their search for God and learn of the existence of our communities around the world.

*CLC Poland
(www.wzch.org.pl)*

Anna Haltof Poland, Warsaw

Anna Haltof (Poland) is 60 years old married, mother of two adult sons. She works as radiologist in the Warsaw public clinic hospital. She is member of Slowo CLC in Warsaw.

My spiritual experience this year involves going to the World Youth Day / Centre for Vocation

in Krakow and getting a chance to know some CLC members.

I was very happy to participate in the Forum of Vocation. In my opinion, it was a good time and a good experience for all of us from CLC, after the Lebanon Assembly in 2013. First of all, we were able to get to know each other better. We spent time enjoying ourselves in direct contact – face to face, as opposed to email or skype. I think it was a big step for CLC, to have a

Below from left to right:

- Polish members in the CLC booth: Waliszewska King, Ania Wilemak, Anna Haltof and Katarzyna Serafin (the main contact in Poland).
- With the Pope in the Vocation Center (looks a real presence!).
- The Cross and the The Icon of the Mother of God Salus Populi Romani symbols of WYD.



new way of building our community, and being together – young people, adults, and the men and women from different countries of the world. I'm a shy person and I am uneasy talking with people using my poor English. However, I had a good time with young people and members of CLC. We received new strength and new creativity for the future.

I only worked for a short time there [in the Vocation Center booth] but I needed that time while waiting for Pope Francesco together with all those who love him and listen to him. I often didn't understand people, I had trouble and made mistakes but I felt the spirit of St. Ignatius in the organization of our service and in preparing the Vocation Center. We invited a lot of people to get to know St. Ignatius and to practice his steps in building relationships with God and Jesus. We helped people discover the importance of reading the Bible, to find suitable sessions and recollections with Jesus, and to join their local Christian communities. I got on well with most of the people I met. I think the encounter had the greatest value and an interactive way of realizing our mission as CLC.

Through her emails, Najat told us that we have the same spiritual language and have the same dream, the same values of being in the world, the same common mission in Church. I agree with her with all my heart. It was holy time which offered us the possibility of change in our lifestyles, friendships and relationships, and sharing something with others. In my opinion, we should meet from time to time and be more interested in helping each other with re-

spect and love. We were really grateful for feeling the community, laughing and having fun, using our hands and faces to speak. The encounter filled me with a new strength to be creative. May God help me in moving towards the right direction.

Virginia CLC Lithuania

Hi, my name is Virginia. I'm a CLC member from Lithuania. My community sent me to the Vocation Forum in the WYD in Krakow and finally, after lots of doubt, I agreed to take the challenge.

Arrival at Krakow and settling in the parish was quite difficult and tiring, because I came there alone, without a group. I thought then that it was quite a stupid step. I felt very lonely and lost.

But all of it changed as soon as I came to the Krakow stadium, where the Vocation Forum was going on. I met wonderful people from my community and felt friendship and lots of common things, even if we were all from different countries. I felt as if I was at home, in my community, among my own. Thus I experienced the international dimension of CLC.

It was very good to hear what similarities and differences CLC has in various countries. All the time there were quite many of us in the booth and it was very nice. We talked to young people sharing our own experiences, how CLC helps us to find our





vocation, Ignatian spirituality, spreading the leaflets, etc.

It was a great experience, so thank you, Najat, for all the help to come to the WYD and the Vocation Forum. And thank you, too, to the Polish team for their kindness, friendliness, and help.

Let the Lord return abundant graces to all of you.

Your friend in Christ.

Sara Tong CLC Hong Kong

Sara has been member of CLC (HK) for more than 10 years.

It's been a consolation to represent CLC Hong Kong to take part in the Vocation Forum during World Youth Day at Krakow. I had the opportunity to meet Najat from World CLC ExCo, CLC friends from Poland, Britain and other parts of the world. We had a great time sharing about our own local communities and we sang our community hymns together. It's always exciting to meet and commune with CLC members from around the world because even though we lead different ways of life, we all speak the same language through our sharing of the same Ignatian Spirituality. I felt a strong bond and sense of belonging within the same community. I had a marvelous time introducing CLC and the Ignatian Spirituality to the youth visiting our booth and playing games with them. It's been invaluable to meet my brothers and sisters in the CLC worldwide during WYD.

Even though we may be apart globally--back to our own daily lives, as we journey onwards on life's pilgrimage, carrying out our individual ministries for the greater glory of God -- may God's bounteous mercy and grace continue to be bestowed upon our community, so that our hearts may always be one.

God bless you all.



Vansi Kwok CLC Hong Kong

Vansi has been a CLC Member for more than 10 years. She is an anaesthesiologist and song writer/musician, member of A.M.D.G.-a Hong Kong Catholic music band producing music inspired by Ignatian Spirituality.

This is my first World Youth Day. This is also my first time meeting with CLC members from across the globe and my first time helping world CLC. Indeed, I have been looking forward to such opportunities for a long time now. :)

During World Youth Day, we were asked to help in the Forum of Vocation where a booth for CLC was set up. We were invited to talk with young people about CLC and Ignatian Spirituality. Najat and her team also prepared a lot of leaflets in various languages introducing the Examen and some simple games to play.

It certainly is a challenge for me to TALK about Ignatian Spirituality especially with people from very different cultures and in English. Ignatian Spirituality is a topic so broad that, at first, I found it hard to start. Later, I chose to talk about my personal experiences with young people when they came to me: "How CLC changed me" and "How Ignatian Spirituality changed me". I am glad that I did open myself to talk.

There were a lot of nice discussions and encounters which later became my consolations that afternoon.

I remember a discussion with a girl from Slovakia. We talked for 20 minutes. At the end [of our conversation], she burst into tears. I was startled and was afraid that I had said something wrong. But then she told me they were tears of consolation. She felt very consoled after learning about the "examen", "finding God in all things" and listening to our experiences. It was because she was actually feeling very uncertain about her future and also troubled by being distant from God and not knowing what to do. And when I talked to her about my past experiences, she felt that she was not alone and felt hopeful. She felt her prayers were heard. Indeed, I was very touched too. I never knew that my simple sharing could have such power. I believe that the Holy Spirit must've been present among us during our conversation. Thanks be to God.

There was also a young man from China (I was glad that I could speak to him in Chinese). He was very interested as he had already learnt a little about St. Ignatius when he was studying in Portugal. Later he also shared with me about his conversion (as none of his family members nor friends were Catholic) and what moved him to baptism three years ago. It was another touching moment.

In the other page from top to bottom:

- The many faces of the youth of the World Community, united in sharing Ignatian Spirituality.
- Ignatian tools, prayers and brochures which the youth volunteers used to share with visitors.
- CLC members from Hong Kong (Sara Tong is in front and Vansi Kwok is in the middle).

I am surprised at how much people are willing to open their hearts and let us glimpse God's great work in their lives when we are willing to open ours, even though it was just a very brief time. I am also amazed that despite diverse cultures and countries, our desire for God is very much the same.

May God continue to guide us all. AMDG!

José David Lopes CLC Portugal

José David Lopes is 31-year-old Portuguese living in Stockholm, where he is post-doc researcher in Speech Technology at the Royal Institute of Technology. He is member of Gourmet CVX

Below from top to bottom:
- WYD- Welcoming ceremony representing CLC- (left- José David Lopes CLC Sweden/ right- Ignacio Ruiz Salcedo CLC Argentina).
- In the back: Bernadett Belenyi and Henrietta Fleisz (Romania), Najat Sayegh, Marta Ratkiewicz (Poland). In the front: Vansie Kwok (HongKong), Katarzyna Serafin (Poland), José David Lopes (Portugal but living in Sweden), Sara Tong (HongKong), Virginia Žiugždaitė (Lithuania).

Sul, Lisbon, Portugal and English Speaking CLC, Stockholm, Sweden.

For me it was a great pleasure to be at the Vocation Forum with CLC. Meeting other young people that live in an Ignatian way in their own countries, being able to share our experiences, how our own communities are organized, how we ended up in CLC was one of the highest moments of my week in Krakow. This meeting led to some follow ups regarding sharing meeting materials or putting people in contact to start new CLC groups in some parts of the world. I also found it very positive to talk about what CLC was to people passing by the booth. Sometimes I felt I was giving my own view of CLC when talking about the community. On the other hand, I thought some people were really interested in what I was telling them about Ignatian Spirituality, which I think is CLC's biggest treasure and something we should try to spread around us.

There were a lot of interesting conversations with people that were passing by the booth and had some contact with Ignatian spirituality or the Jesuits but haven't heard about us before.

It was also great to represent CLC at the events with the Pope. I really felt that I was representing not only the youth CLC but the whole CLC. Having a Pope that shares this Ignatian background with us made it even more special.

On the practical side I think we had a very good location at the vocation center. Perhaps we were not very visible, since we could easily be confused with other visitors. Maybe dressing all the same way would've made us even more visible. I liked the vests that the Lebanon delegation had. In a future WYD we could try to have something similar for people staying at the booth.

Some people seemed immediately interested in having some local person they can contact to join CLC. I think we need to work out these links better. Either by collecting a list of contact persons in each community before the next WYD or build up a team that routes people to their national communities

I proposed this at the last Eurolink meeting and the CLC Europe was very open to it.



Maybe this is something that could be encouraged by the World ExCo as well.

It was also very good to have at least two of us representing CLC at each event. I was a little bit concerned that I was the only one attending the Way of the Cross. At least, while we waited for the event we got to know each other a little bit better, since there was not much time at the booth.

Finally, a word about Magis. If it is true that many of the CLC members that were at the vocation center took part in Magis, it is not necessarily true that all the Magis participants knew about CLC, although we were acknowledged in the Magis booklet. I don't know about the current contribution of CLC to Magis, but maybe we could have a more active role in Magis, by having CLC teams preparing and leading Magis experiments in a future edition.

I'm sharing the photo of me and Nacho representing CLC at the Papal welcome. And thank you, Najat, for making this happen and keeping the contact with us to prepare our booth at the vocation center!

God bless!

Ignacio Ruiz Salcedo CLC Argentina

Ignacio is an Argentinian young lawyer, born and raised in a small province of the country, now living in Buenos Aires city.

First of all, I want to give huge thanks to all the people who worked hard to make [the Vocation Center] booth possible. It was really beautiful to share this experience with you all. Due to my limited English speaking skills I'm sure that the words and phrases that I said to the people I talked with in the booth came directly from the bottom of my heart. Simple words but with a lot of happiness and passion, willing to transmit the message of CLC. To put into words what we believe, what we are and to open my heart was challenging but at the same time so rewarding.

Being with Jose representing CLC in the welcoming ceremony was such an unimag-

inable gift, a blessing for me and for all my community. I don't have words, just THANKS.

I feel so grateful and I hope to transmit all the good I received to my community. Hope to see you soon. Blessings.

Marie-Emmanuelle Reiss CLC France

Marie-Emmanuelle Reiss has been living in Paris for 11 years. She has been a CLC member for 10 years.

I was very pleased when Amélie told me that there was a CLC booth at the Vocations Forum during the WYD. I said straight away that it was OK for me to take part in it.

When I arrived on Wednesday afternoon, I was a bit shy and very happy at the same time to meet Najat again! We met several times before. The booth was very well organized, with many flyers. I was quite impressed!

The time schedule was quite calm. It was interesting to get to know Virginia, from CLC Lithuania. Explaining CLC in English was OK, in German more challenging. So I was happy to talk about CLC with French speaking people; that was easier! I met some people just having a look, and also people much more interested. I remember girls from Belgium who already knew the Jesuits and were really looking for something for them with the same spir-

Waiting for the Pope in the Blonia Park to start the Way of the Cross. From left to right: Guadalupe Ocampos and Ignacio Ruiz Salcedo (Argentina), Rabih Al Bitar and Najat Sayegh (Lebanon), Cristian Morales (Argentina).



ity. I'm convinced we planted seeds in the people who came to our booth. Only God knows what will happen then.

Below:

- From left to right: Fr. Ward Biemens SJ, EA of CLC in the Netherlands and Barbara Gąsiorek (Poland).

- Magdalena Jarzębkowska

- The last day of the Forum, before leaving the booth. From left to right: Aramis Marin (Mexico/ France), Amélie (France), Rahih and Najat (Lebanon), Marie-Emmanuelle (France), Ania Wilemak (Eurolink for Poland), José David Lopes (Portugal/Sweden), Virginia Žiugždaitė (Lituania).

On the other page:

- From left to right: Barbara Gąsiorek (Poland), Myriam (Spain, living in UK), Paola Menegotto (Brasil), Noelia Díez (Spain), Katarzyna Serafin (Poland).

- Vigil with Pope Francis.

Friday midday and afternoon was really crowded. I was very excited to come again! Many people came to our booth! Fortunately, we were members from France, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania and Argentina. So we could answer nearly every visitor in his/her mother language: I found it richer and fuller. Each time I met someone speaking one of our spoken languages, I was happy to send him/her to a CLC member speaking his/her language. We also had time to discuss among ourselves, to see that we knew some other CLC members in common.

The cleaning time at the closure on Friday was very friendly. I felt very comfortable in this booth, like with my friends. And whenever I remember this time, I always smile. When I left, I thought that I wanted to travel to visit all the CLC members I met at the booth.

An improvement for the next time: put the

CLC booth next to the Jesuits' booth as we are of the same spiritual family.

When I read the testimonies from the other CLC members, I thought that I would have wanted to meet all of them!

See you!

Magdalena Jarzębkowska CLC Poland

I would also like to share my testimony with you, from the perspective of the person living in Kraków, working here, using public transport, shopping, cooking and doing all the normal and sometimes boring things that fill up our lives.

World Youth Days were like a joyful and colorful tornado that changed this city and walking these streets every day I still can see in my memory how wonderful it can be when young spirits come together in the name of Christ. I remember people from Argentina singing their national anthem in a tram, I remember concerts on the riverbanks and silent adoration just next to the scene and coming back home late dancing and singing. It was like a big festival organised to praise God and to share the happiness with others.

The Church in Poland is rather traditional and you might not always see this Christian joy in our prayers or during the Holy Mass. That is why I am so happy that Polish people have seen this multinational, open and happy face of the Catholic Church.

I really wanted to have a whole week of holiday to participate freely in WYD events and to be at our CLC booth every day. Unfortunately, this was not possible, as my boss did not agree to give me days off at work. At first I was angry about this, but later on it turned out that this situation enabled me to be the first witness of WYD and the apostle in my workplace.

Most people I work with are far away from Church. Although most of them believe in God in their own way, I heard a lot of criticism and complaints about the Church, WYD, priests and pilgrims before WYD had even started. This was sad to hear. This was why I decided to wear my pilgrim yel-



low rucksack every day to work :). And so, in the morning I was at work and in the afternoon I was participating in prayers, concerts and visiting our booth. I was the only person from my team at work who decided to participate in WYD, so all the people were asking me questions and I was really excited to tell them how great the atmosphere was on the streets and how people from all around the world were kind.

I felt that slowly the attitude of some of my colleagues from work changed. It was a great pleasure to hear from them "Good luck and have fun and take care!" when I came on my last workday on Thursday, as on Friday I finally I had the day off. Despite the fact that I was totally exhausted after WYD, combining WYD events with work, I felt that this was my small mission from God to bring WYD spirit to my workplace

In our CLC booth we had a map of the world with all the countries in which our community is gathering. When I looked at this map and when I met people from CLC from all around the world I felt for the first time how big we are and how blessed we are by God to continue St Ignatius work. It is very uplifting to know that I am a part of such a big community! Now I know, wherever I go I can find people from CLC. Young people now are modern nomads; it's good to know where we can look for the helping hand of someone sharing the same values.

I think Ignatian spirituality is very needed nowadays, as we live so fast, surrounded by a chaos of information, meeting so many more people and seeing so many more places than our grandfathers and grandmothers could ever see. It is so important to learn to meditate on our deeds in the light of the Word of God. So many young women

and men are lost and confused (just as I was some time ago). Ignatian methods of examen, prayer and meditation are really helpful here and this is our mission to make them widely known.

Also, I am so happy to have been the host for Virginia from the Lithuanian CLC. Thank you Virginia! Also great thanks to Fr. Perreira for the prayer and our conversation on the first day of WYD.

Reflecting upon Christian Life Community participation in WYD, I think it would be nice to know more about local communities from different countries. Maybe it is possible to share our local web pages or Facebook pages?

Also together with Polish CLC members from different cities we decided to organise a small version of CLC youth days in Poland to integrate more young members and make more connections between communities in our own country, as WYD was where some of us met for the first time.

Thank you all again and God bless you!

