

PROJECTS

World CLC Day 2022:

From conversion to commitment: a path of love, joy, and friendship.

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*“The wound Ignatius suffered in Pamplona was not so much a happy ending,
but rather a happy beginning. Conversion consists sometimes of great
moments of change, but it is also a never-ending process. We need to put
Christ in the centre every time, again and again.”*
(Fr. Arturo Sosa SJ.)

To the National Executive Councils and all CLC members:

Introduction

This jubilee year (May 20, 2021 – July 31, 2022), we have been celebrating the 500th anniversary of the conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola, our patron saint and father in spirituality. Ignatius, healed of his wound, offered himself completely to the Lord. We are also celebrating, on March 12th, 2022, the 400th anniversary of the canonization of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier who, with several others, co-founded the Society of Jesus. Their friendship in Christ blossomed out of spiritual conversations, the kind of conversations that we seek to engage in CLC and even in our Church today as she prepares for Synod 2023. Additionally, their friendship exemplified an ongoing, deepening commitment in the way of the Spirit, one that grew in love, support, and enthusiasm for one another, on mission together in the world, with Christ.

Living in the world, in our humanity, we experience woundedness in many forms—in our personal journeys, in our families, in our workplaces, in our communities, in our Church, in our world. Drawing on the inspiration of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, we consider how to work through our woundedness to conversion, and we seek ways to offer ourselves to the Lord, through an increased desire to love, to serve, and to deepen our commitment to the CLC way of life on many levels.

In this *Projects Nº177*, we invite our members to identify these areas of woundedness, to reflect on ways to open ourselves to conversion, and to explore ways to deepen in our commitment, service, and friendship in Christ.

Ignatius' wound and conversion

Ignatius' conversion was the result of a wound, a cannonball that broke his leg, in Pamplona, in 1521. During his convalescence, he discovered that only the Lord can produce in us a lasting, profound joy, different from

the superficial joy that disappears and plunges us back into sadness. "No one will take your joy away from you" (Jn 16:22).

As a result of this wound, Ignatius experienced a personal encounter with the Lord. Christ touched his heart. He realized that the Lord is the source of life, of his life, that He has given him everything, that "all good comes down from above" (SE 237). He then converted, changed his life and offered himself entirely to the service of His Divine Majesty.

Ignatius did not choose to keep his experience to himself. He shared it with us in the book of the Spiritual Exercises, in order to allow others to be touched by the Lord, to be converted, and to follow Him. After his conversion in Loyola, he started his life as a poor pilgrim following his newly discovered God. He left everything aside, but he discovered that that was not enough. In his deep crisis in Manresa, he touched the roots of his physical, mental, and spiritual vulnerability and finally, he realized that the mercy of God was immensely greater than his sins and his good actions. This experience is what he shared with us in the Spiritual Exercises. It is a blessed wound that has given us such a saint!



My wound and my conversion

Like Ignatius, each one of us has perhaps been hit in our lives by a cannonball, a shock, an incident, a particular event that wounded us, made us suffer, put us in a situation of doubt and uncertainty, of handicap, and which led to a turning point in our lives, a conversion, a change. In that particular moment, the loving Lord reached out to us, touched the heart of each of us, in one way or another. He came to meet us. He healed the wound and allowed us to get back on the road.

We do not have to look far to identify this woundedness: personal traumas, health problems, global pandemic, ecological crises, polarization, racism, poverty, marginalization, colonialization, corruption, violence, war, hunger, etc. We look to Jesus who understood the messes we are immersed in, some of our own making, and showed us a way through the woundedness. There are those who suggest that some of our messes can be seen as gifts, ways of acknowledging and lifting up our vulnerabilities, engaging the "fight" or energy or passion of Jesus, and allowing ourselves to be converted to live out more fully the "civilization of love" or the reign of God as promoted by Jesus, Ignatius, and Pope Francis.

Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California, USA, describes the experience of a former gang member who suffered much physical and emotional abuse as a child. He used to wear three T-shirts to school to cover the blood and scars on his back. He used to be ashamed of his wounds and regularly sought to hide them until he realized how he should welcome his wounds, make friends with his wounds, so that through his own experience of woundedness, he could help heal the wounds of others. This realization was the significant moment.

- ***I take time to identify my "blessed" wounds. They might be personal, communal, in my family, in my workplace, in the Church, in the world.***

- ***I remember that particular moment when the Lord came to set my heart on fire and awaken in me the desire to follow Him. What did I feel?***
- ***Today there are different fields that need our conversion: conversion to the poor and the victims of our world, conversion to ecology, conversion to diversity and plurality of religions and cultures, conversion to the Church and the Gospel... among others...***
 - ***Which conversion do I need?***
 - ***In what ways can I contribute to a civilization of love and reconciliation and healing?***

Ad Amorem

In the *contemplation to obtain love*, Ignatius tells us that love is in actions more than in words, and that it consists of a reciprocal communication, of an exchange. Now all that I am, all that I possess, comes from the Lord. Nothing belongs to me. I reflect on this Psalm: "What shall I return to the Lord for all His goodness to me?" (Ps 116:12) This is the very heart of Ignatian spirituality. We do not do good actions to earn salvation, we do good because it is our way of expressing gratitude for the absolute love that we have received from God, who has worked for my salvation in every single thing in Creation and in my life.

- ***What can I offer Him in return for His love? How can I express my love and gratitude? I can only give Him back all that He has given me: "Take, Lord, and receive all my freedom...". (SE 234)***
- ***I consider my concrete reality, my life and my world. I consider my time, gifts, availability, experience, wisdom. What is my part to do? It is important to be authentic to the role each of us plays and not to judge how big or small that role is. Each of us is made in the image of God; each of us reveals that part of God that no one else can reveal.***

This desire, this impulse to want to follow the Lord is only the fruit of a personal encounter with the healer. When we are healed, we are led to an inner knowledge of the one who loves us freely to the point of giving his life for us. From this experience, we want to stand under the standard of the Lord, to commit ourselves to serve him.

It is true that commitment is not about words. Commitment, first of all, emanates from the heart. It is an inner movement and the result of a process. But as human beings we need words to express what we are living in a process. We need a moment to stop and say "yes, I love you" and this would express a process of many years of friendship with another person and with God. For some, making a commitment in a public way allows me to witness to my love for the Lord, to make concrete that exchange Ignatius speaks of in the Ad Amorem. It is like the commitment of two spouses who exchange the 'yes' in the presence of God and the witnesses representing the Church. It is also like the 'yes' of Mary before the Angel on the day of the Annunciation. And like the implicit 'yes' that we pronounce, consciously or unconsciously, when we have the opportunity to renew the promises of our Baptism publicly at Easter or when we attend another Baptism. This is our fundamental commitment. Commitment means freedom, fidelity, responsibility. If we think about it, we find that the commitment to CLC is quite natural, but deliberate and conscious. We can then praise the Lord with the Psalmist: "How shall I repay the Lord for all the good He has done for me? ... I will keep my promises to the Lord, yes, before all his people" (Ps 116:12; 18)

As we deepen in our commitment to love, service, and the CLC way of life, our members may feel the call to express this commitment publicly. Many communities have developed beautiful commitment ceremonies which we encourage you to share.

- ***How do I find myself deepening in a commitment to God, to the CLC way of life, both internally and externally?***
- ***Do I feel drawn to make a public commitment to the CLC way of life? If I have already made a public commitment to the CLC way of life, how has this impacted my life and helped me to grow in love, service, and friendship in Christ?***

The Friendship of St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier

From biographies of these two saints, we learn that both originated from the Basque Region of Spain but first met as students studying at the University of Paris. Ignatius was an important influence on Xavier, and while initially reluctant to do so, Xavier made the Spiritual Exercises with Ignatius. Their companionship with five



others deepened over the following years so that on the 15th of August 1534, they pronounced vows. They were not priests (only Peter Faber was), just *Friends in the Lord*. In 1537, they were ordained priests; and in 1540, their continuing spiritual conversations led to the formal founding of the Society of Jesus. Their experience teaches us that spiritual conversation after personal prayer is the most useful tool for discernment in common.

Both Ignatius and Xavier were known for their passion and commitment to their work in the service of God. Hallmarks of their demeanor were joy, calm, vitality, even laughter! Xavier was known to be enthusiastic as a missionary, and he attributed this enthusiasm to the support and prayers received from those that sent him and “from the beauty with which he viewed his service.” He was serving God and helping others, helping others to find God.

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Reading the lives of these two saints, we can appreciate how they encouraged one another to deepen in their understanding of the ways of God and in their commitment of being of service to God.

- ***How do the friendships made in CLC encourage me in the ways of spiritual conversations and to find joy in service with Christ?***

Conclusion

In this Ignatian year, and especially on our World CLC Day -25th March 2022-, we encourage everyone to dare to make their "yes" heard, like Mary, like Ignatius, like Francis Xavier, like many other witnesses.

Pope Francis said recently at a Mass in Greece, “As far as Christ is concerned, we need only open the door and let him enter in and work his wonders.” In our woundedness and vulnerability, may we open our hearts to conversion, commitment, and service in the friendship of Christ and one another. Filled with Christ’s love, joy and peace, our communities can be instruments of healing in our world.

Communities are encouraged to share reflections, photos, videos, etc. with our world community directly on our Social Media accounts or to our Executive Secretary, Manuel Martínez (exsec@cvx-clc.net).

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