

AT THE MEETING

OPENING PRAYER

We begin, as usual, with a short time of stillness, putting ourselves in the presence of God and asking for grace that everything that happens in our mind, heart and imagination may be directed purely to the praise and service of God. *Some communities use the CLC opening prayer, or some other formal prayer, to conclude this brief time of stillness. Others use a minute or two of suitable music.*

GRACE We ask for the grace to explore the vision of Christian Life Community together and to listen to our deepest feelings about it.

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 3: 14-21.. (Ask someone to read this aloud.)

SILENCE

Ten minutes silent prayer remembering my life and prayer since the last meeting. How have I found the prayer this last fortnight? What events in my life and prayer do I wish to share with my community?

SHARING AND LISTENING

- Remember that this is a listening, not a discussion, group.
- Include a second round if there is time.
- It's good to conclude this time of reflection with a short time of silence, praying for each other, and with a formal prayer, such as the *Glory Be* or the *Lord's Prayer*.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER, if wanted.

PRACTICALITIES: This is an opportunity for any reports, eg from members who have attended a CLC event, for questions, for discussion about any concerns, for news about any work or mission in which members might be involved, or for any business the group might need to sort out.

REVIEW OF THE MEETING

- What was good for me in this meeting?
- What was not so good? What would I have liked to be different?
- What do I want to take away with me?

CLOSING PRAYER (Many communities use the CLC closing prayer.)



MEETING PLANS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

OUR SPIRITUALITY



**TOWARDS
MEETING FOUR**

PERSONAL PRAYER BEFORE THE MEETING

A reminder of the suggested stages of prayer . . .

PREPARATORY PRAYER Begin in the usual way.

ASKING FOR WHAT I WANT I ask for the grace to explore the vision of Christian community and to listen to my deepest feelings about it.

MATERIAL FOR PRAYER

First read the article prayerfully and reflectively, letting it lead you into prayer if it does. Then use the General Principle and the following passages, one at a time, staying with each one as long as you feel drawn to it.

* Ephesians 3: 14-21 * Philippians 2: 5-11 * Mark 10: 46-52 * John 1:29-42

TALKING WITH THE LORD

Ensure that at the end of your prayer, you spend some time talking directly with the Lord. You may like to end the prayer with a *Glory Be* or the Lord's prayer.

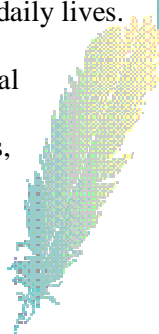
REVIEW OF PRAYER

Afterwards, look back over your prayer and make some notes

“We especially treasure the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality.

“We are called to be open to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily lives. So we need prayer and discernment, both personal and communal, a daily Examen of consciousness, and spiritual guidance in order to seek and find God in all things.”

(CLC General Principle 5)



OUR SPIRITUALITY

The Spiritual Exercises are a series of meditations and contemplations which reflect the way St Ignatius of Loyola was himself led to find God in all things. Ignatius' seminal experience was as a lay person, so his spirituality is very suitable for lay people. Many CLC members have to wait quite some time before they are able to ‘make the Exercises’, but we are all encouraged to try to live their spirituality. In the best of circumstances this takes time and much prayer. (I first ‘made the Exercises’ over forty years ago and I am still trying to live out their spirituality.)

So what are the main elements of Ignatian spirituality? Of course all Christian spiritualities encourage us to realise that God loves us just as we are, sins and all, and is waiting anxiously to forgive us. This loving God is very active in our lives, trying to heal us and bring us ever closer. Healing and forgiveness come to us through Jesus our saviour, and we are helped through prayer to get to know him as a friend whom we can trust and say anything to. Knowing Jesus comes through reading and praying the Gospels and enables us to bring him into our ordinary everyday lives today. Life and prayer become integrated, prayer making more sense of life and life entering into prayer.

This experience of Jesus active in our lives usually leaves us feeling intensely grateful and asking ourselves, ‘What can I do for Christ?’ The answer comes back, “Work *with* me.” It is Jesus' desire to bring about on earth a kingdom of peace and justice, a place of freedom and harmony, a culture of unselfishness and love. He asks our help to bring this about. We may never see God's kingdom complete on earth, but there have been and are pockets where it is more nearly attained and these act as signs of hope in our world.

Working *with* Christ means adopting his values, setting about the tasks he is most concerned about, in the way he wants. So

we need to listen to him before we make choices. We call this “discernment” and Ignatius formulated guidelines to help us to seek God's will for us and to know when we are in harmony with it.

When we love somebody very much and know them very well, we may have a dream for them; not a dream that pressures them but rather one that will make them more free and more themselves. God loves us like that and knows what will make us more ourselves. So discernment is about getting in touch with God's dream for us. One way to discover it is to recognise our deepest desires, the desires God put inside us when we were created. Jesus said to people, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ How would *you* answer that question? It is one way of getting in touch with our deepest desires.

In order to live Ignatian spirituality, we need to notice our reactions. Ignatius encourages us to pray daily the “Examen”, spending time asking God's help to notice in all the events of our day whatever is leading us to God and what is leading us into ourselves.

The above is a very brief description of CLC spirituality. It will be developed bit by bit in later meeting plans. Meanwhile, what particularly attracted or interested you in this article? Did you find yourself drawn to asking God for anything as you read it?

Tony Horan sj

The book of the Spiritual Exercises was written for Spiritual Directors. It can be very off-putting for those doing the praying. So please don't buy yourself a copy just yet! We suggest that you wait until you have had an experience of the Exercises first.

The ‘Examen’ is Ignatius’ way of looking back over the day and will be explained in full in a future meeting plan.