



GENERAL PRINCIPLES 1-13

of the

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

*A paraphrased version
for England and Wales*

together with the official text

Approved by the General Assembly on 7 September 1990

Confirmed by the Holy See on 3 December 1990



©1993 Christian Life Community
in England and Wales

114 Mount Street, London W1K 3AH

This edition 2005

v.1811

PREFACE

The General Principles have been described as our vision statement. Certainly they are both an inspiration and a challenge; both a yardstick by which we can recognise what is truly Christian Life Community and an ideal which, if we are honest, we know we can never quite achieve. However we look at them, we know that they are important.

So I am delighted to be able to introduce our paraphrased version of the General Principles (as revised at the Guadalajara World Assembly) and to record our deepest gratitude to Tony Horan sj, our National Chaplain, who put so much time, labour and love into the work of making the General Principles more accessible to CLC in England and Wales.

We hope very much that individuals and local CLCs will take time to read, ponder and pray over the following text. It is a good way of growing in understanding of the CLC way of life which we have all chosen.

We hope, too, that you won't be content with the following text, but will want to look at it alongside the official text, even though that is more difficult to read. Two versions of the official text are available from the CLC office. The first is the parallel text to this paraphrased version, General Principles 1-13.* The second is the full text of the General Principles and the General Norms with a guide to reading them provided by the World Secretariat. For details of how to order copies, please turn to the back of this booklet.

Note

* Since this was written, the parallel official text of General Principles 1-13 have been added as an appendix at the back of this booklet on pages 17-21. (2005)

PREAMBLE

1. GOD LOVES US AND SAVES US

The Three Divine Persons,
looking upon the whole of humanity,
and seeing so much
selfishness, greed, violence and
indifference to the needs and rights of others
decide to give themselves completely
to all men and women
and to make them free
from all that drives them.



Out of love,
'the Word was made flesh'
and born of Mary,
who relied, not on herself, but on God.

Jesus, choosing to live among those
who had nowhere to lay their heads
invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God
and to work for unity within our human family.

This gift of God to us and our response
continues to this day through the influence of the Holy Spirit
in all our own personal experiences and circumstances of life.

Therefore we, the members of the Christian Life Community,
have composed these General Principles
to aid us in choosing to imitate Jesus Christ
and to take part through him, with him and in him
in this loving initiative
which expresses
God's everlasting faithfulness.

2. GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT

Our Community is a way of living the Christian life; Hence, these principles are to be interpreted by the spirit of the Gospel and the interior law of love, which the Holy Spirit inscribes in our hearts, rather than by the letter of this text.

This interior law of love is always open to meet new situations in 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 recognise our serious responsibilities, to continue seeking the answers to the needs of our times, and to work together with the entire People of God and all those of good will for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.



Our CLC symbol represents the flame of the Spirit received by the community of apostles to give birth to the apostolic community.

3 A HISTORY OF GRACE

The Christian Life Community has an executive office in Rome, and local and national communities in many parts of the world.

It is the continuation of the Sodalities of Our Lady, founded by Jean Leunis sj and approved by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584.

Before the Sodalities there were committed groups of lay people around St Ignatius of Loyola and his companions.

Inspired by their apostolic achievements, we live in communion with all those who have preceded us.

In love and prayer we relate to all those men and women of the Ignatian tradition whom the Church offers us as friends and intercessors, helping us to fulfil our mission.



The previous England and Wales CLC logo with PX for Christ and M for Mary set within the Tudor Rose, is said to go back to the first Sodalities ('Sodalities of Our Lady' as the Congregatio Mariana (CM) were known) in these islands during the Reformation, when Sodalists were keen to emphasise their loyalty to the Crown as well as to their faith.

PART ONE: OUR CHARISM

4 PURPOSE

**Our community is made up of Christians:
men and women, adults and young people,
of all social conditions,
who want to follow Christ more closely
and work with him for the building of the Kingdom,
having recognised the Christian Life Community
as their particular vocation within the Church.**

**Our aim is to be committed Christians,
bearing witness to those human and gospel values
within the Church and society
which affect the dignity of the person,
the welfare of the family,
and the integrity of creation.**

**In particular we recognise the urgent need to work for justice
by trying to see our world through the eyes of the weak,
the oppressed
and the poor
and by seeking a simple lifestyle
which expresses our freedom
and solidarity with those in need.**

**To prepare our members for apostolic witness and service,
we form communities of those
who strongly desire to unite their lives
completely
with their Christian faith
according to our charism.**

**We hear Christ speaking through our everyday lives
calling us to this unity of life.**

5 SOURCES

The spirituality of our Community
is centred on Christ
and on participation in
his life, passion, death and resurrection.

It is helped by
the scriptures,
the liturgy,
the doctrinal development of the Church,
and the revelation of God's will
through the events of our time.

Amongst these universal sources,
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 'Review of the Day',
and spiritual guidance
in order to seek
and find
God
in all things.



* 'Examen of consciousness'

6 SENSE OF THE CHURCH

**Union with Christ leads to
union with the Church,
where Christ here and now continues
his mission of salvation.**

**By learning to recognise
the signs of the times
and the movements of the Spirit,
we will be better able to encounter
Christ in all people and situations.**

**Sharing the riches of membership of the Church,
we take our part in the liturgy,
meditate upon the scriptures,
and learn, teach, and promote Christian doctrine.**

**We work together with the hierarchy
and other Church leaders,
motivated by a common concern
for the problems and progress
of all people,
and open to the challenges
facing the Church today.**

**This leads us into
creative co-operation in advancing
the reign of God on earth
and into readiness to serve
where we are needed.**

7 COMMUNITY BONDS

**We each commit ourselves to the World Community,
through a freely chosen local community.**

**This local community is united in the Eucharist,
a unity expressed in love and action.**

**Each of our communities
is a gathering together in Christ,
a cell of his mystical Body.
We are bound together by
our common commitment,
our common way of life,
and our recognition and love of Mary, as our mother.**



**We aim to extend these bonds of unity
to the National and World Christian Life Community,
and to the Church communities of which we are part,
to the whole Church,
and to all people of good will.**

8 APOSTOLIC LIFE

**As members of the pilgrim People of God,
we have been sent by Christ
to be his witnesses to all people
by our attitudes, words and actions.**

**We take as our own his mission
to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives,
to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free
and to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.**



Our life is essentially apostolic.

**The field of CLC mission knows no limits;
it extends both to the Church
and to the world,
in order to bring the gospel of salvation
to all people
and to serve
individuals and society
by opening hearts to conversion
and struggling to change oppressive structures.**

- a We each receive from God a call
to make Christ and his saving action
present to our own environment.**

**This personal apostolate
is necessary for extending the gospel
in an effective way
among the great diversity of
people, places and structures.**

b We also exercise a communal apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by our Community, or through the involvement of our members in existing secular or religious organisations and events.

c The Community helps us to live the different dimensions of this apostolic commitment, through personal and communal discernment.

We try to give an apostolic sense even to the most ordinary parts of our daily life.

d The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of the structures of society, taking part in efforts to free victims of all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor.

We want to play our part in the evangelisation of cultures from within.

Our desire is to achieve all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives which bring about unity among Christians.

Our life finds its lasting inspiration in the gospel of the poor and humble Christ.

9 UNION WITH MARY

**Because the spirituality of our community is centred on Christ,
we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ:
she is the model of our collaboration
in Christ's mission.**

**Mary's co-operation with God began
with her 'yes' in the mystery of the
Annunciation/Incarnation.**

**Her effective service,
as shown in her visit to Elizabeth,
and her solidarity with the poor,
as reflected in the Magnificat,
make her an inspiration
for our action for justice
in the world today.**

**Mary's lifelong co-operation
in her son's mission,
inspires us to give ourselves
totally to God
in union with Mary,
who by accepting the designs of God
became our mother and the mother of us all.**

**This confirms our own mission
of service to the world
which we received
in baptism and confirmation.**

**We honour Mary, the Mother of God,
in a special way,
and we rely on her intercession
in fulfilling our vocation.**

PART TWO: LIFE AND ORGANISATION OF THE COMMUNITY

10 MEMBERS

**Membership of the
Christian Life Community
requires a personal vocation.**

**For a period of time
the candidate is introduced to
the CLC way of life.**

**Once a decision regarding the candidate's vocation
has been taken by the candidate
and the wider community,
the member makes a temporary commitment,
to allow time to test,
with the help of the wider community,
his or her ability
to live according to the end and spirit of CLC.**

**Then,
after a suitable period of time,
a permanent commitment is made.**

11 BUILDING COMMUNITY

**In order to grow in the CLC way of life,
members meet regularly
in a stable local community
to encourage
a deep sharing of their faith and human life,
a true community atmosphere,
and a strong commitment to mission and service.**

12 WAY OF LIFE

a The CLC way of life commits members to strive, with the help of the community, for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice, this means participation in the Eucharist, when possible; an active sacramental life; daily personal prayer, preferably based on Scripture; discernment by means of a daily 'Review of the Day'*, and, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual retreat, in accordance with our spirituality; and a love for the Mother of God.

b Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the coming of the Kingdom, each individual member is called to be active in the vast field of apostolic service.

Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ to our surroundings.

Our broad and demanding mission asks each member to be willing to take part in social and political life and to develop their human qualities and professional skills

**in order to become more competent workers
and convincing witnesses.**

*** 'Examen of consciousness'**

**Moreover it calls for simplicity
in all aspects of life
so that we may follow Christ
more closely in his poverty
and preserve our inner freedom.**

- c** Finally each member is responsible
for taking part
in the meetings
and other activities of the Community
and for helping and encouraging other members
to follow their personal vocation,
always ready to give and receive advice
as friends in the Lord.



13 GOVERNMENT

- a The World Christian Life Community**
is governed by the **General Assembly**,
which determines norms and policies,
and by the **Executive Council**,
which is responsible
for carrying them out.

**(The General Norms* give more details
about the World Community and its Executive Council.)**

- b The National Community**
consists of all those members
who are trying to live out
the CLC way of life and mission
within a given country or countries.

The National Community
is set up according to the **General Norms***,
and is governed by
a **National Assembly**
and an **Executive Council**.
**Their goals are the harmonious development
of the whole Community and
its effective participation
in the mission of the Church.**
**Their role is to determine
means to achieve these ends
and to work for their accomplishment.**

* Besides our **General Principles**, which are concerned with our vocation and our relationship with the Church and its mission, we also have **General Norms**, which deal with the practical ways in which the General Principles are put into effect. The text of these is available from the CLC office (see inside the back cover of this booklet).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY

The official text of GPs 1-13

PREAMBLE

1 GOD LOVES AND SAVES US

The Three Divine Persons, contemplating the whole of humanity in so many sinful divisions, decide to give themselves completely to all men and women and liberate them from all their chains. Out of love, the Word was incarnated and born from Mary, the poor Virgin of Nazareth. Inserted among the poor and sharing with them their condition, Jesus invites all of us to give ourselves continuously to God and to bring about unity within our human family. This gift of God to us and our response continues to this day through the influence of the Holy Spirit in all our particular circumstances. Therefore, we, members of the Christian Life Community, have composed these General Principles to aid us in making our own the options of Jesus Christ and taking part through Him, with Him and in Him in this loving initiative which expresses God's promise of faithfulness forever.

2 GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT

Because our Community 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 serious responsibilities and to seek constantly the answers to the needs of our times and to work, together with the entire People of God and all those of good will, for progress and peace, justice and charity, liberty and the dignity of all people.

3 A HISTORY OF GRACE

The Christian Life Community is a public world association whose executive centre is presently in Rome. It is the continuation of the Marian Congregations, started by Jean Leunis SJ and first officially approved by Pope Gregory XIII's bull *Omnipotentis Dei*, of 5 December 1584. Going back beyond the Marian Congregations we see our origin in those groups of lay people that developed after 1540 in different parts of the world through the initiative of St Ignatius Loyola and his companions. We live this way of Christian life in joyful communion with all those who have

preceded us, grateful for their efforts and apostolic accomplishments. In love and prayer we relate to those many men and women of our spiritual tradition who have been proposed to us by the Church as friends and valid intercessors who help us to fulfil our mission.

PART ONE: OUR CHARISM

4 PURPOSE

Our Community is made up of Christians; men and women, adults and young people, of all social conditions, who want to follow Jesus Christ more closely and work with him for the building of the Kingdom, who have recognized Christian Life Community as their particular vocation within the Church. We aim to become committed Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the Church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation. We are particularly aware of the pressing need to work for justice through a preferential option for the poor and a simple lifestyle which expresses our freedom and solidarity with them. To prepare our members more effectively for apostolic witness and service, especially in our daily environment, we assemble people in community who feel a more urgent need to unite their human life in all its dimensions with the fullness of their Christian faith according to our charism. We seek to achieve this unity of life in response to the call of Christ from within the world in which we live.

5 SOURCES

The spirituality of our Community is centred on Christ and on participation in the Paschal Mystery. It draws from the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy, the doctrinal development of the Church, and the revelation of God's will through the events of our times. Within the context of these universal sources, we hold the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius as the specific source and the characteristic instrument of our spirituality. Our vocation calls us to live this spirituality, which opens and disposes us to whatever God wishes in each concrete situation of our daily life. We recognise particularly the necessity of prayer and discernment, personal and communal, of the daily examination of consciousness and of spiritual guidance as important means for seeking and finding God in all things.

6 SENSE OF THE CHURCH

Union with Christ leads to union with the Church where Christ here and now continues his mission of salvation. By making ourselves sensitive to the signs of the times and the movements of the Spirit, we will be better able to encounter Christ in all people and in all situations. Sharing the riches of membership of the Church, we participate in the liturgy, meditate upon the Scriptures, and learn, teach and promote Christian doctrine. We work together with the hierarchy and other ecclesial leaders, motivated by a common concern for the problems and progress of all people and open to the situations in which the Church finds itself today. This sense of the Church impels us to creative and concrete collaboration for the work of advancing the reign of God on earth, and

includes a readiness to go and serve where the needs of the Church so demand.

7 COMMUNITY BONDS

Our gift of self finds its expression in a personal commitment to the World Community, through a freely chosen local community. Such a local community, centred in the Eucharist, is a concrete experience of unity in love and action. In fact, each of our communities is a gathering of people in Christ, a cell of his mystical Body. We are bound together by our common commitment, our common way of life, and our recognition and love of Mary as our mother. Our responsibility to develop the bonds of community does not stop with our local community but extends to the National and World Christian Life Community, to the ecclesial communities of which we are part (parish, diocese), to the whole Church and to all people of good will.

8 APOSTOLIC LIFE

As members of the pilgrim People of God, we have received from Christ the mission of being his witnesses before all people by our attitudes, words and actions, becoming identified with his mission of bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, setting the downtrodden free and proclaiming the Lord's year of favour. Our life is essentially apostolic. The field of CLC mission knows no limits: it extends both to the Church and the world, in order to bring the gospel of salvation to all people and to serve individual persons and society by opening hearts to conversion and struggling to change oppressive structures.

a Each of us receives from God a call to make Christ and his saving action present to our surroundings. This personal apostolate is indispensable for extending the Gospel in a lasting and penetrating way among the great diversity of people, places and situations.

b At the same time, we exercise a corporate or group apostolate in a great variety of forms, whether through group action initiated or sustained by the Community through suitable structures, or through involvement of members in existing secular and religious organisations and efforts.

c The Community helps us to live this apostolic commitment in its different dimensions, and to be always open to what is more urgent and universal, particularly through the 'Review of Life' and through personal and communal discernment. We try to give an apostolic sense to even the most humble realities of daily life.

d The Community urges us to proclaim the Word of God and to work for the reform of structures of society, participating in efforts to liberate the victims of all sorts of discrimination and especially to abolish differences between rich and poor. We wish to contribute to the evangelisation of cultures from within. We desire to do all this in an ecumenical spirit, ready to collaborate with those initiatives that bring about unity among Christians. Our life finds its permanent inspiration in the Gospel of the poor and humble Christ

9 UNION WITH MARY

Since the spirituality of our Community is centred on Christ, we see the role of Mary in relation to Christ: she is the model of our own collaboration in Christ's mission. Mary's co-operation with God begins with her 'yes' in the mystery of the Annunciation-Incarnation. Her effective service, as shown in her visit to Elizabeth, and her solidarity with the poor, as reflected in the Magnificat, make her an inspiration for our action for justice in the world today. Mary's co-operation in her Son's mission, continued all through her life, inspires us to give ourselves totally to God in union with Mary, who, by accepting the designs of God, became our mother and the mother of all. Thus we confirm our own mission of service to the world received in baptism and confirmation. We honour Mary, the Mother of God, in a special way, and we rely on her intercession in fulfilling our vocation.

PART TWO: LIFE AND ORGANISATION OF THE COMMUNITY

10 MEMBERS

Becoming a member of Christian Life Community presupposes a personal vocation. During a period of time determined in the General Norms, the candidate is introduced into the way of life proper to CLC. This time is allotted for the candidate and the wider Community to discern the candidate's vocation. Once the decision has been taken, and approved by the wider Community, the member assumes a temporary commitment and, with the help of the Community, tests his/her aptitude for living according to the end and spirit of CLC. After a suitable period of time, determined by the General Norms, permanent commitment follows.

11 COMMUNITY BONDING

As a primary means of formation and continuing growth, members come together on a regular basis in a stable local community, to assure

- * a deep sharing by members of their faith and human life,
- * a true community atmosphere
- * and a strong commitment to mission and service.

12 WAY OF LIFE

a The way of life of Christian Life Community commits its members, with the help of the community, to strive for a continuing personal and social growth which is spiritual, human and apostolic. In practice this involves participation in the Eucharist whenever possible; an active 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, if possible, regular spiritual direction; an annual interior renewal in accordance with the sources of our spirituality; and a love for the

Mother of God.

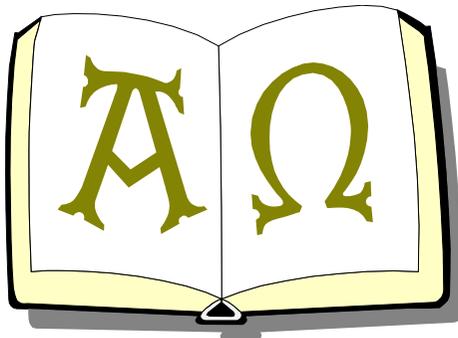
b Since the Christian Life Community aims to work with Christ for the advancement of God's reign, all individual members are called to an active participation in the vast field of apostolic service. Apostolic discernment, both individual and communal, is the ordinary way of discovering how best to bring Christ's presence, concretely, to our world. Our broad and demanding mission requires of each member a willingness to participate in social and political life and to develop human qualities and professional skills in order to become more competent workers and convincing witnesses. Furthermore, it demands also simplicity in all aspects of life, in order to follow more closely Christ in his poverty and to preserve inner apostolic freedom.

c Finally, each one assumes responsibility for participating in the meetings and other activities of the Community, and to help and encourage other members to pursue their personal vocation, always ready to give and to receive advice and aid as friends in the Lord.

13 GOVERNMENT

a The World Christian Life Community is governed by the General Assembly, which determines norms and policies, and by the Executive Council which is responsible for their ordinary implementation. The composition and functions of these bodies are specified in the General Norms.

b The National Community, constituted according to the General Norms, comprises all those members who are striving to live out the CLC way of life and mission within a given country. The national Community is governed by a National Assembly and an Executive Council. Their aims are to ensure the structures and formation programmes necessary for responding effectively to what is needed for the harmonious development of the whole Community, and for CLC's effective participation in the mission of the Church.



**For a full list of publications and prices, please ask for our
PUB LICATIONS LIST AND ORDER FORM**

**from: CLC
114 Mount Street
London W1K 3AH**

or literature@clcew.org.uk

