We Cannot Travel But the World Can Come to Us!
World CLC in BC Event November 11, 2020
By Maureen Wicken and Catherine Kelly, St. Mark's CLC, Vancouver, BC

On November 11, 2020, CLC Rockies/BC members gathered virtually, listening first to "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*" and Acts 2:1-12, hearing about the first Christian Pentecost when people from all over gathered and were astonished to hear the apostles speaking in their own languages. We, too, were amazed and energized to hear the Holy Spirit speaking the common language of Ignatian spirituality through CLC members from Chile, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, Spain, Syria and the Philippines who now live in the Vancouver area as they told their experiences as members of CLC in their home countries.

Catherine Kelly, Director of CLC at St. Mark's Parish in Vancouver, organized the gathering of members from three remote CLC communities in BC and three at St. Mark's, including members from Calgary and New Zealand. Individuals and couples on 36 screens heard stories of welcome, faith, community and service. Fr. Rob Allore, SJ, Pastor at St. Mark's Parish and Janet Ho, Rockie/BC Regional Representative joined, too.

After an opening prayer, the members recounted stories of how they joined CLC, their experiences of formation and mission, how CLC has affected their lives and the graces they have received in CLC Canada.

We were delighted to hear of the varied experiences of those who joined during middle school, high school, university, and adult life, invited by friends or beloved priests like Fr. Frans van Der Lugt, SJ in Syria and Fr. Groum, SJ in Ethiopia who had learned about CLC from Canadian Fr. John English, SJ in the 1970s. The Filippinos spoke of their active college campus ministry and parish CLC experience which invited them to a lifelong "response to God's call to build God's kingdom in areas of social justice" as they remembered participation in protests and rallies, as well as engaging in apostolic service to the community.

The entire panel shared a universal call to action and witnessed to various work such as the Spanish CLCers joining an NGO to serve in India every summer; the Syrian students who served at Al-Ardh (the Earth), a centre for people with different needs who grow and make the best wine in Syria; the work at La Storta in Santiago, Chile which continues the mission of St. Alberto Hurtado; and the inspiring education ministry of the Hong Kong CLC which runs two Catholic schools to this day.

Formation in community facilitated this level of service. Each member articulated how strongly the community promoted formation through retreats, faith sharing, weekly or biweekly meetings and liturgical celebrations. In Chile, the presence of a CLC house encouraged the students to gather, serve the homeless and build houses as part of their outreach. In Hong Kong, hosting the World CLC Assembly in 1994 provided a catalyst for growth and now the focus on the "5 Qualities": depth, reverence, generosity, recollection and silence as well as the monthly prayer booklet, *Shalom*, support the formation which makes their ministries at the Leunis institute and the Children's Centre vibrant. The Spanish noticed their CLC changed as the members grew older and began to

understand their families as a primary vocation. Members there became spiritual guides and gave retreats at St. Xavier's Place.

CLC Ethiopia attracts mostly young professionals who joined through their involvement in the International Movement of Catholic Students. As they begin their own families, they continue to gather and support each other with professional development and spiritual support. George and Majd from Syria reminisced about retreats and hikes for young adults where they were invited to reflect deeply on their encounter with God through creative means such as "photo-language" and being invited to be "rooted in honesty and clarity about our truths". And in the Philippines, Whitney's experience in university CLC led her to join the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and then serve in campus ministry before coming to Canada.

In responding to what graces the international panelists sought and found in CLC Canada, they expressed a desire to find a "sacred space for reflection", "the grace of friendship", a place where they could discern big life decisions in community, "faith-filled guides", an "apostolic community where we can integrate action and prayer" and a place of kindness, service, devotion and family. George articulated it best, saying he was here because "God is everywhere and God in this community is welcoming us".

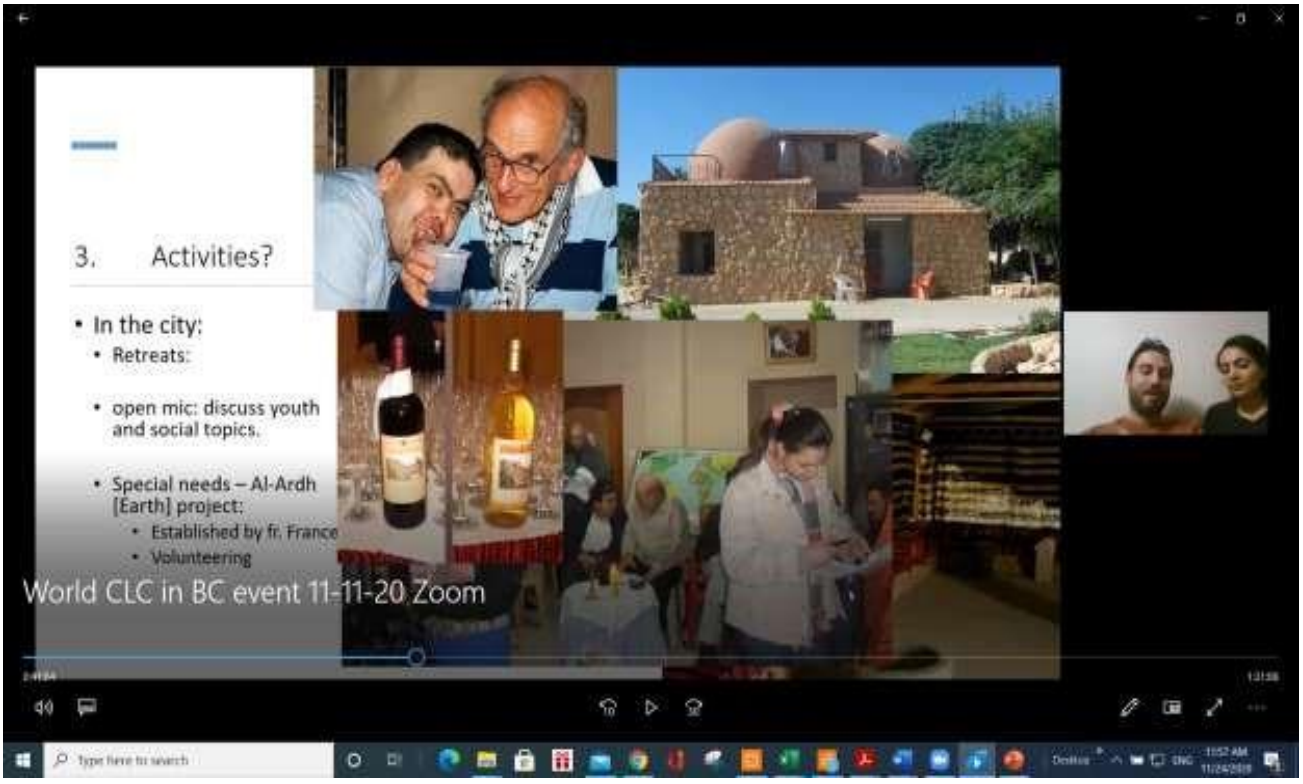
In reflecting on the graces the audience received, many described hope, passion and unity in diversity as follows "contemplatives in action who draw their aspirations from their faith in God, leading them to serve God and neighbor"; "how united we were even though we were called at different stages of life and from different countries; the Spirit is uniting us and that is a source of comfort and joy"; "felt like at Pentecost: everyone hearing and understanding which reveals hope and the Holy Spirit as advocate"; "the passion of everyone, exhilarated to keep the presentation alive; walked away with joy and hope and feeling the Holy Spirit is active in a strong way"; "hopeful CLC is growing in BC, a sense of family and community in one, spiritually journeying together"; "sense of the universal church even though we look and sound different - diversity is good, sharing what's going on in our hearts is powerful, unity in differences, people at different stages, CLC changes as you live out community relationships, community offers hope"; "good experience remembering and treasuring their experiences, hearing everyone's passion and excitement"; "experience of hope, felt like we are alive all over the world, smiles on faces so proud, felt so lucky that we have all these experiences which help us now and in the future, excited to visit all those countries"; "sensing God in the welcome of the community, finding hospitality as a life mission, impressed with the strength of the Hong Kong CLC taking on an intense, ongoing apostolate - sponsoring schools and a children's center"; "encouraging seeing a lot of people with a similar faith and how they want to proceed."

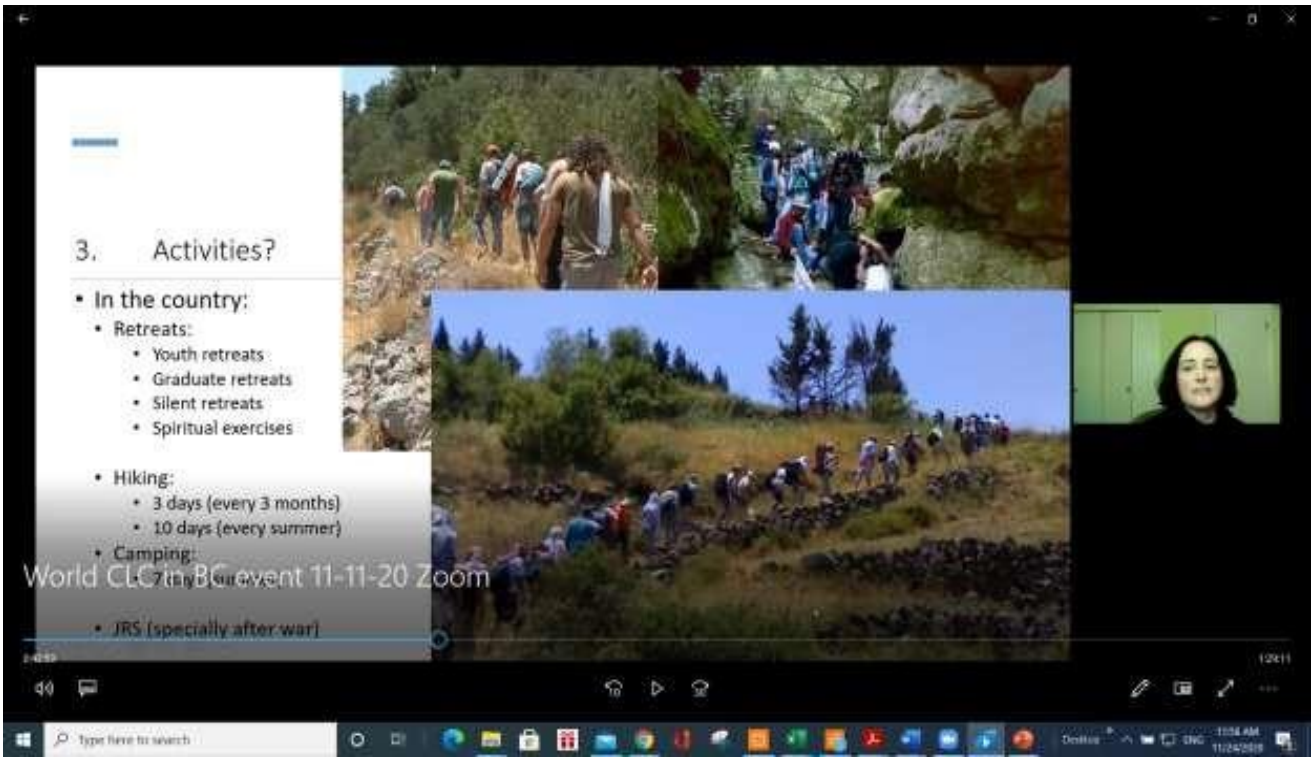
May the Holy Spirit continue to inspire us to welcome all who respond Yes! to the invitation and guide us as we read the signs of the times and discern how best to respond for the greater glory of God in our region, in our country, and in our world.

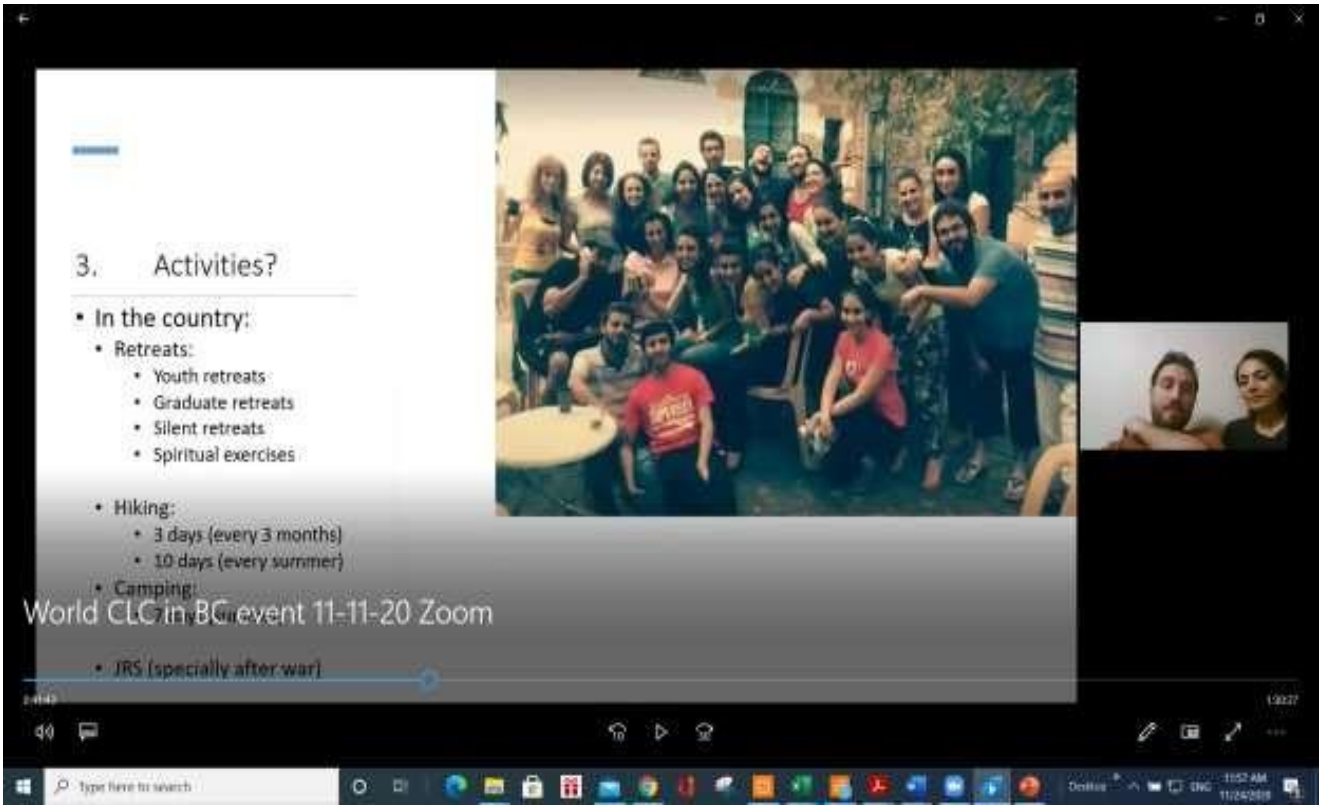





2. Why?
• Majd: joined: in 7th grade my deskmate, introduced me to the group meeting in the Jesuit church in my neighborhood, and the rest was history.
Stayed: Fr. France
• George: opportunity to maintain, grow and deepen my spiritual life, not only with oneself but with a community that listens and embrace you.


3. Activities?
• In the city:
• Retreats:
• open mic: discuss youth and social topics.
• Special needs – Al-Ardh [Earth] project:
• Established by fr. France
• Volunteering
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3. Activities?
• In the country:
• Retreats:
• Youth retreats
• Graduate retreats
• Silent retreats
• Spiritual exercises
• Hiking:
• 3 days (every 3 months)
• 10 days (every summer)
• Camping:
• JRS (specially after war)
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