



like Christ on the Cross
connecting Heaven to Earth
left to right
then to now
person to person
in blood and pain
nothing pretty about it
but the hidden glory of God

Introduction

The first step for those who have caught the Celtic Catholic dream is to form a Connexion group. This is a group of at least four people who commit to each other to meet regularly and hold each other accountable as they grow in their Christian lives. Four is the minimum we strive for (more about that later), but two or three is fine if that's what you've got. A Connexion is an informal group, but with a purpose and with commitment. Generally they are aiming to become actual congregations in the Celtic Catholic Church, but not always. Whatever the group plan to become, their first priority is developing no-nonsense, (sometimes painfully) authentic fellowship where anything goes as long as it is honest and loving. A Connexion does not need to have a priest or any other clergy person to function: it is a grass roots expression of community

Why "Connexion"?

The members of these groups are making connections:

- with each other
- with the Celtic Catholic Church
- with Christ
- with the heart and soul of our ancient/modern Celtic Christian spirituality.

But why "connexion" instead of "community"?

Look at these definitions taken from *Fund & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary*:

community (ke-myoo'ne-tee) *n.* **1.** A group of people living together or in one locality and subject to the same laws, having common interests, etc. **2.** The district or area in which they live. **3.** The public; society in general. **4.** Common ownership or participation. **5.** Identity or likeness: community of interests **6.** *Ecol.* A group of plants or animals living under relatively similar conditions in a definite area. [*L communitas*, fellowship]

How is this word used nowadays? We hear about the "African-American community," the "artistic community," the "homosexual community," the "left-handed red-haired Polish-Japanese Swahili-speaking barber community." What does it really mean? Nothing! Other than to make it sound like they all get together on a regular basis (and where would you fit the "African-American community" or the "artistic community" even if they did have an annual convention?) It has become meaningless and we know it. Billboards for Royal Orangewood Mountainview Lakeside Estates at Stoneybrooke Pointe Centre urge us to "Live in a community, not just a home." Is that what community means? A housing development where no one will ever step foot in their neighbors' houses? It shouldn't mean that, but it does. One of the most beautiful words in the English language has been stripped of meaning.

And the funny thing? The word's Latin root, *communitas*, meaning "fellowship," is exactly what we are all craving. But all we get is ersatz "community."

connection (ke-nek'shen) *n.* **1.** The act of connecting or a state of being connected. **2.** That which joins or relates; a bond; link. **3.** Logical sequence of words or ideas; coherence. **4.** Context. **5** Family relationship. **6.** A religious sect. **7 usually pl.** A groups of friends or associates, often considered as influential in some way. **8. Often pl.** A transfer or continuation from one route or vehicle to another. Also *Brit.* **con-nex'ion**

Yes! This is exactly what we are looking for! Every one of these definitions is what we Celtic Catholics mean when we say that we are all about "community."

- We want to connect to someone, to God and to our fellow humans.
- We know that not just anything is an adequate bond to connect us -- nothing less that the love and grace of God will do.
- That is why the XP is at the center of the Connexion logo. (The X = the Greek letter *chi*; P = the letter *rho*. They are the first



two letters of the word *Christ* in Greek, and together are a traditional symbol for the Lord.) The chi/rho, Christ, is the Logos, the Divine Word who gives logical sequence and coherence to the universe -- in other words, the one who makes sense out of the chaos.

- The connections we form with God and other Christians is the only possible context in which we live our lives.
- Celtic Catholicism and the Connexion groups are all about family relationships: real relationships, not superficial fellowship where you smile and gossip and everything is always "Fine!"
- Though Celtic Christianity does not qualify as a sect, the Celtic Catholic Church does (check your dictionary.) More important, it is an historic branch of the living Christian Faith.
- We hope to influence and be influenced by the new friends we will meet through the Connexion Project.
- And finally, the connexions we make are the first step in a journey which can lead to the creation of a mission station, then a mission, and then a parish. Best of all, they represent a new leg on the journey to Heaven.

What do you mean, that's not what you meant when you asked, "Why *connexion*?"? You just wanted to know why we chose the older/British spelling of the word? Because it looks cool with the X, that's why.

What are the priorities of a Connexion group?

Fellowship comes first. This naturally leads to **praying** together, **studying** with each other, and **worshiping** as a community. Although all Christians desire to spread the Gospel, evangelism *per se* is not a first priority for a group. Why? Well, in our Celtic Catholic thought, "bringing someone to Christ" by itself, although admirable, doesn't make much sense. Christ is experienced in community, in his Body. Our goal is really to bring people to the Kingdom of God. So the Connexions work on creating outposts of this Kingdom:

- authentic community
- utterly honest communication
- real accountability
- deep love for God and others
- fervent prayer
- growth in knowledge and wisdom
- humble worship.

When that happens, God rules, Christ is present, the Spirit flows. This is where people meet Christ.

Where does a Connexion group form?

The ideal would be that all groups begin and grow near established Celtic Catholics, for nurture and fellowship. But we know that if you are reading this, you are probably too far away. So the Connexion group meets where you are: in a home, at a church, at a library, in a park, wherever you are.

On a train in the rain,
In a box with a fox,
Christ will meet you here or there,
Christ will meet you anywhere!

Who makes the Connexion?

We do. Connexion is all about us. There is no me and God or you and God in the Celtic Catholic Church, or in any Christian Church. The Church is you and me and God and the saints and angels with Christ among us as the connexion!

When should I start?

You can start today, or next Tuesday, or in fifty years. So why not get started now, while you are thinking about it?

How do I make a Connexion?

Oh, no! Twelve things we gotta do? Help, help! Forget this complicated idea...

Don't Panic!

It's a whole lot simpler than it looks. Really, a Connexion is just a group of friends who fellowship, pray, study, and worship together. These twelve points simply give you a framework to help it happen and to make it official. So take a deep breath and keep reading.

- Get wired 1
- Get connected 2
- Pick a partner 3
 - Tell us about it 4
 - Make a family 5
- Get into prayer 6
- Get smart 7
 - Get spiritual 8
 - Get official 9
 - Get regular 10
- Become trustees 11
- Report in 12

step one: Get wired

This first step is optional, but you may find it helpful. You can join the e-mail discussion group «CCCfocus» (you can subscribe to it by sending a blank e-mail to cccfocus-subscribe@egroups.com). Then test it out by sending a note introducing yourself to cccfocus@egroups.com (but don't try it until you subscribe or your letter will not go through). Then you can ask questions, debate, make friends, and read Fr. Sean's rambling e-mail about Celtic Catholicism and the Christian Faith.

step two: Get connected

Find some other people who share your dream, or who might share it if they understood it. Or maybe just find some people who want deeper Christian fellowship. You can even try to hook up one or two people who may not be certain they are Christians yet.

Pick a time (once a week works best), find a coffee shop or a living room, and get together. Make this a top priority. Tuesday evening, 7:00, at Fred's house has to happen each week or it won't work.

More info: Try to have at least four people. Two or three is OK for now, but work for four. This is because of the nature of different size small groups.

Two people are a couple. Whether a marriage or friendship, a couple creates a kind of relationship which other people have a hard time breaking into. When a couple adds a third person as an equal, the couple is destroyed and another type of group is created. This can cause anger, hurt feelings, and even bereavement.

Three people are a triangle, and a triangle is very stable. For a fourth person to join, the triad must cease to exist in favor of a new group. This can cause problems, also.

Four people form a group which is more flexible. They can gain a new member without destroying the old group -- it just expands.

So that is why we say you need four people in order to register and become official. But until you get four, just keep doing it.

step three: Pick a partner

You will need a name and a partner in heaven (usually called a "patron saint"). You need a name for your group so we can talk about you behind your back -- actually, so we can add you to the prayer calendar and talk about you to God each month. You need a patron saint so you can have someone rooting for you in heaven. You can't do much without a partner "upstairs" putting in a good word for you. Learn all you can about your saint and develop a good relationship with him or her.

More info: Generally the name and the saint will be the same, e.g., "St. Michael's Connexion Group." You want a name that can stay with you if you wind up becoming a congregation. It is not our tradition to us "marketing" names like "The Rock" or "Refreshing Springs" or "God is Great and So Are We."

It is our custom to avoid duplicating names. If we are talking about St. Michael's we want to know whom we mean.

So how do you pick a saint? Sometimes one of the founders of the connexion will have a special saint he or she will want to honor. Often a group will have a priority for themselves and will find a saint who symbolizes that goal. Some groups like to pick almost at random and enjoy making friends with a saint who had been a total stranger before.

It is also customary to pick theological names for groups, e.g., Holy Trinity, Resurrection, Grace, etc. If you pick such a title, you will still want a patron saint to pray for you and serve as an example.

Perhaps you will want help with this process. Feel free to e-mail Fr. Sean at Fr.Sean@celtic-christian.zzn.com or write him at the address given at the end of this document.

P. S. By the way, there is another important reason to have a patron saint: It is on the feasts of our patrons that we Christians have the best parties.

step four: Tell us about it

If you haven't already done so, drop a note to the Connexion coordinator, Fr. Sean Lotz, to let him know how you are doing. And keep in touch. When you register and become official, you will need to "report to headquarters" twice a year, in November and May. So you may as well start now.

step five: Make a family

And nobody has to get pregnant.

Meeting together regularly is essential, but there is more to becoming a family. Go on a picnic; catch a movie; visit a museum; go to the library and play tag in the stacks. (Whoops! The bishop has just informed that this should not be considered a viable option. Sorry.) Have fun together.

Become a part of each other's lives. When Fred plays softball for the worst college team in the state, show up and root for him and his team. When Bob and Sue are at each other's throats, find excuses to drop by so they don't isolate in their anger and frustration. Visit little Timmy in the hospital -- often, not just a token visit.

Become a healthy and loving family together. Maybe you know what this is like from your own experience; maybe you don't. If you need help, watch *The Adamms Family* movie.

"How long has it been since we've waltzed?"

"Hours!"

Now there's a great family. Waltz together!

step six: Get into prayer

Fellowship is the first priority of your Connexion group. Prayer is the second because it happens automatically as you become part of each other's lives. When Bob and Sue are splitting up, Timmy is groaning in the hospital, and Fred finally hits his first home run, how can you keep from praying?

step seven: Get smart

The third priority is study. Those of you in school -- we can hear you groaning right through the internet! But this is different: this is study because you want to, for the joy of it, because that's how God made you. Our Celtic Christian tradition places a high priority on learning and takes a playful delight in education. For those who can do it, there really is almost no such thing as authentic Celtic Christianity without study. As you study:

- you will step into a two thousand year old Christian tradition;
- you will expand your horizons;
- you will become a better Christian and a better human being;
- you will break out of the brain-numbing tyranny of your own limited point of view.

Studying a really good book which shocks you out of your preconceptions is the intellectual equivalent of the free fall ride at the local theme park. Have fun!

More info: What to study and how to do it?

There is no official course of studies -- this is fellowship, not seminary. We could say you are on your own, but we have a lot of suggestions for you.

Group study is not familiar to everyone so we will present a few suggestions. Some books you will read almost like devotional works, soaking up the atmosphere. Some you will want to study as carefully as you would a textbook on the psychological implications of organic sub-atomic trigonometry as it relates to the social structure of extraterrestrial nematodes.

Everyone gets the book and reads the chapter or section ahead of time. Come to the meeting prepared to discuss.

One person is chosen to act as facilitator. The groups needs to read in advance, but the facilitator is prepared with discussion topics, exercises, "homework" assignments, related short readings -- anything to help the group come to grips with the book. The same person should not serve as facilitator all the time, but the duty should rotate.

The members can read aloud, perhaps a paragraph or two at a time, and discuss as they go.

Some groups like to read a selection and give the members a chance to write their thoughts and reactions. Then they can read aloud what they wrote, if they choose.

Come up with something better than these suggestions and let us know so we can include your ideas.

What should you read? Good stuff, of course. Try to get a healthy mix of theology, the Bible itself, books about the Bible, history, spirituality, and Celtic Christianity. Check out the reading list for suggestions.

step eight: Fall on your face

What a great suggestion! "Fall on your face." I do that well enough without anyone telling me to. And you probably will too, as you figure out how to get your Connexion group functioning. But this is not that kind of face-falling. We are talking about responding to the glory of God -- in other words, worship.

Worship can be said to be the whole point of the Church, its first priority. But we have placed it as the fourth priority of Connexion groups. A group can be founded for mainly selfish reasons, but it moves its focus to God as it matures. It can be founded in isolation, but it moves toward joining the Church in her great Work of worship. Worship is the culmination of spiritual growth and the bridge which joins one small group to the Church as a whole.

These days, *worship* means many things to people. Some folk have no idea; for some, it means a guitar and praise songs; for some, a priest in vestments with incense. In our Connexions, we want to move to a deeper understanding of the two thousand year old tradition of Christian worship and its incredibly deep psychology and spirituality. Worship, done with a humble spirit, frees us from the bondage of our own perceptions and our own souls.

We will, of course, help with this. To get you started, we suggest you begin your meetings by standing and praying the Praise and Mercy Prayers together. This will make your entire meeting come close to being an act of worship.

step nine: Get official

After your group has at least four people who think of themselves as members and who can be counted on, who are ready to "sign their names on the dotted line," let us know so we can make it official. Naturally, getting registered is not essential -- this is fellowship, not paperwork -- but it

establishes an official date. If your group decides to try to become a mission station (the first step toward becoming a parish), it can do so a year and a day after registering as a Connexion.

More info: Registered Connexions have a representative at meetings of the Holy Synod in the person of the Coordinator of the Connexion Project. In addition to changed priorities and more responsibilities, mission stations have a clergy person and can have a vote in Holy Synod.

step ten: Get regular

Although sufficient fiber is an essential part of any diet, you won't need any to "get regular" in a Connexion group.

The word *regular* simply means "according to a rule." The rule in this case is the Rule of the Community of the Companions of God. A Rule is not a list of rules and regulations; rather, it is a description of a life-style lived according to radical Christian principles. It is a guide and a standard to check your progress in the Christian life you want to live.

After registering (but why wait until then?) a group should read together through the Rule two times, one chapter at a time. no one is required to join the Community of the Companions of God, and the group gets to decide whether to continue using the Rule or not. You may find yourselves, though, saying, "This is how we want to be as a group," and continue using it. After two times through, it's your call.

More info: Although most will, not all chapters of the Rule will apply directly and obviously to a Connexion group. Nevertheless, you should read each one and try to extract as much from it as you can. The only two chapters which might want to just skip, as not being applicable, are the very short chapter "On the vows" and "The habit."

Each chapter of the Rule includes the text along with several scripture passages. These verses are not part of the Rule itself but serve as meditations or thought-starters. If there are more than a few in any given chapter, you can pick and choose.

step eleven: Become trustees

We have been talking a lot about priorities. Each of these sections has been in some way about one of the priorities of the group. Underneath it all are whatever priorities are causing you to consider forming such a group.

Priorities which remain only words or only good times together are worthless. Priorities cost. Paying that cost willingly is how we celebrate our priorities and also how we strengthen our ability to act on them. How do we pay for our priorities? Think about life in general: when something is really important, like eating or caring for a child, we dedicate important things to it, like money, time, energy -- anything else you can think of?

Here is where half the readers check out: money. For many people in Connexions groups, the group will be in place of a church; for them it is appropriate to give their tithes to the group. Some people will be in a group in addition to church; for them, a small donation is appropriate. At any rate, the group must be self-supporting and financially responsible through the contributions of the members. By doing this, you become trustees of the money you have been lent and of the group God has allowed you to become a part of.

Where does the money go? Think about the connections you are forming.

Connecting with each other: Some groups will not have any expenses, but most groups will eventually come up with something they want to spend some money on. The group as a whole must supply the money. It must be self-supporting. It is not fitting for one person to be footing the bill -- this amounts to financial irresponsibility on the part of the group and is in, in effect, outside support. No matter how small or large, let the group pay the cost. Often, small groups like to pay for "fellowship events," like a play or dinner in a restaurant together, as a group. This way, even those who can not afford to can participate.

Connecting with the Celtic Catholic Church: You knew we were going to say that, didn't you? But how else do you make a connection except by putting your money where your mouth is? That's really what this whole section is about.

Connecting with Jesus: How can you give money to Jesus? Easy -- you give it to his "least brothers and sisters" who have none of their own. Or you help supply Bibles to everyone on the planet by giving to the American Bible Society. Or you help protect the vanishing habitat of one of his endangered species. Or....

And what about your talents and energy and anything else you can think of to give? You are on your own -- you will figure out something really good. How can you not? Love will always find a thousand ways.

More info: Many similar small groups, like churches and twelve step meetings, take a collection at each meeting. After taking care of actual and planned group expenses and maintaining a prudent reserve, give the rest away. Give up control of it. That is what makes it a gift.

step twelve: Report in

We hope your group will be keeping in touch regularly, through participation in the CCCfocus group, by letters and e-mails to the coordinator, by letters to the Bishop, by phone calls, or whatever it takes. However, just to make certain it happens, after you register you will be required to file a report twice a year, in November and May. (By the way, you will see that the Celtic year begins with November, so what appears to be putting the months out of order really isn't.) A form will be made available for this, but until then, just let us know how many people you have, where you meet, how you conduct your meetings, and what you have been doing in general.

Reports should be mailed to:
The Connexion Project
The Celtic Catholic Church
P. O. Box 9601
Brea, CA 92622
USA