

The pledge of **friendship with Christ** and with each other

ECYD: The Regnum
Christi Charism lived
by adolescents



REGNUM
CHRISTI

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Jesus Christ, our Lord and King, we are happy because we are yours and because you have called us to share in the greatest and most beloved desires of your heart. In response to the love you have shown us, we come to pledge our friendship to you.

We are yours, Lord, and yours we want to be. We offer our lives so that all people might know and love you; because we want you to reign in their hearts.

By ourselves, Lord, we can do nothing; but we know that you are always with us. You also give us your Blessed Mother to be our mother too. In her presence and under her protection; we offer you, Lord, our youth and our fidelity.

Introduction

One of the fundamental characteristics of the spirituality of Regnum Christi is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ¹, which enters our lives very naturally and makes itself present in daily life.

Fifty years ago a group of boys made a pledge of friendship with Christ in ECYD for the first time. Since then thousands of adolescents have encountered the Lord and decided to walk together with him. Many of them are now parents, priests, consecrated laymen and laywomen who fondly remember that first invitation from Christ who approached and asked them, “Do you want to be my friend?” This friendship is the heart of ECYD – a pledge of friendship with Christ and with one another, to build a new world according to the Gospel².

Throughout these past years, ECYD has expressed our charism in a living and original way, daring to reinvent itself and adapt to times and places, without losing what characterized it from the beginning.

1 Cf. SRCF, 12.

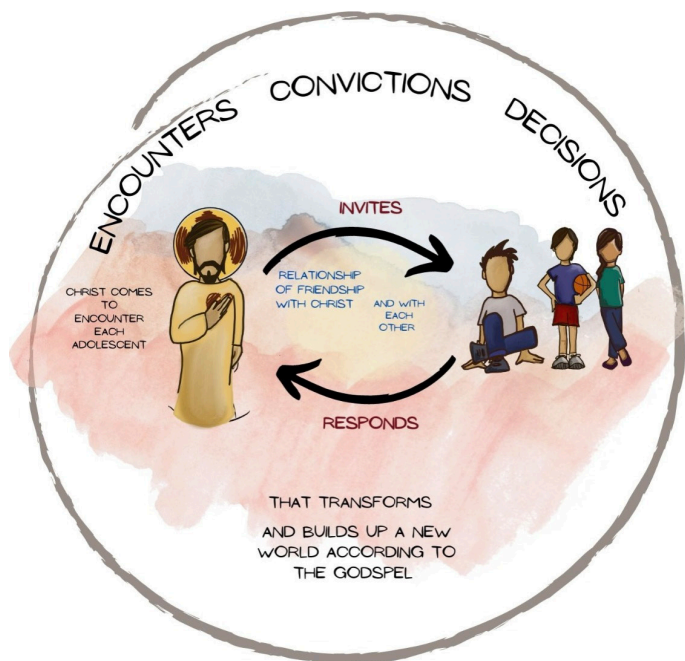
2 Cf. ECYD Statutes, 1.

We discover how the Lord sows the seed of the charism in the hearts of ECYD members. At the same time we see that adolescents are not only beneficiaries of the charism in ECYD, but that they share their own gifts and energy with all of us in Regnum Christi and in the Church.

In Regnum Christi we have always considered ECYD to be a part of our spiritual family. This essay, then, is directed to all of us – those who have had contact with ECYD and those who have not, or had it a long time ago – to all who want to find light in the mystery of Jesus Christ who comes out to meet us and invites us to live as his friends and apostles.

In the following pages we share the thoughts of the different territories five years after the publication of the ECYD Statutes. These reflections are the fruit of the work of an international commission and meetings of the heads of ECYD in the territories, who met in Rome in February 2021.

THE PLEDGE OF FRIENDSHIP IS THE HEART OF ECYD



THE HEART IS THE PLACE OF THE PLEDGE OF FRIENDSHIP





A Pledge of Friendship

The ECYD Pledge of Friendship with Christ is an adolescent's free and personal response to Christ's invitation to be his friend and collaborate with him in his mission.³

How can an adolescent establish a relationship with God? Is it really possible for them to pledge friendship with him, with all the responsibilities that this pledge of friendship implies before God and others?

Sacred Scripture offers us some examples, like that of Samuel, who was still a child when he heard the voice of God and was able to answer, "Here I am" (1 Sam 3: 4). Likewise, it says that God chose David for himself, a king according to his own heart, though he was the youngest of the sons of Jesse (1 Sam 16: 11). On another occasion, the Lord stirred up the spirit of a young man named Daniel (Cfr. Dan 13: 45) to prophecy in the midst of his people. In the New Testament (the New Covenant), everything begins with the "yes" of a young girl from Nazareth (Cfr. Lk 1: 27), and Jesus Christ himself was in the Temple as a child who sought the things of the Father and surprised the teachers of the Law

³ ECYD Statutes, 16.

with his questions (Cfr. Lk 2: 46). These witnesses assure us that the Lord establishes a relationship with his people from childhood and loves them (Cfr. Hosea 11: 1).

Baptism is a pledge of friendship from God to each one of us. It's an invitation to continue to follow a personal path to sanctity.



Through baptism, we also become part of the people of the God of the New Covenant today⁴. The invitation to each adolescent to pledge friendship with Christ in ECYD is grounded in and built on the sacramental reality of baptism, through which “all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father himself is perfect.”⁵

Friendship with Christ

A friend who goes out to meet us

Jesus Christ goes out to meet the adolescent:⁶ He became man to come down into the concrete reality of each one, in their daily lives, with a language and manner that they can understand at their age.

An encounter with Jesus Christ can be enough to begin a relationship



Christ cares about everyone and loves every adolescent, without exception. That means that every adolescent, no matter how distracted or distant they might seem, can be touched by the Lord. We see this so often in the Gospel: **an**

4 Cf. CCC, 1267.

5 Cf. LG, 11.

6 ECYD Statutes, 6 and SRFC, 8.

encounter with Jesus can be enough to begin a transformative friendship, even with the most sinful and excluded people in society.

The beginning point of this experience of friendship is the personal encounter. The God of Christians is the God of encounter, the God who became man to live with us, in our reality. He is the God who reveals his Name, who shows us his face, who takes on a body. The God who wants to have a relationship with us and created us with the ability to dialogue and commune with him. That is why he seeks us and is not satisfied with remaining distant and unknown. Jesus Christ goes where the adolescents really are – their schools, their rooms, their places of gathering. He touches their relationships too: their friend groups, their families. He seeks them out with their questions, their failures and successes, dreams, joys and challenges.

Christ invites them to a relationship of friendship with him

Jesus goes out to meet the adolescent in ECYD because he wants to be their friend. Like he did with the first disciples, he reveals to them that he doesn't want to have a distant relationship with servants, but **a close and loving relationship with friends** (cf. Jn 15:15), for whom he will give his life. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). The best friend that an adolescent can find is Jesus.

Jesus calls us and invites us to be friends and apostles



The Gospel shows us how Jesus was a friend to the apostles, to Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, and many others. The same Christ reaches out to every adolescent who is open to knowing him.

In this friendship the adolescent experiences how they can love because they have been loved first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and have been called by God in the depths of their hearts to respond to that love.

The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live; according to the Semitic or Biblical expression, the heart is the place “to which I withdraw.” The heart is our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death. It is the place of encounter, because as image of God we live in relation: it is the place of covenant.⁷

The love of Jesus for each adolescent is a free offering from God who wants to form a covenant with them. This is the essence of the Gospel message that ECYD wants to bring to each adolescent: **Jesus wants to make a pledge of friendship with you; God wants to be your friend.**

⁷ Cf. CCC, 2563.

So we can say that the pledge is the heart of ECYD and the heart is where the pledge takes place.

And he calls each one by name (cf. Is 43:1; Jn 10: 3)

Like he did with the apostles, Jesus calls each adolescent by name to make this pledge of friendship.⁸ *“The name is the icon of the person.”*⁹

Calling someone by their name shows the intimate and deep knowledge that God has of each person. Having been called to existence by his gratuitous love allows them to experience being fundamentally loved, desired, and valued as someone who is unique and irrepeatable. From there the Lord builds a relationship that is capable of healing them, transforming them, and making them grow.

His love is directed toward a particular and specific “you.” It is personalized, incarnated in the particular reality of each of us. Beneath this loving gaze of God, an adolescent can describe their own identity and become more and more authentically “themselves.”

In the same way, the response to this invitation has to be personal. Jesus Christ invites us while leaving us free, and reciprocity is also a sign of authentic friendship.¹⁰

To call someone by name means there is a relationship, that God knows me profoundly



8 Cf. ECYD Statutes, Appendix 2: ECYD Pledge of Friendship Rite.

9 CCC, 2158.

10 Cf. ECYD Statutes, Appendix 2: ECYD Pledge of Friendship Rite.

It is Jesus Christ who unites us and calls us to be friends with each other.



Friendship with one another

Friendship with Christ is inclusive. **Christ wants his friends to be friends with each other as well.**

Throughout their journey, an adolescent meets other adolescents who, like them, want to live in Christ and want to give themselves so that many others may meet him.

In ECYD an adolescent can develop their capacity for friendship with others and learn what true friendship is, learning from the truest Friend, seeking to accept, listen to, and respect others like Christ does. Through friendships rooted in Christ, adolescents learn to grow together and support one another in the living of their faith, and share the ideals that Christ proposes to them with others.

In ECYD, “the team is a way of learning how to live in a Christian community: ECYD teammates live communion in Christ, and guided by him, journey together towards heaven; they have received the Good News and seek to proclaim it to all (Cf. GS #1).”¹¹

It is a school of true friendship in which each one grows in mutual esteem; everyone can be themselves, recognizing how good the other

¹¹ ECYD Statutes, commentary on n. 23.

person is and accepting their own limits and those of others.

There are different possible levels of friendship among members of a team according to natural similarities, just like among the apostles. Nevertheless, the pledge of friendship with Christ and with one another in ECYD goes beyond a physical and natural bond, and becomes manifest in the awareness and experience that “we are one body in Christ” (cf. I Cor 12:12).

The ECYD adolescent knows that he belongs to a team and knows too that he belongs to a larger community, since the style of life and mission of ECYD are shared by ECYD members around the world. Wherever an ECYD member prays, wherever there is an apostolate, ECYD is completely present. The pledge to each other surpasses the limits of a team; it has an international and ecclesial character.

Furthermore, we can say that the pledge to each other also unites adolescents of ECYD who are on earth today with those who have already reached heaven. They certainly intercede in a special way for all adolescents who want to follow Christ in ECYD.



The mission as a constitutive part of the pledge

When an adolescent makes the pledge of friendship with Christ, they feel moved “to share in the greatest and most beloved desires of his heart.”¹²

The mission is part of the pledge.

Being a friend of Christ means being a disciple, accepting the invitation to follow him. Nevertheless, no one can say that they are a disciple if they are not also an apostle, that is, a witness. Christ calls us and sends us at the same time (Cf. Mt 4:19). As with the first disciples and with all the saints, the adolescent in ECYD who has encountered Jesus Christ does not remain indifferent. The encounter with the Lord moves them, transforms them, and sets them in motion.

This personal and life-giving experience makes the adolescent capable of going out to meet others. It enables them to establish relationships that

¹² ECYD Statutes, Appendix 2: Prayer of the Pledge of Friendship with Christ in ECYD.

transform the people they encounter because, in some way, they experience through him the reflection of the love of God. **Those relationships established in Christ's love** are the ones that bring the Kingdom nearer and transform the world.

*Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. Christ himself wants to experience this with you, in all the efforts and sacrifices that it entails, but also in all the joy and enrichment it brings.*¹³

When they discover their own existence as a gift, the adolescent understands their life and mission as a response to this call of God, and it is in self-giving that they find meaning and fullness.

The pledge moves us to mission

The gratuitous love that each adolescent experiences in friendship with the Lord breaks down little by little the barriers of egoism, that tendency to live for oneself. It is difficult to stay passive before this great gift. Adolescents, captivated by Jesus, throw themselves into living an authentically Christian life in the specific aspects of their lives. The love of God mobilizes them to live with Christ, through him and in him, to the point of giving their lives for him.

Which relationships in your life are "established in Christ's love?" Who are your friends in Jesus?



Friendship with Christ puts us in motion



¹³ Gaudete et exsultate, 25.

10. Christ taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom Come!” (Matthew 6:10). This petition expresses ECYD Adolescents’ burning desire to have Christ reign in their hearts, in the hearts of all people and in the whole world. Therefore, ECYD Adolescents:

§1. seek to know and love Jesus Christ more each day, and foster a close friendship with him, knowing that the transformation of the world begins with a transformation of their own heart (Cf. John 15:4-5); and

§2. give of themselves with great love and enthusiasm to the mission of bringing Christ to those they encounter (Cf. Mark 16:15).¹⁴

By living in this way we can say that the ECYD adolescent doesn’t only do apostolate, but rather is an apostle, taking advantage of every opportunity to collaborate with Christ to make his Kingdom present and give witness to their faith.¹⁵ United as a team, adolescents can exercise their apostolic creativity, seeking to respond with initiative to the concrete needs of the Church and of others. The desire **to transform the world** for Christ is something very characteristic of ECYD and is something the adolescents identify with.¹⁶

The mission begins when Christ reigns in one’s heart



¹⁴ ECYD Statutes, 7.

¹⁵ ECYD Statutes, commentary on n. 29.

¹⁶ ECYD Statutes, commentary on n. 29.

At the same time, the sense of mission makes the adolescent face the Gospel that they proclaim, the Friend whom they in some way represent before the world. This makes them grow in authenticity in their own life every day. In this way the mission reminds them of the need to return to their Friend constantly, aware that one cannot give what one does not have.

This journey of configuration with Christ is the most authentic way to fulfill the mission of building a new world according to the Gospel, because the transformation of the world begins with one's own heart (cf. Jn 15:4-5).¹⁷ An adolescent who allows Christ to reign in their heart is transformed and transforms the world around them.

¹⁷ Cf. ECYD Statutes, 7 §1.



A Pledge that transforms

Configuration with Christ.

ECYD presents adolescents with an attractive and demanding Christian ideal and lifestyle. By virtue of baptism, an adolescent is called to holiness and to the apostolate. Therefore, each one seeks to follow Jesus Christ by responding to his love and allowing themselves to be transformed by his grace.¹⁸

If Christian formation is conforming oneself to the person of Jesus Christ,¹⁹ we can say that the ECYD adolescent is formed according to how their friendship with Jesus Christ and each other develops.

As in any friendship, and as with anything in human life, friendship with Jesus Christ develops over time and implies a process.²⁰ It begins with an initiative on the part of God who goes out in search of those whom he loves, provokes an initial encounter, and from that moment in the relationship, conversation in prayer and many other experiences become more frequent and allow his new friends to know

18 ECYD Statutes, 10 §1.

19 Cf. GE, 2.

20 Cf. CCC, 53.

him better. The adolescent gradually discovers the answers to their questions, even the most existential, in Christ himself who becomes the answer. With time, the love of Jesus Christ gradually conquers and provokes a transformation according to the action of the Holy Spirit and the collaboration of the adolescent. This transformation is precisely the objective of the life in Christ—the configuration of the whole person with him (Rm 8: 29).

This is the prayer that ECYD members raise every day to God in their morning prayer: “Lord Jesus,... **I give you my whole self so you can grow in me, till it is you, Christ, who live and work and pray in me.**”

How can Christ live, work, and pray in my life today?



In ECYD we are convinced that friendship with Christ gradually transforms the life of the adolescent. It christifies their values, principles, and convictions, and from this transformation of their minds (Rm 12:2) the transformation of their life is accomplished, so that their decisions and way of acting also become christified.

The ECYD adolescent walks with their friend Jesus, accompanied by others, sharing a mission and with eyes fixed on the final destination, heaven. It is for this reason that we believe that the adolescent, even at a young age, is capable of seeking holiness.

You have to discover who you are and develop your own way of being holy, whatever others may say or think. Becoming a saint means becoming more fully

yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy.²¹

The name of ECYD: Encounters, Convictions, and your Decisions

This process of transformation in Christ occurs through the formative dynamism of **encounters**, convictions, and decisions, as the name ECYD expresses:

The first transforming encounter is with Jesus Christ



Through different experiences of encounter, adolescents acquire firm life convictions and learn to make free and responsible decisions according to Gospel criteria.²²

Encounters that can transform lives

The process begins with experiences of encounter. In the same way that the Christian life implies communion with God, with others, and with ourselves, so too ECYD fosters encounters in those three realms of relationships.²³

After a personal encounter, the adolescent perceives Jesus in their life as someone near to them. Jesus Christ walks together with them in their world, their responsibilities, and their relationships. The reality of Christian life is not only that Christ

21 *Christus Vivit*, 162.

22 ECYD Statutes, 4.

23 Cf. ECYD Statutes, Appendix 1.

enters the life of the adolescent, but that in some way the adolescent enters into the life of Christ as well. Sacramental life consists in this, beginning with baptism and strengthened by the Eucharist, becoming a real space in a life shared by friends.

Convictions are born from encounters

The convictions of ECYD members are not imposed from without, nor are they memorized. They are the fruit of a friendship. They rise up from within, from a personal experience that is profoundly transformative. They flow from an encounter with Christ, with oneself, and with others.

What are the convictions in my life?



Friendship with Christ calls adolescents to a life that often contrasts with the way the world thinks, and demands that they go against the current. Christ shares his mission with the adolescent: making the Kingdom present. This mission takes on more and more value for the adolescent and supports them in the difficulties of life with the hope of heaven. The certainty that sustains hope is that the Lord is always with us, Christ is always the one who reaches out first to the adolescent. Through all the circumstances of life, Christ wants to grow and strengthen the friendship that he has with each adolescent.

Convictions are not lived only in one aspect or moment of life, nor do they apply only to the activities of ECYD. Rather, they create a way

of being, a style of life that supports and fills ones' relationships with God, family, friends, and neighbors.

Among friends, ideals and values are "contagious." In adolescence there is a certain tendency to imitate others which is proper to this stage. Life convictions are shared and lived as a "we." In ECYD this "we" is formed by Christ and his friends.

Decisions that lead one to identify with their Friend more and more

The encounter with Christ becomes a friendship that configures one from deep within, from one's own convictions. These convictions are simultaneously expressed and solidified in **life decisions**. Every day there are opportunities to choose, and our choices also make us who we are. The ECYD adolescent, upon perceiving the experience of friendship with Christ, can little by little choose that which is more coherent with the style of life that their Friend has proposed.

At the same time, there is the need to identify with a group. That is why it is helpful when we don't feel alone when making decisions. When one knows that they are part of a group where they are accompanied and where there is mutual

What decisions have I made that reflect my friendship with Christ?



help to strengthen the option for Jesus Christ, the Christian journey becomes lighter. This is what the Church does, the community of the people of God that journeys together. This doesn't mean that the decisions of an ECYD member are made *en masse*. On the contrary, each one has made their own choice. But they know that they count on others for mutual motivation, support, and being faithful to a friendship, that of Christ, who unites them and sends them on mission.

Throughout their life, an adolescent is faced with the challenge of making decisions according to the convictions that they have formed in their interior. This journey will not always be easy and will involve struggles and battles. Though there may be falls, failures, and even sins, the adolescent can learn to recognize that Christ their friend is the first one to go out to seek them and give them another opportunity to grow in friendship with him.

The mission will always be present on the horizon of ECYD members' decisions, as part of their style of life. They recognize that their choices are not indifferent to the mission that their Friend has entrusted to them. They learn to consider that the decisions that they make affect the people they have been sent to, because we live in communion. An adolescent who seeks to live coherently and authentically will trust that their actions impact the

n falls, failures, and even experiences of sin; Christ the friend is present



world around them, even when the impact seems imperceptible. The ECYD adolescent changes the world to the degree that they live their Christian vocation coherently²⁴ and is aware that “the transformation of the world begins with their own heart.”²⁵

24 Cf. ECYD Statutes, 29; EG, 273.

25 Cf. ECYD Statutes, 7 §1.



Conclusion

Jesus Christ has called us friends and wants to share the greatest and most beloved ideals of his heart with us. In the Heart of Christ, that is what we are: his friends. That is what he wants to be for each one of us.

We have recognized him as he walked with us and broke the bread (Cfr. Lk 24: 13-35), as he ate with us and played, as he spoke and listened to us. We have met him as we walked together as a team, and together we also went out to announce him. We exult with joy and gratitude like the disciples of Emmaus at the experience of this fire and encounter with the living Christ, “were not our hearts burning within us?”

The pledge of friendship with Christ in ECYD seeks to be a response born from this encounter and leads us to desire to live more and more with him and like him, to change this world and walk together toward heaven.

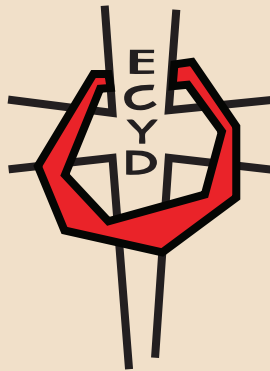
The symbol that sums up and represents everything said above is the ECYD Cross²⁶:

26 Cf. ECYD Statutes, commentary on n.14.

The ECYD Cross opens up vertically from earth to heaven and horizontally from the center to the sides reflecting the openness of man toward God and the desire to bring his love to all others.

A chain encompasses the center of the cross, reflecting unity and the adolescents' pledge of friendship with Christ and with one another.

The letters "ECYD" are set from top to bottom on the vertical beam of the cross.



Abbreviations

SRCF Statutes of the Regnum Christi Federation

CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church

LG *Lumen Gentium*

EG *Evangelii Gaudium*

GE *Gravissimum Educationis*



Workshops

The following are some options for individual and group workshops that can help to take advantage of the spiritual riches we find in this essay.

Personal Workshops

A pledge of friendship with Christ



The ECYD pledge of friendship with Christ involves a promise on the part of God and a free response on our part. The personal pact that God makes with each of us has unique characteristics.

In this workshop, we seek to examine the elements of the pledge of friendship that Christ has made with us.

- a) Jesus Christ has come out to meet you. He has invited you to be his friend. What does friendship with Christ mean to you? What characterizes this friendship?

- b) As in any friendship, there are promises. What has Christ your friend promised you? What are the personal promises that he has made to you? How do you see him being faithful to his promises in daily life?

- c) Since Christ is your friend, what has your response been? Has your life changed? In what ways?



A covenant among ourselves

Friendship with Christ always involves other people. That is why we make a pledge of friendship with one another. It is a pledge that transcends times and places. It is shaped by the people who accompany us on our journey to heaven.

- a) Who are the people with whom I have made a pledge of friendship to reach heaven? What are the things that we share?
- b) What are the commitments or promises that we have made to each other?
- c) What place does Christ have in this pledge of friendship with each other? How do I perceive his presence among us?
- d) Is there a saint or family member in heaven with whom I share this pledge? What do these friends in heaven mean to me?
- e) In order to remember those who accompany me on my journey to heaven, I could write down their names on a piece of paper, or in the case of the saints a holy card in a visible place, which will remind me that I am not alone on my journey to heaven.

Group Workshops

Christ the friend

Members of Regnum Christi have a relationship with Christ the friend who is close to us and who is aware of every detail of our life.



- a) Everyone answers this individually: what does my relationship with Christ the Friend mean to me? This could be done in a chapel or the place where the meeting is held. It should be brief, 15 to 20 minutes.
- b) Afterward, in a room, place photographs or different types of objects on a table. Each person chooses what best represents their friendship with Christ.
- c) We then share with each other the object or photograph that we chose, giving everyone time to explain their choice.
- d) What common traits do we find? According to what we have shared, what are the characteristics of the relationship with Christ the Friend in Regnum Christi?

4

Regnum Christi as a pledge with Christ and with each other

Living Regnum Christi is living within a charism and a mission, living a pledge with Christ and with each other. What characteristics does our pledge with Christ have?

- a) Give everyone time to write down on a paper the principle traits of the pledge of friendship with Christ in Regnum Christi.
- b) What traits does our relationship with Jesus Christ share with the principle traits of the pledge?
- c) How does Jesus Christ make himself present in our team life? Is there a specific moment that we remember?
- d) How do I feel myself linked not only to my team, but also to my locality, the territory, and the Church around the world?
- e) How can we live this pledge among ourselves better, with more intentionality?



The pledge in the team

As a team, we want to make a pledge of friendship. Among ourselves, let us look for specific ways to live it.

- a) What specific commitments, relevant to our lives, do we want to make as a team, that would help us to express the pledge of friendship with Christ and among ourselves?
- b) How can we remember this pledge that we have made? Do we want to have some specific act or symbol that reminds us?
- c) How do we express this pledge in our mission?



Encounters, convictions, decisions

The pledge is transformative. The pledge with Christ and with one another transforms us.

- a) Sit in two circles. One should be within the other, so that we sit with one circle facing the other.
- b) Share an encounter that has transformed our life with the person we have in front of us.
- c) Switch partners by turning the circle once or twice. With the new person, share a conviction that we have in our life and if possible the encounter that gave rise to it.
- d) Switch partners again, and now share a decision that was the fruit of encounters and convictions that we have had.
- e) Share together outside of the circles what we experienced in this exercise.

You can share several encounters, convictions, and decisions. Each couple can have 1 to 3 minutes to share.



ECYD is the charism of Regnum Christi lived by adolescents

We all know that ECYD is the charism of Regnum Christi lived by adolescents. In fact, we can learn from ECYD members, and they can help us to live the gift that God has given us as a spiritual family.

- a) What spiritual traits do we share with the members of ECYD?
- b) What spiritual traits do we learn to live better by seeing them?
- c) How could we help support ECYD in our concrete circumstances?
- d) Write to the ECYD members in our locality and tell them about what we have seen in this exercise.



In their own words

Many members of Regnum Christi have been part of ECYD. After reading this essay, we can prepare questions and invite one or more to share their experiences with us.

