

# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LAY CISTERCIAN COMMUNITIES

## House Report

- 1) Name of lay community: Our Lady Star of the Sea
- 2) Contact person: Sr. Lillian Shank, OCSO
- 3) Date group was established: 2006
- 4) Number of members: 8 – 9
- 5) Monastic liaison(s): Sr. Lillian Shank, OCSO
- 6) Date of adoption of the Lay Cistercian identity document:
- 7) Charter and Statutes - most recent copy
- 8) Leadership Council - how many, how selected
- 9) Formation program - topics, activities, etc.

Our Lay Cistercian group, attached to Holy Spirit Monastery, began about 2006 through the energy and persistence of Bill Doonan. Bill was a life time member of the east coast of Florida Lay Cistercians 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart'. Bill resided in the west coast of Florida yet he would go to the monthly east coast meeting (about 260 miles both ways) religiously. He contacted Fr. Ronnie Sison, who had been a good friend to the east coast lay Cistercians and had been to Holy Spirit and on retreats, and Sr. Lillian Shank, OCSO and asked for their assistance to start a new lay Cistercian group in Ft. Myers.

The group now consists of between 8 and 9 members. They meet at St Vincent de Paul Church in Ft. Myers, after their 9 am Mass in their hospitality room. They have been most gracious to us; this is with the permission of the Bishop and of course the pastor. We meet monthly and begin with coffee and a simple treat and what we call 'Newsnotes' as a community building experience. Then Lauds; A conference is then given by either Sr. Lillian or Fr. Ronnie, discussion and a short break. After the break we have Lectio together and then either Fr. Ronnie or Sr. Lillian give a talk with discussion. We close with Midday Prayer.

It is a close knit group; we have lost 2 original members - one moved to the east coast and now belongs to that lay Cistercian group; the other was called back to work and hopes to rejoin us some day; just recently we lost 2 more members who are very busy with charitable helps to seniors, of which there are many in Florida. Both treasured their time with us but did not feel called to commit themselves. Our principal need is more members and we are working on that and ask your prayers.

Sr. Lillian, who recently had to move to St. Petersburg, Fl (about 100 miles north of Ft. Myers) is still able to come to meetings as is Fr. Ronnie. How we wish the Lord would bring a cistercian monastery to Florida.

### Spiritual Growth of 'Star of the Sea' Lay Cistercians of Ft. Myers, Fl. - 12 28 13

After discussion the group came up with the following values that helped their spiritual growth:

- Gospel values so evident in the Rule of St. Benedict
- Community sharing which strengthens and supports
- Lives of our Cistercian Mothers and Fathers as examples and their writings
- Lay Cistercian vocation helps keep our whole life centered on Christ

- The yearly retreat at Holy Spirit Monastery helps us actually witness monks living the life
- Daily Lectio Divina guides and keeps us on the path
- The daily Liturgy also turns us to God

As one of their mentors I find a group of people, who do not have the benefit of a monastery close to them (Holy Spirit Monastery is 600 miles away) sincerely and deeply desiring God. They are very grateful for Cistercian values and truly desirous 'to Prefer nothing whatever to Christ'. We are all on the conversion journey and there is still much to do but the Lay Cistercian vocation has truly awakened and enlivened this group. They are an example to each other.

Sr.Lillian Shank, OCSO

Please describe your community's situation considering the characteristics described in the document generated in Dubuque on "Characteristics of Lay Cistercian Communities." (no need to answer number 1):

1. *Lay Cistercian Communities receive written recognition from the Abbot/Abbess of the monastery with which the lay community is associated.*
2. *Lay Cistercians communities are assisted by a liaison from the monastic community appointed by the Abbot/Abbess.*
3. *Lay Cistercian Communities recognize and adopt the Lay Cistercian Identity document approved in Huerta in 2008.*
4. *Lay Cistercian Communities have a Charter and Statutes, approved by its members, which outline the spiritual goals of the group as well as its functioning and the link it has with the monastery.*
5. *Lay Cistercian Communities have a leadership council, comprised of lay members, that is responsible for the administration of the group.*
6. *Lay Cistercian Communities have developed a formation program comprised of a curriculum of topics and learning activities that address the values and practices of the Cistercian Charism.*

If your community has a Charter of Incorporation or Bylaws we ask that you send it to us. If your community has a Council, we ask that you describe its formation, membership and election system. Your answers will be posted on the website of the association and may also be consulted during the international meeting in Lourdes.