

Letter of Invitation

**“Mary — Rabboni”
John 20,16**

From the 11th to the 15th of September 2006 the Steering Committee of the International Lay Cistercians met at Scourmont Abbey in Belgium.

During that meeting we reflected together on our experience of the last year since our meeting at Clairvaux and on everything we learned from the various communities of Lay Cistercians we have been in contact with. It helped us to arrive at a deeper and deeper perception of our Cistercian identity as lay persons and lay communities.

A large part of our work during that week was to prepare the next International Encounter of Lay Cistercian communities, to which we are happy to invite you right now! That meeting will take place in the Cistercian Abbey of Santa Maria de Huerta, province of Soria, Spain from May 31st to June 7th 2008.

It seems to us that this 4th International Meeting will be extremely important. Its particular importance will come from the fact that one of its aims will be to arrive at a common vision -- hopefully to be expressed in a document that we will communicate to the OCSO General Chapter. This common vision will be of our Cistercian identity both as individual persons and lay communities as well as our relationships with a monastic community.

Another aspect of our reflection in Huerta will bear on the place of our lay communities in the Cistercian Family and their structural relationship with the various Cistercian Orders, and especially with the OCSO that will hold its General Chapter a few months later.

Obviously, the fruits of this meeting in Huerta will depend on the seriousness of its preparation by all the lay Cistercian communities over the next two years. Each community is asked to commit itself to a profound reflection on its lay Cistercian experience.

In previous encounters the lay communities have developed lists of Cistercian values and practices that they considered essential to the lay vocation. We think we must now go a step further. What is expected of us is to clarify the basic elements that are the foundation of our always evolving Cistercian identity, and how these basic elements affect us in all aspects of our lay existence.

To that end we ask all the lay communities to prepare a document containing their own reflections upon these basic elements of their Cistercian vocation as they perceive and experience them. We suggest that the preparation of this response be made in your lay community and that it include input from as many individuals as possible. We would like to receive a written synthesis of your discussions no later than August 2007. The Steering Committee will compile this material from all the lay communities and will return to you a written pre-conference report by January 2008.

- Place: Monasterio Cisterciense
E-42260 - S. María de Huerta
(Soria) Spain
- Date: May 31, 2008 to June 7, 2008
- Registration: Invitation to this encounter is limited to lay Cistercian communities listed on the ILC Website, and is limited to a maximum of two lay persons and one monk or nun for each lay community. We suggest that senior members or members in a leadership role in your community consider participation. We wholeheartedly encourage all the existing lay communities which are not listed yet to get in touch with us as soon as possible.

Details of registration will be published before the end of 2007.

We feel that this is an exciting time. The Holy Spirit is moving in the world and more and more lay people are discovering the call to live the Cistercian charism. We hope that you will be able to join us in Huerta, and we look forward to your written response to our request.