

Dear all,

I am happy to inform you that the Steering Committee and the Fraternity of Lay Cistercians associated with the monastery of Santa Marie de Huerta have completed initial planning for the 2008 International Encounter that will be held at Huerta from May 30 through June 7, 2008. I would like to share with you some of these plans, and ask in return that your community send me two documents: 1) a copy of your Charter (if you have one), and 2) a house report. (More about these two documents below.)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Along with Dom Armand Veilleux, the liaison appointed by the General Chapter of OCSO after our meeting at Clairvaux, we have discussed and determined the following goals and objectives for the 2008 Encounter:

- With all Lay Communities present, mutually develop a document that answers the question "What is the identity of lay individuals and lay communities associated with Cistercian monasteries?"
- Determine the juridical relationship of Lay Cistercian Communities to the Cistercian Orders and Congregations. (Note that there are 15 Congregations within the Cistercian Family-OCSO is one of these Congregations. See more below under "Invited Guests".)
- Organize an Association of Lay Cistercian Communities that reflects the second goal above.

PLACE OF MEETING

The 2008 Encounter will be held within the restored 12th century monastery of Santa Maria de Huerta (plenary sessions) as well as in classrooms at a local school (language-groups). We will pray some of the hours of the Divine Office in the ancient church of the monastery, will have a reception in the Conversi refectory, and will have our plenary sessions in the beautiful 12th century Gothic monks' refectory. The monastery itself is located in the village of Huerta-a desert region of Soria with a population of about 350.

INVITED GUESTS

A number of guests will be invited to attend and observe the Encounter:

- the Abbot General of OCSO (Dom Bernardo)
- the Abbot General of the Order of Cistercians (Common Observance-he represents 11 Congregations)
- the Abbess President of the Congregation of Castilla
- the Prior General of the Congregation of Esquermes
- the Abbess President of the Congregation of San Bernardo

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK

- Saturday, May 31
 - Arrival of Delegates
- Sunday, June 1
 - Mass of Welcome
 - Introduction to the meeting
 - Presentation of the three-language synthesis of the document "What is our Cistercian identity?"
- Monday, June 2
 - Consolidation of the English, French and Spanish versions of the document of identity
 - Discussion among the delegates and proposed emendations
- Tuesday, June 3
 - Summation of proposed emendations and finalization of the document for vote
 - Presentation on "The History and Development of the Lay Cistercians within the Cistercian Order" by Dom Armand Veilleux.
 - Discussion of Lay Cistercians and Lay Cistercian Communities today within the light of the paper presented by Dom Armand
- Wednesday, June 4
 - Finalization of the identity document, by vote of those delegates of Lay Cistercian Communities present
 - Reflections on the juridical relationship of Lay Cistercian Communities with the Cistercian Orders and Congregations (Dom Armand)
 - Discussion and reflection among the delegates on various models of relationship

Thursday, June 5

- Free day and tours to Avila, Toledo and Secovia
- Friday, June 6
 - Finalization of the internal structure and functions of an Association of Lay Cistercian Communities
 - Discussion of budget and finances
 - Written evaluation of the Encounter
 - Closing remarks
- Saturday, June 7
 - Concluding Mass
 - Choral concert of Spanish music (sacred and regional)
 - Farewells

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

- 5:00 Vigils (optional)

- 7:15 Lauds and Mass (in Spanish except for an English Mass on Tuesday and a French Mass on Friday)
- 8:30 Continental breakfast
- 9:00 Work Session
- 11:00 Break
- 11:30 Work Session
- 1:30 Lunch
- 3:00 Work Session
- 4:30 Break
- 5:00 Work Session
- 6:45 Vespers (Spanish)
- 7:45 Supper
- 8:45 Compline (optional)

LITTLE HOURS

When we are in plenary session, we will pray the Little Hours together in Spanish. When in our English-language small group, we will pray the Little Hours informally in English (as the monks do at their General Chapter).

MASS

The Mass each day will be in Spanish except on Tuesday when it will be in English and Friday when it will be in French. The English-speaking Communities will prepare and lead the Mass on Tuesday.

COST AND REGISTRATION

Registration for the Encounter will be accepted between January 1 and April 1, 2008. Each Lay Cistercian Community may send two lay delegates and one monastic liaison from the monastery with which their community is associated. The cost will be 600 EURO per person and will include all room and board, bus transportation from and to the Madrid airport on May 31 and June 7, materials and tours. (Note: because the Encounter is a working meeting of delegates from each of the Lay Cistercian Communities and because of the limitations of space, each Lay Community may send NO MORE than two lay delegates and one monastic liaison.)

In addition to the Registration Fee, we are asking each participating Lay Cistercian Community to make a contribution over and above the Registration Fee, if possible, to help support the participation of delegates who would otherwise be unable to attend.

THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SYNTHESIS

I wish to thank all of you who worked so diligently on preparing a response to the questions of identity that we sent to you last year. I have received 22 out of a possible 26 responses. It is my

intention to create an English-language synthesis of these 22 documents for distribution before the Encounter in June. After I draft this synthesis, I will distribute it to all of you for your review and recommendations. Remember that the French and the Spanish are doing the same. The final document that will be read to the delegates on the opening day of the Encounter will be a synthesis of the English-language, the French-language and the Spanish-language syntheses. I will be in touch with you in early December with more information about this process.

CHARTERS

Many Lay Cistercian Communities have developed Charters-documents that establish and recognize the relationship between the Lay and the monastic communities. We would like to share as many of these documents as possible on the ILC web site. To that end, if your Community has such a document, please send it to be by e-mail (dmday@dayxday.org) no later than December 20, 2007. All Charters that we receive will be posted on the web site page for the individual Community no later than January 20, 2008.

HOUSE REPORTS

Those of you who have attended previous International Encounters know that the oral presentations of house reports can be long and tedious. Nevertheless, it is important to have this information about your fellow delegates and the Communities they represent. Therefore, we are asking all Lay Communities to submit a written House Report.

Attached you will find a two-page House Report Form to complete. When we have received all of the House Reports from the participating Communities, we will compile them into a single document and make it available on the ILC web site for you to review and print. (NOTE that you must print your own copy of the House Reports; it will NOT be included in your program materials. Note also that if you would like to provide a Spanish and/or French translation of your House Report, you may do so. Translations, however, are not required.)

Please complete your House Report and return to me by e-mail no later than December 20, 2007. NOTE: do not use more space than provided on the Form for the information that you provide. Reports that exceed two pages will be truncated. The compiled House Report documents containing all of the House Reports received from all of the Lay Communities will be made available on the ILC web site on January 20, 2008, for you to print. Please do not forget to bring your own copy of this document to the meeting in June.

TRAVEL

Because the village of Huerta is quite isolated, the local Coordinating Committee will provide bus service from the Madrid airport on May 31, 2008. You will receive more information about travel after you register for the Encounter early next year.

CONCLUSION

I will continue to send you additional information about the Encounter over the next few months. If you have any questions, please send them to me. I will compile and publish on the ILC web site a FAQ page with this information.

I am very excited about the Encounter at Huerta. The site of the meeting is both beautiful and conducive to work. In addition, we will be addressing fundamental issues affecting the identity of Lay Cistercians and the relationship of our Communities with the Orders and Congregations of the Cistercian Family. It will be an historic occasion held in an historic location.

I look forward to hearing from you over the next few weeks and monks. Please acknowledge the receipt of this e-mail so that I am assured that you received it.