

Characteristics of Lay Cistercian Communities

Lay Cistercian Communities, by their nature, share a great deal in common with one another and with the monasteries with which they are associated. They are all united by a bond of charity, a bond of fraternal love and support, and a bond of fidelity. There exists a frequent bond of prayer that deepens the love and respect of one for another.

The following is a list of objective characteristics of Lay Cistercian Communities that the Association recognizes:

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.

Note that this list of characteristics is not prescriptive in nature. The Association does not judge the quality of a Lay Community nor take this list of characteristics into account when a group applies for membership. Rather, it is in all cases the Abbot/Abbess of the monastery with which the group is associated that determines whether a lay community may become a member of the Association and at what level. This is, rather, a list of minimal and ideal characteristics that Lay Cistercians themselves have identified as worthy of emulation.