



International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities

"See how they love one another"

Tertullian

12 January 2015

Dear Friends,

It has been a few months since our 2014 International Meeting in Lourdes and since we all worked hard for many months before that on our community spiritual journey. The result was worth it. We now have two new documents that reflect our experiences and state more clearly our Cistercian vocation as lay people and how we are called to live.

At the meeting in Lourdes we heard often the importance of "community." It is for this reason that the International Coordinating Committee agreed that the next international meeting theme will be "The Cistercian Lay Community." The birth of lay groups, in close relationship with a monastic community in the Cistercian family, brings something new to the Church.

We all know that our Cistercian lay vocation is rooted in the monastic life, which gives a central value to the cenobitic life.

It is clear to us as lay people that a monastic life is not possible. Yet we desire strongly to give a central value to our Cistercian lay vocation in the community. It seems therefore essential that we deepen the meaning and the way we live. We cannot, under any circumstances, say that we are a community of life, as many of us live far apart from each other and some may be together only three or four times a year. This is why we say that our communities are spiritual communities with links so strong between us, the monks / nuns and the lay people who change our lives.

But this opens up great questions:

Is our life in the world really changed? Does the community really determine a new way of relating with others?

For Lay Communities whose members live far from each other and from the monastery, how to create links? How to overcome the distance?

How to establish a deep knowledge of each other, without falling into the trap of self-help groups who want to heal the wounds of each other, instead of being a true School of Charity?

Coordinating Committee: Albertina Parayre † Pascal Sonzogni † Teresa McMahon

We cannot be a community if we do not know each other and if we do not share our joys, concerns, desires, etc. Being community requires sacrifice, time and prioritizing choices, recognizing that we are jointly responsible to each other.

How to learn communication in silence? Silence is a non-negotiable element of the Cistercian values, but it is very difficult to live in the world for those who are not used to it. If we do not learn to be silent and if we are not able to share the silence, we lose the great and unique opportunity to experience the flavor of silence that allows us to know our sisters and brothers at another level.

How to bring diverse communities together, to feel close to each other? Are the International Meetings and preparatory (regional) meetings enough?

In Lourdes, there was also discussion of co-responsibility between the two communities, secular and monastic.

The issues are many and we probably did not list them all. We have still two and a half years to reflect, meditate, contemplate ... and practice! As always, we will ask you to work during the coming months, both individually and with your communities on this topic.

To help you, and given all that we have written, we offer some thoughts as a starting point:

1. Lay Cistercian Community:
 - What is a spiritual community? What is it to us? How do we live?
 - What does being jointly responsible mean? Are we?
 - Are we ready to establish a joint responsibility between the monastic and lay community? In what way?

2. Communication: a loving relationship
 - How to establish means / modes of communication between members of the community?
 - How to establish communication between secular communities?
 - How to establish communication between monastic and lay communities while respecting the different nature of the two?

Working method

You can choose your own method: pooling and synthesis in a single document of individual work, working groups, joint work of all the lay community. Given the "community" nature of the proposed theme, we believe it is very positive that the monastic communities can contribute.

The result will look like this:

- Format: maximum 4 pages
- Deadline: January 2016
- Send to thmcmahon@g.com

From the texts received, we will prepare a summary for each of the three language groups before drafting a final summary that will be the text-martyr to work for the International Meeting.

There are a few months since we have distributed for your consideration the martyr text of the Statutes of Association (Bylaws). We know this is a difficult text and "daunting" but it is essential so that an association like ours, which is a "community of communities," can function without problems. "Laws are made to handle unimportant things, to free the mind for more important things."(A. Veilleux)

Finalizing both documents will be the work of the next International Meeting.

As you have noticed at the top of this letter, the theme that will guide our next international meeting is *"See how they love one another"* (Tertullian). We believe that it is not necessary to explain the reason for this decision.

We are pleased to announce that this time it will not be a Spanish community who takes responsibility for the organization, but all of the Spanish communities. We believe this will be a great way to create links between them!

In the near future we will send you more information about the venue and the dates chosen for our 2017 International Meeting.

In Cistercian love,

Teresa

Teresa McMahan
IALCC Coordinating Committee
English-language Representative