

“For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.” Psalm 35:10

The Lay Cistercian Spiritual Journey

1) The Beginning: the call

Christ calls us into a contemplative way of life lived in the light of the Cistercian charism, and into a relationship with a particular monastery. The principal aspects of the call can be summarized as follows:

- a) Awareness or deepening of an inner life
- b) Desire for a prayer-centered life
- c) Recognition of the intervention of the Holy Spirit
- d) Awakening of reciprocity with God

The awareness of the existence of an interior life takes a particular form: the discovery of our *capacitas Dei* (our capacity to be transformed into the likeness of God).

This call to the Cistercian way of life requires discernment. It is lived out in community with others who have received the same call to the Lay Cistercian journey.

2) The Response: Seeking to embody *capacitas Dei*

This encounter with the Cistercian spirituality embodied in a particular monastic community, leads us to seek to integrate the Cistercian values into our daily lives.

3) The central place of community, lay and monastic, as a means of spiritual growth

Our response to the call of Christ leads us into a Lay Cistercian community where we are mutually enriched in relationship with each other and with the monastic community. The monastic community recognizes the presence of Cistercian values in the lay group and authorizes it to be called a “Lay Cistercian Community.”

Walking with others brings richness, as the sharing and communion experienced are sources of support and joy. Community also creates constraints, requiring patience and listening, and could cause suffering. We recognize that community is an essential and indispensable element of our journey, a necessary means of spiritual growth. We must learn to love those who are called to the same community, sharing with each other with honesty and humility. Thus, we learn to see Christ in one another and to love as Christ has loved us.

This spirituality is not disembodied. It strives to meet the challenges of stability in spite of geographical distances and the difficulty of maintaining the spirit of community outside group meetings.

The difficulties are never considered only as obstacles, but are also a means of spiritual growth, which is made possible by grace and community support.

4) Formation/Transformation: its importance for spiritual growth

Formation within the Lay Cistercian community is a lifelong journey into the richness of the Cistercian charism. Formation must be both personal and communal.

It includes the following:

- a) The practice of *lectio divina* and prayer
- b) The Rule of Saint Benedict
- c) Knowledge of the treasure of Cistercian literature
- d) The Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours)
- e) Self knowledge
- f) The importance of the Eucharist and other sacraments
- g) Spiritual accompaniment

The practice of both exterior and interior silence and listening is emphasized in living the Cistercian charism. The annual retreat is a means of reinforcing community and relationship with God.

5) Life in Christ

The Lay Cistercian's road is one particular way of living the universal journey of human beings into God. The presence of Christ is the heart of our journey: "He is the way, the truth, the life." It is necessarily a journey accompanied by others. It is the quest for the encounter with Christ who transcends us and abides in us. Our greatest hope is that the gift of discovering Christ in one another will be the path of holiness and joy for us. Our journey is inspired and nourished by the sisters and brothers in the Cistercian family; for this we will be eternally grateful.

After reflecting on our identity (Huerta 2008) and working on our formation (Dubuque 2011), we as Lay Cistercians sought to go to the heart and source of these two realities. We discovered an encounter with a Presence: Jesus Christ, the source and summit of our journey. Jesus calls us through our brothers and sisters to be witnesses of the Gospel in the world, enlightened and supported by the Cistercian tradition as it is embodied in the nuns and monks who accompany us.

May Mary, Queen of Citeaux and model of obedience, show us the way to our full transformation into the image of her Son.

Adopted unanimously at Lourdes
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