The bonds of charity that unite us

Like the Cistercian monasteries, each Lay Cistercian Community is autonomous in relationship to one another, but they are all united by bonds of charity.

In order to make those bonds more concrete, the representatives of the various Lay Communities here present at the International Encounter of Santa María de Huerta, in June of 2008, decide to create an **International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities**, which will function *ad experimentum* till the next International Encounter, in three years.

Indeed, one of the important means of expressing this unity is having an international meeting every three years.

The participants at those meetings are the delegates, members elected by each group, along with a monk or nun accompanying each community.

It belongs to the International Encounter to elect a Committee of three members, one for each one of the main language groups.

The role of this Committee in particular is oriented towards establishing channels of communication between all of the Lay Communities and with the Cistercian Orders and Congregations, as well as organizing an International Encounter every three years.

In order to allow the proper functioning of the Association, a financial contribution from the members of the Lay Communities represented in the Association is appropriate. The Committee will be responsible for managing the Association's accounts. A financial report will be submitted to the membership at each international meeting.

Other expressions of the bonds of charity between the communities are, for example, regional meetings of the Lay Communities, sharing of resources, documents, reports, etc, and possibly joint meetings.

The Committee is charged with developing the basic documents for the permanent establishment of this Association at the next International Encounter, with the participation of all the existing Communities of Lay Cistercians.

We also entrust the International Committee with the authority to harmonize the text on Lay Cistercian Identity in the various languages.