



International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities

16 September 2022

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have just finished our brief international meeting in Assisi, and we write again to turn your thinking to the future. The International Coordinating Committee met in Assisi from 11 to 13 September with the two delegates from each language commission and from 14 – 16 to review our work and prepare for the next years.

The topics discussed with the delegates included:

1. **Bringing the Cistercian Charism to the World** – This paper was finalized with minor changes and adopted. It is attached for your information and will be posted to the website. It was also shared with the OCSO General Chapter on 15 September.
2. **Synodality** – The delegation had a rich discussion about what synodality means to the lay Cistercian family, from each individual community to the international level. The focus was how to apply synodality to ourselves within the lay Cistercian family, rather than at the parish or any place in your daily life (which is your own responsibility). We recognize that many member communities do not feel connected to the international association, by which we mean our member communities in the other language commissions as well as within our own commission.
3. **Proposal on “Charity visits”** – Scourmont and LaGrange shared their study of the Charter of Charity and how visitations between lay communities could help build bonds between these communities and strengthen each community internally.
4. **Regional meetings** – There will be more regional meetings in the future for each language commission to improve family relationships among our communities. We expect that these will be a combination of in-person and over Zoom, with specific dates to be determined by each region.
5. **International meetings** – The agenda will include topics proposed and presented by each language commission. There was discussion about the costs for participants and how it could be reduced to be as affordable as possible. The question of whether we should meet every four or five years rather than every three years was discussed with concerns about cost versus the frequency needed to build family both expressed. It was noted that the current schedule is in sync with the meeting of the OCSO General Chapter. Several amendments to the statutes were discussed and an international commission to prepare these will be formed.

6. **Monasteries closing** – Some monasteries have closed, and others are expected to do so. When a lay Cistercian community is associated with a monastery, any loss of a link between the lay and monastic community affects all of us. We feel it is important to address how to help such “orphaned” lay Cistercian member communities.
7. **Website** – As it has been noted many times, we must make better use of the website. While the listing of documents is okay (although it needs to be cleaned up), the dynamic and informational area reflecting our lay Cistercian family is still not working as intended. This needs to be addressed by each language commission. We will ask again for volunteers to assist with keeping the website updated and for all to share resources.

General Chapter Report: The committee presented a brief report (attached) on the activities since 2017 and the outcomes of the Assisi meeting to the OCSO General Chapter on 15 September. We felt that the report was very well accepted and prompted a few questions such as whether the number of lay community members have increased or decreased and their average age, how lay Cistercians can assist their monastic community, and what we think we can do for “orphaned” lay communities. The Abbot General noted that what is most important is that we exist and our fidelity to our vocation, rather than what the lay Cistercians do for each monastery.

2025 Meeting: The IX International Encounter will be in a French-speaking location. The topic will be *The Dreams of the Lay Cistercian Family*. You will receive a letter of invitation with details about dates and location in the first half of 2023.

We will share the reflections on synodality from the international meeting in Assisi in a separate document. This will inspire our work for the next three years.

Commission: An international working group will be formed to address possible amendments to the statutes. 1) Propose to elect the coordinating committee members within each language commission (at the regional meeting) and have the full assembly confirm the selected committee with a vote of confidence; 2) clarify that the coordinating committee serves the entire IALCC, even though they represent their language commission; 3) address how to replace the coordinating committee alternates if necessary; 4) proxy voting; 5) Representation and voting: to determine if the representation/voting at the international and regional meetings should be one per lay community or one per monastery (in some regions there are several lay communities associated with the same monastery); 6) study the question of whether there should be a time limit as to how long a lay community may be in provisional status; 7) clarify the membership status of a lay community when a monastery closes or can no longer support the lay community.

House Reports: Please review your community’s information on www.cistercianfamily.org. Is it current? What do you want other communities to know about your community? What would you like to know about other communities?

Community Recognition: Because recognition by the monastic community is vital to the long-term relationship between the IALCC and the Cistercian family, our statutes state it is necessary to confirm the level of recognition for those lay communities with provisional status or those who were recognized without a vote of the conventual chapter every three years. For that reason, those lay communities with the above-mentioned status will receive a new recognition request for their abbot or abbess or superior before the end of the year.

We recommend that communities who have had the above-mentioned status for many years try to get formal recognition before the 2025 meeting.

Dues: It is time to prepare your annual community support for 2023 (and if you have not sent anything for 2022, it is not too late). As stated in Article IV of the Statutes of the IALCC, "...all Lay Communities associated will pay an annual financial contribution." Please remember that as a recommended value, this contribution can be equal to the economic value received for one hour of work, or retirement income, in a year for each of its members.

Communities in the United States should send a check **made out to the IALCC** to me (Teresa McMahon, 4000 Oak Forest Drive, Des Moines, Iowa 50312). Please be sure to identify what community the contribution is from.

Communities outside of the United States should send their dues to the IALCC (International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities) account through Scourmont Monastery. Please note on the transfer form what community this contribution is from **and** send an email to me that the transfer has been made.

Bank:	BNP Paribas
Name of Account:	ADS ASBL / A.I.C.L.C.
IBAN/Account Number:	BE42 0018 2026 8654
BIC Code:	GEBABEBB

Please send your dues no later than **30 March 2023**.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

In Cistercian love,

Tina, Jacques, Teresa

IALCC Coordinating Committee