

Midwest Holy Cross Associates

Guidelines for Initial Formation Process of Associates

A guide to the application of the constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross to the personal life of an Associate

The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations) declared “The laity, by their very vocation, seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God...They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life...In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity (nos 31)”.

The laity is therefore called to exercise a very active role in the Church's mission. The lay men and women of Holy Cross Associates have heard and answer God's call to give witness to the Gospel.

Saint Paul tells us that each member of the body of Christ, the Church, has a special function to perform, and those who seek to become a Midwest Holy Cross Associate are no exception. Associates strive to be what exactly they are, namely people of God, called to do what they can to be witnesses of Christ by word and example to those around them, while embracing the heritage and charisms of Holy Cross. They support the mission as educators in the faith and form collaborative relationships with the Brothers of Holy Cross, to create a family spirit, which is a gift to Holy Cross, the Church and the world.

This guide is meant to facilitate the journey of an aspiring Associate in prayer, community, service, and “*the knowledge of the history and spirituality, character and mission of Holy Cross*”. It helps those wanting to become Associates to discover the freedom to love, the quest of the searching heart. It is offered with the prayer and hope that all who participate will be formed and transformed by God's love.

Therefore, the goal of the Initial Formation process is for the candidate to acquire the requisite knowledge and understanding of the Holy Cross Constitutions and how they are applied to the life of an Associate as well as an appreciation for the History and Spirituality of the Congregation of Holy Cross. However, it is recognized that those who are seeking to become an Associate may come from different backgrounds and experiences that may have led them to have different degrees of understanding and appreciation for this foundational information.

Accordingly, based on the familiarity and background of each new candidate, there are two suggested approaches for completing the Initial Formation of an aspiring Associate, leading to their final discernment and first yearly commitment.

Part 1 - Interview and Inquiry

During this step, a current member will interview the new candidate to discuss their interests and background (item # “4.1. Interview & Follow-up for New Candidates”). This should more fully assess the status of their faith journey, and their prior knowledge, experience and study of Holy Cross.

Part 2 - Information/Formation

A - Candidate with sufficient background and familiarity with Holy Cross

If a candidate has prior knowledge, experience and study of Holy Cross, they can benefit from an abbreviated formation process. This process assumes prior reading of the Holy Cross Constitutions and focuses on a prayerful reflection of their application to an Associate. The process is contained in the document item # “4.2.1. Come Follow Me” in the resource manual.

B - Candidate not familiar with Holy Cross and requiring extended formation

If a candidate presents themselves as a “clean slate” in regards to knowledge, experience and study of Holy Cross, then they must participate in a more intensive formation process. This process is identical to the abbreviated version in its prayerful reflection and application, but it requires additional time and more in depth reading of the Holy Cross Constitutions. Please note that a Candidate with sufficient background may also choose this more intensive process if they so desire. The process is based on the use of the booklet, item # “6.2.1. Pilgrimage to Holy Cross” and related documentation, accessible in the resource manual.

Implementation of the Formation Process (Part 2)

There is great flexibility when working with individuals who seek to become Associates. Please consider the scheduling needs of the current chapter members or formation leader / facilitator, as well as those of the candidate(s). The formation processes above can thus be completed via any one of the following methods and schedules.

Retreat - The entire study of the Constitutions can be done during a retreat, making the formation process brief, but intense. Formation A can be covered effectively during a one-day retreat. Formation B could be spread over two or more days.

Weekly or Monthly Meetings - These meetings could be one-on-one, but preferably best in small groups (to enhance sharing and community building, including hospitality) depending on the number of candidates. Each meeting should focus on one or two of the constitutions in each session.

Part 3 - Discernment and Commitment

This is a time for the candidate to discern if the Holy Spirit is calling them to make a commitment to be an Associate. Candidates are encouraged to continue attending chapter gatherings during their discernment. Once a candidate is ready to make their first commitment, they can do so alongside the other members of the chapter. The candidate should use item # “4.3 A Journey Discerning Commitment” to facilitate this process. It is generally expected that a new candidate will actively participate in monthly gatherings and Associate activities for one full year before being ready to make their first commitment.