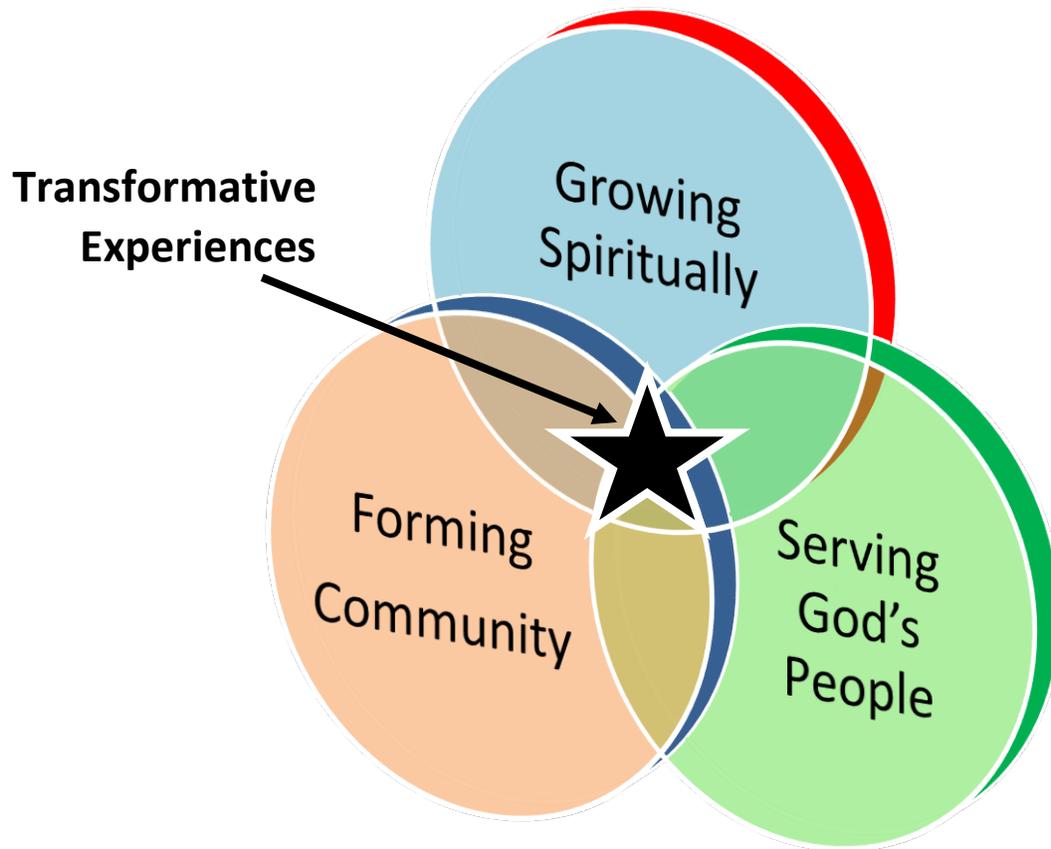


# Midwest Holy Cross Associates

## The Annual Commitment Holy Cross Associates Make



## A Journey Discerning Commitment



## A Journey Discerning Commitment

There are two essential principles that guide Holy Cross associates. The first is regular participation in monthly meetings that sustains the continuous growth of the chapter-community. The second is the commitment associates make among themselves to the broader associate community. A great deal of emphasis is placed on these guiding principles because they set Holy Cross Associates (HCA) apart from other models of association.

Sharing spiritual gifts and being present to one's colleagues in a community setting is an important aspect of what being an associate is all about. If absence from the community is prolonged or continuously sporadic, perhaps the associate and the chapter-community should together determine how to address this issue, or discern together if the associate in fact has a vocation to Holy Cross association. Depending on the individual situation, the community might decide to consider having the associate become a "friend" of the chapter, or an "associate emeritus".

The second principle is to eventually have the associate make an annual, public commitment to one's associate colleagues and to the broader Holy Cross associate community *to be* a Holy Cross associate. A committed associate strives (1) to grow spiritually, (2) to form community, and (3) to serve the people of God. The commitment is a good faith pledge, not a promise or vow, which an associate makes to strive to integrate these three intentions within one's primary Christian life style and responsibilities. Thus one becomes a *committed* associate of Holy Cross.

- ❖ *When is a local associate community ready to make a commitment?*
  - After a year or more following the associates' active involvement in their chapter-community, the associates within that community are encouraged to begin thinking about discerning if they are called by the Holy Spirit to make annual commitments.
- ❖ *How does an associate community know when it's ready to begin a discernment process?* Usually there are several consistent signs:
  - There appears to be openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the part of the associates, and it continues to be evident in the life of the local associate community.

- The “culture” of the community promotes bonds of trust and friendship, and signs of respect for one another’s spiritual gifts and insights are evident in the associate’s community.
- There is a felt comfort of presence among the associates, and a consistent participation of each associate in that community.
- There is a familiarity with the *Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross*.
- The *Lectio Divina* form of scriptural-based shared prayer and reflection is routinely practiced.
- In some cases, the HCA booklets *With Hope to Bring*, or *Christian Discipleship* may have been shared among the members of that particular community.
- A chapter-community’s identity with Holy Cross is felt and appreciated by the associate members.

It may be that one or two associates will discern that they are not called to make a commitment at the time their associate community discerns it is ready. If so, the associate should share this with the community, and the community in turn would be able to encourage the member(s) until such time the associate(s) feels called to make a commitment. Individuals who discover that they are not called to commitment, or choose not to renew their annual commitment, should share this with the chapter-community and seek advice from the members of the local chapter-community.

Accompanying resources are offered here to assist associates within their particular community to prayerfully and communally discern when it is time to make annual commitments to the broader associate community in Holy Cross. It is recommended that approximately four months be allotted for the discernment process: one month each for the three elements of the overall commitment: first, to grow spiritually, second, to form community and third, to serve the people of God. An optional fourth month in this process may be helpful in order to prayerfully discuss and discern individual associate readiness, chapter-community readiness, and provide time to design an appropriate ritual for making commitments. Perhaps a meaningful ritual during this time would enrich the process. Last of all, if desirable, the Director of Holy Cross Associates could be invited to assist with this overall discernment process.

*An Associate's Statement of Commitment*

*I, in the presence of God, my brothers and sisters in Holy Cross, and the Christian community assembled here, make for one year my commitment **to strive for growth in my spiritual life**; to participate in the building of community according to the traditions of Holy Cross, especially with my brother and sister associates; and to continue to offer and seek support in ministering to the people of God as a Holy Cross Associate. May God continue to guide me and our associate community in response to his call, through the charisms and mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross.*

## **Discerning Commitment: Striving for Spiritual Growth**

### ***Opening Prayer***

*We praise you O God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Send forth your Spirit into our hearts that we may gratefully receive your guidance to discern our readiness to make our annual commitment. Move us to pray, reflect, and speak with openness and understanding. Direct our thoughts and senses so that we may deepen our spiritual calling to be committed associates sharing a common vision, and a community that is nourished by the gospels, charisms and mission of Holy Cross. May your grace ever guide us as a community of faith. We thank you for the gifts you give us, and those gifts we share among one another that we may be strengthened with discerning wisdom. Amen.*

**Context** (Adapted from *Vatican II in Plain English*, Bill Huebsch, Thomas More Publishing, 1996: *Constitution on the Church*, The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church, Chapter 5)

The church is holy. The church was holy. The church will always be holy. We know this to be true because Jesus loved the church into holiness, and gave her the presence of the Holy Spirit. This holiness is evident by the many women and men who draw from the church the spirit and strength they need to live lives of holy goodness. We are called to holiness by Christ himself, who taught “that we must be perfect as God is perfect.”

There are many ways to live out this call to be holy. Every one of us is called to walk according to his/her personal gifts and responsibilities. By transforming the activities and events of everyday life into holy moments, we as faithful followers of Jesus grow in this perfection, and the world more and more resembles God’s reign.

The scriptures tell us “Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your understanding, with all your strength. Love one another as Christ loves you.” This is really an invitation to be holy. By our holy love, we nurture a way of life in the world that is

gentler, more beautiful, and more human. The scriptures describe for us what holiness resembles: a heart of mercy, humility, meekness, patience, awareness of God's mercy when we have sinned, and a spirit of forgiveness towards others. Love is the principal way to holiness. Beyond that, but included within it, are the sacraments, prayer, the Eucharist, self-sacrifice, service to others, and virtue lived every day. All the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for holiness and even for perfection.

Let us, then, hear God's call within us to be holy. Let each of us be observant and appreciative of life's unique treasures. Let us be weary using the things of this world and its attachments that hinder us in our quest for perfect love.

***Lectio Divina*** (2 Peter 1: 3-8)

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Getting familiar with the following scripture

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Choosing a word or phrase that leaps out to you. Share.

3<sup>rd</sup> Reading – Listening for inspiration. Share.

4<sup>th</sup> Reading – Listening for God's call: what do I/we discern? Share.

To all of you who have our kind of faith. The faith I speak of is the kind that Jesus Christ or God and Savior gives to us. How precious it is, and how just and good he is to give this same faith to each of us. Do you want more and more of God's kindness and peace? Then learn to know him better. For as you know him better, he will give you, through his great power, everything you need for living a truly good life. He even shares his own glory and his own goodness with us! And by that same mighty power, he has given us all the other rich and wonderful blessings he promised; for instance, the promise to save us from evil that is all around us, and to give us his own character. But to obtain these gifts, you need more than faith; you must work hard to be good and even that is not enough. For then you must learn to know God better, and discover what he wants you to do. Next, learn how to put away your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, letting God have his way with you. This will make possible the next step which is for you to enjoy other people and to like them, and finally, you will grow to love them deeply. The more you go on this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

***Closing Prayer***

*Come Holy Spirit! We your people praise and thank you for filling our hearts, and kindling in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit so we shall be recreated and renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of your Spirit, you have instructed our hearts, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*An Associate's Statement of Commitment*

*I, in the presence of God, my brothers and sisters in Holy Cross, and the Christian community assembled here, make for one year my commitment to strive for growth in my spiritual life; to participate in the building of community according to the traditions of Holy Cross, especially with my brother and sister associates; and to continue to offer and seek support in ministering to the people of God as a Holy Cross Associate. May God continue to guide me and our associate community in response to his call, through the charisms and mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross.*

## **Discerning Commitment: Striving to Form Community**

### ***Opening Prayer***

*We praise you O God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Send forth your Spirit into our hearts that we may gratefully receive your guidance to discern our readiness to make our annual commitment. Move us to pray, reflect, and speak with openness and understanding. Direct our thoughts and senses so that we may deepen our spiritual calling to be committed associates sharing a common vision, and a community that is nourished by the gospels, charisms and mission of Holy Cross. May your grace ever guide us as a community of faith. We thank you for the gifts you give us, and those gifts we share among one another that we may be strengthened with discerning wisdom. Amen.*

**Context** (Selected text from *Mission of the Redeemer*, 51, December 7, 1990, Pope John Paul II)

A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young churches - one sometimes fostered by the bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority - is that of "ecclesial basic communities" (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach. These are groups of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. [They] are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a "civilization of love". Every community, if it is to be Christian, must be founded on Christ and live in him as it listens to the word of God, focuses its prayer on the Eucharist, lives in a communion marked by oneness of heart and soul, and shares according to the needs of its members (cf. Acts 2:42-47).

## ***Lectio Divina***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Getting familiar with the text.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Choosing a word or phrase the leaps out to you. Share.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading – Listening for inspiration. Share.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Reading – Listening for God’s call: what do I/we discern? Share.

Blessed Basil Moreau often referred to the spirit of unity that was embodied in the communities of early Christians. He believed that this unity enabled Christian believers to be “...but one heart and one soul...” so much so that non-Christians of the period exclaimed in admiration, “See how they love one another”. Moreau saw this spirit of unity as God’s purpose for Holy Cross – a characterization by which his lay and religious followers would be recognized.

Holy Cross associates form intentional communities that provide relationships for encouraging and supporting each associate’s call to grow spiritually and in ministry. These communities offer numerous opportunities for associates to gather for prayer and reflection; they are a venue where they can be reenergized in serving God’s people. Each chapter is unique; none is like any other. And so when they assemble for their monthly gatherings, the associates form a place where “see how they love one another” becomes experienced over time in transform-ational ways. In the end, their association as a community is a journey in becoming more effective disciples of the Lord.

Holy Cross associates make annual commitments that call them *to participate in the building of community according to the traditions of Holy Cross, especially with their brother and sister associates*. Here “participate” means actively contributing in the life of the various communities in which associates may find themselves: family, parish, civic, work/ministerial, and most certainly their own community of associates. Whatever their community experience, an associate’s participation means forming and building to maintain the meaningfulness of their community situations. They do this by spreading a spirit of unity while striving to mentor and infuse Holy Cross charisms into their community experiences: family, providence, zeal, hope, and hospitality.

## ***Closing Prayer***

*Come Holy Spirit! We your people praise and thank you for filling our hearts, and kindling in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit so we shall be recreated and renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of your Spirit, you have instructed our hearts, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*An Associate's Statement of Commitment*

*I, in the presence of God, my brothers and sisters in Holy Cross, and the Christian community assembled here, make for one year my commitment to strive for growth in my spiritual life; to participate in the building of community according to the traditions of Holy Cross, especially with my brother and sister associates; and to continue to offer and seek support in ministering to the people of God as a Holy Cross Associate. May God continue to guide me and our associate community in response to his call, through the charisms and mission of the Congregation of Holy Cross.*

## **Discerning Commitment: Striving to Serve God's People**

### ***Opening Prayer***

*We praise you O God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Send forth your Spirit into our hearts that we may gratefully receive your guidance to discern our readiness to make our annual commitment. Move us to pray, reflect, and speak with openness and understanding. Direct our thoughts and senses so that we may deepen our spiritual calling to be committed associates sharing a common vision, and a community that is nourished by the gospels, charisms and mission of Holy Cross. May your grace ever guide us as a community of faith. We thank you for the gifts you give us, and those gifts we share among one another that we may be strengthened with discerning wisdom. Amen.*

**Context** (Text adapted from *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pp.19-21; 2008)

The church is a communion (community) in which members are given to share in union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The reality of the church is the communion of each Christian with a triune God, and the communion of all Christians with one another in Christ. The church is a communion of those called by Jesus to be his disciples, and it is the personal discipleship of each person that makes possible a community of disciples formed by and for the mission of Christ. By virtue of our baptism, we are all at the same time, brought into community, and sent on mission. In fact, community and mission are profoundly connected with each other. They interpenetrate and mutually imply each other to the point that community represents both the source and the fruit of mission. Community gives to mission and mission is accomplished in community.

**Lectio Divina** (The following text is adapted and paraphrased from *Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Constitution 2, Mission*)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Getting Familiar with the text.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Choosing a word or phrase the leaps out to you. Share.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading – Listening for inspiration. Share.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Reading – Listening for God’s call: what do I/we discern? Share.

God so loved the world that he sent his only Son that we might have life and have it abundantly. In the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus came among us. He anointed us by the Holy Spirit to inaugurate a kingdom of justice, love and peace. Jesus breathed his Spirit into his people, and through baptism, his disciples are sent to continue his mission – to hurry along the building of his Father’s kingdom.

The same Spirit moved Blessed Basil Moreau to found the community of Holy Cross to which we have been called. It provides us strength and support for mission to serve God’s people. Our mutual respect, and our shared undertakings in the Family of Holy Cross, is a hopeful sign of the kingdom – especially when others behold how we love one another.

We Holy Cross associates are educators in the faith and, as disciples of Jesus, we stand side by side with everyone. We offer support to men and women of grace and goodwill everywhere in their call to form communities and pursue the mission.

Our service to God’s people is never simple – never simple because the impoverishments and needs we would relieve are not simple: ignorance, indignities, prejudices, warfare, injustices, illnesses, abuse, famine....

Whatever our service, it is always connected to the Lord’s mission. So is the strength that goes with it. We pray that Jesus will clasp us more firmly to himself – use our hands and wits to do the work that only he can do. For Jesus’ kingdom to come in this world, we pray that we may have the competence to see and the courage to act. Then our service to others becomes a prayer – a ministry that speaks to the Lord who works through us.

### ***Closing Prayer***

*Come Holy Spirit! We your people praise and thank you for filling our hearts, and kindling in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit so we shall be recreated and renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of your Spirit, you have instructed our hearts. Grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*