



HCA Chapter-Communities: Assessing Their Vibrancy

Vibrant chapter-communities are maintained by the associates who are called to form them. With this comes the acceptance of new and renewed relationships enjoyed by people who comprise Holy Cross Associates (HCA). The vibrancy of each chapter is the core which defines HCA and each associate's spiritual journey in Holy Cross.

The vibrancy of chapter communities is the result of maintaining a focus on the purpose, values, and the mutual expectations Holy Cross associates share in community; from this all else flows in being an associate. The intentionality of the annual commitments we make to each other and the broader HCA community is about maintaining vibrancy: (1) to participate in our chapter community; (2) to form our chapter community through the influences of the charisms and mission of Holy Cross; and (3) to sustain vibrancy.

Prayerful awareness of, and openness to the Holy Spirit is paramount in the life of each HCA chapter community. Openness to the Holy Spirit guides how we fundamentally participate in our chapter community, and how we form, renew and sustain it. As a result, our faith, attitudes and values as associates are *informed, formed and transformed* by the vibrancy of our chapter's spirit – a spirit that is shared, developed, and renewed continuously.

What is a "vibrant" chapter community, and how do we know we have one? On the whole, the following question-indicators assist in defining the nature of a vibrant chapter community:

IS THERE A FEELING OF ZEAL, HOPE, FAMILY SPIRIT, AND TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE CHARACTERIZING THE SPIRIT (CULTURE) OF OUR CHAPTER COMMUNITY? Do we have a sense that the Holy Spirit is among us when we gather in prayer as a community? Are we striving *first* to form a spirit of apostolic zeal and hope in community with one another which only then enables us to bring zeal and hope to others? How does the spirit of our chapter indicate a sense of family spirit? Does developing "family spirit" spill over into other areas of our lives: friends, and various other communities we belong to – shared ministries, parish, diocese, civic life? Are we aware of trusting in divine providence through events that affect us personally, and in our ministries?

ARE THERE INDICATIONS OF SHARING COMMON IDEALS? Do we talk about why we are associates? Do we feel supported by our associate colleagues on our faith journey with them in community? Do we make periodic valuations on our journey "moving along in the Lord"? Do we talk about our annual commitments, and refer to the beliefs we share as guided by the charisms and mission of Holy Cross?

ARE WE AWARE OF INDICATIONS OF PERSONAL AND CHAPTER SPIRITUAL GROWTH? Over time, can we discern transformative changes in our chapter as a *community*? Do we strive to be present to our chapter colleagues by regular attendance at monthly meetings? Do we talk about inviting others to association, and helping them to discern if they too are called to be a Holy Cross associate?

DO WE BELIEVE WE OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE MOTIVATING AND HELPING OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH? Is there a consensus that we *do* make a difference for one another in community? Do we discern that who we are as associates makes a difference for the people we serve with zeal and hope? Have we asked ourselves if our monthly meetings are meaningful – not just assuming they are? Do we believe our meetings provide quality occasions for motivating and promoting spiritual growth, building community and serving God’s people?

DO WE SHARE IN OUR CHAPTER’S LEADERSHIP AND CHALLENGE “ELEPHANT- ISSUES”? Do we encourage that the spiritual gifts of each associate to be shared among all? Are we comfortable taking on shared responsibilities for our chapter’s business: planning dates for meetings, taking turns leading monthly meetings, providing hospitality, maintaining moral, and participating in events that are intended to sustain vibrancy? When it appears there is an “elephant-in-the-room,” do we trust enough to address the issue promptly as mature adults? Do we exercise the courtesy of informing our colleagues when we are unable to attend a meeting? Do we check on colleagues that miss meetings without prior notification and reach out to them and discern the reasons?

ARE THERE INDICATIONS OF MAKING CHANGES IN OUR CHAPTER? Do we take steps to assure that our chapter is not stuck in a rut? Do we feel we can improve the vibrancy of our chapter community if there is a need to do so? When we sense a time to take a break from our monthly routine, how do we feel about it if it is aimed at renewing our community, our spiritual journey, and the commitments we make?

ARE THERE INDICATIONS OF A WILLINGNESS TO SHARE RESOURCES? Do we use opportunities for building community spirit by giving of our *time, talent* and *treasure* that foster and support chapter activities? Do we regularly share in providing *hospitality* at our monthly meetings?

DO WE PRAY FOR THE NEEDS AND WELFARE OF OUR CHAPTER COLLEAGUES AND HOLY CROSS ASSOCIATES EVERYWHERE? Do we understand that being an associate is not being one in isolation? Do we sense that our chapter community is part of a larger Holy Cross associate community – an appreciation that we are a part of something larger than our own chapter? Do we strive to stay informed about HCA and the congregation? Have we formed habits of prayer that include the intentions of our colleagues, other Holy Cross associates, and the broader Holy Cross family of priests, brothers, sisters and laity?