



**Associates
of the Franciscan
Missionaries of Mary**



*A sense of
belonging*

*Each vocation is an event:
personal and original,
communal and ecclesial.*



«Communion,
This Word Fills Me»
Mary de la Passion

Associates Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all Good!

To welcome, to witness, to announce the universal and unconditional love of God is the vocation and the mission of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

On this path, outlined by Mary of the Passion and on which you have committed yourselves with us, marvellous opportunities of encounter and communion open before us. Coming from diverse backgrounds in Eastern and Western Canada, this creates between you and us a strong sense of belonging that unites us all in the great FMM family.

Led by the Spirit in following Christ, like Francis and Clare of Assisi, our steps bring us together in joy and simplicity of heart through Eucharistic prayer, fraternity without boundaries and participation in the mission of the Church (Acts 2:46) .

Together «let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding». (Rom 14:19). We can then confirm the conviction expressed by Mary of the Passion in 1891:

«What an immense grace is the Institute for the Church and for the whole World.»

*Patricia Saint-Cyr, fmm
November 15th, 2009*

Theological, Pastoral and Ecclesial Foundation

Strongly supported by the Canadian Church, the partnership between lay associates and religious institutes is part of a Universal Church movement. In his Apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life, John Paul II states,

«In the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity».

The lay associates' project of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary began in 1992 as part of a highly encouraged movement by the Canadian Church. *“Perceived as the work of the Spirit and a sign of the times, the associates' movement merits not only attention and esteem, but also a commitment, an involvement on the part of religious institutes and the laity. This can only contribute to the edification of the Church's dimensions of mystery, communion, and mission;*

but also towards human and Christian development of persons and groups directly concerned».

(L. Boisvert, ofm, *Lay Associates to a Religious Institute*).

Likewise, in a paper published in the journal of the UISG #97, Father Füllenbach svd, makes these introductory comments:

«We observe today that an increasing number of lay persons are asking to share the Charism of religious Institutes. They are not satisfied with apostolic collaboration alone: they seek an active participation in the founder's Charism, in the spirituality and the various projects of the religious Institute. Any theology on the laity, on religious life, and on ordained ministries must begin with the fundamental theology of the Christian vocation – without any distinction ».

All of Creation is longing for God's manifestation. It is in our world that God is revealed. It is on earth that we are called to reveal God's presence. **By one's Baptism, each Christian is called to holiness and mission.** This mission is to witness by

one's life to the mysteries of Christ. It is a call to be good as our Heavenly Father is good.

Gift of the Spirit to all the community (see Rom 12 and 1 Cor12), the charisms cannot be owned by one person alone. They must be shared with all the community. This is why the laity has a right to share in the Charism of religious institutes.

The laity like religious form God's people and are the members of Christ's body through a diversity of gifts. Mireille Éthier, a married laywoman (associate and *répondante* with her husband of the Jerusalem fraternity), states it so clearly: the symbol of a body in Saint Paul is very important as it biblically roots the relationship between groups of people, laity and consecrated persons:

«The body is one and has many members...As it is, there are many members, yet one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12, 19-20). This transformation insists on unity, the necessity of diversity, and on the cohesion of the body. Each

contributes to the well-being of the whole through the individual members. The unique contribution of each participating group is called upon and it plays a part in the entire dynamics of the whole».

Statutes and Orientations

Identity:

Baptized laypersons, committing themselves to deepening their faith and witnessing the Gospel according to the **Marian Spirituality** of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and sharing with the community the **Eucharistic and Missionary Charism** of the foundress, Mary of the Passion, **in the footsteps of Francis and Clare of Assisi.**

Their objectives:

Associates aim at promoting:

- prayer at the core of a commitment and witnessing to a Eucharistic life;
- an open mind to all in one's personal and group commitments;
- living openness, welcome, and inclusion in universal mission, according to the spirituality and Charism of Mary of the Passion;
- fraternal life by witnessing Franciscan values of joy, peace, simplicity, solidarity, and respect of creation.

Criteria of discernment in the choice of members:

- emotional maturity;
- capacity for apostolic commitment;
- faithfulness to a prayer life;
- potential for spiritual growth;
- commitment with no financial or legal obligations on the part of the religious members or the lay person.

Membership requirements:

- regular attendance and active participation in meetings;
- pastoral or social commitment as much as possible;
- communion with the Church;
- yearly voluntary contribution.

Individuals, who are sick or too old to commit themselves, may participate in prayer, offering, and solidarity.

Accompaniment:

- Basic formation under the *répondante*
 - Formation program with 6 pamphlets on the Charism.
- Monthly meetings led by one of the group members
 - It is strongly recommended to have a group of leaders with previous experience in accompaniment.
- Accompaniment pamphlets with Scripture reading and sharing.
- Giving updates on Church and social events.
- Personal meeting according to need and certain circumstances.
- Spiritual support for each other in the group.

Procedure for becoming Candidates and Associates

After having contacted and spoken with the *fm* *répondante* (designated by the Provincial Superior), the interested person starts as a candidate.

He or she:

- partakes in the formation meetings (at least one year formation is required),
- becomes familiar with the spirituality and Charism of Mary of the Passion by completing a basic formation program,
- deepens one's understanding of the commitments of the association.

After a sufficient period of reflection and spiritual development, the candidate can present to the *répondante* his/her motivated request to take the pledge. The *répondante* will discern with her/him the good time to take her/his pledge in the association.

At a decided time by the group where she/he has chosen to belong, the associate will

- promise to commit herself/himself for one year in accordance with the Association's agreement;
- continue to journey spiritually while remaining faithful to the monthly meetings.

The celebrations of commitment or renewal will take place during a community feast.

Evaluation:

It is completed between fmm superiors and the associates. This can be done in a group or individually according to the agreement made with the *répondante*.

It should be done on a regular basis and in accordance with the Association's objectives.

Mutual Commitments between the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and the Associates

Through their pledge, the Associates commit to the following:

- preparing for meetings by reflecting on the study themes;
- faithful in one's daily prayer with a Eucharistic devotion;
- specifically participate through prayer in the local Church's apostolic mission with an openness to all;
- partake as regularly as possible in the scheduled meetings.

For their part, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary commit to:

- share the prayer, spirituality, and mission of the Institute according to their Charism;
- support the associates and candidates in their journey as well as offer spiritual direction when need be.



Pledge as Associates of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

Together with my Associate group, I have come to know and to love Mary of the Passion and St. Francis. I now wish to live the fmm Charism transmitted to me by the community. Gratefully aware that my commitment as an associate invites me to:

- fidelity to prayer and the sacraments;
- presence and participation in meetings as much as possible;
- concrete commitment to my milieu;

I,,
answering God's call,
pledge for a year
to ardently live my baptismal vocation
according to the spirituality
of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

