

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PACIFIC PROVINCE COMPANIONS

INTRODUCTION

A primary aim of the Companion program is to invite dedicated lay people to share in the bond of charity that is a mark of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood as well as the cornerstone of its mission, community, and spirituality. At the same time lay people are invited to share with the Missionaries their gifts so that the relationships become mutually enhancing. The intent of these guidelines is to facilitate the process by which Missionaries and Companions experience together the charism of the Precious Blood.

Collaboration among laity, priests and religious is fundamental to the life of a Catholic. The Second Vatican Council made Catholics, regardless of state in life, more aware of the place of collaboration. Today, in the midst of controversy and confusion, there is a great thirst for genuine and redeeming spirituality. The Precious Blood presents a fundamental and strong spirituality, centered in the Blood of the Cross, present and alive in the Eucharistic mystery, capable of giving our lives their essential dimension: the giving of ourselves with greater availability to the Lord and to others. Thus it is a spirituality for today. The invitation to laity to become Precious Blood Companions provides avenues for collaboration, opportunities to experience the joy of belonging, the challenge to grow individually and as a group in service to our God, our Church, and our brothers and sisters.

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood, are committed to bringing to the world the urgent call of the Redemptive Blood. The invitation to laity to become Precious Blood Companions is an invitation to collaborate in the work of the missionaries. Companions make covenant with the missionaries, becoming part of the family as they strive to enter ever more fully into the mysteries of the cup, the cross, and the Word, in order to express their own commitment through meaningful ministry. The Covenant that binds Companions and Missionaries together is one of commitment, relationship, and community, all important elements of a spirituality of the Precious Blood.

The following guidelines are intended to provide a structure and some understanding of how Companions belong and live out their commitment to the Precious Blood Community. . Special circumstances may affect the ways in which the guidelines are applied. Judgements and decisions made about individual Companions or about specific Companion groups will be made in a spirit of good will and charity taking into consideration all relevant factors.

INQUIRY AND QUALITIES TO BE STRIVED FOR

- A. Catholics may enter into Inquiry provided that they are 18 years of age. They are welcomed as Companions upon completion of the designated period of formation when they enter into a covenant with the Missionaries of the Province of the Pacific.
- B. Companions live the spirituality of the Precious Blood by striving to
 - **Participate In Some Ministry**
Having demonstrated commitment to ministry prior to Inquiry; Companions continue to engage in apostolic work. Such work, especially that recognized as

effectively leading to collaboration with St. Gaspar's family springs from a recognition of the signs of the times and a desire to respond to the cry of the Blood; it can include the ministry of intercession (prayer), causes in the defense of life and the well being of that life, catechesis, liturgical ministries, and visitation of the sick.

- **Live closely united to the Eucharistic Life of the Church,** to carry to maturity their baptismal grace by incorporating the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they received at the time of Confirmation and by frequent participation in the Eucharist, the memorial of the Redeeming Sacrifice. As Companions gather at the Eucharistic Table, sharing communion from the chalice of the Blood of the New Testament they find the most expressive sign of the spirituality which unites them in the bond of charity with the larger community of Missionaries. They commit themselves to the frequent participation in, and the reception of the Eucharist in order that they may experience healing and prepare themselves for the challenges of mission
- **Remain open to Conversion and Reconciliation.**
Precious Blood Spirituality convinces Companions that conversion is a life long process that occurs gradually as we allow Eucharist and Word to transform us. Reconciliation calls us to give witness to God's love for all people. It asks of us a conscious willingness to be reconciled with God and with our brothers and sisters. We are attracted to the marginalized, to "foreigners", to all who are "different" and to those who bear a grudge against us. Estrangement has no place in the life of a person dedicated to the Precious Blood. We are to be at peace with our world and all its creatures. We are to take to heart the admonition of Jesus, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your companion has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first be reconciled to your companion and then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5: 23-24)
- **Incorporate prayer as an integral part of their daily lives.**
Just as Jesus drew light and strength from prayer to drink the chalice the Father had given him (cf. Lk. 22:39 cf. Jn 18:11), so Companions also seek in prayer the light and strength to drink from their own cups of pain and suffering and to fulfill their mission as lay people. (cf. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 4). They find time for individual and corporate prayer and meditation especially with the Sacred Scriptures. They come to know that Precious Blood prayer leads us to see God and to remind us that God is with us.
- **Opportunities for Prayerful Celebrations**
Companions draw closer to their Precious Blood family, incorporated members, Companions and candidates when they join together in prayer at liturgical feasts and Precious Blood celebrations.

- **Enter into the Paschal Mystery**
Companions unite themselves with the sacrificial offering of Christ with hope, love and joy, fulfilling faithfully their commitments as lay people in the world and joining the crosses that they bear with the cross of Jesus.
- **Respect the Family that is Church**
Mindful that "**God has acquired the Church with his own blood**" (Acts 20:28), Companions commit themselves to live in communion with and respect for persons and ministries in the Church.
- **Recognize and Advocate for the Human Dignity of all People.**
According to the possibilities of each one, Companions commit themselves to bring about a better social order of peace, justice and love among peoples. They are especially mindful of the concern of their Precious Blood Community for families, immigrants, and those living on the margins. They take up a life lived in solidarity with the suffering, the alienated, the poor, the powerless, the oppressed and the marginalized. They are called to intercultural awareness and sensitivity to all peoples. Jesus has reconciled humanity "**through the blood of his cross**" (Col. 1:30), "**creating in himself one new man from us**" (Eph. 2:15).

INVITATION TO MEMBERSHIP

Sponsors may invite an individual to inquiry. A sponsor is any incorporated member who will determine the readiness of the individual for the Companion program. Companions may recommend individuals to a sponsor for inquiry.

FORMATION FOR INQUIRERS

The period of formation for inquirers will normally last two years. During this period inquirers receive special instruction about the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, their history and their spirituality. They also learn and experience what it means to belong to the Precious Blood family as Companions. This inquiry period is characterized by frequent opportunities to meet with other Companions and incorporated members. The format for Inquiry will *normally* consist of six formal inquiry sessions per year. These sessions will include:

- corporate prayer and faith sharing
- study and instruction as to the nature and purpose of Precious Blood spirituality
- history of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood
- applicability of Precious Blood spirituality to every day life.

On alternate months, inquirers will meet with a Companion group and, when possible, incorporated members and candidates to begin to share the fellowship and to experience that sense of family that members of a Precious Blood community value.

ACCEPTANCE OF INQUIRERS AS COMPANIONS

Upon recommendation of those responsible for the formation of inquirers, and with the approval of the Provincial Director, the Provincial Director or his delegate will accept the written covenant of each inquirer at a special ceremony. In case of disagreement about the suitability or readiness of an individual to become a Companion, the Provincial Director will make the final decision.

COMPANION MEETINGS

- Companion groups will meet monthly at a mutually agreeable time and place. Each Companion group will determine a prayer structure which meets its needs. Some suggested elements of Corporate Prayer are:
 - A reading from the Word of God
 - A Psalm prayed together (possibly sung)
 - Silence
 - Intercession
 - A corporate prayer prayed in common, principally the “Our Father”
- A Topic which the group chooses for discussion, reflection and prayer. Preferably this topic will connect to Precious Blood spirituality and may include
 - Study
 - Discussion
 - Application to every day life
- Social Interaction
Such interaction usually comes at the end of the more formal parts of the meeting, but must be considered as important as the other elements of the meeting. It is during this time, that Companion members develop relationships based on the trust and respect that has been engendered by study, reflection and sharing. The community charism of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood is extended to the Companions and leads to a strong sense of belonging and family connection.

On-Going Formation for Companions in Covenant

The monthly meeting is considered the primary venue for ongoing formation. With this fact in mind, the Advisory Committee, the sponsors, and others responsible for planning the monthly meetings will consider for formative discussion, reflection, and application topics that provide opportunities to become more deeply connected to the reality of the redeeming power of the Blood of Christ, to the life of St. Gaspar, and to the spirituality of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The Pacific Province Formation Team has committed itself to the development of a formation plan that is applicable both to candidates for incorporation and to Companions. Companions will be invited to participate with the Candidates and the incorporated members in a variety of formation events.

Opportunities to meet and interact with incorporated members and candidates are important sources of formation. These meetings can take place during events around some of the feasts that the Province celebrates:

- January 6 The birth date of St. Gaspar
- February 4 The Feast of Blessed Maria de Mattias
- March/April The Paschal mysteries and Resurrection
- May 24 Feast of Mary Help of Christians
- June Month of the Sacred Heart
- July Month of the Precious Blood
- August 15 Founding of the Society of the Precious Blood by St. Gaspar
- Sept. 14 Triumph of the Cross
- October 21 Feast of St. Gaspar
- December 28 Death of St. Gaspar

These informal encounters are rich sources of formation and can lead to a greater commitment to the Pacific Province and its spirituality.

The time designated for Companions to attend the annual assembly provides yet another opportunity to be with incorporated members and candidates. In this venue, not only do Companions have an opportunity for shared prayer and social interaction, but also they are given an opportunity for serious discussion of issues that are important to the Province and to offer their insights and experience when making recommendations.

Of greatest importance in the ongoing formation of Companions is the sharing of a Covenant Liturgy which in many cases is the highlight of the Companion experience in any given year. Such renewal customarily occurs during the annual assembly.

REQUIREMENTS FOR COVENANT RENEWAL

Upon recommendation of the sponsors, when applicable, and the Director of Companions, and approval by the Provincial Director

- First Covenants are accepted.
- After three one-year covenants, Companions in good standing are eligible to ask for a three-year covenant.
- Companions, who no longer live in the area where Companion meetings are available, may continue to renew their covenants.
- Companions may not be eligible to renew their covenants if they have
 - missed a number of meetings over the course of the year without notifying the sponsor or convener of their companion group of the reason for their absence
 - not participated in Companion activities
 - failed to live in accordance with these Companion Guidelines

Loss of membership occurs when a Companion does not make or renew covenant or is dismissed by the companion director.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Director of Companions will appoint a committee of Companions and incorporated members to serve in an advisory capacity.

The committee will

- consist of at least three Companions, including at least one from each Companion group and two incorporated members including the Director of Companions.
- serve for a three year term and may be appointed for a second term, but will not serve more than six consecutive years.
- meet at least twice each year.

The Committee will be responsible for:

- establishing an annual calendar of events for all Companions in the Province.
- conducting, periodically, an evaluation of the Companion program.
- planning the annual Companions' retreat.
- making recommendations to the Director of Companions relative to Companion meetings, to Companion participation at the annual assembly, and to policies and procedures.

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