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WORKING PAPER

Community

Membership

(Working On)

**What it Means to Be a Member of
City of the Lord**

2017



A Response to a Call

We come together as a community of brothers and sisters in the Lord who seek to support one another as disciples and to serve in a common mission. We came into existence in response to a call from the Lord to become a people set apart for His purpose in the world. Each of us is committed to that common call and so we accept it as part of our own personal call.

Our Call as a People - A Community of Disciples on Mission in the Grace and Power of the Holy Spirit

In every age the Lord calls men and women to follow Him, to put aside concern for their own lives and, trusting fully in His grace, to give themselves generously to his service. We have heard the call of God to be receptive and committed to Him, to love Him and His people in this time of challenge and opportunity , when He is pouring out the Holy Spirit as a Tsunami of Grace, to renew, restore and unify his people.

Community

In response to our particular call from God to community, we have freely committed ourselves to others who have been called in this same way. We accept the mission our Lord has entrusted to us as a people and the responsibility to live together as citizens of the kingdom of God¹. We believe the Lord desires to create a culture which reflects the life of Heaven.

- We are a covenanted body that lives a life together in service to God, His people and the world.
- We are brothers and sisters of one another in the Lord.
- We are a charismatic people of praise and worship.
- We share a rhythm of life marked by prayer and celebration.
- With a common mission, shaped by our founding charism, we are making ourselves and our resources available for that mission.

- We have a Catholic identity as a founding member of the Catholic Fraternity of Covenant Communities and Fellowships.

In short, we live out our Christian commitment, bound together by a covenant, a shared life and dedication to a common purpose and mission.

Disciples

By His grace, we have become sons and daughters of God, filled with His Holy Spirit, desiring to live out all our relationships on a daily basis in the power of the Holy Spirit. We have responded to His call to live as a people by faithfulness to our baptismal commitments through personal conversion and dedication to righteousness, growth in holiness and service as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our ideal is to be men and women who can put our hand to the plow without looking back², take up our cross daily³, and serve rather than be served⁴. We worship the Lord together as a fruit of this commitment to the “universal call to holiness”.⁵

Mission

Having heard God’s call to a common mission, we desire to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world and to make Him present in the circumstances of daily life. We desire to proclaim His kingdom and demonstrate His goodness through manifestations of the Holy Spirit as we are directed, for the benefit of the Church.

- We seek to proclaim the Kingdom of God by life and word so that others might come to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- We seek to demonstrate the Kingdom of God by operating in the charismatic gifts, performing the works of Jesus, and even greater works as we are led by the Spirit.⁶
- We seek to bring others into our life to share in our experience of joyful and authentic Christian witness.
- We seek to live as disciples and to represent Jesus in the daily circumstances of life so that we leaven the situations we are in.

- We seek to be a witness to Christian truth and morality in the Church and in society.

In general we seek to make ourselves available to the Lord for the conversion and transformation of the world so that it increasingly reflects His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Unity with All Christians

We desire to live out our lives and mission in unity with all who know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We wish to work in harmony with those who serve Christ in roles of pastoral authority in the churches. By our ecumenical unity and collaboration we want to witness to the unity God intends for all His people.⁷

Entered into by Covenant

When we became members of our community, we entered a relationship that is based upon a covenant commitment. We rely on our brothers and sisters and upon the community to support us in living our common call. In return, we commit our lives to our brothers and sisters in the community so that together, individually and corporately, we might live our call to be a people. The voluntary acceptance of a relationship with mutual responsibilities makes our life together possible. The covenant we commit ourselves to is foundational to our community life.

The Community Covenant

Preamble

We believe that God has called us together, as a people, under the Lordship of His Son, Jesus Christ, to live a life together in the power of the Holy Spirit, in Christian community.⁸

We believe that what we are doing together is not simply a matter of our own desires, but of God's call to a covenant relationship with Him. He is offering to be our God and He is asking that we be a people set apart for Him and for His purposes in the world.⁹

We believe that God wishes to form in us the life of heaven, to be a visible manifestation in the world of that City whose builder and maker is God. We recognize that this endeavor will require the offering of our whole selves to God, that the way we live might not continue to be shaped by this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds in God's truth.¹⁰

Therefore, while acknowledging our primary commitment to our Church, to marriage, or the single state for the sake of the kingdom, we choose to place our lives under the reign of the Lord Jesus, to love and serve our God and one another with our whole lives and to follow His plan wherever it may lead us, as members of the City of the Lord.

Agreements

1. We agree to love, support, serve and honor one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ.¹¹
2. We agree to conduct our relationships with one another in the "fruit of the Holy Spirit", according to God's Word: eager to build one another up in the Lord, quick to forgive and ask forgiveness, to exhort and admonish one another, respectful, upbuilding, and loyal in our speech.¹²
3. We agree to handle personal difficulties and disagreements in the way prescribed by the Community.¹³
4. We agree to set aside a significant amount of time each day for personal prayer, and for reading Scripture as God's revealed Word.¹⁴
5. We agree to be faithful in our commitments to Community gatherings and activities, and to service in the Community, in the Church and in outreach.¹⁵
6. We agree to contribute regularly and faithfully to the financial support of the Community by contributing at least 5% of our gross income to the Community.¹⁶

7. We agree to respect and commit ourselves to the way of life established among us, especially as set forth by the Covenant.¹⁷
8. We agree to receive gratefully the appropriate guidance of those in the Community who are designated to exercise pastoral care for us as individuals, and as groups; especially when major changes in lifestyle, vocation or commitments are involved.¹⁸
9. We agree to recognize and honor the pastoral guidance of the Coordinators and elected Leaders over our life together and to commit ourselves in a special way to support their office, to encourage them, and to pray for them.¹⁹
10. We agree to be held to this Covenant and these Agreements, and to hold one another to them.

Statement of Resolve

We approach the making of this Covenant with seriousness and sober judgment, fully informed of the responsibilities we are assuming in doing so, and of the principles on which our life is based. We take this step freely, without reservation, in personal response to the call of God, and in faith. We understand that making the Covenant does not necessarily imply for everyone a life-long commitment to this Community. Changing circumstances in an individual's life may affect continued active involvement in our life. However, such a change is not merely a personal decision, but would be undertaken only with serious prayer and pastoral guidance.

We recognize at the very heart of what we are doing the call to holiness, and in Christian community, a means God has chosen for our sanctification. We wholeheartedly ask the Lord to use our life together as an instrument of change in every area of our lives so that we might be a holy people, fit for service, reflecting the character of the holy God who dwells in our midst.

In making this Covenant, we confess our weakness and sinfulness, and our constant need for the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to live the life and call we have been given. We wish to present our bodies as a spiritual sacrifice to God, placing our whole lives, our resources, and our future in His hands and at His disposal.²⁰

We regard with reverence and with awe the way He is sovereignly at work among us and stand prepared, as we undertake this commitment, to follow the unfolding plan of God for us as a people wherever it may lead and whatever the consequences in the days ahead.

Statement of Covenant Commitment

In the presence of God, and His People, I _____, openly declare my resolve to bind myself to this Community in true Covenant Love and service, to its Covenant and Agreements, and to the Plan and Purpose for which God has called us together. I am resolved to live for God, and for His People, as a member of the City of the Lord.

Our Spirituality

As disciples of the Lord, we seek to live orthodox Christianity in its fullness. In response to our call and our covenant commitment, we live our Christian lives in a way that expresses our call and vision and makes them effective in our circumstances. We therefore have a spirituality that expresses the life the Lord has called us to live in the world today.

Our Spirituality

Ours is a Spirituality of Discipleship

We have given our lives fully to God and radically follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that all we are and do might be for the glory of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom.

Ours is a Spirituality of Covenant Love

We live our lives together in covenant with our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers and children in gratitude, thinking the best of one another, honoring in our speech, quick to forgive and ask forgiveness, not easily offended, generous, gracious, reliable and kind.²¹

Ours is a Missionary Spirituality

We seek to live our life together in the way that best promotes the advancement of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of all people, to be a city on a hill and a light to the world²², in freedom and joy.

Foundational Characteristics of Our Spirituality

We live our life together centered on God the Father, living under the lordship of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. We do so by praising and worshipping God, by living in obedience to Him, and by serving to extend His Kingdom.

We have our lives formed by the word of God, both in Scripture and Sacred Tradition, so that we believe it and live it in communion with the Catholic Church, guided by her bishops. We seek to live for God as a charismatic people and to worship in a way that is formed by his word and empowered by his Spirit.

We seek to move freely in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit²³ and to grow abundantly in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.²⁴

We seek to live our lives together with Christian character at all times, in all circumstances, to be salt, light and leaven for the world; and we do so faithful to the vocation the Lord has given us, young or old, male or female, married or single, lay or clerical.

We live our life receptive and committed to the Person and culture of the Holy Spirit, particularly in covenant love with a heart for service to God and His people.

Our Way of Life

As disciples of the Lord, we want to live consistently for the Lord's glory and the advancement of His cause. We want to follow Him, not in words alone, but in truth and deed. We therefore have a daily life ideal of what we want to be and how we want to live so that we can fully respond to the call we have.

Our Daily Life Ideal

- We desire to be eager, joyful, faithful Christians who glorify God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.
- We desire to love God through lives of holiness, daily prayer, and devotion to the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- As disciples of Christ, we desire to follow Him faithfully, particularly through trials.
- We desire to actively work to spread the gospel.
- We desire to be responsible and generous stewards of our time, talents and resources.
- We desire to maintain the Christian way of life as practiced through the centuries, as well adapted as possible to modern circumstances. This includes relationships of peace, speech that builds up, faithfulness to commitments and respect for order and authority.
- We desire to be faithful members of our community, ready for service, kind and generous in our relationships, patient and understanding with shortcomings and by walking in humility.

Caring for Relationships

We believe that the life of the community supports strong families and that the family supports the mission of the community. To that end our goals are:

Family relationships

- Follow good order in the marriage relationship:
 - The husband takes responsibility for his wife and children.
 - The wife supports her husband in his role as head of the family.
 - They have regular husband and wife meetings.
- Parents raise children as sons and daughters of God:
 - They seek to maintain appropriate respect, obedience and good order in the home.
 - They instruct their children in Catholic formation and spirituality.
 - They lead their children into the charism of our covenant community, teaching receptivity and commitment to the Holy Spirit in a culture of surrender to God's will.
 - They train their children in the spiritual gifts and in how to hear the voice of God.
 - They encourage their children to discern their State in Life with wise guidance, in order that they will live either in marriage or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom.
 - They seek the input and guidance of community leaders in these areas.

Relationships as a single person

- They relate as brother or sister to members of the opposite sex.
- They approach dating and courtship with pastoral guidance.
- They honor and care for parents appropriately.

Relationships as one who is a consecrated single or single for the Lord

- They live according to the covenant or rule of life he or she has chosen.

Relating to Modern Life

Basic protections

- They use media in a wise and limited way.
- They live a simple lifestyle as appropriate to one's responsibilities in life so as to be more available for service to the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

As we respond to God's call to covenant community, The Lord promises us that He will be present in our midst. This is a life beyond that which we could ever provide for ourselves; that has a character that goes beyond the limits of the human condition. It is a life that can produce the deeds of the saints and has within it "the power of an indestructible life"²⁵. And it is the only real witness we have to give the world – the life and goodness of God present in our midst.

Endnotes

¹ Philippians 2:9; Ephesian 2:19; First Peter 2:11

² Luke 9:62

³ Luke 9:23-27

⁴ Mark 10:45

⁵ ***Lumen Gentium***, Chapter V; Matthew 5:48

⁶ John 14:12

⁷ John 17:21

⁸ Acts 2:42-44

⁹ Exodus 19:5,6; First Peter 2:9-10

¹⁰ Revelations 21:1-3; Romans 12:1-2

¹¹ John 13: 34-35; Romans 12:10; First John 3:14-18; Philippians 2:4

¹² Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:15-16, 29

¹³ Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁴ Matthew 6:6; Romans 15:4

¹⁵ Hebrews 10:23-25

¹⁶ Second Chronicles 31:5-10; Acts 4:32-34

¹⁷ First Corinthians 14:26,33

¹⁸ Hebrews 13:17-18

¹⁹ First Thessalonians 5:12-13

²⁰ Romans 12:1-2

²¹ Romans 12

²² Isaiah 60

²³ First Corinthians 12:7-11

²⁴ Galatians 5:22-25

²⁵ Hebrews 7:16; *Covenant Love in Community Life*