

THE ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF
THE SISTERS OF HOLY CROSS

1990-9

Prepared for the Conference on the
History of the Congregations of Holy Cross
in the United States

June 15 - 17, 1990
New Orleans, Louisiana

by

Sister Doris Ouellette, C.S.C.

and

Jan Rondeau, Associate

HOLY CROSS HISTORY CONFERENCE
New Orleans, LA
June 16 - 17, 1990

HISTORICAL ORIGINS

Presented By: Sr. Doris Ouellette, CSC
Sacred Heart Province
Jan. Rondeau, Associate
Manchester, New Hampshire

In our Constitutions, the chapter on "Service" states: "The Congregation welcomes as associate members those persons who desire to live out their Christian commitment in the spirit of Holy Cross." (Art. 36.4) This article became the spirit that motivated our endeavors to start an Associate Program within Holy Cross. It is our strong belief that the lay people are called to holiness, that is, to live deeply their Christian life within the reality of a modern world.

Our Mission Statement reads: "Women of the Church, we witness publicly to the prophetic dimension of the People of God and joyfully live and work in mutuality with all our brothers and sisters." Accordingly, in 1982, we invited a group of people whom we felt were already in the wind of the Spirit of Holy Cross and we began to journey with them as we shared Scriptures, Prayer, Liturgy and the Charism of Holy Cross.

We realized that the world's materialistic values unnoticeably change one's attitudes. Personal gains and advancement so easily take precedence over the spiritual world. In this program, we have witnessed that these pilgrim people have enflashed the true meaning of their baptismal vows and thus find in Christ

a source of strength, hope and encouragement to live their Christian life in a deeper fashion.

As the journey continues, it becomes obvious that their lives have taken on a more purposeful meaning, and that their daily living and tasks are now perceived as a ministry, that is, a service performed for love and the welfare of others. Their role as members of the Mystical Body becomes clearer and more significant, thus giving a greater spiritual impetus to their daily living.

Simultaneously with the development of this modality of membership developed another one which we termed "Praying Members", the emphasis being entirely focused on prayer. This was offered to persons who could not for some reason or another, follow the total program. Yet they wanted to be affiliated to Holy Cross, so promised to pray for the entire community: priests, brothers, sisters, and associates, and so forth. To deepen the spirit of unity and to give these members a sense of belonging, each prayer member is given a Sr. of Holy Cross as a prayer partner.

As the Program continues, hopefully, new phases will develop; such as live-in situations, that is living with the sisters and the possibility of working with the sisters at home or abroad in our foreign missions. It is also a great hope that someday

these Associates will form base-Christian Communities within the Church. These would consist of men and women witnessing the Gospel values in their life-style, in their activities, and in their participation in parish activities. Thus, hand in hand, we the People of God, the religious and the Associates, will strive to build the Kingdom of God.

LIVING THE CALL

Presented By: Jan Rondeau, HCA
Sacred Heart Province

As stated by Sr. Doris in her historical overview, the Holy Cross Associate Program was initiated in March of 1982 when the Srs. of Holy Cross extended an invitation to lay persons who desired to live their Christian lives more fully, to become members of their extended family.

After an initial journey of prayer, instruction and guidance, the first group of men and women (15) became Associates of Holy Cross during a commitment ceremony held on October 29, 1983. Each year since that date, other groups have followed bringing the present membership to forty-five with six Candidates preparing for their first commitment. The Associate Program also has one hundred and seventy-two prayer members.

The Associate Members of the Sisters of Holy Cross are men and women who desire to give a concrete expression to the call

they have perceived to live their Christian Faith more deeply. To achieve this goal they commit themselves to live the gospel values in the Spirit of the Congregation of Holy Cross. This commitment is made after completing an orientation period of approximately ten months. Each candidate has a minimum requirement to attend the following before making their first commitment.

Workshops:

1. Belonging to a Foundation (1)
2. Psalms (Office of the Hours) (1)

Lectures:

1. History of the Founder (1)
2. Ministries within Holy Cross (1)
3. Community Structures (1)

Retreats:

1. Weekend Retreat within Holy Cross (1)

Any flexibility in ways of meeting these requirements rests upon the approval of the Director and members of the Council.

Aware of our own calling by the Holy Spirit to live more fully the life of Jesus Christ, we Associate Members of Holy Cross commit ourselves to live out our Christian vocation in the spirit of Fr. Moreau and Holy Cross. In keeping with the Charism of Fr. Moreau and the Srs. of Holy Cross the Associate Members are called to:

- 1) Deepen their Christian life by sharing in the prayer life and spirit of Holy Cross;
- 2) Witness the Gospel values in their daily lives;

5.

- 3) Share with the Congregation the insights gained from living the Gospel values as married or single persons; and
- 4) Share in the apostolic endeavors of Holy Cross and the Church.

While living out this ministry as members of the extended family of the Srs. of Holy Cross, the Associates also maintain their own autonomy. A lay director, Jan Rondeau, HCA, has recently been commissioned to replace the two Srs. of Holy Cross (Sr. Yvette Keroack & Sr. Doris Ouellette) who functioned as co-directors during the initial years. They will continue journeying with the Associates as members of the Council and in the formation of new Candidates. The first council was formed in June of 1983 with six members to assist Sr. Doris and Sr. Yvette in coordinating the smooth functioning of the program. Presently the Director has a seven-member council elected by the membership at large at the annual General Meeting. There is at least one member on the Council representing each area from which Associates come. They also act as Chairpersons for Administrative Committees. The Council meets monthly to: evaluate and update its manual; organize, plan and evaluate programs and functions; guide the Associates as they journey; and to be responsive to their needs and the purposes for which the program originated. Membership is presently made up of men and women from NH, MA and CT who meet monthly in their various localities with annual meetings and retreats held in general assembly in W. Franklin or Manchester, NH. An Associate Newsletter is published every two or three months to keep everyone in touch with each other and which allows

the Council to keep members updated on workshops, meetings, retreats, etc. It is our communication tool that keeps us bonded as we are spread out over such a vast area.

The Associates' manual was written in 1987. It was formulated by the joint efforts of its founding Directors, Sr. Doris and Sr. Yvette and the members who made up the Council in 1986-87. This manual embodies the guidelines that encompasses the format of the entire program such as: Historical Origins; Philosophy; Mission Statement; Organizational Chart; Membership Modalities and their requirements; and the Nature, Composition and Terms of Membership.

Each Associate, or area where a group of Associates is located, has a contact person who is a Sr. of Holy Cross living within that local area. This contact person may attend monthly meetings and annual general meetings and is the person who informs the Associates of prayer, celebrations and the local Community functions that Associates are invited to attend.

In September of 1989 the Associate Program moved into a new phase. A core group of three women opted to live together to: give greater witness to true Christian Community; provide a "home" where other Associates and Srs. of Holy Cross can go for prayer and quiet reflection, private retreats and group retreats; provide a place for Associate meetings; and to offer a quiet haven for prayer for interested people in their local community. This house (St. Theresa House) also provides a room for a spiritual library

that is growing rapidly and a room for the Holy Cross Associate Archives. It is an exciting time for the Associates of Holy Cross and St. Theresa House is providing the stepping stone to our future visions.

FUTURE VISIONS

Presented By: Jan Rondeau, HCA and
Sr. Doris Ouellette, CSC

With the Catholic Church seeing a decrease in religious vocations, the Church must begin recognizing more and more the importance of the laity to continue Christ's work. The Holy Cross Associates are taking seriously Christ's mandate (Jn. 17; vs:17 As you Father have sent me into the world, so I send them into the world) by witnessing the gospel message in their homes, in their work places, in their social gatherings and in the communities in which they live. Apostolic endeavors presently include: visiting and working as volunteer aides with the sick and elderly in nursing homes; working with the poor in soup kitchens; working with minorities in parish centers; giving spirituality and stress management workshops; eucharistic and parish ministries; counseling with victims of abuse and the terminally ill; etc.

From all that has been experienced and lived thus far, we envision St. Theresa House as the door that will lead us on the path to the realization of our dreams and visions and to things

we haven't yet begun to dream or envision. The following are dreams that we believe will soon be a reality:

- 1- Living the gospel more radically among God's people.
- 2- Serving the poor and needy in more concrete ways.
- 3- Serving as a model for base Christian Communities.
- 4- Serving local needs with the hope that it will lead to a desire on the part of the Associates to extend that service to the poor in third world countries.

A deep faith in Divine Providence and a trust in the leadership of the Holy Spirit have been the foundation upon which the Holy Cross Associate Program has been built, upon which it has been nourished and grown and upon which its future rests. Happy are they who dream dreams and are willing to pay the price to make them come true.