

WHAT ARE LAY SPIRITANS?

We are an “inspired laity,” moved by the Holy Spirit to serve the poorest of the poor, those who are vulnerable and excluded from society.

We are men and women, single and married, of all ages and professions who are called to ministry through deep prayer; our relationship with God and Mary, the Mother of Jesus; and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We Believe In:

- Community life which is Christ-centered
- Prayer
- Active apostolic work
- Advocacy for the poor and marginalized
- Ministering to those who others are reluctant to serve
- Mutuality with our professed Spiritan brothers
- Studying the lives of our founders and Libermann’s practical union with God
- Humor, fun and celebration
- Nurturing family life
- Balance of prayer, reflection and outreach

We Dream of:

- Religious and Lay working together out of small Christian Communities.
- Clusters of Lay Spiritans in every region where Spiritans live and work.
- Taking Lay and Professed Spiritans to places where alone we might not go.

Lay Spiritan Spirituality

Lay Spiritans make a commitment to:

- Being present at a deep level with the marginalized
- Sharing materially with those in need locally and globally
- Working locally &/or globally for peace, justice and the integrity of creation
- Participating in inter-religious dialogue
- Living a simple lifestyle.

**WE ARE A
COMMUNITY**

IN TOUCH WITH THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES
refusing to be “stuck in the notions of the past”

WHO TRUSTS IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
and does not offer the least resistance to
where the Spirit’s breath may carry us

OPEN TO AND GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
in sharing its life, mission and spirituality

BROUGHT TOGETHER
through the prompting of the Spirit

**WHO OPTS TO SERVE THE MOST POOR,
VULNERABLE AND EXCLUDED FROM SOCIETY**
enabling them to break out of the cycle of misery

UNITED
in heart and soul

**OF LAY SPIRITAN
ASSOCIATES**

whose interior spirit allows for
openness, simplicity and gentleness with each other
in working together to build God’s reign of
Love, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

Spiritual Practices of Lay Spiritans

Prayer: We each make a commitment to personal prayer every day and to communal prayer when we gather together as a community. We engage in meditation, contemplation and *Lectio Divina*.

Scripture: We reflect on the Word of God every day in solitude, and as a community when we come together.

Spiritual Direction: We seek spiritual direction as individuals.

Apostolic Ministries of Lay Spiritans

Our apostolic ministries emerge out of our prayer life and an understanding of how God is calling us to serve the poorest of the poor in our midst.

Each member is involved in some form of outreach ministry. In choosing a ministry, priority is given to those ministries that particularly reflect the Spiritan Charism such as ministries with people whom others are reluctant to serve, and ministries with those who are the poorest of the poor and who are marginalized within a society or community.

Examples of current Lay Spiritan Ministries include:

- Peasants and school children in rural Haiti (Rich and Daneen Gosser);
- People with disabilities in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda (Anne Marie Hansen)
- War veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress, ex-offenders, men and women experiencing homelessness (Anne Marie Hansen & her OT students)
- School children who are marginalized and underserved (John Hansen);
- College students who are marginalized, international college students and those who feel lonely and depressed (Debbie Zugates); and
- Poor school children and families in rural Louisiana (Judy Stubbs).



Lay Spiritans are also charged with developing new Lay Spiritan Communities. This is done by a designated, experienced Lay Spiritan in conjunction with the new group's designated Priest member.

Apostolic Ministry Development

Some Lay Spiritans join the Congregation with a ministry that fits the Charism of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in service to the poorest of the poor and/or to people and communities where other workers are reluctant to serve. Suggestions for developing one's own ministry include:

- Seriously consider your role in an existing Spiritan ministries.
- Look at the feasibility of developing an outreach//ministry appropriate to your skills and abilities.
- Consider engaging jointly with other Spiritans and Lay Spiritans in new collaborative ministries.

Spiritan Priest member for Lay Spiritan Associate Community

A Spiritan Priest serves as an accompanier for every Lay Spiritan Community. His appointment to the group is a mutual agreement between the Lay Spiritan Community and the Provincial. The priest member is careful not to assume a formal leadership position in the group. His role is as friend, counselor and guide. He will provide sacramental ministry when his priestly services are called for by the Community. In extreme situations, his presence will safeguard the Spiritan integrity of the group.

On-Going Formation

After completing the formation program and requirements to become a Lay Spiritan Associate for a term of 3 or more years, he/she faithfully meets together monthly with other Lay Spiritans. This on-going formation program provides an opportunity to share the fruits of our prayer and apostolic ministry, as well as to support and encourage one another. In addition to these activities we

- Study our Spiritan founders
- Invite Spiritans who are serving locally or visiting from a ministry anywhere throughout the world, to share their life story and their ministry,
- Explore new ministries and
- Discuss ways to invite new inspired laity into the Lay Spiritans

Lay Spiritan Associate Collaboration with Spiritans in the US Province

Lay Spiritans participate in the spiritual life of the local Spiritan community as mutually determined, as well as serve on Congregational Committees.

- Faithfully attend Lay Community gatherings.
- Study and reflect on the history of the Congregation and on contemporary issues.
- Dialogue on new approaches to the Spiritan Way coming out of General Chapters.
- Dialogue on the issues raised in Spiritan publications.
- Understand these are an integral part of our Community gatherings.
- Participate in Spiritan renewal days and informal community sharing
- Attending the Spiritan renewal days, engaging in formal and informal affirming and challenging each other at the community gatherings as part of the on-going positive formative processes.
- Spending time visiting, meeting and reflecting with other Spiritans at home, active and retired, and abroad.
- Lay Spiritans are guided by the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the Provincial and his Council.
- Lay Spiritans each write an annual report for the Provincial Council at least once annually, attend annual retreats, Provincial Chapters and assemblies.

Lay Spiritan Commitment – Three Year Term

Lay Spiritan Associate candidates who have completed a minimum of a two year formation program, a discernment process and have fulfilled other requirements set by the Lay Spiritan Associate leadership team in collaboration with the Provincial and his Council, will be accepted for a three year term. The commitment ceremony takes place during Mass in one of the local Spiritan communities where all are invited to attend. The LS candidate signs a letter of commitment for all to witness.



Lay Spiritan Commitment – Permanent

After the first three-year commitment, a Lay Spiritan Associate candidate may request an additional two- 3-year terms. When the candidate has completed 9 years, he/she may apply for permanent membership. Membership acceptance is a decision made by the Provincial and the Provincial Council in collaboration with the Lay Spiritan Associate leadership team. The permanent commitment ceremony takes place during Mass in one of the local Spiritan communities where all are invited to attend. The LS candidate signs a letter of commitment for all to witness.

“Today we realize that the charism of a religious Congregation is not confined to its professed members but is shared by laypeople, single and married, who feel drawn by the same vision.” Duquesne University

Financial Responsibility

It is anticipated that Lay Spiritans will not be a financial burden on the Congregation. They are expected to provide for their own financial security. A document clearly negating any legal responsibility of Lay Spiritans for the Congregation of the Holy Spirit or the Congregation of the Holy Spirit for any Lay Spiritan will be drawn up and signed by both parties at the time of commitment.

North American Lay Spiritans

Lay Spiritans meet annually with other Lay Spiritans in North America. Currently, there is group of Lay Spiritans in the Province of Canada (Quebec) and in the Trans-Canadian Province. The purpose of these gatherings is to share our lives together as Lay Spiritans, discuss issues of common concern related to justice, peace, integrity of creation and inter-religious dialogue, our ministries, formation and recruitment as well as to have fun together.



Spiritans Around the World

Lay Spiritans of the US province keep in touch with Lay Spiritans in other countries around the

world. For example, Drs. John and Anne Marie Hansen visit Lay Spiritans in various countries in Europe and Africa when they are traveling for work or leisure. Anne Marie Hansen travels to various countries in Africa once or twice a year for research, teaching and service, collaborating with occupational therapists. During her visits, she also spends time with Lay Spiritans listening to their stories, mutually sharing ideas, offering days of reflection and learning from the African Lay Spiritans.

FORMATION PROGRAM AND PROCESS FOR BECOMING A LAY SPIRITAN

The Lay Spiritan membership is open to all Catholics (over age 21) who have completed a prescribed probation period and a two year formation program (see below).

Lay Spiritan, Dr. Anne Marie Hansen, Scholar in Residence at the Center for Spiritan Studies created a two-year Lay Spiritan formation program in collaboration with other Lay Spiritans, Spiritans and theologians. The formation program consists of the following elements:

- Monthly meetings that include
- Prayer
- Reflection the writings of Spiritan founders, Spiritan documents, articles and other important resources
- Small group and large group discussion on the readings/presentations
- Discernment of ministries
- Sharing of one's life journey at this point in time
- An annual retreat
- Invitations to participate in Spiritan activities that are important to the life of the US Province.
- Celebration of feast days and Pentecost with members of the province



For every new Lay Spiritan cohort, the Lay Spiritan Formation Leadership team develops a unique formation program plan according to the needs of the new group, grounded in the Lay Spiritan Formation Program.

Process for Acceptance into the Formation Program

1. Laity who inquire about the Lay Spiritan program or those who are invited to explore the LSA community, are encouraged to attend 2 or 3 monthly on-going formation meetings over a period of 6 – 12 months.
 - The purpose of this time of exploration is for the potential candidate to understand more about LS and to discover if he/she thinks this is a good fit for them.
 - This also gives the Lay Spiritan Formation Team an opportunity to get to know the potential candidate and their readiness for the process.
2. If the Lay Spiritan Formation Leadership Team believes the candidate is a good fit to become a Lay Spiritan including their spirituality, call to ministry/mission with those on the margins and desire for community, then the potential candidate will do the following:

- Interview with the Lay Spiritan Formation Leadership Team
 - Complete a formal written application
 - Write a letter of introduction to the LS formation team and the Provincial and requesting to begin the formation program (with the next cohort). The provincial discusses the candidate's readiness for formation with the LS Formation Team
3. If accepted, the Provincial presents the applicant's request to the Provincial Council.
 4. If the Provincial Council accepts the applicant, the provincial will send an acceptance letter to the applicant.

If the applicant is not accepted, the Provincial will write a letter indicating this decision to the applicant.

Process for becoming a Lay Spiritan Associate

After successfully completing a minimum of a 2-year formation program, attending all sessions and completing all the other requirements, the Lay Spiritan candidate presents a letter of request to the Provincial. In this letter of request the candidate includes the following:

- Describe how they have grown spirituality through the formation program
- Describe how they are living Lay Spiritan spirituality
- Describe their apostolic ministry.



Period of Commitment

The initial commitment is for a period of three years, as is a second and third commitment. After each period of three years, the applicant will follow the same procedure, writing the above described letter to the provincial and the formation director.

- After six years the person will make one more three-year commitment for a total of 9 years.
- After nine years, the candidate may apply for the permanent Lay Spiritan status.

Choosing Lay Spiritan Ministries

Lay Spiritans in formation discern a ministry that fits the Charism of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit such as service to the poorest of the poor and to people where workers are reluctant to serve. Suggestions include...

- Seriously consider your role in existing Spiritan ministries.
- Look at the feasibility of developing an outreach//ministry appropriate to your skills and abilities.
- Consider engaging jointly with other Spiritans and Lay Spiritans in new collaborative ministries.

Contact us to find out more about becoming part of the Spiritan Family.



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