

The Associate Relationship



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Introduction to the Associate Relationship

Welcome and Introductions

Call to Prayer

Leader:

We gather today (tonight) at your invitation, O Provident God.

Response:

Help us to be open and attentive to your calming, healing yet challenging voice in this prayer. (Take turns reading each paragraph out loud slowly)

Believe in your questions, no matter how trifling;
they are the gateway to knowledge, wisdom, and enlightenment.

Believe in your gifts, no matter how small, they are God's Providence to
your world, to enrich it, to ennoble it, to bring it love.

Believe in your past, no matter how painful,
it is a unique book of history, a gospel revelation of God's mercy and faithfulness.

Believe in your yearnings, no matter how subtle,
they are energy, urging you forward in your quest for God.

Believe in your sinlessness, no matter pointed fingers, they are only passing
vestiges of fear reminding you to forgive, to remain rooted in love's reality.

Believe in your vision, no matter the climb,
it is a mountain peak calling you to experience God.

Believe in your ideas, no matter the doubts,
they are seeds, seeking nourishment, sunshine, life-giving water.

Believe in your neighbor, no matter the risk,
she is sent from God to walk with you.

Believe in your God, no matter the mist,
God is strong and trustworthy and cares for you. (By: Joan Metzner, M.M.)

Quiet Reflection on the above prayer.

Shared Response:

What word or phrase in the prayer spoke to you and why?

Reading: (Read all together or choose one person)

"Through the centuries, Providence has been a symbol which speaks to us of the creative activity of God who calls into being, sustains, nourishes, challenges and lures all creation toward its final fulfillment. Providence is not the mystery of a God who plans everything handing it down to creatures. Providence is rather, the name of the God who makes all things possible. It is the mystery of dialogue and relationship in which divine activity and human response are joined." (Marie McCarthy, S. P.)



The Journey begins...

In 2001, Sister Myra Rodgers, then General Superior of the Sisters of Divine Providence, wrote to an inquiry group, "We meet together to begin another leg of the Providence journey begun" in 1851. "It is a graced Providence journey, we call the" Associate inquiry journey. "But it is a journey which will take us on a course that will help define our future as women and men of Providence.

The star of Providence is our guiding light. We walk in the energy and faith of our founder Bishop Ketteler and with the courage and abandon of Mother Marie and our fore-mothers. But let us not fool ourselves, the journey may be arduous at times. The pebbles of business may cause us to limp; the weeds of insecurity and what it means to be an Associate may try to block our path, and our countless questions may leave us winded and struggling for the breath of Spirit. There will be moments along the way when we will want to pitch a tent or stay and build a house, take an easier road or a wider path, or even leave our sister travelers and return home to the ideas and glories of yesteryear. But more often than not, there will be Providence moments when we will know together the peace that comes in the wake of the struggle to follow the signs of hope and be united through the gifts of Providence.

So, let us lace up our walking shoes of courage, leave behind the old baggage of believing I am in charge of what happens in my life and strap on the backpack of trust and providence and firmly commit ourselves to the journey and our companion travelers. Let us take hold of the walking sticks of prayer. Let us resolve today to 'Journey Together as Providence into a Future of Hope.' Now let us begin!"

Mission Statement of the Associates, Marie de la Roche Province

We, as Associates, proclaim to be a part of the International Congregation of Divine Providence. Our participation calls us to live in a spirit of unbounded trust in, and openness to, the Providence of God. We challenge ourselves to an ongoing discovery of the richness of the charism entrusted to us by Mother Marie and Bishop Ketteler. We support each other in our diversity of lifestyles, while we strive to creatively confront the problems and issues of our time. As prophetic witnesses, we respond in compassion, holding all life sacred.

Associate Relationship Symbol

The symbol design represents the earth enclosed in an open trefoil. The trefoil is a symbol for the Triune God we call Providence. God's Providence is made visible through acts of justice and compassion and through an inclusive, hospitable presence. Associates of the Sisters of Divine Providence wear this symbol as a sign of our commitment to God's Providence in our world.



An Associate Is...

Associates are women and men, over 18 years of age, who find a deeper connection with God and with others through their relationship with the Sisters of Divine Providence. Associates choose to share the spiritual, communal and/or ministerial life of the Sisters. They develop, maintain and deepen their relationship with the Community members and participate in activities that further the goals and mission of the Community and Providence spirituality. Associates are a diverse group, varying in lifestyle, occupation, and religious tradition. Some Associates are single, others married, divorced, or widowed.

Associates are invited to participate in:

- Life-giving liturgies and prayer rituals
- The challenging call to social justice
- The presence and action of a Provident God in your life

Associates are invited to share in Community retreats, educational opportunities, social events, and ministries, where feasible. Associates receive relevant Community publications and mailings.

There is a mutual benefit between Associates and Sisters in that both give expression to Divine Providence and give witness to the spirit of Providence within their own lives. Associates are invited to share their gifts with one another and the world.

There is no canonical, financial, or legal obligation on the part of an Associate or the Community. Associates are invited to participate in annual assemblies as observers, but do not participate in the governance of the Community. The Associate is responsible for personal expenses related to travel and participation in Associate and Community programs.

All inquirer-candidates participate in a Spiritual Journey orientation leading to a formal commitment. At the time of formal commitment, these women and men are called Associates. However, in Puerto Rico, these participants are known as la familia de la Providencia (the family of Providence)

The Journey to Become an Associate...

Contact the Director of Associates, who will talk with you about becoming an Associate. Then...

- You will complete an application
- The director and you will mutually choose a companion to accompany you through the journey
- After completing the application, a ten month inquiry journey begins: generally, the orientation sessions consist of information on Providence spirituality and the Community mission, charism, history and ministries.
- In a mutual discernment process, you will be invited to make a formal commitment as an Associate of the Sisters of Divine Providence
- You will be received and blessed in a formal commitment ceremony, at which time all Sisters and Associates renew their commitments and are commissioned to make Providence more visible in the world.
- The initial covenant commitment is for a period of one year, with a renewal period of one to five years.



Associates are invited and encouraged to:

- Participate in the charism and mission of the Sisters of Divine Providence through reading, reflection, prayer, conversation
- Share in Community retreats, educational opportunities, social events, and ministries, where feasible.
- Participate in Congregational events, circles of collaboration, assembly and chapter, which strengthen a sense of mission and community.
- Unite together with sisters through prayer and service
- Meet together with associates and sisters in local faith sharing groups for prayer, reflection, socially and for peace and justice activities
- Respond to the needs of the times with the Congregation by supporting the chapter mandates and the peace and justice focus
- Accept the responsibility to encourage and promote the Associate relationship. Recommend individuals to the director whom they see as being viable inquirer-candidates for Associates
- Discern their willingness to be a companion to an inquirer/candidate and participate in other related components of the relationship as needed
- Keep informed of Congregation news and information through communications and publications
- Be faithful to annually review one's commitment as an Associate

Role of the Companion...

The primary role of the companion is to encourage the inquirer-candidate to share more fully in the mission and spiritual life of the Sisters of Divine Providence through participation, prayer experiences, dialogue and faith sharing.

The companion is asked:

- To accompany and participate with the Associate Inquirer-candidate to all the orientation sessions
- To stay in communication with the inquirer-candidate by getting together, telephone calls or e-mails at least once a month in addition to attending the orientation sessions
- To assist the inquirer-candidate in her/his ongoing discernment about becoming an Associate of the Sisters of Divine Providence
- To participate with the inquirer-candidate in the reception ceremony. The invitation and call to be an Associate of the Sisters of Divine Providence involves a commitment on the part of both the Community and Associates. Sisters are invited and encouraged to:
 - Accept the responsibility to encourage and promote the Associate relationship. Recommend individuals to the director whom they see as being viable inquirer-candidates for Associates
 - Discern their willingness to be a companion to an inquirer-candidate and participate in other related components of the relationship as needed
 - Convey to the Associates the mission and charism of the Sisters of Divine Providence
 - Unite together with Associates through prayer and service
 - Invite Associates to participate with them in local community celebrations, social gatherings, enrichment programs and retreats
 - Welcome and get acquainted with Associates when they are present for gatherings and celebrations
 - Keep informed of Associate news and information through communications, website and newsletter



Associate Leadership

There are various types of leadership in each local area. Some of these include Local Coordinators, secretary, treasurer, assistant resource person, photographer, program planner. Leadership qualities in Associates are recognized and fostered as Associates continue in the relationship.

Director of Associates

The Provincial Leadership Team appoints a Director of Associates for the entire Province for a term of two years, with a renewable term of two years. The Director reports directly to the Provincial Leadership Team. The Marie de la Roche Province consists of four geographic areas: Kingston, Massachusetts; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Puerto Rico and St. Louis, Missouri. The Director is responsible to promote the mission and vision of the Associate relationship in the Province.

Local Coordinators

There are two Local Coordinators in each geographic area. Local Coordinators, usually a lay Associate and a Sister, work with other volunteers coordinating on-going activities, events, orientation sessions, maintaining communications with local Associates and promotes relationships with Sisters and Associates. Lay Local Coordinators serve a two year term with a renewable term of two years. Sisters are appointed by the Provincial Leadership Team.

Advisory Circle

The Director of Associates, Local Coordinators and the Council Liaison form an Advisory Circle. Members of the Advisory Circle gather for a meeting at least annually. Quarterly meetings are by conference call. Their purpose is to explore ways to enhance and unify the Associate relationship throughout the Province.

Providence Award

Each year at the annual Assembly a Providence Award is presented to an Associate who, in her/his life and ministry, makes Providence visible in our world.

The criteria are:

- manifests trust in Providence/Providence spirituality
- lives with a spirit of joy, hospitality and hopefulness
- demonstrates justice by word and service to those in need

Nominations are gathered from all the geographic areas and the Director of Associates and Sisters who are Local Coordinators, by way of evaluation of each nominee, select the Associate who will receive the award. The award is not granted during the year in which a Provincial Chapter is held.

PowerPoint about the Sisters of Divine Providence

Copies of the slides are included at the end of this material.

Description of the Inquiry Process

Questions and Answers

Closing Blessing: May God bless all the days of your life and be ever with you to guide and protect you. -- Mother Marie

