



Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia

Missioning Booklet



We Live And Work
So That All People May Be United
With God And With One Another

(Constitutions 16)

March 2013



SISTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH

MISSIONING PROCESS

Our mission as Sisters of Saint Joseph flows from the purpose for which our Congregation exists. We live and work so that all people may be united with God and with one another. (Constitutions 16)

Our mission calls us to respond in love to the needs of our dear neighbor wherever we are and “**to make Christ visible to the world...**” (Constitutions 24) Our ministries, volunteer, part- time or full- time, offer us myriad opportunities to live out the mission of Jesus in diverse places, responding to many different needs.

Our ministry flows directly from our mission of unity. We respond by embracing all the works of mercy that tend to the spiritual and temporal needs of our dear neighbor. Given the present reality of our personnel and financial resources, we need to make ministry choices that evidence a corporate sense of identity and reflect responsible stewardship.

The demands of ministry, age, health, family needs and other circumstances can affect a sister’s ability and desire to continue in her present ministry or residence. Situations at a work site can change as well. Responsibilities in a role description can become more difficult to fulfill or less challenging. Funding may no longer be available or parishes close.

When a sister realizes that she might be called to consider a new residence, a new ministry, or some adjustment to her present ministry responsibilities, she enters into the congregational Missioning Process. Discernment is integral to our Missioning Process. The heart of the Missioning Process is the ongoing discerning spirit of the Sister of Saint Joseph who realizes that she is called, consecrated and sent forth to continue the mission of Jesus. This discernment is made in light of personal and congregational needs and the needs of the dear neighbor.



DISCERNMENT DURING THE MISSIONING PROCESS

PERSONAL REFLECTION PRIOR TO CONTACTING CONGREGATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Discernment is at the heart of the Missioning Process and takes place throughout it. Key moments include the initial decision or necessity to be newly missioned as well as decisions regarding a specific ministry and/or a specific local community. For us, as Sisters of Saint Joseph, discernment throughout the Missioning Process is mutual, involving dialogue between the individual sister and a Congregational Representative. Together we seek to make our decisions in the context of faith, flowing from our desire to know what is of God for us. A spiritual director can be helpful in moving through a discernment process.

The following may help in your discernment prior to contacting the Area Delegate or Coordinator of Ministry:

In prayer, recall your faith journey.

- Recall those moments in your life when you recognized God's presence with you.
- Relive past experiences of decision-making that seemed to be truly of God for you.
- Remember the sense of rightness, the sense of God's presence, the sense of peace.

Now bring those moments into the present as you begin to prayerfully reflect on the reasons and circumstances of your life leading you to consider being newly missioned.

- Have you come to a time in your life when you need to reduce ministry responsibilities? To move to part-time? To move to a volunteer ministry? To consider becoming a resident of Saint Joseph Villa?
- Are you being called to serve in a new way and/or to live in a new local community?
- How would being newly missioned challenge you to live our mission of unity?
- Do you sense any lack of freedom within you? What is it? Can you identify the reason behind this unfreedom?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being newly missioned?
- Where do you feel God is leading you?
- Does this tentative decision seem to fit who you are and who you are called to be as a Sister of Saint Joseph?

If, as a result of this discernment, you feel that you are being called toward a movement in your life, contact the appropriate Area Delegate or Coordinator of Ministry for an appointment.



NEW MINISTRY

When Considering a Change of Ministry...

A sister considering or needing a new ministry:

- Speaks with the Coordinator of Ministry to discuss her desire to seek a new ministry and her reasons for doing so.
- Considers and discusses the impact of her decision around housing, finances and transportation.
- Reviews ministry possibilities by checking the Congregational website and other websites such as CatholicJobs.com and those of the dioceses where she hopes to minister.
- Arranges appropriate interviews and notifies the Coordinator of upcoming interview dates.
- Maintains contact with the Coordinator weekly to receive support until the Missioning Process is complete.
- Contacts the Coordinator of Ministry before accepting a position.

When Adjusting Present Ministry Role Description...

A sister who desires to remain at her present ministry site, but wishes to move, or is asked by her employer to move to a different position and/or part-time or volunteer status:

- Speaks with the Coordinator of Ministry about her desire to adjust her ministry **before speaking with her employer.**
- Considers and discusses the impact of her decision around housing, finances and transportation.
- Maintains contact with the Coordinator on a regular basis until the Missioning Process is complete.

AFTER CONSULTATION WITH A CONGREGATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

When you are ready to make a decision regarding a specific ministry, these questions may help to focus your discernment:

- How will this ministry enable you to live out our mission “live and work so that all people will be united with God and with one another”?
- Does this ministry meet, as far as possible, your needs as well as the needs of our Congregation, Church and world?
- Will choosing this ministry help you “live out our mission of unity through prayer, community life and ministry”?

If your desired ministry did not materialize, have you considered how else your gifts and talents could be used?



NEW RESIDENCE

We live in community in a house of our Congregation to be a sign of Christian unity and to be a creative and healing presence in our world. (Constitutions 47) We invest ourselves in congregational life and local community life as a vital source of transformation and expression of our mission. (Strategic Plan 2008)

There are times when sisters feel called to move to a new residence. There are also times when our housing situations are impacted by diocesan pastoral planning decisions.

Values and Assumptions

The following values and assumptions flow from the spirit of our Constitutions and our Chapter values:

- Community living is a primary value of our Congregational life.
- Each sister considers the Congregational common good in all decision-making.
- Each Sister of Saint Joseph is valued.
- Each sister is welcomed to local community life.
- Each sister's commitment to and participation in community life is essential.
- Each sister is responsible for her own personal growth and for her contribution to the harmony and vitality of her local community.
- Fostering right relationships and open communication is integral to our mission of unity.

These values and assumptions are the foundation for our discernment and conversations about a new residence. We know that such local community conversations are about sharing our values and hopes, as well as some practical, pertinent details of our lives. Therefore, these conversations are not about a local community's receiving or not receiving one of our sisters, though there may be special circumstances for the sister or for the local community that may require further consideration.



Steps Leading to a Conversation Regarding New Residence

When Seeking a New Residence...

Individual Sister

A sister who is considering moving to a new residence or who needs to move because of other circumstances does the following:

- Speaks to the Area Delegate to discuss her reasons for seeking a new local community.
- The Area Delegate identifies communities where there is an opening for an additional sister.
- Together the sister and the Area Delegate discern potential communities that might meet the sister's needs.
- The Area Delegate contacts the house(s) to alert them that a sister will be calling for a conversation.
- The sister arranges a mutually agreeable time for a visit and conversation.
- The sister prepares for and engages in this conversation using the process that follows on Page Six.

Local Community

The local community does the following:

- Responds to a sister's request by arranging a mutually agreeable time for a visit and conversation:
 - Provides adequate time and a welcoming environment for the conversation.
 - Prepares for and engages in this conversation using the process that follows on Page Seven.
 - Discusses a time line for next steps in the process.
- As a courtesy, shares with the pastor or appropriate person that a sister is considering joining the local community.

When Considering Becoming a Resident at Saint Joseph Villa...

A sister who is considering becoming a resident at Saint Joseph Villa:

- Speaks with the Area Delegate about her desire.
- Receives guidance about the specific steps of the process.



Personal Preparation for New Residence Conversation

Reflect on the following questions in the context of who we are called to be as Sisters of Saint Joseph:

- What are the circumstances of my life that are leading me to consider joining this particular local community?
- What is the State of my Heart at this time?
- What value does community life hold for me at this time?
- What are my hopes and desires for sharing life in this particular local community?
 - How do I expect these hopes and desires to be realized?
- What are some of my assumptions/expectations regarding local governance?
- What are the gifts that I bring to local community living?
 - What can the local community expect of me?
 - What do I need at this time from a new local community?
- What are the limitations or “growing edges” within me that I need to work on at this time for the sake of shared life?
- How well do I balance or integrate my individual needs with the needs of shared life?
- What are some of my expectations or assumptions regarding daily life together?
 - *Communal Prayer: frequency and forms * Sharing the State of the Heart/Order of the House * Meals * Meetings * Celebrations *Leisure * Hospitality * Outreach * Finances
 - *Means of communicating information and making decisions
 - *House responsibilities * Quality of presence * Television *Car *Computer *Pets
- Do I have any specific concerns or needs that could affect shared life?



Preparation by a Local Community for Conversation

It would be ideal if members of the local community could come together as a group to discuss the following questions. Often this is not possible because of time constraints. In this case, the preparation is done individually.

Reflect on the following questions in the context of who we are called to be as Sisters of Saint Joseph:
(Refer to *Values and Assumptions* on page four)

- How do I/we create an atmosphere of trust?
- What level of relationship do I/we expect or desire in our local community?
- Do I/we share the state of our hearts with one another?
 - If so, how has this affected growth in our local community?
 - If not, what prevents me/us?
- Recognizing that we belong to one another, what are some concrete ways I/we:
 - **Encourage one another to address with love and courage those issues which hinder our unity. (Constitutions 50)**
- What are some of my/our expectations or assumptions regarding daily life together?
 - *Communal Prayer: frequency and forms * Sharing the State of the Heart/Order of the House *Meals * Meetings *Celebrations *Leisure * Hospitality * Outreach * Finances
 - *Means of communicating information and making decisions
 - *House responsibilities *Quality of presence * Television *Car *Computer *Pets
- What are some of my/our assumptions or expectations regarding local governance?
- How are we growing together as a local community?
- What aspects of our life together are life-giving?
- In light of the above, how does our Statement of Intent express our life together?
- Is my heart/are our hearts open to another person sharing life with us, recognizing this will call me/us to new beginnings and flexibility?
- How open are we to welcoming a new sister into this local community? What personal adjustments will I have to make?



New Residence Conversation

In a spirit of hospitality, the conversation takes place in a setting that invites openness and comfort. As far as possible, it is important that all the members of a local community be present for the conversation with the sister in the missioning process.

The following may be helpful:

- Use the results of the individual and local community preparations as a beginning for conversation together
 - Present Statement of Intent
- Ask any questions that will give a sense of
 - Shared values and their concrete expression
 - Individual and/or local community issues that may affect shared life.
- Provide a few moments of quiet to reflect on any feelings surfacing within one's heart
 - Are there any other questions to be asked or thoughts to be shared?

DISCERNMENT FOLLOWING THE CONVERSATION

Individual Sister

These questions may help the sister seeking a new local community to focus her discernment:

- How will this local community enable me to “live and work so that all people will be united with God and with one another”?
- Does this local community meet, as far as possible, my needs, such as companionship and availability of transportation for family and social events as well as for ministry opportunities, etc?
- Does it also meet the needs of our Congregation, Church and world?
- Will choosing this local community help me “live out our mission of unity through prayer, community life and ministry”?

Local Community

The local community processes the conversation experience together and shares their feedback with their Area Delegate.



Next Steps

Within a mutually agreeable timeframe:

- The individual sister processes and continues to discern her experience and contacts her Area Delegate.
- The local community processes its experience and contacts their Area Delegate.
- The individual sister and her Area Delegate consider the feedback and continue the conversation until clarity is achieved.
- The individual sister contacts her future residence and any other local community with whom she has spoken to communicate the results of her discernment.

Area Delegate

The Area Delegate receives the feedback from both the sister and the local community and makes the necessary contacts. The Area Delegate notifies the pastor or appropriate person when a decision is made that a sister will be joining the local community.

FORMAL CONFIRMATION OF MISSIONING

As a formal confirmation of missioning, a sister receives a letter from the Congregational President. The Congregation is informed of a sister's missioning through the Missioning Updates published in the Congregational mailing.

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