

Lay Claretian Movement
Study Guide #11

HOW TO START
A LAY CLARETIAN GROUP

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English Translation
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PRESENTATION

The aim of this paper is to help to start a Lay Claretian group. These pages are a result of concrete experiences in forming a new groups of LAY CLARETIANS.

Yolanda Ibañez, who coordinated the process of formation and accompanied the groups in formation, here describes her experience and the path she followed with the groups. Today that process of initial formation is referred to as the "process of discernment." The discernment takes place in the person that is learning about the Lay Claretians. That individual must decide if the Lay Claretian Movement is his or her vocation. It is also a process of discernment for the leadership of the group involved. The group has to make a decision regarding the vocation of the person asking entrance into the movement.

After an introductory clarification of what a Lay Claretian, a Lay Claretian group and the Lay Claretian Movement are, Yolanda goes on to present the criteria and conditions that must be borne in mind when the time comes to form a new group, and the steps that have to be taken during the stage of initiation.

The General Secretariat for Lay Claretians, believes that this booklet might be helpful to those who want to form a Lay Claretian group. It is hoped that it will be helpful to have the movement grow.

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1. INITIAL CLARIFICATIONS

Before suggesting how one might start a Lay Claretian group, let us briefly review who are Lay Claretians and what is the Lay Claretian Movement. This is essential for those who desire to promote the movement and encourage individuals to see this lay vocation as an option. Even though these concepts might be clearly understood, generally speaking, forming a Lay Claretian group is not an easy task.

1.1. What is a Lay Claretian?

The Lay Claretian Sourcebook, in a rather condensed way, first presents the essential elements that describe a Lay Claretian. These elements are then explained at greater length throughout the rest of the Sourcebook.

The Sourcebook states, "Lay Claretians are Christians who are striving to make our own the mission of Jesus in the world, living the demands of the Kingdom, and, always within the framework of our lay identity, offering a service of evangelization in the Church, according to the charism and spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret." (Sourcebook n.1)

In other words, we can say the Lay Claretians are Christians who, moved by the urgency of the Gospel and trusting in the Word of Jesus want to spend their lives to better the world and serve the Church, in a service of missionary evangelization according to the life-experience and charism of Saint Anthony Mary Claret.

This specific vocation has some essential elements. In it, the missionary and lay dimensions stand out, and there is a strong accent on evangelization. "The Lord has called us to be evangelizers, to proclaim and spread the Kingdom of God among people by means of the word in all its forms, especially by our witness and transforming action in the world, thus bringing the Good News to all human environments and transforming humanity from within."

As laypersons, Lay Claretians have a distinctive way of being Church and of serving the ecclesial community. "We live a life of full involvement in the world" (S. n.11)

The Lay Claretian mission has certain concrete characteristics marked by a number of options in principle which inspire a commitment to the Church "to carry our God's plan of salvation." (S, n.32).

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They are evangelizers and, as such, "feel urgently called to collaborate in pastoral programs for youth, marriage and the family, in the manifold forms of catechesis and the catechumenate, in the mass media, in the promotion of the laity, in the formation of new evangelizers, and in the development of all the possibilities afforded us by lay ministries" (S, n.25).

As laypersons, we "find a very specific field of action in the Christian animation of temporal realities" (S, n.22) and "action to transform the world" (5., n.23).

The Lay Claretians share in the charism of Claret and find, in his style of missionary life and in his spirituality, the expression of their own special way of seeing Christ and of laboring for the Kingdom of God.

Through the Holy Spirit, they have gratuitously received this concrete charism, which empowers and destines them to a special service in the Church. It is a community charism, because it has been given to many persons, in order that they may all jointly undertake the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God by cooperating in carrying out the mission of the Church.

In this perspective, it can readily be understood that no one is a Lay Claretian simply because he or she wants to be one. No one can be a Lay Claretian, unless they have received this gift and call, and have discerned that this is the plan that God wants them to undertake. And finally, have generously made the personal decision to make it their own life-plan.

Being a Lay Claretian is something that qualifies all that one is; it is a genuinely Christian element that shapes our way of being followers of Jesus.

1.2. What is a Lay Claretian group or community?

This theme is addressed at length in Study Guide #18, "The Growth and Maturation of the Lay Claretian Group." But it will be useful to describe along general lines just what a Lay Claretian group or small community is, and what its mission is.

Why do we say group or community? The Sourcebook leaves it up to each group to organize or structure itself in keeping with its own characteristics and demands. In the Sourcebook we find the following description: "Within the pluralism that is proper of a charismatic communion, Lay Claretian groups are generally small ecclesial communities, which may even have all things in common, like the early Christian communities. We achieve the community dimension of our charism not only within our own group, but also in our relationships with the local Church and in dialogue with people of other confessions." (S. nn. 17-18)

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Thus it does not assign any one concrete formula for organizing a group or community within which all enjoy the same charism. Each group is free to choose the form it thinks most fitting for its needs.

Whatever it is called, or whatever the demands the group agrees upon, it is clear that all Lay Claretians share a common charism. It is their common meeting point and the bond of union that brings them together and makes them a community. This charism is not only their bond of communion, but also the dynamic principle that creates relationships between members of the group and unites them in carrying out their mission.

The Sourcebook further states, "The gift we have received and the experience of it which we share, are bonds of a communion. This charismatic communion, which is above all a grace, which we express and develop in friendship, mutual help, teamwork, assemblies, days of reflection, review and prayer, in other encounters planned by the community, and above all in the Eucharist." (S. n.17) The Eucharist is the encounter in which fraternity and community are lived, celebrated and developed to the maximum.

Lay Claretians groups or communities, by the very fact that they share the same gift for mission, have certain concrete characteristics and certain demands for communion that will never allow them to be simply groups of friendship, of prayer or of work. **They must be evangelizing communities, images of the model of Church that they hope to bring about.** They are committed to assume all those responsibilities that are proper to laypersons. These are the following:

- Communities that are not self-centered, but open and sensitive to the world and to society with its problems;
- Communities in which the Word of God holds a privileged place. They listen to that Word, not only as a call to personal inner conversion, but also as a call to transform society;
- Communities which discern, in the light of the Gospel and of the Sourcebook, the personal and group outlook which, as Claretians, they must promote;
- Communities that encourage the personal formation of their members, thus preparing them to offer better service to the Kingdom of God and the Church through the transformation of the world, and enabling them to multiply agents of evangelization.

1.3. What is the Lay Claretian Movement?

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If we run through history, we find that there have been three stages and three different titles in the history of the reorganization of the Lay Claretian Movement: 1) Collaborators (1938-1971), 2) Associates (1972-1979) and 3) Lay Claretians (1979-....).

This is not just a case of changing names to designate the same reality. The reality itself has changed. However, neither does it indicate a total break, that is, three diverse realities corresponding to three diverse names. Rather, it is a matter of a progressive development of the Lay Claretian charism and of its institutionalization, a development which has been directed by two great forces:

- 1) Claret's prophetic insight into the mission of the laity, and
- 2) the Church's growing awareness, over the years, of the mission of the laity in the Church.

Since the World Congress of Lay Claretians In Villa de Leyva (Columbia), where the Sourcebook was approved, efforts have been concentrated on trying to bring that Sourcebook to life and to achieve the maturity needed in order to have the Lay Claretians move ahead on their own power. Thus the members of the Movement would walk alongside those other Claretian groups that history has already purified, strengthened and in some way consecrated" (Message of the 19th Gen. Chapter of the CMFs to the Lay Claretians, n.6).

The Movement now exists on worldwide and regional levels, with an organization and its own necessary voice. There is no desire to overload the Movement with structures and organization. It should be very agile. All that is desired is to have the structures that are necessary in order to coordinate, help and unite efforts in its commitments for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

2. FUNDAMENTAL CRITERIA

It is not easy to offer guidelines or working plans for starting and forming new Lay Claretian groups, especially when we consider the very different environments in which they arise.

2.1. Respecting Pluralism

The Lay Claretian Movement is pluralistic. It can accommodate many kinds of groupings as long as the group's project and lifestyle remain within the broad limits set by the Sourcebook.

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This pluralism of which we speak brings a great richness to the Movement. It allows persons to express their distinctive vocation in many different forms. In the Lay Claretian Movement there are certain things that fit in and do not have a place in other forms of Claretian life styles. (Message, n. 11)

To see to it that this richness is always respected, is the work of all. Concretely, when it comes time to create new groups, we should not stick to the image of other groups we know, however well they function, if they are not adjusted to our own reality. Each group has its own characteristics and form, and we must learn how to view and respect them at all times.

2.2. Assimilating the Historical Development of the Movement

As said above, the Lay Claretian Movement has passed through different stages in its development. For a long time it viewed itself as united to the Congregation of Missionaries, as a work of the Congregation and in total dependence on it.

From 1979 on, the Congregation has come to a clearer awareness of the insights of Claret and of the evolution of the laity in the Church. It now acknowledges the Lay Claretians to be a work of Claret and not of the Congregation. It endeavors to change the bonds of dependency into bonds of fraternity. Moreover, it has greatly helped the Movement to come of age, at all times showing respect for the Lay Claretian vocation.

It is necessary for promoters of a group to have assimilated this evolution of the Movement. Otherwise, when the time comes to put their plans into effect, they might end up creating a group of the past. We have to be consistent with reality, not only in words but also in action.

We cannot adulterate the charismatic nature of the movement, or its lay and evangelizing identity, by creating or giving the name of Lay Claretians to groups of benefactors, collaborators or friends who do not offer us their services or do not share some work with the Lay Claretians.

Logically, too, the knowledge of our evolution should also be assimilated by those religious who foster the creation of new Lay Claretian groups. Only in this way will the Movement come into its maturity and, as such, will acquire more power on its own, because its base will be solid. In this way too, there will be a greater communion with the Congregation and with other branches of the Claretian family. It will put into effect the co-responsibility that should exist and that will help LC's to realize the mission to which they have been called.

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2.3. Taking the Measure of our Strengths

To start a Lay Claretian group does not consist in calling together a group of well-selected persons, giving them a minimum of information, getting some materials for them, and then leaving them to get organized on their own. Rather, it involves, besides getting them started, a period of accompanying them, rather closely at first, and then gradually, as the group gathers enough maturity, letting them walk on their own.

Consequently, the person or persons who promote a group must measure their strengths and possibilities, in order to be able to offer all the effective help that the new group may need. This help will not be just on the level of theoretical knowledge, but also and especially on the practical level of real life. It will be a help marked by active and committed presence to the group. One that will transmit joy and enthusiasm to help them overcome the difficulties that will arise during the time that they are taking their first steps.

The religious who accompanies a group, even if it be only at its beginnings, must also carefully measure his or her own talents. This type of fraternal accompaniment cannot be done from outside, but from inside the group, which demands active participation in the struggles, options and situations of the group and of the Lay Claretian Movement (Study Guide #7, The Religious Assessor in the Lay Claretian Movement).

2.4. The Danger of Going Too Fast

Even if, before starting the group, a plan is made with time lines and specific planned activities, the rhythm of the group should be respected. The pace should not be forced or accelerated. The group should enjoy its freedom.

In the hurry and enthusiasm of starting a new group, all of us --laity as well as religious - often throw ourselves into the project, and are tempted to quickly enroll friends who have good qualities, but may lack a Claretian vocation.

At other times there may be the temptation to convert existing groups with other goals and objectives into Lay Claretian groups by merely pasting the Lay Claretian label on them. What is essential is that these groups first go through a serious and reflective process of discernment to see if they have a lay Claretian vocation. If they do, then to move toward a deliberate planned transformation of the group.

If we fail to do this, we may harm both individual persons and the Lay Claretian Movement as such.

2.5. Don't Be Too Eager to Proselytize

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Through the grace of Baptism all Christians have received special gifts which determine their vocation and mission in the Church. We can help anyone to discern their own vocation, but we cannot transmit their vocation to them.

It would be a grave error to be carried away by a proselytizing eagerness to convince our friends and acquaintances that they have a Lay Claretian vocation and then enroll them, without further ado, in a Lay Claretian group.

There may be many laypersons who are friends of ours and may even work alongside us and share many points of view in common with us, but that doesn't mean that they have the same vocation we have. One must learn always to respect the specific vocation of another person, and help them, to the best of our ability, to develop their vocation fully.

There is a subtle and dangerous temptation for the Movement to want to incorporate persons without a clearly defined vocation, whether lay or Claretian. At the same time, this is a danger for the persons themselves, since they may be limiting possibilities of discovering and developing the specific plan God has in mind for them.

2.6. Don't Create Groups Just for Activities

In principle, Lay Claretian groups should not be started just with the one aim of carrying out some determined activities or projects, however necessary these may be. The group is born of the union of several people who discover that they have the same charism and decide to live it in common. The same persons are the ones who, after going through a process of discernment, decide to undertake those evangelizing activities which best meet the demands of their mission.

It should be borne in mind, of course, that it is not necessary for the whole group to carry out the same activity, since each of its members have different gifts and qualities and live in different situations.

Consequently, it should be remembered that Lay Claretian groups be created with the objective of developing some concrete project or service. It is not a service or concrete activities that create a group. The most these activities can do is to motivate people to join forces. What creates the group is a vocation from God, and this vocation is always a convocation for a common mission.

2.7. Starting a New Group is the Work of All

Starting a new Lay Claretian group is an important task and one involving a great deal of responsibility. It means trying to follow the action of God who keeps calling people to

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continue the mission that He entrusted to Claret in His Church. This is the reason why one person alone, whether a religious or layperson, cannot be the only one involved in this enterprise.

a) in the case of laypersons, the normal thing is for the members of a group or a region to detect the need and suitability of starting a new group.

In keeping with their talents and possibilities they may opt to do this in various ways. The following are three possibilities:

- When a whole group that makes the commitment - In this case its members will draw up a detailed program with different functions and activities. These tasks will be distributed and all work together with periodic revision and evaluation.

- When the group entrusts the task to some of its members - In this case persons are designated and "sent" to start a new group. This does not exempt the rest of the group from their responsibility as a group, even though the work falls mainly on the shoulders of those who were appointed. The latter should always be able to count on the help and support of the whole group that sent them.

- When a single Lay Claretian would try to get a group started - This scenario is probably the most unlikely but possible method if the process is positive and thorough. This could be successful. However what is important is that the group to which the Lay Claretian belongs approves the project. In this way the person who makes the attempt to initiate a group has the unconditional support and trust of the group. At any rate, this is by no means the most recommended procedure and it should be restricted to very concrete circumstances which would be difficult to explain at this point.

b) In the case of religious the same thing can be said, with a few nuances, when they are the ones who are trying to create new groups.

The ideal situation would arise if the religious community were sensitized as to the importance of promoting the Lay Claretians and, after carefully analyzing the realities involved, would like to promote a group.

A difficulty arises when a particular religious who is sensitive to and in harmony with the Lay Claretian Movement, and is disposed to work for it, does not have the acceptance and support of his community. In fact, if the community regards this work as a merely individual action and does not offer the needed support, it will be the Lay Claretian group that suffers the consequences. It will not receive the welcome it needs in order to grow and mature.

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Usually in these circumstances when the religious in question is sent to another assignment, the group will either dissolve or be totally unattended.

As we can see, the starting of a new group must be a conjoint effort, carried out "in" the group, working in a coordinated fashion, trying to avoid individual antagonisms which could harm the persons involved or the task itself.

At the same time it is important the religious work "for the group," because the effort to give life to a new group may unduly tie the religious to it.

Having this work in common, sharing the same dreams and concerns, opening oneself to the same, somewhat unknown, reality as that of the group, and entering into contact with other persons, will allow the religious to live a highly enriching experience, which in turn will help the group itself to grow deeper in its being and to mature as such.

Starting a new Lay Claretian group is a task which we have to undertake and carry out responsibly with the great care so that the new groups are formed in depth, thus enriching the Movement, and not just keeping it alive.

3. SOME CONDITIONS AND PRIOR STEPS

The creation of new Lay Claretian groups requires some conditions and prior steps.

3.1. The Witness of a Claretian life

The first condition is that, both on the personal and the group level, we give a clear witness to a Claretian missionary life by being communities that are evangelized and evangelizing.

- If people can't see that we are really committed to the cause of the Kingdom of God,
- if they can't see that each Lay Claretian -- according to his or her state in life -- is actively collaborating to plant love, justice, and peace in this world,
- if they can't see that our spiritual life is serious and deep and that prayer has a privileged place in it,
- they can't see that we are striving to be consistent with the Gospel we proclaim,

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then what frame of reference can they have in order to live their vocation that we are pointing out to them? And what are we offering to attract them?

3.2. Making St. Claret Known

Another required step to forming a Lay Claretian group is to make Claret known, to present his person, his charism and his mission, his sensitivity and his efforts to empower lay evangelizers.

If we are, and feel that we are, Claretians, we should take advantage of all possible occasions to make Claret known. If we really think about it, we will see that there are many moments when we could do so. Many times we let opportunities pass us by.

Lay Claretians have to take this to heart and overcome any uncomfortable feeling they may have when talking about Claret and his ministry. Special occasions have to be created to do this. In every circumstance there is a way and a special moment when this can be done in a fitting way.

3.3. Make People Aware of the Need for Lay Evangelizers

Since we are trying to initiate Lay Claretian groups which are by nature, or rather by grace, evangelizing groups, advantage should be taken of unique opportunities for sensitizing people of the urgent need for lay evangelizers.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST ENCOUNTERS

4.1. Letter of Convocation and Objectives

We take it for granted that, prior to the first meeting, a letter of convocation has been sent out. This will not be dealt with here, since this is a very specific item. In each place, one will have to study the way of attending to this, taking a whole series of factors into account, such as the kind of people they are sent to, their gifts and talents, etc. What should be kept in mind is that sending out an open general invitation for a convocation is not to be recommended. This creates a host of problems that would finally be hard to solve.

When the time comes to organize the first meeting, it is very important to offer ample motivation for what you are planning to do. For this keep in mind the following:

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- 1) The kind of people you are addressing in your letter of convocation (age, education-formation, their environment, etc.)
- 2) The level of knowledge and experience of your addressees, or the lack of information regarding your theme, and persons who might already be committed to evangelization, etc.
- 3) The ultimate objective you have in mind (simply setting forth the theme, really informing people, deepening them in their formation, leading them to a level of greater commitment, etc.).

The objective of the first meetings should be not only to give those addressed an idea of who a Lay Claretian is and what the Lay Claretian Movement is, but to help people discern their own vocation.

For this purpose we are now going to offer an outline that may serve as an orientation. This outline is divided into two parts: the first deals with the laity in general and the second deals with basic information on the Claretian level.

4.2. Topical Outline

4.2.1. The Laity in the Church

A) Objectives

- 1) To clarify important basic concepts that can help people become more aware of the vocation and mission of the layperson in the Church.
- 2) To discover the vocation to which each person in particular has been called, encouraging them to deepen their knowledge of it and commit themselves to it.
- 3) To give a unified treatment of fundamental criteria for discovering common objectives.

B) Possible Contents

- 1) Laypersons in the Church: what it means to be a layperson, what values and responsibilities this implies.
- 2) The evolution of the role of the laity in the Church:

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- The layperson throughout the history of the Church,
- Vatican II and the laity.

3) The mission of the laity in the Church today:

- To make people share in salvation and redemption,
- To proclaim and spread the Kingdom of God:
 - ! Christian animation of the temporal order,
 - ! human advancement and progress.

4) How to be a layperson in the Church:

- Social dimension of the human being as a person,
- Community dimension of the human being as a Christian,
- Sharing services and responsibilities in the community.

5) Present situation of the laity in the Church:

- Positive and negative aspects in present reality,
- Relations between the hierarchy and laity.

C) Methodology

- 1) Presentation of the theme and assigning personal work.
- 2) Brief exposition, working in groups, sharing in common.
- 3) Handing out sufficient materials for a workshop, with the participants themselves giving an exposition of the theme as drawn up by themselves.
- 4) Development of themes, using the dynamics needed to help group to a deeper understanding of it (small group activities, expressing the pros-and-cons, complete the phrases exercise, questionnaires, full panel discussions, etc.).
- 5) Round table discussions or debates.
- 6) Periodic meetings to develop the themes.
- 7) Get-togethers organized for this end.

D) Materials Needed

1) Documents of Vatican II, especially the following:

LG nn.30-37.

AA nn. 1-3,6,9,10,13,18,19,22,25,29,30,33.

AG n.21.

2) Pueblo Documents, nn. 96-100,125-126,153-155 and 777-849.

3) EN, nn. 21,24,38,59,70,71,73.

4) Study Guides published by the Secretariat for Lay Claretians

- Sourcebook: Study Notes

- Commentary on the Lay Claretian Sourcebook

- #1 - "The Layperson in the Church"

- "Thoughts for Lay Claretians"

- "The Mission of St. Anthony Mary Claret"

- "Claret, Apostolic Missionary"

- "Lay Claretians and the Missionary Congregation"

- "Growth and Maturation of a Lay Claretian Group"

4.2.2. Claretian Laity

A) Objectives

1) To know St. Claret and his charism.

2) To see what being a Lay Claretian consists in.

3) To inform participants about the Lay Claretian Movement.

B) Contents

1) Historical setting of Claret:

- His vocational itinerary.

- Claret "Apostolic Missionary."

- Claret and the Laity:

! His prophetic awareness of the evangelizing mission of the laity

! His efforts to multiply agents of evangelization.

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2) Notion of evangelization:

- Fundamental forms of evangelization
- Contents of evangelization

3) The Lay Claretians:

- Vocation
- Mission
- Spirituality

4) Historical evolution of the Lay Claretian Movement:

- Groups founded by Claret
- The eclipse of the Claretian laity
- The resurgence of the Claretian laity
- The Lay Claretian Movement at present

C) Methodology (as mentioned above)

D) Materials

- Autobiography of St. Anthony Claret
- Mystic and Man of Action (John Lozano, Chicago)
- The Lay Claretian Sourcebook and Statutes
- Evangelii Nuntiandi
- Study Guides of the General Secretariat for Lay Claretians

Once the first meetings have been completed and contact has been made with persons who have discovered an affinity with Claret and the lay form of living his charism, we should carry out with them a more complete plan of formation which will lead them to analyze whether or not they have a Claretian vocation, and whether this might therefore be in God's plan for them. They should also discern whether they want to form a Claretian-oriented lay group or community, and whether it might possibly be incorporated into the Lay Claretian Movement. We shall now speak of this stage of formation.

5. FORMATION IN THE INITIAL STAGES

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Formation during the initial stages of the group is very important. One should not be in any hurry and skip steps at this point because the future quality of the group depends in great part on it.

Although the integral formation of a Lay Claretian involves many aspects, some of these must be given priority during this first stage. Just which aspects will be stressed will vary according to the make up of the group and the previous formation of its members.

Essential to initial formation is contact with Claretian sources. Here is where one gets in touch with the demands and commitments that are required of a Lay Claretian. Contact with these sources helps a person arrive at a deeper identification with, and a more conscious acceptance of, the Claretian vocation itself. On the basis of this will those who wish to become members of the Movement create a plan for their personal life.

When the specific elements of Claretian spirituality are analyzed as a group activity, a favorable climate is created in the group. In this environment members share their faith and discover the need to celebrate the Eucharist together making it the center of their life. On other occasions it may be listening to the Word of God and sharing its meaning as it applies to each person's life. At another time it will lead to shared prayer. All of these experiences will help the group toward a solid interior formation.

An in depth in-depth study of the characteristics of Claretian evangelization will highlight its missionary character and lead to efforts to multiply lay evangelizers. This process will help the group when its members will discern their personal fields of action.

The English resource materials prepared for this purpose by the General Secretariat for the Lay Claretians will be highly useful throughout this process.

The Sourcebook, as the basic document for the Lay Claretian, should occupy a broad chunk of study time and reflection, since it is not a question of merely studying it, but rather of understanding it, assimilating it, loving it, and making it a rule of life.

Also, during this first stage of formation, we must not fail to encourage the members of the group to be aware of their need for being formed on other levels. We should recommend that they take part in courses which their own dioceses offer for laypersons, even if this means taking correspondence courses. In this way Lay Claretians will receive a better preparation for evangelization.

An interchange of experiences and the personal testimony of a Lay Claretian can be very enlightening for members in this period of formation. This contributes to building a family spirituality. It promotes the sense of community that must exist among all groups that make up the Movement. There are some plans already drawn up by the world council of the Lay Claretians but at the moment are only available in Spanish. They Could prove useful for

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some of the groups which are involved in formation but I am sure each group has one or two individuals that can draw up some plan for this discernment process. The Claretian Missionary of religious that accompanies the group can be a resource person to help with such a project.

What is presented thus far aims only at offering a few guidelines concerning some aspects that are most needed in initial formation.

Persons working together on the formation of a new group will have to make an analysis of the concrete needs of the group and draw up a program of formation that will adequately meet the needs of the group within the circumstances within which the members of the group live and work.

6. ENTRANCE INTO THE MOVEMENT

The main objective of the Movement is not to increase the number of Lay Claretian members, groups or communities, but rather, to foster their inward growth and maturity. This does not mean that numerical growth is unimportant. In these initial years it is not top priority.

The Movement will be what the members of the Movement make it. Faithful to their specific vocation and to the insights of Claret, they should be conscientious as to essentials when they set about creating a new lay group.

Individuals or groups who want to enter the Movement should have true apostolic zeal born of a proven vocation and a generous response to it. The only way that the Movement will be able to take a place on the cutting edge of issues is by consistently responding to its evangelizing mission.

The Sourcebook does not deal with the prior steps that groups must follow in order to be incorporated into the Movement. However this doesn't mean that such steps shouldn't be taken. To give some guidelines for this phase the following are some fundamental steps essential for admittance.

- Before a group becomes part of the Lay Claretian Movement, it must first have spent enough time where the members have worked together and achieved satisfactory consolidation as a group.

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- This stretch of time of working together should be long enough to insure that there is some type of consolidation. The length of time will always depend on the needs and characteristics of the group. This is an important phase in the formation of the group.

- Formation, as we have seen above, should be as comprehensive and as thorough as possible. In it, everything related to matters Claretian must have a privileged place. It should include all the elements the members will need in order to make a calm and in-depth discernment of their lay Claretian vocation. For this, it is indispensable that they have studied the Sourcebook seriously and that they are prepared to adopt it as a guideline for their lives. Helpful in this study is the Commentary On the Sourcebook and a reading of the "Study Notes" which are the copious footnotes of the Sourcebook. All this is now available in English.

- Before entering the Lay Claretian Movement, each group will have to work out and put into practice their own group project. It should spell out the concrete ways in which they live it. The group should also determine the ways in which they will share their faith and develop contact and communion with the other groups.

The admission of new groups belongs to the Regional Council if there is one. If not, requests for admission are made to the Secretary General of the Movement. The Statutes of the Movement explains this procedure.

Regional Councils should live up to the task that their brothers and sisters have freely entrusted to them and which they have freely accepted. When the time comes to admit new groups into the Movement, these Councils should seriously "examine, with very clear criteria, whether both the members of new groups and their project measure up to the demands of the Sourcebook" (Cf. Study Guide #7, "The Religious Assessor in the Lay Claretian Movement,").

We cannot allow ourselves to be carried away by sympathies, friendships, pressure and other reasons of this sort, when it comes time to admit new groups.

7. THE FOLLOW-UP OF THESE GROUPS

The fact that a group has been admitted to the Movement does not mean that they no longer need the help and support of the persons who have actively promoted them. But the presence of these persons must gradually move to a secondary place. The help they now offer will be of a different nature.

If the promoters have been Lay Claretians, the group to which they belong will be linked in a special way to the newly admitted group. They will be largely responsible for its

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progress. The relationship between both groups should be characterized by equality. What should be avoided is that the older group assume the role of a "protector." Both groups should foster various kinds of meetings and/or encounters to strengthen mutual bonds of communion.

The values of the group should be measured not only with ones own group, but also in relation to other Lay Claretian groups. Meetings and/or encounters also serve as an occasion for an interchange of experiences and may even provide the opportunity for the joint programming of activities in formation and evangelization. This prevents the groups from becoming closed in on themselves.

If the group has been promoted by a religious community, the initial relationships of dependence "must little by little dissolve, until only a relationship of fraternity remains" (cf. The Lay Claretians and the Congregation of Missionaries).

When a group is admitted to the Lay Claretian Movement, it also enters the Claretian Family; therefore the relations between the group and the religious community should be those of genuine fraternity. "A fraternity that should lead us to mutual collaboration on evangelizing projects and actions."

In its 19th General Chapter, the Congregation of Claretian Missionaries expressed its desire for this fraternal collaboration:

"We want to see you at our side on all those evangelizing fronts where we, by the mission of the Church, are working. Your distinctive way of being fills out the total being of Claret, the source of inspiration of us all" (Message to the Lay Claretians, n.i2)

We Lay Claretians have to use all means at our disposal to assure that this may be a reality. Working and collaborating on the same evangelizing fronts implies a degree of maturity that we will not achieve without the effort that an adequate formation, a truly Claretian availability, and what is demanded by dedication to what is a true evangelical life.

The effort cannot be wholly on the Congregation's side. It must also exist on the side of the Lay Claretians, who are to be true to Claretian identity with the express desire to belong to the Movement. This is to be clear when a group asks for admission.

Lay Claretian groups will always rely on the accompaniment of their religious assessor, who actively collaborates in the process of the group's maturation and development. Nevertheless, Lay Claretians, should always be aware of how the assessor should limit his role, and not expect him to do what the Lay Claretians should be doing.

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The Lay Claretians from the outset should become accustomed to look on the assessor as just one more member who lends us his services as he is needed. He should not be regarded as the indispensable leader of the group. Nor should the group become overly attached to him. If they do this, they would be hindering both their own personal maturity and that of the group.

The Congregation of Missionaries itself, in the Message of the 19th General Chapter to the Lay Claretians, states: "If you do not want your groups to decay or die..., then do not anchor or pin your hopes only on the worth of an individual or a group, because both are subject to the limitations of time and space" (Message, n.14).