

*MISSIONERS OF CHRIST*

MEMBERSHIP



ORIENTATION PACKET

*“I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were  
already blazing!” – Luke 12:49*



## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

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### I. ABOUT THE MISSIONERS

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*By understanding better who the Missioners are and what we are about, we hope you will be able to better discern if this is the Community God is calling you to serve with.*

#### **Mission Statement**

Missioners of Christ is a Catholic Christian Community centered in prayer and united by covenant that evangelizes, disciples and sends forth youth and young adults on domestic and foreign missions to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ.

#### **History**

Missioners of Christ began quite simply as a gentle stirring of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of youth and young adults throughout Virginia who had a hunger for more of Christ in the Church. In many pockets of Virginia, youth groups and young adult groups were growing and flourishing as they committed themselves to learning and vibrantly applying the richness of Catholic worship while still remaining firmly grounded in the traditions of the faith. As they grew, these groups began to identify and connect with other groups in the diocese and clusters developed in Virginia Beach, Newport News, and Richmond. The groups shared resources and began to regularly partner in ministry ventures.

As time went on and as love for the Lord and His Church grew, there arose a desire to reach out to the poor, not only sharing material wealth but spiritual wealth as well. This desire gave way to our first youth mission trip to the Lord's Ranch, near El Paso, Texas, in the mid-1990s. The trip merged some of the best resources of the many groups involved. That first mission trip was such a success that soon afterwards individuals began to speak of formalizing the vital relationship that we all shared into a lay community centered on radical discipleship, powerful evangelization, and compassionate service to the poor.

At a Young Adult Retreat at Shalom House, Montpelier, those gathered voted on a name for the group – *Missioners of Christ* – a name that now encompasses various expressions of the same goal, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ by whatever means. Now we are excited to be a part of the "new springtime in the Church" proclaimed by Saint John Paul II. Whether one participates in a Missioners mission trip, prayer group, retreat, or other activity, we continue to heed the call of the Lord among our families, friends, and Church.

Our sharing in this orientation packet is not for the purpose of boasting or presenting ourselves as better than we are; truly, it has only been through the Grace of God that any fruit has come forth from the ministries He has entrusted to us. In spite of our many personal and even corporate shortcomings, we have consistently received confirmation that the Lord wishes us to push forward in serving His people through this vehicle.



## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

### Identity

*Missioners of Christ is a Catholic Christian community united by common prayer and common ministry.*

Our “four pillars” shape the essence of our formation and spirituality. We are:



**Eucharistic**, understanding the Eucharist to be “the source and summit of Christian life” (CCC 1324)



**Charismatic**, believing in and calling upon the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are “at the service of charity which builds up the Church” (CCC 2003)



**Marian**, holding a special devotion to Our Lady, which is “intrinsic to Christian worship” (CCC 971), recognizing Mary as a “preeminent and... wholly unique member of the Church” (CCC 967)



**Magisterial**, being submitted to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, whose “authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ” (CCC 85).

Our Covenant defines our commitments to each other and collectively to God, in how we live out our daily experience as a Missioner. This Covenant serves as a general rule of life, which allows us to be in solidarity with the greater Missioner community, whether we are in proximity to other members or not. The Covenant also reinforces and emphasizes aspects of the Catholic Christian life which are already expectations of the Church for its faithful, such as frequenting the Sacraments, stewardship, prayer and fasting, and charity to one’s neighbor.

### Purpose

*The Missioners of Christ has been called together to fulfill the Great Commission, “making disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).*

We are a discipleship community. Our primary focus is on youth and young adults, with our main means of discipleship being missionary service. God has blessed us abundantly with many gifts, and it is recognized that, “much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” (Luke 12:48b).

Our primary locus of ministry and service is outside of our community. Realizing that more than two-thirds of the world does not even know Christ, and that many of the faithful that call themselves Christian are so poorly discipled that they are like the seed that “fell on rocky ground where it had little soil” that ended up being “scorched and withered for lack of roots” (Mark 4:5,6), as soon as difficulties arise, their faith perishes, and then they are like “salt which loses its taste” (Luke 14:34).



## *MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET*

Community is the fruit of our common prayer and common ministry. While fruit can be enjoyed in and of itself, its ultimate purpose is to fall to the ground, die, and reproduce itself in abundance. In such, internal ministry is essential to the Missioners, such as prayer groups, retreats, social opportunities, formation, and intercessory prayer covering -- yet these aspects of Missioners are engaged in for the purpose of strengthening its members so that they may go forth in serving those much more in need than ourselves, and are always in subservience to our vision and mission to disciple the nations, "for the love of Christ urges us on" (CCC 851).

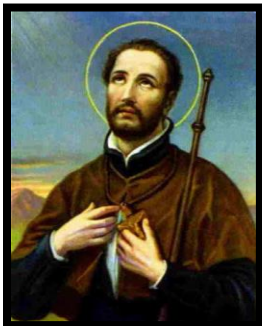
### **Ecclesial Accountability**

Missioners of Christ is a Catholic Christian entity that functions in full submission to the Roman Catholic Church. Per our Constitution, the Missioners must establish and maintain a formal and organic connection to either a local Diocesan See or the Holy Roman See. In each Diocese in which we engage in regular and ongoing ministry, we seek permission from the proper Ecclesial authorities. Missioners of Christ seeks to establish its identity, purpose, philosophy, and practice in full compliance with Canon Law as established by the Catholic Church.

The Missioners are currently established as a "Private Association of the Christian Faithful" in accordance with Canons 298-311, 321-326 in the Code of Canon Law, through the Diocese of Comayagua, Honduras and the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. Missioners of Christ desires to function in a similar manner to a Third Order, in accordance with Canon 303.

### **Spirituality & Patron Saints**

The Missioners of Christ have adopted the spirituality proposed by Bl. Pope John Paul II for the New Evangelization, who stated that we must strive to be "contemplatives in action," an approach which understand to be a fusion of Carmelite (contemplative) and Ignatian (active). In pursuing and establishing this spirituality, we have sought the intercession of four individuals who exemplified this disposition in their lives:



*St. Francis Xavier, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John Paul II, and St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us!*



## *MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET*

### Ministries

- **Short Term Missions:** Missions are a direct response to the Great Commission and a powerful tool in forming the faith life of young Christians while serving God's people. The Missioners facilitate domestic and foreign missions for youth, adults, and families.
- **Foreign Mission Internships:** Missioners of Christ has established a permanent mission community in Comayagua, Honduras, often referred to as the "heart" of our community. In collaboration with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal and local diocesan priests, we endeavor to serve the local Church through sponsoring children and special needs individuals, educational support of youth and adults, evangelistic outreaches (in the mountains, Pan de Vida retreats), discipleship groups, and attending to the temporal needs of the community at large. Here, young adults (generally of college age) give up one semester or more to step deeper in their Catholic Christian Faith to serve. Faith formation, simplicity in living, community, and obedience are core in this ministry that seeks to develop a permanent missionary spirit in those who participate.
- **"The Rez" Youth Retreats:** Retreat aimed at providing youth the teachings and skills to make a radical commitment to Christ through their Catholic Christian faith. Talks on sin & reconciliation, the Cross, the Resurrection, and evangelization combined with the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Mass provide an experience which aims to awaken a young Christian's sense of "the Call" to follow Christ in all aspects of his or her life.
- **"InterMission" Retreats:** Twice a year, the Missioners facilitate a retreat for both young and young-at-heart adults. These lightly-structured retreats are times for spiritual refreshing, fellowship, formation, and shared prayer and praise. Usually held during Lent and Labor Day Weekend in Virginia.
- **MXP (Missioners eXtreme Praise):** Event with Eucharistic adoration and extended praise & worship, testimonies, and prayer ministry. The target is the college-age/young adult population, though high school youth, parents, and adults are always welcome. Usually held twice a year in Virginia.

### Prayer group

Missioners are encouraged to be part of a regular prayer group where members have an opportunity for praise & worship, teaching, and fellowship. The original prayer group meets Monday nights in Virginia Beach, VA. Where there are clusters of Missioners in a particular area, members are encouraged to either start a prayer group for fellowship and support or to join an existing prayer group.



## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

### II. DISCERNING A CALL TO JOIN MISSIONERS

The goal of the discernment process is for an individual to discover their particular call from the Lord. While we desire to have a community / apostolate open to all, we recognize that we are one small part of the Body of Christ, and that Christ's people are called to many different communities and apostolates throughout the world. Therefore, the discernment process for the Missioners of Christ is designed to assist people in discerning if they are called to *this specific community / apostolate*, mutually benefiting both the individual and the Missioners.

- **A Mutual Process:** Discernment of participation as a member of Missioners of Christ is mutual process including both the applicant and the Missioners.
- **A Specific Calling:** We all have a calling to holiness and to a particular vocation and ministry in life. Some are specifically called to the Missioners of Christ community / apostolate while others are not.
- **A Convergence:** We seek a convergence of callings. We understand God orchestrates His will and plan in a harmonized fashion – if a person is called to the Missioners, then living out his/her own personal walk with Christ will also function in concert with the mission of the Missioners of Christ.
- **More than a Feeling:** While the desire to enter into Covenant with the Missioners can definitely be an indicator of a calling to this community / apostolate, feelings can be mitigated and directed by our own wants, needs, and past experiences functioning on both the conscious and unconscious levels often subject to our fallen human nature. Therefore, the discernment process must be one that recognizes God's will in one's life.
- **Recognition of Limitations:** In the discernment process with any particular individual, it is essential that the leadership of Missioners maintain an acute awareness of the community / apostolate's limitations. If it is deemed that the acceptance of an applicant, due to their particular challenges and dispositions in his/her life, are beyond the ability of the Missioners in their current state of collective maturity to support, heal, and / or manage; and / or if acceptance of this application would likely prove damaging to the common good of the Missioners, then it would be crucial for the leadership to provide direction in full light of charity to that applicant, in supporting them in their personal walk with Christ, whether in another community / apostolate or circumstance which would best serve their needs. This determination would not prevent him/her from participating in appropriate ministries of the Missioners (i.e. prayer group, retreats)

#### **Steps of the Discernment Process**

The following discernment process is deliberate and intensive, not to be a barrier to entry, but rather an opportunity to investigate the potential convergence of an individual's personal calling with that of the Missioners and to avoid a "club mentality". *Any practicing Catholic aged 18 and above who has graduated from high school is eligible to discern formal participation in Missioners.*





## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

1. **Statement of Intent.** Completes a basic “Statement of Intent” application to enter in a formal discernment process. This application is submitted to the Director of Community or one delegated by the Director. As part of this application, they choose a Committed Member in Missioners who can act as a “sponsor” for this person. The sponsor makes sure that they faithfully do what is required during Discernment.
2. **Formal Signing of “Invitation to Discern”.** At one of the two InterMission retreats or on a visit to the mission in Honduras, applicant signs “Invitation to Discern” document with at least three (3) Covenant / Committed Members present. If not possible, a majority vote by the Concilium can authorize an appropriate procedure for signing with the presence of at least two (2) Covenant/ Committed Members participating. This may be done virtually as a “last resort” regarding members who live far away from other members – efforts should be made to meet with at least one other member in proximity.
3. **Initial Interview with Director of Community.** Individual participates in an interview with the Director of Community or someone delegated by him, reviewing application and learning of the process and prerequisites to be accomplished during the Discernment period. *This step may take place prior to steps 1 & 2.*
4. **Meeting Members of Missioners of Christ.** Applicant is given a listing of local Missioners in their area. The applicant is encouraged to make contact with these people and to introduce self.
5. **Participation in Missioners Life.** Applicant participates, to the degree that is possible, in Missioners activities, such as local prayer groups, retreats, social events, assisting in some form of ministry, and visits to Honduras.
6. **Completion of Pre-Requisites.** Applicant completes pre-requisites which are necessary before becoming a Covenant / Committed Member of the Missioners.
  - Obtains & Reviews Constitution of the Missioners of Christ
  - Obtains a Spiritual Director. Spiritual Director must ultimately sign off on Covenant / Commitment, sharing that in his/her opinion, applicant is mature in his/her Faith and life situation to actively participate in Community / Apostolate life.
  - Completes 2 books, identified by the Director of Community, which prepare the applicant for Community / Apostolate life (at present those 2 books are: *Community and Growth* by Jean Vanier and its MOC companion formation booklet).
  - Participates in Spiritual Formation Session on the Four Pillars of the Missioners
  - Establishes / Maintains an active Catholic sacramental life (Mass every Sunday/vigil and Holy Days, Confession at least once a quarter)
7. **Final Interview with Director of Community.** A final and at length discussion of where the applicant is in their discernment process. A review of completion of pre-requisites. A frank discussion on the motivation(s) of the applicant to become part of the Missioners, and a final, mutual discernment if all sense that this is a call from God, whether the discernment time should be extended, or whether this is not where God is calling the individual now.
8. **Initiation and Signing of Covenant at Covenant Celebration.** The applicant and Director of Community, having completed all aspects of Discernment, announce at least 30 days prior to the Annual Covenant Ceremony (usually Divine Mercy Sunday) their intent to enter into a Commitment with the Missioners. Applicant signs the Commitment in the presence of members of the Missioners of Christ in the ceremony.



## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

### Categories of Participation

There are different levels that individuals are able to participate in based on their particular life situation at any given time. Some are called to the Missioners for a season, some for a lifetime. Some serve alongside us, collaborating, while not feeling called to full participation. It should be noted that one does not have to be a “member” to participate in most of the Missioners activities, such as the prayer groups, InterMission retreats, Short-term missions, and other ministries in which an individual wishes to assist. *Please refer to the chart for a more complete look at the various commitments involved.*

- **Covenant Members:** Covenant members are those who feel called to commit to the Missioners of Christ for life. These individuals have served under the Covenant for at least one term as a Committed Member, are in good standing with both the Missioners and the Catholic Church, and have mutually discerned a permanent call to the Missioners.  
*Special Conditions/Considerations:* Must have served a three-year term under the Covenant as a Committed Member in good standing. If in the vocation of marriage, can only be Covenant member if spouse enters into the same covenant  
*Aspects / Privileges of Covenant Members:* Participates fully in the Covenant Lifetime term (barring unforeseen circumstances or vocational change); Inducted during annual Covenant Ceremony; Full voting privileges; Can serve on the Concilium; Can be appointed Director of an Office; Can serve as Servant Leader of Missioners
- **Committed Members:** There are those who feel called to commit to the Missioners for a “season” – a three year period where the individual functions as a full member of the Missioners, with full voting rights and ability to serve at all levels.  
*Special Conditions / Considerations:* Must have participated in a six month mutual discernment process; Can recommit on this status indefinitely  
*Aspects / Privileges of Covenant Members:* Participates fully in the Covenant; Three-year term (barring unforeseen circumstances or vocational change); Inducted during annual Covenant Ceremony; Full voting privileges; Can serve on the Concilium; Can be appointed Director of an Office
- **Discerners** An initial phase that all Missioners must go through. This is a mutual journey that a prospective Missioner goes through with the Missioners of Christ community/apostolate, discerning whether or not they are called to a deeper commitment to the Missioners.  
*Special Conditions / Considerations:* Must have a sponsor within Missioners of Christ  
*Aspects / Privileges of Covenant Members:* Participates in a form of the Covenant – “Invitation to Discern”; Commitment of 6 months – 1 ½ years
- **Associate Members** There are those who feel committed to the Vision of the Missioners of Christ, who may serve alongside us and / or support us in prayer, but are not able to fully participate in the ministries and communal experiences.  
*Special Conditions / Considerations:* Can join anytime under the witness of a current Covenant or Committed member  
*Aspects / Privileges of Covenant Members:* Participates in a less intensive form of the Covenant





## *MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET*

### **Membership Requirements**

#### **[Required for Covenant, Committed, and Associate Members]**

- ✓ In choosing to become a member of Missioners of Christ, I am making a commitment to the purpose of “discipleship (as) participating in and facilitating missionary service, both short- and long-term; and the spiritual well-being of all members of the Community; encouraging, supporting, and challenging them to live the Christian life in a manner which is often radically different than the society at large. These commitments, which we all enter freely, are not constraints that bind, but instead, freedoms that allow us to die to ourselves
- ✓ To frequent the Sacraments of the Church, receiving Eucharist at least weekly and the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least quarterly (and immediately if I am aware of being in the state of mortal sin)
- ✓ To fully submit to and support the Magisterium (Teaching Authority) of the Catholic Church
- ✓ To participate in daily individual prayer, and over the course of a month, praying for each member of the Missioners of Christ Community
- ✓ To recite the Missioners of Christ Community Prayer during individual prayer
- ✓ To participate in some act of fasting or penance on the first Friday of each month (sundown Thursday to sundown Friday) to the degree that I am able, in prayer and solidarity with my fellow brethren in the Missioners of Christ, wherever in the world they may be
- ✓ To mutual discernment of my role in Missioners of Christ, whether internal or external, for the support of the ministry / community
- ✓ To obtain an accountability / prayer partner within the Community, with whom I will communicate at least monthly, sharing my Faith Walk, and supporting and challenging him / her in theirs
- ✓ To support Missioners of Christ with my financial resources (For those gainfully employed, suggested 1% - 4% of gross income. For students, in whatever capacity they are able to support, at least \$5/month)
- ✓ Following Diocesan Guidelines to attend VIRTUS training/fill out necessary diocesan forms (Child Protective Services) for those who work with minors (only mandatory for Associate members if interacting with teens/minors)

#### **[Required for Covenant & Committed Members; Suggested for Associate Members]**

- ✓ To obtain a Spiritual Director with whom I meet at least quarterly (For those in the Governing Body of the Missioners, and / or those who have made a longer-term commitment, this Spiritual Director must be outside of the Community)
- ✓ To further my personal spiritual and catechetical growth, as well as enhancing the communal growth of Missioners, through reading the required books recommended by the Missioners
- ✓ To participate in at least one Missioners retreat or visit the mission house in Honduras annually in order to strengthen my bonds with other Community members, as well as to deepen my personal / communal relationship with Christ
- ✓ To participate regularly in a prayer group preferably one that is sponsored by the Missioners
- ✓ To participate in at least one foreign mission trip every three years, if I am able, as this is the primary means of discipleship for the Missioners



## MEMBERSHIP ORIENTATION PACKET

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### MISSIONERS BOOK LIST

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Discerners are required to read *Community and Growth* by Jean Vanier. Then, as Committed Members, they should read at least **one book a year** “to further personal spiritual and catechetical growth, as well as enhance the communal growth of Missioners”

#### *Essential Readings:*

- “The New Faithful – Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy” by Colleen Carroll
- “Happy Are You Poor – The Simple Life and Spiritual Freedom” by Father Thomas Dubay
- “Sheep in Wolves' Clothing: How Unseen Need Destroys Friendship and Community and What to Do about It” by Valerie J. McIntyre

#### *Readings of Missioners' Patron Saints*

- “Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire” by Joseph Langford

#### *Important Ecclesial Documents:*

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Papal Encyclical “Redemptoris Missio – The Mission of Christ the Redeemer” by Saint John Paul II
- Papal Encyclical “Evangelii Nuntiandi – On Evangelization in the Modern World” by Pope Paul VI

#### *Additional Suggested Books*

- “Live It Up! How to Create a Life You Can Love” by Tom Sine
- “Healing America’s Wounds: Discovering Our Destiny” by John Dawson
- “Heroic Leadership – Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company that Changed the World” by Chris Downey

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### CURRENT MEMBER DIRECTORY

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Go to the following link for a list of current members and their location/contact info:

- <http://www.missionersofchrist.org/directory.html>

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### COMMUNITY PRAYER & CALENDAR

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Go to the following link for our Prayer Calendar App:

- <http://catholic-missions.net/prayer.asp>

#### **Missioners of Christ Community Prayer**

*As Missioners of Christ we say “Yes” Lord. We say, “yes” to your will and “yes” to your ways. We will willingly go where you send us and love those you bring into our lives. Bind us together as a family in Christ and send us out in the power of your Holy Spirit to make You known in this world. We say, “yes” Lord, with all that is in us we say “yes”! Amen.*