



Vernian Laity

Documents and Formative Path

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**CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
EI SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE**

Prot. n. I. 5-1/2004

DECREE

The Association named "Laici Verniani" of the Religious Institute of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, whose general house is in the Diocese of Rome, is an Association of devout believers who wish to share the charisma transmitted by Mother Antonia Maria Verna to her Daughters, adapting it to the state of life of the members.

Touched by to the Church's call, while remaining in the century, the members of the Association "Laici Verniani" share the ideal, the spirit and the apostolic mission of the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea.

This Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, carefully analyzed the Statute already presented and so declares that the above mentioned Association is a proper work to the Institute and for that reason must be recognized by everyone.

With this Decree, moreover, the Mother Superior and her Council are entrusted with the approval of the aforementioned Statute and with any necessary changes in the future, by informing the Holy See.

Despite any contrary provision.

Vatican, 18th May 2004.

Silvano Nesti, C.P.
Secretary

Sr. Enrica Rosanna, F.M.A. Undersecretary

STATUTE OF THE "ASSOCIATION OF THE VERNIAN LAITY"

1. PURPOSE AND NATURE OF THE ASSOCIATION

Art.1

The Vernian Family gathers in the name of Mother Antonia all those who, in any way, draw inspiration from her: Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, Missionaries of Charity, lay groups, or any of the individual faithful. Within this family it is formed a private association of faithful and it is named **VERNIAN LAITY ASSOCIATION**. These faithful people wish to attain their Christian vocation through participation in the charisma of the Institute of Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, according to their lay status, and in communion with the Sisters of the Institute. Members intend to live the spirituality of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception following Mother Antonia's model, in gratitude to God for the gift of the Christian vocation, and to give their contribution to the apostolic commitment of the Sisters in charity service and evangelization".

Art.2

Marian spirituality commits its members to cultivate a special devotion to the Immaculate Mary, celebrating her feast with particular solemnity. They are also called to live a proper Christian life, according to their own life, in faithfulness to their own religious duties, in the participation to the Holy Mass and in the practice of the Sacraments. This spirituality particularly draws its inspiration from "Regola di vita delle suore di Carità dell' Immacolata Concezione di Ivrea", articles 2 and 3.

Art.2: "In Mary's Immaculate Conception we find the mystery of the absolute gratuity of God, who loves and saves, and the total dedication of the creature who offers herself without any hesitancy. Full of grace in her free and gratuitous gift, Mary belongs to God in an exclusive and absolute manner because, being Mother of the Word made flesh and united in His whole being in Christ Savior, she cooperated to mankind salvation".

Art. 3: "In her we find the perfect image of our consecration and the sanctity we are called to, the inspiring force of the apostolic action. We draw upon the genuine spirit of the Institute by contemplating on her mystery; we learn to be a community that doesn't belong to itself, everything is in the name of God and for the others. In Mary, and as she did, we perform our saving charity in Christ with an open disposition towards the needs of our brothers".

Art. 3 The apostolic commitment of charity will be realized in the "maximum attention to the poor and those in need" that we can meet along the way, and in giving them the time and aid in the service of charity, within the possibilities. The apostolic commitment to the evangelization and to catechesis demands the members to start with Christ, as the Holy Father has stated in the Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, to aim for "a high standard of ordinary Christian life" (NMI 31); to pay attention to their own complete spiritual formation and to be willing to the evangelization and catechesis.

In this way, the laity not only commit themselves to fulfil their own lives with the vocation to holiness, which they received as a seed in Baptism, but they are also a support for other Christian brothers.

II – GOVERNMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Art. 4

The Vernian Laity Association's head office is in Rome, via della Renella 85 (address), near the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea General Curia, its governing body is divided into three levels: **Local**, **Regional**, and **General**.

4.1 At **Local** levels there are groups constituted, recognized in due manner, with their own leader, elected every four years by the group itself.

4.2 At **Regional** level, a President is elected every four years by the Regional Assembly, by absolute majority. The regional assembly is made up of all the members of the Groups who have made the "promise". The President is supported by two Councilors, elected by the Regional Assembly. The election will take place after an adequate preparation of the Groups, and it will be held in the presence of a member of the General Council or a delegate of the General President. The regional level scope is determined by the Association President with his Council's approval.

4.3 At the **General** level, there is a President helped by four Councilors elected every four years by the General Assembly. The first elected Councilor, acting as Vice President, may be delegated to perform functions or tasks and duties at the President's discretion and he will cover for the President in case of absence or obstacle.

4.4 The General Assembly is the utmost government collective organ, it is representative of the entire Association, it is constituted by members by right (President and General Councilors, Presidents of the vernian regions) and by elected members. It is held every four years and it mainly must :

- elect the General President and the four Councilors,
- review the Association's life,
- elaborate the Association plan for the four-year period.

Art. 5

A group will be considered effectively formed when it is recognized by the President of the Association with the approval of his Council. When it's possible, in proceeding with recognition, the following criteria will be considered:

- the members should not be less than ten,
- they should not be geographically scattered,
- they should be grouped in such a way that, when possible, they will together fulfill the statute obligations,
- they should have a religious community of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea as a reference point.

Art. 6

The Local Leader will act as a double connection: internal (between the Group, the Regional and the General Presidents) and external. He will be responsible for the group so that it adheres to the Statute of the Association. He will also encourage the life of the group, both for the spirituality and the apostolate, and for the development of the Association itself.

Art. 7

The tasks of the regional leader are comparable to those of the local leader, but they are adapted to his level. To carry out these tasks, the leader will need the cooperation of his Council. In particular he will decide, with the help of his Council, the acceptance of membership requests (in a written statement) and he will also deal with the most relevant issues that fall within his competence.

Art. 8 Duties of the President and his Council

8.1 According to the Statute, the General President will be responsible for the life and the development of the whole Association. He will ensure that the members observe the Statute of the Association. He will be helped in carrying out his duties by his Council.

8.2 In particular, it is the President's duty to keep in contact with the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, concerning the fidelity to the Charisma, the spirituality, the apostleship, and the formation.

8.3 The general President and his Council will be responsible for verifying new members' admission, for dismissing members from the same Association, if necessary, and treating the most important Association issues.

III - ADMISSION, DISMISSAL, RESIGNATION

Art. 9

Candidates (men and women; married or unmarried) to be admitted as members of the Association are required to be of legal age, and practicing Catholics. After a proper formation, they must be willing to commit themselves to realizing the goals of the Association and to observing the Statute, with a promise of fidelity to be professed, with an appropriate formula, possibly during a liturgy, preferably in a Sisters' religious house, and to be yearly renewed on the 8th of December.

Art. 10

Those who have been accepted and welcomed as members of the Association may be dismissed by the General President for lack of adherence to their own duties and obligations, for not providing an explanation and for not renewing their own fidelity commitment, after the Regional President has reprimanded twice by a written statement or in front of two witnesses.

Art. 11

If anyone has reason to leave the Association, he will have to take up the issue to the proper authority, either locally (local group leader) or regionally (Regional President).

IV – LIFE OF THE ASSOCIATION**Art. 12**

In a special manner the Association will focus on the Christian formation of its members, so that they will always be suitable to realize its goals. For this purpose, there will be formation meetings according to an accurate yearly plan, under the responsibility of the General President and his Council.

Art. 13

The annual plan will include: a spiritual-theological deepening about the laity vocation and mission; the apostolic formation for the areas where a cooperation is conceived; and a deepening about the Vernian Family spirituality.

Art. 14

The members are mainly called to operate in the areas where the Sisters of Ivrea are, and in collaboration with them, in hospitals, in schools, in the parishes, in missionary lands, and in other areas in constant contact with the legitimate ecclesiastical authority and in harmony with other ecclesiastical groups.

Art. 15

Every member of the Association will be committed to developing his own spiritual life, through the fidelity to his Christian duties and in his proper state to nurture a particular devotion to Mary Immaculate, especially through the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary; to dedicate oneself to the study of the Catholic faith, particularly in deepening knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, of the catechism of the Catholic church and listening to the words of the Holy Father.

Art. 16

A particular emphasis will be laid on the Church doctrine regarding the charitable works: aiding, evangelizing, teaching, and taking special care of those in need. (Rules 1823).

Art. 17

It will be necessary for the group itself to address some time, at least every three months, for a meeting of recollection and prayer, and for the revision and the self examination.

Art. 18

For those desiring to do so, members may participate in prayer time, in the meditation on God's Word and in family moments of the Sisters' religious community.

V – ADMINISTRATION

Art. 19

The Association is a non-profit organization. The funds to attain the Association's goals come from the contribution of its members or others. These funds are administered, at different levels, under the supervision of the competent supervisors, by the Treasurer.

VI - CONNECTION TO THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF IVREA

Art. 20

The Association achieves its purpose only in communion with the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, and their own charisma. Such particular communion implies that the Association takes part to the life and spirituality of the same Institute, with the knowledge of its history, spirituality, and apostleship.

Art. 21

The Mother Superior will be the guarantor of the Association's charisma, of its members' spiritual formation and of the protection of the identity of the association itself; especially through the promotion of the apostleship areas and the urgencies the commitment must be destined to. Those who participate in these duties, at the regional level, are the Provincial Superiors.

Art. 22

The Mother Superior may participate at any time in the Council meetings and in the Association's General Assembly. The General President will always keep the Mother Superior informed of the status of the Association and will send a yearly progresses report.

Art. 23

The Association acknowledges the necessity of the presence of the Sisters for its own development and progression. However, it will be very important that each member may live his own spirituality according to his own state of life. In particular, it is necessary to avoid every kind of collaboration which do not respect the family secular vocation of the laity and the religious vocation of the Sisters.

VII - ASSISTANCE OF A PRIEST

Art. 24 It is recommended that the life of the Association be accompanied by a priest, who will assist in the spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic formation of the group.

VIII – FINAL DISPOSITIONS

Art. 25 This present Statute, valid for the entire Association, may be further specified with a regulation adapted to the single regions. Any change must be approved by the general President with the consensus of his Council and by the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity of the

Immaculate Conception of Ivrea. For what is not specifically foreseen by this present Statute, the norms of the Codex Juris Civilis (CJC) will apply.

Assembly decision of 24.10.2015

It has been pointed out to the Assembly the problem of some areas with only one vernian group. It is established that, in these particular situations, the Association President, with his Council, will see provide to the establishment of a Group or a Region, and consequently the discipline of Groups and Regions will be applied to these new realities by analogy.

Rome, January 3rd, 2003; modified by the General Assembly December 29th, 2007; modified by the General Assembly October 24th, 2015.

During the General Assembly (October 24 to 27, 2019), the following points were unanimously approved:

- 1) Of the four General Councilors, one will be responsible for formation and one for the mission, after the appropriate formation.*
- 2) Of the two Regional Councilors, elected by different groups, whenever possible, one will be in charge of formation and one of the mission, after the appropriate formation.*
- 3) Each group will have an interlocutor (group leader) who will have a strong connection with the Regional Council and may participate in the meetings by the Regional President invitation.*
- 4) All members of the Association must deepen their formation and mission with the other two parts of the Vernian family, if they are present.*
- 5) Each Vernian lay should know how to "keep the fire burning" in his own group (annual renewal of the promise with a strong lay vocation, and participating at a formative and operational level).*

THE LAY BELIEVERS

Reference document:

Christifideles laici, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on *Vocation and Mission of the laity in the Church and in the world*, Rome, 30th December 1988.

From the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 20:1-4)

"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, 'You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just. So they went off.'"

The **LAY FAITHFUL** (...) are those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the labourers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew's Gospel. The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord's vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labour in it. The vineyard is the whole world (cf. *Mt 13:38*), which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God. From that distant day the call of the Lord Jesus "*You go into my vineyard too*" never fails to resound in the course of history: it is addressed to every person who comes into this world.

You go too. The call is a concern not only of Pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. In preaching to the people Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact and comments on the parable of the labourers in the vineyard: "Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lord's labourers. Each person should take into account what he does and consider if he is labouring in the vineyard of the Lord". (CfL 1-2)

FORMATION OF THE LAY BELIEVERS IN THE LAY STATE

... that you bear much fruit!

(from Chapter V of CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI)

A CONTINUAL PROCESS OF MATURATION

57. The gospel image of the vine and the branches reveals to us another fundamental aspect of the lay faithful's life and mission: *the call to growth and a continual process of maturation, of always bearing much fruit*.

The vitality of the branches depends on their remaining attached to the vine, which is Jesus Christ: "*He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing*" (Jn 15:5). People are approached in liberty by God who calls everyone to grow, develop and bear fruit. A person cannot put off a response nor cast off personal responsibility in the matter. The solemn words of Jesus refer to this exalted and serious responsibility: "If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (Jn 15:6). In this dialogue between God who offers his gifts, and the person who is called to exercise responsibility, there comes the possibility, indeed **the necessity, of a total and ongoing formation of the lay faithful.**

TO DISCOVER AND LIVE ONE'S VOCATION AND MISSION

58. The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfil one's mission. *God calls me and sends me forth* as a labourer in his vineyard. He calls me and sends me forth to work for the coming of his Kingdom in history. This personal vocation and mission defines the dignity and the responsibility of each member of the lay faithful and makes up the focal point of the whole work of formation, whose purpose is the joyous and grateful recognition of this dignity and the faithful and generous living-out of this responsibility. In fact, from eternity God has thought of us and has loved us as unique individuals. Every one of us he called by name, as the Good Shepherd "calls his sheep by name" (Jn 10:3). However, only in the unfolding of the history of our lives and its events is the eternal plan of God revealed to each of us. Therefore, it is a gradual process; in a certain sense, one that happens day by day. To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord in our lives always involves the following: a receptive listening to the Word of God and the Church, fervent and constant prayer, recourse to a wise and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as the diverse social and historic situations in which one lives. Therefore, in the life of each member of the lay faithful there are *particularly significant and decisive moments* for discerning God's call and embracing the mission entrusted by Him. Among these are the periods of *adolescence* and *young adulthood*. No one must forget that the Lord, as the master of the labourers in the vineyard, calls *at every hour* of life so as to make his holy will more precisely and explicitly known. Therefore, the fundamental and continuous attitude of the disciple should be one of vigilance and a conscious attentiveness to the voice of God. It is not a question of simply *knowing* what God wants from each of us in the various situations of life. The individual must *do* what God wants, as we are reminded in the words that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, addressed to the servants at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). However, to act in fidelity to God's will requires a *capability* for acting and *the developing of that capability*. We can rest assured that this is possible through the free and responsible collaboration of each of us with the grace of the Lord which is never lacking. Saint Leo the Great says: "The one who confers the dignity will give the strength!".

This, then, is the marvelous yet demanding task awaiting all the lay faithful and all Christians at every moment: to grow always in the knowledge of the richness of Baptism and faith as well as to live it more fully. In referring to birth and growth as two stages in the Christian life the apostle

Peter makes the following exhortation: "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation" (1 Pt 2:2).

A TOTAL INTEGRATED FORMATION FOR LIVING AN INTEGRATED LIFE

59. In discovering and living their proper vocation and mission, the lay faithful must be formed according to the *union* which exists from their being *members of the Church and citizens of human society*. There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called "spiritual" life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called "secular" life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture. The branch, engrafted to the vine which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. In fact, every area of the lay faithful's lives, as different as they are, enters into the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the "places in time" where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and service of others. Every activity, every situation, every precise responsibility-as, for example, skill and solidarity in work, love and dedication in the family and the education of children, service to society and public life and the promotion of truth in the area of culture-are the occasions ordained by Providence for a "continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity".

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF FORMATION

60. The many interrelated aspects of a *totally integrated formation* of the lay faithful are situated within this unity of life. There is no doubt that *spiritual* formation ought to occupy a privileged place in a person's life. Everyone is called to grow continually in intimate union with Jesus Christ, in conformity to the Father's will, in devotion to others in charity and justice.

The situation today points to an ever-increasing urgency for a *doctrinal* formation of the lay faithful, not simply in a better understanding which is natural to faith's dynamism but also in enabling them to "give a reason for their hoping" in view of the world and its grave and complex problems. Therefore, a systematic approach to *catechesis*, geared to age and the diverse situations of life, is an absolute necessity, as is a more decided Christian promotion of *culture*, in response to the perennial yet always new questions that concern individuals and society today. This is especially true for the lay faithful who have responsibilities in various fields of society and public life. Above all, it is indispensable that they have a more exact knowledge -and this demands a more widespread and precise presentation-of the *Church's social doctrine*. The cultivation of *human values* finds a place in the context of a totally integrated formation, bearing a particular significance for the missionary and apostolic activities of the lay faithful. In this regard the Council wrote: "(the lay faithful) should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues related to social behaviour, namely, honesty, a spirit of justice, sincerity, courtesy, moral courage; without them there is no true Christian life". In bringing their lives into an organic synthesis, which is, at one and the same time, the manifestation of the unity of "who they are" in the Church and society as well as the condition for the effective fulfilment of their mission, the lay

faithful are to be guided interiorly and sustained by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of unity and fullness of life.

COLLABORATORS WITH GOD, THE TEACHER

61. Where are the lay faithful formed? What are the means of their formation? Who are the *persons and the communities* called upon to assume the task of a totally integrated formation of the lay faithful?

Just as the work of human education is intimately connected with fatherhood and motherhood, so Christian formation finds its origin and its strength in God the Father who loves and educates his children. Yes, *God is the first and great teacher of his People*, as it states in the striking passage of the Song of Moses: "He found him in a desert land / and in the howling waste of the wilderness; / he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. / Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, / the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no foreign God with him" (*Deut 32:10-12*; cf. 8:5). God's work in forming his people is revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Teacher, and reaches to the depths of every individual's heart as a result of the living presence of the Spirit. *Mother Church* is called to take part in the divine work of formation, both through a sharing of her very life, and through her various pronouncements and actions. It is thus that the *lay faithful are formed by the Church and in the Church* in a mutual communion and collaboration of all her members: clergy, religious and lay faithful. Thus the whole ecclesial community, in its diverse members, receives the fruitfulness of the Spirit and actively cooperates towards that end. First of all the Church is a teacher, in which the Pope takes the "primary" role in the formation of the lay faithful. As successor of Saint Peter, he has the ministry of "confirming his brothers in the faith", instructing all believers in the essential content of vocation and mission in light of the Christian faith and membership in the Church. Therefore, not simply the words coming directly from him, but also those transmitted by the various departments of the Holy See call for a loving and receptive hearing by the lay faithful. The one and universal Church is present in various parts of the world, in and through the *particular Churches*. In each of them the Bishop in his person has a responsibility towards the lay faithful, in forming the animation and guidance of their Christian life through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacraments.

Situated and at work within the particular Church or diocese is the *Parish* which has the essential task of a more personal and immediate formation of the lay faithful. In fact, because it is in the position to reach more easily individual persons and singular groups, the parish is called to instruct its members in hearing God's Word, in liturgical and personal dialogue with God, in the life of fraternal charity, and in allowing a more direct and concrete perception of the sense of ecclesial communion and responsibility in the Church's mission.

OTHER PLACES FOR FORMATION

62 . The *Christian family*, as the "domestic Church", also makes up a natural and fundamental school for formation in the faith: father and mother receive from the Sacrament of Matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, before whom they bear witness

and to whom they transmit both human and religious values. While learning their first words, children learn also the praise of God, whom they feel is near them as a loving and providential Father; while learning the first acts of love, children also learn to open themselves to others, and through the gift of self receive the sense of living as a human being. The daily life itself of a truly Christian family makes up the first "experience of Church", intended to find confirmation and development in an active and responsible process of the children's introduction into the wider ecclesial community and civil society. The more that Christian spouses and parents grow in the awareness that their "domestic church" participates in the life and mission of the universal Church, so much the more will their sons and daughters be able to be formed in a "sense of the Church" and will perceive all the beauty of dedicating their energies to the service of the Kingdom of God. *Schools and Catholic universities*, as well as centers of spiritual renewal which are becoming ever more widespread in these days, are also important places for formation. *Groups, associations and movements* also have their place in the formation of the lay faithful. In fact they have the possibility, each with its own method, of offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life, as well as having the opportunity to integrate, to make concrete and specific the formation that their members receive from other persons and communities.

THE RECIPROCAL FORMATION RECEIVED AND GIVEN BY ALL

63. Formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all. In this regard the Synod Fathers have said: "Possibilities of formation should be proposed to all, especially the poor, who can also be a source of formation for all"; and they added: "Suitable means to help each person fulfill a full, human and Christian vocation should be applied to formation". In the work of formation some convictions reveal themselves as particularly necessary and fruitful. First of all, there is the conviction that one cannot offer a true and effective formation to others if the individual has not taken on or developed a personal responsibility for formation: this, in fact, is essentially a "formation of self". In addition, there is the conviction that at one and the same time each of us is the goal and principle of formation: the more we are formed and the more we feel the need to pursue and deepen our formation, still more will we be formed and be rendered capable of forming others. It is particularly important to know that the work of formation, while having intelligent recourse to the means and methods available from human science, is made more effective the more it is open to the *action of God*. Only the branch which does not fear being pruned by the heavenly vinedresser can bear much fruit for the individual and for others.

FORMATION OF THE VERNIAN LAITY

Be faithful
to your vocation!

Antonia Maria Verna

"Following Mother Antonia Maria's model, the Vernian laity propose themselves to live the spirituality of the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception, in gratitude to God for the gift of the

Christian vocation, and to give their contribution to the apostolic commitment of the Sisters in charity service and in evangelization". (St.n1).

St ch. IV: "Life of the Association".

Here we have the general lines of formation, subdivided into:

A – First formation for supporters;

B - Permanent formation for each lay who made the promise.

A – FIRST FORMATION FOR SYMPATHIZERS

"Candidates (men and women; married or unmarried) to be admitted as members of the Association are required to be of legal age, and practicing Catholics. After a **proper formation**, they must be willing to commit themselves to realizing the goals of the Association and to observing the Statute, with a promise of fidelity to be professed, with an appropriate formula, possibly during a liturgy, preferably in a Sisters' religious house, and to be yearly renewed on the 8th of December". (St. n.9)

At n. 9 of the Statute, they talk about an "adequate formation" before professing the promise. The term *proper* reveals that the Association must assure the supporters all the formative elements to make a conscious promise.

➤ Formation time

The duration may vary, but it should not last less than two years. Very special cases should be examined by the Regional President and his Council, in agreement with the General President.

➤ The formation supervisors

Firmly supporting what the Statute expresses: *The President, with the collaboration of his General Council, is responsible for the formation and the Mother Superior is the guarantor*, at the General Council level there is a Councilor responsible for formation as well as at the regional level. In the groups or in the regions, it would be appropriate to identify a *Vernian Lay*; careful, cautious, consistent, humble and simple, with a grounded life on prayer, which raises and gives confidence, so that he can be entrusted with the task of accompanying those who are beginning the path in the Association. This person can be helped by a Sister in the formation process for the sympathizers. In the event that, within the Vernian group, it is not possible to identify a lay person who can assume the role of mentor, it is possible that it is a sister or a priest who can carry out this task. The supporter is welcomed into the *group*, as a brother/sister in Christ, for a first mutual knowledge, to experience the style of the Vernian family and to become a faithful witness.

➤ Verifications

During the initial formation, space must be given to verify what is being done, with special regard to the specific commitments entrusted to the sympathizers. This verification should be a moment

of exchange of friendly opinions, which helps the supporters to express their doubts and their difficulties, to help their progress on their Vernian path.

The sympathizers must be accompanied:

1. to deepen
 - ✓the theme of life as a vocation,
 - ✓the vocation to be Christians,
2. to know
 - ✓his commitment and his place as a lay person in the Church,
 - ✓the vocation and mission of the Vernian lay,
3. to know
 - ✓the life and work of Mother Antonia,
 - ✓the spirituality and charisma of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea,
4. to know the Statute.

The lay who accompanies in the formation, should periodically meet the sympathizers for a profitable path on a spiritual, operational and relating to the contents level.

Decide upon a concrete commitment.

Plan some meetings with the group for training and spiritual retreats.

It could be necessary to adapt the content to the person, who is being on formation, and to the culture in which it has been inserted.

The demand for a deeper path could arise, in the case of a lay person, already knowledgeable, wishes to know more about some aspects of the charisma, spirituality, Sacred Scripture and faith. In this case the person in charge will be helped by competent people, in agreement with the Councilor responsible for the formation.

Being a supporter does not automatically force the promise: it is a mature and free choice of the candidate.

1- LIFE AS VOCATION

A- CALLED TO LIFE

- ✓ Starting point: Psalm 139 (138) *O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me...*
- ✓ *God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them* (Gen 1:27).

Reading of the steps of Genesis on the creation on man.

CCC study 355-384

B - CALLED TO FAITH BY BAPTISM

"It is no exaggeration to say that the entire existence of the lay faithful has as its purpose to lead a person to a knowledge of the radical newness of the Christian life that comes from Baptism, the sacrament of faith, so that this knowledge can help that person live the responsibilities which arise from that vocation received from God" (CfL n. 10)

The Sacraments (CCC. 1212 - 1658)

The Ten Commandments (CCC 2083 - 2550)

Christian prayer (CCC 2559 - 2856)

Reference texts: Sacred Scripture and Catechism of the Catholic Church.

SPECIFIC COMMITMENT

- Sunday mass,
- participation in Group meetings,
- small gestures of charity in everyday life, in the family, at work.

2 - THE MISSION OF THE LAY IN THE CHURCH

Deepen *the mission of the laity in the Church*:

- in the CCC, 897-913.
- read the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*.

SPECIFIC COMMITMENT:

- Active presence in the parish: participation into Caritas Groups, missions and different initiatives.

3 - LIFE AND WORK OF BLESSED ANTONIA MARIA

The spirituality and charisma of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, from which arises the specific commitment of the Vernian Laity.

Study:

- the life, the spirit and the charisma of Blessed Antonia Maria,
- reflect on how a Vernian lay can live the four rules of Mother Antonia and those of the Vernian laity,
- deepen the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

Reference texts:

- Montonati, *"A gratis" per amore*, 2011
- S. Majorano, *Antonia María Verna. Scritti*, 1997
- SCIC, *Il sapore della gratuità*, 2011.

SPECIFIC COMMITMENT:

- Experiencing gratuity in giving and receiving: give time, listening, patience, forgiveness, helping without asking for anything back and doing it with joy, especially to those who are most in need.
- Get involved in a charitable work: in the parish, with the Sisters or elsewhere for the poor.
- Daily pray a mystery of the Rosary.

Read carefully the Statute and the text of the Promise.

B - PERMANENT FORMATION for every Lay who made the Promise

Supervisors:

It stands as expressed in the Statute: *The President, with the collaboration of his General Council, is responsible for the formation and the Mother Superior is the guarantor*, at the General Council level there is a Councilor responsible for formation as well as at the regional level.

Content:

It is essential that the Lay who made the Promise commit himself to an ever deeper path of prayer:

- Holy Mass on weekdays if possible;
- Meditated reading of the Word;
- Daily recitation of the Rosary;
- Moments of Eucharistic Adoration, Via Crucis ...

During the Permanent Formation it is very important:

- take up the topics of initial training and delve into all its contents. (Reference texts are always Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church),
- read the Documents of the Church, the Messages of the Holy Father, etc.,
- deepen the study of the Foundress, the Writings and the Charisma (Reference texts are mentioned at n.3 of initial formation, to which other biographies of the Foundress and specific documents and texts on the mystery of the Immaculate Conception can be added),
- follow the *annual spiritual lines*, specified by the Congregation and also shared with the Missionaries of Charity.

The members of the Association must live with coherence and credibility the commitments included in the Promise, feeling and growing the membership to the Vernian Family.

It is essential that each Lay Vernian increasingly internalize the Charisma of Mother Antonia, living it concretely through commitment in works of charity and simple gratuitous gestures, in the family, in the Group, in the Parish ... In every place and situation he is called to announce Christ and His Gospel of hope, poverty, brotherhood and joy, also on the Crucifix, and to become

promoter of peace, unity and mercy. The Vernian lay must be able to re-propose the initiative, inventiveness and sanctity of the Foundress!

PROMISE OF LOYALTY VERNIAN LAY ASSOCIATION

To the praise and glory of God
for the gift of the Holy Spirit
I renew my promises
of my baptismal consecration
and I undertake to faithfully observe
the Statute of the Association of Vernian Laity.
On the model of Mother Antonia,
I want to live following the proper spirituality
of the Congregation,
according to my lay condition
and in communion with the Sisters
and the Missionaries of Charity,
also offering my contribution
to their apostolic commitment
in the evangelization
and in the service of charity "Massime ai poveri".
The grace of the Holy Spirit
and the intercession of Mary Immaculate
help me to be faithful
to this promise.
Amen



VERNIAN IDENTITY

The rules of Mother Antonia, 1823



1. Assist day and night and help the sick people, man and women, according to their strenght, people who suffer from any disease even the contagious one, such as leprosy, and all for free, without any reward, and mainly the poor people.
2. Catechize the girls, especially the poor ones, either at home or in the parish, above all during Lent, always without any reward.
3. Teach reading and writing to all the girls without distinction, especially the poor ones, for free.
4. Take special care of all the girls who are and will be orphaned and abandoned, mainly those who are really devoid of wealth, to give them some safe and advantageous location, according to their vocation and ability, also giving them that support for their subsistence according to the circumstances and forces of the retreat.

VERNIAN IDENTITY RULES

5. Live in communion with all the associates and all the Vernian Family, growing together in Faith following the light of the Gospel,
6. Live gratuitous love, inspired to the Immaculate Conception mystery,
7. Live your own life as vocation with clarity, conviction and perseverance, in complete service to the fellow person,
8. Take care of the formation path for a humble simple operativity in charity,

all “a gratis”.

FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINAL CONCLUSIONS

(Rome. 22nd – 25th October, 2015)

A. VERNIAN IDENTITY

Vernian lay people identify themselves as a community of believers involved in growing their faith, living the Gospel and the values of gratuity, availability, respect, solidarity, humility, simplicity and service, especially aimed at the poor people, as Mother Antonia did, getting inspiration and strength from the mystery of The immaculate Conception. During the Assembly, these concepts have been affirmed very often, with a further extension: we acknowledge that our *calling* is a vocation, to which we have to give a clear, convinced and strong response, grounded on faith and perseverance that come from the daily adhesion to the Word of God, to Jesus that is present in the Eucharist and given to us on the Cross. The Vernian lay is a person that “*looks Jesus*” with passion and a deeply rooted desire to meet him. That's why all of us are called to rediscover and rekindle our relationship with God with prayers (God's Word, Communion), in our own vernian community with various fraternity moments, our relationship with each brother, *especially with the poorest*, such as Mother Antonia asked: especially for the poor people. From the sharing of the “work instrument”, many beautiful and positive things that we usually do come to the light, while the different aspects that stop or block the path are grasped. Negative aspects challenge us, the positive ones stimulate us to dream of a future where it will be possible to realise a wider opening to brothers, a more audacious testimony and Gospel announcement, a livelier way of involving the young in a vernian cristian maturity path, a greater degree of collaboration among groups. The search for one's vocation, the conviction that everyone must live it with serious commitment, the dedication to the mission demand us to use all the energy and formation received to actively work among the young.

We need courage, a profound sense of belonging, of availability, commitment and a spirit of sacrifice to give ourselves to become the “*seed that accepts to die in order to make others live*”, in order to bring Jesus to those who seek him.

B) FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Charisma deepening

We look for Jesus, the Gospel is our Rule of Life; Mother Antonia's charisma shows us the style we want to embody it with. It is very important for every Vernian Lay to deepen the charisma and grow solid bases through study, sharing, prayer and concrete works:

- with exhaustive explanations and theological, spiritual, doctrinal and practical detailed studies,
- sharing, in the group and also in praying moments, the richness that the charisma and the missionary experience reveal us,
- participating in the activities and missions that express the charisma and spending time with people that deeply live it (Sisters, Missionaries and Lays) despite all the possible limitations,
- doing everything we could to have a Sister in each group, able to pass down the Vernian spirituality in all aspects,
- working in charity projects that may express the openness to the mission of our charisma, in syntonny with the “Verna fraternitas Onlus”, also in collaboration with other groups.

Sense of belonging

The Vernian lay must be aware of *belonging* to a family established by Mother Antonia, even if he works in other voluntary organizations in the area. The charisma bequeathed by our Foundress will be his distinctive trace. Furthermore, in a world where "visibility" is important, the discreet usage of the media (radio, TV, local newspapers) can be a means of spreading our *free way of living the Gospel*.

Formation

It is considered fundamental; it assumes various manners in relation to the culture in which it is carried out. It must be *permanent* and *focused*, or diversified for those who have already made their Promise and those who are supporters.

It includes:

- growth in our Faith, received in our Baptism, in the continuous search for Jesus, the Word, the Eucharist and our brothers,
- progress of our vocation and in the mission, along with the Gospel and Vernian charisma,
- ability to interpret the present situation, with its problems, in the light of our Faith (this requires adequate study and analysis).

The formation may occur in the groups, in the regions or at a general level.

In the groups, with sustained assistance, with a sincere fraternal sharing, with a deep sense of belonging, with the utmost openness inside the group and exchange and communication with other groups.

In the regions, through study, times assigned to the prayers and common projects. We must know how to pray and work together, holding hands.

At a general level, besides the annual proposal of the spiritual lines, the Council should plan two formation days in Rome, all Vernians invited, as it happened at the beginning.

It should also promote:

- a) a Statute close analysis, completed by the Assembly decisions,
- b) a "Promise" view,
- c) a day of prayer in which all the Vernian family (all the three branches) in Italy and abroad unite to invoke Mother Antonia's intercession for our family,
- d) provide information regarding the various groups and regions, their activity and the formation path they are following, adequately using the opportunity offered by the site www.laiciverniani.net.

All this will occur with the strength provided by the *Word of God*, by feeding on the *Eucharist*, with the *passion for the brother* and for *fraternity*, in Mother Antonia's style and charisma: humility, simplicity, free charity.

The young and young couples

Where there are groups with young people inside it is needed to:

- suggest activities according to their characteristics and awaken their human and spiritual potentialities,
- know how to attract them to Jesus and to the Gospel, living the charisma,
- pay special attention to young couples, using the schools or our Sisters as bases for activities and mission, involving them in their activities, raising questions, promoting meetings where they learn about Vernian spirituality, and our Association's characteristics.

A good example, given by fully convinced Vernians, as well as the reception, are undoubtedly the key to open young people's hearts.

Sense of family

The General Council, with the aim to improve group and region contacts, to understand their problems and to promote an *authentic Vernian fraternity*, will become *itinerant* and *enlarged*, at least in Italy. The Council will last two days, and this will allow the visit of different regions with their own groups, sharing, whenever it's possible, their activities, also inviting the Regional Presidents and their Councilors.

Life style

"Seeking Jesus" will have to be the true spiritual objective for all lay Vernian people for the next four-year period, with a life choices according to the Vernian charisma.

We'll seek Him with *enthusiasm* and *conviction*.

We'll seek Him with *faith in God's action*, knowing that He never abandons anyone.

We'll seek Him with simple and authentic *joy*

- in the Word, both individually and in the Vernian community we belong to,
- in the Eucharist, through the most frequently participation in the Holy Mass and in the Sacraments,
- in fraternity and in our brother, through creative opportunities for opening to others and the possibility of meeting our neighbor.

We must look for our brother in the near and far suburbs, with missionary spirit and an attentive eyes, to everyone's needs, such as our Holy Father demands us. We will find him on the Crucifix, when he shows up, if we accept our crosses with Christian patience and evangelic spirit.

THIS IS THE ONLY WAY OUR ASSOCIATION WILL BE ABLE TO BE DYNAMIC, TO BEAR FRUIT, TO FACE THE REMARKABLE CHALLENGES THAT THE TIME WE LIVE IN SHOWS US.

FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINAL DOCUMENT

(Rome, 24th – 27th October, 2019)

CHARISMA: A GIFT WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US BY THE SPIRIT

- Charism is the Spirit's gift given by God to the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of Ivrea, it has also been given to every member of the Vernian Family.
- Simplicity, charity and gratuity are part of Beata Antonia Maria Verna's charism.
- Gratuity which defines us, isn't born from an idea or a reasoning but is founded on God's Love and in our answer, following the Immaculate Conception's example.
- Charity, as has been taught by Mother Antonia, is to live with Christ, for Christ and in Christ. That begins with formation and prayer, it opens up our hearts, it pushes us to help the poor, whether it is a material or spiritual kind.
- The Charism is known by means of formation, experienced through testimony, shared among us to live in unity and harmony, overcoming obstacles.

Due to this we commit ourselves to:

- 1- **DEEPEN** our charisma with solid formation, getting help from anyone who "possesses" it firmly;
- 2- **INCARNATE** the charisma creatively, according to the times and places in which we live;
- 3- **LIVE** our charisma within charity work: feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, teaching catechism, educating the young, helping the needy as well as the victims of wars and natural disasters;
- 4- **SHARE** the charisma among us using the appropriate means of information;
- 5- **TESTIFY** the experienced charisma living our present, in happiness as well as with passion and fidelity the first four Rules of Mother Antony and the four Rules of Vernian identity.

ASSOCIATION

MOTHER ANTONIA MARIA VERNA'S MULTI ETHNIC RAINBOW

- The Lay Vernian people's vocation is founded on the baptismal promise and in Mother Antonia's Charism,
 - As Lay Vernian people we are called to be strong in our faith, in our vocation, in charity,
 - The Association of Lay Vernians acts being formed in a coherent and concrete manner, taking the spiritual guidelines proposed by the Mother and the Council into account, possibly facing uncomfortable social issues, as well as implementing the eight Vernian Family's eight rules within our socio-economic context,
 - Vernian Family's lifestyle is based on: humility, enthusiasm, happiness, fraternity, spontaneity, simplicity, giving its own talents with generosity.

That is why we commit to:

- 1- **MEET** in the group and among the groups with the Family spirit,
- 2- **BE**, like Mother Antonia, light in the darkness, making her testament ours in our every day actions,
- 3- **FORM** valid charismatic leaders, enthusiastic and ready to get involved in the service to others,
- 4- **PROMOTE** the Association of Lay Vernians, its image and its work, through informational means and multi linguistic means of information,
- 5- **ENCOURAGE** the Foundress values' transmission and young people's involvement in the Association of Lay Vernians, organizing specific events and through a special "commitment formula" for them,
- 6- **FAVOR** the sense of belonging within the Association of Lay Vernian through group formation and sharing moments with others, also festive,
- 7- **IDENTIFY** annually, Charity projects carried out in communion with the Sisters and the Missioners, putting into practice creative ways of fund raising and making an effort as a whole group, to complete them.

HOPE CARRIERS IN A DEFYING WORLD

- Hope is a Holy Spirit's gift, it opens up our eyes and our heart enlightening each dark angle within our history and within our present.
- In a Godless world, in which the Gospel is no longer known, a world in which nearly no Catholic catechism is taught and in which exists a desire to live without God, mother Antonia's choices strongly remind us that the first and most important work of charity is to take Jesus to man and man to God.
- In our present situation characterized by ego centrism and loneliness, Lay vernian people live fraternity Gospel and follow Mother Antonia's example of love for everyone: "They will be recognized as a result of the love they have for each other".
- Every Lay Vernian is a hopeful being who keeps cultivating that seed in his life and plants it within the heart of each of his actions.
- To every lay Vernian Mother Antonia's charity and gratuity are stimulus to help the poor, the children and the old living in disadvantaged conditions: "by the fruits you will be recognized".

That is why we are committed to...

- 1- confide ourselves to the Holy Spirit's strength, which overthrows every barrier and blows wherever it wants to blow.
- 2- Intensify prayer and persevere in it, whether it is alone, with our family or together, to discern the steps we should take to live Mother Antonia's charism.
- 3- Rediscover our faith's roots, catechize within commitment, acquiring skills and formation, turning mercy the heart of evangelization.

- 4- Catechize, first with life and then also with the gospel, in parishes, or in the families, with a particular attention to teenagers and the young who defy us, who need to find consistent adults with solid foundations.
- 5- Create fraternal communion in the group, in the family and in the parish: this will favor the knowledge, mutual support, especially in difficult moments.
- 6- Create a strong communion and a spiritual proximity in the group and the Association: to pray together to create Family spirit, which allows us to always find Jesus Christ, the Master.
- 7- Help the Parish and other Groups or Associations to carry the Gospel and the Gospel's Hope to the sick, the old and those who need comfort.
- 8- Do in such a way that Hope is:
 - heart's thrust of that one who is alone and discouraged.
 - heart's thrust of he who gives himself to the world and to humanity, even in the face of adversity.
 - heart's thrust of he who shares the future always made of new challenges to convey faith to others.
- 9 - To back up charity projects, whether those originated within the Association or from Parishes.

A UNITED FAMILY IN THE SIGN OF HOPE

- We are Family, because we live in the same charism the Spirit has given to Blessed Antonia Verna, even within different callings: Sisters, Missioners and Lay people. Vernian Spirituality makes us enjoy the happiness of living in gratuity, simplicity and humility in a unique and an original way by drawing our strength from Eucharist, the Crucifix and the Immaculate.
- According to the Statute's 5th article, the Association of Lay Vernian people must have a community of Charity Sisters as a reference, wherever possible. It must also promote and favor meetings with its sympathizers. Within this synergistic and relational dynamism and vocational or life states must be respected, and appreciated, making the Vernian Family U.N.I.C.L.(Unity-Noveltty-Interaction-Collaboration-Love for Mother Antony)
- There is a territorial division in respects of formative and operative professionalism, spiritual and cultural. It is positive to strengthen and to reinforce the sense of belonging, by taking advantage of technology as a communicative means and enforcing pilgrimages to vernian places.

That is why we are committed to...

- 1- Deepen the charism and spirituality with every available means to each group, possibly along with the Sisters and Missioners, to increase the sense of belonging to our u.n.i.c.l. family and to manifest it more and more.

- 2- To develop a vivid sense of our own personal responsibilities, actually each member of the Vernian Family is called to get harmonically involved as well as in a complementary way, getting involved in situations where there is discomfort and poor people.
- 3- Look for every occasion to live moments of prayer and celebration, along with the whole Vernian Family, open to those who are around, even if they are not vernians.
- 4- Find every occasion to work together in the catechism, in apostolic activities and free charity missions, updating Mother Antonia's four rules "mostly with the poor".
- 5- Move away from the "I do" to the "we do".
- 6- Get over the "differences" with the commitment to live communion for the sake of people who want us to show unity testimonies.

PRAYER TO MARY

O Most Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church,
With joy and wonder
we seek to make our own your *Magnificat*,
joining you in your hymn of thankfulness and love.

With you we give thanks to God,
"whose mercy
is from generation to generation",
for the exalted vocation
and the many forms of mission
entrusted to the lay faithful.

God has called each of them by name
to live his own communion of love
and holiness
and to be one
in the great family of God's children.
He has sent them forth
to shine with the light of Christ
and to communicate the fire of the Spirit
in every part of society
through their life
inspired by the gospel.

O Virgin of the *Magnificat*,
fill their hearts
with a gratitude and enthusiasm
for this vocation and mission.

With humility and magnanimity
you were the "handmaid of the Lord";
give us your unreserved willingness
for service to God
and the salvation of the world.
Open our hearts
to the great anticipation
of the Kingdom of God
and of the proclamation of the Gospel
to the whole of creation.
Your mother's heart
is ever mindful of the many dangers
and evils which threaten
to overpower men and women
in our time.

At the same time your heart also takes notice
of the many initiatives
undertaken for good,
the great yearning for values,
and the progress achieved
in bringing forth
the abundant fruits of salvation.

O Virgin full of courage,
may your spiritual strength
and trust in God inspire us,
so that we might know
how to overcome all the obstacles
that we encounter
in accomplishing our mission.
Teach us to treat the affairs
of the world
with a real sense of Christian responsibility
and a joyful hope
of the coming of God's Kingdom, and
of a "new heaven and a new earth".

You who were gathered in prayer
with the Apostles in the Cenacle,
awaiting the coming
of the Spirit at Pentecost,
implore his renewed outpouring
on all the faithful, men and women alike,
so that they might more fully respond
to their vocation and mission,
as branches engrafted to the true vine,
called to bear much fruit
for the life of the world.

O Virgin Mother,
guide and sustain us
so that we might always live
as true sons and daughters
of the Church of your Son.
Enable us to do our part
in helping to establish on earth
the civilization of truth and love,
as God wills it,
for his glory.

Amen

(taken from Christifideles Laici)