

**PROCEDURE FOR ESTABLISHING ASSOCIATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL WITH THE  
INTENT OF BECOMING INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

This policy has been established for the purpose of assisting groups of individuals who wish to found new religious institutes. Acting on the imperative, outlined in *Mutuae Relationes*, 51, that 'those who are responsible for discerning the authenticity of each foundation should weigh with humility, of course, but also objectively, constantly, and seeking to foresee clearly the future possibilities -- every indication of a credible presence of the Holy Spirit, both to receive His gifts "with thanksgiving and consolation" (LG 12) and also to avoid that "institutes may be imprudently brought into being which are useless or lacking in sufficient resources', this policy seeks to bring clarity to the process by which the diocesan bishop, in this case the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, is to pass judgment on individual initiatives to establish new religious institutes.

Please note that the *Code of Canon Law* does not presently provide for ecclesiastical movements or families which include priests, brothers, sisters, active and contemplative forms of life in mixed groups. Therefore, requests to formally establish such movements will not be considered in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Establishing a new institute of consecrated life is a process comprised of five levels or steps. Advancing to the next level requires the approbation of the appropriate ecclesiastical authority. Groups of individuals wishing to found new religious institutes are advised to allow at least five years for each level or step.

**Level One: Voluntary Association of Individuals**

- 1). A voluntary association seeking recognition by the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis for the purpose of establishing a new religious institute must be comprised of at least three individuals who have lived together in community for a minimum of two years.
- 2). During this initial exploration period the group should be actively developing their way of life, including by writing their statutes. Guidelines for writing statutes are available from the Chancellor for Canonical Affairs.
- 3). The individual members should pursue further education in their chosen spirituality and, if the nature of the group makes it appropriate, the group should engage with similar groups for the purpose of sharing prayer, community, and knowledge. A formal program of continuing education should be developed which addresses the group's particular needs for Catholic theology and spiritual progress.
- 4). A voluntary association may have its own spiritual director and confessor, but approval to reserve the Blessed Sacrament must be received from the Archbishop.

5). The group should interact regularly (at least once a year) with the Archbishop's Delegate for Religious, providing to the Delegate information on each member of the community including, but not limited to, curriculum vitae, sacramental records- including declarations of nullity when applicable, academic records, documents pertaining to the public profession of vows, civil documents such as immigration records as well as any incorporation documents for the community, medical reports and psychological assessments, and recommendations from a least two individuals who know the member well.

6). Other information provided to the Delegate for Religious should include descriptions of the physical factors and qualitative dimensions of community life, the financial condition of the group including any salaries or stipends received for employment and provisions for medical insurance and retirement benefits, the group's service and ministry to the faithful of the Archdiocese, and the group's spiritual life including worship, prayer life, and preparation for commitment.

7). The information provided should be the basis for an annual evaluation to be shared with and discussed with members of the group. With each evaluation, goals for the coming year should be agreed upon and stated in writing. This evaluation will be compiled by the Delegate for Religious and approved by the Archbishop.

8). In most cases, prior to entering the recognition process to advance to the level of a private association of the faithful, the group will be required to undergo a period of novitiate with a similar institute.

9). After the group has demonstrated a certain and reasonable stability (generally five consecutive years of living as a community), and received a minimum of two positive annual recommendations, the group may submit its statutes for review and formally request recognition as a private association by the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

#### Level Two: Private Association of the Faithful

1). After a minimum of two positive annual evaluations, the group may request recognition from the Archbishop as a private association of the faithful. As part of this process, the group's statutes must be reviewed.

2). Prior to reaching a decision whether to grant the requested recognition, a careful study will be undertaken according to the following:

- Completion of written documents, including statutes, directories, etc
- Evident charism or purpose
- Spiritual growth of the members
- Growth in understanding of the chosen commitment of vows or promises
- Growth in membership
- Responsible stewardship and financial stability
- Behavioral health
- Effectiveness in ministry

- Evidence of openness and cooperation with diocesan authorities

3). After reviewing the results of the study, the Archbishop will either grant the group status as a private association of the faithful in the Catholic Church or request that the group withdraw its petition for recognition. Either decision will be communicated to the group in writing.

4). If recognition as a private association of the faithful is given, this recognition will be for a specified period of time and renewed at the discretion of the Archbishop. In most cases, recognition will include establishment as a juridic person.

5). If recognition as a private association is granted, the group will be expected to adhere to the canonical norms for such associations, including canon 300 regarding the use of the term 'Catholic', canon 301 regarding pursuits under ecclesiastical authority, and canon 305 regarding oversight by ecclesiastical authority.

6). The annual review outlined in Level One will continue for each year the group remains a recognized private association of the faithful. Presuming positive evaluations and a growth in membership, after five years the group may request to be established by the Archbishop as a public association of the faithful.

#### Level Three: Public Association of the Faithful

1). After a minimum of five years as a recognized private association of the faithful, including positive annual evaluations and a growth in membership to approximately twenty professed members, the group may request erection as a public association of the faithful. This request should be made to the diocesan bishop of the territory in which the principal seat of the private association is located.

2). Prior to determining whether to grant or deny the request, a study will be undertaken according to the process outlined in the section on Private Associations of the Faithful. Special attention will be given to the charism, spirituality, and apostolate of the proposed public association. The proposed Constitution of the public association will be carefully reviewed as part of this study.

3). After reviewing the results of the study, the Archbishop will either establish, by means of a decree of erection, a public association of the faithful 'in view of being erected in the future a religious institute of diocesan right', or request that the group withdraw its petition for establishment. Either decision will be communicated to the group in writing.

4). If the decree of erection is issued, the members of the association may have their own novitiate, pronounce private vows, wear their own religious habit, have their own government, and establish houses in other dioceses. However, the vows taken by members in the association are not to be considered 'religious vows', and upon leaving the association the vows will automatically cease. Furthermore, while the association remains small in number, the Archbishop

will appoint its Superior and admit members to the novitiate and to professions. These provisions should be included in the association's Constitution.

5). If the public association wishes to establish a new house or section outside of the Archdiocese, the Archbishop must be consulted prior to approaching the bishop of the diocese in which the new house is to be established.

#### Level Four: Erection as a Religious Institute of Diocesan Right

1). In order to be considered for possible erection as a religious institute of diocesan right, the group must have at least forty members, the majority of whom are professed members in perpetual vows.

2). A group that has attained this status may petition the Archbishop for erection as a religious institute of diocesan right. However, prior to erecting a religious institute, the Holy See must be consulted (canon 579).

3). Before consultation with the Holy See, the Delegate for Religious will work with the group to assemble the information specified in 'Documents Required in View of Erecting a Religious Institute of Diocesan Right' from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

#### Level Five: Obtaining Pontifical Recognition of a Religious Institute of Diocesan Right

1). In order to receive pontifical recognition, a religious institute of diocesan right must have eighty to one hundred members, the majority of whom are professed members in perpetual vows.

2). A religious institute of diocesan right may petition the Holy See for pontifical recognition. The decision as to whether to grant this recognition lies entirely with the Holy See.

3). At the time that the religious institute of diocesan right is making its petition, the Archbishop will send a testimonial directly to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Society of Apostolic Life giving his opinion as to the stability and discipline of the institute, initial and ongoing formation, the institute's ability to ensure responsible governance, its administration of temporal goods, liturgical and sacramental dimensions of community life, and the institute's history of collaboration with the particular church.

4). At any stage in this process or the defined processes at other levels, the Archbishop has the right to withdraw his permission and support for the endeavor. Promotion to any level of the process should not be taken as a guarantee that further promotion will take place.

**Already Established Associations of the Faithful Seeking to Establish a Section of the Association in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis**

Prior to establishing a section of an already recognized Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the written consent of the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis is required (canon 312, 2). Before giving his consent, a study will be undertaken using similar criteria to that outlined in the section relating to private associations of the faithful.

Prior to making the request of the Archbishop, the Association must secure the consent of the diocesan bishop of the principal seat of the Association. Associations seeking to establish a section in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis will be expected to have the financial means to provide housing, medical insurance, and transportation for its members. A minimum of three professed members must plan to reside in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis in order for the request to be considered.

Permission, if granted, will be for a specified period of time and renewed at the discretion of the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The granting of such permission entitles the Archbishop to reasonable oversight over the exercise of the apostolate of the association, the formation of candidates, the government of the association, and the administration of its temporal goods insofar as those activities take place within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.