

Sacred is the Call: Reflections on Agregee

In 2013 those present at the Congregational Chapter committed the Congregation to "intentionally welcome, foster and develop emerging ways of living the charism such as...agrégée." One of the responses to this congregational call was a gathering in St. Paul of fourteen women, five from Albany (one in person and four by Zoom), one from Los Angeles, one from St. Louis and seven from St. Paul. These women, associates, consociates and partners in mission, came together from June 15 through June 17, 2018, with the desire to respond to the call of the spirit in each of them and to discern what agregee might mean for themselves and for the Congregation.

After examining elements of agrégée programs in other CSSJ Congregations who have implemented agrégée, namely Concordia, Erie, Springfield and Boston, the women gathered in St. Paul chose to express their hopes and desires as a series of statements coming from their communal dialogue and discernment during their days together.

We believe-

The agrégée commitment is a covenant relationship with mission lived in the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. It is a way of living the charism of unifying love, gift of the Spirit for the sake of the church and the world. The essence of agrégée is a graced and free attachment - to the mission, to the congregation, to each other. It can be a temporary or permanent commitment with rights and responsibilities related to justice, relationships, ministry and intentional community.

The agrégée commitment is characterized by:

- ~Living simply in the spirit of gospel values;
- ~Pursuing ongoing spiritual growth including an annual retreat;
- ~Choosing to live in community when feasible;
- ~Participating in community gatherings;
- ~Being responsible for one's own personal financial matters;
- ~Making an annual financial contribution to the Province and having a percentage of these contributions be set aside for agrégée needs as they arise.

The process of becoming an agrégée is modeled on ACOF and sister admission practices. It includes spiritual accompaniment with a mentor and resource persons. The time period of candidacy depends on the person's background;

Based on the value of self-authority, if an agrégée no longer feels called to this commitment, s/he may be dispensed following dialogue with a designated discernment community.

We extend welcome to those persons who have discerned the charism within themselves and have the desire to live the agrégée commitment.

We extend welcome, affirmation and invitation to those who are married, widowed, divorced, single or partnered as well as families; those of all gender identities and sexual orientations; those of all races and ethnicities.

We believe that what we put in writing now is an evolving expression of agrégée with the Carondelet Congregation. It will unfold with experience and further dialogue and discernment.

Therefore, in response to our 2013 Congregational commitment and the personal call of the Spirit each of us is experiencing-

We express our willingness to experiment and to intentionally live into what agrégée with the Carondelet Congregation means for us. This may be different for each person and in each local area. We will reconnect with one another in three months to share what is happening for us. After a year of experimentation, we will come together to reflect on our experiences and what we have learned as a way to guide us into the future.

While we acknowledge that much of what we have expressed here is already part of our reality, we feel an urgency to begin this time of experimentation together at this time.

Respectfully submitted by Gail Buschle, Mary Cay Cooney, Mary Craven, Nancy Koltko, Kileen Stone (Albany); Rita Scherrei (Los Angeles); Alexandra Guliano (St. Louis); Megan Bender; Louise Hiniker; Barbara McIlquham, Mary Kaye Medinger, Mary Louise Menikheim, Lois Mineau, Jennifer Tacheny (St. Paul)

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