

CHRIST THE PRIEST REGION

MANUAL FOR THE CREATION OF NEW GROUPS OF THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE CROSS IN THE CHRIST THE PRIEST REGION

1. Introduction

Like yeast to the batch of dough, or light in the darkness (Cfr. Mt 13:33 and Lk 8:16) Jesus' message needs to be proclaimed until the ends of the age (Cfr. Mt 28:20). Something similar pertains to the Spirituality of the Cross which brings the presence of Jesus, priest and victim, contemplative and solidary to the world (cfr. SAC 1).

The first inspiration to open a new group of the Apostleship of the Cross (AC) may come about in different ways. So the places where it could begin and grow are diverse, because the Spirit blows where He wills (Cfr. Jn 3:8).

This *Manual for the creation of new groups of the Apostleship of the Cross* presents three different ways:

- a. When the group opens where there already are other groups of the AC and/or communities of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit (MSPS) or another group member of the Family of the Cross which is willing to accompany a new group of the AC.
- b. When the new group opens in a place where there is no presence of the AC and /or the MSPS, or any of the groups belonging to the Family of the Cross.
- c. When the new group opens in a place where there already are groups of the AC, and it falls under the jurisdiction of an already-established Center.

The way these requests appear, even if varied, generally presents common characteristics: therefore, the process that needs to be followed may vary depending upon the particular circumstances. These topics will be further developed in No. 4.

In every case, so that the new groups may effectively relate to the Work and live out their own charism, the following guidelines must be taken into account. In this way, all members of the Apostleship of the Cross, baptized in the same Spirit, even though they are diverse, not only form one body (Cfr. I Cor. 12:12), but "moved by the Holy Spirit, follow Jesus Christ, Priest and Victim, Contemplative and Solidary, and in communion with Jesus, collaborate with His salvific mission." (SAC 1)

It is noteworthy that according to the Statutes, “Every person or group belongs to a Region” (SAC 49)¹.

It is important to note that this Manual only applies to the Christ the Priest Region (CPR).

2. Identity and unity factors.

- a. The *Statutes* are principles and norms that apply to the entire Apostleship of the Cross (SAC 83). This is why all groups which open in the future will use this document as a base. In it the history of the Work, its charism and main components; its formation process, its structure and the commitment of belonging that is required of those who wish to be part of this Work are explained.
- b. The *Regional Regulations* contain norms particular to a specific Region (SAC 85).
- c. The attachment of any new group to one of the existing geographic regions in the Christ the Priest Region (CPR) and its communication with the Region through the organizational structure proper to the Region: groups, sections, centers, Area Representatives and Regional Council.²
- d. The active participation of the people and groups in the life of the Region by the means available to them.³

3. The importance of a discernment process.

The Christian life implies a call from God and each person’s answer; belonging to the AC also implies that divine call and the active desire to welcome the charism of the Work. This is why the first step to be taken, when somebody wants to belong to the AC and /or open a new group, is to begin a discernment process to discover if the first intuition is the will of God, if the person is willing to embrace the spirituality of the Work and the commitments that follow thereafter, and if they have an actual ability for this kind of commitment.

A detailed and precise explanation of the commitment and the belonging to the AC can be found in the Statutes, Chapter 2, #7-9.

¹ “Region” is the combination of persons and/or groups of the Apostleship of the Cross who are under the pastoral care of a Regional Council, (SAC, 49).

² Describe the Region with the geographic areas that form it, and for the current list of Area Coordinators please refer to the internet webpage of the Christ the Priest Region of the AC at: <http://www.apcross.org>

³ From the beginnings of the group, the person who is in direct contact with the people that belong to it, will provide them with a general vision of the activities that take place at the local, Area and Regional level.

4. Stages in the Process.

Now, as it was explained in the introduction, the way these requests come about, even though varied, usually possesses common characteristics. And even though the process to be followed may be diverse depending upon the particular circumstances in the Christ the Priest Region (CPR) they also share common elements. Following, we describe the steps that would normally be taken to open a group:

A. Origin of the inclination/desire to belong to the AC.

Taking into account that there could be a variety of ways in which the first idea or need appears to establish a new group (God awakens in somebody the desire for God, and somehow they know about the Spirituality of the Cross; somebody wishes to open a new group of the AC in a different parish than those which already have it; because somebody moved to a different city, state or nation, and he/she wishes to start the AC there, because of a conflict of schedules of neighboring groups already in place, because membership is culturally diverse and/or the desire exists to open a group in a language different than those already present, etc.), the steps to be taken will always be the following:

B. Beginning stage:

- a. Once the person with the interest to start a group has made contact with any member of the AC, this person will refer the interested party to any of the Area Representatives of the CPR.⁴
- b. If that future group would be geographically within their area, said Representative will contact the interested party and begin a discernment process in the manner it was mentioned before, taking advantage of the resources the CPR already has in place for this.⁵
- c. If the discernment moves forward in the right direction, and the opening of a new group seems imminent, it is advisable that the Area Representative communicates to the Regional Council (RC) the facts and the process as it developed.
- d. When the new group belongs in the jurisdiction of a Center, it is the role of the Center Coordinator, together with the Local Council to analyze the request, discern the validity of the process and approve the opening of the new group. The Area Representatives must be kept informed at all times.

⁴ It might be useful to have a list of these people and their contact information.

⁵ For example, Initial Questionnaire for the starting of a new group, guide for optimal use of the materials in the web page, "Apostle of the Cross" Magazines, etc.

C. Consolidating the idea.

In this stage it is important to:

- a. Define the location of the new group.
- b. Gather information about the rules of the local church or parish, spirituality center, etc., where the group will hold their meetings.
- c. Have a conversation about the future members: who they are, how many, their cultural background, apostolic groups they may have belonged to in the past, language the group will use, etc.
- d. Meditate about the formation process proper to the AC and the way it might be implemented in the new group.
- e. Clearly define the communication channels between the new group, the Area to which it will belong, the actual people who will accompany them, etc.
- f. It is advisable that the Regional Director, by his own hand or through the Regional Secretary, send a letter to the pastor, the Director of the Spirituality Center, etc., a letter explaining the nature of the Work, the organization of the CPR, etc.

D. Starting a new group.

- a. The group will be assigned to one of the existing Areas in the CPR.
- b. The current practice calls for at least three members with the prospect of more in the future so the working of the group itself may be lively and targeted to living out their faith in the small community (Cfr. SAC 34).
- c. The person will express his/her desire and free decision to belong to the Apostleship of the Cross in writing, detailing the reason why, to the appropriate Area Representative.
- d. In order for the new group to start it is essential that the Facilitator be someone who has already received the Cross.⁶
- e. Throughout the first moments, and until such time as when the members receive the Cross, the Area Representative will walk with the group by all the means possible, either in person or through a person he/she delegates this role to.
- f. The Regional Director will send a letter to the pertinent authority (Bishop, pastor, etc.) notifying him of the official opening of said group.

⁶ In these cases, the counseling role can be taken on by a Sister of the Cross, a Missionary of the Holy Spirit, or another person who knows the Spirituality of the Cross and the Apostleship of the Cross because he/she belongs to the Family of the Cross. Due note must be taken of the role of the Area Representative in this process.

- E. First steps in the growth.
 - a. The new group will be considered a new cell of the AC in the CPR, and therefore, the Area Representative will maintain frequent communication with the Group Coordinator; the Representative will also provide the group the materials which give unity to the Work: *Statutes, Regional Regulations*, formation process, information and journey of the Work at the Regional and general level, etc.
 - b. When the time comes, the steps for the discernment about the best moment for the members to formalize their commitment of belonging to and taking the Cross will be undertaken.
 - c. From the beginning the members of the new group will be invited to have a sense of Work, and the way this is at the service of the Church and the world from the point of view of one's own spirituality.
 - d. When the time comes, it is common practice for the group to choose a name for itself.
 - e. At the same time, a way must be found to awaken in the members a missionary spirit which will move them to take the Work beyond their own group.

5. Areas of competence and responsibility.

- A. It is the responsibility of the Regional Council:
 - a. To assign the Area to which the new group will belong in the case the group is located outside of the territory of the groups already present in the region;
- B. It is the responsibility of the Lay Representative and the MSpS Area Representative:
 - a. To evaluate the case in point and accept the opening of the new group
 - b. To inform the Regional Council at the appropriate time;
 - c. To maintain direct communication with the person presenting the request, and/or assign and delegate so that somebody can walk with the group in the beginning, with the means at their disposal.
 - d. Strive so that the group will receive an adequate formation in the spirit of the Work.
- C. It is the responsibility of the Center Coordinator, together with the Local Council:
 - a. To evaluate the case, discern the process and approve the opening of the new group, when said group will belong to his/her jurisdiction;
 - b. To keep the Area Representatives informed at all times.

D. It is the responsibility of the Regional Director:

- a. To send a letter to the pastor, director of Spirituality Center, etc., explaining the nature of the AC, the organization of the CPR, and any other details he considers relevant. If he deems it convenient, he will also send a similar letter to the appropriate authority (Bishop, Pastor, etc.), notifying them of the opening of the new group.

6. Conclusion.

This document and its addendums are an instrument of the Regional Council to send out into the world every member and group in the Christ the Priest Region to share the *love that saves*.

This document was approved in Spanish by the Regional Council at their July and August 2015 meetings.