



March 2, 2021

Dear Sisters, Associates, Consociates, 'Ohana, Familia de San José and other friends of the congregation,

At the last Congregational Leadership Group meeting, we agreed to collaborate in establishing a newly designed Congregational Novitiate. The discussion leading to this decision focused on our commitment to the future of our congregation and to religious life in our world and the new forms that it will take in the 21st century.

The 21st Century Woman Calls for a New Approach to Formation

The Novice

Today, the women who are coming to our congregation are usually few in number. They come with a variety of experiences and from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. We recognize that welcoming this rich diversity will call the entire congregation to growth and change.

In order to best serve the congregation and these women, the CLG agreed to **consider the congregational novitiate as a process rather than define it as a program carried out in a specific place.** The process will be characterized by creativity and the flexibility necessary to respond to the needs of each woman and the congregation. The process will be designed to assure that a novice has ample opportunities to help her grow in our CSJ spirituality, theological grounding, CSJ history and experiences of participating with the congregation in mission. The process will also include opportunities to grow in CSJ identity through deepening relationships with sisters, ACOF and others who identify with the charism.

The Novice Director(s)

This plan assumes that while a novice director will assume the very serious responsibility of helping novices discern and grow in their CSJ identity, it is not required that a novice director and novice(s) live together. If the director and novice do not live in proximity to one another, the novice director will maintain frequent contact with the novice. The novice could also have a local sister companion to support her and be a liaison with the local community, the novice director and others involved in the formation process. An additional assumption is that while the role of novice director will be a sister's primary ministry, it will not necessarily be a full-time position. Finally, we understand that the ministry of serving as novice director could be shared by two sisters, thereby allowing for greater ability to respond to the diversity of the novices and for mutual support as their role develops in changing and challenging circumstances.

The Immediate Future

Flexibility in Province Participation

Given that our congregational structure is in transition, each province or vice-province will determine how they can and wish to participate in the congregational novitiate. The process has been designed with great flexibility in hope that all will be able to participate in it in some way while our governance structures evolve.

The Immediate Need

We now have a few women in candidacy in two of our provinces. Two of these women, like one of our two most recently professed, were born and have spent much of their life in countries other than the United States. This is a sign of how we as a congregation are being invited to grow and change with the times. We are called to contemplate and discern the new kind of future God is offering us and the world through us.

Even as we consider creative possibilities, we need to name one or more novice directors very soon. Aware that the choice of directors is crucial for the future of the congregation and for the church in our world, we are asking all sisters, ACOF and others who support our mission to join in prayer that that we will find the sister(s) best suited to carry out this vital ministry for the congregation.

In addition to prayer, we ask every sister to evaluate her own readiness to welcome new members and support them with generosity. We also ask you to help call forth women who could serve as our novice directors. Please think and pray about our congregational needs and the sisters who might serve in this ministry. Feel free to tell them what made you consider them for this role and encourage them to reflect about what they could bring to it.

We will soon begin a formal process for seeking sisters who could serve in this ministry. In the meantime, we will be united in prayer, conversation and discernment, asking the Spirit Sophia to guide us to go deeper, to respond boldly and creativity and to offer a prophetic witness to our world.

We thank you for your prayers and ongoing support of our congregational formation efforts.



Patty Johnson, CSJ
Congregational Formation Liaisons



Mary McGlone, CSJ