

SISTERS AND LAYPEOPLE ACKNOWLEDGED BY US AS TERESIAN FAMILY

*Institute of the Sisters of the Company of Teresa of Jesus
Selection of various documents*

We have a strong desire to live as Teresian Family. We like it; it offers us hope and enthusiasm. Acknowledging that Laypeople and Sisters are bearers of the charism broadens our horizons. For many Sisters it means sharing what they have received as “inheritance”. Together we desire to live as a charismatic family that acknowledges Henry and Teresa as masters of life, in that we Sisters and Laypeople feel invited to live the Gospel that humanises us and leads us to humanise our milieu as Teresian Family. All this demands capturing, acknowledging and naming what is already happening in many places and circumstances. We feel that sharing the charism that we have received and offering it to the Church and to humanity is for us an historic responsibility.

The Company acknowledges that it has seen itself impelled by the present historical situation and by the context of fragility to establish more effective and functional relationships, seeking collaboration and commitment from Laypeople in the educational endeavour and in the management of works. It is observed that for many Laypeople the feeling of identity and belonging to the Teresian Family comes to them above all through the Teresian School and their involvement in the educational ventures of Company colleges. Some Laypeople state that many of them are linked through the work environment more than through charism. The link with the Teresian Family is not evidenced so much by being parents or educators as by living Christian identity in harmony with the charism.

Now is the time to accept that the centre of gravity of the whole founding work of Henry of Osso is the charism and not the Company. We perceive this time as a gift of the Spirit who is at work in the midst of weakness to open up new spaces and new forms of belonging to charisms within the Church.

We observe that in many of the works there has begun the usage of the expression “shared mission” linked to management and reorganisation. With the reduced number of Sisters the need has grown for Laypeople to adopt responsibilities that Sisters formerly adopted. This affirmation explains a few of the comments:

- Many Sisters have accepted the proposal that basically arises in the school. A small number experience diffidence and feel themselves displaced.
- However it is hard for us to give up being in charge, to make ourselves indispensable, to form and to work as a team. It is hard for us to resituate ourselves.
- Some are able to see it as a solution to the decrease of Sisters in the works.
- We want Laypeople to proceed with assuming positions of responsibility.

It is now a matter of nourishing the life that has emerged as a result of such a process that has emerged in the majority of the works. We acknowledge with gratitude that without Laypeople many of the works and presences of the Company could not survive. We have gone ahead, believing in “shared mission” and in the richness of the charism which is not to be limited to the Company. There has taken place a journey of incorporation of the Laypeople into positions of responsibility and in various teams which has also involved a process of charismatic formation. To the extent to which they come to know the charism they feel connected and committed.

We are discovering that in the nuclei of shared life – where together, Laypeople and Sisters, we recreate the charism and live the experience of connection with the mission of the family – there is a step by step increase in the feeling of being the Teresian Family.

The Sisters feel the call to share Teresian identity and to believe that the charism has the creative capacity to incarnate itself in new forms of life or in various existential projects. Nevertheless it is the Company’s task to stimulate, form and accompany, and where appropriate to hand over the lead to others so that we can all grow and be transformed - “including making mistakes”.

In this whole process there are Laypeople and Sisters who are open, while there are others who find themselves in difficulty. Resistance and fear in “allowing ourselves to be family” are perceived on both sides. One’s own identity is discovered in relation to other identities. In this journeying the Sisters make explicit the need to resituate themselves within this family and to rediscover their identity as consecrated women through a profound desire of personal and institutional revitalisation.

A fact that cannot be ignored is the reality of urban marginal areas, of indigenous and rural people. We believe that it is time to be living enculturation of the charism likewise in the world of the poor and excluded. It is surely time to be asking ourselves what its place is and their link to the Teresian Family, and how they enrich the charism.

The actions that indicate that life is arising in the family are quite varied:

In some countries there are stable groups and communities of Teresian Associates and of TAM (Teresian Apostolic Movement) which is growing in awareness of the world movement.

Formation courses in charism and spirituality for Sisters and Laypeople who “acknowledge the Teresian charism in each other” are being organised in the provinces. The efforts at formation on the international level in the ITCs (International Teresian Centres) are acknowledged and appreciated by Sisters and Laypeople. We perceive as being a limitation that the opportunity for formation at this level is accessible to a reduced number of Teresians who in general are coming in the majority from the educational teams of the Company’s schools.

We are beginning to open ourselves up and are finding that together we enrich and complement one another. When we Sisters and Laypeople meet, we have a sense of being a family that shares life and activities. We are persons drawn by a spirituality that little by little we are proceeding to discover and nourish together, with a common cause: justice, reconciliation and peace in the Reign.

It is a significant fact that in the Intercapitular Meeting of Angola (October 2008) in the Continental meetings of Sisters and Laypeople in America (July 2009) and of the Sisters of Europe (October 2009) one of the priorities has been the Teresian Family.

Recognising ourselves as family based on our beginnings commits us to look upon the past together so as to nourish ourselves from our charismatic roots and to look towards the future so as to

underpin the sense of communion that the Spirit is arousing today. To live as “family” is something unprecedented which should develop little by little among those sharing the charism and the dreams.

GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE TERESIAN FAMILY AND SOME ACTIONS

- Become aware of the need for a change of mentality and of attitude in order to live out this sense of being Teresian Family: as Identities in relationship.
 - ✓ Acknowledge that we are mutually responsible for recreating the charism and for strengthening the sense of Teresian Family. Let us reflect profoundly on our origins.
 - ✓ Be open to relationships with persons who have this charismatic experience and with other families whose charism has the same root.
 - ✓ Acknowledge and be grateful for Teresian vocations in the broad sense. Vocational promotion needs to be rethought within the Teresian family as an stimulus for discovering and understanding the charism which is incarnated in various life projects.
 - ✓ Create networks of Sisters-Laypersons and other institutions.
 - ✓ Foster “generating nuclei” with Laypeople who have taken part in an ITC or other encounters. In some cases there could be opportunity for setting up a Commission of Sisters/Laypeople, and giving them autonomy to think about and propose actions that cultivate the sense and the creation of bonds as also a sense of Family.
 - ✓ Integrate this within community reflection topics so as to give a name to what is already existing, admitting the feelings that this arouses in us - fears, misgivings, enthusiasm, desires and so on - and enabling certain actions.
 - ✓ Organise at local, provincial, continental and intercontinental levels meetings of Sisters that will allow us to intuit the possibility of a new or transformed life born of the same Spirit that aroused in Henry the first “Teresian projects”. Let us designate persons and set up structures that will empower this process at the various levels.
 - ✓ We will need to effect this process so as to resituate our identity in relation to lay identity, arriving at agreed formulas that will commit us to arriving at the point of the Teresian Family becoming the object or theme of a General Chapter. Laypeople should be incorporated in the reflection with the aim that their participation in local, provincial and general Chapters becomes an established reality.

- **Arrange for Family interaction and relationships**
 - ✓ Arrange for the time and quality of the encounter with other members and groups.
 - ✓ Adjust the theoretical understanding of what is charismatic along with fostering relationships and the quality of shared life.
 - ✓ Open our houses, communities, areas and so on.
 - ✓ Open up other pathways to relationships well beyond the school. Develop recognition of different groups with whom we can join up as Family: Sisters and their relatives, former students, certain parents, open prayer groups, volunteers, people who have previously belonged for a time to the Company of Saint Teresa of Jesus, neighbours of the houses where we live, like-minded people and friends of Teresa of Jesus and/or Henry of Osso.
 - ✓ Promote associations of former students and of parents.
 - ✓ Care for and restore relationships with Brothers/Sisters of the Company, our families, former Sisters, and so on. Invite these to important events.
 - ✓ Reach out and open ourselves up to other families of Teresian spirituality.

- ✓ Link up the different groups of the Family who live in the same city. Share experiences that we are having. Create structures that facilitate relationships of equality between Laypeople and Sisters, among Teresian educational communities and inserted Teresian communities.
 - ✓ Be open to giving all I can and to receiving all I am offered by the different members of the family: listen to and examine what each one offers me and as family.
 - ✓ Welcome persons or groups who might be identified with the charism so as to journey with them. Resituate ourselves in our place which is not that of determining who belongs and who doesn't but rather of supporting acknowledgement of many others as being bearers of a charism belonging to many.
 - ✓ Give purpose to groups and individuals with whom we are living.
 - ✓ Support and stimulate the process of TAM renovation and autonomy as being a Lay Movement within the Teresian Family.
- **Establish accompaniment procedures for Teresian journeying as believers.**
 - ✓ Personally deepen our journeying as believers. Revitalise in us the passion for Teresa of Jesus that characterised Henry of Osso.
 - ✓ Read Teresa of Jesus together with Laypeople and reread what indicates that she should be intermediary for our faith journey, mistress and guide for our journeying.
 - ✓ Accompany Teresian prayer methods.
 - ✓ Prioritise times, persons and resources for accompaniment.
 - ✓ Accompany or stay close to and maintain family links with Sisters who have left the Company.
 - ✓ Encourage former students.
 - ✓ Wager on the life of Teresian communities with a sense of mission and commitment in the world, communities that are composed of Sisters and Laypeople of different lifestyles according to circumstances (who come together to effect a community Project, or to pray together every so often, or do Teresian readings, or share in social and/or gospel projects).
 - ✓ Promote encounters of persons leading groups and undertakings.
 - **Strengthen shared formation in “the charismatic”**
 - ✓ Make available shared opportunities (Sisters and Laypeople) for rereading of the charism and for reflection on the meaning of Teresian Family in different contexts.
 - ✓ Systematise conjoint formation of Sisters and Laypeople. Keep in mind indigenous people and lower levels of society.
 - ✓ Pay close attention to undertakings at the local level: beginning and follow-up.
 - ✓ Continue to create conditions for all of us to take on shared leadership and the practice of sharing in function of mission.
 - ✓ Stimulate and organise formation in charism, Bible, Theology, spirituality and community experience.
 - ✓ Make use of meetings and promote them based on this meaning and apply an experiential methodology that will lead us to deepen-know-understand and to get in touch with life.
 - ✓ Provide a charismatic nucleus as transverse axis of any meeting even when it does not take the charism as a central topic.
 - ✓ Reflect upon and stimulate the conclusions of the ITCs concerning the Teresian Family. Systematize experiences and reproduce them in other places and for other recipients. Consider holding these meetings at provincial, regional, continental or intercontinental

level. Foster these processes at provincial levels and design international meetings as points of arrival of phases previously lived in the places of origin. Incorporate Laypeople in the preparation of the ICTs.

- ✓ Live out the enculturation of the charism in the world of the poor, rural people and the indigenous. Ask ourselves what their concrete link is to the Teresian Family, whether they have a place, how they live and enrich the charism.
 - ✓ Assume that those for whom we are forming this family the thinking that is offered turns into a challenge that is offered to those who are motivated or feel attracted by it. It implies reflecting on formation, how they are going to join with us, what they are going to do, what horizons we are offering them. It would be necessary to give time to preparing a Plan of charismatic formation or of Family formative journeying, including deliberative processes that incarnate educating us as we educate.
- **Strengthen the Teresian Spirituality of Henry de Osso (formation and reflection), for mission and engagement in the world.**
- ✓ Reflect jointly on the way of being in the world as Teresians today.
 - ✓ Follow guidelines of the continental meetings of America and Europe and conclusions of the ICTs.
 - ✓ Make use of the personal capacities of Sisters and Laypeople.
 - ✓ Work as a team and work for the creation of international networks in local areas.
 - ✓ Promote the Teresian Volunteers and work at their development.
 - ✓ Invite and link Teresians through concrete projects of solidarity or of social transformation based on Teresian spirituality.
 - ✓ Build on already existing projects. Include amongst these the celebration of the 5th centenary of Saint Teresa's birth.
 - ✓ Translate materials into other languages.
- **Promote the spread of Teresa by the means within our scope**
- ✓ Be present where we can be seen and heard. Develop our sensitivity concerning the life of Laypeople. Shift from where we are positioned with regard to them.
 - ✓ Seek out people who can harmonise with our charism. Interest them in knowing and enriching their charismatic formation, in connecting with one another and give them personal and charismatic responsibilities.
 - ✓ Be mindful of the persons who are employed in our houses and communities: have some specific meeting, share with them important moments, set up "family relationships".
 - ✓ Review our way of being and of participating in the parishes in which we are inserted as a Teresian community: celebrate our Family days and share with the parochial community.
 - ✓ Search out and form committed friends of God. Arrange for sharing of our inheritance.
 - ✓ Make use of already existing forums or projects with the intention of sharing and rereading together with others the Teresian charism. With suitable accompaniment volunteers might be ideal spokespersons for presenting the charism.
 - ✓ Be creative in recognising, and in devoting ourselves to being recognised as, Teresian family.
 - ✓ Multiply texts and images. Have complete bibliographies of the total Teresian works.
 - ✓ Broadcast the TEP (Teresian Educational Project).

Ways of linking

There are persons or groups who do not feel the need to determine different ways of linking or do not see that this is the time:

- We do not feel the need to set limits; we feel the urgency of being attentive to the innovation that is growing among us and to accompany it with gospel lucidity.
- It is important to know the experiences of other religious congregations in this matter and to allow ourselves to be enlightened.
- It is appropriate to think about various criteria of linking for various groups of persons.
- We need to reflect jointly about ways of linking.

There are those who place the accent on the processes of rapprochement:

- It is appropriate that the incorporation of a group or family is done via a community, or possibly, another group. What is clearly seen is that, in whichever form, it would be necessary to choose it explicitly.
- It is important to express in some form the desire of belonging or linking to this charismatic family. It would be necessary to watch over the first stage of getting to know each other, and the second phase in which a mutual involvement and commitment is happening.
- It is appropriate to effect a “journey of faith” in which every person comes to the knowledge of this charismatic family via some community. This is not a permanent commitment, but it helps when the process is done in individual or group form, at the same time as the "connection" is taking place with other members who personify the charism and consider themselves in mission. We need to present or create structures that facilitate the linking of Laypeople in concrete form.

There are those who consider it very important to define the levels and various forms of linking, and they suggest to us:

- It is appropriate to reflect on those who form this family and to define levels of linking.
- It is appropriate to establish a few basic and common criteria that assure us an identity, shared identity or family spiritual affinity.
- It is important to foster flexible structures of belonging that allow autonomy to the Laypeople.
- It is appropriate to think about different ways and levels of linking: shared commitment and follow-up, something new that makes use of the richest of our tradition and history.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ITC COURSE “TERESIAN FAMILY 1” – 2008

In response to the suggestion made by the XV General Chapter to the General Council¹ throughout seven weeks of January and February 2008, the ITC called together Teresian Laypeople and Sisters so as to reflect upon and deepen what could be the meaning today of living or sharing, as FAMILY, the Teresian charism of Henry of Osso.

Aware of the limits of our reflection we are seeking to begin to formulate what is becoming clearer to us. Our conclusions form part of a process that has already begun and that should continue. They base themselves on what has been said about the Teresian Family² and we like to think that would serve other groups to follow up such reflecting in the future.

¹ “Develop reflection on the extension of the Teresian Family to its lay branch with various ways of linking”

² Sap which flows p. 21; Directory Art. 3; Constitutions Art. 34

TERESIAN LAYPEOPLE AND SISTERS
AS MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY OF HENRY OF OSSO:

We feel ourselves called to know and love Jesus, to make him known and loved, based on the reality of living out a “relation of friendship with Him, which humanises us and leads us to humanise or world. We look to Teresa and Henry as masters of this way of living the Gospel as charismatic Family in the Church.

THIS WAY OF PRESENTING OURSELVES HAS SOME **IMPLICATIONS** FOR US LAYPEOPLE AND SISTERS WHICH FORM PART OF THE MEANING THAT WE GIVE TO BELONGING TO THE TERESIAN FAMILY:

- Care and sensitivity in acknowledging the dignity of each person by the manner of being friends with each that opens up so many possibilities.
- Enter more deeply into the Word of God and the word of Teresa and Henry with both an intellectual and an affective knowledge that challenges us and incites us to action.
- Live deeply and promote Teresian Prayer methods both personal and communitarian which engage us with the environments in which we live.
- Profound attention to the cries of the real world so as to know and discern whence the interests of Jesus are progressing, and to give concrete responses.
- Continue experiencing that our way of being is communitarian. Let us learn from one another. Let us seek with others, work alongside others, and pray together with others. In the midst of life we feel we are disciples and teachers, always alongside others.
- Revitalise in all that we do the sense of the shared Mission of the Teresian Family and of the Church.
- Rediscover the Teresian charism of Henry through reflection and dialogue together with the various groups of Laypeople, Sisters and priests who are living the charism in the light of the gospel journeying of Henry and Teresa and of the ecclesiology of communion.

CONCRETE ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL TERESIAN COUNCIL (ITC)

There is a base conviction that inspires many of the actions that we are saying should continue: All of us, Laypeople and Teresian Sisters are co-responsible for strengthening the sense of Family. From this arise the following proposals:

- Live, share and enrich with passion and commitment the *Teresian Charism* and everything being lived at present. Present it in our groups and communities, prizing what we already have and generating new ways of acting.
- Become aware that we need a change of mentality and attitudes in our relations as Teresian Family and put this into action without delay:
 - ✓ We are all in the process of learning, based on the life project of each and his/her personal maturity.
 - ✓ We need to know ourselves and acknowledge ourselves as Teresian Family, and look for new ways of linking or coming together among members and groups.

- ✓ For the Sisters this change of relationships means the living out of the “congregational position” proposed by the last General Chapter³.
 - ✓ Continue reflecting on the way of creating or of renewing structures of communion and animation, and facilitating conditions that permit the development of relations between Laypeople and Sisters. Envisage more multiple and participatory ways of acting than those we already have.
- Become aware that it is an ample *Charism*, for sharing with many others unstintingly, well beyond our Family.
 - ✓ Gratitude for the gift received and responsibility for sharing the faith through Teresian Spirituality, with an ecumenical and universal sense.
 - ✓ Foster opening out to others and joint work in projects, humanitarian causes and other efforts in favour of the dignity and strengthening of the human Family.
 - Recreate the Charism within the different groups of the Family and continue steadfastly along the way initiated in each, respecting their identity and their particular processes.
 - ✓ Design several specific plans.
 - ✓ Choose to invest time and money, to share spaces, and to support the initiated processes, whether as persons or as groups or communities of the Teresian Family.
 - Promote research and joint formation within the Teresian Family:
 - ✓ Develop the spirit of research and of personal, group and Family formation.
 - ✓ Stimulate the preparation for shared leaderships.
 - ✓ Set up in every place where we are, formative processes that involve us, Sisters and Laypeople, in the different searches.

CONCLUSIONS OF ITC II 2009 - THE TERESIAN FAMILY EXISTS ALREADY

Giving continuity to the ITC of the Teresian Family 2008, we brought together Laypeople and Sisters to reflect upon and to deepen different aspects of the Teresian Family. Conscious of the limits of our reflection, we are seeking to take a further step in the process that has begun and that must continue.

Laypeople and Sisters, as members of this Teresian Family of Henry of Osso, **we feel called to know and to love Jesus, to make him known and loved, based on the reality and the experience of the *relation of friendship* with Him and with others, that humanises us and leads us to humanising our environment.**

We acknowledge Teresa and Henry as masters of this way of living out the Gospel as Charismatic Family in the Church.

³ Final document of the XV General Chapter: “As part of a humanity thirsting for God, communion, justice, life, and peace, we feel ourselves called *to situate ourselves in life with simplicity, humility, depth, and as a community of disciples hearing the word.*”

For this team, assembled in Ávila-Tortosa in the year 2009 for one month, being Teresian Family has many **implications**. We emphasise the following ones in accordance with what has been more significant.

Everything that we can offer others must arise from a personal experience, from what we consider essential:

- Living our own spiritual itinerary (the experience of God) in the light of Teresa and Henry and to offer mediation so that others may live it:
 - ✓ Recognizing one's own interior wealth and that of every person through relationships that humanise others and humanise ourselves.
 - ✓ Studying in depth the Word of God and also the word and life of Teresa and Enrique with an intellectual - affective knowledge that challenges us and impels us to action.
 - ✓ Living and promoting methods of Teresian prayer, deep attention to personal and community existence or other options that commit us to the environments in which we live.
 - ✓ Being attentive to the real world so as to know, to discern and to give concrete responses.

- Starting from a world that challenges us, to generate communities that will respond to various demands and to present in a plurality of forms the experience of the Teresian charism. For this:
 - ✓ Develop the community or associative sense of our Christian-Teresian vocation.
 - ✓ Laypeople and Sisters need to resituate themselves responsibly within the family, seeing themselves as active bearers of the charism and renewing relationships, according to the new ecclesial ecosystem⁴
 - ✓ Set up the conditions by which every member of the community performs at his/her best, recognising themselves as disciples and teachers, alongside of others.
 - ✓ Generate processes of accompaniment and/or monitoring of life and formation.
 - ✓ Rediscover the sense of our charismatic family, by reflection and joint dialogue among its different groups, in the light of the gospel journey of Teresa and Henry and the ecclesiology of communion.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

All of us, Laypeople and Sisters, are jointly responsible for recreating the charism and strengthening the sense of Teresian Family, and in consequence we support the following proposals:

- Share the reflections and experiences of this ITC in our communities, so as to generate new procedures.

⁴ Antonio Botana. Conference: Current ecclesial situation of charismatic families, p.5: " The new ecclesial ecosystem is characterized by the grouping of evangelical or charismatic families that is to say, the sets formed by institutions and groups of believers joined by the same founding charism, or the same charismatic root, but with different states of life and with differing emphases of the same charism. The force of the charismatic family does not come from a domineering institution that drags the others, but from the communion between the diverse institutions and groups at the service of the same mission. It is enriched by the particular charisms of each group".

- Experiment with new ways of linking or calling together among members and groups to promote participation and more active experience:
 - ✓ Offer ourselves opportunities for rereading of the charism from different contexts.
 - ✓ Design and implement specific plans that will generate solid formative processes.
 - ✓ Invest time and money into sharing spaces and supporting initiated procedures, whether for persons, groups or communities of the Teresian Family.

- Stimulate a process of joint formation that fosters a change of mentality in relationships as Teresian Family:
 - ✓ Prepare ourselves to be able to assume shared leadership.
 - ✓ Commit ourselves to self formation.
 - ✓ Be propagating agents within our own setting.

- Be aware that the Teresian Charism is open to universality:
 - ✓ Share and enrich faith by means of Teresian Spirituality.
 - ✓ Be open to working together on projects, humanitarian causes and other efforts that foster dignity.

We promise to live and transmit these involvements and actions in the real world, and we desire that all the members of the Teresian Family continue to reflect and live new forms of linking with the Charism.