

# LCG Mentoring Guidelines

## Preface

As the title of the document indicates these are simply "Guidelines" for use by any mentor as they journey with a LCG candidate through their two year Discernment Period. The mentoring process is an opportunity for us to provide direction and support to a discerning candidate, specifically for their spiritual life within the context of the Cistercian charism.

The process involves developing a relationship and three way communication between the candidate, the mentor and the Holy Spirit. The mentor as companion must be open for the flow from the candidate to the Holy Spirit and from the Holy Spirit to the candidate. It is not our job to effect a discernment; that is between the Candidate and God. Our job is to provide information and guidance so that the candidate can make a proper discernment.

"As individual lay Cistercians, we recognize a personal call that is experienced in community as a gift from God. We define it as a call to be an active witness of Christ and his Church in the midst of the world, providing a prayerful and contemplative testimony in a life defined by the values of the Cistercian charism. This life is guided by the Rule of Saint Benedict as a concrete way to interpret the Gospel, and by our Cistercian Fathers and Mothers. This personal call is a means of continuous conversion, one that leads to a rediscovery and deepening of the grace of our baptism and the development of an adult faith." From "Identity" adopted by International Association of Lay Cistercian Communities (IALCC) 6/7/08.

During the discernment period we seek to adapt Cistercian spirituality to the lifestyle of a lay person though it is very clear that there are two different ways to live it, monastic and lay, and both are complementary. This shows us the vitality of the monastic life. Lay people have found in Cistercian spirituality a way to live in the world with greater commitment and spiritual depth. We are unanimous in our belief that the Cistercian charism can be lived outside the monastery.

There are many ways to live the Cistercian Lay life – but although the forms may be different all have only one aim: "to seek God". Because every mentor and every candidate is different in their spirituality, their life history, and in their experience of the Cistercian way, each mentoring relationship is attuned to the skills and needs of the participants. These Guidelines have been developed to provide the Mentor with a variety of mentoring information and methods, a book list, and a sample check sheet. It is up to the Mentor to get to know the candidate and then develop a program and check list to match the candidate.

Our discernment process seeks to introduce and immerse the candidate in Cistercian values and practices, summarized in the IALCC "Identity" document, which

are a means of liberation and internal conversion, can be incorporated in the life of laypersons:

Prayer and praise  
Confidence and abandonment to God  
Humility

Obedience  
Poverty  
Chastity

Austerity  
Simplicity of life  
A balanced life

Silence and solitude  
Work  
Hospitality and service

Stability  
Simplicity  
Joy

### **Mentoring Outline**

1. The discernment process usually will last for two years. More or less time may be granted if the Mentor deems it advisable based on the candidates experience.
2. The mentor will work with the candidate to help them understand:
  - The history, purpose and nature of LCG.
  - The Cistercian Charism
  - How the Cistercian Charism can be lived in our lives
  - The LCG Plan of Life

### **INITIAL CONTACT**

1. Initial contacts will usually be made through the Local Coordinator who will send out information about LCG, Friends of LCG, and a formal application with a cover letter that will explain the Discernment process.
2. When the application has been returned, the Local Coordinator will review it, promptly select a mentor, and provide a copy to the mentor with a copy of the Mentoring Guidelines as needed.

### **MENTORING**

1. The mentor must be a person who has made their formal commitment as an LCG member illuminated by the Spirit through their living in the presence of God. The mentor should have a good understanding of the Cistercian Charism and how it is lived in the

world.

2. The Mentor must have and commit to the time it will require to walk with the candidate for the next two years. This will require time for study and for meeting regularly with the candidate. We must always remember: "You gave me these people, who have come out of the world, they belonged you, and you gave them to me. {Jn 17.7}
3. Initially, the Mentor will converse with the candidate and get an understanding of where they are coming from and how much do they know and what are their greatest needs pertaining to LCG. Following this the pair might develop a plan (perhaps of twenty four months) to become more attune to God and the Cistercian charism.
4. Respecting the various strengths and needs of the candidate and the mentor we suggest, consistent with our Formation Guidelines the following areas for consideration which have been useful to initiate and inform candidates:
  - a. Review the LCG Plan of Life, and together make suggestions of best practices to apply it in the life of the candidate.
  - b. Reading: Identify books that would help the candidate in the discernment process (consider material from the List of Suggested Readings.)
  - c. Read and Discuss the *Rule of Benedict* to become acquainted with the basis for monastic life and work.
  - d. Take several meetings to read, review and discuss in depth the *Exordium* which best explains the foundation and development of the Cistercian Order with emphasis on the important historical persons in Cistercian history and crucial elements of the Cistercian life and charism.
  - e. Stress the importance of a daily prayer life: consider elements of the Cistercian charism.
  - f. Encourage the candidate to be involved with the local community when one is available.
  - g. Share with the candidate elements of Lectio Divina, regularly participating together is reading, meditation and contemplation of spiritual text.
  - h. Journaling can be a useful method whereby the candidate is encouraged to write regularly of his/her spiritual odyssey and efforts, successful or otherwise, to apply the Cistercian charism in daily life.
  - i. Some mentors suggest a candidate might write, early in the process, thoughts and dreams of the Cistercian community and charism; and, later, toward the end of the discernment period, again write of thoughts and dreams of the Charism and community.
  - j. It is vitally important to maintain frequent communications with meetings, phone and or e-mail; whatever works best for the two of you.

### **THE CANDIDATE**

During the Discernment Period the candidate will become familiar with:

1. the history and elements of the Cistercian charism
2. consider and apply elements of the Plan of Life.
3. enhance regular prayer and Lectio Divina.

4. maintain active participation in the local community (for some this may be an E-Mail group.)

### **COMMITMENT**

At the end of the two year discernment period if the Mentor and the candidate feel that the candidate has a reasonable understanding of the Cistercian Charism, the application of the charism in his or her daily life and the candidate wishes to belong to the LCG Community the Mentor will present to the Local Coordinator his / her name for Commitment to LCG. It is at this time the candidate can answer the question, "What does it mean to be a Lay Cistercian rather than any other Lay Monastic", with a resounding: "Yes, God is inviting me to this style of life."

With Local Coordinator agreement the candidate will be recognized and celebrated at the annual LCG commitment ceremony as a member of the Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey.

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