

U.S.-Ontario Province Policies and Guidelines Formation for SNJM Associate Candidates

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM), acting on the direction of Vatican Council II, regarding renewal of religious life in light of the charism of a Congregation, has developed a special relationship with women and men, who resonate with the charism and spirit of the Congregation, and who thus desire to live their lives in the light of the charism and in communion with the Sisters and with one another. This relationship is referred to as Associate Commitment.

Associates are called to live out the SNJM charism within their chosen lifestyles in relationship with the Sisters and with other Associates. Integral to SNJM Association are prayer, community and ministry.

Prayer: Through prayer, contemplation and the witness of their lives, Associates further the SNJM mission. Their lives of prayer are central to their ministries and community life. Associates are united in prayer with the entire Congregation.

Community: Associates and Sisters mutually enrich one another and give life to each other at Associate and SNJM community gatherings, celebrations and other special events. Connecting with and supporting Associates who are no longer able to attend gatherings is coordinated by the Local Associate Leadership (LAL).

Ministry: Associates, imbued with the charism, extend the SNJM mission in ministry, family, workplace, community or Church.

Essential Components of the Preparation of Candidates

As part of the preparation of SNJM Associate Candidates, Local Associate Leadership will:

- introduce the candidates to the identity and reality of the Congregation;
- plan activities in which the spirit of the Congregation may be experienced;
- provide opportunities for candidates to deepen their spiritual life and their understanding of Christian mysteries. and
- introduce the process of prayerful discernment and accompany the candidate through the process.

The period of formation, which usually extends between six months and one year, is adjusted to meet the needs of individual candidates. See **Addendum 1** for the list of recommended resources to be used throughout the formation process. **Addendum 2** provides additional information on the specifics of Prayerful Discernment.

1-The Identity and Reality of the Congregation:

The LAL emphasizes the founding of the Congregation by Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher, the evolution of the SNJM charism, and contemporary priorities of the Congregation to meet today's needs.

- History of the Congregation, its charism and mission in the Church
- Life and work of Marie-Rose Durocher and other foundresses
- Spirituality focused on the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
- The Acts of General Chapters relevant to the commitment of Associates
- History of the formation of the U.S.-Ontario Province - See **Addendum 3**.
- History of former province as it relates to location of the Associate Candidate

- Role of Province Chapters in the life of the community
- Role of Mission Centres which are “evolving units of government designed to meet needs in a specific area.”
- An overview of the life of Provinces/Sector from the Congregational perspective
- Leadership Structure of the Sisters of the Holy Names

Recommended resources are:

- The Acts of the 33rd General Chapter July 2011
- Synthesis of the General Chapters 1986-2006
- Fire upon the Earth (DVD)
- Célébrités/Mother Marie Rose

Suggested Reflection Questions for Associate Candidate:

As you become more acquainted with Blessed Marie-Rose and the history of the SNJM Community, reflect on the values that you think characterize this woman and her community as you know it at present.

Are these values that you have/want in your life?

Which are most important at this time in your life?

What is your understanding of the SNJM Charism?

What gifts do you have which match the SNJM Charism?

How do you currently live the Charism in your daily life?

Do the Acts of the General Chapters present values and directions you have or want in your life?

Which Act particularly calls to you?

2-Experiences of SNJM Spirit:

LAL emphasizes experiences which provide Associate Candidates with opportunities to share community activities with other members, and to identify ways to share one's call in support of SNJM ministries through prayer and/or active involvement.

- Prayer with Sisters and Associates in a variety of settings (e.g., retreats, prayer groups) from which the Associate Candidate can gain a sense of SNJM spirituality and in which the candidate's own spiritual gifts may find expression;
- Opportunity to experience a sense of shared ministry with other Associate Candidates and with Sisters and Associates;
- Invitation to participate in the ministries of Sisters and Associates according to individual possibilities and calls, and
- Invitation to attend Mission Centre meetings, prayer groups, clusters, and Chapters.

Recommended resource is:

- A Pilgrimage of the Heart With Mother Marie-Rose

Suggested Reflection Questions:

What do you see as a possible or continuing ministry within your lifestyle and commitment as an SNJM Associate Candidate?
How did attending Mission Centre and/or other SNJM meetings help you develop a sense of yourself as a member of this group?

How do you plan to participate in meetings, gatherings and celebrations in the future?

3-Spiritual Life and Christian Mysteries

LAL emphasizes opportunities for personal spiritual growth and communal prayer groups, both rooted in the Gospel and central to the mutually enriching relationship between Sisters and Associates.

- Exploration of various prayer forms: personal and communal prayer and the prayer of the Church (the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist);
- Emphasis on contemplation in action;
- Experiences of faith-sharing;
- Acting on one's call to justice;
- Reflection on central mysteries of Christian faith in light of one's life experience, and
- Deepening sense of one's baptismal call and of the role of the laity in the Church.

Recommended resources:

- Acts of the General Chapters

Suggested Reflection Questions:

What does contemplation in action mean to you?

How do you experience your call as laity in the Church?

What would be helpful in your spiritual journey as an SNJM Associate?

Addendum 4 is a sample of an SNJM Associate Formation Document.

Preparation of Former Vowed Members Seeking Associate Commitment:

During the period of preparation of a former vowed member seeking to become an Associate, the LAL is encouraged to consider the Associate Candidate's

- past experience within the Congregation,
- knowledge of the origin and history of the Congregation,
- understanding of the evolution of the Congregation since her departure as a vowed member, and
- understanding of the distinct call of being a person in Association with the SNJM Congregation.

The LAL is encouraged to include in the process consultation with some vowed members who lived and ministered with the Associate Candidate when she was a vowed member.

Preparation for Initial Associate Commitment

In preparation for the candidate's Initial Associate Commitment, it is important that the LAL stresses the mutual agreement between the Congregation and the Associate Candidate. The roles and responsibilities of the Congregation and the Associate are described in detail in the following Mutual Agreement.

MUTUAL AGREEMENT

Associate Commitment involves a mutual agreement between the Congregation and the person who is called to this form of commitment. Finding its meaning in the sharing of the charism of the Congregation, this relationship is formally endorsed in a written agreement which expresses the respective roles and responsibilities of the Congregation and of the Associate.

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary

- extends hospitality to the Associate;
- unites with Associates in prayer;
- offers opportunities for spiritual development and for participation in various community gatherings;
- may invite Associates to share in the SNJM mission through collaboration in some SNJM ministries;
- shares Congregational level and Province/Sector level communications pertinent to Associates;
- initiates a process of discernment for initial commitment;
- assures a process of discernment and evaluation for renewal or non-renewal of the agreement.

The Associate

- makes a commitment to the Congregation to integrate prayer, community and ministry in her/his life according to the charism and spirit of the SNJM Congregation for a specific length of time determined by the Province/Sector;
- shares her/his gifts and talents with other Associates and with Sisters;
- is present at various gatherings, as much as possible, as agreed upon at the Province/Sector level;
- participates in a process of discernment and evaluation to renew commitment;
- understands and accepts that Associate Commitment is a relationship to the Congregation, rather than membership in it;
- understands and accepts that the governance and finances of the Congregation are the domain of the vowed members.

Respective Obligations

The written agreement precludes any canonical bond, and all legal (civil and canonical) obligations as well as financial obligations. Before formal admission to Associate candidacy, the interested person will express a desire to begin this relationship to the Local Associate Leadership. This request is made in writing according to the *U.S.-Ontario Policies and Guidelines*. Upon completion of the period of candidacy, the Associate Candidate and the Congregation sign the mutual agreement for a specific period of time. The length of time is determined by each Province/Sector.

Questions or assistance with these *U.S.-Ontario Province Guidelines* may be directed to the Associate Coordinating Committee at acc@snjmuson.org.

Addendum 1

U.S.-Ontario Province Associate Candidate Formation Resource List

We recommend the following resources for use in the formation of Associate Candidates:

1. *Who Do We Say We Are?*
Synthesis of the Acts of the General Chapters (1986-2006)

The Acts of the 33rd General Chapter July 2011
2. *Célébrités/Mother Marie Rose* (Book) by Yolande Laberge snjm
3. SNJM Congregational Policies and Guidelines on Associate Commitment
4. Fire Upon the Earth, Legacy of the SNJM's (CD) in Charism Book
Mary Haupt snjm
This video is located on the Province web site.
Link: <http://www.snjmusontario.org/who-we-are>
5. Marie-Paule Hermine Paré (CD)
6. *A Pilgrimage of the Heart with Mother Marie-Rose*
7. *She Who Believed in Tomorrow* (Book) by Frances Allison snjm
8. SNJM Corporate Stands
The SNJM Corporate Stands are located on the Province web site.
Link:
<http://www.snjmusontario.org/what-we-do/vision-and-mission/45-what-we-do/1133-corporate-stands>

Addendum 2

Discernment

1. What is Discernment?

- a. "Discernment...is the process of intentionally becoming aware of how God is present, active, and calling us as individuals and communities so that we can respond with increasingly greater faithfulness." ~ Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM: *The Way of Discernment*
- b. Discernment is a Christian spiritual practice, "a process of sifting out what is of God, discriminating between that which expresses God's call and anything that runs counter to it." ~ David Longsdale, *Listening to the Music of the Spirit*

2. When is Discernment Introduced?

Discernment is introduced immediately after a person becomes an SNJM Associate Candidate, and throughout the Formation Process. .

The Local Associate Leadership's (LAL) Discernment sessions should include:

Introduction to the Awareness Examen

Seven Steps for Discerning a Decision

Foundations of Discernment

Paying Attention to the impact of ...

Memory

Intuition

Body Awareness

Imagination

Reason

Power of Religious Affections

Nature

Confirming One's Tentative Decision through discussion with the LAL prior to the Candidate's Application to Make A Formal Commitment.

3. How is Discernment Useful in the Associate Formation Process?

As various units of the Formation Guidelines are introduced, the LAL may offer particular prayers or practices of discernment for the candidate to consider.

Candidates should keep a Discernment Journal throughout Associate Candidacy. This enables them to record and reflect on questions, feelings, and prayers throughout this journey. It will also be a helpful tool in reviewing and considering the entire journey when the time comes to make a decision regarding Initial Associate Commitment.

Resource List:

Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM Shares Insight about the Art and Spiritual Practice of Discernment on YouTube (Aug 8, 2014 Connections; uploaded to YouTube July 16, 2014) <http://youtu.be/QD9jVpUOk1U>

The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making by Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM

Prepared by Pam Wood

Everett Associate Region

Addendum 3

U.S.-Ontario Province Reconfiguration (Highlights of Dates)

1998: Leadership Teams of five SNJM Provinces – California, New York, Ontario, Oregon, and Washington – made a commitment to a process of Reconfiguration, with a view to revitalize and to enhance SNJM ministry

2002: Interprovincial gathering at Asilomar, California

2003: Early in the year, the Leadership Teams established the Confluence Committee to implement Reconfiguration in the spirit of the directional statements to which 450 Sisters and Associates had given shape in 2002 at the Interprovince gathering at Asilomar. Since then, many Sisters of the five Provinces (approximately 700 in total) and some Associates (approximately 350 in total) have gathered in different regions for further reflection and focused conversation to continue the process.

The Confluence Committee's role was twofold:

- To implement the directional statements related to reorganization;
- To oversee and integrate the work other committees would do to further directional statement in the areas of ministry, finance and membership. The Confluence Committee establishes other committees as the reconfiguration task might require and seeks input from other established Interprovince committees.

2004: On the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, September 12, 2004, the Sisters in the five Provinces voted formally to approve reconfiguration into the U.S.-Ontario Province. After that vote, this statement was issued: Recognizing the reality of aging, and in support of new forms of belonging, reconfiguration is a pro-active decision to consolidate our resources and strengthen our ability to serve the People of God.

2005: Nine months later, in June, the new seven-member Province Leadership Team had its first sessions together as the U.S.-Ontario Province Leadership Team.

2006: January 1, the Province was a civil and canonical reality.

Shirley Roberg, SNJM

Addendum 4

Sample of SNJM Associate Formation Program Document

Do you share the core values of the SNJMs?

1. What does it mean to be an Associate of the Sisters of the Holy Names in this Associate Region and beyond? Meet some Sisters and Associates and learn why they decided to become SNJMs.
2. Blessed Marie Rose Durocher was the Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. When and where was she born? What was her life's calling? How did she organize a group of women who are still living out her energy and focus today?
3. Study the history of the SNJM Community from Canada to the USA and beyond.
4. Focus on the mission of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Learn about the individuals and the ministries of the Sisters and Associates in our Mission Centre, our Province, and our Congregation worldwide.
5. How can we create a spirit of dialogue within our own Church?
6. Learn more about the crisis of our environment. Study the SNJM corporate stand on water. Study water as a human right and a public good.
7. The Sisters and Associates of the Holy Names Community are dedicated to the principles of Justice. In what ways do they live out this commitment today? Study more about the issues involved in immigration.
8. The trafficking of human beings is spreading at an alarming rate in our world. What are SNJMs doing now? What else needs to be done to make an impact on this travesty?

Do you feel called to work with the U.S.-Ontario Province to create a community of men and women dedicated to the SNJM vision?

Enrichment Materials

As part of each module, we attempt to integrate one or more of the ideas from this “enrichment” list. It is an attempt to familiarize our candidates with the SNJM customs, traditions, and culture. While we have specific modules on some of these topics, ongoing formation is important. Please assist with the continuous creation of our modules by including your suggestions, and providing feedback on how each module is received and can be improved. Some potential areas of enrichment:

Blessed Marie Rose...her life and work

Our SNJM elders...What was life like for them? What were their accomplishments?

Holy Names traditions, simplicities, Christmas donuts, collation...

Words and how we use them. It can seem like a foreign language when we talk about a “Chapter” and no one mentions the book. Other Examples: missioning, Summer Days, Congregation, charism, mission centre, CLT, PLT, LAL, ACC...Who are these people?

The Feast Days we celebrate and why...What are the annual events and ceremonies, and what is the meaning?

Our Gifted SNJM's...artists, musicians, poets, writers, photographers, jewelry makers, cooks...

Our Congregation and Province Ministries...Who is involved, and what do they do?

Our Mission Centre...Who are the members of our SNJM family and what do they do?

Compiled by Maureen O'Brien

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