



Companions of the Cross

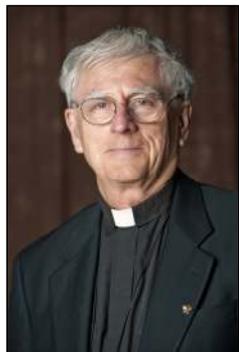


LAY ASSOCIATES

## A NEW SPIRITUAL FAMILY

### The Companions of the Cross

In 1985, Fr. Bob Bedard founded a new community of priests in the Catholic Church: The Companions of the Cross. He did so in response to the call of God with a passionate desire for the renewal of the Church. This community lives a deep common life, a rich spirituality centered upon Christ Crucified, the power and wisdom of God, and seeks to contribute to the ongoing renewal of the Church through a dynamic evangelization.



In 2003, the Companions of the Cross received official status as a Society of Apostolic Life. In 2011, Fr. Bob Bedard, our beloved Founder and Spiritual Father in Christ, passed away. The Companions of the Cross continue the mission that God has given us through him.

### The Servants of the Cross

In 2003, Sr. Anna Chan discerned a call to found a sisterhood which would incarnate the spirituality that was given to Fr. Bob Bedard.

The Servants of the Cross are a community of women called to spread the message of the Gospel through a dynamic evangelization. Akin in spirituality to the Companions of the Cross, they live this message in their everyday life as Fr. Bob Bedard, their Spiritual Father envisioned.

In 2011, the Servants of the Cross became a Private Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Ottawa.

### Lay Associates

In 1986, the Companions of the Cross opened up their regular Friday night gatherings to lay people interested in becoming associated with the new community.

There are now many people who have become part of our spiritual family as Lay Associates, living out our spirituality and mission in their everyday lives.

### 3. Regional Coordinator (and optional Council)

Each Regional Chaplain will appoint a Lay Associate as Regional Coordinator, for a term of one year, renewable, to assist him in his work. Practically, it is foreseen that the Coordinator will handle most of the details and organization and the Chaplain will largely oversee the Lay Associates program. If the Chaplain deems it helpful, additional Lay Associates may be invited to form a Regional Council to assist the Chaplain and his Coordinator.

## TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Those interested in finding out how to join the Lay Associates should visit our website at [www.companionscross.org](http://www.companionscross.org) and click on Lay Associates to find contact information for your local Foundation.

For those outside our Foundations, please contact our main office at 613.728.3175 or 1.866.885.8824 and ask for the Lay Associate Coordinator or email us at [layassociates@companionscross.org](mailto:layassociates@companionscross.org)

Priests and deacons interested in associating with us may also contact our main office.

Men discerning a call to the priesthood may visit the Companions of the Cross vocations website at [vocations.companionscross.org](http://vocations.companionscross.org)

Women discerning a call to consecrated life may visit the Servants of the Cross website at [www.servantsofthecross.ca](http://www.servantsofthecross.ca)

- **School of Evangelization** - This course, drawn heavily from the teachings of Fr. Bob Bedard, covers our mission of evangelization in both theory and practice, including practical tools for sharing the Catholic faith in daily life.

In Companions of the Cross parishes, these courses will often be offered to all parishioners. In circumstances where this is not the case, Lay Associates may receive this formation in small groups, or even individually. The Regional Chaplain or Coordinator will assist Lay Associates in finding venues for these formation courses.



## LEADERSHIP

In order to oversee the activities of the Lay Associates, the following structure has been established by the Companions of the Cross:

### 1. General Chaplain

The General Chaplain of the Lay Associates is a Companions of the Cross priest stationed in Ottawa who has overall responsibility for the Lay Associates.

### 2. Regional Chaplains

A Regional Chaplain of the Lay Associates is a Companions of the Cross priest who oversees the Lay Associates in a particular Foundation.



## WHAT IS A LAY ASSOCIATE?

All of us are called to be disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. At our baptism we were made members of His Body, the Church. All of us share in the glory of being “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Pet 2:9). We have received special gifts from the Holy Spirit to use for the building up the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12).

The laity live out their vocation in the secular arena. By virtue of their Baptism, they are called to “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 31.2). The laity “have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth” (CCC 900).

Throughout the history of the Church, lay people have felt called to associate themselves with the life and ministry of various communities of priests and religious. In becoming a ‘lay associate’, they embrace the vision and spirituality of some particular community but in the lay state.

From the beginning, Fr. Bob Bedard, our spiritual father in Christ, recognized the indispensable dignity and role of the laity in the renewal of the Church. For this reason, the Companions of the Cross joyfully welcome lay people who desire to associate themselves with us.

A Lay Associate is a lay person who has embraced, through a formal commitment, the spirituality and mission of the Companions of the Cross.

## OUR SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION

God has called us to labour boldly for the renewal of the Church through a dynamic evangelization centered upon Christ crucified, who is God's power and wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:23-24). Spurred on by the love of God, we desire all people to come into the fullness of life through a personal and ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ.

“Concretely this entails: (1) trusting in the Lord and giving him permission to move as he pleases; seeking his wisdom, his ‘now’ word, and waiting upon it, with proper discernment, not making any major moves without it; (2) profound openness to the Holy Spirit, the power of God, and the various ministry gifts through which the Church is empowered; a strong conviction that God desires to touch and inflame the lives of all his people; (3) the renewal of the Church through the renewal of the person. Personal conversion, discipleship, empowerment, and ‘calling forth’ of individuals to ministry comprise the chief strategy for renewal. Social and institutional changes will flow more easily from a renewed people. Personal conversion is the necessary first step.” (*Constitutions and Rules of the Companions of the Cross, Our Roots*)

Our spirituality is fully Catholic, imbued with an evangelical heart and Pentecostal fire. We are Eucharistic, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, truly devoted to Mary, and loyal to the Magisterium.

## MEMBERSHIP

To become a Lay Associate one must be a Catholic in good standing, either married or single, at least 16 years of age, who desires to embrace the spirituality and mission of the Companions of the Cross.

The Lay Associates are not a community unto themselves, but are individuals and families who wish to be *associated* with the Companions of the Cross and the Servants of the Cross. It is not necessary to live in geographical proximity to a Companions' parish or other foundation.



we encourage Lay Associates to form small faith sharing groups of some kind in their local area.



## 6. Lay Associates Formation

The Companions of the Cross provide formation courses for Lay Associates concerning the foundational elements of our spirituality and mission. All Lay Associates are invited to complete the following four courses:

- **The Catholic Discipleship Series** – This course, with the accompanying book *The Catholic Disciple*, covers the basics of Christian discipleship in the Catholic tradition including talks on the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, prayer, the Church, liturgy, wisdom, healing and discipleship. Presented by Fr. Bob Bedard himself, it is an excellent introduction to the person and charism of our spiritual father.
- **Catch the Fire: The Spirituality of the Companions of the Cross** – This course covers the foundations of the spiritual life with a particular emphasis on Companions of the Cross spirituality.
- **Christian Relationships** – This course covers the importance of committed Christian relationships and living them out: authentic communication, empathetic listening, use of speech, forgiveness, fraternal correction and exhortation, conflict resolution, share groups, and relating to authority.

- **Special Celebrations** – Ordinations to the Diaconate and Priesthood, Lifetime commitments, Masses for the reception of Minor Ministries (for seminarians on the way to priesthood)
- **Gatherings for Prayer** with members of the Companions of the Cross and/or Servants of the Cross.

#### 4. Support the Companions of the Cross

A Lay Associate supports the Companions of the Cross and Servants of the Cross in two principle ways: *spiritually* and *materially*. Lay Associates support us through prayers of intercession, bringing before the Lord the temporal and spiritual needs of our communities and Associates. It is a tremendous source of encouragement and hope for our priests, seminarians and sisters to know that they are being held up in daily prayer before the Lord by a large group of Lay Associates.

We also ask that Lay Associates consider making an annual contribution of some sort to the Companions of the Cross and/or Servants of the Cross as they are able. We wish to make it clear that we do not require a set amount or even that you donate anything at all! Any gift you may wish to make should be freely given: “Everyone should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). We rely greatly upon the generosity of our Lay Associates to provide material support for our life and ministry.

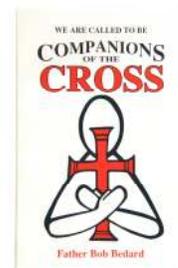
#### 5. Committed Christian Relationships

We need other brothers and sisters to support us in our pilgrimage of faith through committed Christian relationships. As members of the Body of Christ we need each other. These relationships can take many forms: extended family, parish small groups, prayer meetings, Bible studies, etc. Lay Associates are encouraged to participate in such groups in their local parishes. Where such opportunities are lacking,



## MAKING THE COMMITMENT

Those interested in the Lay Associates are given the book *We Are Called to Be Companions of the Cross* to read and are invited to attend a Lay Associates Membership Retreat offered annually at Companions of the Cross foundations. This day-long retreat includes teachings on our spirituality and mission, the commitments and benefits of being a Lay Associate, and opportunities for prayer and discussion. Special accommodations will be made for those unable to attend a formal membership retreat due to constraints of time, distance, etc.



At the conclusion of the retreat, participants have the opportunity to become a Lay Associate during a Rite of Lay Associate Promises, in which they are formally presented with a Lay Associate insignia (pin) and our Lay Associate Handbook: *Embracing the Cross*.

## LIVING OUT THE COMMITMENT

A Lay Associate of the Companions of the Cross embraces a particular way of Christian discipleship which includes (1) a spirituality centered on the Triumph of the Cross, (2) a mission of evangelization, (3) participation in Lay Associate events and community celebrations, (4) support of our communities, and (5) committed Christian relationships.

### 1. Spiritual Disciplines

In order to foster a vibrant spirituality centered on Christ crucified, Lay Associates commit to the following spiritual disciplines:

- **Personal prayer** - Lay Associates are called to have a daily personal prayer time which should include speaking to the Lord in our own words, prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, and a time of listening to the Lord and seeking His particular wisdom for us.



- **Sacraments** - Lay Associates are encouraged to participate frequently in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist to which we have a particular devotion. We urge Lay Associates to frequent reception of communion and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament when possible. We also recommend a regular celebration of the Lord's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



**True devotion to Mary** - Recognizing that true devotion to Mary ultimately leads us to Jesus, we venerate and honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen, and imitate her as the model of Christian discipleship. Lay Associates are consecrated to Jesus through Mary and are encouraged to pray the Rosary and the Companions of the Cross Marian Entrustment prayer as a sign of this consecration.

- **Fasting** – Lay Associates are encouraged to undertake some form of fasting on Fridays, the day when Jesus triumphed over sin and death. Fasting from the things we enjoy unites us to the sacrifice of Jesus and fosters a more radical dependence on God.

## 2. Mission of Evangelization

Lay Associates are called to be servants of the Lord, responding to the Great Commission to bring the Gospel to all creation. For most people this ministry of evangelization will be realized in their parishes, workplaces and families, in accordance with their vocation and state in life. Where circumstances allow, we are open to collaborative efforts of evangelization and outreach with our Lay Associates.



## 3. Lay Associate and Community Events

Lay Associates are encouraged to attend the following events:

- **The Feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross** (September 14)

This primary feast day of the Companions of the Cross is an occasion of particular solemnity and joy. In most Foundations there will be a celebration, such as a Mass, Holy Hour, or prayer meeting, followed by a reception hosted by the Companions.

- **Annual Lay Associate Retreat**

Each year, the Lay Associates gather for a time of prayer, Mass, talks and fellowship. Others, especially those interested in the Lay Associates, are welcome. It is a time to gather together as a spiritual family, to deepen our fellowship in the Lord, and to renew our commitment to the Lord and one another. This will be held at a convenient time and location in each Foundation.



Depending on the circumstances in a particular Foundation, the following additional celebrations may take place:

- **The Anniversary of the Death of Fr. Bob Bedard** (October 6)  
A Mass of Remembrance is celebrated for all deceased members of the Companions of the Cross, Servants of the Cross and Lay Associates.
- **Companions of the Cross Foundation Day** (1<sup>st</sup> Friday in May)
- **Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows** (September 15)  
Renewal of Promises for the Servants of the Cross.