

(Sept. 25, 2015)

## **The accompaniment of the SS.CC. Secular Branch**

### **FROM THE STATUTES OF THE SECULAR BRANCH**

**26.** Each SS.CC. lay community will be accompanied by an SS.CC. religious community or a designated brother or sister.

1. The accompaniment of the SS.CC. lay communities is done, broadly speaking, by all the brothers and sisters of the area in which they live. It is expressed in prayer for the members of the SB, in concern for what they are living, in participation in activities of the SB, etc.
2. In a particular way the accompaniment is done through SS.CC. religious appointed by their respective Major Superiors for this service. This service lasts while the respective Superiors ask them to do it.
3. The Major Superiors should ensure that the SS.CC. religious who are appointed to accompany the SB have real time and preparation to provide the service. They will also inform the General Secretariat of such appointments so that they are reflected in the INDEX of the SB.
4. When the regular presence of a religious (because of geographical distance, etc.) to accompany a lay community is not possible, the respective Major Superiors will appoint a religious as reference to exercise this service as far as possible.

### **Attitudes of the brother/sister who accompanies**

1. To understand accompaniment as a mission; knowing that he/she is sent by the Congregation, carrying out a service that is part of the mission of the Major Community; this is not his/her own work, but of the Congregation; he/she does not own the SB, but serves it.
2. To be convinced of the importance of sharing the SS.CC. charism with the laity, believing in the action of the Spirit in them and in the SS.CC. journey as a valuable way of life in following Jesus today.
3. To live his/her own SS.CC. vocation with gratitude and joy, loving the Congregation believing in the worth of SS.CC. charism, having a real delight on it.
4. To value and promote the role of the laity in the Church and their ability to evangelize.
5. To love the laity of the SB, as particular individuals, who have their own specific reality (lay), with a spirit of service, putting heart, energy ... and time into it.
6. To welcome, value and promote the role of the SS.CC. laity; to be sensitive to their rights, their initiatives, proposals...

7. To live communion with SS.CC. laity, participating in the life of the lay community in a friendly and active way, not limited to formal or structured moments.
8. To know how to respect processes with characteristics of the lay life (family, work, social relations ...); to be aware of what a commitment to the SB entails, what is at stake, the consequences...
9. To be close to the laity, to listen with simplicity; to welcome fraternally, with an open heart.
10. To be attentive to the needs of all members of the lay communities, particularly the "weaker" ones.
11. To try to be a presence that takes everybody into account; promoting the participation of all, fostering an environment of freedom and responsibility.
12. To learn to motivate, give encouragement, inviting openness to the Holy Spirit, to trust in his action, open to the reality of the world, of people, the Church, with creativity and flexibility.
13. To care for his/her own ongoing formation, with particular attention to theology, SS.CC. history and spirituality and practice of personal and group accompaniment.

#### **Tasks of the SS.CC. brother/sister who accompanies**

1. To participate actively in the life of the lay community, usually attending activities as stipulated in the programme drawn up with the laity.
2. To serve as a privileged link between the SB and the SS.CC. brothers and sisters by ensuring that there is always a good relationship.
3. To be in contact with other SS.CC. brothers/sisters who are also accompanying the SB in the area (Major Community, country, etc.). It is worthwhile to have some meetings of those who live in the same area, country, to share experiences, reflect together, promote initiatives, etc.
4. To be in contact with the Team of Spiritual Animation of the SB, contributing to the implementation of the action plans, maintaining mutual information, etc.
5. The brother/sister who accompanies the SB, or if applicable, the group of them, will keep the Major Superiors informed about the life of the lay communities of the Sector. They will also keep the Major community informed by presenting timely reports at assemblies, chapters keep the Major Community informed by presenting timely reports on assemblies, chapters etc. as well as through the channels of communication available in the Major Community.
6. To invite members of the Secular Branch to significant Congregational events (assemblies, religious professions, feasts of the Congregation) and to encourage the SS.CC. brothers and sisters to respond to invitations made by the Secular Branch.

### ***Internal to the RS***

7. The preparation, chairing and organizing of the activities of the SB correspond to SS.CC. laity, in accordance with the plan of life and mission of the community. The brother/sister who accompanies will offer his/her help to carry out this plan of life.
8. The role of those accompanying is not to coordinate the life of the secular community, nor to coordinate the other services proper to the laity. The accompanying person needs to respect the competency of the various services of the laity in the community, thus promoting lay leadership.
9. To keep the SB informed of the most important events in the life of the SS.CC. brothers and sisters. To promote mutual information through the media (website, SS.CC. Blog, Facebook, SB newsletters and the provinces newsletters, etc.).
10. The brother/sister who accompanies the SB may provide an important service in the initial and ongoing formation in accordance with the orientations of the local community, the congregation and the local and universal Church.
11. The brother/sister who accompanies, in collaboration with the lay coordinators, shall ensure that in the Sector there will be a proper Structure (Rule), a Plan of initial formation, a Register, as established in the Statutes of the SB. He/she also will also ensure that as far as possible, each sector of the Secular Branch will take steps with the civil authorities of their countries to become a recognized entity, with their own rules and statutes.<sup>1</sup>
12. The brother/sister who accompanies will be a member of "mixed committee" that should exist in each Sector. This committee is composed of the brother and sister who accompanies, the lay coordinator, accompanied by another lay member of the sector. If there are more than a brother or sister who accompanies the SB, only a brother and a sister will be members of the mixed committee. This committee will be responsible for the implementation of procedures for admission of candidates and the celebration of commitments in the Secular Branch. This committee will likewise be responsible for keeping the register of commitments in each sector.<sup>2</sup>
13. To listen to members of the SB so that the SB maintains the SS.CC. charismatic orientation, collaborating in the assessment of the commitment to the SS.CC. mission.

### **Some challenges and resources**

- The brothers and sisters who accompany the SB have other responsibilities that make it difficult for them to have the time required for this service.
- Some are very alone in the task, other SS.CC. brothers/sisters, with little support from the Major Community, from other SS.CC. brothers/sisters.
- Sometimes there is lack of coordination between those responsible for the accompaniment of the SB.

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<sup>1</sup> General Chapters 2006, document "Secular Branch": Recommendations on the organization of the Sectors of the SB, n. 9.

<sup>2</sup> General Chapters 2006, document "Secular Branch": Recommendations on the organization of the Sectors of the SB, n. 7 and 9.

- In some places, there are communities of the SB that are geographically distant from SS.CC. religious communities. It requires a special effort by the one who is responsible for accompanying them.
- Another problem could be to use a way of thinking, acting, decision making ... which are proper to the context of religious life and to apply them to the SB regardless of the different reality of the laity (time demands, family needs, use of money, etc.)
- It is a great help for a brother/sister who accompanies SB communities to live in a community whose PARL (Project of Apostolic Religious Life) takes this task into consideration and assumes it as its own; although the concrete work is carried out by a brother/ sister, the whole community has it as their own.
- To share with other brothers and sisters who accompany the SB is always of tremendous help, either sporadically or even better if it is organized.
- For some it is a great help to have a brother and a sister responsible for accompanying the communities of the SB, to complement each other and to better express the uniqueness of this feature of our Congregation.
- It is also a help the fact that the Plan of Life of the SS.CC. lay community takes into account the presence and role of the brother/sister who accompanies.
- It is also useful that materials related to the SB are accessible on the website of the Congregation.
- Contact with the Team of Spiritual Animation of the SB is also very important.