ASSOCIATES OF IOWA CISTERCIANS AND PRESENTATION ASSOCIATE

PARTNERS 1987--2012:

AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

ASSOCIATES OF IOWA CISTERCIANS AND PRESENTATION ASSOCIATE PARTNERS 1987-2012:
AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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This dissertation describes and analyzes lay association with vowed religious as an underappreciated model of Christian community and discipleship with layered correlations to the local and universal church. It seeks to identify who lay associates are and what their new way of life means within the life of the church. Reflection on the meaning of associate life was largely authored by vowed religious in the early 1990’s and fails to take into account associates’ viewpoint. In response, I draw from associates’ practices and self-perceptions to investigate two representative samples of this way of life. As a historical-theological portrait develops, I critically analyze each group’s common practices and perceptions of the church and argue that these associates engage the church by means of their unique reception of, contribution to, expression and propagation of their respective spiritual traditions. This study concludes that it is the inner life of each
group—understood as including but transcending the inner life of each individual and expressed in their living out of a vision arising from the teaching of the council and with a sense of their larger interconnections-- that best encapsulates who they are and why.

My project critically examines the lives of two Catholic lay associations in the archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, the monastic Associates of Iowa Cistercians and the apostolic Presentation Partners. Employing original research including oral history interviews and archival studies, I offer detailed accounts of associates’ practices and narratives and show how they bring to light questions of ecclesiological “fit.” I explore their relationship to parish, ministries, other Christian traditions, religious congregations, religious experiences, and perceptions of church and culture. The study interprets the groups’ fit with the church by understanding it within the framework of the interpretation of Vatican II. It finds the two associate groups share the work of responding Vatican II’s universal call to holiness and mission in the context of an affiliated but not vowed community. Both the shared interpretive work and the bond with religious distinguish associates from comparable groups and develop in them a nascent ecclesiological self-understanding.

By spotlighting associates’ experiences in their own words, this study significantly advances reflection on associate life by compiling a detailed description and analysis of two typical associations. This data contributes to current conversations on: the distinctive vocation of the laity, ecumenism, new ecclesial movements, Cistercian monastic tradition and new monasticism, women religious, and Christian communal practices in an American context. Overall the project advances a practical ecclesiology on the ground as it: 1) highlights the experiences of a neglected ecclesial movement,
2) proposes an interdisciplinary approach to studying them, and 3) reveals associate life as a site of innovative theological reflection on sanctification, the passing on of spiritual traditions from vowed religious to laity, and sustaining bonds among Christians immersed in institutional transformation. Associates’ pivot between Christian tradition and U.S. culture and back again outside of the security of traditional institutional structures and yet firmly linked to the local church prompts new reflection on the meaning of Christian brotherhood and sisterhood.
For Abuelito, MC, and the associate with the theological flat tire
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There are a number of people whose contributions made this dissertation possible and to whom I am indebted. First, I wish to thank the Presentation Partners of Dubuque, Iowa and the Associates of Iowa Cistercians of Peosta, Iowa for their generous willingness to participate in my study and honest responses during interviews. In particular I would like to acknowledge the directors Trisha and Dennis Day of the AIC and Karla Berns† of the PP for participating in multiple interviews. Archivists Sr. M. Hermann Platt, PBVM and Denise Hillman of the AIC and research librarian Becky Alford of Clarke University offered skillful assistance in locating pertinent materials. The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, IA and the monks of New Melleray Abbey of Peosta, IA offered the hospitality of their homes for interviews. Sr. Mary Christine Morkovsky and Sr. Maria Eva Flores of the Sisters of Divine Providence in San Antonio, Texas offered invaluable guidance on conducting oral history interviews of religious women. Fr. Terrence Kardong, O.S.B. and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove aided in locating resources pertinent to classical and new monastics in the U.S.

The Institutional Review Board of the University of Dayton approved this project’s use of human subjects in 2010 and 2011. My UD professors offered continual attentiveness and models of life-giving teaching and scholarship. In particular my
advisor, Dennis M. Doyle, listened supportively to an exciting but incoherent idea I shared in the hallway one day and agreed to help me follow it through. He modeled both abiding trust and playfulness in the work of understanding and helped me begin an intellectual conversion that will be a wellspring for the climbs ahead. The members of UD’s 2006 PhD Theology class and the members of my UD online dissertation support group generously offered their company, humor, prayers, good questions, insight, and friendship.

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Finally, thank you to my husband Bill for walking alongside me and drinking my tea in the dark early mornings. And thank you to our children Mary and Luke for their
nearness, love, and play as Mama wrote “stories about people who love Jesus.” May we look to the witnesses who gaze upon Him.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC – Associates of Iowa Cistercians

PP – Presentation Partners, a lay association linked to the PBVM Sisters

OSCO – Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance

PBVM – Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in this study of Dubuque, IA

NEM – New Ecclesial Movements

SCC – Small Christian Communities

See Appendix for abbreviations used to name interviews.
INTRODUCTION

I. Introducing Lay Associates

“We seek conversion of life in quiet hidden ways,” states one Associate of Iowa Cistercians, “not identity recognition.” Since its inception the lay associate movement in the U.S. has been marked by both a robust desire for ongoing conversion within the Christian life and a subdued presence within the church.

Yet, a quiet presence does not at all indicate a group turned inward. Rather, tens of thousands of lay persons who gather together in small groups following an associate rule of life live out their Christian commitments by means of a shared charism and foster associations that hover in relationship between the religious orders and the Catholic, Episcopalian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches of which they remain active members. In the Roman Catholic Church, new wave lay associations are groups of the faithful formed within the last thirty years made up of participants from all three states of life but most commonly non-vowed laity. They are bonded in formally committed relationship to vowed religious orders, their charisms, and some of their practices while remaining independent canonical entities.¹ They are committed to a new shared form of life distinct from other new ecclesial movements, oblates, and third orders yet in layered relationship with the religious they call “family,” local churches, their

¹ For a fuller definition of lay association see section B of this Introduction and Ch.1.
groups and ministries, and several levels of broader associate organization, including international conferences. Through their spiritual practices, routines, reflections, and relationship with vowed religious and other ecclesial communities, lay associates develop their self-understanding as a cell of ecclesial vitality. This dissertation’s main thesis is that the Associates of Iowa Cistercians and Presentation Partners and the religious who support them envision and live out an ideal of the associate way of life that has ecclesial dimensions, including Vatican II’s calls to holiness, the renewal of religious life, Christian unity, and a renewal of the theology of charism. The AIC and PP strive to live out this ideal in a committed shared way of life located outside but related to traditional institutional structures and to a certain degree are successful in doing so.

A. Locating Associates in U.S. Catholic History

Bernard Lee described his 2000 study of small Christian communities in the U.S. Catholic church as “still shots of great motion” and the same can be said of the limited available history on the associate movement that is rapidly maturing. The following pages summarizing the history of associates serve to provide background for the rest of the project and show how associates fit within a U.S. Catholic tradition of small groups.2 The Lay Associate Movement in the U.S. had its origins in the 1980’s at a time when localized small group life in the Catholic Church began organizing itself into networks with newsletters and conferences.3 At this time religious orders were also experimenting

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2 A comprehensive history of the movement does not yet exist, as Ch.1 will underscore. This introductory material provides necessary background for examining the AIC and PP. Ch.1 complements this overview by comparing historical approaches to studying the movement. This dissertation’s focused contextualization addresses associates’ relationship with other small faith communities and ways of relating to vowed religious. It does not directly address the rise of association within the context of American Catholicism in the 1980’s.

with new structures for living out the council. The lay associate movement rapidly matured. It quickly established leadership structures for collaborating with religious and yet remaining a lay-led movement. Leadership steered associate programs to formalize the formation and commitment process and to continually address the boundary between associates and religious. As early as the late 1980’s lay associates began calling themselves a movement as they took on the religious’ practice of cultivating ties to regional, national, and international forms of associate groups in order to share ideas, address conflict, and share reflections on the meaning of their new form of life. Today, nearly thirty years later, a good number of associations have reached the tipping point of counting more associates than vowed religious among their participants. As shown in Ch.2, several national-level organizations are now in place and associates are beginning to write their own histories and theologies. Ch.5 explores how associates are also beginning to share in religious’ planning process for a future of decreased vowed membership and institutional transition or closure.

As will be shown, some authors have described the development of the associate movement as a nostalgic reach for the time of the apostles’ house churches or as another means of Catholics desiring para-church faith community opportunities parallel to what they perceive their Protestant (often Evangelical) neighbors enjoying between Sundays. Others see associates in a more positive light, as the descendents of the church’s

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4 The term “movement” is used in AIC and PP archival documents as early as 1989. This use is echoed in some of the earliest scholarship on associates such as in Maurice L. Monette, Kindred Spirits: The Bonding of Laity and Religious. (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1987), and Rose Marie Jasinski and Peter Foley, “Reflections on the Associate Movement in Religious Life,” Occasional Papers, a publication of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 16 (October 1989): 357.
penitential community tradition. Though there may be traces of these influences, associates’ emergence is primarily marked by the air of experimentation within the new conditions set up by Vatican II and its reception, the dissolution of the Catholic immigrant subculture, and the increase in educated middle class Catholics.

As Ch. 1 will recount, most religious orders responded to the council with an increase in theological education for their members, a re-examination of their origins and founding charisms, and a methodical communal studying of council documents so as to discern ways to respond to them. Members of both apostolic and monastic communities were invited by Vatican II to reconsider the equality of the three states of life and in light of this as having newly discovered gifts to offer the rest of the church and the suffering world. Some religious congregations began making considerable structural and ministerial changes in their way of life. Some experienced a rapid decrease in vocations. Some witnessed a decrease in single congregations sustaining institutions such as schools, universities, and hospitals. Alliances among members of a variety of congregations increased especially as these alliances took on new ministry and social justice projects. Perhaps in part because of the increased contact with educated laity these ministries provided, religious women took the lead among vowed institutes in establishing volunteer programs, prayer partner programs, and eventually associate programs.5

5 Monette, Kindred Spirits, 12. As early as 1987 Monette identifies seven “bonding styles” observable among religious and non-vowed laity in the U.S. including: foreign and domestic volunteers, associates, associates in prayer and support, associates in community living, associates in spiritual formation, members of a religious family, and co-workers in ministry. As Ch.1 will show in further detail, the two new wave lay associations studied in this dissertation can also be distinguished from mission associations, devotional societies, cultural associations, fraternal associations, and secular and third forms of religious orders, each of which has a noteworthy role in American Catholic History.
For those U.S. Catholic laity concurrently benefitting from recent increase in educational and financial status, rapid changes in religious life often exacerbated the felt disconnect with an immigrant-based parochial subculture. Early twentieth century U.S. Catholic movements such as St. Vincent de Paul and the Holy Name societies, the Knights of Columbus, the Grail, and others often took on the role of conduit—carrying on lay Catholic values, practices and ties from subculture to suburbs. While some kept alive the vision of a founder, others ensured continuation of a sense of service for the common good. After the council lay movements increased in number and kind within the social mission landscape cultivated by religious.

The small Christian community movement which took root in Latin America and moved to the U.S. in the mid-twentieth century underscored a growing desire for another kind of lay group outside of parish life, a desire that to some extent overlapped with that of early associates. The faithful desired to respond to Vatican II’s invitation to engage Christ in Scripture and at the same time engage him in the structural suffering of the world. Meeting in people’s homes for faith sharing, scriptural reflection, meals, intercessory prayer and reflection upon correlations between daily life and the gospel, the small Christian communities offered something the typical lay groups and even the Charismatic movement could not. That is, its attractiveness was found in its tie to the liturgy, its focus on intersecting scripture and life, and its challenge to be committed in fellowship to a small group of faithful over time.

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6 The distinctions between various kinds of small Christian communities and lay associates will be explored in Ch.1-2. This dissertation claims that while there are reasons to consider lay associations a type of new ecclesial movement, their unique relation to institutes of vowed religious separates them from most other small Christian communities in the U.S. To categorize them simply as one among many forms of small Christian community misses what is utterly distinct about them.
This study will include brief discussion of how the role of feminism cannot be ignored in tying the lay movement to the renewal of religious life. By the 1980’s some U.S. based apostolic sisters had twenty years of renewal behind them already and had gained some practice, language, and skills in institutional change. Some were receptive and even desirous of more contact with non-vowed lay women just as lay women began finding new venues for expressing their baptismal calls to membership in the Body of Christ. As the PBVM Origins section of this project will show in particular, these threads come together in a series of preliminary conversations during the early 1980’s that resulted in the formation of the earliest associate programs. Sisters and lay women wanted to formalize the bond that had often been present in different times and places in the history of U.S. based religious congregations.

Concurrent with associate life’s expansion, the U.S. church faced major challenges such as further institutional diminishment; a vocation shortage to the priesthood, a sexual abuse crisis, the U.S. church’s challenging reception of *Humane Vitae* and the silencing of various theologians, and the rapid increase in the Catholic and Protestant Hispanic population. Traces of all these events can be found in the AIC and PP sources. At the intersection of religious life and the faithful, the past thirty years have witnessed the closing of some Catholic institutions and the rising of many with renewed zeal for the work of mission integration. It is not uncommon to find Catholic identity committees and educational associates at Catholic schools and hospitals today, striving to be attentive to the necessary passing along of charism and tradition from vowed religious to the lives of the faithful who serve as employees or recipients of services there. As Ch.2 will show, whereas other groups have been attentive to non-vowed laity living out a
religious institute’s vision in different ways, associates are best located as offering a unique way of doing this work. Theirs is a collective approach, marked by collaborative, committed, and conscious discernment and attentive to associates’ tether to both the local and universal church. Unlike other small Christian communities that struggle with a sense of marginality in relation to the church, associates are unusual for seeing themselves firmly imbedded in it.

B. Cousin Groups and False Assumptions

This study will emphasize that associates are a new entity among lay groups in U.S. Catholic history, sharing some aspects and contexts with other lay movements but undertaking a new form and mission trajectory. Associates are a young group, having only been on the American Catholic scene less than thirty years. Ch. 4 will show how most associates interviewed in this study found that explaining their way of life to other Christians usually entailed some degree of comparison with more familiar comparable groups. The same process seems to occur on the cultural level. Several authors identify the Catholic small faith groups most influential in the 20th century as serving, among other ways, to “familiarize Catholic culture” with such forms of living out the faith.7 Lee points to sodalities, Catholic Action, the Christian Family Movement, the Legion of Mary, Cursillo, and Marriage Encounter. O’Malley points to St. Vincent de Paul, Holy Name Society, the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Daughters of America, Sodality of Our Lady, the National Council of Catholic Women.8 The Grail, the Catholic Worker, and Friendship House can also be included in this listing. The history of these groups and

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their reception shows that American Catholics are accustomed to their parish-based faith being lived in conjunction with a variety of other forms of belonging as well, some more representative of “intense religion” than others. Yet since 1980 it has been common among Catholics to bring to mind the tradition of Benedictine oblates or third order Dominicans when hearing about lay associates. Some of these distinctions will be addressed in the canon law section of Ch.1. In brief, third orders and oblates have different kinds of bonds with their religious institutes. Tertiaries and lay brothers and sisters also have a long standing close connection to religious orders, but they too fall in a different canonical category than associates. In general, these “cousin” groups are marked by oblation and adherence to a Rule, one tied more closely to the definitions of forms of religious and individually consecrated life rather than a collective group marked by lay identity. They typically have less of a focus on collaboration and mutuality with religious and one another than associates.

Another form of life related to but quite different from association is the “religious family” tradition. Some religious institutes, even those participating in some way in the new wave of lay associates, have had a “religious family” tradition dating to the origin of their group. These groups were made up of some combination of priests, sisters, brothers, and laity from the days of their founders. Among the most prominent in American Catholic culture are the Maryknollers, some Dominican groups, the Marianists, and the Missionary Cenacle Family. While this religious family tradition does foster

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9 Monette, *Kindred Spirits*, 4-5 and 23. Monette’s history of the bond between religious and laity praises the Missionary Cenacle Family as developing in response to Vatican II. He argues that a reclaiming of founder Fr. Thomas A. Judge, C.M. and the faithful who served with him has shifted the group’s vision from a helping model of missionary work to a community-based fostering and supporting of mission in a variety of forms. The group now is called Missionary Cenacle Apostolate and includes sisters, brothers,
close alliance between laity and religious around a charism, they do not share associates’ Vatican II origins and lay-led leadership.

Associates are marked by two characteristics held in tension: their bondedness with religious and their lay identity. As this dissertation will show, this combination of features makes associates markedly different from small Christian communities and most new ecclesial movements and yet, as Ch.2 will describe, associates have more in common with these groups than any others in the church. For this reason closely comparing associates’ practices with those of small Christian communities and new ecclesial movements as well as exploring how each group operates within the church and draws upon tradition yields greater delineation of lay association as a unique way of life. Lastly, though most associations do include other Christians, they are not as elaborately diverse (nor as organized) as groups such as the secular and ecumenical Franciscans.10 Rather, they remain largely composed of Catholic members.

What little awareness there is within American Catholic culture concerning lay associates tends to be riddled with false assumptions. Most commonly lay associates are thought to be mostly former nuns who want to remain linked with their congregations. This view is exacerbated by the numerous ways of naming associate groups in the U.S.

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10 Ch.3 will show how the AIC and PP largely draw members from Catholic, Congregational, Baptist, and Episcopalian churches. The most complete history of the secular Franciscans in this country including their ecumenical membership can be found in William Wicks, SFO, History of the Secular Franciscans in the U.S., National Fraternity of the SFO, vol. 1 (Lindsborg: Babso-Carlson, 2007).
church according to their relation to religious. As will be shown, occasionally a few nuns may join an association of their community or another association, but more commonly members are laity who never spent time in religious life. Another common assumption is that associates are all Catholic women of retirement age. This too is false. Though women of this age do make up the majority of associate membership, most groups include men and married couples ranging from their 20’s to their 90’s. Most groups have both Catholic and non-Catholic members and at least some members with children still living at home. Catholics belong to associations of other Christian churches just as other churches are represented in most Catholic lay associations.

Rather than trying to be quasi-nuns or monks who take up the rule of an order, associates typically insist on the strengths of their lay vocation and upon the unique intersection with the order’s charism and traditions that it provides. A similar assumption is that associates are seeking a religious enclave as a way of securing their identity and escaping conflict within the wider church. As this study will show, most associates demonstrate awareness of this danger, take action to maintain their groups’ Catholic diversity, and work to avert the life of their group turning in upon itself. Vowed religious sometimes assume associates want to take over the congregation, wielding decision making or financial power. Although there may be exceptions, most associations encountered in this study strive to protect the integrity and privacy of the congregation.

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11 For example some associates have been called: alternative members, non-vowed members, a degree of membership, and para-community members. At the same time, those who would like to become members of a congregation more fully than associate life allows and yet not undertake vows sometimes call themselves co-members or participative associates. To further complicate the nomenclature there are “Lay Associates of the Missionaries of the Gospel of Life” related to Priests for Life who use the name lay associates and are related to a group of priests but commit to sharing in their pro-life ministry more than their congregational life or charism and therefore would not exactly fit the type of lay association discussed in this project.
they value so immensely for its distinctiveness. They seek to aid it in surviving and transitioning to a smaller number of vowed religious. Finally, among those who have heard of associates it is common to believe they represent the stylistic interests of just a few Catholics and are peripheral to the life of the church. As this study makes clear, lay associates may be hidden, but they are in fact far from marginal. Appropriately they have been called a “quietly erupting” movement in the heart of Catholic life, one that offers much benefit for the future of the church in the U.S.

C. The AIC and PP as Lived History Interpreters of Vatican II

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, thus shortly after the movement’s inception, associates received some scholarly attention from sociologists and religious life authors, but there has been little specifically theological exploration of associates. At the same time there have been no studies performed with a focus on the perspective of associates themselves. In response, my dissertation as a whole delves into the theological implications of associate life as lived by the specific examples of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians (AIC) of Peosta, Iowa and Presentation Partners (PP), of Dubuque, Iowa, both about twenty years old. These groups were selected because they draw Catholic and Protestant members from the same geographic radius, share a common belonging to the local archdiocese, and provide a comparative sample of the two central types of association in the U.S., monastic and apostolic. The AIC and PP are also typical of the

13 The groups have their meetings about twelve miles apart, with the AIC at the New Melleray Cistercian monastery in rural Peosta, IA and the PP holding their large group meeting in a suburban neighborhood of Dubuque, IA at Mt. Loretto convent.
demographics and arc of development for new wave associations in the American church during the past thirty years.\textsuperscript{14}

This dissertation studies the AIC and PP from an historical theological perspective, using original sources and tapping several areas of scholarship about groups holding much in common with associates. The first part of the project renders a detailed description of each organization, including its membership, practices, and beliefs. The second part of the project examines implications emerging from this portrait, particularly showing how, when read against the background of relevant passages from the documents of Vatican II, the collective life and ecclesiological self-understanding of the AIC and PP reveal a new interpretation of the council’s calls to holiness, Christian unity, the renewal of religious life, and the theology of charism. The project concludes by suggesting how the ground-up work of unearthing the ecclesial meaning of specific illustrations of lay associate life can foster a theology of lay association in the U.S. post-conciliar church. Furthermore, the historical-theological portrait of the AIC and PP contributes a model of ecclesiological investigation of lived Christianity that could be applied to other lay movements. Finally, the portrait serves as a model of a serious form of community life outside the liturgy. Associates in this study would readily admit that the liturgy is at the heart of their Christian life, but they would add that their life together

\textsuperscript{14} This study examines the AIC and PP between 1987, when the first book length study of associates was published by Monette, until 2012, the year the AIC reached a milestone in shaping the International Lay Cistercian Association and the PP reached a milestone in completing their first formal constitution. Some experimental prototype associate programs emerged as early as the 1970’s, but most new wave lay associations had their origins in the mid-1980’s. For these reasons the phrase “thirty years” will be used within this dissertation to describe the span of the lay associate movement in a general way, acknowledging in Ch.1 that there are a variety of ways associates themselves count the age of their movement.
in the association is a deepening and living out of this conviction among their brothers and sisters in faith.

II. Method

A. The Question of Ecclesial Fit

This dissertation seeks to identify who lay associates are, specifically who the AIC and PP are, and what their new way of life means within the life of the church. Answers to these questions contribute to the area of on-the-ground ecclesiology, to scholarship on religious life in the U.S., and to the ongoing work of identifying how the U.S. church interprets Vatican II. Both concerns are addressed in historical-theological ways. First, in response to the challenge presented by sparse historical and theological scholarship on associate life in the last thirty years, Ch.1-2 employs a review of interdisciplinary literature on similar small faith groups as well as original historical sources including oral history interviews and archival materials.15 This material is gathered and organized according to associates’ own priorities within their self-perception and introduces the claim that the definition of association benefits from but is not solely dependent upon a comparison to religious life. In Ch.3 data from these sources is also correlated into detailed descriptive positions on associates’ history, practices, and beliefs. Inspired by Bernard Lonergan’s distinction between common sense and theoretical levels of knowing, this task of correlation begins with two descriptive levels of reflection beginning with Ch.3 and expanding to Ch.4-5’s discussion of associates’ institutional fit with the church and their perceptions of it. Ch.6 makes a beginning at an

explanatory reflection, showing how responses to “why” associates fit within the church emerge directly from the data on just “what” their way of life is like.

B. Gathering Sources on Associate Life

Chapters 1 and 2 serve as this project’s literature review. The argument is made in Ch.1 that the sporadic texts from historical and canon law perspectives on associate life reveal an historiographical picture with many holes; associates make appearances in historical accounts and canons but never as a significant unified movement with its own character, vocation, and voice. Similarly, Ch.2’s survey of literature about four gradually narrowing genres of scholarship with bearing on associate life reveals a real need for understanding who associates are and why. These four types of work each address the living out of a vowed religious institute’s charism by those outside the congregation.16 Within this area of inquiry a need emerges for ascertaining what associates themselves have been saying about the meaning of their way of life especially how it is like and unlike vowed religious life. Together Ch.1 and 2 also show how while comparison of associates to vowed religious can be clarifying, such assessment is not sufficient for adequately defining their way of life.17 These two chapters also clarify how associates and those who write about them typically use the terms member, community, primary belonging, local church, tradition, and lay vocation.18 Throughout the dissertation I rely upon the phrases “inner history” and “group life” in order to pinpoint the entity of each

16 The AIC and PP’s living out of Vatican II’s call to a renewal of the theology of charism will be addressed in Ch.7.
17 Ch.7 discusses how the AIC and PP’s relationships with religious shape and are shaped by the larger church.
18 This dissertation refers to members of the faithful who are neither ordained nor vowed religious as laity or non-vowed laity, recognizing that 1) the term “laity” can be problematic in that it defines the faithful negatively and 2) members of vowed religious orders fall within the canonical parameters of the lay faithful.
association as a character with its own history, discernment practices, vocation, and response to a charism.

C. Observations on Associate Life: Portraits of the AIC and PP

As the heart of the project Ch.3 compares the practices of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians and Presentation Partners, organizing data from archives and oral history interviews to present a thick description of each group’s manner of life. After explaining the oral history methodology employed to conduct interviews, the chapter explores each group’s origins. It then investigates membership issues including: demographics, lexicon, initial attraction, commitment ceremonies, formation curriculums, ministries, and relationships with other associates. Next, each group’s spiritual practices are clarified and structured according to associates’ self-understanding. I show how members and the religious who support them work to fashion an integrated form of life in which their common practices of prayer, scriptural encounter, and group discernment are connected with care. It is in Ch.3 more than anywhere else in the project that the real “personalities” of each association become apparent---for the Cistercians as a “school of charity” and for the Presentations as a shared ardor for drawing near those living in poverty. The humanity of each group also shines best here as reference is made to each group’s recurring conflicts, areas of oversight, occasional biased viewpoint, and sense of humor.

Ch.4 and Ch.5 deepen my close read of associate life by probing associates’ perceptions and beliefs. Ch.4 details how associates understand their primary institutional relationships as straddling the boundaries of religious community and parish or congregation. Ch.5 discusses associates’ formative narratives and cultural-ecclesial

19 Results of the oral history research can be seen in numerical form in the Appendix.
perceptions, especially including how they see their dramatic religious experiences, the
call to holiness of Vatican II, and the future of associate life. At this second descriptive
level associates’ various forms of expressing how they see their fit with the larger church
come into play, including their founding documents, constitutions, mission statements,
and materials for prospective members.

D. “A New Kind of Collective Charism”: Ecclesiological Contributions Emerging from
the AIC and PP

In addition to what associates say of themselves, this study also investigates what
can be observed and evaluated about their relationship with the church’s teachings,
church structures, and the overall ecclesial culture in which they are situated. Ch.6
moves the investigation to the explanatory horizon in showing how the previous data give
rise to several avenues of reflection on the church. First, it shows how the council’s call
to holiness, ecumenism, and mission undergo a unique translation based equally upon a
religious congregation’s charism and the pressures of lay associates’ lives. Secondly, the
chapter highlights the AIC and PP’s unique navigation of the boundaries between vowed
and lay life and between institute and charism. The third section continues this
discussion of relationship among communities by mapping the AIC and PP in relation to
several intersecting layers of ecclesial belonging, some with more influence upon their
inner “group life” than others. The chapter then closes with a more developed discussion
of the theological implications of these two groups’ new kind of living out of Vatican II
in the form of a so-called “collective charism.” It asks what they are doing when they
understand themselves and what the resulting viewpoint of their self-understanding may
be, and the chapter also asks to what extent this view is accurate. This project can then
offer an educated judgment concerning precisely how the AIC and PP’s intersection with Vatican II teachings contributes a foundation for their ecclesial self-understanding.

Advancing the thesis of this dissertation, Ch.6 pinpoints two observations. First, it is the inner life of each group that best encapsulates who these associates are and why. The chapter does this by demonstrating how the inner life of the AIC and PP includes but transcends the life of each individual and is expressed in their living out of a vision. Second, the nature of this vision both arises from the teaching of the council and demonstrates associates’ sense of their connection to the larger church.

III. Significance
A. Further Questions: Toward a Theology of Lay Association

As Cistercian and Presentation associate programs continue to expand and the number of religious decreases such that the use of New Melleray (NM), Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey (OLM), and Mt. Loretto may have to change dramatically, these associates may have to learn new practices and skills and their work of marking the parameters of their way of life will taken on new urgency. They will have to develop the beginning they have made to understand Vatican II’s meaning for collective charisms and cooperation among the states of life and fully lean on the resources for this work provided by their national and international networks. The local church will have to receive them as bearers of a mission, spirituality, and charism once attributed only to religious.

As these events unfold, not just within the AIC and PP but across associate programs in the U.S., further questions can gradually address the broad pursuit of a theology of lay association. When viewed from the perspective of a lived interpretation
of Vatican II, what is the meaning of this way of life as a tradition? Will the future local church look more and more like associate life? Are the differences of region, class, and racial background among associate groups an obstacle to understanding this way of life as a unified movement? What directions can be identified in the cross-pollination among associates of different Catholic and Christian backgrounds? Among the youngest associates, especially those influenced by time spent in full-time service alongside religious as temporary members, does associate life continue to bring together faithful from disparate corners of the church for lifelong commitment?

B. The AIC and PP as Models: Implications for Ecclesiology and Church Groups

This project approaches the study of the associate way of life from an historical-theological point of view. As such it stands at the intersection of the historical work of making sure associates are present in U.S. Catholic history and also the theological tasks associates themselves undertake of making sense of this presence in relation to the broader church. In this way it contributes to the area of ecclesiology done on the ground, drawing forth from associates’ lived expressions various connections among intersecting communities. This project has emphasized that the nature of associate life requires an interdisciplinary approach and has shown what pursuing this approach might entail. Next steps for investigating the question of ecclesial fit could benefit from cooperative work among historians, sociologists, ecclesiologists, and scholars of religious life.

Beyond the scholarly community, this dissertation offers a model of Christian discipleship to various groups within the church. Emerging churches and new monastics seeking to build Christian community rooted in the church’s tradition of religious life might find echo in the portraits of the AIC and PP. New Christian communities
attempting to stand outside traditional religious structures may be curious about the fierce tie to a religious congregation expressed by the AIC and PP. Religious congregations at various stages of developing their own associate programs may appreciate the comparison between a monastic and apostolic group’s story and a clear demarcation of just how associates are and are not like religious. Finally, the lay faithful, perhaps particularly women or those who consider themselves on the “fringes” of traditional parish life, who in search of a communal way of life that respects their distinct vocations can look to the AIC and PP as witnesses to what is possible for Christian brotherhood and sisterhood within the church.
This chapter offers a review of histories of lay associates, makes several historiographical claims about this literature, and in so doing sketches a broad outline of the history of the movement in order to frame Ch.3’s specific accounts of the AIC and PP. The available literature on lay associations in the U.S. tends to contextualize them both historically and theologically in relation to vowed religious. Because associations emerged in different experimental forms within religious congregations for about a decade before the movement had enough shape to organize nationally in 1996, religious were the first to chronicle early forms of associate life and write about the movement’s wider development and implications. The initial questions these authors brought to reflection upon associate life were understandably primarily concerned with its relationship to religious life. They were concerned with the integrity of the vowed vocation and whether it is indeed possible to share a congregation’s spirituality and charism in common with a lay community. These issues have remained important, though the study of associate life today and includes the viewpoints of canon law, of a large movement of communities concerned with lay people living out ways of life.

20 Though comparisons of associates to vowed religious can be used to emphasize legitimate critical concerns about blurred boundaries, most authors treated in this project’s literature review rely on comparison as a useful means of upholding the parameters of both vowed and associate identity.

21 These include monastic and lay communities, Catholic and other Christian communities, and those, such as new monasticism, from typically Protestant communities. To help distinguish among this diversity
traditionally attributed to vowed religious, and of associates themselves. This wider set of perspectives still somewhat gravitates toward defining associate life in relation to religious but, as is evident in this study’s interpretation of the AIC and the PP in Ch.3-6, work on the meaning of association has also matured to encompass the distinct associate vocation. This vocation entails ongoing growth in living out the teachings of Vatican II evident on the part of individual religious, religious congregations, and individual associates and their communities.

Including Ch.1 and Ch.2 the literature review of this dissertation surveys the last thirty years of scholarly effort to define associate life and its fit with the larger church. Overall the review shows three things. First, it demonstrates how the comparison to religious life as a means of defining associates ripens over time. Second, it offers a syntax for the study of the associate way of life. Third, it shows how the scholarship around association fails to take into account the actual way of life of today’s associates, especially their maturity as an ecclesial body and appropriation of vowed religious’ practices for living out Vatican II.

For the sake of classifying the wide range of scholarly approaches that have been implemented to study associates, and recognizing that there is some overlap in perspective, Ch.1 focuses on primarily historical approaches and Ch.2 addresses theological ones. Later, Ch.6 will show that because of the limitations of each view on its own, an integration of the two methods offers the most clarity for this dissertation’s

of types, this dissertation will employ the terms institute or congregation when discussing a vowed religious community unless otherwise differentiated (as in “traditional monastic community”).
reach not only for who the AIC and PP associates are but also for what their presence might mean ecclesially.

The Ch.1 survey entails two main sections examining: 1) the limited available sources on the history of the movement and 2) a review of the history of canon laws most pertinent to associate life. New wave association is a young movement that crosses traditional boundaries and structures, takes on a variety of forms at the local level, and is rapidly increasing. For these reasons, assembling the available evidence on associates into a unified description of a movement or even when simply describing the way of life of a single associate group, several basic questions emerge: What exactly is a lay association in relationship with a religious community? What characteristics define its boundaries and has the definition changed over time? Where are the demarcation lines for associate life beyond which one simply holds a private informal bond with a group of religious or participates in a faith sharing group? Which degrees of relationship constitute a whole new form of life? Are there forms, practices, and laws traceable across church history? Who participates and why? Given the close alliance with vowed religious and given the group belonging aspect of lay association, are there particular ecclesial challenges facing this way of life? How can we sort through the numerous lay associative organizations bearing comparable titles and living comparable ways of life in the U.S. Catholic Church today?

Ch.1 addresses these foundational concerns first by investigating several histories portraying how the new wave of associate life came about in the 1980’s, including demographic descriptions of its participants over the course of the movement’s first decade. Selective changes in religious life since Vatican II with the most significant
impact on present day associates are also addressed here as a third way of framing the context of associate life. The historiographic argument of this first half of Ch.1 makes two claims: 1) There are the three main types of available histories of the lay associate movement—conferences, demographic studies, and sources on the renewal of religious life. These have each changed over time from using what may be called a balance of power model for describing associates’ relation to religious, through a period of trying out a friendship model, and then tentatively approaching a model of multiple modes of relating in which individuals come to see themselves embedded in a community. 22 2) The method of comparing associates to religious has changed over time from an early tone of defending boundaries and giving to associates toward today’s tone characterized by emphasis on seeking mutual enrichment of each side’s distinct vocation.

Ch.1’s second half continues a basic description of associates by chronicling the lay associate movement canonically as it briefly surveys church laws about earliest associate or associate-like groups through the 1917 code. Next this section discusses canonical forms of association found in the 1983 code because these have the most influence over the practices of the AIC, PP, and other lay associations like them. The chapter ends with a summary of the most challenging juridical issues surrounding associate life in its current form. Overall this section shows how scholarship from a canonical perspective claims that though the way of life constituted by close relation to a vowed institute has shaped and been shaped by centuries of juridical development, the new wave associates have partially broken the mold. They must be understood as a distinct form of life with characteristics that exceed current juridical definition. Both

22 These three models are explained in the following section on new wave histories.
sections of Ch.1 demonstrate how the historical work on associates conducted so far succeeds in establishing basic parameters of a comparison to religious life and syntax with which to operate. However, this historical scholarship does not take into account several central aspects of present-day associates’ way of life including their maturing as an ecclesial body over time as well as their appropriation of Vatican II.

I. Investigating Histories of Associates in the U.S. Church

A. Lay Associate Programs: The New Wave

As the canonical history section in the second half of this chapter will describe, associate life has a long line of historical predecessors when it comes to forms of committed lay-religious bonding in the church. The primary focus of this dissertation is the so-called “new wave” of associate life which builds upon canonical work accomplished in the early 20th century and began about twenty years after Vatican II.23 Too young and too diverse in practice to have warranted a history of the whole movement, and yet clearly the youngest addition to a long tradition of affiliation with religious orders, the new wave associates face a challenge in recounting their story. Events and influences from a variety of sources, each with a slightly different aim, must be pieced together and several gaps remain in the scholarly record. Even at the level of

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23 The title “new wave” is given to this stage of associate life because prior to the 1970’s and 1980’s those who operated in relationship to religious in what comes closest to today’s associative model typically were 1) sparse in numbers and 2) not in alliance with one another to the extent they were in later programs. Only passing reference is made to these precursor associates in historical work on the movement. Further unearthing of sources about them is needed. The so called “new wave” brought swelling numbers of associates and a tenacity to belonging in their associate community. Also, the canonical work on comparable groups in the early 20th century that paved the way for canons eventually applied to associate life will be discussed in section II Canon Law below.
local associate groups or sponsoring institutes, participants are just at the earliest stages of writing their first histories.  

This section relies on the earliest substantial sources that offer a history of the associate movement: 1) Kindred Spirits, the Bonding of Laity and Religious by Maurice L. Monette (1987) was written by a member of an ecclesial movement who had an interest in the lay religious bond after the council. 2) Articles were written after each of the early associate movement’s U.S. national conferences held between 1989-1996. 3) Work by and about religious as they undertook Vatican II’s call to renewal includes early attempts to conceptualize association as a way of relating to the post council religious institute.

First, several observations can be made about the way the history of the associate movement has been told over time. Most accounts tell the history of lay associates chronologically in three main stages: 1) earliest new wave practices and organizing efforts, 2) the blossoming of numbers, reflection, and leadership structure in the late 1980’s and 1990’s, and 3) the new circumstances surrounding associates around the year 2000. When giving an account of these stages, the sources address questions of how the new wave of associate programs came into being, why they expanded so rapidly, and, most importantly for these authors, how they related to religious. Three kinds of narratives about relating to the larger church by means of relationship with religious emerge from the sources within this discussion. They can be termed the ‘balance of relation’ model, the ‘friendship with religious’ model, and the ‘individual to community’

model of associate history. These will be traced in the accounts of the associate movement’s origins and early days that follow. It will be shown that while most conference accounts from this period tend to favor a friendship with religious model of framing associate history, by the mid to late 1990’s demographic studies and scholarship on the renewal of religious life were beginning to reach for ways of describing associates’ multiple layers of belonging.

By the time Monette wrote Kindred Spirits in 1987, some initial counting and describing of associates had been done by surveying leaders of religious institutes. However his book stands as the first with a focus on describing the movement in itself and situating it historically. Drawing from his own surveys of both religious and lay leaders, Monette writes about associates at a time when they were striving to solidify their awareness of their own history and “[order] themselves to the larger tradition” as a movement.

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25 The ‘balance of relation’ narrative begins with an account of a helping model relationship in which laity primarily receive guidance, charism and opportunities for engaging prayer and work from the religious community. The relationship gradually shifts toward mutuality over time and has recently taken on inklings of a second shift toward associates giving more aid to religious communities with aging and decreasing membership. The second common narrative can be called the ‘friendship with religious’ model in which the relationship between laity and religious itself develops from that of superiors to inferiors in the 1970’s toward a friendship or partnership among equals today. A third common narrative might be called the ‘individual to community’ model. It tells a tale of private individuals at first bonding with a few religious from a community and their manner of prayer or service. Then these persons come together into small group and then institutionalized organizations with contracted relationships to an entire religious community, its charism, and its networks across geographic distances.

26 M.L. Monette, Kindred Spirits: The Bonding of Laity and Religious, (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1987): xiii. Monette is one of the first to make the case that associates’ development is not a narrative of the watering down of religious life but rather the emergence of a unique form of the lay vocation. He also is unique for writing writes for an audience of both religious and associates, unlike the authors of conference articles whose work follows in this section.
Unlike later accounts of associate history which describe slow steady growth of the movement since Vatican II, Monette argues that lay associations initially decreased in number after Vatican II as those who already participated in what might be called pilot associate programs later left for a spectrum of reasons. For Monette Vatican II ignited a change from a “trickle down model” of associates relating to the devotional life of religious to a mutual sharing of life model as early as the 1980’s. The shift took time at first but, once integrated, sparked a rapidly growing movement.

Monette sees associates emerging at the intersection of the post-conciliar renewal in religious life and the emergence of the mission-sense of the non-vowed, non-ordained faithful. He compares this situation to “giant plates grinding below the surface of the earth.” He describes how when membership in women’s religious institutes dropped 33 % and men’s institutes dropped 14 % from 1966-1983, the church felt the effect immediately and several new challenges arose. For Monette one of the first was that women’s religious communities had to change how their social mission functioned. In

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27 Though some trace the beginning of the new wave to the late 1960’s, most historical accounts date the beginning in the mid-1970’s. For example, The North American Conference for Associates and Religious states that the origins of the new wave occurred in the 1970’s. See “NACAR History”, NACAR, http://nacar.org/whoweare/nacarhistory.html (accessed June 1, 2009). Jasinski/Foley, in their early studies of the movement state, “this powerful movement has been quietly erupting within the Church for the last ten to fifteen years,” which would put the start at 1975 or 1980. Rose Marie Jasinski, and P.C. Foley. "The Associate Movement in Religious Life," 353-357, in Review for Religious (no49 1990): 354.

28 Monette, Kindred Spirits, 11 and 4. According to Monette this was true of the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate which reduced in numbers from nearly 2000 to about 500, some leaving to protect a helping [priests and religious] model of associate life and others rejecting it.

29 Monette, Kindred Spirits, 16. Here Monette contrasts the trickle-down spiritual benefits society model (for example the Association of Marian Helpers) with the mutuality among lay members of the faithful model (some as sisters and brothers and some as married and single persons) present in associate life.
contrast apostolic women’s traditional institutional forms of service in hospitals and schools, sisters’ congregational homes themselves became sites for social mission.\textsuperscript{30}

Several lay movements launched at this time, including Cursillo, RENEW, Christ Renews His Parish, and RCIA and, most importantly for Monette the new wave of lay association, can best be understood as part of a post conciliar wave of social mission innovation in the church. He describes the wave as a new pattern of bonding between laity and religious and “the boundaries between religious and laity [were] being blurred by a new spirit of mission and holiness.”\textsuperscript{31} Changes in lay language, spirituality, and ministry and in the receptivity of institutes to lay ideas all contributed to a new context in which associates could come about and flourish. Monette also notes that the post-conciliar context asked laity previously accustomed to close relationship with religious in a variety of formal and informal forms to examine possible imbalances in the

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 40-41. This shift is addressed again in Ch.3 and 4 in the context of an associate describing how her childhood closeness to the PBVM’s shifted over time to include professional closeness as more and more sisters received higher education degrees and entered a wider range of service professions such as social work, chaplaincy, teaching, and pastoral ministry.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 51. The full context for this quote reveals a positive view of this blurring for the wider church and yet shows sensitivity toward the good of retaining ecclesial boundaries between vowed religious and non-vowed laity. It states,

“the regathering [of church since the council] is happening in many places. One is where the new patterns of bonding are developing between religious and laity. These two distinct groups within the church are exploring anew their common faith and finding in each other the resources of a prophetic tradition and sensitivity to the needs of people and communities in a changing culture. The boundaries between religious and laity are being blurred by a new spirit of mission and holiness. Some believe that this blurring is an identity crisis which can be resolved by simply reinforcing traditional identities. Others believe it to be a major step toward a more wholesome integration of calls and gifts which had been artificially separated. In either case the bonding of laity and religious is providing the space in which to discern the movements of the Spirit which have caused such disruption and questioning.
relationship, permanence of commitment, the question of stability, and the “good and bad” blurring of ecclesial roles.  

Monette seems unique among the historians of associate life this dissertation examines in that he places such strong emphasis on the balance of relation narrative. He seems to be responding to associates’ early and vocal critics. This is clearly the case when he explains how a trickle-down pattern of religious sharing their life with associates made way for a more collaborative model of sharing spiritual gifts during the movement’s first ten years. His description of the collaboration emphasizes the giving and receiving of both constituencies. Emphasis on the balance of relation narrative also requires him to show associates engaging with Vatican II’s call to holiness and mission in distinct ways. He begins this task but, in part due to the youngness of the movement at the time of his writing, does not develop it. His history occasionally begs the question, what evidence is there that associates have shown they see themselves in a unique vocation in the contexts of both church and world? This dissertation offers such evidence in Ch.4 and 6.

While Monette’s historical commentary provides a context for the initial rise of the new wave, conference reports from the earliest U.S. associate conferences in the late 1980’s offer a retrospective memory-based account of the movement’s origins. In 1989 at the Bon Secours Spiritual Center in Mariottsville, Maryland, over 100 directors of associate programs (both religious and associates) gathered for a conference. It was the first meeting of this kind, though they committed to biannual and regional meetings thereafter. After each conference, a sister would typically collect participants’ views and

32 Ibid., 54-63.
analyze them and publish her findings in an article for the Leadership Conference for Women Religious or the *Review for Religious*. Here several of these articles are summarized and lined up chronologically to show how over time they offer a deepening of the “friendship” model for describing associates.

Participants at the first conference in 1989 included directors of programs ranging from a few years old to a decade old. The topic was the history of the movement so far, particularly how the spiritualities or charisms of institutes had been received by the associates over time. Directors described their groups as diverse according to sex, marital and vowed status, Christian tradition, and age. Even young programs were already finding more annual applicants to themselves than to the vowed religious institution. Some groups were already experiencing greater membership numbers than the institute itself. Practices varied across groups but held in common a “strong emphasis on forming bonds between laity and religious around a specific charism and mission; attempting to live out that spirit and charism in one’s particular lay lifestyle.” Most groups at least held monthly meetings, annual retreats, and weekly prayer meetings.

When asked what had attracted associates in the last decade of the new wave, responses included dissatisfaction with community at the parish, desire to deepen prayer, and a desire to participate in the community meetings. While some programs retained from earlier times an overall *telos* for the group of prayer and devotion, others had dual ends of spiritual development and service. It was a common experience for a group to

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33 Rose Marie Jansinski and Peter Foley, "Reflections on the Associate Movement in Religious Life," *Occasional Papers*, a publication of The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 353-357 (no 16 October 1989): 357. A majority of the program directors were sisters.
include an end of spiritual development for the purpose of fostering and sustaining service.\textsuperscript{34}

Jasinski/Foley bring a sociological viewpoint to their recounting of the same 1989 meeting. They observe a generational pattern among associates wherein “generation” refers to order in joining the association rather than age. They identified a first founding generation marked by receiving spirituality and leadership from an institute. In the second generation of associates who joined a few years later they saw more evidence of shared efforts between religious and laity toward spiritual development. A third generation of participation could be recognized by their desire for a sharing in the institute’s community life including its spirituality and leadership.\textsuperscript{35} And finally, Jasinski/Foley see signs of a rising fourth generation of newer associates who are “spiritually motivated and supported by a faith community to go out in mission to share the charism.”\textsuperscript{36} Participants agreed that charisms were best passed on through one-on-one friendship, but not necessarily from religious to associate. Their study called for more exploration of bonds of friendship among associates. An insight about charism, one that surprised the authors, was that the religious described being energized and renewed in their charism commitments by having associates.\textsuperscript{37} Finally, conversations at the conference also discovered that membership in the program was more constituted by desire and commitment rather than by presence and participation. Such a distinction

\textsuperscript{34} Jasinski/Foley, “Reflections on the Associate Movement,” 353-354. They are among the first to refer to the “associate movement in religious life.”

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 356. The authors write, “the more congregations included members in governance and community structures the greater the commitment of time and energy of associates.” But it is not clear from this claim that inclusion in governance produces great commitment.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 355.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 355-356.
indicates that groups faced discord surrounding degrees of participation and geographic distance.

The movement grew “steadily and quietly” and a second directors’ conference in 1991 focused on the future of the movement and lay leadership. There were 110 attendees, some religious, some associates, and this time some from Canada. The non-vowed associates agreed to meet between conferences to build up a leadership vision and all the sessions at the 1991 conference operated with the assumption that “associates themselves are the experts.” The second conference’s reflections indicate a shift has happened in associates’ thinking about vocation between the late 1980’s and 1991. The language used at the 1991 conference began to include phrases such as “a unique call” and “a unique identity” for laity and a “need for healthy distance to support respective calls” in the lay religious relationship. The conference indicates that associates had begun to appropriate the charisms in deeper ways and ask “to what extent can laity own the charism?” and “are associates attracted because they already posses the charism?” A shift in language also occurred around the initial joining processes, some advocating the term “orientation” rather than the term “formation” usually linked to vowed religious.

A need to make distinctions was clearly arising for associates, and it remains a question to what extent religious themselves influenced this need. There is some evidence religious were beginning to desire the sustainability of a friendship model of association because of the burgeoning size of most associate programs in comparison to decreasing size of religious congregations. The 1991 conference recorded that associates were continuing the word of mouth rather than formal advertising practice of recruitment held since the beginning of the new wave. They continued to express desire for a faith
community but began expressing concern about religious “watering down” expectations for them or not matching their desire for relationship. Both religious and lay participants communicated a need for more mutual responsibility and accountability regarding the relationship, a need for more of a friendship. Again, this indicates the religious were needing to establish a protective boundary around the sharing of their life.38

Jasinski’s commentary on the conference suggests the original conference was seeking external legitimization but the second seeking internal form. New language emphasizing “call” and “work of the Spirit” indicate a development in the movement’s maturity, toward a “spiritual not organizational process” of each association working out its own ramifications of its deepening bond with religious. By the mid 1990’s variety of practice and form were considered hallmarks of the movement.

Not only do local norms vary from group to group, but so do practices, the nature and scope of the relationship with religious, the degree of participation and communication among members and with larger associate conferences, and the primary ends of the programs. One example illustrates the point well. Jasinski noticed participants questioning the validity of associate attendance at congregational chapter meetings. She observed that when an associate community has good experiences sharing several aspects of a community’s life, the presence at chapter smoothly follows and, likewise, when a program encounters tension around the sharing of other aspects of life, the chapter policy often excludes them. For Jasinski, this pattern indicates that “whatever associate membership means, it is to be explored in the experience itself rather

38 Ibid., 577-578.
than in the structures or organization [or policies] of the “program” that shapes and
perhaps seeks to contain the experience.” 39

In 1991 a parallel conference was held by the U.S. and Canadian Scarboro
Missions family40 in Scarbarough, Ontario, Canada. They too felt a need to discuss the
partnership between laity and religious, but their unique contribution was reflection upon
what had happened within the associate movement since Vatican II. They noted that
religious began inviting laity to participate in missions during the 1970’s. The form
changed over time, beginning simply with shared prayer among co-workers at a Catholic
hospital and or during overseas missions and later adopting structure and common
practices. Discussions at this conference primarily concluded that the relationship
between laity and religious is in the process of maturing. They acknowledged that
sometimes the structures of congregations “proved in some cases unresponsive” to lay
members and are in need of reexamination. Commitment on the part of laity rose to the
surface as a key factor in this issue because the amount of oversight on the part of
religious seemed to be in direct proportion to the duration of the associates’ commitments.
Religious seemed to desire a mutuality of friendship rather than a teacher-student model.
The conference ended with both laity and religious supporters recommitting themselves
to the relationship constitutive of “the lay-religious associate movement in order to bring
about a new and truer vision of church.” 41

40  Today the Scarboro Missions Family calls itself a Catholic mission society but operates with a new wave
associate model including priests and associates.
41  G. Curry, "New Wine-New Wineskins: Laity and Religious in Partnership," in Scarboro Missions (no72
After nearly ten years of associate directors meeting together every two years, some participants joined together and formed the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) in 1996. The original founders Jean Sonnenberg, an Associate of Bon Secours, and Sr. Ellen O’Connell, SC, wanted a conference with a mission to “support associates and religious in their work as and with associates” and the same mission remains today. NACAR carefully continued the tone of mutuality set by the 1989 meeting. They focus on associate experience itself as the primary “expert.” They rely on small group conversation and faith sharing, and they have added large group visioning and keynote speakers to the biannual conferences. While some issues have come into being and passed out of popularity in NACAR’s offerings such as the chapter attendance matter, other issues seem to cycle around repeatedly with new reflections each time associate leaders come together. For example, the possibility of associates living together or with religious in intentional communities recurs as a topic because these avenues are imagined as ways of fostering the mutuality of friendship model to which most groups aspire. There is also growing interest in associates connected to orders of priests and religious whose numbers are growing. NACAR’s work continues to expand in scope as the number of associates increases. For example in the early 2000’s they co-

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42 See Appendix for an image of NACAR’s symbol.
43 Now, with a board of directors, a small staff, and an office NACAR provides workshops, biennial international conferences with keynote addresses, ten regional associate meetings (one of which is Canadian), a quarterly newsletter called The Associate, an online prayer forum, accessibility to news articles and scholarly publications for members, and generally offers support to associates, leaders of associate programs and the religious communities who sponsor them.
44 See Nashville Dominicans and Dominican Laity Program which is a canonical public association. Sisters of Mary Mother of the Eucharist, “Dominican Laity—Mission,” Sisters of Mary Mother of the Eucharist of Ann Arbor Michigan http://nashvilledominican.org/Home/Dominican_Laity/Mission (accessed November 30, 2011). While this dissertation has focused on the history of association with LCWR-related congregations of religious women and with monastics because of its focus on the PP and AIC and because these associates have left the most accessible paper trail to date, further studies are needed to compare this history to a history of associates of religious congregations participating in the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious.
sponsored two sociological studies about associate life with the Center for Research into the Apostolate. \(^{45}\) They have been reaching out in friendship internationally to other associate programs, so far largely in Australia and Canada. \(^{46}\) Another concern for contemporary associates has been to foster regional, national, and international conferences of program leaders, and provide chances to get to know associates from other spiritual traditions and locations within the church. \(^{47}\) In the history of the new wave of associate programs, the founding of NACAR in 1996 was a pivotal event. The movement seemed to have crossed a threshold from its earliest stage of initial gatherings and fundamental identity work into a new intermediate stage of growth, leadership development, \(^{48}\) and deepening theological reflection.

In summary, the historically reflective work of these conferences demonstrates a change over time in how associate life was described. First, a model of imbalanced dependency upon religious gave rise to a model of collaborate friendship. Conference participants quickly identified the need for associates to clarify their telos and begin

\(^{45}\) This topic is discussed in the demographic data section below.

\(^{47}\) Zoe Ryan, “Associates Embrace Orders’ Charism,” *National Catholic Reporter* (September 27, 2011) http://ncronline.org, (accessed September 30, 2011). In Ryan’s article Robert Schrieter comments that individualistic societies like the U.S. tend to have more associate programs. Distance between members, between associates and sponsoring religious, and between programs has had mixed and largely unexplored consequences for associate life. Internet-based associate groups and internet based communication tools for members both offer new opportunities and concerns for associates. All these issues will be examined in the examples of the AIC and PP in Ch.4-5. A hypothetical image of the creativity across distance characterizing contemporary associate life might show an associate of one religious community as a prisoner in a state penitentiary emailing a prayer request to an associate of another community across the country who serves as a board member for a Catholic hospital.

\(^{48}\) In this circumstance leadership of associate programs has become a pressing concern and recent creative responses include co-leaders, fostering lay associate-led leadership, and turning program leadership into paid positions. For more on this topic see Catherine Schwerner, “Associate Directorship,” NACAR Report (2008): 1-28.
creating unique appropriations of the spiritual traditions to reach it. As the conference studies show, this need stemmed from both the associates’ discovery of the uniqueness of their living out of charism and community life and the needs of religious to be prudent with their resources. These conference materials also show scholars beginning to remark on the shift associates tend to make from their attraction based on individual benefits to their long-term commitments rooted in a “we-ness,” a sense of group call and identity that was not present before.

B. A Middle-Class Social Club?: A Demographic Portrait Then and Now

Next to the early accounts of associates’ origins and central characteristics written by Monette and various religious, demographic studies offer the next best source for tracing the history of the movement. Unlike the accounts of associates’ origins in the conference reports in the previous section, the demographic studies presented here were concerned with counting the number of members, listing their developing characteristics, recording their rates of initial commitment and retention, as well as measuring changes in prayer practice, engagement in ministry, and the effectiveness of passing on of the spiritual tradition from vowed religious to associates. This section summarizes data on these topics chronologically according to the aforementioned three stages of associate history. First, it examines the earliest count of associate programs, then the flurry of studies in the 1990’s as the movement became widespread, organized, and interesting to leaders in religious life, and finally the section addresses the most recent studies sponsored by the North American Conference for Associates and Religious.
Several changes over time can be traced among the narratives surrounding these numerically-based sources. Demographic counts presented in this section certainly show associates as a group growing in size during their first decade of serious organization. Yet such counts go on to describe how the groups are also growing in maturity, and more and more coming to reflect the characteristics of the religious they befriend in quantifiable ways. One way of measuring shifts in the definition of association is to consider how the data shows associates’ desires becoming clearer over time; they have always wanted to draw close to the spirituality of their religious congregation, but it can be observed that they also begin desiring alliance with a congregation’s mission, ministries, and practices.

This section lines up key demographic studies of associates to show how the meaning of associate life changes over time in quantifiable ways. What begins as a simple friendship model of relationship with local religious moves toward a model of multiple modes of relating in which associates begin to take initiative for their own leadership and infrastructure at the national level. The demographic history of associates shows them to be much more than a middle-class social club. By the time the more recent demographic studies were being written around the early 2000’s, records showed associates had come to awareness of themselves as part of a layered movement. The best evidence of their expanded awareness is that they came to sponsor a sociological self-study through NACAR to better measure the parameters of the movement on the national level.

In 1987 the National Conference of Religious Vocation Directors, which counted 187 American associate programs, and Monette’s *Kindred Spirits* study, which counted
250 programs, are credited as the first statistical sources for associate data.49 In 1988 Sr. Rosemary Jeffries conducted what can be called the first major sociological count of associates. She surveyed women’s religious communities and found 6,000 associates who were largely white, educated, older women. Her 1992 study found the number increasing. Jeffries is remembered for her enduring comment that the associate’s demographic profile often seems to mirror that of the vowed members with whom they bond. In 1994 Sr. Paula Rae Rose, O.S.F. found similar results. By 1996, when the movement began solidifying its North American Conference, the number had reached over 14,000 associates.50

When the movement had reached a decade of annual conferences in 1996, the Center for Applied Research into the Apostolate at Georgetown began studying it as a “new experience of relationship” within the church and calling for more study. In response the 1997 CARA study entitled “The Associate Movement in Women’s Religious Communities” found 14,500 associates and 212 women’s religious communities with associate programs. Most studies thus far had surveyed leadership of religious institutes. However, CARA emphasized that while membership and commitment are worth attention, the way associate programs “bring together laity deeply committed to spirituality and faith sharing suggests that future research should focus on

49 Monette, *Kindred Spirits*, viii and 18. The discrepancy seems to stem from Monette sending surveys directly to the leaders of religious institutes inquiring about associates whereas the NCRVD may have relied on data from studies with multiple questions.

their place as a kind of small faith community.”

This statement opened the door for research into new wave lay associations themselves as ecclesial sites.

In 2000, Sr. Mary Bendyna, RSM., a CARA sociologist interested in the generational and political attributes of U.S. Catholic life, conducted a study entitled “Associate Programs: a Growing Trend Among Religious Orders.” Her work surveyed 812 major superiors or provincials of congregations of both men and women. She counted 25,500 associates with 2,700 in formation. Half the programs began in the 1980’s, a quarter in the 1990’s, and some planned one soon. Bendyna confirms that most associates are white women age 50 and older, though Hispanic women and African American men are the next largest groups. Bendyna is the first to compare women and men’s associate groups in depth. She finds a minority of congregations limiting associates to only women or men. She also discovers that most men were attracted by community, ministry, and service according to the leaders of the institutes while women were more likely to have programs for formation on charism, mission, and spiritual tradition.

Bendyna learns that most programs admit both single and married members and around 60 percent allow non-Catholic Christians. Around 20 percent accept non-Christians. Bendyna noted that 16 percent of institutes said they do something other than association to share life with laity such as oblates, third orders, or prayer associates.

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51 CARA Associate Movement 1997, 3.
52 Bendyna discovered women outnumbered men in associate programs seven to one. She also learned about a handful of religious congregations had some form of associate program before 1980 but ended it for a variety of reasons.
Some groups do more than one of these.\textsuperscript{53} Regarding practices, she found that most people make formal commitment to the order’s mission and most renew it.

Because NACAR supported Bendyna’s study they also had a chance to communicate the findings to associates themselves. Their description emphasized slightly different aspects of the results. They especially highlight that Bendyna’s second portion of the study found more than 27,400 associates. They note that male associates numbered 3,789 and most male associate groups began in the 1990’s. They note that men and women associates both see the main end of their commitment as living the mission of the institute. NACAR titles their report “Relationship in the U.S. Catholic Church” and they note how associates “help carry on the charism.” They express how vowed members do not see the same attractions in associates. Here they describe that the domain of sharing is usually prayer and mission activities, not financial or corporate business. Most associates grow in their desire to serve in ministry over time. Older religious were less likely to have relationships with associates or know about their formation. Younger religious are the reverse, praying and faith sharing with them more often. This parallel report shows a rare glimpse into how associates were beginning to reflect upon themselves. In doing so they emphasized the growth of their movement and its ability to live out the charism of a religious congregation while not impinging on religious’ distinctive way of life. Whether reported by CARA or by NACAR, the study marks a significant turning point on associates in that they have begun to evaluate themselves statistically.

\textsuperscript{53} The Sisters of Charity BVM of Dubuque and the Holy Cross family for example offer multiple avenues of affiliative relationship.
The second of the NACAR sponsored CARA studies occurred three years later in 2003 and was entitled “Associates Work, Pray with Vowed Members of Religious Institutes.” This study referred to the “movement” of associate life. Surveys were again distributed to directors of associate programs and religious superiors but also included samples of associate and vowed members for the first time. The study took into account that different units of governance have associate relationships: institutes, congregations, provinces, regions, and monasteries thus tried to draw from the spectrum for their scope. Two of their findings were that women continued to outnumber men in associations and that members’ average age is 61. The 2003 study confirmed the racial profile from the previous study and found half of the associates surveyed were married; six in ten had college degree. In addition to confirming that most groups had a formal formation program it found that a mentoring component via religious or associates or both was also prevalent. It confirmed that most had friends in the order or association but learned that only half knew much about the institute before beginning formation. One third had previous contact through a colleague at work, through volunteer positions, or through other ministry contacts.

Religious who responded to the second study were older and less diverse. They had familiarity with spirituality and charism attracting associates, the formation process, and what associates do. The associates emphasized their sense of call and desire to work with vowed members, whereas the vowed members were less likely to name these. The 2003 study found both groups largely agreed that associates are likely to be encouraged to join social and prayer events of institute. They also agreed that most vowed members are encouraged to participate in these but found that associates are more likely to actually
participate. Both groups also agreed that what helps foster relationships between associates and religious is regular contact with vowed religious and other associates, the formation program, and participation in the institutes’ prayer practices.54

This overview showed how the prominent demographic studies conducted on the associate movement so far reveal the majority of associates to be desirous of deepening friendship and expanded collaboration with religious. They increasingly express how much they value the face to face encounters afforded by associate belonging. As the numbers of associates grow, they show themselves capable of taking on the commitments and accountability of a serious community life with one another, and willing to work out and sustain multiple layers of ecclesial belonging. Though no studies have been done to measure the number of associates since 2003, associate leaders interviewed for this dissertation believe the movement is due for a new sociological study.55 A new study would likely find that while most associates are still white, middle-class, educated women commonly in the age range of 50-70, the number of associates continues to swell, and the meaning associates attribute to their way of life has changed over time in significant and observable ways.

55 Interviews B6, A10. In Ryan, “Associates Embrace Order’s Charism,” Joseph Connell. director of Holy Cross Associates for the Brothers of Holy Cross Midwest Province and Board Member for NACAR, and his colleagues now think there are more than 50,000 lay associates in North American countries. Mary Jo Mersmann, co–president of the NACAR Board, suspects there is a new trend toward increases in the number of members who are men and younger than 40 but a study has not yet confirmed this.
C. Changes in Institutes for Consecrated Life

The history of the post Vatican II renewal in religious life and its aftermath has bearing on the relationship between associates and religious. Because no studies have directly addressed this topic, this section of Ch.1 selectively explores five themes of the renewal with the most relevance to associate life: Religious Life as a Movement, Community, No Longer Superior, Embracing the World, and New Needs for Religious Institutes. The discussion draws heavily upon Sandra Schneiders’ early work to emphasize the kind of reflections shaping the context of religious life around the time the associate movement was beginning. Schneiders shows how each of the five themes can bring about sensitivity to both individual and group levels of the conciliar vision of call and response to holiness. Each theme reveals an opening for the concept of association to “graft” upon an element of post-conciliar religious life. This section makes the historiographical argument that more than the other approaches discussed so far in this chapter, the viewpoint of locating the history of associate life within the framework of the renewal of religious life results in conceptualizing association as a means of fostering a community-minded “we” centered point of view.

1. Religious Life as a Movement

One outcome of Vatican II and its aftermath for religious was a turn toward a long-range historical view of the church and religious life. This perspective set newer changes within larger stories of change in religious life, its form, and its social fabric. At the same time, Sandra Schneiders observes how the council showed the “richness of the

phenomenon of religious life and the fecundity of approaching its meaning from broader points of view than the dogmatic juridical one that had commanded the theology of religious life at least since the Council of Trent." 57 A good number of religious institutes in the U.S. made changes in thought and practice toward reflection from a ground-up model. Schneiders’ read of the ground up model leads her to see the history of religious life as a movement with degrees of participation that vary over time. She writes:

If religious life, in the broadest sense and not merely in the juridical sense, is a movement, it is only to be expected that there will be members for whom the quest for the Transcendent is a virtually exclusive commitment, those for whom it is the primary commitment among others, and those for whom it is the primary commitment among others and those for whom it is an important commitment that is periodically primary. 58

Seeing religious life this way leads institutes to examine their “group life”59 with tools from the social sciences for analyzing movements. What is the balance of power? What forms of accountability do we have? Are there cases of inappropriate dependency on one another? What is our vision, mission, charism, and spirituality, and is it communicated well? Schneiders work responds to these concerns beginning with the assumptions that religious are human; that they are socially construed; that they are different from one another, and that religious life can be understood in a broad way with room for a great mix of commitments. One of her suggestions is a “commitment

57 Schneiders, New Wineskins, 28.
58 Schneiders, New Wineskins, 41.
59 See Ch.1 for clarification.
typology” mentioned below, an idea the founders of the AIC and PP actually read as they created their associate programs.60

2. Community

Inevitably the transformations of Vatican II touched what is known as the commitment to common life or community life. Schneiders writes that the “equation of community with ‘common life’ as it was eventually defined in the 1917 code of canon law is an historical development which is not necessary to religious life as such.”61 If this is so, then community life is no longer limited by a congregation’s rule and liturgical rhythm and room opens a new starting point for reflection about the meaning of community. Schneider observes,

Christians in every walk of life today are coming to a renewed (or new) realization of the essentially communitarian nature of Christianity and seeking ways to make this important dimension of their Christian vocation concrete for themselves….neither religious nor lay people any longer regard the community character of religious life as something which radically distinguishes religious life from other forms of Christian commitment.62

Religious have had to decide how such sharing fits within the charism or mission of the institute. To reflect in this direction, Schneiders relies on the spatial metaphor of inside/outside perspectives on the congregation-community dichotomy:

To make the reality of what they are visible so that it can function as witness in Church and world is a [task of religious in this new setting]. The kind of automatic visibility which the “common life” community had in times past is no longer available to many religious. But, on the other hand, it is much more possible today to allow people to witness religious community life from the inside

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60 A key reason to rely on Schneiders instead of other authors on this topic is that both AIC and PP archival material reference Schneiders’ early work. In notes and correspondence from the PP’s earliest meetings with religious in the mid 1980’s, Schneiders work is held up as an example of what is happening in other congregations in the U.S. See Ch.3.
61 Schneiders, New Wineskins, 237.
62 Ibid., 238.
than it was when religious life was an entirely exclusive phenomenon viewed only from the outside……many people today want to find ways both to participate in the life, ministry and spirituality of religious communities and to found voluntary lay communities modeled on those religious communities they know.\textsuperscript{63}

For Schneiders religious communities can and should offer both an “inside” and an “outside” witness in the post-Vatican II context and this itself could serve as a central differentiating factor between religious and non-vowed faithful. She goes on to argue,

Perhaps what is most needed in our times is the model offered by a concrete realization of the possibility of building real community among people who do not live in the same place at the same time, who do not work together in the common enterprise of the common enterprise of either the family farm or the shop or even the breadwinner/homemaker family unit, for whom real diversities in everything from personality to work necessitate and legitimate an irreducible plurality of lifestyles and yet who long for and need authentic relationships in life giving community.\textsuperscript{64}

In summary, many in religious communities see the need for innovations in the witness of both the internal and external life of their community life after Vatican II and both shape the context for the emergence of associate life.

3. No Longer Superior

Schneiders claims that two central outcomes of Vatican II for religious life are the “demise” of an understanding of the life as superior to other states and secondly, a reversal of the adversarial stance to the world.\textsuperscript{65} As a result combination of these two changes considerably shaped the landscape of relationship among religious and the new wave of lay associates. Schneider also distinguishes profession and other vows, arguing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[63] Ibid., 264.
\item[64] Schneiders, \textit{Selling All}, 352.
\item[65] Schneiders, \textit{New Wineskins}, 27.
\end{footnotes}
that the first is “essential for constituting the state in life” but the form of vows historically varies with the context.\footnote{Ibid., 50.}

In light of new conciliar views of religious life and its community life this vocation does not have to be seen as rooted in an individual taking on obligations but rather can be seen as a collection of persons with a “consecration for ministry within, and as an expression of, the mission of the institute.”\footnote{Schneiders, \textit{New Wineskins}, 88-89.} In expanding this claim, she proposes a typology of religious life based on the organizing principle model. Within the typology she describes among active communities some members who have a “[religious] primary life concern.” These members of an institute may “give themselves to it with energy and dedication without totally renouncing their non-conflicting commitments that are also important to them.” Such members are neither among the temporary members nor are they among those for whom “the search for God is exclusive.” They are akin to associates, she writes, whose “concern with the Transcendent surfaces repeatedly and claims its due, but it never so takes over the life of the person that it becomes the organizing principle.”\footnote{Ibid., 41.} In both cases religious and associates join with others who share a common organizing principle as a means of sharing this call. To the extent perspectives like Schneiders on the meaning of religious life were in the air of American Catholic religious institutes during the 1970’s and 1980’s, the associate movement responded to them by raising the key question of just what it was with which they were associating. Responses to this question color the character of each association.

\footnote{66 Ibid., 50.  
68 Ibid., 41.}
4. Embracing the World

What are the implications of Schneider’s typology of religious life when it comes to the council’s call to embrace the world? If the question is considered with a concern for associate life in mind, what comes forward is the manner in which religious institutes began seeing their own fit with the church and world in ways that made them receptive to and skilled in relationship to lay groups. For Schneiders the missionary sense manifested as a “new sense of a common quest for Christian perfection and consequent re-integration into the people of God.”69 Associates drawing near their way of life in this context, then, often encountered religious drawing near them in return, skillfully communicating the Christian life and its various vocations. This mutuality is addressed again in Ch.5-6.

5. New Needs for Religious Institutes

Finally, Schneiders sees the emergence of associates as a symptom of a continuous process of differentiation within the history of religious life. She writes:

Revaluation of various so-called “lay” extensions of some congregations and the creation of a variety of forms of associate or co-membership in congregations which previously did not have such “lay” branches” may be considered a move away from the strongly institutionalized movement characteristic of late nineteenth and early twentieth century religious life. 70 Institutions themselves began creative reworking of the vowed form of life to allow for degrees of affiliation within the “movement”. In Schneiders view, “community life” can entail a variety of forms ranging from a small group to an individual living alone, from an intentional community to shared houses or motherhouses. As she sees it, the parent-child

69 These come from Schneiders, New Wineskins, 88-89. Also see Lumen Gentium 39-42 on universal call to holiness.
70 Schneiders, New Wineskins, 32-33.
model of community life both internally and in relation to non-vowed faithful has been
eclipsed by the language of “adult friends in ministry.”71 In this way religious life,
particularly apostolic orders of women, responded to Vatican II’s renewal invitation by
reinterpreting the meaning of its “group” dimension and creating new vocabulary to
express it.

Schneiders offers a fairly clear naming of the aspects of Vatican II inspired
renewal that have most shaped the landscape within which religious undertook the task of
self-interpretation and first began serious reflection about association as a concept with
bearing upon their future. This section has shown that any correlation between religious
and associate life must acknowledge both forms of life have been undergoing tremendous
simultaneous development.

D. Conclusion: The Limits of Comparison

The first half of this chapter argues the three main types of available histories of
associate life—conferences, demographic studies, and sources on the renewal of religious
life—indicate a change over time from utilizing a balance of power model for describing
associates’ relation to religious, through a period of trying out a friendship model, and
then beginning to employ a multiple belonging model wherein associations become

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71 Ibid., 248, This model is characterized by a voluntary society that involves, “the acceptance of certain
characteristics of some members and certain features of group life for which she might not
car...she has joined it because the group provides for the satisfaction of certain needs and
embodies certain values that are important to all the members...among these values (for
religious) will be a shared concern for ministry, a shared vocational context of celibacy, and in
some sense a shared history. Some of the needs which the community will meet will be that for
worship, prayers, and faith sharing in the spiritual sphere; the supplying of mutual assistance,
support, affirmation the space to be oneself and to grow, reasonable and caring confrontation
when necessary, and a sense of belonging, interdependence and friendship in the phsychological
sphere and the sharing of resources and opportunities for growth and development in the
professional and ministerial spheres.” This portrait offers striking resemblance to associate life.
ecclesial cells and religious are not the only tie to the larger church. It has been demonstrated how at each of the three stages of associate history but especially within the most recent two, key elements of association as practices have been left out. The key reason for this oversight is that the premise of comparison to religious life as a means of defining association may have decreased in its relevance over time. For the early movement such a comparison served to launch reflection and create conceptual sources on association, but the historical sources indicate the movement has outgrown this starting point. As Ch.2 will show, associates can now begin describing who they are and what their ecclesial fit might entail from a variety of other useful starting points. The second half of Ch.1 echoes the claim that comparison of associate life to religious life seems to have encountered its limits. It does so by mapping the history of canons related to association and identifying their limitations.

II. Investigating Histories of Canon Law on Associates

Associate life is both compelling and hard to define because of its in-between qualities. It is not quite a vowed religious congregation and yet associates engage in a way of living perceptively different from those who are not associates. This way of life is characterized by committed engagement with a spiritual tradition, with a vision of Vatican II, with other associates, and with caretaking of the accountability, leadership, decision-making, and discernment of each group’s inner life. This way of living is also on the move, changing rapidly alongside religious congregations, most of whom are urgently adjusting to fewer members. As another type of historical approach to studying associate life, the canon law perspective of this second half of Ch.1 catalyzes the foot-in-
two-worlds impasse which can hinder or bias understandings of associate life. The thesis of this section is that while associate life clearly has canonical precedents, its contemporary practice exceeds juridical parameters.

Of the limited historical studies on lay associates, few have attended in depth to a canonical perspective on the new wave.72 The discussion in this section significantly draws upon two canonists who have both researched the historical precedents of the new wave movement and attended to the lived practices of contemporary associates. A 1995 dissertation entitled “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs in Canada: Origins, Canonical Considerations and Practical Aspects” by Sr. Susan Wikeem S.N.J.M. probes the church’s legal history for antecedents of a number of Canadian associate programs73 and her study remains the most comprehensive historical work on this subject. In 2012, lawyer and canonist Amy Hereford CSJ authored an article entitled, “Associates of Religious Institutes: A Way Forward.”74 Addressing leaders of religious institutes in the U.S., her article traces the post-conciliar canons with most import for today’s associates and emphasizes the importance of working out clear legal identities for both religious and associates.


Wikeem and Hereford’s work both employ narratives about religious life that shape their overall juridical assessment of the associate movement. Wikeem’s locating of associates employs a view that the juridical history of lay people drawing near, sharing life, and to varying degrees officially associating with religious communities might be told as tale of gradual institutionalizing of a common and diverse practice. For Wikeem this process had greater and lesser degrees of benefit to the form of life at certain points in church history but overall, what was once scattered practice gradually became named, guided by similar local community rubrics, and ultimately solidified into rules of life and canon laws for the whole church. This solidification in turn placed limitations on practices and structures at the local U.S. church level.

Hereford agrees with a narrative of gradual institutionalizing of practices, but she emphasizes that that within this context, “the story of every religious institute contains a unique tale of lay collaboration.”\(^\text{75}\) The new wave, Hereford argues, is a continuation of the historical impetus of each association engaging religious institutes’ spirituality, mission, community, and governance in unique combinations. As a result, she offers suggestions for associate programs evolving into independent entities over time. These entities should uphold the unique character of each collaborative relationship while ensuring clear demarcations between religious, associate, vowed congregation, and lay association identities. The following summary traces Wikeem and Hereford’s claims as they locate new wave association in juridical history.

A. Historical Canons on Association with a Religious Order through 1917

In broadest terms association can be understood as communion among members of the church seeking to join with one another as brothers and sisters in sharing the faith. Because they are members of the church, they form their organizational life not only in correspondence with the local culture but also in conjunction with what the church teaches, expects, and offers under these circumstances as they are detailed in canon laws and authoritative pronouncements. Being a member of an ecclesial body, even a small one like an association, involves a member of the church in spiritual, social, political, bodily, and sometimes even economic ties with other members. From the perspective of the church as institution, canon laws pertaining to all aspects of associate life are crafted to shape and guide organizational life in such a way as keeps the wellbeing of the faithful who participate in the foreground. Ideally the canons recognize and adapt to this way of life arising from and living within the vitality of the church. Wikeem and Hereford describe how this ideal is actually lived out over time.

1. Earliest Predecessors

For Wikeem the first six hundred years of non-vowed faithful associating with a group of monastic religious can be called the “local custom” phase. She describes how when 11th century monastic reforms brought the first institutionalized religious orders into public life, affiliation first moved from custom to recognized form of life, typically attached to a monastic rule of life. During this time “the world was constantly knocking

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76 Ibid., 4 describes how: “In the Egyptian deserts, individuals would go out to converse with the hermits living there. They might bring food or supplies needed by the hermits, and they would remain for a time, receiving the hermits’ guidance and blessing.”

77 Wikeem,, “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs,” 14-15. Recognition did not entail clarity of definition, however, and the taxonomy itself presents a difficulty for scholars:
on the cloister door” for a variety of purposes including manual labor and porter duties. Consequently there came about within early organized monasticism in Europe an initial practice of individual men and women or even families simply forming bonds with monks in a variety of ways, degrees, forms, and locations. As Wikeem sees it, this form of relationship remained a diverse and ad hoc practice marked by “vitality of relationship between religious and laity and of creative responses by monastics to their own changing conditions.”

The first major legal development occurred in the 7th century when confederated monastery leaders relying on the rule of St. Fructuosus agreed on norms for the presence of families in but not of the monastery. In 817, at the Synod of Aix-la-Chapelle, an unsuccessful attempt was made to restrict reception into a monastery to those who

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To say that there is great confusion of terms used to describe the various forms of affiliation is not to overstate the fact. More often than not the same reality bore different names in different places. Conversely, the same name was used to describe different realities. Furthermore, the realities themselves changed over time. This lack of precision in terminology creates an obstacle to a clear understanding of lay affiliation with religious orders in the early stages of its development.


80 Ibid., 17. She also mentions the Rule of St. Isidore in this section. The Regula Communis was a collection of decisions of some monasteries within a confederation. On this topic she quotes M.C. Diaz y Díaz’s article “Frutuoso in G. Rocca ed, Dizionario degli institute di perfezione, Roma, Edizioni Paoline”, 1977, vol.4 col 984-985 (translation by Susan Acciani): "...the goal of such a rule was to be a new form of integrating complete families into monastic life, without actually being a part of the community itself. They could enter the monastery as such in order to live there, the spouses living separately and the children with one or the other of the parents, depending on their sex and age, without destroying their family ties; their availability is characterized by absolute obedience to the abbey, from poverty in the form of the total renunciation of one's own worldly goods in exchange for room and board at the monastery, as well as the direct and independent bond of spouses and children to the abbey."
desired to be monks. Those drawing near monastic life but not joining it were given some aligned practices through these laws, but also some boundaries. Consequently, as Wikeem’s study presents it, the legal history of association underwent a pivotal period of transition from the local custom with limited inter-monastery rubrics model of the 9th century to a set of institutionalized practices epitomized by the refinement of oblation and the establishment of third orders by the 12th century. Increasing numbers of associating faithful including men, women and children necessitated more detailed local rubrics.

Wikeem observes that between the 9th and 12th centuries monasteries attracted followers because they were “perceived to be the embodiment of the Christian life” and they were fairly stable economically. Sometimes children, family members, or even those being punished by royalty would be “offered” or oblated to a monastery for a short time or for life. Historians have found some rubrics governing occasional cases in which these guests moved into closer relationship and were then referred to as oblates, donate, or praebendarii, especially by means of handing over property and formally attesting to the abbot’s authority. The fact that these rubrics are careful to protect the monastery

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81 Ibid, 18. For example, other synodal guidelines stipulated that laity would have the same spiritual reading during meals but live in a different refectory.
82 Wikeem, “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs,” 18. In some cases a statute naming these people as monks of the household or including them on the monastery roll elevated their status above that of mere servants. Monastic statutes of the time refer to famuli, matriculardii and praebendarii, all lay servants but with a mix of economic, devotional and residential ties to their monastery.
83 Ibid., 20.
84 Wikeem, “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs,” 20. Further studies are needed here comparing rubrics on these topics between men’s and women’s orders. In one example Wikeem describes rubrics framing the presence of consecrated “pious women” who offered care of sacristy, vestments and sometimes property in exchange for participation in prayers, spiritual direction, charitable deeds, and sometimes a residence and or financial support. The economic stability factor appears in the historical record as local rules about affiliates guiding monasteries in the right use of property, residential status, acceptance of abbot authority, and sometimes shared prayers or good works.
85 Ibid., 19.
from troublemaking wealthy or powerful oblates not interested in submitting to an abbot’s authority indicates that misuse of the practice likely occurred. This turn to the contract model and to more detailed rubrics in general both serve to begin rounding out the rights and responsibilities of both parties in the relationship---at this point usually the individual or family and the monastery. They mark a distinct change from the earliest one-sided rubrics. A mutual, if not equal, relationship had been legislated.

2. Third Orders and Oblates

The rise and institutionalization of oblates and third orders has a legal tradition dating to the 8th century and continuing today. Here rubrics concerning these groups will be addressed only in so far as they serve as a precursor to lay association. Monastic rules governing child and adult oblation, for example, set precedent for contemporary canons governing oblates:

the essence of adult oblation and the common element in all its manifestations was the free offering of one’s person to the monastery to gain some degree of participation in the life of the monks. In this manner without becoming religious, lay people, men, women, married and single as well as secular clerics were aggregated definitively to a religious order.

The presence of oblates especially seemed to necessitate rubrics concerning property, residence, and authority. For Wikeem oblation rules are important because they

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86 Ibid., 22. Another of the categories of affiliation Wikeem notes during this time is the confraternity member whose presence was marked by a formal liturgical union with a monastery. Rules about confraternity members provide an illustration of the common contract model of associative life during this period. Such rules stated that monks agreed to pray for living and deceased members, to offer the habit on member’s deathbeds and to bury the members in cemeteries. Confraternity members in turn formally agreed to give of their money and property also participate in the monastery's good works.

87 Wikeem, “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs,” 40-50.

88 Ibid., 24.
set precedent of stipulating the rights and responsibilities of both the order and the affiliate. 89

By the mid 17th century church oblates’ lives looked quite similar to religious. Some oblates at this stage even professed the evangelical councils.90

Third orders were a widespread movement of lay penitential movements arising in conjunction with the “ideal of primitive apostolic life” of mendicants. 91 For Wikeem the next significant legal event was when Francis wrote a rule for some followers with commitments that prevented them living like the friars around 1209 or 1210.92 The first and second Rule in 12221 and 1289 was approved by the church and formally provided for a third order.93 Scholars can say the first rule of 1221 legislated conduct, practices, attire, expectations, membership, leadership, money matters and even made notations

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89 Ibid., 25-28 Oblation served the one seeking it by offering a path to Christian life and practice and economic stability and offered the religious the relief of relying upon “quasi-religious” oblates instead of servants for help with manual labor. While some oblates offered their property, obedience and service unrestrictedly others promised their property, service and that of their descendents to the monastery’s use and paid a kind of rent. Still other oblates exchanged goods for long term support, burial and protection from poverty. She mentions how Cistercians and other 12th century orders established religious lay brothers and monks as separate and the church teaching followed.

90 Wikeem, “Contemporary Lay Associate Programs,” 29-31 After a decline from the 15th to the 18th century, oblation made a comeback in the 19th century. The law for secular Benedictine oblation was revised, attributing characteristics akin to third orders by 1871.

91 Ibid., 33-34 Mendicant life’s renunciation, simplicity and passion offered attractive contrast to the upper class European societies’ wealth, consumption and misuse of power. People from all walks of life began drawing near these models of Christian life in both spiritual and temporal ways just as they had when the penitential movement arose in comparable circumstances in the 4th century.91 Church law first prohibited mendicants but Pope Innocent III recognized some mendicants and established a rule for them.

92 Ibid., 36, No source exists for this but his “letter to all the faithful” written to individuals may be similar. Some debate exists about whether this letter predates or postdates his Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

93 Ibid., 36-38. Also see The Order of Penitents Historical Roots and Pastoral Future J.A. Favazza Liturgical Press 1988. The term third order was already in use by the Humiliati and others and traditionally could refer to clerics, celibate religious and lay married or single people. Church leaders and Franciscan historians applied the term to his followers.
about oaths and bearing arms. Especially noteworthy parts of the rule include a probationary period for new members, putting one’s commitment in writing with witnesses, and wearing a habit. The rule created community expectations such as meeting attendance, acts of charity and prayers for the dead and also stipulated rules about self government and provision for a visiting bishop for oversight. The rubrics prevented taking oaths, holding public office, joining the military, and dealing with members in civil court. In short, the rules ensured third order members were treated as ecclesiastical persons.

By 1286 a parallel Dominican version of a third order was acknowledged by the church. Mendicant’s contribution made it possible for the faithful to legally lead a religious life in the world. From the mid 1800’s to the early 1900’s third orders faced challenges including prohibition against third orders in some places and canonical changes to reduce the order’s rigors and emphasize the end of personal sanctification.

94 Ibid., 39.
95 Wikeem, 39.
96 Several papal bulls were issued to reinforce these rules. They ensured the penitents were under the local bishop and not the friars minor for oversight though the legal history shortly after indicates continued debate on this point.
97 Ibid., 39-40. Some controversy arose over whether or not third order members promised the evangelical counsels. On this point Wikeem asks, “tertiiaries publicly professed their intention to lead a life different from that of the ordinary Christian but did this profession create a “state of life?” For her this remains an open question.
98 Ibid., 42-43.
99 Ibid., 72, 43, 45-46. But the legal history attests to the vulnerability of this combination. In most cases the Franciscans and Dominican Rules of Life for 1st and 2nd orders provided the model for the third order form. In fact, having a third order became a mark and privilege of new apostolic orders up through the 19th century. Establishment of a third order regular allowed church authority to place those third order members who were not married and yet living in private secular households doing charitable work into a regular religious community model as they desired. They did so primarily by adding solemn vow status, three evangelical counsels and the cloister. Socially, the vows and cloister together made them religious. Those remaining in third order secular status then had expanded ability to promulgate the secular nature of their life, taking up the scapular instead of the habit and pursuing devotional and charitable work in the world.
above all else. By 1912 third orders were largely functioning as devotional societies.100 The 1917 code, however, was a turning point in Dominican and Franciscan law in that they now witnessed to a new awareness of lay dignity, taking into account for example the need to pursue both sanctification through devotion and also charitable service.101

For Wikeem the earliest predecessors of affiliative bond102 with monastics attest to the dynamism of the relationships between religious and laity over time. Among oblates, third orders, and confraternities,103 she sees today’s lay associates most closely akin to third orders in that they try to participate in the very spirit of a religious institute.104 The rise of third orders and oblates mark the historical point of institutionalized lay religious community specifically arising in relation to an established order of religious.

100 Ibid., 47.
101 Wikeem, 47. The church laws surrounding third orders since then have refined the parameters of third order life to reflect true Franciscan and Dominican tradition and yet also specify the unique apostolate of the laity.
102 Wikeem, 48-49. Though not discussed here, confraternities modeled formal association till the tenth century, particularly in their practice of formal prayer relationships. Confraternities have historically been marked by the attachment of a group to a particular monastery by sodality with its monks and with one another in prayer. Funeral rites and burial at the monastery have also been a longstanding mark of confraternities. Franciscans and Dominicans established their own particular confraternities to increase devotional practices and do charitable work and these groups were established to be different from third orders. In this way we begin to see the precursors of “family-style” spiritual traditions which include cloistered, clergy, sisters, brothers, and laity all committing to a common founder and charism.

103 Fraternal organizations and ethnic confraternities in secular U.S. history served to bring together members of immigrant groups for mutual support of various kinds, and also to integrate immigrants, youth, blacks, and women into American society. Some, including the more rare Catholic variety, even aided members by training them in good American citizenship. See for example this kind of aid within the history of the Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas in “SPJST History, A Proud Past, A Bright Future” SPJST http://www.spjst.com/ (accessed Dec 28, 2011). Within church history the terms confraternity and sodality refer to a variety of ways of life marked by association for pious purposes.

104 Ibid., 50.
3. Beguines

In recent years it has become common practice to reference the 12th and 13th century women called Beguines as medieval predecessors of contemporary lay initiatives\textsuperscript{105} and their life of devotion and service together outside of a vowed order does serve as a “sort of middle way between ecclesiastical orders and lay status.”\textsuperscript{106} The development of church laws governing Beguines serves as a canonical precedent for today’s lay associates in that both groups lack oblation, vows, and a Rule of Life.

At first laws and other regulations concerning Beguines attempted to guide economic, social, and spiritual\textsuperscript{107} aspects of their life together and tried to sort out who, among clergy, wealthy patrons, and mendicant members, clergy, and wealthy patrons would have primary oversight over them.\textsuperscript{108} The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and the Second Council of Lyons declared that all those living in ways akin to religious must conform to an existing Rule of Life.\textsuperscript{109} Similarly, the Ecumenical Council of Vienne in 1311 tried to create anti-Beguine stipulations about religious life but all three had trouble naming specific enough characteristics of the diffuse Beguine movement to implement their legislation. Laws developed later for the mature Beguine movement detailed strong economic oversight, the ownership of residences, types of prayer and work, the benefits and restrictions of common life, economic stratification, temporary, long-term and

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 7 and 11.
\textsuperscript{107} Ellen Babinsky, trans. Margaurite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, (Mawwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 11. The author argues that Beguines most often ran into critique and persecution because they did not believe agree with church teaching that alliance with an established community’s Rule of Life was the only legitimate protection against heresy. This issue especially came to a front when they were accused of adherence to the Heresy of the Free Spirit.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 9.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, 10.
differentiated membership, and careful stipulation about rubrics for entering or leaving the community.\textsuperscript{110}

Marygrace Peters, O.P. argues that one of the many reasons for Beguine’s decline was the ongoing conflict created by their legal status as both unmarried and uncloistered women. Babinsky and Peters both describe how Beguines met with inadequate institutional forms to uphold their life.\textsuperscript{111} Though today’s lay associates do not face the extreme legal conflict encountered by the Beguines, they too have faced tensions between canonical parameters for traditional consecrated life and their unusual committed but neither vowed nor oblated bond with religious communities.

4. The 1917 Code of Canon Law

So far this historical overview has shown a scattered and diverse practice of lay association gradually becoming more standardized and governed by church law. For Wikeem, the 1917 Code of Canon Law marked a turning point in this narrative. In the 1917 Code third orders, confraternities, and pious unions received detailed attention and the first attempt at a thorough descriptive framework resulted. Of the three categories of affiliative community, Wikeem sees the stipulations on third orders as closest in kind to today’s new wave lay associates because of their strong link with a religious order, its end, and its way of life.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 15-17.
\textsuperscript{111} Peters, “The Beguines,” 36-52. Other Beguine scholars disagree with this argument and posit that Beguines actually did transgress the boundaries of church teaching and law on religious life.
\textsuperscript{112} Wikeem, 50-51.
Wikeem’s dissertation summarizes the statements on third orders within the 1917 code. She points to the careful stipulation of ends and the distinction among associations established by laity and those established by church authority. The 197 canons on third orders gave oversight to a local ordinary (who could be a priest, a bishop, or a religious superior) and outlined several duties and rights including visitation, attending liturgical functions, oversight over the use of money, the wearing of habits and the appointing of a chaplain. These canons also gave opportunity for further membership restriction at the local level as needed as well as the chance to form local rubrics governing the conducting of meetings, the management of temporal goods and record keeping.

As the following two sections will detail, today’s new wave lay associates had to consider whether or not they were indeed the “secular form” of a vowed order or not and looked to tertiaries when deciding who would officially found the association. Additionally, some long standing practices within the third order and affiliative traditions

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113 Ibid., 51. Statements on third orders addressed “those who, in the world under the guidance of some religious order and according to its spirit, strive to progress toward Christian perfection in a manner consistent with the secular life according to the rules which have been approved for them by the Holy See.” In this way the title “third orders” continued to refer to organizations related to religious institutes with a primary end of Christian perfection. Acts of charity were part of their life but they were not to undertake social or political action. Reflecting the political climate of other times and places than those of new wave associations in the U.S. today, some 1917 canons outlined the right to collectively attend public events, wear their association’s insignia, and march under their own banner in public. The code also stipulated that pious unions should have a clear end of charity or piety and confraternities should primarily promote public worship.
114 Wikeem, 53-54. Page 167 calls those initiated by lay people erected or approved associations.
115 Ibid., 62.
116 Ibid., 59. Additional canons from this 1917 code pertaining to tertiaries include the prohibition of non-Catholics, those belonging to other ecclesiastical associations, and those who had taken vows in a religious institute. The canons also required third order members to commit for their lifetimes, though renunciation or expellation were possible under extreme circumstances. As will be shown in later chapters these characteristics clearly do not apply to today’s lay associates.
117 Ibid., 60.
found their way into the 1917 code as canons and later heavily shaped associate practice as will be shown in Ch.3. For example, the code legislated the practice of each new member signing his or her name in a roll book at the time of initiation and the practice of the superior of the first order receiving members into the third personally. \textsuperscript{118} These highlights show the 1917 canon to be an event of both continuity and change toward the more precise juridical definition of affiliative traditions.

B. Canon Law Governing Associates Vatican II to Today

The new wave lay associations, including the AIC and PP, came into being in the midst of an overhaul of church laws about instituting the lay-religious bond. Portions of the 1917 Code of Canon Law dealing with affiliative groups were updated at Vatican II and disseminated by means of the 1983 Code of Canon Law and as well as by revisions to the local norms of religious institutes stimulated by the council. Wikeem views the changes in the 1983 code as a significant advancing of the associate movement and a “radical departure” from what came before. \textsuperscript{119} Hereford takes a more critical stance. She argues that the new code and constitutions do affirm the movement as a sign of deepened understanding of the lay vocation and offer religious institutes the chance to share their tradition and expand their ministerial reach. However, in light of the movement’s development during its second, third, and now fourth decade “growth in association and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] Ibid., 58. These exact practices will be seen in Ch.3 within the commitment ceremonies of the AIC and PP.
\item[\textsuperscript{119}] Ibid., 75-78. She cites how the 1983 code increased chapters on the topic from one to four and organized laws around ecclesial authority over groups rather than groups’ ends. Monette echoes Wikeem’s positive viewpoint on this matter when he states, given the ongoing development of canons on associates, “the present Canon Law pertaining to membership crystallizes some of the most cherished lessons of the past and, in that manner, can contribute to effective lay-religious bonding today and stimulate the discovery of new forms. Monette, \textit{Kindred Spirits}, 61.
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diminishment in vowed membership present challenges to existing organization, 
structures, and procedures that served the first decades of the modern associate 
movement."120

This section’s summary of canon laws governing associates from Vatican II to the 
present is divided into four sections: a) Sources of Contemporary Laws will summarize 
four sources of rubrics for associates and how they fit together. b) Lay/Religious 
Blurring addresses the various laws that seek to uphold distinctions among vocations and 
while guiding the valuable relationship between institutes and associations. c) 
Membership Issues describes the imperfect juridical definition of association. d) Fit with 
Church evaluates to what extent the code and proper laws aid associations in relating to 
larger church structures. Overall, contemporary church law does define association in 
broad and ideal terms, but it falls short of describing actual contemporary associate 
practice in the U.S. Consequently, as is true of most associates, the AIC and PP do not 
significantly attend to canonical guidelines when crafting their self-understanding.121

1. Sources of Contemporary Laws

Church law governing the lay associate movement comes from three sources: 
Vatican II’s new ecclesial vision, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, Post-Council Proper 
Law, and statements of various members of the hierarchy addressing ecclesial 
movements or religious institutes. Wikeems’ approach to making sense of these new 
laws for associates is to examine how the major Vatican II insights about the lay-religious 
bond emerge from a new vision of the church as the People of God. In particular she

121 The relationship of the AIC and PP to canonical and proper law is addressed in Ch.4-5.
cites the Church as the People of God in *Lumen Gentium* 9, the revalorization of the laity in *Apostoloricam Actuositatem*, the call to renewal in religious life in *Perfectate Caritatis*, and the recognition of the right of association in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* and *Apostolican Actuositatem* 19. She then shows how the canonical implications of this vision have been lived out in several Canadian religious institutes with associate programs.122

The 1983 Code, framed by this ecclesial vision and based on conciliar teachings regarding religious life and associations of the Christian faithful, specifies several canons concerning associates. Like historical laws about tertiaries and lay brothers and sisters, these canons stipulate any association’s ends, authority, right use of property, membership parameters, and relationship with religious institutes.123 Religious institutes, in turn, were asked to adjust their constitutions in light of the council and also create proper laws in light of the 1983 code. General mission-level adjustments to constitutions that involved shifting an institution’s view of itself as developing over time and engaged with the outside world certainly made way for associate programs.124 At the same time, proper laws particular to each institute stipulated the nature and purpose of a variety of

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122 Ibid., 64-71 and 116. Her approach to examining contemporary lay associations’ practices in light of specific council teachings inspires Ch.6 of this dissertation. She examines the proper laws of eight religious institutes with associate programs in Canada: the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, the Clerics of St. Victor, Missionary Oblates of the Sacred Heart and of Mary Immaculate, the Oblates of May Immaculate, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of Charity at Ottawa and the Society of Missionaries of Africa. She analyzes constitutions, procedures, and acts of chapters across groups on the topic of membership.

123 Ibid., 76-80, 84-88, and 103.

124 Ibid., 127. Wikeem discovered that orders seem to place norms for associates in their community laws according to how stable an entity they judge them to be. For example, some place the rules governing associates in their constitutions and this may indicate associates are “basic to ... [their] identity and purpose” whereas other may place them in “sections applying their norms on mission and community and [therefore] expect changes.” As will be shown in later chapters, both the AIC and PP appear in acts of chapter added to constitutions.
avenues for relating to religious as associates, affiliates, temporary members, and volunteers. Lastly, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI took note of the rapidly swelling numbers of faithful engaged in new ecclesial movements governed by Vatican II, the 1983 Code, and the revised proper laws. They both offered annual addresses on the ecclesial ramifications of living out commitment to a movement within these rubrics, emphasizing the need to uphold distinctions among vocations and engage with the local church.125

2. Lay/Religious Blurring

These four sources have bearing on the juridical guidelines offered to associates and their supporters regarding the prevention of lay/religious blurring. Most foundationally, Canon 303 establishes that associations can share in the spirit of religious institutes without becoming part of them.126 Hereford notes that this applies to today’s associates but the comments that follow only pertain to third orders, leaving associations adrift when it comes to implementing the canon. Participants in the associate movement believe a certain degree of sharing of life is appropriate, but at the same time there is concern at all levels to avoid inappropriate blurring of vocations. Evidence of blurring may be seen in practices including associate attendance at chapter meetings, shared prayer texts and schedules, shared commitment to mission and charism statements to the exclusion of associate versions, certain cases of living in community together, and

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125 These will be examined in Ch.2. John Paul II especially emphasizes Canon 677 which states institutes which have associations of Christ's faithful joined to them are to have a special care that these associations are imbued with the genuine spirit of their family.
ambiguously worded membership vows and norms.\textsuperscript{127} Associations in this situation miss the opportunity to develop the independence they will need in the future and religious institutes forgo several benefits of privacy including the internal conversations and decision making needed to discern their ministerial and financial futures.\textsuperscript{128} Hereford judges that the best practice can be found in good proper laws, particularly institute constitutions that incorporate the council, code, and hierarchical statements well.\textsuperscript{129}

3. Membership Issues

As the history of canon law on association has shown, membership has been a contested term. Hereford’s question to associates, “what precisely are you a member of?” distills the legal issues. The simple answer is that they are members of the association. In the case of public associations, associates are technically members of an association of the faithful and only those who are vowed are members of an institute for consecrated life can be called its members. Most lay associations that are at least fifteen years old have implemented careful changes in terminology to reflect this need for defining individual membership.\textsuperscript{130} Yet, when it comes to the legal status of associations as communities in relation to religious communities, in neither canon nor civil law does an associate possess

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 14-16.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 15 and 17. Hereford states, The institute may have gatherings for prayer or ministry to which associates and others are invited. There may be joint activities and gatherings; there may also be joint committees on which both associates and members serve. However, in any living organization, there will be gatherings organized for the members only. This is particularly true of meetings regarding governance; however, the life of a religious institute is more than governance and finance. There will also be gatherings celebrating and supporting the life of the institute and its members, its spirituality, its communities and its ministry. These gatherings are appropriate only to vowed members and those in formation for vowed membership.

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 12, She writes, “thus, the Code and the constitutions establish a religious institute as a society composed of members who commit themselves by vow to religious life in a particular institute; the institute is governed by its own members.” These two factors are the best groundwork for a good distinction between religious and associates.

\textsuperscript{130} See Ch.3 for example for a discussion of how the PP used to hold other titles.
“community” status. In other words, an association is not treated as a juridic person in the same way as a religious order.\textsuperscript{131}

Other membership-related juridical puzzles potentially arise in cases of public associates who are somehow separated from the Catholic community by being former religious who have not been released from vows, clergy in various stages of the laicization process, divorced and remarried persons, active homosexuals, or non-Catholics. Since most lay associations treated in this study are \textit{de facto} organizations as the next section will discuss, they would not need to consider these situations unless they sought public association status.\textsuperscript{132} Currently judgments about the participation of these members is left to associate leadership and the local norms of their vowed institute, though some groups seem to be more alert to these canonical requirements and willing to address them than others.

A final membership dilemma that shows up occasionally in sources related to the AIC and PP surrounds the rising number of programs of “association for a time” or “temporary association.” People in these categories can closely resemble and be confused with new wave lay associates and neither group operates with sufficient canonical parameters. Temporary association is juridically different from lay association because:

1) Public associates make commitments for the duration of a year, three years, five years,

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\textsuperscript{131} One implication of this rule is that associates may simultaneously belong to several Catholic organizations, institutions, and associations of various types. This is true of the groups I have studied. See questionnaire results in dissertation's appendix.

\textsuperscript{132} Regarding non-Catholics, some lay associates among the new wave have included in their membership Buddhist, Jewish, or even atheist or agnostic members. This is the case for numerous groups including to varying degrees: the Associates of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa, the AIC, the PP, and the Ecumenical Secular Franciscans.
or more whereas the temporary associates usually make shorter commitments.\textsuperscript{133} 2) Temporary associative groups may never reach the status of a separate organization if they are simply considered a work of an institute for apostolic life. 3) Those lay associations with long-term cohesion tend to seek \textit{de facto} or public association status together and come to see themselves as an ecclesial body, whereas temporary members tend to relate to religious orders only as individuals.

This discussion of membership rubrics shows how several parties have influence over the concerns surrounding what it means to be an associate member of an order. Individuals with ties to a group want a kind of membership status that recognizes their relationship but does not inordinately prescribe it. Associations themselves want a membership definition that protects the corporate bond between the two groups and recognizes something of their real sharing of life and history. Institutions seem to want a membership description that accurately leaves room for the uniqueness of vowed members while naming the real affiliation of association with its charism. The canon laws pertaining to associates discussed in this part of Ch.1 function on behalf of the institutional church amid these desires, ideally advocating for precision in definition of roles and protecting individual and corporate rights and responsibilities. The next section further describes to what extent this ideal has been met.

4. Fit with Church

Several canons establish the broad strokes of ecclesial fit for associates. Most generally, Canon 215 upholds the right of members of the faithful to associate. Canon

\textsuperscript{133} For example the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and a branch of the Holy Cross Associates expect a two year commitment.
310 describes how associates can form a *de facto* association of the faithful and Canons 298 and 303 put equal weight on such groups fostering an end of Christian perfection and apostolic work in order to “animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.”

Canon 311 tells institutes with associations about best practices for mutual expectations. An institute should ensure the associates collaborate in the apostolate of work of the diocese and under the local ordinary alongside other associates. They must make sure their associates do not become ends in themselves but participate in building up the church in its mission.

In general terms most associations of laity fit the public association pattern. Such a public endorsement also means the church claims this group and identifies itself with its activities. Some public associations may even be charged with teaching Christian doctrine, promoting public worship, or other activities usually reserved to ecclesiastical authority. Most new wave lay associates examined in this dissertation, including the AIC and PP, are neither public nor private but simply non-canonical or *de facto*. This means that by simple agreement of the members it comes into being, and it has no standing in canon law, no legal ties to the church, or to another legal body. A non-canonical or *de facto* association can be recommended by a church leader, but it cannot serve purposes reserved to the church nor use the name Catholic without permission.

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134 Ibid., 94.
135 Wikeem, 96.
136 Ibid., 99.
137 Ibid., 77-78 and 80. This means the Holy See (for international groups), the Episcopal conferences (national) or bishop (diocesan) or a religious institute (for third orders) erects the group and approves its statutes. Public associations receive mission to act in the name of the church.
138 Ibid., 79.
139 Ibid., 83-84.
Still *de facto* associations have the most in common canonically with public associations. That the canons governing associations of all types fall within the People of God and Christian Faithful sections of the 1983 Code of Canon Law may be interpreted as evidence of the church perceiving such groups as primarily in close kinship with secular institutes. Public associations are treated as a quasi-religious form of life\textsuperscript{140} within the People of God section of the code, marked by: promises taken for prescribed numbers of years, a voluntary venue for living out dual ends of mission and the call to holiness, a form of corporal unity with several levels of options for alliance with the apostolic works of a local church, a manner of promising to live one’s state of life within a certain charism and including particular devotional and charitable practices and under the supervision of a local authority. This form also includes a manner of belonging, or affiliating, or associating with a local religious institute that often has national or, more commonly, international ties.

Hereford’s commentary on the dilemma posed by being *de facto* associations with little direct juridical guidelines indicates that associates and religious take it upon themselves to define association in a dynamic way. She suggests an embedded model of association that has been in common practice up till now should gradually shift to an autonomous model by the year 2020. When an association is considered part of the life of an institute, receives their written publications, and relies heavily on religious’ oversight and leadership they can be called “embedded.” When an association

\textsuperscript{140} In Ch.2 of her *New Wineskins* book Schneiders mentions that canon law treats secular orders and associates like religious in stating they are closest in resemblance to religious and organizing their canons accordingly.
outnumbers vowed religious, takes measures to formulate its own leadership and infrastructure, and begins relating to civic and canon law as an independent entity, it can be considered “autonomous.” This model is attractive to all parties because it upholds the rights and expectations of all participants and still allows them to relate in meaningful ways. 141 This survey of the history of canon law has shown how the juridical portrait of associates emphasizes its lay-religious bond, its unique circle of membership concerns, and its fit with the larger church. Wikeem’s study reveals a story of gradual institutionalization and the “constant challenge” of working with the distinctions between lay and religious and the rights and obligations of each. 142 Both Wikeem and Hereford argue that there is “a variety of modes of bonding that do not fit readily into the old canonical categories.” If new wave lay associates have staying power for the future, the future of canon laws relating to associates will have to address secularization and the church’s stance toward their new maturity as independent ecclesial bodies. As will be demonstrated in Ch.3 and 4, what is most important about canons governing associate life for this project’s study of the AIC and PP is the way both groups have resisted some forms of regulation and discovered the benefits of others. For the most part neither group is especially focused on the canonical dimension of their group identity. The PP is a defacto association of the faithful and likely to remain one whereas the AIC is deeply engaged in breaking new ground establishing a Lay Cistercian Association within the Cistercian order.

141 Hereford Seminar. For an image of Hereford’s embedded model changing over time, please see Appendix. Associates would have their own constitution and would perhaps even qualify for their own 501C3 tax status. Hereford describes how this depends on whether the group has income beyond yearly dues or deals with grant or foundation money. It remains a question for the institute whether or not “the fostering of an association is a work [of the institute] with a civil exempt status.”

142 Wikeem, 73.
C. Conclusion

The canonical history of relationship with a religious institute, the most relevant canons governing new wave lay associate life, and the most pressing canonical issues for associate programs together form a portrait of the lay associate as belonging to layered communities and therefore holding layered responsibilities within the church.

This chapter named the prominent historical sources and canon laws on associate life from the 1980’s to 2010 and asked to what extent they are sufficient in their descriptions of association. A four fold response was given. It was shown how the earliest histories from observers and conference participants tend to correlate with one or more of three models describing the extent to which associates and vowed religious have either poorly blurred or helpfully differentiated their vocations and community life. Later, approaches to studying the movement focusing on demographic changes over time found a focus on the friendship model of relation to religious, especially emphasizing mutuality between associates and religious. From the viewpoint the history of religious women in the American church since the council associates represent a hopeful innovation. Associates’ way of life comes out of new conciliar ways of framing the history and theology of religious life. Schneiders shows how the charism of a religious institute can be extended beyond traditional congregational structures within associate life itself and the religious life models it suggests.\textsuperscript{143} She compliments the way associate life retains positive aspects of both American individualism and faith community and yet also respects the boundaries of consecrated life. Lastly, when tracing juridical thought about

\textsuperscript{143} Schneiders argues this extension has benefit for associates who are sisters as well as vowed congregations as well.
associate life, it is also evident that as they appear today neither the parameters of lay
associates’ individual and community lives nor their implications have been fully
pinpointed by canon law. The historical record of associates according to these studies
has been shown to have limitations, whether studied through the perspective of associates’
bonds with religious, through sociological counts, through a view of them as a small part
in the history of women religious receiving the council, or even through canon law. In
summary, these studies tend to depend too much on a correlation to religious life and do
not sufficiently recognize associates’ distinctive vocation and growing awareness of it.
They also neglect to attend to the lay association as a community in itself with its own
practices and growth developed by studying the council documents. Moreover, these
studies fail to observe that religious have continued to study and implement Vatican II
since associates’ first programs and associates have been close observers and
collaborators during this process. In short, the historical studies represented here do not
take into account the unique living out of the council developed in relationship with
religious and present in individual and group associate life.

These limitations can be attributed to several factors. First, there are inherent
obstacles to fully describing a movement that is both new and growing rapidly. Most
authors from the early days spoke in broad generalizations after national conferences
because there simply were no other substantial sources. To complement the broad
national picture of the movement, the local historical record heavily depends on religious
orders’ scholars, archivists, or other interested parties taking the time to preserve, collect,
and organize the archival records left by planning committees, early associate leadership
and formation teams, and associate applicants. For most orders this record is spotty or
disorganized at best because those with interest may have shifted ministerial assignments several times since the 19080’s or early 1990’s when these records were created. Furthermore those with access to such records had primary concern for the history of a particular religious order and pursued, saved, and discarded materials accordingly.

A second challenge for historical work on associates is that the movement seems to draw a good number of critiques and false assumptions from every quarter. Scholars from a variety of disciplines bring questions to the movement, not the least of which is the question of whether it is a generation-dependent innovation or whether it has staying power as an ecclesial structure. Others express legitimate concern for the integrity of religious life, the lay vocation, and the parish. Ch.1 has shown that in the wake of having no real history of the movement from which to draw and very few histories of individual lay associations, the development of these critical analyses over time serve as the most basic framework for describing associates in an historical way.

Beyond a basic framework, though, the next level of framing the available scholarship on associates involves identifying how theological questions raised about their way of life have changed over time. In Ch.2 these questions are identified and traced over time within conversations about new ecclesial movements, traditional and new monasticism, and among associates who are beginning to publish their own self-reflective studies. It will be shown in Ch.2, as in this chapter, that the meaning of associate life does indeed stand at the intersection of shifting plates heavily influenced by its ties to religious life. Yet, while this image was helpful for identifying associates at the time of their founding, as Ch.4-5 will show, there remains more to be understood about this way of life as distinct from religious, particularly the maturing in vocational and
ecclesial self-awareness that come forth in the study of particular groups such as the AIC and PP.
CHAPTER 2
HUNGRY HEARTS: THE EMERGENCE OF A THEOLOGY OF ASSOCIATION

As the Introduction of this project discusses, the kinds of scholarship with the most influence upon the study of association are often found blending historical and theological claims. Yet, for purposes of analyzing such claims Ch.1 discussed approaches to studying lay associates with historical implications while the present chapter locates inquiry into lay association within several kinds of more conversations with theological repercussions. Ch.2 focuses on discussions surrounding new ecclesial movements, the widening of monasticism’s influence among the faithful, and the perspectives of religious and critics on associate life, and recent studies by associates themselves and about associates’ lived ideals. The chapter claims two things: 1) that concerns within these areas of study overlap with those pertinent to the study of associate life and yet 2) these areas of study fall short of fully identifying from a ground-up ecclesiological perspective who associates are and what their way of life means for the church.

Associates’ way of life tends to elude easy identification because it continually crosses borders: between vowed religious and laity, between ecclesial community and traditional parish life, between Catholic and other Christian ties to a charism, between public and private religious expression, and between theoretical and common sense views
of a religious institute’s charism and mission. Compounding this situation, associates tend to blend quietly into the life of a local church, worshipping at liturgies, serving in family, parish, and community, workplaces and neighborhoods, imbedded in Catholic schools and hospitals, and even other small lay communities. They do not show up at annual meetings for reflection with the pope or maintain houses of formation in urban areas. A key part of the initial work then, of analyzing just who associations are, what their way of life is like, and what it might signify involves uncovering and identifying the most prominent intersections between associates and other similar groups within the church. These links can then be mapped in relation to the small body of scholarship that has directly addressed the theological implications of association.

Ch.2’s map of relevant theological studies moves from the broadest to the most specific. The chapter opens with a discussion of how the work of Brendan Leahy and Tony Hana frame the study of new ecclesial movements in light of the Council’s ecclesiology. Next, various efforts to bring intentionality to the process of “diaspora” of vowed religious’ traditions within the last thirty years are compared, particularly as they come to appreciate a mutuality of exchange among classical and new monastics. Narrowing to associate life in particular, the third section sums up the earliest work among associates and vowed religious during the 1980’s and early 1990’s as it reflects a shift over time in what is hoped for within the transmission of charism. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of recent work by AIC members themselves that raises precise questions about the layers of communion to which associates are uniquely called.

This chapter’s two claims hinge on the assumption that associates are substantially different from other ecclesial groups. As later chapters will demonstrate,
associates’ way of life is multilayered and resides at a pivot point for several different historical dynamics within church life including among them the development of vowed religious institutions after the Council, charismatic movements, the U.S. Catholic reception of Vatican II, the collapse of the Catholic subculture, and the arising of an educated Catholic middle class. If associates really are a different species within the genus of new ecclesial movements, each of the four sections of this chapter must consider what it is that distinguishes them the most from other groups. This dissertation claims that associates are most set apart by the ecclesial implications of the inner meaning and expressions of their daily lives, particularly as lived in relation to religious.

Additionally, this chapter will show how inquiry into the meaning of associate life has generally not kept pace with the reflective work done on comparable movements since the movement’s beginnings in the 1980’s. Those studies that have addressed the topic directly have tended to rely upon secondary sources that, for the most part, ask how associates fit into the development and theology of established institutes of vowed religious. Hardly any work has been done to gather associates’ own archival records and writing\textsuperscript{144} into histories or to draw forth the theological import they contain. As a result this chapter demonstrates the need for “on the ground” investigation of what distinguishes the life of associate groups, especially their origins, beliefs, formation, ties to religious, practices, and ecclesial perceptions.

In this way, Ch.2 demonstrates both the relevant scholarship already undergirding a theological discussion of association and the substantial shortcoming of these

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{144} While this chapter discusses some work done within the international lay Cistercian community, the conclusion of this dissertation mentions how further work is needed gathering and analyzing associate-authored writings on a broad scale.
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discussions for fully examining what it means to be an associate from an ecclesiological perspective. This dissertation draws upon the several types of applicable scholarship to frame associate life in relation to Vatican II and religious life. At the same time it contributes an examining of the inner meaning of the AIC and PP to the new conversation about the meaning of the movement from associates’ own perspective.

I. On New Ecclesial Movements and Vatican II: More than Charism vs. Institution

As introduced in Ch.1, new ecclesial movements are most often categorized as movements of the faithful emerging around the time of Vatican II, bearing its “impulse” and fostering a deepened Christian commitment among members of all states of life, especially those who are neither vowed religious nor clergy. Among associations of the faithful within the church, new ecclesial movements bear the most resemblance to lay associates, and consequently the theological reflection upon them accomplished so far offers a particularly useful launching point for understanding associate life. Topics within NEM studies with direct relevance to association include the origins of new movements in the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II, a spectrum of views on their current value for the church, and the interconnection between NEM and the Council’s renewed understanding of charism. Another advantage in seeking out new movements as a mirror for association is that whereas literature on associate life is ten to twenty years old at best, reflection upon the movements has been in progress for at least twice that

145 Being diverse in practices and contexts, NEM are often identified by common canonical parameters such as the five offered in Brendan Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities (New York: City Press, 2011), 19.
146 Though Jean Sonnenberg, one of NACAR’s founders, once claimed lay associates shared many characteristics with small Christian communities, they may actually hold more in common with NEMs because the movements often share their foundations built upon a founder and charism. See Bernard Lee, The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities, 32.
long. Most movements founded around the time of the Council or immediately after have had a chance to begin, expand, face obstacles, and grow into a second developmental phase marked by the theological reflective tasks of helping them “move into the ordinary rhythm and mission of the church.” In this way the fairly new task of locating associate life in relation to the Council benefits from decades of reflection on how the new movements have intersected with it.

This first section of Ch.2 reviews selected scholarship on the new ecclesial movements in light of Vatican II’s ecclesiology. The authors featured in this section are chosen because they each claim to offer a balanced account that neither overly celebrate the virtues of NEM nor excessively highlight their conflicts with the institutional church. As will be shown, there are several avenues for reaching this position which may be of benefit in analyzing association. The review opens with a comparison of work by Tony Hana and Brendan Leahy portraying the movements woven into a retrieval of charism and sense of church as mystery, communion and mission. Then follows a summary of ways the reflections of recent popes have guided thinking about the responsibilities of movements. Lastly, the work of Massimo Faggioli illustrates an example of a highly critical view of movements that insufficiently take up the teachings of the Council.

Overall this review serves to identify the range of possible ways of making sense of NEMs’ ecclesial fit by correlating the elements of 1) Vatican II, 2) the movement’s particular benefits to the church, and 3) a renewed understanding of charism. This

147 Ibid., 11. Leahy mentions that several founders have died recently resulting a growth in identity within each movement. Here I address Leahy and Hana on largely European based NEMS but further study could ask to what extent this is true of groups based outside of Europe, including the Madonna House movement in the U.S.
dissertation’s efforts to uncover the shape of associate life and what it means within the church will rely on the framework that these three elements create, particularly in Ch.6. Also, while most scholarship on NEM relies on promotional literature and movement’s mission statements, this project’s study of the AIC and PP draw upon original sources from particular associate groups, including interviews, surveys, and archival materials. By taking a more detailed look at the way specific movements actually shape and live out their ideals, the three point interpretive tool gleaned from NEM studies can be applied with more precision.

A. Vatican II: Charisms and Gifts Reappreciated

As Massimo Faggioli has indicated, the literature on European new ecclesial movements most often narrates their emergence as “coincident” with Vatican II and their growth stimulated by its forces of aggiornamento and ressourcement. 148 Most authors would agree that NEMs are of at least of some benefit to the church and most expect them to continue expanding their membership. Yet, it is precisely by examining the ways this Vatican II emergence narrative is diversely employed that distinctions appear among various views of NEMs, and ultimately greater and lesser alliances with the concerns of lay associate life begin surfacing. Two prominent supporters of NEMs, Tony Hana and Brendan Leahy, offer recent representative studies in this area. While they are not alone in their line of inquiry, their work stands out as particularly grounded in an assumption that charism is a key element in the ecclesiology of movements and shows how different

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148 Massimo Faggioli, “The New Elites of Italian Catholicism: 1968 and the New Catholic Movements,” The Catholic Historical Review 98, no. 1, (Jan 2012): 20. For Italian New Ecclesial Movements, he argues, this interpretation does not sufficiently take into account how they are bound up in the aftermath of Vatican II.
treatments of charism directly influence the manner in which scholars frame ecclesial movements in relation to the Council.

1. NEMs as Charismatic “Like the Franciscans”

Hana’s survey called *New Ecclesial Movements*, a 2006 study based on his dissertation, comes from the perspective of a member of the Irish Charismatic movement as well as a founder of an ecclesial community himself. His book primarily seeks to increase awareness of ecclesial movements and dispel extreme biases toward them of both the positive and negative variety. Hana’s approach is historical in that he locates the movements within the context of Vatican II’s retrieval of the theology of charism and encouragement to renewed reflection upon the specifically lay state. He peppers his argument with illustrations of a number of specific European new ecclesial movements relying mostly on secondary sources on life within movements, addresses from members of the hierarchy, and profiles of particular movements. Assuming NEMs have been a largely positive development, his overall assessment is that the movements follow the trajectory of other reform movements in church history\(^ {149} \) such as the monastic movement, the Franciscan movement, and others. For Hana NEMs join this legacy by serving as site of intersecting Marian and Petrine impulses, the charismatic and institutional dimensions of the church. Hana claims this is especially so when examining their meaning over time. Seeing the historical development of the understanding of “lay spirituality” as a substantive cause of Vatican II’s ecclesiology of conversion, he places NEMs as a young but direct outcome of the Council. Hana sees them offering much enthusiasm and renewal to the church.

\(^ {149} \) Tony Hana, *New Ecclesial Movements* (New York: Alba House, 2006), 10-11 and 282. He twice mentions that the NEMs remind us the church itself is a movement.
Just as with religious institutes, NEMs must be guided into alignment, particularly as they become stronger in “wealth, property, spiritual power, and influence” and as conflicts arise among them. He sees that each group’s vision engages in self-correction according to the Gospel and so too the “structures, rules and regulations and way of exercising authority and of forming and accompanying new members” are called to move toward holiness over time. In matters of ecclesial reception, relationship to bishops, the dangers of elitism, and the “blessings and dangers of intense religion and more explicit commitment” that go alongside the presence of movements, Hana’s claims return to a comparison between the history of religious orders and NEMs. For him the working out of a charism’ institutional life and place of service in the church take time and the collaboration of church authorities. Hana sees how ideals and concrete fallible human shortcomings of both the community and church at large meet best in a balanced understanding of NEMs. Such balance is best imagined through the developmental image of schools of communion as they serve as models of and for the rest of the church.

2. NEMs as Gift: Keys to the Council

Irish scholar Rev. Brendan Leahy, an expert on von Balthasar’s ecclesiology who has had some contact with Focolare and other movements, also desires his 2011 study of NEMS to educate and correct false presumptions. Like Hana, Leahy relies on Council

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150 Ibid., 251-253.
151 Ibid., 257.
152 Ibid., 261-263.
153 This developmental view is also found in Marian Maskulak, “Ecclesial Movements and New Communities: Living Translations of the Faith” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the College Theology Society, San Antonio, TX, June 2012). She sees the NEMS as living translations of the church’s faith, and therefore subject to minor errors and oversights that do not substantively detract from their overall positive contribution.
documents and ecclesiological studies of the Council, but he also adds more theological accounts of these matters and on the history of movements in German and Italian. He too views movements as clearly emerging from Vatican II roots. But unlike Hana’s focus on the development of charism within a religious institute, Leahy’s account paints this emergence as primarily influenced by the Council’s expression of three new senses of church.

The vision of the church as mystery, communion, and in mission shed light on some truths the earliest movements were already embodying at the time of the Council: 1) that the church is a divine-human reality rooted in the Trinity, 2) that baptism launches the faithful into communion with this reality and sets them on a course to participation in one of three distinct but related states of life, and that 3) at the heart of this participation is the gift of sharing in Jesus’ mission to all peoples.154 Leahy sees these three new senses of church as “opening up parameters for understanding ecclesial movements.” The Council made clear that all of the faithful have the capacity to share in Jesus’ mission and holiness by means appropriate to their states of life, including the right of association held by all the faithful.

The retrieving of a full sense of charism---as gifts given to individuals and groups, for the whole church and for the salvation of the world in an ongoing way—also flowers within this new vision of the church.155 Such a robust sense of charism makes way for the 1965 document Perfectae Caritatatatis on religious life, later documents on lay

154 Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 35-39.
155 Ibid., 41-42. Leahy mentions the pivotal roles of Francis Sullivan, S.J. and Cardinal Suenens here, who both tapped the tradition of charism in the church and encouraged its renewed appreciation at the Council.
ministry, *Christifidelis Laici*, and today’s maturing understandings of charism in both new ecclesial movements and associate life. In short, for Leahy, the Council opens up the new horizon of reflection possible for groups of laity. This horizon depends upon but is not limited to a renewed sense of charism. Vatican II gave movements a terminology,\(^\text{156}\) an ecclesiology attentive to mystery, communion, and mission of all the baptized, and a rediscovered sense of complementarity among the states of life and charismmatic gifts of the faithful. These tools make the time ripe for reflectively cultivating NEM identity and for the church’s reception of their expanding post-conciliar presence.

Agreeing with Congar, Leahy sees the Spirit at work in the earliest movements aligned with the Spirit at work in the Council. Early movement leaders attended some of the Council sessions, members of movements were woven into the Council event itself, and were part of its later reception.\(^\text{157}\) As Leahy explains, “movements provide opportunities for people to train or do exercises in a lifestyle of communion.”\(^\text{158}\) Their contribution lies in embodying the Council’s vision of church as communion:

[They] provide an environment where holiness as the perfection of love can be nurtured in communion with others and in view of mission. Through living missionary communion, movements—while they themselves are always called to renewal—can be places of formation in the collective holiness for which the People of God strives.\(^\text{159}\)

\(^{156}\) For example Leahy notes historian John O’Malley’s observation that charism was one of Vatican II’s “interiority” terms. He also notes that the Council affirmed the faithful’s right to freely associate with one another. This is a point that frequently emerges in the literature about movements and the Council, particularly in the context of contrasting this affirmation with top heavy structural claims of the previous Council.  

\(^{157}\) Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities*, 34-35.  

\(^{158}\) Ibid., 77 and 74. He mentions several times the view among scholars of NEMS that their purpose is for understanding and experiencing Vatican II.  

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 189.
Leahy emphasizes this collective model of holiness more than once. While an individualized view of the universal call typically aligns with a founder-centered view of charism, attending to its shared dimension is a way of drawing forth the Council’s work on charism as more dynamic. Rather than seeing the charismatic dimension merely in contrast to the institutional dimension of church, the Council brought forth the charismatic dimension as integral to the church’s self-understanding. That is, it brought forward the church as changing over time, the church as growing, and the church as having a “general charism…the gift of love offered by Christ to humanity.”

Movements, for Leahy, witness to the fact that charisms are a “constituent part” of the church. Their life incarnates both the freedom of God’s people to shape a variety of paths to holiness and the unity that binds them together. Moreover they do so in an effective way with implications for evangelization:

At a time when personal, communitarian, and social witness are central in evangelization, movements provide experiences of communion that others can see. They are living spaces of encounter with Christ and also prove that the journey of faith can be traveled together.

In this way before, during, and after the Council members of lay movements were working with new visions of church that later solidified into Vatican II’s central ecclesiological claims. For this reason Leahy’s overall judgment takes a more historical view and leaves more room for growth than Hana’s. His history of the theology of charism emphasizes the emergence of a communitarian expression of charism just as Hana’s does, but then points to the growth of its ecclesial role over time. Namely, for

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160 Ibid., 92.
161 Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities*, 114.
Leahy's charism and NEMs both connect with the whole church in movement. This spurs a spirituality of communion with implications for all parts of the Body of Christ.\footnote{Ibid., 184. His claim clearly stems from von Balthasar’s views as well and is echoed in Libero Gerosa, “Secular institutes, lay associations, and ecclesial movements in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” Communio 17 (Fall 1990): 343-361.}

Leahy argues that working out these implications is an ongoing task wrapped up in continuous interpretation of the Council’s ecclesiology.

B. Beloved and Young: Relation to the Hierarchy

Discussions of the ecclesial significance of the new movements often include some reference to the hierarchy’s influence on such reflections. In general, popes and bishops have spoken in praise of the movements’ local reflection of the church universal and have urged ongoing growth in their awareness of being constituted by layers of communion.\footnote{Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 47, 52, 56-61. Highlights of this relationship include Pope Paul VI’s 1973 assigning of responsibility for ecclesial movements to the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the criteria for ecclesiality established under John Paul II in 1988, and the pivotal world congress at the 1998 Pentecost meeting of movements under John Paul II. The latter event began a tradition of popes, bishops, and leaders of movements coming together regularly for reflection, as well as a call to deeper communion with among NEM, with bishops, and with the wider church.}

Some critics raise concerns about movement-run seminaries, the choosing of apostolates within local churches, and the difficulties in having bishops or even cardinals who are members of the movement in turn having authority over the affairs of other movements. Some point to gaps in current canon law for movements that are not personal prelatures. The lack of legal guidelines opens the way for some groups to seal themselves off from other ecclesial groups or the needs of their own local churches.\footnote{Sandro Magister, “The Seven Capital Vices of the Movements, According to “La Civilta Catolica,”” Chiesa, 16 July 2004, http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/7057?eng=y [accessed July 3, 2013].}

For the most part, however, these conflicts have not had a prominent place in the history
of the most well known NEMs in the U.S. Sant’Egidio and Focolare, for example, have largely enjoyed cordial relationships with American bishops perhaps in part because parish life in some regions tends to be stronger here than in Europe. At the same time these groups simply have less presence here.

Proponents of NEMs typically bring up the several instances of John Paul II reaching out in friendship to movements and their founders offering “unprecedented support in promoting the role of new movements in the life of the church.” He spoke favorably of them as communions and signs of communion in God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit and among all Christians. Sr. Marian Maskulak sees John Paul II’s concern for tying the lay state to mystery, communion, and mission as the organizing principle behind the five criteria for ecclesiality of associations of the faithful established by the 1988 post synodal exhortation Christifidelis Laici. Furthermore, associate literature often cites John Paul II’s celebration of the “personal encounter with Christ,” his observation that movements live out a harmony between the institutional and charismatic dimensions of the church, and his naming of their gifts to the church: fostering appreciation of baptism, resurrection, and Eucharist as the center of Christian life,

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165 This is an overall claim but it recognizes that there have indeed been occasional conflicts, particularly with smaller groups. See for example the case of the Love Holy Trinity Mission in Iowa. The group was critiqued by the local bishop of the archdiocese of Dubuque for cult-like characteristics and for not receiving proper approval for a lay movement. Michelle Martin, “Cardinal Bans Mission,” The Catholic New World October 9, 2005, http://www.catholicnewworld.com/cnw/issue/1_100905.html, [accessed July 12013].
166 Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 47-49.
167 Marian Maskulak, “Ecclesial Movements and New Communities,” and Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 47-49.
cultivating domestic churches, the priesthood, and religious life, and “new forms of lay life inspired by the evangelical counsels.”

Benedict XVI also had a positive impression of movements from his time at Tübingen during which he came to admire the Neocatechumenal Way’s appreciation of baptism. Like his predecessor, he sees the movements as a sign of the church at Pentecost: gifted, diverse but unified, and sent out. Most authors on NEMs agree that Benedict XVI continued a generally positive take on the movements though some see him as more cautious about their dangers than John Paul II. Having encountered NEMs at a later stage of their development, his tone is slightly different from John Paul II’s. For example he praises movements for reaching young people with schools of true freedom that “bring to life a shared form of faith,” but he also encourages bishops not to see them as a problem or risk. Leahy stresses that Benedict’s emphasis on movements are an expression of the church’s own multiplicity and unity of charism and ministries. For Leahy, their service to the church mostly arises from their witness of holiness.

Though it is still early in his pontificate, Pope Francis has continued the tradition begun by John Paul II of meeting with and addressing movements at the Pentecost vigil mass each year. Having had some exposure to the movements as they appear in Latin America, he has already expressed similar messages toward NEMs. He has addressed their potential for attending to the new creative work of the Holy Spirit, their opportunity

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169 Ibid., 3 and 54, 57-58. Leahy credits Cardinal Suenens at Vatican II for fostering the idea that charisms are most integral to the present church and rather than simply characteristics of the early church.

170 Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 64. He later had positive contact with Communion and Liberation and the Charismatic Renewal.

171 Ibid., 65.


173 Ibid., 5 and Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 65.

174 Leahy, Ecclesial Movements and Communities, 67-70.
to create harmony within diversity, and their possibility of taking up the proclaiming mission of Christ. At the same time he has cautioned them to adhere to the authority of bishops and yield to the needs of their local churches.175

When popes and leaders of movements meet annually, they create new insights into the ecclesial meaning of the new movements. Discussions have occurred about the tension between charism and institution, the need for religious institutes to share their life while protecting its integrity, and the specific gifts movements bring to the church. For the most part lay associates remain small and under the radar of these discussions, not yet warranting much hierarchical attention, but benefitting from the larger level conversation about movements coming to appreciate their own ecclesiality.

C. A Poor Translation of the Faith?: Faggioli as Critic

Not all scholarship locates NEM positively in relation to Vatican II.176 Most critiques of the movements emerge out of contact with European-based large movements such as the NeoCatechumenal Way, Regnum Christi, Focolare, and St. Egidio. They address concerns particular to the situation of large and somewhat powerful movements at work in Italy, Spain, and other European countries, concerns that are largely strange to the context of U.S. based lay associations. However, the concerns raised by Massimo Faggioli, who addresses the situation of movements in Italy, bear weight in this chapter’s


176 The glowing positive accounts seem especially present within studies on the movements written in English.
discussion. He emphasizes the inadequacy with which some movements appropriate the Council’s ecclesiology and thereby draws attention to the fact that 1) movements affect the local and universal church and 2) a movement’s lived vision of the Council can be unearthed and analyzed.

There are several ways Faggioli sees movements adversely affecting the local and universal church. Some foster a “perversion of *resourcement*” by promoting “hostile” models of the church against the world and they decrease the local church’s diversity. These play out in a problematic division among the faithful between the disciplined and orthodox “movement belonging Catholics and the ordinary Catholics” whom, he claims, NEMs see capitulating to secular culture. While NEM’s do offer “weakened local churches” in Europe a substantive population of serious faithful willing to serve various ministries and needs, an unparalleled media savvy, and an attractive chance for experiencing the “immediacy of Christian faith,” he fears that they are gaining too much power.

Some groups neglect collegiality and rely on direct relationships with the pope as their “most important channel of identification” with the larger church. The presence of NEM in some European dioceses is “front page” in the sense of being continually recognized and lauded at the highest levels of the hierarchy, particularly by various popes. Yet at the same time NEMs bypass the traditional church structure of dioceses held together by the Eucharist and a bishop, sometimes even opening their own seminaries and

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178 Or even worse—he sees them creating a three-tiered view of humanity: the front page NEMS, the dead zone, and the world.
universities in Rome and holding seats in the Curia. In this way, the movements run the risk of becoming “a new kind of Catholicism clustered in separate and not communicating cells.” While positively the vision of the church emerging from NEMs’ life and worship is one of a church rich and various in charisms, Faggioli shows how in practice NEM can monopolize the “market of spiritual traditions.” Their competitive edge in the market of traditions is the attractiveness of “intense high cost activism.” As members bring their family, social, and professional lives under the domain of a movement, Faggioli fears the consequence has often been “lost diversity, freedom, and inclusiveness” in each group. He also sees NEMs focusing inward toward their own communities and not engaging church-wide debates coming out of Vatican II concerning sexual ethics, inculturation, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue.

Faggioli’s critique draws upon evidence for his claims embedded in the policies, social life, ministry, and especially worship life of movements. He claims the liturgical sensibilities and prayers of each group reveal an ecclesiology undergirded by distance from a fallen world. In fact he sees in some NEMs an ecclesiology that encourages the faithful to engage the world as conquerors, setting out to overcome it. This tendency sets them apart from the Council’s message of astute engagement with the world.

Faggioli’s claims that 1) movements affect the local and universal church and 2) a movement’s lived vision of the Council can be unearthed and analyzed have several implications for the study of associates. To what extent do their practices reveal an ecclesiology? Do associates too bypass the traditional channels of church structure in any way? Although they clearly are not dominating a local diocese, do they have any

179 Ibid., 2.
180 Ibid., 11, 13.
impact on it? Do they draw the faithful away from traditional institutional structures or toward them? To what extent do they simply follow in the footsteps of the religious with whom they bond when it comes to crafting a relationship with a local bishop? Does a new structural vision of the church emerge for associates after they undergo formation? Just how do they see their charism in the life of the church? Are associates as a group turned inward or engaging the wider church’s debates on Vatican II influenced topics? Are there common views on the relationship between the church and the world among associates and to what extent do such views match those of the vowed religious community? Is there any element of Hana’s “intense religion” or Faggioli’s “intense high cost activism” at work in their initial attraction and (usually) lifetime commitment to the group? Overall, Faggioli’s work raises the question of whether the cultural, political, and theological elements composing associate life can be teased out and their correlations understood. Such concerns map a path for examining associates’ ties to Vatican II and to an “imbedded” ecclesiology in their way of life as will be addressed in Ch.4-5’s second tier of reflection.

D. NEM as a Mirror

As chapters 3-6 rely upon the foundation established by this review of literature on NEMs, several further questions will arise in relation to the data on associates’ lives. First, do associates simply echo the views of their religious institution when it comes to the aforementioned Vatican II emergence narratives or even the role of charism in their manner of life? To what extent might associates’ see their service to the church in ways comparable to Hana or Leahy’s glowing claims about the movements abiding at the
church’s heart and papal claims about fostering personal encounter with Christ? To what extent do associates link their ecumenical and international work to communion ecclesiology in the way that movements do? Underlining these further questions is the claim that, just as with the new movements, making sense of associate life involves working out their fit within the history of Vatican II’s teachings, particularly as they are lived out by intersecting communities within the church.

When Congar called the Sant’ Egidio movement the “fruit of the Council,” he saw in their way of life a chance to expand the horizon of what could be hoped for in the lay state and in the collaboration of states of life. Rather than just aiming for morality in work and family, the faithful could aspire to holiness, to “being the church.” Congar’s thought later shaped Sant’ Egidio’s “border-crossing charism,” encouraging their missionary impulse to broaden geographically and move into a central part of their identity. These turns have tremendous import for renewing thought on the lay vocation as lived out in community life; they both vertically and horizontally expand the horizon of possibility for living out the faith collectively. In summary, reflection upon the Council grounds a theology of NEMs in a fluid sense of charism that moves among groups within the church and ties them to the church’s missionary heart. Ch.6 makes a beginning at reflection on association in light of the Council in this way.

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II. New Millennium, New Collaboration: Monastic Diaspora and New Monasticism
A. Monastic Diaspora

Another body of literature with direct application to associate life is the rapidly increasing scholarship on the extension of monastic values and practices to the lives of lay individuals and communities. This body of work as received in the U.S. is often traced to texts by well known authors whose work furthers monastic studies and yet is accessible to a popular readership such as Thomas Merton, Henri Newman, and later Meg Funk, Joan Chittiser, Genevieve Glen, Terrence Kardong, and Kathleen Norris. These authors share a vision in common of making the Gospel as lived out within monastic tradition an accessible path for all Christians across states of life and denominational divisions.

While individual religious institutes have been successful at living out this vision for a long while in the U.S., the larger effort across particularly monastic groups to share the work of mutual reflective exchange is fairly recent. One of the most prominent forms of this movement can be seen in the swelling efforts within Catholic institutions such as hospitals, colleges, and universities that tend to go by the headings mission integration, Catholic identity formation, or formation in the Catholic Intellectual tradition. In short this work seeks to step into the gap left by decreasing numbers of “religious virtuosi” in religious life and the priesthood who historically staffed and lead

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182 There are also a number of lesser known authors who are also prolific on these issues. See the weblog describing a recent bike tour of the “interface” between classical and new monasticism titled “Emerging Communities, Ancient Roots: A Christian Exploration of Contemporary Intentional Communities” http://emerging-communities.com/ accessed 9/13/14.

183 Prominent examples of such success are the Secular and Ecumenical Franciscans.

184 This exchange occurs between monastic communities of men and women, between those cloistered, semi-cloistered and apostolic, between oblates and members of intentional communities, and among interested individuals who have made a private commitment to living out the monastic tradition.
such institutions. It is the work of making the tradition accessible and offering chances for formation in at least its central values and teachings within a radically different Catholic culture than the one that surrounded each institution’s origins. Recently the effort has shown 1) a move toward collaborative efforts across religious congregations and the institutions they founded and are handing over in many cases and 2) recognition that Catholic tradition cannot be absorbed by study alone and does best when study is paired with “times and spaces for encounters” with Christ and supportive reflection upon them. In the discussion that follows, studies operating within these two claims are shown to stress mutuality of exchange among laity and religious. As Ch. 3-4 will indicate, such mutuality and the collaboration across congregations has already been an influential piece of the lay association movement and is just beginning to influence associations to be in more explicit and fruitful communion with one another. Also, Ch. 4-5 will show how associate life not only provides times and places for encounters with Christ, but also serves to heighten recognition of those encounters within the daily lives of both associates and religious.

First, this rippling outward of monastic thought and practice is of growing interest to scholars standing outside a church perspective. For example, the work of Pryce implements an anthropological perspective to study what she terms “monastic

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186 For example the following groups foster this transition for Jesuit educational institutions: Collegium, the Ignatian Colleagues Program, the AJCU Leadership Seminar, the Heartland Delta/Western Conversations, and the conference of the Association for Jesuit Colleges and Universities.
187 Though a range of expressions of this effort exist in the U.S. It has been described by David Gentry Akin in *Teaching the Tradition*: 16 as Catholic Imagination including contact with the Incarnation, the Mystical Body, a Sacramental Worldview and Mary as the Mother of God.
diaspora.” Pryce uses the term diaspora to describe the spreading of contemplative monastic viewpoints and practices among these networks. She examines this process as it occurs using interviews, ethnographic methods, and e-journals from contemplative practitioners who sometimes visit a monastery. Though her work is still in progress, so far she has found that individuals seek intellectual sophistication as well as spiritual practice; they think about the pressures for contemplatives created by living in globalized American context and want to continue thinking through such issues alongside monastic friends and mentors. New practices for individuals who desire some common group-level activities also emerge in Pryce’s study such as group timers on meditation apps, similar altars in the home, and newsletters written by geographically separated practitioners in weblog style. Pryce has begun asking what social conditions are needed to sustain the “counter-cultural” transformation of self contemplative life invites. Pryce’s study shows the widening demographic of

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189 Paula Pryce. Personal e-mail Correspondence with Author. May 1, 2013. She is tentatively calling her dissertation “Divine Immanence and Transformed Selves, or Practice Makes Perfect: Monastic Decline and the Rise of Contemplative Christianity in America.”

190 These practitioners are a diverse group including a good number of recently reverted Christians who find contemplative practice more palatable than church affiliation. Pryce in fact attends to their religious diversity and attraction to interreligious schools of contemplative thought; they are often individuals who practice contemplative Christianity right alongside Vedanta Hinduism or Buddhism. She states, “Many turned from parish-style Christianity because they found it did not match their calling to intimacy with the divine. Being untethered, many suffer deep frustration and alienation (which also occurs in monasteries, of course); they often have no likeminded associates and rarely have a mentor to help keep them steady and on-track. Also, as with any movement, people “get it” to varying degrees. I have found that the achievement orientation of American society is perhaps the hardest for people to shed.” Paula Pryce, email correspondence with author, May 1, 2013.

191 Pryce is also careful to include the positive and negative impact non-monastics have upon the monasteries, including the increasing presence of “mature” practitioners with decades of relationship to the monastery and centering prayer behind them and more likeness than differences to their vowed friends.
those influenced by monasticism and the growing appreciation for the ramifications of the diaspora among scholars in the social sciences. Her work underscores that in order to study the new forms of relation to a Christian monastic community, scholars must attend to beliefs, judgments, and affections in addition to practices. The interplay of these factors in relation to associate life is taken up in Ch.5-6.

Secondly, several streams of reflection concerning the sharing of wisdom from vowed religious communities with the wider church converged during the 21st monastic institute meeting in 2006 at Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. This collaborative reflection serves as the most prominent example within this third category of literature. One of the first apparent insights of the conference was how much value the monastics attributed to the sharing of their life with these others. Contrasting their views with a kind of private discipleship, the monastic participants described the desire of their communities to have an impact beyond themselves. Some of this impulse has roots in monasticism’s reception of Vatican II’s call to the renewal of religious life and its theology of communion. One participant, a theologian and Benedictine, relates:

There was the call to identify, structure, live and celebrate the experience of the church as a communion of disciples. Religious communities, by living as a communion of disciples, have to satisfy people’s hungers for community on a human, religious, and Christian dimension. Communion involves relationships on a broad spectrum of practices: forgiveness, tolerance, forbearance, support, rejoicing, receptivity, faith. Communion

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192 For other examples of this type of literature see the series of articles by Terrence Kardong, OSB and other monastics in Barbara Mayer, OSB, ed. “How Vatican II Changed the Church and Religious Life,” Benedictine Review LXVI: 2 Fall/Winter 2013. The articles emphasize how Perfectate Caritatis and Lumen Gentium are quoted more than any other Council texts in discussions about the Council’s impact on monastic life in part because they deal with institutes’ inner lives. Yet, Gaudium et Spes, for example, should also be given adequate consideration for the work it accomplishes in radical shifting of religious’ relation to the world.

193 Mary Forman, OSB, ed. One Heart, One Soul, Many Communities, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009): 125. She is quoting Parker Palmer’s definition of community here.
is at the heart of our call to live the Gospel, how we do justice, so as to call the world to do justice, and how we model hope and assurance that it is possible to live justly. I believe that all monastic women, whether more enclosed or not, will affect others because of the way we live, have been formed and transformed.  

She concludes that monastic women can “assuage hungers for community” in their contexts. This post-conciliar view of what monastics offer the world lines up with a pronounced dissatisfaction in the Western context today. As she puts it:

Disappointment with shallow spirituality, materialism, consumption, restless striving, disregard for creation, divisions between rich and poor people, and a lack of time for relationships—pushes persons toward community but does not equip them for it. Dissatisfaction with life as it is lived presently does not, in itself, prepare people for new forms of community.

Alongside this state of affairs, participants named a recurring dilemma: they have observed themselves yearning of substantive community but “ill equipped” for it. The participants at the Institute represented and spoke of the range of ways the hunger is being assuaged by people drawing close to their vowed communities. These ways begin with visitors, students, colleagues, and retreatants and expand to include oblates associates, new monastics, and members of other intentional communities. Vowed communities offer friendship and modeling of community life lived in relation to the Rule as well as steeped in the challenges of this context.

Oblates describe a shift of viewpoint that occurs as a result of their committed bond. They notice themselves moving away from a worldview focused upon the

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194 Ibid., 136.
195 Ibid., 73.
196 Forman, One Heart, One Soul, 71.
individual good and toward “thinking communally” alongside the religious and their tradition.\(^{197}\) Alongside this shift they also notice a paradox in their life together. While they value the “freedom of expression” and wide range of backgrounds that characterize their lives as oblates, this shift to “we thinking” sensitizes them to the difficulties they face in coming together annually for oblate meetings.\(^{198}\) Monastics and oblates all expressed how much they appreciate the diverse ecumenical, generational, state of life, and professional backgrounds present in their life that serves to pull participants toward engagement with the larger church.\(^{199}\)

B. New Monasticism

Now entering its second decade, the ecumenical new monastic community at Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina has found itself leader and model for the few thousand other new monastics in the U.S. Though they are a young movement whose numbers are still fairly small, they have shown themselves to have tremendous influence and attraction.\(^{200}\) Seeing his new monastic community as “more like a river we have fallen into then a march we organized,” co-founder of Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove locates his community Rutba House’s way of life as following the radical and reform traditions in company with the desert monastics, the first Benedictines, Francis and Clare, radical reformers of the 16\(^{th}\) century, Quakers, U.S. slave churches, and Catholic Workers among

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\(^{197}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{198}\) Ibid., 62.
\(^{199}\) Ibid., 212. By the conference’s end participants were mentioning a common insight that engagement with this broadened monastic community sheds light on other groups of Christians who, while not strictly tied to monastic life, “bear witness to values often called monastic...those of the Gospel like simplicity, peace, harmony, integrity, community and equality” and ask, “how do we mutually enrich each other’s path?” Specifically she mentions Quakers here.
\(^{200}\) Forman, *One Heart, One Soul*, 53.
others. Though distinguished by its diversity of all kinds, the monastic movement as described by Wilson Hartgrove holds together by focusing on a vision of the church as firmly rooted in the past, present, and future simultaneously, drawing from Christian tradition (specifically in the form of the 12 practices or marks of the new monasticism)\textsuperscript{201} “in the belly of the paradox called America.”\textsuperscript{202} Persons from a variety of backgrounds unite their prayer, works of mercy, actions for peace and justice, worship, study and reflection, and homes with one another and those they serve. The growing literature by and about new monasticism rounds this sections’ discussion of literature about the spreading of monastic ways of life among laity. Like Pryce’s work, this body of literature contributes by investigating how and why communities largely made up of young Protestants and others who would not identify as Catholic look to monastic tradition for guidance, mentoring, and friendship.

Authors writing on new monasticism approach making sense of it from a range of disciplines including theology, journalism, ministry studies, peace studies, social ethics, and philosophy.\textsuperscript{203} These studies ask questions such as: How does new monasticism’s commitment to relocation to the abandoned places of empire compare to desert monasticism and contemporary groups such as Jonah House and the Catholic Workers?\textsuperscript{204} Why is it important for new monastic communities to forge and maintain

\textsuperscript{201} For the specific ways this movement draws upon Christian tradition see Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove, The New Monasticism: What it Has to Say to Today’s Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2008 and the anthology School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of the New Monasticism, Rutba House, ed. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2005.
\textsuperscript{202} Forman, One Heart, One Soul, 49.
\textsuperscript{203} Schools for Conversion, 173. The diversity of approaches can be attributed to the multifaceted nature of the church at work.
\textsuperscript{204} 12 Marks of the New Monasticism, 10-25.
“strong and accountable relationships with the wider church”?\textsuperscript{205} Can living close together enable practices of discipleship and deepened commitment to Christ and his church?\textsuperscript{206} These kind of inquiries hold in common a taking up of the Christian tradition—especially vowed religious life and the peace tradition—and a living it out among urban people in the U.S.

New monasticism studies reveal some overlap with the concerns of associate life. Both movements: bring together diverse groups of largely urban Christians who commit to a shared ideal of living out the Christian life rooted in the kingdom of God; study and pray texts of the church’s tradition; and are firmly anchored in the wider church and needs of the suffering in a particular location. They both undertake contemplative disciplines and routines of prayer and work. They even address some of the same contemporary problems such as the war in Iraq, the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, and the injustices surrounding immigration.\textsuperscript{207} At the same time there are real differences worth noting between the two movements and their literature. New monastics tend to be younger, have children living at home, have a more Protestant demographic, and live together or in neighborhood proximity to one another in order to share routines and actions.

Both groups are asking how to best serve as witnesses in this U.S. context while living in relationship with vowed religious congregations that are rapidly changing. They both ask about offering hospitality to the stranger, leading a disciplined contemplative

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{205} Ibid, 68-79.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid, 124-136.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Forman, \textit{One Heart, One Soul}, 49.
\end{itemize}
lifestyle, and being God’s people in today’s world. In short, as a contribution to the backdrop of scholarship surrounding inquiry into associate life, studies on new monasticism profile groups located within the American church, engaged in a process of drawing upon tradition while growing awareness of the limits of this process, and continually innovating their way to serious community life outside vowed celibate monasticism.

III. The Young Days of Associate Life

A. The “What” of Shared Life: Work by Religious for Religious

Ch.1 presented some of the early theological work on associates for religious for religious and within the context of the earliest conferences. Later work of this type also emerged as religious worked to integrate Council themes into their way of life and produced organizations and journals to foster collaboration across groups. Three articles from the journal entitled Review for Religious written between 1985-1997 demonstrate an important shift within religious’ reflection specifically on the content of what can be shared with associates; the content once characterized as simply charism or spirituality expands to include several other central aspects that shape a full Christian life including new appropriation of baptism, Eucharist, and the sacramental dimensions of daily life.

First, sociologist Patricia Wittberg’s 1985 article “Transformations in Religious Commitment” reflects on a new view of charism in light of an emerging associative

208 Forman, One Heart, One Soul, 49, 52-53. The Madison Benedictines have been characterized as asking similar questions in the life of their ecumenical monastic intentional community that is known for stepping, “outside traditional ecclesial boundaries.” See “Benedictine Women of Madison,” Holy Wisdom Monastery http://benedictinewomen.org/benedictine-women-of-madison/ accessed 8/12/2013. By contrast the AIC, PP, and a good number of new monastics have chosen to remain within the structures of their local churches.
model of religious community in some congregations. Characterized by new ways of belonging and relating to a charism, this model centers on a shared vision held together by common practices including work, play, ritual, and sacrifice.\textsuperscript{209} Above all, she argues that, if the associate model of religious life is to be a key to community survival, especially for twentieth century American Catholics groups, the work of common practices must serve to maintain a founder’s charism.\textsuperscript{210}

Second, in conversation with sociologists like Wittberg, Max Weber, and Peter Worsley, theologian Bernard Lee’s “A Socio-Historical Theology of Charism” (1989) in \textit{Review for Religious} argues against the effort among post-conciliar religious institutions to “recover their charisms.” Warning against comodification, he pleads for careful use of the concept of charism recognizing that it is a “deeply historicized social phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{211} One of his central claims is that the work of maintaining a founder’s charism advocated by Wittberg and others has failed to distinguish a community’s deep story from its charism. Whereas a charism belongs to a specific context and “names an effective connection between a deep story and contemporary social situations,” a community’s deep story can be seen as a kind of developing text or classic that is


\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 166-167.

transmittable and a mediator of gospel to culture.  

For Lee much work can be done to “keep a community creatively rooted in its deep story” (131). Critical memory combined with social analysis would foster a kind of practice of life-giving dialectic conversation with a community’s classics. Such conversation is the only thing with potential to make conditions likely for the grace of a charismatic event given for the whole church.

Wittberg and Lee taken together indicate that even as religious life endures far reaching upheavals and renewals of all kinds, it offers a valuable model of how to live in community bound together by common charism. Very early on reflection on associate life expresses the strong attraction on the part of associates to learning why and how community life works. Yet, in addition to this community model, religious life also offered earliest associates an attractive model of deepened spirituality. At this same time as scholarship addressed the laicizing of religious, a trend can be traced toward bring forth a religious spirituality to the laity. Aschenbrenner, for example, advocated a “fundamental re-announcement of their lives that shifts and roots their identity center in a radical experience of God alone,” what he calls a monasticism of the heart. The result of such experience includes a reliance on God alone, a reappreciation of baptism, as well as an increase in awareness of participation in the paschal mystery and the sanctification of daily life. Not only are these among the primary attractions described by associates

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212 Ibid., 126-128. For Lee Charism always has an element of public recognition of God’s power in the relationship between a community and the larger world. His use of deep story comes from structuralist interpretation of group identity.

213 Ibid., 133 and 135.

seeking relationship with religious, but they are also frequently named by religious communities describing just what from their tradition they hope to pass on.215

These three representative examples from Wittberg, Lee, and Aschenbrenner show that earliest thought by religious for religious on the subject of sharing religious life with laity circled around offering content in the areas of: charism, community, and spirituality.

B. Reflection by Early Associates on the Sharing of Tradition

1. The Promoters: Hopes in the Early Conferences

As early scholarship on associate life began to take off through the work of the first few biannual conferences between 1989 and 1997 discussed in Ch.1, the content of what religious and laity shared gradually expanded beyond these three areas. Reflections at the conferences show what associates and religious respectively hoped for regarding the living out of a shared tradition and how that hope shifted over time. Though the *Review of Religious* and other journals on religious life216 occasionally featured a lay associate author reflecting on his or her experience217 it is more fruitful to gather accounts of the 1989, 1991, and 1997 conferences and cull from them what they might reveal about developing thought on the passing on of tradition.

215 Ibid., 489-491 and 496-497.
216 See for example *Sisters Today* which featured among others Conleth Overman, CP’s “The Need for Religious Institutes to Develop a Strong Outreach of Lay Associates,” *Sisters Today* 57 (February 1986): 345-347.
217 Fran Pignatelli, "Lay Associate Membership," *Review for Religious* 48 (1989): 936. Her article is a rare case of this kind. In it she praises the way associate life permeates her private and work worlds and how the community’s spirit challenges and supports her. A more recent example of scholarship on this topic by a lay associate is the fruit of two decades of theological dialogue between lay Cistercians and Cistercian monastic scholars expressed in work like Wayne Bodkin, “Lay Cistercians: the latest addition to the family,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 38, no.1 (2003): 85-89. Bodkin argues “we share the charism not as religious but as laity.”
At the 1989 conference the term “assimilation” was used by a sister to describe how associates come to “claim the identity, history and traditions of a particular spirituality as their own.” She observes that a lingering sisters-as-superior bias still lingers though a more equality of states view is “gaining ground” in U.S. Catholic culture. She noted there was a “growing ambiguous sense” of associate members’ capacity to be “imbued” with a charism and at same time religious are saying there is “new commitment but it is not clear if it is to the local community, the congregation, associate community, individual sisters” or the charism itself. The conference concluded with the reflection that the passing on of charism happens best person to person and an elaborately structured associate program or formation process is not necessarily needed.218 This person to person contact also sheds light on a budding mutuality. Several religious describe “receiving their charism back” from associates as they freely express what it is like to integrate it into their daily lives.219

At the next conference in 1991 at Marriotsville, MD effort was made to foster lay-leadership in the reflective process and, at the same time, religious began seeing their own role differently. Instead of the charism being theirs to give to laity, they began seeing their formation task as recognizing and collaboratively enhancing the presence of their community’s charism already within the laity. This conference envisioned a shared community life, grounded on shared faith, shared charism, and shared ministry.220

219 Ibid., 356-357. This article is also the first instance of associates and religious questioning the associate movement’s place in relation to the larger feminist movement, a link that will be raised in discussions about the AIC and PP in Ch.5-7.
The same year at a parallel Canadian conference conversations placed the movement squarely as a response to the conciliar vision of church as the People of God and religious life as intended to be lived not “apart from the people” but rather with them. Laity seeking holiness and religious seeking to share something of their life were deemed valuable dynamics, but some participants said an entirely lay-led movement should be tempered by a collaborative decision-making model. “Is it fair for us to ask to most recent arrivals in our midst to be the ones expected to find the way forward?” one sister asked. This conference’s ruminations led to a discussion of charism with religious insisting they have a charism to pass on and some laity and religious arguing a need for a new active reception of it. The account of this conference indicates pushing and pulling regarding the nature of laity living out the tradition, particularly how the passing on will be structured and who will shape it. It also shows the religious coming forward with a major insight about the need to work out what mutual sharing of a charism might mean.

By the 1997 conference, two hundred religious and lay associates from the U.S. and Canada met at Convent Station, New Jersey under the newly formed North American

marked by the increasing awareness of both religious and associates of the need for associates to take responsibility for themselves.


223 Curry, “New Wine, New Wineskins,” 11. By the conference’s end all participants recommitted themselves to the movement in order to “bring about a new and truer vision of church.”
Conference of Associates and Religious.224 The conference topic addressed mutuality within the religious-associate relationship. As charism was discussed it became clear both laity and religious were seeking an “adult spirituality,” composed of new ways of relating to faith by means of their charism. Both groups sought contact with people from other states of life and both groups were interested in living out their distinct vocation within new structures of community life. The keynote speaker observed a change over time as well. She offered the image of a hypothetical member of the early associate movement joining while saying “now I’ll be someone” as she clung to the respected status of a religious order. In contrast, a contemporary member may join because she and the sisters she meets find they seek the same ends by the same means: holiness by means of relationship to a particular charism, learned alongside and expressed in mission with their communities. In this way a partnership and friendship model for relating to the partaking of charism seems to have emerged over time.225

2. The Critics: Critique From A Lay Carmelite

As early as 1990 a few critical voices began to arise surrounding the associate movement. Though they remained a minority among religious, especially among LCWR apostolic religious sisters, their views were strongly expressed. Some sisters, rather than seeing associates’ presence as primarily “a morale booster” or an energizing “contribution to the mission of the order,” saw a disturbing blurring happening between

224Patricia Lefevere, “Orders Find New Life in Associates,” NCR Online http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/1997b/052397/052397c.htm (accessed October 1, 2009). Some children and families attend this conference as well as Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, UCCs and Methodists. Although members of these groups may have attended previous conferences, neither group was mentioned.

lay and vowed members. Some even worried that the blurring could lead to a “diluting” of religious’ identity\textsuperscript{226} or a class of members who reap the benefits of vowed life without any of the sacrifices.\textsuperscript{227} Critics feared the possibility of a “part time” sisterhood as taking away from the unique gift of their vocation. Others more starkly “feared associates will come in and change the rules and take all [their] money” and continue the order in ways sisters may not want.\textsuperscript{228} A wholly different minority critique among religious expressed concern that most associates seemed to “prefer religious life as it was” and were holding their orders back from developing in radical ways in response to the Council.\textsuperscript{229}

Sometimes associates themselves expressed concern about the direction of the movement. Lay Carmelite Michelle Scully’s 1990 article entitled, “On Association and Lay Membership,” explores severely critiques the direction she perceives the movement headed and is representative of those associates who would like to see religious maintaining less porous boundaries with laity. She asks, “why the interest seems to have shifted from spirituality to socializing, from communion to communicating.”\textsuperscript{230} Scully shows how the lexicon chosen by session participants (namely co-member, contact sister, and sponsor) shows association to be heading toward “artificial relationship” that is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{229} The conclusion of this dissertation will discuss new directions that research into these views might take given the kind of data collected in Ch.13.
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\end{footnotesize}
merely social. Scully is particularly alarmed by what she sees as the blurring of lay and associate life as evidenced by most groups in the session embracing lay participation in annual chapter meetings and other congregation meetings. She remains wary of the “thoughtless joy” of welcoming association and urges sisters to stop “apologizing for being religious women.” In contrast with the trend toward an associate-driven movement, Scully also argues persuasively that it is the religious women who must maintain and clarify distinctions and definitions between the two groups. Scully wants serious relationship but with clearly defined boundaries—a serious commitment to the charism but within a community that is clearly embedded in an existing vowed order.

3. Young Days as a Reach for Mutuality

This section on theological reflection conducted during the earliest days of associate life has shown the development of a need to be precise about what is given by each side in the associate-religious bond. Early authors came at this need at first by talking about the content of what religious share with laity. Later, conferences of associates and supporters began relying on images of friendship or partnership but realized these ideals of mutual exchange require a great deal of reflective work in order to identify and uphold appropriate boundaries for each vocation. In this way the earliest theological efforts opened the door for associates to show the way forward for this reflective work in the years that followed.

231 Ibid., 297.
232 Ibid., 298-299, 300-301. Scully goes so far as to warn religious that this kind of lay involvement will lead to the loss of what constitutes religious life, saying “we will one day devour you.” She wants an associate program, but a program with clear boundaries on the part of religious. She sees clear canonical differences—as in associates pursuing canonical status as an association of the faithful—as the way forward.
233 Ibid., 300. Her view also describes associates “knowing little” and encouraging religious to value their “better part.”
IV. In Their Own Voices: Theological Reflection by Lay Cistercians

The final category of literature seeking to draw forth monastic insights into the broader life of the church is scholarship conducted by lay associates themselves. Though lay associates from the new wave movement discussed in this study are just beginning to write theological explorations about their life and its meaning, three kinds of reflections have come out of the AIC: A) articles in the *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* published at the OLM monastery B) work by AIC members in other types of publications and C) a new genre of texts emerging from years of collaborative inquiry between the Cistercians of the OSCO and the International Lay Cistercians. While the PBVMs have by no means neglected reflective work on their life together theirs has often taken other forms and does not yet follow a clear arc of development in understanding.\(^{234}\) Though the texts discussed here remain a small piece of overall literature about associate life and few people outside associate leadership are aware of this body of work, it is a significant development on the question of ecclesial fit. Their work is in also continuity with and expands upon other types of monastic dispersion scholarship being written by today. The work of this dissertation about ecclesiological implications of the AIC and PP’s inner meanings complements the type of reflection demonstrated here by members of the AIC themselves. The AIC-authored studies below serve as a self-descriptive window into the uniqueness of the interiority of the AIC as a group, a topic developed in Ch.6.

\(^{234}\) Their publications and those to which they contribute such as the nationally syndicated *The Associate* will be discussed in detail in Ch.4-5.
A. *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*

Though other authors have referred to the presence of associates in Cistercian congregations, AIC members began contributing their own scholarship to the journal *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* in 2000. In 2000 an article entitled, “Some Reflections of the Emergence of Cistercian Associates” was authored by AIC founders Dennis and Trisha Day. Their work is an introductory inquiry into what the AIC is like, its fit with their two monasteries, and the larger Cistercian order. In short, they describe how the AIC has come to use “Cistercian” as an adjective and not a noun to describe themselves; they see themselves as embedded in a lay vocation shaped by a Cistercian way of life.236

They describe the typical AIC member as one with a calling that is simultaneously contemplative Cistercian bound to community and also moving between the world, the home and the monastery.237 The living out this call by means of practices of praying the hours, *lectio divina*, the Rule of Benedict, silence, and solitude are not without struggle but made quite possible given the support of their “school of charity,” the AIC community. As the Days frame the AIC experience, it is in this group context that AIC members study and cultivate virtues like obedience, humility, chastity and poverty and ultimately enter into an ongoing transformation. This state of ongoing conversion manifests in the associates’ manner of engagement with Christ in “the natural

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235 The first mention of associates in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* occurs in Michael Plekon, “Monasticism in the Marketplace, the Monastery, the World, and Within: An Eastern Church Perspective,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34 vol. 3 1999): 343. He mentions The Monastic Center, a program for lay men to stay at the monastery for a short time exploring monastic life and its application to their own.  
237 Ibid., 98.
environment of the lay person in the world, in one’s neighborhood and parish and in the home.”

The Days position their inquiry quite honestly at the beginning of a process of discernment guided by Holy Spirit. They name several lines of inquiry ahead for the group surrounding how this way of life impacts monastic communities. They wonder if Cistercians themselves will come to agree with Lay Cistercian members that it is possible “for the charism to be shared with laity in the world, “shaping itself to a secular form.” They patiently hope to be seen not as “a prayer group or retreatants who happen to meet at the monastery but instead as important adjuncts to the monastic community or perhaps as actual members of the Cistercian family.” Seeing the AIC as a young development within a 900 year old tradition inspired by “an expanded and empowered vision of the laity in the church and a late twentieth-century spiritual thirst evident in society.”

Their view is also solidly grounded in a sense of the distinction between monastics and AIC members. They state:

Associates do not see themselves simply translating monastic norms into a worldly setting but as discovering a new and radical way of being Christian in the world, a way that has its roots in Cistercian patrimony and its expression in the Cistercian charism. The danger, it seems to us, is that some monastics might begin to see associates as monks and nuns living and working outside the cloister instead of persons who are called to lead a contemplative and spiritual life in the world based on the values and practices they discover in the monastery.

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238 Ibid., 100-102 and 106.
239 Ibid., 107-109. They see the possibility of such questions resulting in a new canon law or a formal recognition by the Cistercian order itself, the latter of which does occur a few years later.
240 Ibid., 110.
To this end their article calls for a “careful exploration of the associates’ vocation” that can serve as the foundational piece of lay Cistercian self-understanding.\textsuperscript{241} The Days end with a hope that lay Cistercians can meet John Paul II’s call in \textit{Christifidelis Laici} \textsuperscript{20} for ecclesial communion characterized by unity and complementarity of states of life, a passage later quoted fairly often by leaders of the OSCO.

Eleven years of development within the AIC occurred before the second of the articles was written. “A theology of Commitment in the context of the Lay Cistercian movement,” by theologian and AIC member Linda Harrington, offers a sophisticated look at how theory and praxis work together in the AIC’s commitment-making practice that occurs at the end of three years of formation and is renewed thereafter. She asks “Can commitments be described in a way that makes it evident that they are statements made in the Cistercian tradition yet accommodates the wide variety of Lay Cistercian communities in the world? Can they be described in a way that allows each Lay Cistercian community to express its own particular embodiment of the Cistercian chrism without imposing an unnatural uniformity?” Harrington ultimately sees the AIC’s years of reflection on this issue leading to a view of commitment as a statement of call, identity and “Cistercianness.” It confirms members’ distinctly lay calling as well as their call to relationship with the Cistercian charism and, just as with Cistercian monastics, it confirms their call to a particular local community (the AIC).\textsuperscript{242} As Harrington expresses it:

\begin{quote}
Because members individually and corporately subscribe to those same values, everyone who makes a commitment can presume that the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid., 111. This subject will be examined in Ch.7.
\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 435.
community will provide the teachings, the encouragement and admonition, and the fraternal affection that allow us to become ever more mature in our identity as Lay Cistercians. Conversely, commitment is more than a personal spirituality program; it is a promise actively and intentionally to participate in community, including responding to other members with encouragement and fraternal affection.  

She is careful to note that they do not see themselves making commitment to the specific OLM and NM monasteries as monks and nuns do, but rather to the local community of the AIC. In her view, the AIC see how, Commitments are made to God, to oneself, and to one’s lay community; they are witnessed and affirmed both by ones’ lay community and by the monastic community with which one’s lay community is affiliated…it has no status in canon law…but allows Lay Cistercians a way to express what is already the truth of their existence; that they seek to embody the Cistercian charism in the context of their life, in, for instance, family and work and parish responsibilities. 

Her article marks a pivotal shift for the AIC’s theological work in several ways. First, she writes for a wider audience than the AIC including other monastics other Lay Cistercians, and the wider associate movement. Such a broadened audience reflects the maturing of the AIC as it becomes more and more a substantive local community and takes its place in the wider church. Secondly, her piece shows a development in the kind of theological reflection undertaken by associates. It is reflection done at the hinge group reflection on experiences and the Cistercian tradition. This marks a shift from the who are we questions of the Days’ article to questions about how to live out lay Cistercian

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243 Ibid., 437.
244 Ibid., 432-434.
245 Ibid., 438.
identity. Finally, Harrington’s piece highlights collaborative nature of associates’ theologizing. Surveys, meetings for discussion and reflection, examining different views and reaching for a shared theological foundation to their practice all mark their life together and the literature they produce.

B. Other Types of Publications: Popular Pieces

Though the AIC’s process of theological reflection is comparable to that of other associate programs, their productivity is rather exemplary. The theological reflection conducted by AIC members is not limited to its expression in scholarly articles. The group has inspired co-founder and writer Trisha Day to author several other kids of ruminations about or inspired by the lay Cistercian way of life. For example, AIC members often publish poems in their newsletter. Day’s poem called “Brother Walter Tells Us of Psalm 148” describes a monk who has memorized the psalm and teaches associates to do the same. Day has also written scripture meditations featured in the *Give Us This Day* Catholic devotional.246

Day also spent three months living with the OLM community in 2001, and wrote a book length reflective account of her time there especially as she methodically appropriated key monastic practices as a Cistercian lay woman.247 Though it is a remarkable thing to have such a prolific writer in the midst of the AIC, particularly one so tied to the history and leadership of the group’s life, such work is beginning to be found among other associate groups as well. As associations move to maturity and in some cases take on a new institutional independence from their vowed religious mentors,

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246 See Appendix for a copy of the poem.
247 Day’s book will be discussed again in Ch.6.
such theological work in poetic and personal essay form is beginning to flower. It is a crucial type of work in that it: offers glimpses into associates’ own understanding, gives voice to the process of moving from appreciation to appropriation of a congregation’s tradition and way of life, and dwells on the beauties and small moments of conversion and daily insight that mark the associate life. These are aspects easily missed by scholarly studies focused on the big picture. As this dissertation’s conclusion mention, further work in this area would do well to gather together and examine this genre of theological work from a wide range of communities—a spectrum of both maturity and geographic location—as a distinctly lay Cistercian contribution to the literature on associates.

C. A New Genre: Collaborative Texts

In addition to scholarly articles and popular pieces, the third and final type of AIC-produced work on associate life is a published dialogue among AIC members, members of other groups belonging to the International Lay Cistercian conference, and leaders of the Cistercian order. The exchange of reflections, questions and posited judgments can be categorized as a new type of collaborative texts amid this chapter’s discussion of associate-authored reflection. It shows associates and monastics at the local, national and international levels thinking through together the central questions about associate identity, structure, and ecclesial fit. While the dialogue is ongoing, the portion examined here spans a little more than ten years beginning in the late 1990’s. The context for the exchange is the preparative work for the International Lay Cistercian conferences at Quilvo, Chile (2000), Conyers, Georgia (2002), Clairvaux, France (2005), Huerta, Spain (2008) and Dubuque, Iowa (2011) respectively.
The collection of letters show a line of collaborative inquiry into who associates are and how, consequently, they should relate to the Cistercian order traced through letters to and from the (now called) International Association of Lay Cistercians, letters of support from AIC’s monasteries, and ultimately the documents about the identity and character of the ILC conference. These documents will be briefly summarized here. The documents show both vowed and lay Cistercians working on a foundation for a theology of associate life that takes distinctions among vocations seriously.

While at first associates looked to monastic guidance, input, and steering of major decisions, the later documents show all involved affirming that the Lay Cistercians are not only capable of directing their own course of reflection, they in fact should be doing so. Monastics offer companionship and insight born of long study and practice but associates are the primary “listeners” to this new movement of the Holy Spirit. The documents explored here show this change, map the nature and meaning of associate life among the Cistercian family over a decade-long period, and offer a window into how associates and monastics each contribute to this joint effort.248

The first letter, written by Abbot General Dom Olivera, OSCO in January 1, 1995 and later published in Cistercian Studies Quarterly in 1997, called the whole order to consider to what degree the charism can be shared with lay groups and “open itself to a secular form…to a structure that is not monastic.” His most often cited portion of the letter includes his declaration that the Cistercian order does not exhaust the life and manifestation of the Cistercian charism.

248 While Ch.7 explores the emergence of the International Lay Cistercian Associates conferences and AIC’s relation to them, this section focuses on the documents produced during its first ten years as milestones in an ongoing process of theological reflection on the meaning of associate life.
At the Second International Lay Cistercian Encounter in 2002 at the Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia, associates gave the OSCO General Chapters a letter generally describing their work together so far and asking for a “word of wisdom and encouragement for [their] endeavors to live the Cistercian Charism in the world.” The letter sought the chapters’ discernment of spirits about Lay Cistercian life.

In response a letter was also read by Olivera in which he proposes the image of spiritual marriage in Christian mysticism as the “high point and destination of our Christian pilgrimage on the pathway of ascesis and prayer,” a point to which all Christians are invited rather than the “privileged few.” Olivera warns against misreading the lives of both vowed religious and laity as a dichotomy between a life of focused communication with God and a life “with a divided heart.” He concludes with the suggestion that,

Cistercian monastic life, as a way or system of life, has to create the best possible climate to foster a certain type of Christian experience. The married life and family life of Cistercian lay men or women also has to create the most suitable climate for another kind of Christian experience. Each has a charism, a gift of the Spirit of God, and all of us partake of the common charism of the Cistercian grace.

Addressed to “[our] Cistercian co-brothers and sisters” in associate life, Olivera’s message is one of embracing the distinctions between the vowed religious and lay state as the best means of drawing close to the Cistercian charism and one another.

The OSCO leadership responded with another short letter that describes such work primarily happening according to the principle of subsidiarity; each local monastic/associate community will do the detailed work thinking about how they will
“work together to discern participation in same charism” and reminds associates that their presence encourages and uplifts monastics in their vocation.249

Another source from the 2002 conference is Dom Bernardo Olivera’s homily entitled, “Beyond Our Borders,” in which he persuades the associates to embrace their distinctive lay reception of the charism saying, “we need you to embody the charism, to speak about it in a different language, to discover new ways of living it out, to re-inculturate it. And you have no need to ask our permission to do this.” He encourages them to take the lead in figuring out basic criteria for discerning a lay Cistercian vocation, to draw up the outline of a formation program, and what kind of structures and routines would best suit communities at the local and regional levels.

Around the time the initial 2002 Georgia conference was being planned, a parallel stream of thought surrounding associates emerged surrounding associates’ request for formalized support from the order. In response to Abbot Olivera’s 1995 letter advocating serious commitment to associates among monasteries, and in response to the maturing of the AIC’s leadership and formation structure, members of the New Melleray monastic community sent a formal letter of support to the AIC dated March 9, 2001. This letter echoes some of Olivera’s views as it encourages associates to work through mutuality of relationship with the monastics, protect differences, and create a formation program without impeding the monastic’s call to the hidden life. Most significantly, it affirms that

249 The letter cites John Paul II’s 1998 address to the Cistercian family in which he encouraged them to discern the place of laity in their life, opening paths for such participation and also maintaining their monastic way of life.
the “Holy Spirit is sharing the Cistercian charism with [their] AIC community” and “inviting [monastics] to share [their] vocation” in a “mutually enriching way.”

Two years later, in October 2003, the nuns from Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey sent a similar letter of formal support and recognition to the AIC. Their letter describes how a vote of the conventual chapter officially affirmed and recognized AIC as a group not only “drawn by the Holy Spirit” to live the Cistercian charism but also a source of grace for the world, the church and our community.

Such formal letters of support served as models for other monasteries as the practice expanded. The letters echo and solidify Olivera’s foundation for all reflection on associate life: the equality and distinction of vocational states mutually aiding one another to live out the charism. For the AIC the letters serve as confirmation of the Spirit’s work among them and a focus for their ongoing work of crafting an identity and creating an appropriate formation program. Most importantly they formalize the specific nature of their relationship to both the monastics and the charism and elevated it to the level of the entire order.

In between the dates of the two AIC recognition letters, the general meeting of abbots and abbesses of Cistercian communities met at Rome in 2002 and wrote a letter of support and approval to the entire lay Cistercian community. They stated that they “recognize [them] as authentic witnesses of the Cistercian vocation fully engaged in the

250 Dennis Day, email correspondence with the author, September 5, 2013. This letter is not available to the public but Day’s email paraphrases key points.
251 Ibid.
252 For example see AIC Archives “What is the Cistercian Charism?” presentation at an AIC meeting by Fr. Brendan Freemont 11/13/04
Most importantly they see associate life as a work of the Spirit and, in keeping with Cistercian tradition, ask each local community of monks and nuns to respond appropriately.253

At the International Meeting of Lay Cistercian Communities at Huerta, Spain 2008 the Lay Cistercian Communities presented a collaboratively written International Lay Cistercian Identity Document and requested that they be recognized as a “new expression of the Cistercian charism.”254 It was unanimously accepted.255

At the Fifth International Meeting of Lay Cistercian Communities (IALC) held in Dubuque, Iowa in 2011 associates furthered their request for recognition to the international level. They requested that the OSCO formally recognize the International Association of Lay Cistercian communities as the central organizing body of Cistercian associates. They were careful to uphold the desire for subsidiarity so the IALC would serve as less as a policy-making body and more as a vehicle for organizing reflection and communication among monasteries and associate groups. This recognition was granted

255 Armand Veilleux, “The Lay People Associated with Cistercian Monasteriesand their recognition by the OSCO,” ILC http://www.cistercianfamily.org/documents.asp?language=english Accessed June 30, 2013. Later this decision was seen as “official and very clear” and it was even stated that “one cannot insist strongly enough on the importance and scope of this vote.” Veilleux makes the case here that the OSCO since Vatican II has come to see the Cistercian charism less as theirs to own and administer and rather larger than “the whole of the institutions officially recognized as Cistercian” and belonging to the whole church. This view leads the OSCO at this time to feel responsibility to recognize new work of the Spirit in “causing new expressions to appear...as He has in the past.”
in part because a threshold number of monasteries had recognized their associate programs in the same fashion as New Melleray and OLM. 256

As associates’ place within the order began to be established, attention shifted toward reflection upon formation. Monastics and associates each had a great deal to contribute to this work—both on the level of desires and on the level of concerns. Neither group wanted formation to be a replica of monastic novitiate training yet most associate groups desired more than attending interesting lectures on monasticism. This work on formation programs began at the 2011 conference and will continue at the next meeting scheduled at Lourdes in 2014.

One of the most important actions taken at the conference was the establishment of a list of characteristics of lay Cistercian communities, agreed upon by all groups present but meant more as “minimal and ideal characteristics” rather than a rubric for authenticity. 257

The final type of reflection undertaken at the Dubuque 2011 conference took the form of talks from various leaders. Among the various presenters, including the former abbess of OLM, Dom Armand Veilleux presented a talk on “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Cistercian Family” in which he stresses the distinct nature of the Cistercian order is a “community of communities” and monks become members by joining a local

community. That is, they are never called to “a so-called Cistercian spirit,” rather “it is
the vocation to a local community or to the Cistercian spirit as it is embodied in the life of
a local community.”

This collection of letters and conference documents has shown: 1) that AIC’s
dialogical manner of reflecting on the meaning of associate life takes place within several
layers of communities and 2) that this form of reflection has emphasized the need to
attend to the distinctly lay and Cistercian aspects of the AIC vocation. Overall this
section IV has shown that when associates reflect upon their own life, they stress the need
to discover what commitment to a particular spiritual tradition can mean in the context of
their lay state. Associates ought “not ask the Order to tell you what you should be” but
rather continue listening for the Spirit’s guidance,” a task “that requires both an
autonomous life of the lay community and a constant communion and dialogue with the
monastic community.”

D. Conclusion

This chapter has shown the central theological discussions with bearing on the
study of associate life as well as the central changes over time within them. Studies of
NEM showed a focus on the history of religious movements, a renewed sense of charism,
and a sensitivity to the local and universal church as guides for locating movements in
relation to Vatican II. A trend was described within the study of monasticism and new
monasticism toward taking seriously the emergence of a mutually enriching dialogue
between laity and religious and across ecclesial communities. In the early days of the

258 Dom Armand Veilleux, “The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Cistercian Family”, Meeting of the
associate movement, both religious and associates were shown to reach for precisely what was being given and received by each side and how this operated. Finally, recent theological reflections by AIC members and supporters demonstrate growing appreciation for how associates are called to an ideal embodied in a local community.259

Putting together the changes over time in both the historical scholarship featured in Ch.1 and more theological types of studies examined here in Ch.2 locates this dissertation’s study of the AIC and PP within several conversations about the faithful’s living out of Vatican II in relation to religious. While parts of these conversations have been identified as pertinent and useful for the study of lay associate life—namely the focus on charism as dynamic, layers of community, models of mutual exchange, and the vocation’s groundedness in a particular local group—several limitations have been pointed out along the way when it comes to identifying the inner meaning of association and how it might relate to its ecclesial meaning. In short, most theological work with bearing on association has not taken into account associates’ ideals and the actual living out of such convictions. This concern is taken up by the remaining chapters of this dissertation. Beginning with source material in Ch.3, the project now moves through several levels of reflection on the AIC and PP. It reaches for an interpretation of their way of life that is both anchored in post-conciliar religious life and colored by a unique kind of common-life vocation to holiness within the church.

259 Both the monastic mutual exchange and the Lay Cistercian literature model a way of doing theology in dialog that has much in common with communicative theology. These approaches have implications for all four dimensions of gaining theological insight in a communicative theology context: Personal Experience of Living and Believing, Experience of Ecclesial and Other Forms of Community, Biblical Testimony, and Social Context in Bernd Jochen Hilberath, Bradford Hinze, Matthias Scharer, eds. Communicative Theology, Reflections on the Culture of Our Practice of Theology, vol 1 (LIT Verlag: Berlin, 2007).
CHAPTER 3

LAY ASSOCIATIONS ON THE GROUND I: MEMBERSHIP PRACTICES

OF THE ASSOCIATE PARTNERS OF THE PBVMS AND THE ASSOCIATES OF

IOWA CISTERCIANS

“We are simply associates,” responds one PBVM Associate Partnership member when asked about the term “member.”260 “We are not trying to be monastics…our call is to be ourselves,” comments a lay Cistercian, “We are the new members of the family.”261

The way of life of associate members of religious institutes could, on the one hand, be told as a “simple” story. Members of the faithful who find themselves in relationship or desiring relationship with an order of vowed sisters or monks simply formalize their bond and continue it. On the other hand, as argued in Ch.1 and 2, a history of contention and lack of awareness surrounds the term “membership” with regard to lay associates. Only a few recent studies have considered associates’ vocation as a unique one in need of exploration. These studies raise questions about the contours of this vocation such as, if they are members, then what are they members of and where does that leave the vowed religious? If they are not members of a corporate body, then are they any more than a collection of individuals who happen to all affiliate with a congregation in individualized ways? What exactly do they do? How different are their lives from those who are not

260 Interview B1
261 Wayne Bodkin, “Lay Cistercians: The Latest Addition to the Family,” Cistercian Studies Quarterly (vol 38 no1 2003): 85-89. In interview B5 one PP member described how associate life “is about relationships and relationships are mystery.”
associates? Is association more like a prayer group or a social club? Both Ch. 3 and 4 address the simplicity and the depth of the question of membership by drawing upon sources that highlight the perspectives of associates themselves. The broadest claim of Ch.3 and 4 is that the specific examples of the PP and AIC show them to be mature groups at the intersection of parish and religious order who are engaged in spiritual practices and deliberation on their shared way of life.

Relying on original research, Ch. 3 and 4 examine what it is like to be members of the Sisters of the of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (PBVM) Associate Partnership of Dubuque, Iowa (PP) and the Associates of Iowa Cistercians of Peosta, Iowa (AIC) during the years 1987 to 2012. Ch.3 shows how associates express the origins of their group and how they describe the characteristics of membership, whereas Ch.4 shows how these characteristics emerge from an individual and collective ordering of associates’ lives through spiritual practices grounded in the charism of their respective religious institutes. As mentioned in the Introduction to this study, Ch. 3 and 4 offer the first of three tiers of reflection on the data collected on the PP and AIC. As the first tier of reflection, they present detailed and layered descriptive accounts of the framework of each association’s way of life.

Sources for these chapters include archival material and oral history interviews. From July 2011-July 2012, 34 Presentation Partners and 30 Associates of Iowa Cistercians, along with two Presentation sisters and one sister from OLM, participated in questionnaires about the nature of their engagement with associate life.262 Of those surveyed, eleven PP members, two PP sisters, thirteen AIC members, and a sister from OLM were asked to complete one hour interviews in person at New Melleray or Mt.

262 See Appendix for a copy of questionnaire and interview questions.
Loretto, by phone, or in written form with the author. All interviewees were asked about their relationships, identity as an associate, belonging, ministry, founding stories, membership, communication and other practices, relation to the sacraments, and relation to the Holy Spirit, Jesus, Mary, the saints, the church, and to all levels of associate organization. Of these Round 1 interviewees, three were asked to participate in a Round 2 interview seeking more in-depth responses on particular issues and some associates later offered additional follow-up responses by personal correspondence.

Associates’ responses to interviews are gathered into the two headings of Ch.3: I. Origin Stories, II. Life as Members, and Ch.4’s discussion of Spiritual Practices. In each heading descriptions of the PP are followed by descriptions of the AIC. In Origin Stories, the story of each association’s founding is collected and conveyed. Secondly, the Life as Members heading includes several topics: 1) Definitions and Membership Names, 2) Who They Are Now, 3) Membership Requirements and Special Populations, 4) Membership Perceptions, 5) Recruiting and Attraction, 6) Orientation and Formation, 7) Commitment Ceremonies, 8) Ministries and Service Activities, and 9) Relation to Groups in Other Places. These topics are selected because they offer a foundational description of what PP and AIC life entails from an associate’s point of view. In keeping with this dissertation’s inquiry into ecclesial fit, the topics are presented according to an order of widening engagement of individual members with the larger church through associate commitment; the section begins by discussing members’ initial reasons for attraction to the group and ends with a discussion of their living out of a call to service and their connection to various other ecclesial groups.

263 See Appendix for a listing of dates, locations, and types of interviews as well as the geographic range from which associates come to Dubuque.
Ch.3 and 4’s examination of the PP and AIC answers a descriptive question about the nature of their way of life. In short, the framework of their way of life as presented in both chapters shows a gradual conversion from the “I” of individualism to the “we” of a group’s common life. This claim is supported in three ways, the first of which is argued here in Ch.3: 1) Associates and the religious who support them have worked together to create a form of life in which their common practices of prayer, scriptural encounter, and group discernment are thoughtfully connected. This integrated way of life attracts members to join and stay because it challenges them to pursue an ongoing conversion within the Christian life and offers the support of others to do so. 2) Secondly, as argued in Ch.4, each group crafts its way of life through discernment and decision-making about mutuality of relation to religious, the boundaries of membership, the structure of leadership, and the type and degree of shared spiritual practices to which they hold themselves accountable. 3) Cumulatively, these decisions form a distinct group “personality” that empowers individuals with a sense of belonging while retaining room for individual interpretation of a charism. As Ch.6 will show, each group’s personality shapes an ideal vision of living out of Vatican II’s call to holiness, the renewal of religious life, Christian unity, and renewal of a theology of charism and this vision has several ecclesiological dimensions.

I. Origin Stories

While the historical summaries in this dissertation’s Introduction and Ch.1 traced the origins of the entire associate movement, this section summarizes the particular
histories of the Presentation Partners and Associates of Iowa Cistercians in order to provide background for discussion of their membership characteristics and spiritual practices. The PP and AIC have been selected because of their proximity, meeting twenty-five miles from each other within the same Archdiocese of Dubuque, and their comparable age, having both originated with conversations in the 1980’s that gave way to the establishment of an associate program in the mid-1990’s. Because the two groups share a location and time period, they also share the context’s history of tension between Catholic and Protestant, rural and urban, and Irish and German residents. In addition, their founding stories show how they also share a change over time from affinity toward mutuality of relationship between associates and religious.

A. A More-than-Neighbors Kind of Company Along Nano’s Way, the Origins of the Presentation Partners of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa

The Sisters of the Presentation began serving schools and parishes in Dubuque, Iowa beginning in 1874. Both archival materials and interviews mark the beginning of the Associate Partnership’s history over one hundred years later when, in 1985, the idea of an associate program was inspired by other associate programs,264 advocated for over the course of several community meetings by Sr. Ruth Marie Hotzbauer, and finally

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264 The Fargo PBVM congregation for example had started an associate group 10-15yrs before the Dubuque association and served as a model. Written Response WRB1. Additionally, the precursors to today’s associate program were also being discussed in various ways in the wider Presentation network including at long-standing PBVM mission sites in Bolivia, Appalachia, Chicago, and New Orleans.
approved at the 1985 PBVM Chapter meeting. Later, the 1989 Chapter meeting cautiously approved the implementation of a program.\textsuperscript{265}

At this time the term “neighbors” began to be used as a way of referring to several kinds of involvement with the PBVM community including friendship, family connections, former sisters, former employees and alumni of sisters’ schools, geographic neighbors, and donors. An early idea among sisters and long-time friends was a formal structured process of education in the PBVM mission, but the planning group opted instead for a format that better acknowledged informal absorption of the PBVM way of life.\textsuperscript{266} The planning group wanted “Sarah’s circle over Jacob’s ladder” as a model of organization. As a result the group “grew up” as primarily a relational site and secondarily as a place for spiritual education.\textsuperscript{267}

At this point, the “Neighboring Process,” as it came to be known, had the purposes of “naming and ritualizing” already present bonds among sisters and others and building community through faith-sharing and the promotion of PBVM foundress Nano Nagle’s charism of service among the poor.\textsuperscript{268}

By November 1992, a task force on the Neighboring Process started a tradition of inviting people to join one by one, and occasionally an invitation would go out to friends, family, alumni, and former employees of the PBVMs to attend a day of reflection at the motherhouse and hear about associate life.\textsuperscript{269} By February 1993, Neighboring leaders

\textsuperscript{265} Archival Document, Joan Lickteig, PBVM and Barbara Ressler, PBVM Associate, Draft of History of Presentation Associate Program (Neighboring), 11/20/92.

\textsuperscript{266} Archival Document, Joan Lickteig and Barbara Ressler, \textit{Draft History}.

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{268} Interviews IRB1 and IRB2 and Joan Lickteig and Barbara Ressler, \textit{Draft History}. Early reservations among sisters included a concern for the privacy of the sisters. Sisters and associates were both called neighbors since most community members supported the associate program.

\textsuperscript{269} Archival Document, Beth Kress, PBVM, Correspondence to Membership Cluster/Committee Members, 11/11/1992. Nano Nagle (1728–1784), was the founder of the PBVM order in Ireland and well known for
had discerned that there was much value in women telling their stories to one another, women from different states in life bonding together, exploring a feminine spirituality together, and reflecting on Nano Nagle’s vision. A pamphlet from the mid-1990’s presents a presentation associate as one who possesses “a desire to strengthen gospel values and deepen prayer life...[and who has] a wish to share more intensely in ministry as expressed in the spirit and life of the Presentation community and welcome opportunities for friendship, prayer, service, hospitality and celebration.”

As the number of associates slowly but steadily swelled, certain pieces of their identity as a group started to congeal. The orientation program and leadership guidelines became standardized, and by 1998 the first fairly structured program took shape enough to call itself the “Associate Process.” The first candidates made their commitment ceremony in 2000. At this time of launching, the program associates primarily saw themselves in mutual relationship with sisters and in “commitment to spreading the gospel and fostering the charism of Nano Nagle.”

Several common practices held the young group together and became central to the sustaining of group identity over time including: monthly meetings, the intercession phone and email lines, the community directory of associates within the sister’s photo directory, the inclusion of deceased associates among the PBVM’s listing outside the

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270 Archival Document, Task Force Meeting Minutes, Membership Design Group, 2/5/93. Men were certainly joining as associates, but in much smaller numbers than women, and there remained a strong current of the theme of women’s spiritual life in the group’s reflection, prayer, and study.
272 Today the small associate groups choose their own names such as Servant Seekers, Lantern Keepers, Cities of Faith, Nano’s Nine, and the Chicago Group.
chapel, and the joining together of sisters and associates for recurring events and service. Additionally, an associate created an emblem for associates to receive at the time of their commitment.\textsuperscript{276} By the early 2000’s, associates were receiving and contributing regular columns to \textit{Community Notes}, an internal PBVM newsletter. One of the new co-directors of the associate process referred to the work of this time as “extending Nano’s work (hospitality) in creative and practical ways.”\textsuperscript{277}

From 2000 to 2013, the number of members and geographic distance between them both increased.\textsuperscript{278} Two part-time associate directors were given an office at the Dubuque motherhouse and fostered communication among large numbers of far flung associates and various levels of leadership.\textsuperscript{279} The number of associates who had made commitment began to swell again during the early 2000’s which resulted in an initiative to begin a structure of new small associate groups of 3-10 members. One sister points out that a significant shift occurred from a heavily sister-guided program in the 1980’s and 1990’s to a largely associate-driven program today.\textsuperscript{280} For example, the Associate Process was renamed the Sisters of the Presentation Associate Partnership in 2007 to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{276} Undated Emblem Description, “Presentation Associate Pin”, circa 1998. See Appendix for an image of the emblem. Diane Geesen, an associate from Fargo, created the design in 1998. She describes the cross at the center with four equal lines reaching in each geographic direction, a circle at the center with the inscription PBVM just as the sisters’ emblem has, and a border of text spelling Presentation Associates. For Geesen, the image represents the sisters’ heritage of global outreach in service and the “added support and strength to continue the ministries they have started” as associates.

\textsuperscript{277} Community Notes, 4/11/2004.

\textsuperscript{278} Written Responses WRB1 From Texas, Missouri, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa associates joined with great desire to “serve the poor and marginalized...promote justice and save the earth.”

\textsuperscript{279} Archival Document, unauthored, “Brief History of the PBVM Associate Partnership”, 7/10. Though the director position held by an associate became a paid part-time staff position in 2009 the director claims there is always more work than she can accomplish and sees a full time position needed in the future. Interview CB1.

\textsuperscript{280} Interview IRB2.}
better describe the ongoing relationship of mutuality between sisters and associates.\textsuperscript{281} A theme of the program’s ten year anniversary in 2010 was “helping [associates] carry on the mission of Jesus based on today’s needs.”\textsuperscript{282}

By 2011 the group had twenty small associate groups and a membership count equal to and then surpassing the number of sisters.\textsuperscript{283} This situation has spurred discussions among Partnership leaders concerning how best to help such a large group gather regularly and connect with international associate conferences,\textsuperscript{284} how to maintain unity of practice but allow for differences among small groups including those for less-active aging associates, and how to form sustained relationships with sisters.\textsuperscript{285}

B. Origins of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians: “Strange Birds” Find a Home

Associates of Iowa Cistercians see themselves as a spiritual movement “not planned or fabricated but of God’s design,” a “grass roots, spirit-inspired, community of and for the church.”\textsuperscript{286} The Cistercian presence in Peosta, Iowa dates to the establishment made by Irish monks in 1849.\textsuperscript{287} In 1993 Abbot Brendan Freeman invited

\textsuperscript{281} Archival Document, unauthored, “Brief History of the PBVM Associate Partnership”, 7/10.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid and Questionnaire QB12.
\textsuperscript{283} In March 2011 there were about 120 sisters and 122 associates and the “tip” to an associate majority had just occurred. Interview CB1 and Written Responses WRB1.
\textsuperscript{284} “Associate Membership” Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque Iowa, http://www.dubuquepresentations.org/membership_associate.cfm, accessed August 1, 2010. The story of the Dubuque Presentation Partners has had echoes in the founding of associate programs in Fargo, Aberdeen, San Francisco, New York, Canada, England, Ireland. Each group now has its own webpage with photo galleries, videos, prayers and reflections, accesssible through the congregations’ homepages.
\textsuperscript{285} Interview B5. In March 2013, the PP completed their first comprehensive by-laws, also referred to as their constitution, titled The Associate Partnership Handbook.
\textsuperscript{287} The order to which the New Melleray and Our Lady of the Mississippi monks and sisters belong is called the Cistercian order of the Strict Observance, OSCO, also called the Trappists. This 900 year old Roman Catholic order is known for their charism of seeking unity with Christ in community lived out through contemplative cloistered life. Traditionally the monks support themselves through manual labor. The monks at NM recently ended their farming business and now support themselves through their
a married couple with a long-standing relationship to New Melleray and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbeys to attend a meeting hosted by a Cistercian lay associate group in Conyers, Georgia. He asked the couple to consider developing a similar group at NM.  

Following the trip an initial gathering of about eight people, all with individually strong and fairly long-term ties to NM and OLM, began meeting monthly to socialize and hear a monk or sister present a topic from the Cistercian monastic tradition. “Consciously anti-structure,” leadership was unorganized and rotating. As the group’s size grew it became clear that something more than informational lectures and informal discussions was desired by both the associates and the monastics.

The monthly meetings took shape. As several interviews corroborate, a “bombshell” event for the AIC occurred when a couple brought their young children to the meetings and other members had strong concerns about this. Monastic liaisons guided members step by step through a formal discernment process used by their communities. The result was not only a decision to restrict meetings to those aged twenty-one and older but also the beginning of a “profound transformation” of the group’s group discernment practices.

casket-making business. The sisters continue to do some farming and also rely on profits from their candy making business.

288 Since the founding of the AIC OLM has founded a sister monastery in Norway where it has just begun building the kind of relationships among neighbors and supporters that could one day turn into an associate program modeled after the AIC.

289 Archival Document, “Cistercian Associate Conference Executive Summary”, 5/23/97. A continual point of laughter among founding members is the time the monastic liaisons told them, “You people are stuck in the 1960’s!” Interview A1.

290 Interviews A10, A4, A1, and A7.

291 Interview A1.
The AIC came to see Cistercian monastic tradition as its model in community living and a search for a common life became the driving force for the next few years of the AIC’s history. The transformation from information consumption to active common life happens one small change at a time. Eventually, working with a more intentional Benedictine community model produced an associate handbook that said AIC are a community in relation to the OLM and NM communities, “called to mutual care, obedience, and cooperation.” By 2001 the group was considering the best way to articulate a common purpose, the AIC’s strengths and weaknesses, and methods from the Rule of Benedict for community decision making, order, and discipline. Support came from other associate programs like the Cistercian Lay Contemplatives of Cincinnati, Ohio and a group of five U.S. Lay Cistercians who had begun meeting regularly. Inspired by monastics’ bonds with one another, contact with other lay Cistercians remains an important piece of the AIC’s life.

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292 Archival Document, “Prayer Sheet for November on Vocation and Formation”, circa 2000. Associates saw an important outcome of this initial conflict: “The Holy Spirit [was] putting into [their] hearts the desire to find common ways of living so [they] can support one another not merely verbally, but by how we act, by our fidelity to prayer and sacred reading, by knowing we are not alone in what we are doing but have a responsibility to one another and to God.”


294 Archival Document, “Future Conference,” AIC Newsletter, vol. 2 no.1 January 1996, pg. 4. A member of the Conyers Associates visited around this same time period. O’Neil, Kathleen, OSCO, “Daily Lives,” AIC Newsletter, vol. 1 no.2, October 1995. Another factor in outside influence upon the AIC life are the distribution of letters from the International Lay Cistercian liaisons and from the Abbot General of the Order which are read, studied and responded to by AIC members throughout their history as discussed in Ch.2. The earliest among these seems to be the 1995 letter from Dom Bernardo Olivera to the Conyers associates, dated 1/1/95 entitled “Challenges of Charismatic Associations.”

295 Archival Document, “Background on International Lay Cistercians: Questions for Huerta”, circa 2007 Later a founding member of the AIC would serve on the steering committee for the International Lay Associates and even help host an International Conference in Dubuque, Iowa in 2011. The international Lay Cistercians are an ad hoc group without authority over individual associations. It serves as a think tank, center of prayer and communication, and official link with the OSCO. The meetings have been in Quito, Ecuador (2000), Conyers, GA (2002), Clairvaux, France (2005), Huerta Spain (2008) and Dubuque, Iowa (2011).
In 2001, the first group of nineteen associates made formal commitment to the AIC community in a common statement and also made individual commitments to specific practices. Small pendants were presented to each member imprinted with the new AIC logo. By 2004 the AIC had established a leadership council elected by vote in charge of development, oversight, and recurring issues such monastic decorum, the need for a program for members at a distance, and for helping members discern leaving the AIC if necessary.

In 2005 the two monastic liaisons asked the AIC to write up particular responsibilities and expectations of the AIC in a more formal way just as writing a monastery’s standards can lead to clarity about their common life. By August 2007 the AIC could describe its way of life as a vocation and express in detail to new members just who they are and what they are about. Though smaller scale changes continue, the community’s foundation remains solid. The council now also steers a three year, twenty topic rotation of Cistercian values studied by both initial and ongoing formation members.

From the beginning the AIC has included Christians from other tradition, clergy, divorced and homosexual members, and members who worship in an intentional

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296 Interview A1. Members recall this first commitment ceremony as an emotional and profound time of gratitude and awe for God’s work in them as individuals and as a group.
300 Development of Guidelines, pg. 1-5.
301 This two track formation idea came about in 1999 along with a practice of senior members mentoring initial formation members. Both have been unique strengths of the AIC since then.
community rather than a traditional church. It has maintained a continuous policy of hospitality. A good number of members have changed churches, some joining and some leaving the Roman Catholic Church during their time as associates and at least two have become monastics. One member says the unstated tone of the group is discretion; members do not know all the personal details of one another’s lives, and they find this helps sustain their intimate spiritual sharing.

By 2011 the AIC was considering issues such as too many members for their meeting space and the relationship to AIC’s online offshoot community called Conversi. Members describe one another as serious about growth in prayer, committed, warm, faithful, and stable. Long standing members approaching twenty years with the AIC speak about the fruits of the Spirit and the “infusing of Cistercian values” into their families, workplaces, and homes. As compared to other Lay Cistercian groups in the U.S. and all over the world, the AIC sees itself as unique in its bond with two monasteries, its lay agency, and as a comparatively mature and formed group.

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303 Interview A7 and A10. Another founding member refers to the “profound acceptance” of one another as the group’s crowning achievement. He talks about them being a collection of “strange birds who have found a home” and sees the AIC as tethering several members to the church who would otherwise not be connected.
304 Interview A5.
305 Interview A4.
II. Life as Members

A. The PBVM Associate Partnership

1. Definitions and Membership Names

The Presentation Association Partnership (PP) defines itself as a “mutual and supportive relationship between sisters and lay women and men seeking to foster the Presentation spirit and charism.” Together the partners make their own and live out the PBVM Mission Statement and Earth Charter and model their lives after Nano Nagle, the Irish foundress of the PBVMs. Through opportunities for shared friendship, prayer, celebrations, spiritual growth, and ministry, especially to the poor, women, and children, the Associate Partners deepen their connections to one another and to those in need.

2. Who They Are Now

As of January 2011 there were 122 total PP members including 110 women and twelve men. A good number have been members for between ten and fifteen years. They come from Colorado, Missouri, Texas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois. The Partnership includes single, married, and vowed members as well as at least one clerical member. Several married couples joined the associates together. The majority self-identify as Catholic. As of January 2011, 49.2% of members were between ages 60-79, 33.6% were between 30-60yrs old. And 17.2 percent were over age 80.

306 Archival document, “Partnering in the Mission,” undated brochure
307 Correspondence from Karla Berns and Sr. Lynn Mary Wagner, email message to author, January 18, 2011.
308 This refers to vowed members of both the PBVM and religious institutes other than the PBVM congregation.
309 Interview CB1.
Many are retired. A few have children living at home. Though a few groups of partners live in rural areas, most are from urban or suburban areas in the Midwest. Most are English speaking, Caucasian, and middle class, though there are a few Latino and African American members and an occasional member with more or less wealth than the average member. The majority have a college degree; some have graduate degrees, and a few members have vocational training or a high school diploma. While no dues are expected of members, they must be financially capable of traveling to meetings and communicating by phone and/or email with other members.

3. Membership Requirements and Special Populations

In order to qualify for membership one must express a desire to grow in alignment with the Presentation charism and mission while “maintaining [his or her] own lifestyle.” The PP has said no to prospective applicants but only because of geographic distance. Currently the oldest is age 92 and the youngest age 22, and nearly half are retired from full time employment. There are Lutheran, Methodist, and Jewish members. There is even one PP who joined while in prison. The group includes 9-
10 former PBVM sisters, some divorced and widowed members, and some homosexual members. There are members with mental and physical disabilities. Associates help these members get to meetings or visit their homes to keep them connected with the group.

4. Membership Perceptions

Associate Partners tend to perceive their membership as primarily a relationship with the sisters and the charism they embody. Above all they speak about friendship with the sisters and with other associates and the sharing of spiritual life and ministry. They do not see themselves as members of the congregation but rather as helpers in carrying out its mission and caring for the well-being of the sisters. Some associates have long term bonds with the sisters and know each one by name while others have had contact with only a handful and primarily relate to their small associate group. Members see their participation in the group as supportive, particularly for a “life of prayer, service, hospitality, and holy living.”

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320 Questionnaires Q86 and Q87 and Interviews B3, B6 and CB1.
321 Questionnaire Q85. Among these are a “good number” with cancer, one with Multiple Sclerosis, and one in a mental rehab center. Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
322 Not all associates have strong friendships with both sisters and associates. Interviews B4 and B5. Interviewees repeated this point often; some thought it fitting that the degree of friendship with sisters varies among associates while others wished for more friendship between the two groups.
323 Some have more than thirty years of relationship with the sisters. Interview B5. “I have associated with the sisters for so long that I am “a common law nun.”” Q82 and “PBVM [sisters] are like family.” Q83
324 This can be a matter of geography too. For example some small associate groups have endured and new members have joined even though it has been many years since a sister was present in the group or in town. Interview B6.
325 Interview B9.
5. Recruiting and Attraction

While it is possible to initiate contact directly with the Associate Office at the Mt. Loretto motherhouse in Dubuque, which is staffed part-time by an associate and a sister, most prospective associates experience initial contact and an invitation initiated by a sister in a ministry context. Usually a sister brings up the subject of associates, shares what the group is like, and invites the person to attend a meeting of one of the small associate groups or a celebration. Most interviewees describe finding some alliance between the Presentation mission and ministry activities and their own propensities and commitments. Common alliances include work in an education or church-related profession, hospitality, work among the poor, and a special concern for women and children. A characteristic attraction is described as increased opportunity for service among the poor when associates join the sisters’ ministries and missions. Associates also speak about being attracted by the regular social contact, friendships, shared work, and prayer of associate belonging, contrasting these with the difficulties in finding these within typical parish life. Every interviewee commented on attraction to the hospitality of the sisters at the motherhouse and what a great benefit it is to partake in this hospitality regularly as “an apart space of beauty and quiet.”

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326 For more on this issue see the section on recruiting and attraction below.
327 All associates come together for meetings and celebrations several times during the year, but small groups of less than ten associates and sisters are an optional and commonly chosen way for associates to meet more frequently.
328 Interviews B5 and B6. Single interviewees especially make this claim. Even those quite active in parish life make these claims. See the section on parish life in Chapter 5 for more on this topic.
329 Interview B4. Most questionnaires commented that among the benefits is being the recipient of the sisters’ love and acceptance. Questionnaire QB4
6. Orientation and Formation

Once prospective associates ask to begin the process of orientation, they meet regularly with a few other potential members and a leader, either a sister or an experienced associate, for a varying period of time that averages about a year.\textsuperscript{330} They typically gather in homes or at the Mt. Loretto Motherhouse in Dubuque for a couple of hours as often as the group chooses.\textsuperscript{331} As of May 2012 there were five associates in orientation, with one group meeting every other Saturday at the Mt. Loretto Motherhouse.\textsuperscript{332} They sometimes also share a potluck meal or refreshments.

Following a process designed in the early nineties and written by six sisters, a leader (who is a sister or seasoned associate) guides the group through the sections of an orientation handbook titled \textit{The Associate Connection}. Topics include PBVM Heritage, Charism, Mission, Prayer, and Community. Each topical “lesson” follows a similar format including prayer within a particular environmental setting, songs, scripture, and spiritual reading.\textsuperscript{333} Since some come with a great deal of knowledge about these areas and others have little or none, the group has some adaptability to fit the makeup of the prospective members. Most associates speak of this period of orientation as valuable in

\begin{Verbatim}
\textsuperscript{330} Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012. The official guidelines say the range is six to eighteen months.
\textsuperscript{331} At least one group meets from 9am-4pm every two months. Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid. Two members of this group made commitment in June 2012. This illustrates the Presentation Associates’ practice of including newcomers at varying stages of formation, each group discerning how long an orientation will be needed, and ending time in the newcomer group once commitments are made. Experiences of an orientation group, then, run a size spectrum with some in a large group and others having a one-on-one mentoring experience. Some interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with this variance.
\textsuperscript{333} \textit{Associate Connection Handbook}, (2011).
\end{Verbatim}
that it deepened their knowledge of Nano Nagle and the PBVM’s history. But they also add comments about the limitations of learning about Nano’s spirit and PBVM mission through a book-learning method. Several contrasted this with how much they learned and were “formed” through relationship and nearness to the sisters.

7. Commitment Ceremonies

When the period of study and discernment has been completed, as judged by participants and a facilitator, those who would like to make a commitment to the Presentation Partners for a year write a letter of request to the PP. Their requests and acceptances are formalized at commitment ceremonies held at Mt. Loretto or in the home of a local associate. Though the ceremony can occur at any time during the year, depending on the preference and needs of the local group, they are often held during community days in the summer, a time for the congregation and associates to gather for renewal and chapter meetings.

Across these diverse times and places of celebration and for over a decade, the commitment ceremony has followed a fairly standard program. It includes an opening prayer in which the speaker prays that the group is assembled “to formalize [their] commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ and the church through the charism of Nano Nagle….” A time of candle lighting follows. After a reading of Luke 4: 16-21, the group prays a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit. The leader then calls the names of the new candidates who reply “yes” as each is asked whether it is her desire to associate with the PBVMs. Together the new candidates read the commitment statement:

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334 Interview B5.
335 For example see Community Notes, 2004.
Believing in my baptismal commitment to live according to the Gospel to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and desiring to do this in the Spirit, charism and mission of the Presentation Sisters, I commit myself to one year as an Associate of the Presentation Sisters of Dubuque, Iowa. May God give me the grace to fulfill this commitment.336

All candidates then sign a copy of this statement called a commitment sheet as one co-director describes: “As each associate signs...someone reads from their letters requesting commitment as to why they want to be an associate and what it means to them.”337 Then each is pinned with the Associate Partners emblem pin as a “mark of commitment to church and Nano Nagle and a sign of commitment to the sisters’ mission.”338 The pin was designed by Dianne Geisen in 1998, and it blends images of both the PBVM sisters and the associates.339 Though a few associates wear the emblem as a label pin or necklace, most do not.340 Each new associate then receives a copy of the common mission statement, a copy of the Earth Charter, and receives the leader’s blessing.341 Commitment is renewed yearly thereafter, often by simply re-signing a commitment sheet and sending it to the PP directors.342

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337 Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
339 See appendix for a copy of this image. Archival document Presentation Associate Pin undated brochure. The center cross is the same as the cross the sisters use and “touching all four arms are the words Presentation Associate...The cross of the Sisters was chosen for the center because they are the core of the Association. The sisters have extended their ministries to all four corners of the world represented by the four arms of the cross. The presentation Associates are encircling the Sisters. The lay people bonded together as Associates of their Congregation, will be added support and strength to help the Sisters continue the ministries they have started.”
340 Several interviews including B3, B4, B5, B6, B10, B8. Some even mentioned having lost the emblem.
342 Most interviewees, even those who express how much they value the temporariness of this year to year commitment, wish they could commit for a lifetime. Interview B9 and B8.
8. Ministries and Service Activities

When PP members are asked what they do as associates, they usually describe their local ministries and service, both with the sisters and individually, their mission trips to impoverished areas, and a set of special events and annual service commitments they share with the sisters. These responses remain fairly constant despite the varying level of activity among the twenty groups within the partnership.343

A good number of individual PBVM associates have long term service commitments to their local parish that pre-date associate commitment. They serve as lectors and extraordinary Eucharistic ministers. They take Eucharist to hospitals and the homebound, they serve on parish councils and committees and some even undertake the archdiocese’s three year long lay formation training.344 Among the service tasks associates undertake weekly are: reading to elementary school children, volunteering in a battered women’s shelter, working on fundraisers for shelters, aiding new immigrants, visiting prisons, and writing to political leaders. In addition to volunteer service, most employed associates see their job as part of their ministry. A DRE, a nurse in a retirement home for religious, a teacher in a Catholic school, and a member of a board of directors for a shelter all described ministerial aspects of their work. Most had at least some contact with sisters, even non-PBVM sisters, at their place of employment.

PBVM sponsored ministries offer associates other opportunities for regular service as individuals and with their small associate groups. For example a PBVM sister

343 Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.

344 Four associates completed this in June 2009. See Community Notes, 6/10/09, pg. 1. There is a claim in Interview B6 that this was inspired in a more than one case by encouragement from fellow associates and sisters and that a PBVM sister used to run the program.
runs a local food pantry and several associates volunteer hours there weekly. One small group called Nano’s Nine has a recurring commitment to filling baskets of food there at Christmas.\textsuperscript{345} In addition to gathering two hours monthly for prayer, discussion and reflection on common readings,\textsuperscript{346} this same group “sponsors a child in Guatemala, worked on the [congregation sponsored] garage sale…and made blankets for the poor….\textsuperscript{347} Also the PBVM sponsored Lantern Center, a resource center for new immigrants, attracts regular associate volunteers.\textsuperscript{348}

It is common for small associate groups to undertake special service projects together in response to a need expressed by a sister engaged in a specific ministry. One associate helped the PBVM archivist write the congregation’s first history published in 2011. A recent successful undertaking was the Sock Project initiated when two sisters noticed a need for socks for the increasing numbers of poor and homeless who had none or only one pair at a Chicago food pantry where a third sister works. They asked sisters and associates in the Chicago area to gather socks and money for socks for this pantry and other PBVM sisters and associates were asked to seek out and meet similar needs in their own cities. Within two years, the project spanned several cities in three states and included diocesan staff, Catholic school children, former students, other church groups, and even a medical supply company which donated medical compression socks. Associates participated integrally in the project by spreading the word, asking for

\textsuperscript{345} Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012  
\textsuperscript{346} Ibid. In this case recently including the Earth Charter and a book on prayer by Joyce Rupp.  
\textsuperscript{347} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{348} Interview B3. One interviewee described the attraction to time spent “dropping by” the Lantern Center. When attending during Advent she noticed new immigrants planning a Posada event for children and she said, “I was surrounded by Spanish and I was the one who felt as they usually do. They were maternal, family and faith filled…I thought the rest of us are shopping and doing crazy stuff and you’re doing this every night for how long? It is God making Himself known and I’d like to be amid it more.”
donations, setting up donation sites in their place of business or church, donating socks and money, and later by writing about it in a congregation publication.349

Sometimes, as with the Sock Project, associate undertakings turn into long term commitments and at other times they remain short term nine to twelve month projects.350 We do “simple things like baskets for women’s shelters, work at soup kitchens, clothing drives where needed and money to charity activists.”351

Either as individuals or as small associate groups, a good number of PP participate in “summer service,” which is a short term mission program sponsored by the congregation and open the public. A mix of Catholic and other Christian volunteers commit to traveling by car together to an impoverished site such as Appalachia and spending a week in common prayer, forming relationships with the people, bringing donated supplies and money, and working on small projects. For some associates summer service is an entry way into associate life; for others it has been a constant yearly commitment, and they see it as a large part of their identity as associates.352

A final type of service undertaken by associates is participation in the annual events sponsored by the PBVMs.353 The annual spring garage sale with all proceeds benefiting sisters’ missions and ministries requires weeks of work for associates and sisters. Sisters host an annual Christmas dinner at the motherhouse for men staying at the Catholic Worker hospitality house and the downtown mission shelter. Associates usually

349 Karla Berns, “The Sock Project No time for Bare Feet,” Presentation Doorways vol. 55 no1 (Spring 2012): 12-13. She writes, “this is being church in its most authentic role” (13).

350 Karla Berns, “The Sock Project,” and Karla Berns correspondence May 2012. Most groups do not meet in the summer and meet to choose nine month commitments in the early fall.

351 Questionnaire Q9.

352 Interviews B9 and B10.

353 These can be centered upon the sisters’ needs as in the yearly card-writing project conducted among elder sisters and also centered in the city’s needs as in the annual PBVM Relay for Life team benefitting the American Cancer Society.
donate money for the men’s gifts. Some associates and sisters have been regularly protesting at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia via a nonviolent protest and resistance and legislative and media work via the annual Presentation Quest volunteer program.

In describing the service activities of associates, distinction should be made among the twenty small associate groups. Although not every associate belongs to one, most do, and a fairly wide spectrum of activity levels exists among groups. Most meet monthly and some every other month. Those of elder members primarily meet for prayer, reflection on the weekly gospel, and social time. Other groups can be moderately active. This type characterizes those with nine month projects initiated in September and completed in May, taking summers off. A few groups are considered by members to be extremely active with multiple year-long projects and service commitments. The demographics and interests of one’s small group seem to exert strong influence on how associates speak about their degree of engagement with ministry and service.

Included in the category of service are all the hours associates spend sharing leadership. The tasks of leadership include ordering the small groups, caring for the

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354 Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
355 Presentation Doorways, vol.52 no.2 (Summer 2009): 7. No associates participate in the regular peace witness conducted by the sisters just outside their Motherhouse grounds. Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
356 Interviews B4 and B5 and Questionnaire QB1.
358 Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012.
359 Interview B3.
360 Correspondence from Karla Berns, Co-Director PBVM AP, email message to author, May 26, 2012. As with Nano’s Nine, it is common to rotate leadership of the prayers, the discussions and responsibility for refreshments.
large PP-level of the organization through an Associate Process Advisory Committee,\textsuperscript{361} and hosting and participating in regional and national associate meetings. Most members interviewed have either served in the PP regional and national level leadership or considered doing so considering such work to be essential to the well being, impact, and longevity of their small groups.

9. Relation to Groups in Other Places

For this reason most of the interviewed PBVM associates have had some contact with non-PBVM associates of other institutes. For some this contact happens in their neighborhoods or parishes. For others the contact is the direct result of participation in a retreat each year designed to bring together associates from a wide geographic area. In alternating years a good number of PP members attend the Presentation Gathering and the Midwest Associate Gathering. About sixty associates attend the Presentation Gathering, hosted at Mt. Loretto and organized by the program directors and a committee of sisters and associates. Several hundred attend the Midwest Associate Gathering, which varies its location and is organized by the Midwest Associate Director Group, now called CARMA Conference for Associates and Sisters of the Midwest Area. PP members, while not required to attend these retreats, are encouraged to participate. They speak about these retreats as a chance to see how other PBVM small groups as well as other non-PBVM associate groups work. They are particularly inspired by how others form members in a charism and the variety of service initiatives they undertake.\textsuperscript{362}

\textsuperscript{361} *Presentation Doorways* vol. 46 no3 (Fall 2003): 11. This title has been in place since 1998 when the Associate Task Force changed names.
\textsuperscript{362} Interview B8.
More will be said about the significance of these wider contacts among associates in later chapters. Here I note that a self-image of one’s own associate program and more commonly one’s own small associate group emerges from these contacts. Associate Partners speak about themselves as doing well and maturing as a group, modeling practices for others as “progressive,” and in most cases they speak about their small group as capable of being more active than they are, often pointing the Chicago group as a model of a very active group.363 The Presentation Partnership’s formation/orientation Process called the Associate Connection has received acclaim among associate programs and has been an influential and widely dispersed model. They see themselves, by way of contrast, as a spiritual and service oriented group rather than primarily a social group.364

Sometimes policies and group practices change as a result of these meetings. There is evidence of a common vocabulary emerging and being reinforced through these meetings as well.365 None of the interviewees spoke extensively about experiences at NACAR though a few associates attend as representatives every year and at least five PP are members. PP program directors usually participate in the annual conference and occasional NACAR sponsored associate director workshops and webinars.366 In this way and through the quarterly publication, the Associate Directors have more contact with NACAR’s members and conferences. Ideas, books, speakers, stories, language, and

363 Interview B8.
364 “I don’t need to go to lunch; I need something more spiritual.” Interview B3.
365 Though no studies have been conducted on this subject, a developing syntax can be observed when examining the NACAR periodical The Associate over time. See Ch.5 and 6 for examples of this syntax.
models are shared with Associate partners and have an influence on their reflective work though they might not always have a personal awareness of NACAR.\textsuperscript{367}

B. Life as Members: Associates of Iowa Cistercians

1. Definitions and Membership Names

Since its beginnings in the mid-nineties the AIC has defined itself as a spiritual movement, a Cistercian association of lay people and Cistercian monks and nuns with affinity to New Melleray Abbey in Peosta, Iowa and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey in La Motte, Iowa who come together for encouragement and assistance in leading lay life influenced by the Cistercian charism and values.\textsuperscript{368} Monks, nuns, and laity, while remaining in their own vocations, “form a unique body, entirely Cistercian in character in which their respective vocations are expressed in new and unexpected ways.”\textsuperscript{369} The group comes together for monthly meetings, retreats, and celebrations at Our Lady of the Mississippi or New Melleray. In between meetings members commit to common spiritual practices and study with a goal of implementing the Cistercian charism in their lives. Regarding nomenclature of membership, none of those interviewed claim to be members of the Cistercian order and some even take issue with the term “lay Cistercian” claiming “I’m a lay woman who applies aspects of Cistercian life to my own. Cistercian can be a noun or an adjective and for me it’s an adjective.”\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{367} Some PP members are dues paying ($60 annually) members of NACAR for example, but most are not. 
\textsuperscript{368} They say it is neither a monastic nor a lay association AIC Handbook Draft (10/7/95): 3. See also AIC Handbook (updated version). 
\textsuperscript{369} AIC Handbook Draft (10/7/95): 3. 
\textsuperscript{370} Interview A10 and A8.
2. Who They Are Now

While some facts are available describing the membership of AIC, the group’s commitments purposely leave little time to learn about one another’s personal circumstances.\textsuperscript{371} As of December 2011 there were over sixty members and sixteen in initial formation as of May 2012.\textsuperscript{372} It is typical to have 5-12 new members join each year.\textsuperscript{373} Most come from urban areas in a “self-selected radius” around Dubuque.\textsuperscript{374} Most are Catholic though some do not belong to a parish, and there are also members of other Christian churches. Most members are age 50-70, but there are some in their early 30’s. There are both single and married members, and of the married members some have spouses who are also Associates of Iowa Cistercians. Most couples joined the AIC together while others did so separately.\textsuperscript{375} The group is primarily Caucasian. A couple of Latino members have recently joined. No non-Christians or agnostics have asked to become members.\textsuperscript{376} Several other Christians have become Catholic, and a couple of Catholics have joined other Christian churches during their time as AIC members. The financial situation of members is also purposely not discussed, but members must be able to afford a trip to the rural monastery monthly and pay the $60 annual dues.\textsuperscript{377} Most are college educated and some have graduate degrees, including a few with doctorates and seminary or ministry training. At least two are theologians, and several work in parishes.

\textsuperscript{371} The Leadership Council learns these things through conversation with individuals or through the Benedict’s Box practice discussed in the Spiritual Practices section below. They also come out in interviews or when tolerance policies are mentioned before a discussion. Interview A6.
\textsuperscript{372} Interview A10 and Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012.
\textsuperscript{373} Interview CA2.
\textsuperscript{374} Archival Document, AIC Handbook, undated.
\textsuperscript{375} Interview A10.
\textsuperscript{376} Interview A7. Neither the ethnic makeup of the group nor the absence of non-Christian or secular members has ever been a topic of discussion among members.
\textsuperscript{377} For some this trip entails not only car and gas money but also food (they often bring their own lunches), lodging at the monastery with suggested nightly donations.
and local ministries. There are lawyers and medical professionals, one former politician, and a good number who are teachers.378

3. Membership Requirements and Special Populations

To be a member an inquirer must be over age twenty-one and a Christian. Though the number of other Christians is purposely not discussed or recorded, the leadership council is aware of Lutheran, United Church of Christ, Baptist, and Episcopalian members. There are members of men and women clerics from Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Baptist churches. There are no former nuns or monks from NM or OLM, but there is at least one current sister and one former religious sister from other institutes.379 Additionally there are homosexual and divorced members, though just as with the PP, the exact number is intentionally neither known nor recorded.380 A good number of the AIC are retired or partially retired. Most do not have children living at home.381 Some members have physical disabilities. Mobility assistance from other members and use of an elevator help them participate fully.382 One member with a terminal illness shared her dying process with the AIC over a period of many months.383

378 A Catholic Worker was a member until 2010. A former member of Congress is a current AIC.
379 Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012.
380 Interviews A6 and A10.
381 Interview A7 Early in the AIC’s history is a story about a married couple with young children who later discerned with the group that membership was not suitable because of their commitments as parents and their desire to bring children to meetings. Parents of teens have sometimes come, realized they were not able to participate fully until their children are grown, and left.
382 Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012.
383 Interview A1.
4. Membership Perceptions

The AIC hold great reverence for their membership and consistently speak about it with the utmost regard in interviews, formal documents, and correspondence. “It is profoundly important to us,” one long time member puts it.384 And a founding member simply states, “This group is crucial to me.”385 One member, whose spouse is also an AIC member, expressed it as “our highest priority and grounding because it allows a spiritual mindfulness to flow out into other areas of our life.”386 AIC members speak about membership as primarily a relationship to the Cistercian charism and values and secondarily a relationship to the other associates and specific monastics of NM and OLM. While some members have warm close relationships with the sisters and or monks of “reciprocal love,”387 others may have had limited contact with only one or two monastics.388

AIC members see their association as a shared commitment to growing in understanding and practice of the Cistercian life. For them it entails a disciplined and accountable spiritual life at the community and individual levels. Members also see the AIC as part of wider intersecting trends in Cistercian, lay, ecumenical, and ecclesial movements.389 Members refer to the AIC as a movement, a spiritual home, a school of love, spiritual friendship, a group of people with similar affinities and commitments, a

384 Interview A1.
385 Interview A10, and Interview A5 “It is a worldview that matches my chemistry and my understanding of what it is to be human in relation to God. The kind of spirituality is nourishing and grows when I maintain that connection in ways I didn’t have and longed for before the AIC.”
386 Interview A3.
387 Interview A2 “There isn’t anything I wouldn’t do for them...I know a majority of them” and “I have deep spiritual friends there.”
388 Interviews A5 and A6. More will be discussed about this relationship in Ch.5. The contact typically occurs through staying at their monasteries or through monastics’ work as liaisons or presenters for the AIC.
389 More will be said about this in Ch. 5 and 6.
deep bond, an intimate community, and a space to integrate the spiritual aspect of life with all the other aspects. And lastly, the telos of the AIC most commonly named by members is the conversion of their lives outside of the AIC within their jobs, relationships, primarily commitments of family, their worship, and ministries.

5. Recruiting and Attraction

With the exception of one member who saw a brochure for AIC in a retreat center, most AIC come to awareness about the group through word of mouth. This lack of formal advertising or recruiting is an intentional choice of the group’s leadership and has been nearly consistent throughout its history. This is in line with liaison Sr. Gail Fitzpatrick’s frequently quoted comment that vocations are more discovered than heard. Mention of the AIC is regularly made in the New Melleray and OLM newsletters and websites, but only one interviewee described first contact through these means.

Attraction to the AIC seems to follow a common broad theme but with individual variations. The majority of interviewees had some exposure to Cistercian monastic life through a retreat at OLM or NM and found attraction to the quality of the monastics’ presence during that stay. Most were then approached by an AIC member or monastic who told them about the group and invited them to come to a visitors’ meeting, held at

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390 Interviews A3, A10, A5.
391 Interview A10.
392 Interview A8.
393 Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012. A brochure about AIC membership was made to address inquiries and is offered in the NM gift shop and a few other retreat sites nearby.
394 Archival document, undated. Lay Cistercian life is often discussed among members and presenters as a vocation.
396 Interviews A6, A3.
least yearly. A few interviewees had long pre-invitation spiritual friendships with monks or nuns.\textsuperscript{397} One member even ended up at NM as an “anti-Catholic aggressive atheist,” who was “getting serious about recovery issues” and experienced conversion to the Catholic faith through relationship with the monks.\textsuperscript{398} Most Catholic interviewees expressed their attraction to AIC life as a contrast to their negative or inadequate parish experiences. These limitations included sparse opportunities for shared practices of prayer, especially quiet prayer, limited depth and fragmented topics in parish based topical study groups, and a limited sharing of faith with others.\textsuperscript{399} Having found likeminded people in the AIC, they could say to one another “I’m odd in my parish too.”

6. Orientation and Formation

After an initial invitation or inquiry and spending one Saturday as a visitor to an AIC meeting, those interested in pursuing AIC membership fill out an intent form, meet with a member of the leadership council, and request to be accepted to the initial formation group. Acceptance indicates the new member will attend monthly meetings and commit to the spiritual practices, community relationships, and study required of members. The AIC in turn agrees to accompany the new member in her three year long initial formation course of study topics, welcoming and mentoring her as she grows in understanding and relationship with the group and lay Cistercian way of life.

\textsuperscript{397} Interview A2 and A7.
\textsuperscript{398} Interview A1.
\textsuperscript{399} Interviews A5 and A3. “We have tried a lectio divina group [in the parish] but it became ‘what are you thinking and getting out of the text?’ instead of just absorbing for its own value.”
\textsuperscript{400} See the section on parish life in Ch.5 and Interview A5.
During a typical Saturday monthly meeting, the new members participate in the same schedule as the ongoing formation members. They meet in a nearby room with the initial formation facilitators for a morning conference and an afternoon discussion. The topics occasionally are the same for both groups, particularly if there is a shared special speaker, but more commonly initial and ongoing formation topics follow their own courses. Currently the three year topical rotation includes “Cistercian values” such as lectio divina, obedience, enclosure, poverty, work as prayer, simplicity, compunction, and mindfulness. Lectio divina and other study sessions have included scripture study, church fathers and mothers, Benedict’s Rule, Cistercian authors, and some contemporary spiritual life authors such as de Mello, Merton and Casey. The number of topics matches that of the initial formation course but with a different pace.

Just as more seasoned members do, those in formation examine the study topics throughout the preceding months and explore them further through lecture, meditation, and discussion at meetings. Each new member also has periodic mentoring conversations with a more seasoned member and occasionally with a council member. These offer a space for the person to share how they are making sense of the Cistercian path and topics in light of their personal circumstances. It is within this relationship that new members gradually write and periodically reflect upon their commitment statements which are shared publicly at the commitment ceremony at the end of three years.

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401 See Appendix for typical Saturday schedule. The day usually includes a gathering time, praying the hours as associates and with the monks, a morning conference by one of the liaisons, an associate or a guest speaker, a time of silent prayer and lectio, a reading or silence during lunch, an afternoon discussion aimed at integrating a particular Cistercian value into associates’ lives, quiet walks or visits, and closing intercessions, recollection and prayer. The day begins at 9am and ends at 3pm, though many make it a habit to come Friday evening and stay through Sunday morning as well.

402 Some authors come up frequently such as Br. Lawrence, St. John Cassian, Beatrice and Gertrude, Aelred of Rievaulx, and Thomas Merton.

403 Correspondence from Trisha Day, Founding Member and Leadership Council Member, to prospective mentor, undated.
Leadership council members are looking for a new member’s fit with the group through the formation years as indicated by their attendance at meetings, their demeanor, and contributions during discussions.\textsuperscript{404} As part of their initial request to enter formation, members are expected to be present at monthly meetings, maintain contact with the formation coordinators and a mentor, and are invited to attend all the retreats, celebrations, and special events alongside other members. While a good number of new members join AIC, some do not find a fit and leave before the three years end.\textsuperscript{405} One leadership council member described how in comparison to the experiences of more seasoned members, new members now come with rather focused desires and hopes and follow a carefully prescribed set of practices and expectations.\textsuperscript{406} Members themselves generally speak of the formation process in positive terms, appreciating the slowness of the pace and the chance to integrate Cistercian values in a systematic way. Some of the seasoned members who did not experience such a planned three years of study speak of the great benefit in following a cyclical course on the same topics because it provides a chance to fill in the gaps in their knowledge and challenge themselves in a few key practices over time.

7. Commitment Ceremonies

Members speak about the commitment ceremony with a combination of tremendous reverence for its profundity and at the same time an emphasis on it being

\textsuperscript{404} Interview A5.
\textsuperscript{405} There have been a variety of reasons for leaving including becoming a monastic in at least one case. Interviews Variety emphasized the self-selection and discernment of fit here and the de-emphasis on a gateway or filtering model of acceptance. Interviews A5, A7, and A10.
\textsuperscript{406} Interview A1.
only a small moment in a larger event of years-long conversion to the Cistercian way.\textsuperscript{407}

During Advent the entire AIC is invited to make a three day retreat at a retreat center. It is usually a silent retreat with conferences offered by one of the monastic liaisons on a topic related to commitment. Then, in January, the community devotes one Saturday meeting to making and renewing commitments.

A typical day’s schedule is followed until none ends. Then the AIC, liaisons, the Abbot of NM and the Abbess of OLM, as many monks and nuns as possible, and family members of the AIC all come together in the NM chapel. A member reads a passage from scripture, sometimes the passage on freedom from Galatians 5: 13-14. With the Abbot and Abbess presiding, new members read a group statement of commitment and then are each individually called forward to read their personal statement of commitment and sign it.\textsuperscript{408} The group statement states:

Baptized into the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, I freely accept His New Covenant, agreeing to live in love of God and humankind. Sensing a call to discipleship in the Cistercian contemplative path, I commit myself for a year to pray daily, to seek God’s will for my life, and to expand my service to God and others, including the AIC community. With Mary’s example to guide me – whose response to God’s call was born of a humble heart – I especially offer myself to carry Christ light and love to all in my everyday life. To this end I welcome the help of my God and my brothers and sisters in Christ. Today as I come to make this commitment, I count on the prayers of my brothers and sisters of New Melleray and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbeys, and the AIC. With their help, I pledge myself to a deepening of my Cistercian calling of

\textsuperscript{407} Interviews A1, A6, A10 and A5.

\textsuperscript{408} Agenda January 12, 2008. An example of a personal commitment statement from December 10, 2005: “What this weary world needs is love. A love that goes beyond self, that brings forgiveness and peace. The School of Love is where I grow—loving my family, the students I teach, and all those I meet inside or outside the AIC community. To foster this love, to attend its school, I will weekend at NM Abbey or OLM Abbey quarterly each year. I will begin and end each day in reading the Office, in lectio, in meditation. I will let God’s love guide my hand in writing, my mouth in speech, in what I choose to see, or read, in my actions and inaction. I will guard my heart, my mind, and be a good steward of God’s creation and my finances. I will strive to do His will, and daily accept his grace and love.”
prayer, contemplation, and work, in order that I might grow closer to what God is calling me to be.\textsuperscript{409}

The abbot and abbess then respond to the new members and bless them, and they are guided to an AIC member who gives them an AIC medal. Then, renewal of commitment occurs when the ongoing formation members recite their common commitment statement or respond “I do” as portions of it are read aloud.\textsuperscript{410} After prayers and songs, the entire group gathers for a celebration.

8. Ministries and Service Activities

Lay Cistercians follow both an active way of life and a modified kind of enclosure, a combination intrinsic to their self-description. One of the study days was devoted to considering the topic of enclosure and took several voices into account including the Rule of Benedict, readings from Cistercian fathers and mothers, a letter on enclosure given to Cistercians at the international congregational level, a presentation on enclosure’s spirituality from a member of OLM, and time to hear accounts of AIC members’ integration of enclosure into their lives.\textsuperscript{411} A description of their activities and ministries therefore has to take this situation into account, noting both the interior and exterior work they undertake. Daily activities of an AIC member include some practice of \textit{lectio divina}, liturgy of the hours, daily periods of spiritual reading, and study on the month’s topic.\textsuperscript{412}

\textsuperscript{409} AIC Ceremony of Commitment and Renewal booklet January 12, 2008
\textsuperscript{410} Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012. When the group was smaller this also involved resigning commitment sheets.
\textsuperscript{411} Archival document, “Agenda for Saturday Meeting: Enclosure”, undated.
\textsuperscript{412} Interview A10 and A4. Morning prayer can be modified considerably and still fit the expectation to participate in some form of the hours. More will be said about each of these in the Spiritual Practices section.
Some members mention a commitment to daily mass, rosary, and intercessory prayer. As a group they pray for one another daily and for the monks and nuns at OLM, NM, and in the wider Cistercian community, including a prayer for “hidden contemplatives.”

AIC members also engage in daily activities as part of their ministries, families, communities, and lay Cistercian life. These include care of their primary communities, care of elderly relatives and adult children and grandchildren, jobs, volunteer work, and ministries. Some bring Eucharist to the homebound, some are hospice or prison volunteers, some tutor children, and others are music ministers at their churches or worship communities. Some are pastors of churches or employed by parishes, some have daily work involving care of land. Members describe sending and receiving email and phone calls related to AIC several times each week. Preparation for upcoming meetings and evaluation of the group’s wellbeing composes most of this correspondence. If asked to prepare a talk for an AIC meeting, a member might spend several months studying and writing on a subject. A member may also be asked to write a report on the state of the AIC for the leadership council, or to communicate with liaisons, or to answer questions from inquirers. Members may be asked to serve as a representative of

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413 These commitments are detailed in their commitment statements.
414 Archival document, AIC Intercession Sheet, (undated). This page sets one or two AIC member names for each day of the month and also includes liaisons, abbot and abbess, and “hidden contemplatives.”
415 Interview A10. This phrase and others found among interviewees and in archival material may be considered an AIC syntax.
416 Interview A4 and A10. These interviewees said they are caring for an elder parent to an extent they would not be if they were not AIC members. Their AIC commitments and convictions have created a “conversion of heart” such that they see themselves capable of and invited to serve their elders in this way.
417 Interview A3 One interviewee mentioned that her work bringing Eucharist to others is “so very different” now that she is an AIC members. Whereas she once was focused on “doing the Catholic things,” she now is focused intensely on exchanging gifts of presence with those she encounters and seeking interior quietness to witness to the Christ in each person.
419 This is truer for those on the Leadership Council or serving as a mentor.
420 Interview A5.
the AIC at international Lay Cistercian online or conference events or at parish or other church presentations.\footnote{Interviews A4 and A10.}

AIC members count among their ministries the tasks performed during Saturday meetings by volunteers. These tasks include readings of the Benedictine Rule and other spiritual texts at meals, leading intercessions and initial formation sessions, collecting dues, leading closing reflections, and cleaning up. They also see the spiritual direction and private retreats they undertake as part of their lay Cistercian work.\footnote{See Ch.4 for more details. No statistics exist about how many members do these practices. See Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, AIC Leadership Council Member, email, May 28, 2012.}

Most attend mass or Sunday worship, and some are daily communicants, and some include these commitments in their commitment statement. Some but not all attend holy hours, spiritual direction, and confession.\footnote{Interview A7 Among the topics not discussed among members is confession, though many indicated they do partake of the sacrament in their questionnaires.} Most AIC members interviewed are also engaged in at least one small parish based faith-centered group outside of AIC. Among these are Teams of Our Lady, Bible studies, topical parish study groups, Benedict’s Toolbox series, and small faith sharing communities.\footnote{Interviews A2, A3, A5, and A10.} One member is a prayer associate of another religious institute of women and at least two members are helping to create an intentional ecumenical worship community.\footnote{Interviews A6 and A10. There may be more people who are engaged in this kind of exploration. Also see note from member A10 on archival document requesting an outside conversation about these matters among interested members, so as not to take up AIC time.} One helped found and now facilitates an online Cistercian community called \textit{Conversi}.\footnote{Interview A5.} Members speak about their participation in other small faith based groups as “complementary” though they usually see their “grounding” and primary group as the AIC.\footnote{Interview A3.}
A final note on the topic of ministries and activities and enclosure is that three interviewees mentioned noticing in themselves and in their fellow associates that gradually, as they matured in relation to understanding a Cistercian way of life, the outer trappings of their lives have become simplified. One lost a job, another accepted part-time ministry, and another was forced to accept early retirement. They see these events as the work of God in their lives making more space and time for prayer and AIC participation and less time for the level of engagement and activity with the world to which they had been accustomed.428

9. Relation to Groups in Other Places

The AIC participates in regional, national, and international meetings of lay Cistercians. These meetings are quite recent developments that members of the AIC have been instrumental in establishing. One founding member of the AIC429 serves on the international Lay Cistercian Leadership Council and shares responsibility for planning meetings, creating reports about local practices and letters to be shared with the order’s leadership, and communicating the leadership’s views to lay Cistercians across the U.S.

Other AIC council members have attended workshops as well as topical and regional meetings with other Cistercian groups at Genesee and Conyers, GA. While attending these events, their role is to facilitate communication between the AIC’s other associate groups and the wider Cistercian order’s conversations about the nature of associate life. The entire AIC participated as hosts in the recent International Meeting of Lay Cistercians held at Dubuque, IA in 2011. As a group they prepared reflective

428 Interviews A1, A7, A10.
429 Interview A4.
statements about their life and concerns. Some volunteered to help with logistics, site set up, translations, paperwork, meals, and transportation to aid attendees. As a group they later studied and responded to the documents emerging from the meeting.430

On a more local level, as mentioned previously, AIC members have spoken about the AIC or Cistercian monastic life to parishes or small faith groups, and have spoken about that role as one of “translator” from monastic life to lay life.431 Most members interviewed have some sense of the AIC in comparison to like groups, though as can be expected this sense is deepened according to the degree of exposure to wider lay Cistercian meetings. One common perception among interviewed AIC members is that their group is unusual. This is so because their numbers are so large and yet they come together in person in a regular way. It is also unique for having strong relationships to two monasteries---one of monks and one of nuns---and that most members of these monastic communities are in relationship with associates.432 Members repeatedly emphasize that their uniqueness also lies in the integral presence of non-Catholics, the strong leadership of lay Cistercians instead of a monastic “director,” and the development of a commitment to the “lay” side of Lay Cistercian life.433

C. Conclusion: From Membership to Spiritual Practices

Archival and interview sources on the PP and AIC within the Origins and Life as Members headings discussed here in Ch.3 have built a portrait of the membership

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430 Interview A5 and archival document, undated.
431 Interviews A2 and A10.
432 It is much more common among U.S. Lay Cistercian groups for one or two monastics to take on relationship responsibilities for a great number of years instead of rotating the liason position and including non-liason monastics in some events.
433 Several interviews and questionnaires including A1, A4, A10, A7.
dimension of a form of life. This form of life is shared with religious and sustained by membership rubrics and formation programs, as well as common practices of prayer, scriptural encounter, service, and discernment. This chapter has already demonstrated some indication that associate belonging serves to shape the perceptions of its members and their new outlook has implications for living out the gospel as members of a U.S. church. The integration of the practices and ideals of this way of life establish an attractive form of life and it has been shown how members readily take up the challenge of sharing a common supportive Christian life while living apart. The following chapter expands upon the framework presented here as it examines spiritual practices undergirding this way of life.
CHAPTER 4

LAY ASSOCIATIONS ON THE GROUND II: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN THE ASSOCIATE PARTNERS OF THE PBVMS AND THE ASSOCIATES OF IOWA CISTERCIANS

Parallel to Ch.3’s descriptions of the membership practices of the PP and AIC, Ch.4 highlights each group’s spiritual practices including the headings: 1 Practices, 2 Scripture/Prayer Materials, 3 Jesus/Mary/Saints, 4 Gathering Together, and 5 Group Life and Discernment. These topics emerged from questionnaires, interviews, and archival materials as the central landmarks of each association’s shared Christian life. Together they offer a framework for Ch.5-7’s second and third tier reflections on the layers of community and inner landscapes of the PP and AIC.

As Ch.3’s introduction explained, Ch.3 and 4 work together to reveal two associations with distinct but comparable ways of forming their members such that they begin to partake in a common life with other associates. The present chapter deepens discussion about the specific type and degree of spiritual practices, group discernment, and decision-making to which the groups hold themselves accountable. These practices also sustain their paths of ongoing conversion within the Christian life. In Ch.4 the PP and AIC begin to appear as groups with their own “personality,” resting on the
foundation of their membership mores but shaped by the distinctive ways they share the Christian life with one another.

Within first the PP and then the AIC, the focus of this chapter opens with an examination of associates’ individual experiences and daily practices and widens to consider group practices including influential uses of texts. Finally, the chapter presents a wide angle look at each group’s relationships to God and holy figures and how the life of the group operates in unity through discernment of the Spirit. Because the PBVM’s and AIC’s are such unique associations, the discussion follows this general narrow-to-wide topical outline, but different topics will be emphasized for each group. For example, within the subsection called “Practices,” treatment of the PBVM’s will emphasize their numerous ways of emulating Nano Nagle’s care for and among the poor in the “narrow lanes.” The treatment of the AICs will specify what they mean when they describe an overall commitment to practice “modification of life” and integrate Cistercian values into daily living.

The sources show what names associates give their regular activities, what importance they attribute to each practice, to what extent they have appropriated and adapted them, how they understand the connections among practices, and how they hold themselves accountable to a common way of life. In this way the thesis of this chapter is that an examination of each association’s spiritual practices shows the inner meanings that make up their unique charismatic identity, an identity carried jointly by individual members, the life of the association itself, and the interplay between the two.

434 See the discussion of charism and charismatic identities among new ecclesial movements and associations of the faithful in Ch.2.
I. Presentation Partners Practice Nano Nagle’s Care in the “Narrow Lanes”

A. Practices

At the simplest level the Presentation Partners’ (PP) spiritual practices entail shared encounter with Jesus in the Gospel and in the poor as modeled by the life of the order’s founder Nano Nagle. As with other associate groups, the PP members interpret their way of life in different ways but refer to some elements of a common spiritual life. They commonly describe times of coming together with other associates and sisters and service among the poor as cornerstone practices that animate all the spiritual activities undergirding PP identity. Since the Associate Connection orientation handbook organizes the parts of associate life into four categories, all four are addressed in this dissertation. While the “evangelization” category will be treated later in Ch.5, the remaining three categories--prayers, service, and hospitality--serve well as a schema for demonstrating how PP classifies its own spiritual practices. Relying on primary sources then, including interviews and periodicals by PP members, what follows describes both how PPs engage in prayer, service, and hospitality and how they perceive these activities as echoes of Nano Nagle’s compassionate charity.

1. Prayer

At the time of commitment, PP are invited to engage in three common types of prayer-- individual, intercessory, and sacramental-- and they customarily select comparable ways of doing so.435 Most associates describe a deepening of individual prayer expressed by reflecting on scripture through *lectio divina* or a parish bible study.

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435 Interview B8, B4. Interview B8 included the comment, “There’s no PBVM fence about how we pray. There are no restrictions or uniqueness from [other spiritual traditions].”
Of all their prayer practices, the responsibility to pray for others in a disciplined way seems to, “connect and encourage [them] in Nano’s spirit though separated by distance.” Along with sisters they pray daily for a common list of intercessions, including for the poor and vulnerable, for themselves and loved ones, and for the sisters. One member describes her intercessory practice as attractively challenging: “There are so many [intercessions],” she comments, “I could do it all day. I look them up in my PBVM picture directory to see who they are and then put them on my treadmill each day.” Since becoming a PP, she also notices how much more “conscious” she is of “little needs and little intercessions I can offer for them,” saying, “I can’t fix things but I like to have something to offer.” Additionally, interviews show many PP attend weekly mass and at least one other mass a week, and half stated that they attend confession at least twice yearly. A PP co-director describes how mass is “encouraged but not part of PP meetings,” yet associates are usually very active in the sacramental life of their parish.

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436 This practice is introduced in the Associate Connection orientation handbook.
437 Group prayer practices are discussed under the discussions of texts and group discernment.
439 The email prayer chain replaced a phone prayer chain custom a few years ago. Currently an email goes out to all sisters, associates, staff and friends of the order every about every other day requesting prayers for between 2-6 people. Some of these requests have been transferred from a pen and ink intercessions book located outside the Mt. Loretto chapel. Not everyone prays with this prayer chain and it is not required to do so, but most take it on as a common responsibility. See interview B10 for an example of someone who does not use a computer for any of his associate activities. Interview B7 describes giving up the practice when it switched to email in part because it was too time consuming. Interview B5 describes an associate who simply visits the motherhouse daily and hears about sisters’ and associates’ needs in personal conversations there.

440 Interview B3.
441 Interview CB1. Little is revealed about how they connect this participation to their life as associates. More will be explored about how Presentation associates see their relationship to their Catholic identity and parish belonging in Ch.4.
2. Service

Commitment as a PP usually entails seeing faith in action as one’s driving spiritual practice. PP begin changing habits of perception to notice and meet the material and spiritual needs of vulnerable peoples so as to “look where others don’t” and “keep on looking for new ways to serve the poor.” Whether they are traveling on a summer mission trip, donating socks to the sock drive, or considering global justice issues as part of the International Presentation Association’s NGO at the UN, associates describe a consistent spirit driving their service---that of connecting to Nano Nagle’s vision and bringing it alive today.

3. Hospitality

Nearly every interviewee expressed appreciation for recurring times of giving and receiving hospitality that are woven into the regularly occurring associate calendar. PP practice hospitality in their work and ministry as they make room for the stranger and “underdog.” Associates also make a dedicated practice of hospitality among sisters

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442 Interview B2 and B12. Interview B5. One teacher has come to see her “educational ministry” as “spiritual work not just a transaction” because of contact with PBVM educators which developed into her associate commitment. “How and what I teach are different,” as a result, she claims, because now she asks about “transcendent” dimensions of teaching tasks such as “what are you learning math for? How can we [teach] and impact the world and do the best for young people?”

443 Interviews B6 and B2. An associate says she “focuses on the marginalized” in her parish work.


445 Interviews B3 and B6. This is encapsulated in one member’s attitude of, “call me up and I’ll be there!” Archival Document, Community Notes, 9 July 2007. These include fall Presentation Day celebrations, summer community days, speakers, retreats, and shared events like profession anniversaries and funerals. One associate couple even celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with mass, vow renewal, and a party at Mt. Loretto. Interview B5. Several members described their fidelity in attending sister-sponsored events as akin to the dedication one shows to extended family. Archival Document, Mt. Loretto Bulletin, vol 48 no 4 Winter 2005. Indeed the social events are not uncommonly tied to associates with family ties in the PP or PBVMs as is the case for a set of four siblings who are also active associates.

446 Interview B2 and B6. These sites include shelters, food pantries, and the Presentation Lantern Center for newly arrived immigrants. It happens through advocacy of the poor at their local parish or even by lobbying in Washington, D.C.
and other associates to the extent it can be difficult to tease out just who is extending hospitality to whom. For example, associates eagerly anticipate the annual card making party at the motherhouse during which they aid elder sisters in writing out Christmas cards to their friends and family and then enjoy a large social.447 Several spoke about the experience of walking in the motherhouse front door and parlor as “amazing…completely welcomed. You are supported and cared for from the moment you walk in the door.”448 Another member recalls how hospitable sisters were even years ago when they could not “go out for pizza” because of the restrictions of their (pre-Vatican II) rule of life.449 Finally, a divorced and remarried associate with a husband who is not Catholic particularly found profound healing through the hospitality practiced by sisters and associates at Sunday mass.450

4. Texts

As an understated but shared spiritual practice, the reading of common texts serves as an effective path toward the “communion of hearts” and common culture of “activating faith” sought by members. When Presentation Partners are together at meetings or celebrations or apart engaged in their daily service work, there is an expectation they will be continually hearing and reflecting upon several types of texts and putting the messages of faith they bear into action in their own circumstances. Unlike some of the other spiritual practices that members undertake, they speak about the prayerful engagement with these shared texts as an act that can be counted upon to provide a foundation of language, images, and narratives for a common way of life.

447 Interview B6.
448 Interview B4.
449 Interview B5.
450 Interview B3.
Five kinds can be distinguished among the regularly encountered texts. They are listed as follows in order of prominence in interviews: 1 scripture, 2 written prayers, 3 PBVM “heritage” texts forming the congregation’s tradition, 4 internal PBVM publications circulated among sisters and associates and 5 sundry texts of suggested spiritual readings.

B. Written Materials

1. Scripture

PP members describe encountering scripture with “new lenses” as a result of associate membership, lenses characterized by sensitivity to Jesus bringing forward a person who is typically shunned. Their new lenses inform and are formed by their shared scriptural practices. Members explain this dynamic in terms of how being a PP has increased the number of relationships in their lives, including relation to Nano Nagle, the PBVM communities worldwide, and particular suffering persons. PP encounter scripture through daily private reading, mass, and the texts chosen for reflection by the facilitating members of small associate groups. For example, when Luke 4:16-21 was examined during a formation session on mission and ministry, the group reflected on applying Jesus’ mission today. When associates hear the teachings and acts of Jesus in the gospels, they claim to hear it with new sensitivity to characters in the story who are poor, hurting, and without hope as well as characters who are bringing healing and peace.

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451 Interview B5.
452 In particular several members refer to how much they have come to value the weekly Mt. Loretto masses for (among other reasons) the sake of the excellent reflections on scripture in the homilies provided by a priest who is also professor of theology.
2. Written Prayers

At their first orientation meetings, regular small associate group meetings, community days, and PBVM celebrations, PP always pray a written prayer aloud together. Though such prayers are sometimes taken from a contemporary author or a sister from another congregation, they more commonly come from a PBVM sister or an associate.\footnote{Associate Connection handbook pg.23 and pg. 35. For example, one session might feature “The Sower of Seeds” by Arista Constance, SC. Prayers frequently cite passages from \textit{One Pace Beyond} or Corrine Murray’s prayer “Hospitality and Presence.” Sisters and associates collaborate on an annual Lenten Prayer Booklet that includes scriptural reflections and prayers. Interviews B7, B3, B8, B4 and others.} PP find these internally written prayers helpful because they provide models of integrating the PBVM vision and the gospel into daily life give the group a shared voice. Associates also appreciate that they “always sing” at least one hymn together.\footnote{Associate Connection pg. 7. Often they sing mainstream parish music as in the songs, “Here I Am Lord,” “As a Fire is Meant for Burning,” and “All are Welcome.”\footnote{Occasionally they sing hymns special to the sisters as well, such as “Sing a New Church.” “Presentation Associates Reflect on Chapter.” \textit{Mt. Loretto Bulletin} vol 46 no1 Spring 2003 pg. 6 One associate did remember the details of a song sung during the first chapter meeting associates that were permitted to attend. She felt all the issues discussed could be answered by the song’s refrain, “Because we love God.”} 455

3. Heritage Texts

In encountering short passages from the third type of texts, called “heritage” readings, PP emulate the PBVM tradition, and this has come to be a PBVM community-wide spiritual practice.\footnote{Interview B5. At first critiqued as “schoolish,” the meditative reading of the handbook and other texts has become a spiritual practice of shared by the whole PBVM community as they accompany new members.} Works by Nano Nagle or Mother Hennessey (the local foundress) and other early PBVM figures stimulate a continual appetite for such reading. One member says, “[Nano’s] spirit helps me realize Jesus is present and really alive in every individual when I take communion to the homebound.” Another associate finds himself reading about Nano and asking, “how have I or could I become more like her?”
Another member recalls, “I learned so much about Nano and studied the history of the sisters. The story touched my heart deeply. As an associate I feel like an artist picking up a paintbrush and creating something beautiful for the poor.” The Mission statement, Earth Charter, and associates’ by-laws are also read one small sentence at a time, so members can discuss and share commitments to conform their actions to them.

One member describes keeping a copy of the mission in a frame on her desk while group reflection on small passages from the Earth Charter and associate by-laws appear on PP meeting agendas. Finally, new members study a collection of passages in the orientation handbook including: historical PBVM texts, common hymns, written prayers from a variety of sources, scripture passages, the hymns “Song of the Body of Christ” and “Companions on the Journey,” passages from One Pace Beyond, Fire on the Earth, and contemporary congregational documents. From the wider Catholic tradition they also study Lumen Gentium 39-42 on holiness.

4. Internal PBVM Communications

PP’s have a practice of reading internal PBVM publications such as the quarterly Mt. Loretto Bulletin and Doorways, and the small associate-based newsletter called

457 Archival document, Community Notes, August 2007 pg.7
458 “Counting our Blessings,” Community Notes, July 2008 pg.9. Research for this dissertation did not unearth other forms of imagining relation to the poor. Most PP documents used the language “for the poor” rather than “among” or “with” the poor.
459 Interviews B8 and B9. The Earth Charter, a document the sisters crafted as a kind of promise about environmental awareness and action, also has pride of place in individual and group reflection practices.
460 Interview B9 and B4 says when these two documents come up at monthly meetings and appear in literature from the PBVM’s she is “prompted to appropriate them.”
461 The sisters also put reflection on parts of the mission, Earth Charter, and their by-laws on meeting agendas.
462 Associate Connection pages 12, 13. These include: “Witness to Love,” and several of the sisters’ mission documents on charism, spirituality, mission, creed, and commitment.
463 Associate Connection page 37-40. John Paul II’s statements on the church and on poverty are also studied.
Community Notes. In interviews members relayed how regularly receiving and reading these publications strengthens their living out of the PBVM mission in their own families and workplaces. Besides reading them alongside the sisters, associates also contribute articles, poems, and photos to these publications. Doorways has come to include at least a two page spread by and about associates with photos and, Community Notes has short one page updates about associate activities as well as short reflections by associates themselves.464

5. Suggested Spiritual Readings

Associates and sisters circulate books and articles informally among themselves as a routine and integral part of the group’s life.465 As the group studies justice issues or community, texts seem to “cross-pollinate” among the group.466 In addition, numerous speakers and workshop presenters are brought to Mt. Loretto by the sisters. Associates attend and join in conversation with the sisters about them before and after. This participation in shared study deepens associates’ ability to join in a community-wide conversation on particular issues and, in turn, associates’ viewpoints and questions become part of the PBVM conversation about love in action.

464 Doorways vol 154 no3 fall 2011 pages 18 and 19 and Doorways vol 154 no 2 summer 2011, pg.14. Recent topics addressed in this publication include: an associate group changing its name from Handmaids to Presentation Partners, the commitment ceremony welcoming several young associates, and a report about the Midwest Associates Gathering held in April 2011.

465 Book titles appear regularly in Community Notes, for example. Another means of sharing titles are occasional topical study groups made up of sisters and associates. They also have a regular practice of sharing movies and discussing them. For example, “Angela’s Ashes” was suggested as a film that “helped us understand the poverty that Nano experienced” and “Entertaining Angels” offered a chance to “look for Nano qualities in Dorothy Day’s life.” Community Notes 8 April 2006.

466 Interview B5. One associate studying community life with sisters went on to study the work of organizational development and community building expert Peter Block at their suggestion. Works on social justice, poverty, mission, education, prayer, retirement, and aging have been part of this type of study including those by sisters Joyce Rupp, Monika Hellwig, and Joan Chittister.
C. Holy Figures

When it comes to the subject of holy figures, true to their ethos of an active faith as opposed to a simply “personalized one,” PP’s reflections gravitate toward Nano Nagle’s narratives and images and only occasionally directly touch upon those of Jesus and Mary. These figures serve as model of caring for vulnerable peoples, especially women and children, and inspire PP to do likewise.

1. Nano Nagle

The PP give heavy weight to their self image as “children of Nano” who repeatedly return to her as model and inspiration. As a spiritual practice, relating to Nano involves several distinct activities. Textual encounter, as mentioned in Ch.3, provides a beginning. Additionally, images of her and her works of mercy make their way into small associate meetings in the form of poetry, prayer, or even art by devotees. For those living near Mt. Loretto, her image also surrounds members from the time they enter the house. Of the pervasive and influential spiritual practice of connecting with Nano Nagle, one member relates, “Nano laid down her life as Christ did and became Christ’s handmaid like Mary. I think of Nano and pray to be like her in doing the will of God,” and he adds, “She is a model, someone to inspire me when the mission grows difficult.” Another says, “For me her role is similar to that of some of the saints” in that her actions provide an example of living according to God’s love and will. Some members are taken with her sacrificing her wealthy birth to single-mindedly pursue love of the poor. They say “what Nano endured…blows my mind. I’m a small, very small

\[\text{\textsuperscript{467} Interview B6.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{468} Interview B1.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{469} Interview B2.}\]
part in that vision.” Other members see the connection simply. “She just wooed me,” a long term member declares.470

2. Jesus

Members of the PP describe coming closer to Jesus and knowing him better through associate life.471 Relationship with Jesus does not immediately appear in associates’ self-descriptions, but it does show up indirectly when they talk about associate life inspiring them.472 Common images of Jesus among interviewed members include Jesus as comforter, healer, and lover of the poor. Members also say, “Nano is a beautiful replica of Jesus Christ,”473 and more than one member has seen the sisters “live like Jesus” and have been compelled to follow their example.474

3. Mary

For PP, relationship to Mary seems to fall on the boundary between a generally accepted stance and a spiritual practice. It is quite rare for an associate meeting to include specific Marian devotion or prayers on the agenda, though that sometimes happens.475 Most are even unaware of the story of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary for which the order is named. A large portrait of this event hangs at the top of the central staircase of the motherhouse, but the narrative usually does not appear in associate reflections or texts. Yearly members are invited to prepare for the November

470 Interview B5.
471 Interview B9 and QB10.
472 Orientation activities and texts do refer to Jesus comparatively often but the focus here remains on what associates say about it as part of their way of life.
473 Interview B1.
474 Questionnaire QB11 and interview B10.
475 Interview B6.
Presentation Day celebration by doing a novena but, just like praying a rosary with sisters when visiting the motherhouse, this is more of a sharing in sisters’ practice than an associate practice. That said, however, members neither ignore the figure of Mary nor see her as separate from their life and work as associates. In fact, some would even describe themselves individually as Marian. One associate refers to her as “our spiritual mother” and finds inspiration in Mary as “handmaid.” Others see Nano Nagle as a Mary-devotee whose care for women and children stems from this devotion.

D. Gathering Together

Ch.3 sketched a basic outline of what PP do when they come together and this section explores the considerable social and spiritual benefits associates attribute to these shared times. For the majority of associates monthly or bimonthly two hour small group meetings in members’ homes most shape their practice of gathering together. Rotating hosting responsibilities, PP usually sit together in a living room around a candle, statue, or piece of art. The Chicago small group takes turns preparing food, leading prayers, facilitating discussions, and reading aloud from scripture, Nano Nagle’s life, or a PBVM document. PPs are familiar with many forms but most use a period of silence following a reading followed by half an hour of individual reflections on integrating it into daily life. Someone volunteers to lead a hymn and intercessory prayers at the meeting’s end before sharing a meal or coffee. Presentation associates speak about these meetings, and especially the more intimate orientation version, as especially spiritually rich time

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476 Interview B1.
477 Interview B3.
478 Correspondence, email from Chicago Area Associates Leader to Dubuque PBVMs, April 2, 2008. Sometimes the faith sharing takes the form of “share something meaningful to you like a book, workshop, experience or prayer.”
479 Interview B8, B9, B10.
because of the intimacy of the group (typically 1-4 members and a facilitator) and the concentrated encounter with PBVM heritage. Two members describe disappointment when their orientation group ended after the commitment ceremony and want to find a comparable small associate group.  

Additionally, simple access to various spaces and times in the motherhouse enriches the practice of gathering together. In addition to Mt. Loretto’s beauty, quiet, and hospitality, several sites within the sisters’ home have become familiar places PP visit often and have standing invitations to share. PP call Mt. Loretto a second home, a place of retreat, and a grounding place. These sentiments can be heard among those who attend daily and weekly mass, do work in the archives and library, join sisters for meals or spiritual direction, and even among those who only visit a few times a year. Those who live at a distance speak about returning every chance they have.

Presentation associates model their patterns of gathering together on those of the sisters. They have their business meeting at a parallel time to the PBVM business meeting and have attended portions of summer chapter since 2003. Members express great respect and appreciation for this practice, with one reflecting, “participation in chapter will help illuminate my experience and sustain me as I follow the path guided by Nano’s lantern.” Another PP notes, “I recognize the spirit of God in the prayers shared,

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480 Interviews B3 and B4.
481 Interviews B6 and B3.
482 Interview B5.
483 Interview B6.
484 Interviews B9 and B10.
485 Interview B6 and CB1. They stay for general and topical discussions though they do not vote and they leave when matters particular to the sisters arise. At this point they leave to a nearby meeting room and hold a business meeting for associates led by the co-directors.
the challenges presented, the directions for implementation, and the laughter. I will cherish and be challenged by those days of sharing and planning.\textsuperscript{486}

An annual retreat day for associates on both the PBVM and inter-community levels also offers a way of gaining perspective on the spiritual life of their group. While not every association has experienced these retreats, all are encouraged to do so, and a number have made it a yearly commitment. Attendees speak about the lectures, reflective exercises, and socializing time as both affirming of the work their Dubuque groups have accomplished integrating PBVM charism and also challenging of their creativity in answering the call of the poor.\textsuperscript{487} Finally, the retreats serve to strengthen their identity as laity in collaboration with sisters who are responding to a movement of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{488}

Lastly, Presentation Associates’ funeral practices stand out among the practices of gathering together as a community. A rarity among associate programs, the deceased Presentation Associates are included among the necrology of PBVM sisters posted outside the motherhouse chapel. They are also included in prayers for the deceased at masses and posted in newsletters.\textsuperscript{489} This practice deeply moves associates and deepens their sense of unity as a PBVM community. Furthermore, some associates make a priority of gathering together with sisters at the death, wakes, and funerals of sisters, of which there are some every month given the aging population of the congregation. A

\textsuperscript{486} Mt. Loretto Bulletin vol 46 no 1 Spring 2003 pg.6
\textsuperscript{487} Interview B8.
\textsuperscript{488} Interviews B6, B5, B4.
\textsuperscript{489} Interview CB1.
couples of members can say they “never miss a wake,” and some who live at a distance make a point of traveling to town for any sister’s funeral.\footnote{Interview B5, B6 and B8.}

E. Discernment in Group Life

Discernment in group life can be counted as last among the Presentation associates’ spiritual practices though it functions like pervasive glue binding the group’s identity and activities together. The category encompasses questions of leadership—that is leadership works in the group—and questions about the styles of discernment and decision-making members learn and enact. Addressing these concerns, what follows is an account of the Presentation Associates’ leadership structure and practices including patterns of contact with the sister’s leadership structure as well as a few examples of decisions the group has made. Just as the PBVM sisters take the leading and decision making work of their community seriously, so too the AP engage this dimension of their life together with the care and commitment of a spiritual practice.

As the origins section of this chapter showed, the group life of Presentation Partners has evolved from its bumpy beginnings to its current effective structure. The group’s leadership consists of an advisory board made up of sisters and associates, a sister who serves as primary liaison, two part-time associate program directors (currently an associate and a sister), and the representative leaders of several small groups. The directors function as communicators on many levels—among the national and regional conferences of associates, among sisters in leadership at various levels, and among associates facilitating small groups and beginning orientation. They write articles in Doorways and Community Notes and maintain a website and database of members. They
also help members find ministries, ministerial training, and suitable small associate groups to join.

Two aspects of this leadership structure seem to touch members spiritually. One is simply having a paid co-director on the staff of the motherhouse. Since most programs do not have this, Presentation Associates are struck by the sisters’ message of support in doing so. They also express gratitude at the chance to discern who would best serve as directors. PP say one key way to see the Spirit’s internal growth over time of group is to look to developments in the PP’s leaders and structure.491

Though the advisory board and directors model of leadership does not lend itself to a pure consensus model of decision making, the group maintains a strong practice of group discernment and input. Small group leaders continually receive requests for the associate office to consider various issues, provide feedback after group discussion, and let the central office know what members are doing among the poor. The associate portion of chapter meetings and biannual PBVM associate retreats also provide a space for listening to the Spirit as a group. Members tend to reflect upon Nano Nagle’s influence on them as individuals before referring to how the life of the group is going. However, when they do speak about it they emphasize the value placed on collaboration with the sisters all along the way—true partnership—and the sister’s skillfulness as experienced models of community living.492

The group’s life has already included a few challenging decisions that put this discernment practice to work. After a period of reflection among small group leaders and

491 Interview B5.
492 Interview B5, B6, B4.
directors, for example, a few members had to be asked to leave because they were simply not participating in even minimal associate activities. In another situation a few mission sites in which sisters had been working and launching associate programs suddenly found themselves with no sisters living nearby. Members had to decide whether to end their commitments as associates or take up leadership for the group themselves. They chose the latter, with visits and support from directors, and helped their small group survive and grow.\textsuperscript{493} A third example involves the elder members of the PP. Members noticed some among them were gradually dropping out of participation, showing up for meeting and events less and less. After some group discernment heavily influenced by the PBVM sisters’ own work among their elder sisters, the PP decided to initiate a category of associate membership called “prayerful service to community” just as it is called among the older sisters. In this category a member commits to pray for the common intercessions, but can no longer be active in its ministries and enrichment activities.\textsuperscript{494}

As these illustrations all show, most members do not carry a daily responsibility for caring for the well-being of the group at large beyond prayerful support. However, all members do engage in a continual group discernment, a listening for new ways their community can be unified and meet the needs of all.

II. Associates of Iowa Cistercians Practice “Modification of Life”
A. Practices

In contrast to other U.S. Lay Cistercian groups who have a reputation for heavily prescribed largely Catholic practices, Associates of Iowa Cistercians further their overall

\textsuperscript{493} Interview B6, B9, B10.  
\textsuperscript{494} Interview B6.
aim of making the Cistercian way of life their own by means of a shared collection of carefully prescribed and yet individually appropriated practices. Most interviewees insisted that commitment to this shared collection of practices defines AIC identity in a fundamental way. These disciplines are explored below, especially highlighting how members describe and view them.

1. Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings are so central to AIC life that this discussion will be longer than discussion of other spiritual practices. Members gather together the first Saturday of every month at NM or OLM from 9am to 3pm. They follow a schedule of quiet prayer, lectio divina, liturgy of the hours, meals, conferences, discussions, and intercessory prayer. The tightly scheduled Saturday meetings have many layers of significance but, overall, members speak about enjoying being together in the human community that is also a school of love.

Interviewees state interpreters of AIC life cannot underestimate the value they place on simply speaking, listening, and praying together, seeing one another’s smiles and tears, hearing one another’s laughter, embracing, shaking hands, singing, eating,

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495 On one end of the spectrum is the group Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Lay Cistercians of Conyers, Georgia, the first Lay Cistercian group in the U. S. In interviews they came up repeatedly by way of negative contrast with AIC. They are known for a heavily prescribed individual and group schedule including rosaries, mass, “witnessing,” confession times, and a partial habit. On the other end of the spectrum are groups without geographic proximity to a monastery who meet periodically for prayer or book discussion but place little or no expectation upon members for prayer and work in between meetings. Interview A4.

496 The AIC use the monastic term “conference” to indicate a prepared talk. In this case it is given by a religious or an AIC member and typically lasts over an hour. Members are expected to engage in prayerful silent listening during this time.

497 See Appendix for a sample Saturday schedule. A manual labor “work” day or special speaker occasionally alters the schedule.

498 Interview A3. This is evidenced in several interviewees’ comments that members know as little personal information about one another as monks do and value that situation. She says, “it might be the most monastic thing about us!” Interview A7.
walking, resting together, asking questions, and sharing thoughts. The dearly miss it when they cannot attend. At NM, the guest quarters, porter’s office, bookstore, meditation chapel, guest chapel, the “pillar” small meeting room, guest dining room, community room, AIC library, main chapel, and restrooms all make up two floors of visitor space at the front of the monastery. During meetings AIC members make use of all of these. Visitors also often walk the outdoor grounds including an outdoor Stations of the Cross, a main rural road, and the property of the order’s casket making business. Visitors can also walk an adjacent cemetery and rural parish’s grounds, a parish which has historically been served by a priest from NM.

In keeping with Cistercian community tradition, the AIC seem to appreciate the practicing of prayer and work alongside one another just as much as the chances to talk about it. Members recall the times when a monk or nun gives the morning reflection with appreciation for the personalized insights into monastic life that they offer. They also speak about the helpfulness of hearing how fellow AIC members are making sense of particular readings as well as how they are interpreting the Cistercian way, applying it, and the real struggles encountered in family, work, and church life when they do so. AICs mention how valuable it has been to practice attentive listening and a way of

499 See Appendix for a sample Saturday schedule. A manual labor “work” day or special speaker occasionally alters the schedule. The AIC use the monastic term “conference” to indicate a prepared talk. In this case it is given by a religious or an AIC member and typically lasts over an hour. Members are expected to engage in prayerful silent listening during this time. Members describe their appreciation for all the parts that make up a typical Saturday meeting, finding solace and an exemplar in the scheduled times of gathering together and visiting, quiet prayer, lectio divina, liturgy of the hours, meals, conferences, discussions, and intercessory prayer.

500 Interview A5.

501 This is evidenced in several interviewees’ comments that members know as little personal information about one another as monks do and value that situation. She says, “It might be the most monastic thing about us!” Interview A7.

502 Interview A10. One member articulates the subtlety of the skills required by this practice in saying they are now able to share freely and deeply but with discretion.
speaking only when moved by the Spirit, a style common to the OLM and NM community discussion rubrics. One AIC member calls this discussion community-fostering like “stones jumbled together smoothing one another” just as monks name it.\textsuperscript{503}

Most of the community life practices that sustain the association are found woven within the monthly meeting schedule mentioned above. These practices are quietly guided by the leadership council, and all members participate with input, volunteer tasks, or serving as leaders of small groups or on the council. While they are intentionally crafted to be non-intrusive into the main activities of the day, they contribute to the smooth functioning of the group’s life together in all its aspects. In brief, the three key practices are the rotating of leadership, ongoing group self-evaluations, and the cultivation of right demeanor. At the back of the community room where most activity takes place is a table covered in clipboards listing tasks for upcoming meeting. During the course of the Saturday meeting, each member is expected to look through the tasks and sign up to volunteer for those he or she is able and willing to do. This practice of rotation prevents dependency upon a few key leaders, levels the opportunity for service to the organization to include long standing members as well as newcomers, and helps members take ownership of the meetings as well as come to know one another’s gifts. Several interviewees mentioned how much they value this rotating responsibility and how they take the chance to serve one another in these ways quite seriously—quoting from the Rule of Benedict about serving one’s community promptly and with alacrity.\textsuperscript{504}

The second type of group practice, evaluation, follows similar principles of inclusivity and shared responsibility. The AIC leadership council solicits members’

\textsuperscript{503} Interview A7.\textsuperscript{504} Interview A1. Questionnaire QA1. Such sentiments can also be found in the 2010 AIC Constitution under Community Life.
perspectives on how the group is doing and what they should address next. A Benedict’s box inside the community room collects anonymous comments offered to the council during each meeting and works in keeping with the Benedictine Rule’s admonition “against murmuring.” Occasionally, during the fifteen minute community meeting after the noon meal, there is a House Meeting for the whole AIC to discuss or decide on particular topics. Once a year, usually during a fall meeting, the council asks members to take time to complete a talent and skills inventory. Members describe this practice of bringing about a year-long awareness that the fall inventory will come around, and this shapes their reflection about their place in the group as well as what they might like to contribute.

The two monastic liaisons and the rotating monastic conference and retreat facilitators are not given the title “director” or “teacher.” They have a strong guiding influence, but they are not the prime leadership figures or decision makers during Saturday meetings. Besides the accompanying model, monastics and the AIC have also adopted a full community to full community approach to the relationship among AIC, NM, and OLM during Saturday meetings.

AIC members aim for a common demeanor of mindfully relating to one another, to the monastics, and to the space of the monastery. This ideal can be gleaned from the

505 Interview A1.
506 Interview A6. These have included such projects as special repair projects for OLM, offering musical skills during retreat masses or commitment ceremonies, taking photos of the AIC, and taking on responsibility for an upcoming “conference” on a particular topic.
507 Interviews A1, A7, A10, A4. They are discussing the momentous decision mentioned in the Origins section about the exclusion of children in the AIC.
508 Interview A5. The Saturday ambiance, then, is marked by three whole communities gradually getting to know one another and share in the AIC’s life. Unlike most other Lay Cistercian groups, the AIC members have the chance to pray alongside the whole NM community during several offices at each Saturday meeting. Rotating speakers and frequent visitors also make it likely that each AIC member will meet more than one or two monastics from each monastery.
literature AIC produces about itself but also by their lived experiences. For example when a Saturday meeting is devoted to the topic of stability, AIC members reflect about this value in relation to their Saturday sessions as primarily a responsibility to show up, participate, and help form a “schola caritatis.” Reverence, too, shapes the interchanges and communication of meetings. Members are adamant that they are not all alike and that they even strongly disagree about church and spiritual matters, and yet hold great esteem for the care taken to maintain a reverent practice of conversation that probes the difficulties of integrating Cistercian life together. One member describes the group’s dawning realization that “[they] are bound together” despite differences as their greatest asset.

AIC members speak about the focus, challenge, and support these Saturdays provide. With common demeanor, a shared habit of ongoing self-examination, and new faces rotating the leadership duties regularly, the monthly meetings incarnate and model the ideal community life to which they aspire. Though the Saturdays together are clearly fundamental to the life of the group and to passing on the Cistercian way, members themselves admit most of the heavy lifting of their prayer and work happens in between monthly meetings.

2. Daily Life

AIC members practice interpreting the Cistercian way, applying it within real struggles encountered in family, work, and church life. The practice involves dedication

509 Interviews A10 and A7. Also interview A5 in which she describes in great detail how surprising the immediate sense of “fit” was upon attending her first meeting. Her usual reticence among new people was not present and she found herself at ease sharing personal spiritual experiences.

510 For more on conflicts see the section below on Group Discernment. On disagreements see Ch.5 and 6.

511 Interview A10.
to a disciplined but also flexible rule of life. Just like the monks of NM and nuns of OLM, the day of an AIC member contains certain firm elements: *lectio divina*, the divine office, quiet prayer, spiritual reading and study surrounding Cistercian teachings and values, intercessory prayer, and labor of some kind. As evidenced by commitment statements and comments during interviews, members may commit to any office or number of offices they choose. They may undertake any form of quiet prayer they desire, they may study the month’s topic in a manner of their choosing and their intercessory prayers (especially for one another), and their labor can take a great number of forms. Most members add other devotional practices to this list.

One married couple had adapted the office of Morning Prayer to the extent that “it would be unrecognizable” to others and yet saw this adaptation as precisely the way they had been able to be faithful to the commitment. An Episcopalian member uses the Book of Common Prayer for her morning office as a way of connecting to her own and Cistercian tradition at the same time. One man sees the care of his rural property and volunteer labor on the grounds of the OLM Abbey as his primary “labor,” whereas a member of the AIC leadership council names as her labor the guidance of initial formation members, her facilitation of retreats for the AIC, her talks on monasticism to parishes, and her care of her elderly relatives. Great variation can be found in the texts

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512 See Ch.5 for a discussion of how AIC members readily acknowledge that the religious’ lives include numerous other elements than their own. They also note that monastics’ manner of prayer and manual labor is likely quite different from their own. Here I will also treat the AIC’s use of the phrase “Cistercian values.”

513 Interview A10. Interview A2. One member with a propensity toward contemplative meditation and some experience in Zen and other meditation techniques includes more of this practice than other practices in his day. He also incorporates contemplation into the visual art he creates.

514 Interview A7.

515 Interviews A1 and A10.
used for praying the divine office as well, with some closely following the Cistercian *ordo* and others relying on online, inclusive language or devotional periodical forms, while variation can also exist within each person’s practice. One recently retired member finds he can spend longer periods of time on the morning office and *lectio* than he used to a couple of years ago.\(^\text{516}\) While members freely adapt the elements to their circumstances and struggle and sometimes fail in their commitments to pray and work according to this list of elements, they share in common the ongoing promise to try to incorporate these practices into each day.

The interpretive work of daily life for the AIC, called modification of life for short, seems to join together of each member’s daily living and all the messy undertakings, challenges, activities, and relationships that entails with a set of Cistercian values aiming at “conversion of manner of life” to Christ.\(^\text{517}\) The values studied monthly, discussed in the previous chapter, affect more than member’s thoughts; they shape the members’ daily living just as their unique daily circumstances shape the interpretation of the principles.\(^\text{518}\) Members give examples of trying to integrate Cistercian values into their marriages, family, employment, ministries, and service within the AIC. Each month they take up the challenge of changing their behaviors, understanding, attitudes, and habits surrounding one topic. They try things out, they fail and succeed, they pray for grace, they find support and resistance among loved ones and worship community, they share the struggle with others, and they collect examples of all these inner and outer acts to share at the next meeting.

\(^\text{516}\) Interview A1.
\(^\text{517}\) Some of these values include: enclosure, poverty, solitude, simplicity, humility, obedience, and compunction.
\(^\text{518}\) See Ch.5 for a discussion of appropriation of principles—both its potential and limitations.
Sometimes different associates approach modification of life to different degrees. One member, who lives out a quiet unassuming life, spending time with her grandchildren and bringing Eucharist to the homebound, finds life-long acceptance of a familial distaste for her quiet ways in considering the value of hidden-ness. A married couple shared that they consider their morning car commute to work together to be a form of enclosure, a kind of hidden-ness in which they pray lauds.

There is also an issue of challenge. Members desire to undertake difficult conversions of heart and habit and in fact seem to thrive on this component of being an AIC member. They realize, however, that taking on too extreme a challenge will end in falling short and discouragement. One couple wrestled with this issue within their family relationships and, though they felt stretched, they accepted the challenge to take on care of aging parents who lived hundreds of miles away, something “[they] wouldn’t be doing if it weren’t for the AIC” helping them break the task into manageable pieces.

One member modified her life in ministry according to the principle of simplicity and poverty of spirit. As a new convert to Catholicism, she at first “wanted to do Catholic things” and volunteered for a number of ministries including Eucharistic Ministry. During her time as an AIC, she gradually saw her own ambitions and long standing attachments to the “driven life” and cut down her service commitments. She now simply takes Eucharist to the hospitals and relishes the slowness of waiting and watching for the Christ in each person, a way of ministering that is “so different.” A member observes that several long-term members including her have lost jobs, taken on

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519 Interview A3.
520 Archival document, conference given by Father Neil. Need title and date.
521 Interview A4 and A10.
522 Interview A3.
part time work, or pre-maturely retired within the last few years, and she suspects these are examples of the members cooperating with the Spirit’s design that they should have more time for prayer and work in the Cistercian sense.523

3. Bridge Disciplines and Other Liminal Practices

In addition to the Saturday meetings and daily practices, several undertakings and ways of being that might be termed “bridge” or “liminal” mark AIC life because they point to in-betweenness and the crossing of boundaries between monthly meeting and the site of daily practice as well as monasticism and the life of a lay Christian. These in-between acts fall into four main types: personal spiritual disciplines, internal service to the AIC that happens between meetings, ways of being (beyond the monastic demeanor described in the meetings discussion), and contact with the larger church.

When questioned about their personal spiritual disciplines, a number of AIC members described participation in annual retreats, spiritual direction, the sacramental life of their church, and other devotions.524 While it has been made clear that not all the monastics serve as spiritual directors, a few do, and some AIC members make regular spiritual direction appointments part of their monthly trip.525 Among the Catholic members, some are daily communicants and receive the sacrament of Reconciliation as often as monthly, whereas others describe attending mass “sometimes” or even

523 Interview A7.
524 Interviewees most commonly referenced attending Eucharistic Adoration and, for the Episcopalians, Evening Prayer.
525 Interviews A1 and A7. See archival document 2004 Council Meeting Minutes for a reference to the need to make an announcement that monks and nuns are not continually available for spiritual direction.
526 Mass is not celebrated during the Saturday meetings, though it is part of AIC retreats. Some non-Catholics have found mass shared with AIC to be a site of simultaneous unity and disunity---one interviewee in particular has received Eucharist and sensed a monk’s approval of her doing so. Interview A7. The archival document 2010 AIC Handbook, page 9, under Celebration of the Eucharist states, “For members of the AIC, Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life and of their communion in Christ. They are encouraged to participate in the Eucharist whenever possible for it is by the sharing the
“rarely.” Regular Sunday worship seems to be the most common practice among the non-Catholics. Between meetings AICs might work on preparation for prayer, talks, and papers; leadership council service including international Lay Cistercian leadership; mentorship of new members; and general communication among members. Even members not engaged in any of these responsibilities may receive an email or two per month or an occasional mailing with logistic details about upcoming retreats, AIC celebrations, or monastic events.

Additionally, there are ways of being common to AIC members that span both the monthly meetings and daily living but rarely merit a monthly topical study. They might be seen as an unvoiced by-product of AIC life. Among the four are an honoring of Mary as Mother of God, spiritual friendship and the things that sustain it, “contemplative living” in the midst of an active (contemplative but not cloistered) life, and ongoing prayer for others.

Mary-related devotions will be discussed below under Holy Figures. Most AIC members can say they have at least some spiritual friends in the group with whom they can share the challenges and joys of integrating Cistercian way of life into their particular situations and, in some cases, be forthright about the suffering, injustice, and pain.
experienced in relation to their church. Some members pointed to contemplative living as a general way of being that has come about in them in a deepened way since becoming a member. Prayer for others also spans the various sites of AIC life to the point of becoming a way of being. Members tend to see their prayer and work as Lay Cistercians as intended for the good of the church and world, just as their monastic counterparts do. They adamantly do not see it as primarily for their own authenticity nor as simply a source of renewal and refreshment; rather, their AIC commitment is their primary mode of being in communion with others and the church.

Along the same lines, through participation in a parish or worship community, serving as monastic ambassadors who give lectures or classes in church settings, and by the AIC’s contact with other Lay Cistercians in the U.S. and internationally, AICs are connected to the broader church. Most interviewees said they do not go out of their way to make their AIC membership known; they tend not to wear their emblem or tell others about the AIC unless someone asks. Yet when it does become known that a member has connections to the OLM and NM, opportunities seem to arise for sharing about the Rule of Benedict, religious life, or monasticism generally.

530 Interviews A10, A7, A1, A2, A5. Phone calls, attending funerals and weddings, shared meals, and visits strengthen these ties between members.
531 Interviews A5 and A7. Questionnaire QA1. They say contemplative living is not: “spiritual illiteracy,” frenzy and speed, over-consumption of media within AIC days and at home; it is not consumption of spiritual things, but rather slow study, earnest conversion, silence and solitude. It values prayer as the primary task each day in the midst of active living, and it relates to Christ primarily in the contemplative gaze of “just absorbing.” Interviews A10, A3, A2, and A7.
532 Interviews A3 and A7. See Ch.5 and6’s reference to the statement on the International Cistercian website concerning the work of Lay Cistercians for the good and mission of the church.
533 Interviews A2, A10, A6. The opportunities have been within Catholic churches, Methodist and Episcopalian churches and within secular contexts. A few members have found themselves in the position of explaining the term Cistercian, or more recently, even explaining the term monastery. Interview A1 states, ““Cistercian” makes people’s eyes glaze over. It’s a conversation stopper.”
Finally, the contact the AIC has with other Lay Cistercians, those connected to monasteries or online, stretches their contact with the larger church as well. Concerns of the International Cistercian conferences filter to the AIC including topics such as: declining numbers of members in western countries, increasing desire for monasteries in other countries, and increasing need by both monks and the secular marketplace for the dissemination of monastic tradition, practices, and ways of community-making. Communication among U.S. based Lay Cistercians reveals common concerns about planning for the future, remaining in contact and community with one another across the country, and the inclusion of diverse ethnic populations and ages. Even members with little engagement in the work of the International Conference have described their participation in AIC widening their sense of what the church is.534 Lastly, the AIC formally expresses its connection to the larger church and its mission in stating:

Although Cistercian monks and nuns cannot be called upon to meet the needs of the active apostolate, Lay Cistercians, given their life in the world, are encouraged to consider their participation in the Cistercian Charism in light of the Church as a whole and the needs of their local churches and faith communities in particular. Nonetheless, the goal of participation in the AIC is not an active apostolate, but rather the development of a contemplative and transformative life as a way of participating in the mission of Christ and his Church.535

Having shown associates’ central practices of monthly meetings, daily life, and bridge disciplines as composed of what members do, believe, say, value, pursue, aspire to, pray, and make time for both individually and together, the remainder of this chapter’s discussion of spiritual practices addresses several key activities that AICs undertake in common in more depth.

534 These will be explored in Ch.6 and 7. Interview A6.
B. Scripture and Prayer Materials

The AIC reads texts in a very intentional manner inspired by Benedict’s Rule. It is the regular and in-depth contact with this content from monastic tradition that marks AIC practice as personally nourishing, a way of connecting with the wider church, and a challenging but worthwhile daily practice. The AIC sees itself as a contemplative community learning to integrate their contemplative character into their active lives and they see textual encounter in the divine office, *lectio divina*, music, study, and other means as one of their most important means of doing so.

Members encounter texts in prayer, study, and work, together during meetings, and individually in daily practices. They collect them into an AIC library housed at NM. They share them by email, in photocopied pages, and in borrowed and purchased books. Some meticulously keep their readings in binders, and others let them pile up by the bedside table. Some members spend months poring over several translations of texts, and others feel content to read portions of the topical reading before the monthly meeting.

As with the Cistercians of NM and OLM, the AIC’s textual encounters are founded on psalms sung in the divine office. New members are introduced to the divine office as a “rhythmic cycle of prayer based on the Psalms which are sung or recited as a community” and which order the day. Because “AIC members are unable to focus [their] attention seven times a day on praying the Liturgy of the Hours,” they pray the little hours *Terce, Sext, and None* at meetings, and most do some portion of them on days in-between meetings.536 Members initially learn the rudiments of following an *ordo*,

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breviary, or devotional book and later undertake more concentrated study of the theology of the psalms. 537 One Saturday meeting in their three year learning cycle is devoted to the topic of Psalms/Divine Office. A talk on the “The Psalms and Jesus” given by a sister from OLM one Saturday highlighted liturgical psalms, how they are used in the New Testament, different categories of psalms, ejaculatory prayers from psalms, and how they fit in the psalmody. 538 On this subject members study: “‘Christ in the Psalms”: Theological Dimensions of the Opus Dei,” by Jeremy Driscoll, O.S.B, Luke 24 and Psalm 3, and “General Instructions of the Liturgy of the Hours” in the front of a standard breviary. AIC members also study “Christ’s own prayer and how that is realized in us, the church, when we pray Liturgy of the Hours.” 539

AICs also speak with great affection for their lectio practice, having discovered it to be a source of encounter with Jesus. The instructions given for how to do lectio divina are taken from the OLM sisters. They include explanations of the oratio, meditatio, lectio, and contemplatio and give simple steps to follow in “listening” to God speaking in a short text. AIC members practice lectio on a large number and wide range of texts. Lectio readings for one Saturday meeting in 2004 for example included excerpts from the Rule of Benedict, Deuteronomy, Psalm 118, Isaiah, John, II Corinthians, James, Ezekiel, Proverbs, Luke, Romans, II Peter, and Hebrews. In learning about lectio as part of their three year curriculum, members ask themselves such questions as “To what extent do you

consider your life as included in [the scriptural narrative of salvation history]?” and “Is lectio connected to the liturgy for you?”

Members encounter texts in song in both the psalmody and at the end of the first or last office of the AIC’s monthly meeting together. Members with musical skills have played instruments and sung at commitment ceremonies, retreat masses, and other special occasions. One Saturday the group studied musical traditions and a how-to primer in singing the office at NM. Preparation for this meeting included reading some texts on the theology of sung prayer including one article on religious life traditions of gathering to sing around the bed of a dying sister or monk.

Within each monthly study topic there are generally readings from the early church, from the Cenobic tradition, and from a contemporary author in the Benedictine or Cistercian traditions. Some texts are merely informative or encouraging while others range from persuasive sermons to scathing critiques of passive Christian life. Among the long list of texts encountered can be found: Guerric of Igny’s Second Sermon for Advent (12th Century Cistercian), a chapter from Andre Louf’s The Cistercian Way, The Second Gift by Fr. Edward Yarnold, S.J., Brother Lawrence on Discerning Between Two Goods, Sleeping with Bread from the brothers Linn, Discerning Heart by M. Conroy, Awareness

540 They also study lectio in broader Cistercian and church tradition. For example, they read: “Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina” by Fr. Luke Dysinger, ”Lectio Divina: Daily Information for a New Life Even Three Minutes at a Time” by Fr. Adam Ryan O.S.B and “Seven Principles of Lectio Divina” by Michael Casey (undated) emphasizing lectio is not simply reading. They also read a letter from Dom Bernardo OSCO to all Cistercians from January 1993 on the theology and monastic practice of Lectio Divina in which he describes four movements of lectio and emphasizes the priority of place of Lectio in monastic life in order to transform monks “according to the form of Christ.”

541 Agenda 3/8/08 Servant Song Donna Marie McGArgill OSM 1984 OCP Publications, Agenda 4/12/08 Balm in Gilead, Undated Song, Possibly for Meeting 2/9/2008 Open My Eyes Lord, 1999 Jesse Manibusan OCP Publications Hymns chosen are those suggested in the breviary or songs commonly chosen by AIC such as “Servant Song,” “Balm in Gilead,” and “Open My Eyes Lord.”
by Anthony deMello, *Truthful Living* by Michael Casey, and excerpts from St. Augustine, St. Basil the Great, St. John of the Cross, Boethius, St. Theresa of Lisieux. A “prayer sheet” lists questions for reflection and discussion for the collection of readings each month reaching for “guidance into a prayerful and reflective study of what the text is saying to [them in their] daily lives.” Finally, letters circulating among the Cistercian family provide a fourth category of texts regularly encountered by AIC. The archives indicate that several letters have been repeatedly read aloud during meetings including letters regarding the AIC’s history and identity discussed in the published dialogue presented at the end of Ch.1.

C. Holy Figures: Jesus, Mary, and the Saints

Members of the AIC see closeness to Jesus, Mary, and the saints as central to their way of life both as Christians and as Cistercians. Yet, unlike the fluidity with which interviewees discussed other matters, when asked to describe their relationships to Jesus, Mary, and the saints, most study participants offered only a comment or two, and many declined to comment. This situation seems to reflect the great diversity of perspectives brought to the AIC and the unwillingness among members to impose their views on others. While one long-standing member said his connection to Jesus, Mary, and the saints changed little since becoming an associate because “Cistercian charism


544 In Ch.2 some of these letters were discussed in the context of emerging theological work conducted by associates and Cistercians in collaborative ways.
Another said associate life has “increased [her] sense of Jesus’ humanity and the companionship of Mary and the saints.”

A founding member explained that since monastic Cistercians are Christocentric, “preferring nothing to Christ,” AIC hold the same. She describes herself as taking the “teaching and messages of Christ quite seriously.” The 2010 AIC Constitution states, “The purpose of the AIC is to bring Associates into ever-closer union with Christ since it is only through the experience of personal love for Jesus Christ that the particular gifts of the Cistercian vocation can flower.” Imitation of Christ is a central guiding principle of AIC spiritual life: “With Christ as the Divine Model, the soul of the Christian is instructed in the way of love. This is the core of the Cistercian life and that towards which the School of Charity is oriented. For this reason Lay Cistercians are encouraged to model their lifestyle on Christ using the examples and insights of the Cistercian charism.” A member related how frequently the name of Jesus bubbles up in his spontaneous prayers, thanks to AIC-guided training, and he has come to see Jesus as both “nurturing and challenging.” Another member has discovered through the AIC that Jesus and His Cross have been “a drawing force for the saints” and seeks to understand why. She continues, “the deeper my awareness of Christ and His presence, the more I am drawn to Him, love Him, long for nearness to Him, seek to serve Him, and to reflect his presence. This is a path from mere devotion to intimacy.”

545 Interview A4.
546 Questionnaire AQ4.
547 Interview A10. She also speaks about her observation that the oldest and younger monks have special warm devotion to Jesus. Questionnaire QA2.
550 Interview A2 and Questionnaire QA1.
551 Questionnaire QA3.
Other than the daily reminders of saints’ feast days within the divine office, members do not often speak about devotion to particular saints as part of their associate life, though some have individual devotions. Several mentioned closeness to Cistercian martyrs. Of the Cistercian Martyrs of Tibhirine, one interviewee states, they “show a great harmony between their life of prayer, manual labor, and spiritual study, and their devotion to Christ. They sought to leave everything behind…as they journeyed the path of Jesus---to the Cross. I desire to do this as well, but in the context of my own life, commitments, and secular circumstances.”

There exists a limited spectrum of views on Mary’s role in the AIC. By far the most common position is that voiced by one member who claimed that AIC has “no specific Mary anything” and another said she “rarely every so often comes up.” They do notice that she is invoked during commitment ceremonies and that some individual members are “very Marian.” One Episcopalian member claimed that “out of respect for the monks and the AIC, I am trying to figure out where I am with Mary,” but she claims “I don’t know if I’ll ever get clarity on it.” Another comment from an Episcopalian member sees the situation as one of the community holding Mary as a “very important part of the general charism” but intentionally not drawing attention to it because the inclusivity challenges would be too great. The less common view on Mary is that she is indeed central to AIC life inasmuch as “Cistercian monastics have special devotion to Mary the Mother of God” as patroness of Cistercian monasteries. Lastly, one associate claims that the Salve Regina and petitions to Mary are a key part of her daily

552 Interviews A10 and A7. In the latter she mentions St. Christopher in this case, acknowledging his status.
553 Questionnaire QA3.
554 Interview A10 and A7.
555 Interview A10.
556 Interview A7.
and a different member claims that she reaches for Mary’s humility by praying daily Magnificats and Salve Reginas during compline.\(^{558}\)

D. Gathering Together

Because the AIC community focuses so strongly on their Saturdays, most of what can be said about how and why they gather together has been described in the Monthly Meeting section of Ch.3. However a brief look at other forms of gathering together complement that discussion and emphasize that the AIC does function as a spiritually supportive community even beyond the boundaries of meetings. The practice of Advent and Lenten retreats offered by and for the AIC has already been mentioned. Cost, time, and distance prevent some members from attending, but most have done so at least once, and a good number make it a regular practice. When a member dies, associates are usually invited to attend the funeral services and receptions, though there is no formal AIC service for such an occasion. Because members live in scattered cities within a wide Midwest geographic radius, this type of support usually involves a significant car trip.\(^{559}\) As mentioned earlier, members form strong friendships, particularly as the number of years they have spent as an associate increases. One even calls the entire AIC a “spiritual fellowship.”\(^{560}\) Within the context of friendship, then, they visit one another, support one another through hard times by phone and in person, attend weddings and other celebrations, plan trips to have meals together, plan pilgrimages together, and some even

\(^{557}\) Interview A8.
\(^{558}\) Questionnaire QA3.
\(^{559}\) Interview A1.
\(^{560}\) Questionnaire QA5
claim that their children have come to know other associates’ children in these ways.\textsuperscript{561} Meetings outside the monthly meeting might occur among leadership council members, with monastic liaisons or among self-selected members who wish to further discuss or study a particular topic. These outside-the-meeting interactions are epitomized by one long-standing member’s comment that she has come to value her freedoms as a lay woman in a new way as a result of her AIC participation and intentionally makes one of her regular spiritual practices dressing up for a “good meal and wine with my husband or friends” to celebrate that.\textsuperscript{562}

E. Group Life and Discernment

A description of their forms of servant-leadership and group discernment provides a final vantage point from which to examine the spiritual practices of the AIC. Here the group’s beliefs, prayers, and disciplines come to bear on the oversight of its life, for which all “senior” members take responsibility. The question can be put simply. How do they lead?\textsuperscript{563}

Of their leadership practices, the AIC formally says, “The AIC community depends on a shared leadership structure in order to direct and nurture the growth of the community in prayer and charity. Types of shared leadership include the AIC Council, consultation with members in on-going formation, community dialogue, and service to the community.” In addition to the consultation and dialogue among members and liaisons, the AIC Council bases decisions upon the Rule of Benedict and the AIC

\textsuperscript{561} Interview A10.  
\textsuperscript{562} Interview A10.  
\textsuperscript{563} Here leadership is emphasized but Ch.6 will raise the question of group life again within the broader context of implementing Vatican II’s call to holiness in a shared way.
constitution and guidelines. As the Origins section of this chapter described, the AIC has always been guided by a small leadership group and fairly early on they decided to call it a leadership council. Currently council members serve four year terms and are elected by vote from a pool of names of members in ongoing formation suggested by members and confirmed by the candidates. One member recalls, “when we gather to vote for council members the Holy Spirit draws us to identify the one best prepared to serve.” Founding members continue to serve on the council, and several interviewees have been council members for a number of years. A secretary is designated, but the rest of the council members share work according to gifts and interest without receiving particularly designated roles. The council meets periodically to review goals, address needs, and communicate with its monastic liaisons. They are also the eyes and ears of the group during monthly meetings, observing things going well and things in need of attention. Occasionally council members and those working with initial formation program gather for a time of formation.

The AIC’s approach to leadership can been seen by the way in which they handle conflict. Their formal statements on the matter of “Loving Correction” state:

The love that forms the foundation of our community is characterized by accountability. Each member of the AIC is expected to be accountable to one another in sharing the responsibility for creating and nurturing the AIC community. As members of our community we have mutual responsibilities, but we do not act independently of one another. Our dependence upon one another is one of concern and respectful love. Especially during our monthly meetings we have a responsibility not only to be present and prepared but also to help one another by fostering an

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565 As one interviewee put it “those who discern a willingness to lead make themselves available.” Interview A7.
566 Questionnaire QA3.
567 Correspondence with Teresa McMahon, email correspondence with author, July 13, 2012.
environment conducive to prayer and formation. We are all called to help one another understand how we are fostering or neglecting an atmosphere of prayerful, respectful attentiveness. We work together to build an atmosphere of mutual accountability, based on trust and respect. Our words and actions must be rooted in a spirit of love and kindness, and flow from a sincere desire to help one another. Our mutual accountability to one another and to the rules, norms and guidelines of our AIC community is a call to obedience. It is one more example of how we, as Associates, attempt to live our lives according to the Rule of St. Benedict by renouncing our own will in order to follow the example of Christ.569

Beyond these formal statements, an illustration of an actual case of conflict resolution shows how leadership operates within the group. Several interviewees independently of one another called to mind a case in which a member regularly put forth several “politically charged” and even “militant anti-abortion” prayers in the intercessions list. The prayers first came to the attention of and upset other members at the closing and recollection part of the meeting. The member in question also routinely voiced a desire at house meetings for the group to have mass together, particularly masses for life or masses for the unborn. Some members perceived in these acts a lack of sensitivity to the ecumenical and church-belonging concerns others raised in response. Many if not most members assent to the pro-life teachings of the church, but were concerned about how they were expressed within the AIC.570 In keeping with the philosophy of leadership described above, this member was guided by private conversations with various council members to consider whether the group did not fit his expectations. Over time he himself came to the conclusion that he should leave, and the

570 A glance at the bumper stickers on the cars in the monastery parking lot on an AIC Saturday reveals widespread pro-life messages. To the extent bumper stickers can express belief, the member may have found sympathetic listeners had he brought forth his view in a different way.
group was later told that he “did not discern a fit” with the community. The form in which this member chose to present his concerns was found to be outside the boundaries of relating that the community had established.

In general those interviewed claimed that the leadership structure and style is working well for the group. In a recurring way they do have to address concerns about a perceived inner and outer circle of authority among those serving on the council and other long standing members. Questions of boundaries---particularly the bringing of guests to meetings---also seem to circle back around frequently. In addressing ongoing concerns such as these, one leader says his role has benefitted from the council’s commitment to simply “being in a position of judgment about whether people were complying with the…model” spelled out in the constitution and then helping those involved discern a judgment too. Members hold the model in high regard because they see it as the fruit of discernment work they have accomplished together since their founding. The leadership remains mindful of the limits of the group’s common life in that they “go their separate ways and don’t live together 24/7.” Overall, they foster participants’ own steering of “the growth of the community in prayer and charity.”

F. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the collaborative and ongoing creation of the PP and AIC’s ways of life, particularly their “personalities” as groups, relies on cultivating a

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571 Interviews A7, A1, A10, A5. A5 says in 15 years only 2-3 have been asked to leave directly and that is usually because they are not coming to meetings.
572 Interview A2.
573 Interview A1.
574 Interview A1.
575 Interview A10.
relationship of mutuality with religious. This mutuality gives rise to great attentiveness to the connections among each group’s membership parameters and spiritual practices. Associates and their supporters have discovered that, as they work to establish these parameters and practices, they seek to balance tensions between challenge and support, intimacy and room for individual appropriation, and vision and the living out of that vision. No two groups make decisions about these issues in the same ways. In this way the PP and AIC each foster a unique group personality that becomes part of the tradition to which they invite others and hold one another accountable. For the Associates of Iowa Cistercians, with their historical roots in contemplative practices, group identity circles around seeing themselves as a “school of charity” in ongoing conversion, whereas for the Presentation Partners, with their roots in apostolic practices, it stems from a shared ardor for drawing near those living in poverty. More about these personalities will be discussed in later chapters.

This chapter has also shown how associates themselves have a great deal to say about how their vision is lived out in the concrete commitments, practices, and structures of their way of life. As Ch.2 emphasized, this has been a missing voice in the literature about associates’ way of life. When sources that rely on associates’ own perceptions are investigated, their humanity becomes evident. Reference has been made to each group’s recurring conflicts, areas of oversight, and occasional biased viewpoints. Neither associates nor their supporters in religious life shy away from discussing these and making observations about the individual and group shortcomings encountered in the associations and congregations. In short, there is evidence that religious and associates come to see one another and themselves as not only driven toward a shared vision but
also as consoled by the company of fellow imperfect pilgrims. Ch.6-7 will explore to 
what extent the PP and AIC are self-reflective organizations capable of addressing 
conflict and changing for the better. The following chapter, Ch. 5, will examine how 
some of the claims made in the two Lay Associations on the Ground discussions of Ch.3 
and 4 carry forward into how associates understand their primary institutional 
relationships as straddling the boundaries of religious community and parish or 
congregation.
CHAPTER 5
MORE SALT AND LESS LIGHT?: AN EMERGING PORTRAIT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL SIDE OF ECCLESIAL FIT

As a conclusion to his study on new ecclesial movements (NEM), Tony Hanna writes,

“Light of the world” is the institutional Church as lighthouse, inspiring, leading, offering people the sure way home. “Salt of the earth” is the Church buried, half-anonymous, in society, forming opinion, offering hope to the desperate, putting love where otherwise there would be none…Both light and salt are necessary. If the new shape of the Church is to be more salt, less light, perhaps [new ecclesial movements redress] an historical imbalance.\(^{577}\)

Though the church as a dichotomy is not the only or even best way to imagine distinctions within it, Hanna’s statement gives voice to the most common way of speaking about the ecclesial fit of new ecclesial movements. For him and for most authors, NEM offer more salt, redressing the at times institutionally heavy history of the church by expressing the church’s charismatic side in innovative and vibrant ways independent of the diocesan structure.\(^{578}\) As this study turns toward the task of locating the Associates of Iowa Cistercians and the Presentation Partners ecclesiologically, this narrative of redressing an imbalance will offer a point of comparison and a guiding question. Just how do the PP and AIC fit within the church? To what extent does the NEM narrative suit their way of life?

\(^{578}\) Tony Hanna and Brendan Leahy champion this view which leans on the work of John Paul II.
Chapter Five responds to these concerns by probing how associates locate themselves within the church as institution. By now it should be clear that PP and AIC do not see themselves as beginning a new or para-church. Neither are they creating an alternative worship community nor a house church, though some have expressed interest in these endeavors. Rather, the participants in this study see their gathering together running parallel to the existing life of the local church and the parishes and congregations to which most belong. At the same time, associates firmly claim to be members of neither an existing religious order nor a new kind of religious order that advocates a quasi-vowed state of life. Instead they see themselves as members of the faithful who are living out a particular tradition with others in profoundly close relationship to a community of vowed religious.

Perhaps most exceptionally, they understand their place to rest in between institutions of parish, larger local church often understood ecumenically, and religious congregation. They dwell between these valued connections to church as institution and service mediating “love where there would be none” in the contexts of their lives, though this mediating takes different forms for each group. For the most part their members identify primarily as members of the faithful and secondarily as associates. Yet their ties to the church are powerfully shaped by their participation in their association. Their ways of living out the faith as individuals and among others are fundamentally different than they were before joining. So too their participation in their association as a community of faith shapes their perceptions of the church and their responsibilities within it.
This chapter begins the process of probing the nature and significance of lay associates’ relationship to the institutional church by examining the two most prominent kinds of landmarks the PP and AIC seem to use when locating themselves ecclesially. I. Living Out the Tradition explores the PP and AIC’s relation to their religious community, their primary ecclesial connection. Their manner of living out the particular tradition of a religious congregation creates a map of boundaries—those crossed and those upheld—that serve to clarify and strengthen their distinct vocation. II The Church Question: Between Two Institutional Expressions furthers the locating of these two groups between their religious congregations, parish, and other parts of ecclesial structure show how they hold the “space” of a unique intersection within the “light” and “salt” of the church.

Here their manner of reflecting upon their own place in church history, both within their local church and in relation to the most vulnerable populations of the world, comes into play. The PP and AIC seem bound up in both, on the one hand, church as institution and, on the other hand, church as charismatic and as performing works of charity and justice. They seem to find the intersection life-giving rather than tension-filled and dialectical rather than segregated. Unlike their counterparts in the new ecclesial movements, the PP and AIC’s ways of life as they describe them may be able to hold the institutional and vitality parts of church life in tension in a unique way through their with-but-not-of relationship to religious orders. In doing so their ecclesial location begins to become clear: that of offering both more salt and more light in a way appreciably unlike other movements and groups.
I. Living Out the Tradition

A. In Relation To Religious

As discussed in Ch.3, the relationship between associates and religious can be examined as a mutual one with giving and receiving on both sides. This study focuses on uncovering just what attracts and compels PP and AIC members to formalize their bond with religious among the company of like-minded others. As Ch.2 demonstrated, scholarship on associate life has only begun to examine the relationship as it currently stands. This section explores aspects of the bond between religious and associates including: 1) communication, 2) care, 3) commitment, and 4) modeling. For the PP and AIC these parts contribute to a kind of reciprocal and mutual but not necessarily equivalent relationship, one that serves to cultivate associate life into something all parties can affirm is a new manifestation of each congregation’s charism.

1. The Shape of the Bond

Unlike a relationship between religious and prayer affiliates and donors, the religious-associates bond can be said to bear the mark of two-way communication. The exchanging of prayer intentions and newsletters is just the beginning, though these communications leave a clear and convincing textual trail. In word and action, in time, personnel, and resources shared with associates, and in the nearly twenty years of photos of religious and associates standing shoulder to shoulder, the religious communicate themselves to associates. Comfortably sharing a memory or insight during group reflection on a spiritual text or walking alongside associates as they gather with national or international associate movement representatives, religious express both their own living out of their tradition’s charism as well as their respect for associates’ appropriation.
of it. Likewise, by showing up each year, renewing commitments, nurturing new associates, honestly bringing the joys and challenges of their lives to associate meetings, creatively suggesting new ways of extending the work of the association, and drawing close to ailing and elderly religious, the associates communicate both how they have made the tradition their own and the esteem in which they hold the sisters and monks.

Besides communication, the religious-associate bond bears the mark of enduring mutual care and concern. There are the dramatic cases, such as prayer for an associates’ seriously ill child580 and offering support during a sister’s mental illness.581 There are also recurring daily contacts of friendship with one another as they visit the ill in hospitals and homes, celebrate joyous times together, attend one another’s funerals, share their faith and daily struggles, give each other rides, send each other reading materials and letters, make music and art, and undertake projects together.582 These are among the more visible examples of mutual care.

Care, however, is sometimes more hidden, does not appear in uniform ways, and varies among individual expression. For example, one AIC member describes having very little contact with either the monks or the sisters and yet experiencing a strong bondedness to all Cistercians living and dead expressed prayerfully and in her personal

580 Interview B4.
581 Interview A2.
582 Interview CB1. This interviewee described the complex plan of care sisters had recently implemented to care for their elderly members and how associates took up that plan to care for their own elderly members.
transformative work. Some religious, in turn, simply have very little contact with associates because of circumstance, choice, or illness. Even these religious live out a commitment to pray for and support associates. These foreground and background expressions of care on both sides come together to create the effect of an extended family grounded in mutual care while sustained by different degrees of contact.

A clear mutual commitment can be found at the root of the reciprocal flow of communication and care in the religious-associate bond. The commitment, ritualized at the commitment ceremonies and typically renewed regularly for both PP and AIC, establishes the expectations of self-gift for each side and sets parameters for the new life as a unity they have created together. Religious commit to continue sharing the tradition with associates, accompanying them in the work of their organization, offering the service of a few vowed religious who will especially walk with the group as co-directors (PBVM), steering committee members (PBVM), and liaisons (AIC). The orders also commit to praying with and for their associates in regular ways. For the PBVM’s, the language of these promises follows Nano Nagle’s narrative and they use terms such as “support,” “walking with,” “going out to the narrow lanes,” and “lighting lamps.” The Cistercians tend toward language referencing “community,” “sharing Cistercian practice and tradition,” and “conversion.” Both the new associate and the leadership of the associations and congregations sign the commitment sheets. The ceremony for both

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583 Interview A5.
584 Interview IRA1. Because of their changing ministerial and congregational leadership commitments, some religious might draw close to an associate group for a time, attending meetings and serving as a guide, and then experience a time of detachment from the group with contact only during whole community interactions such as commitment ceremonies.
585 Fitzpatrick, “Hopes and Fears.” These two Cistercian monasteries made such recognition from the beginning of the AIC and in congruence with their practice, the 2008 General Chapter of the OCSO voted to approve the statement, “We recognize the existence of a lay expression of our Cistercian charism in the lived experience of the groups of lay persons associated with a number of the monasteries of our Order.”
groups ends with a blessing from the congregations’ leadership (abbot, abbess, president of leadership council) and prayers from the religious and associate communities in attendance. The effect of these ritualized exchanges is a reinforcement of the joint undertaking they have vowed to nurture. Beyond these formal promises, religious from each congregation have offered other tangible commitments over time.  

Another unscripted commitment can be found in the change in syntax, religious and associates pervasively using the term “we” when discussing the life of the association. This indicates that both sides have come to understand themselves as a unity.  

Unlike other congregations, the PBVM and Cistercian religious actively seek to prevent associates from being the special interest of one or just a few of their members. Rather, they see them as an extension of the work of the whole congregation. Even those sisters and monks with strong reservations about the program must at least cooperate with the congregation-wide promises made by acts of charter. Prayer prominently expresses

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586 Interview IRA1. The PBVM’s for example have offered office space in the motherhouse and a part-time salary for an associate director of the PP. The monks and nuns have generously offered more than the typical access to their monasteries for monthly AIC meetings and have agreed to co-host an International Lay Cistercian meeting in 2011. This practice seems to vary according to the “personality of the porter” at New Melleray with some tightly booking the meeting weekend (and thereby restricting the spaces available for meeting) and others restricting the reservations to the AIC alone.  

587 Interview B9, B10, B7, IRB1. “We all come to see the “we” of church and that empowers us,” recalls one PBVM sister. The strongest bias of religious as elevated above laity came from the eldest of the PBVM associates I interviewed. Further study could explore to what extent this view of sisters remains among other generations.  

588 The Presentation Partners even go so far as to say both associates and sisters are “partners” and thereby associate members. In practice this usage seems to apply particularly to those sisters who have been meeting with an associate group with rotating leadership duties for many years.  

589 Fitzpatrick, “Hopes and Fears.”
this commitment in that daily prayer for one another has become one of the practices expected of all the communities—associates, Presentaions, and Cistericans. 590

Mutual modeling comprises another weighty force shaping the religious-associate bond. Understandably associates look to religious for models of lives lived in faithfulness to prayer, in loyal community, and focused upon “seeking God.” 591 Religious openly model a way of life in community and a demeanor that is attractive, friendly, hospitable, affirming, trusting in God’s care during the aging of their population, and that is marked by humor, self deprecation, practiced leadership, continual learning, constant prayer, supporting others in prayer and action, and seeing the good in individuals and calling it forward. Less well known seems to be the contribution of associates in modeling a faithful Christian life for religious. Both interviews with religious for this study and for the study conducted by Fitzpatrick of Cistercian monks and nuns in 2008 592 indicate that the religious see associates’ witness as a major benefit for their congregation. This seems to work primarily by means of regular opportunities for religious to hear associates reflect upon the integration of the charism into their daily lives. As associates present stories from their month, they show religious: (1) that they are encountering the tradition through texts, worship, prayers, and engagement with others, (2) how they are developing in their absorption of the charism, understanding difficult teachings in new lights, and reconciling doubt and trust in the face of injustice and suffering and (3) they also reveal their struggles, sorrows, shortcomings, and failures

590 Interview IRA1. On commitment ceremony days, particularly recently since they have been held at OLM, all the sisters and as many monks as are able attend the ninth hour of prayer called none together, witness the commitments, and pray for the new members and the well being of the AIC.
591 Fitzpatrick, “Hopes and Fears.”
592 Fitzpatrick, “Hopes and Fears.”
in the context of a return to following Christ. In so doing the religious say they “gain as much as they give.”

This practice humanizes the lay associates; religious can experience the revelation “we are alike.” They also begin to sense the distinctiveness of the associates’ unique call to take the charism to the world in ways the religious cannot as in, for example, marriage or parenting. At the same time the religious say their own vocations are deepened and confirmed. The associates are “a valuable support to the [congregation]” in that their sincere seeking for God and adherence to the tradition of the congregation despite the challenges in doing so inspire the religious to pursue their own vocation with similar zeal. In other words, “[Lay associates] enrich the Cistercian charism by witnessing to its Spirit in lay life.” As Fitzpatrick adds, “sharing our charism deepens the prayer life of associates and monastics by the constant challenge to be what we say we are. This mutual support is not measureable but it is palpable.”

For the PP and AIC tradition is more than spiritual. It is carried by a network of human attitudes and acts: holy figures, founder’s legends, texts, oral narratives about previous followers, art, music, prayers, and even aesthetics. There are also the more hidden carriers such as particular ways of encountering scripture and living it out in their particular contexts. The tradition also encompasses how the religious and then the association lives its group life, including the ways decisions are made, leaders are chosen,

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593 Interview A4.
594 Interview A4, IRA1.
595 Fitzpatrick, “Hopes and Fears.”
596 Ibid and Interview A7. One long term AIC member reflects, “We are told by the monastics that we encourage them. They feel like a relic but we come in and sop up their values. They don’t see themselves taken from but rather are encouraged.”
597 For an illustration of tradition carried by these factors see Alex Garcia-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The Little Stories and the Semiotics of Culture, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books): 1995.
new members are formed, and conflict is resolved. A piece of the vowed Iowa Cistercians’ and PBVM’s traditions, then, has come to be the ways in which they share their lives with associates by means of (at least) an exchange of communication, care, commitment, and modeling. Ultimately the “personality” of an association finds its shape according to the both the character of the relationships associates have with the vowed members of the order and the way the tradition is shared and developed among them. As the following section further explores ways associates and religious describe and live this bond, particularly through collaboration and the appropriation of principles, this chapter will ask how and to what extent each association’s unique bond shapes the process of laity coming to live out the tradition.

B. From Blurring to Collaboration: Concern for Mutuality

In the 1980’s and early 1990’s as the associate movement was launching, some religious and laity wrote about their primary worry: that the movement would lead to religious-lay “blurring.” This term referred to the danger of a decreased boundary between the life and practice of religious, particularly apostolic women religious, and laity, at first particularly lay women. As Ch.2 showed, the literature portrayed associates as a great idea provided that they did not speak, dress, pray, or act like religious. In retrospect the context of the fear shows its origin. It was during these years that some apostolic religious women from some U.S. congregations were interpreting Vatican II’s messages for religious life as entailing a reshaping of community life, even (for some) to the point of an associative model of congregational connection.598 From one angle,

598 Patricia Wittberg is most frequently credited with the term “associate model” pertaining to religious life. See Sandra Schneiders’ reference her use of the concept in Selling All and New Wine, New Wineskins in Ch.2.
associates seemed to be growing in likeness to women religious just as women religious were growing in likeness to non-vowed women.

The fear of blurring as understood in this early movement context may not apply as readily today. Much of the apprehension may have been anticipatory of a new and uncertain movement. With twenty years of practice, some of these anticipated fears were found insubstantial or, more commonly, have been treated with generous thoughtfulness on the part of both congregation and associate leaders. That is not to say blurring as a concern has disappeared completely. For example, there remain some associate groups today that emulate religious life to such an extent that they even don habits at monthly meetings.\(^{599}\) These may in fact be attractive features in the context of the breakdown of an American Catholic subculture worth more exploration in other studies. These exceptions aside, mainstream associate life seems to have developed the concern about blurring into a more mature, positive concern for oversight of mutual collaboration.

Such a move comes from a variety of sources. On the ground it seems to emerge out of religious and associates genuinely working together over time, establishing formation programs, and, in the face of the frequent arrival of new initiates, becoming clear about how who is who and what the distinctive vocation entails. Another source may be from church teaching and canon law as they impact religious institutes and color

\(^{599}\) Anonymous Lay Carmelite in Connecticut, Personal correspondence with the author, November 2012. Even “cousin” groups to those in this study such as the Conyers, Georgia lay Cistercians utilize self-understandings and syntax most commonly connected to religious life such as “novitiate,” “novice,” and “postulant.” See Interview A4 and Archival Document, AIC Council Notes, undated. Latino devotional societies often bear comparable marks: white veils and gloves, vows and strict leadership structures. These are a distinct species of lay movement, however, and not within the bounds of this study. Further research into lay associations with high Latino populations might explore this question.
the thinking of congregational leaders. A third source may be the changes in American Catholic culture since the late 1980’s, particularly the expansion of a wealthier, more educated laity who had begun to appropriate Vatican II teachings on the value of the universal call to holiness in their specific contexts.

Working together, religious and associates mostly learn collaboration by doing it. Together they invite new persons to join the association; they construct the formation program and walk new members through it. Together they ritually initiate members and together they form associate leaders and help them navigate the unchartered waters of a developing organization. However, collaboration for the PP and AIC has not meant unilateral mutuality in the sense of continuous equivalent contributions. Rather both associations and their religious narrate a story of change over time in this matter from dependency to initiative.

In the beginning of her small associate group, relates one PBVM sister on the steering committee for the PP, the associates were “so hungry for spiritual enrichment” and for chances to pray with scripture, as well as to learn about Nano Nagle’s vision and put it into practice together. She found herself in a teaching role sharing both content and process learned in congregational life and ministry training. As time together led to years together, now approaching a decade, the sister saw her role changing to that of accompaniment and guidance. She has been inspired and delighted by the quality of zeal

600 Amy Hereford, “Canon Law for Religious Institutes,” E-Workshop, 2011. In speaking about associate life, Pope John Paul II underscored the 1985 Code teaching that associates could be nurtured provided that they do not impede the vocation of the religious congregation to which they bond. Ch.2 showed how Cistercian leaders and associates were aware of this statement early in their history.
and initiative demonstrated by members of her group. Though they rotate leadership, she sees them as clearly steering their own group life now.  

For the AIC, the process of developing a curriculum of Cistercian values also followed the arc from dependency to initiative. The first AIC meetings consisted of a handful of members and a monastic liaison. Though they followed a monthly meeting schedule similar to their current one, the presentation and discussion portions of the day leaned heavily on the expertise of the monk or sister. He or she would choose the topic, create reflection questions about it, and guide the conversation, liberally peppering it with studies and examples from his or her own experiences living out Cistercian tradition in a monastery. Though members highly valued this offering, they grew in their desire to learn Cistercian tradition in a more systematic way.

At the same time they grew in their desire to bring forward and explore the distinctiveness of their lay Cistercian vocation with one another. Instead of hearing a sister’s talk and going home to privately integrate insights into one’s life, they wanted to do more of the integration together just as even enclosed monastics do in their community life. Over time these desires brought about several instrumental changes to the association. A leadership council with a designated formation team was elected. An associate-created “curriculum” of Cistercian values was established and set into a three year formation cycle for new members.  

Within the last few years, the “ongoing formation” members who have already made initial commitment have also embarked on three year cycles of the same topics so that they are continually returning to the same

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601 Interview IRB2.
602 Interview A7. Interviewees use the phrase *curriculum of values*. 
touchstone teachings of the tradition. A religious who served as liaison during the early part of this transformation insists that it was an associate-driven growth. While they asked for input and ran ideas by liaisons, they quite clearly took on the responsibilities that were once the domain of the religious.\(^{603}\)

These examples of the PP and AIC collaborating mutually with religious show it is not the case, at least in these two associate programs, that religious do all the teaching and associates do all the learning.\(^{604}\) But though the ideal is aspiring to mindful dynamic collaboration, it must also be noted that boundaries are sometimes transgressed. Such instances can be seen as among the greatest spurs for learning about the shape of the religious-associate bond.

1. Blurring: Crossed Boundaries

Religious and associates sometimes stumble upon a boundary of religious life worth upholding as not entirely porous. For the PP this has occurred in the case of chapter meetings. While the fear from early associate movement literature that annual congregational chapter meetings would be taken over by lay members did not apply to Presentation Partners’ history, they did struggle with what form collaboration might take in this matter. Ch.4 discussed the practice of chapter meetings, a time the sisters call “community days,” and therein the tension arises. If they were gathering as PBVM community, should not the associates have a part in that time expressive of their familial status? At first associates were invited to the social, worship, and celebratory portions of

\(^{603}\) Interviews IRA1, A10, CA1, CA2, A4.

\(^{604}\) Interview IRB1. “That is just not true for us. They teach us so much!” insists one PBVM sister.
the week. An annual retreat (often silent) linked to these days remains for sisters only.605 Later the associates also were invited to presentations on aspects of the spiritual life and Nano Nagle’s vision. Some sisters wanted to go the next step and proposed inviting associates to chapter.606

This step created controversy among sisters. While associates were certainly quite close to sisters, they remained outside the congregation. Some sisters saw a need for privacy surrounding congregation discussions about care of elderly sisters, adjustments of congregational initiatives according to diminishing numbers, and finances. They did not see associate membership as giving them a right to insider information about the congregation’s life; “they want to make sure there is a reason they took vows,” as one sister strongly puts it. It is clear that the desire to include them in chapter came from sisters engaged with associate life. Associates, grateful to attend any part of community days, were not making requests to be part it. As it stands today the policy permits associates to participate in nearly all aspects of community days, even portions of chapter meetings, but when the time for financial discussions and other select congregation-sensitive topics such as those dealing with property or leadership choices arise, the associates move to another room in the motherhouse and conduct their own business meeting (with no sisters present).607 This model shows the mutuality present in the relations between sisters and associates. At the same time it shows that the two groups do not give and receive the same things to one another in an equivalent fashion.

605 Interview IRB1 states that the 2012 retreat given by sisters from Ireland on Nano Nagle’s life left her inspired and refreshed and with the conviction that “[associates] should have been with us.” Not all sisters share her sentiment.
606 Interview IRB1. This sister has the view that they could and should be invited to the whole chapter and perhaps will be “if we can convince some people to see it our way.”
607 Interview B6.
The AIC has also undergone several cases of learning about the right boundary between themselves and the monastics by tripping over it. In one example from 2004, some AIC members learned that the well-known speaker on contemplative prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating, would be coming to the region soon. They suggested at a leadership council meeting that steps be taken to invite him to speak at an AIC Saturday meeting, but they received a gentle correction from the monastic liason. He explained how within the Cistercian order requests for a monk to visit a monastery had to take place within prescribed channels, particularly through the office of the abbot. There would not be time for these channels to operate prior to Keating’s visit, so he advised them to drop the proposal. They accepted the correction, learning a bit more about the role of obedience to the abbot in monastic life in the process, and instead proposed inviting interested persons to travel together to Chicago to hear Keating’s lecture. They, too, found a way to work together, though the monastic rule of life and not associates’ every desire clearly remains the determining influence.

C. Ways of Appropriating the Tradition

So far this chapter has discussed the bond in its parts and as it plays out in questions of mutuality. A final avenue for exploring the religious-associate relation can be found in considering what both populations say about appropriating the order’s tradition. The associate movement (and the PP and AIC with it) claims it is actually possible for an association to encounter, study, and appropriate (and even contribute to the development of) a religious congregation’s tradition. This claim rests at the center of

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the movement’s self-understanding and serves as primary evidence of a largely unstudied site of ecclesial vitality. This section claims that when PP and AIC members reflect upon making principles born out of religious life their own, they tend to discuss content, process, and identity.

1. **Content: What is Passed On?**

   Any associate would readily agree that the tradition they embrace refers to a spiritual one marked by holy figures, texts, stories, prayers, music, and ways of encountering scripture with others. They might also say tradition includes how a community comes together and sustains a group’s life, how they induct new members, discern the Spirit’s work within their group, deal with conflict, understand the church, analyze social settings and injustices, and make clear what it is to which they all aspire together. Still, “practices are easy to talk about,” relates an AIC member, but there is more to the tradition. Associates from the PP and AIC claim the ideal purpose of the tradition’s content is to make way for the gospel to transform their whole lives.

   For the new PP or AIC the tradition first takes shape through texts, which are integral to associates’ life together as Ch.4 already pointed out. Ruminating over the written tradition heavily shapes associates’ conceptual framework and language for better understanding their Christian vocation by means of their charism. Interviews from both groups, however, emphasize that the absorption of the tradition is much more than

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609 This will be revisited in Ch.7.
610 Interview A4.
611 Interview B5. As one long time PP puts it, “The single charism can be called hospitality....I received that from my family but I think about it with language from my associate study and experiences.”
“a cognitive thing”; comments a founding AIC member, “it’s a lived thing.”

Associates use terms like “values,” “principles,” “mission,” and “virtues” to illustrate how over time and with practice the things they read in texts become embodied in their living as individuals and as a group.

A point of celebration among both PP and AICs is that associates do not necessarily resemble one another in the ways they manifest this process. One PP describes how growing into associate life for him primarily meant learning to live out sensitivity to the poor and the wellbeing of the natural world. An AIC member with a strong commitment to Christian feminism describes how she was challenged to appropriate obedience and humility. Two AIC members talk about “doing things at first because they are Cistercian” and then later coming to see the wisdom in them for any Christian path.

Amid such diversity of interpretation, most associates agree that the content of the tradition is for the transformation of lives, not simply a “spiritual trip.” Some say associate life has helped them become “more than just a Catholic.”

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612 Interview A4.
613 Interview A7. One AIC member recalls with amazement how as her years in the group increased, “Things the world would see as bad became virtues like celibacy or being underpaid. The larger [Cistercian] values reframed it, and instead of saying ‘poor me’ I say [these things] are a pure blessing because they free me up.”
614 Interview B8.
615 Interview A10.
616 Interview A10 and A7. Both women tried a complete media abstinence and then adjusted their practice to a limited media practice more in keeping with Benedictine Rule.
617 Interview A1.
contrast to their current way of life with daily and monthly efforts and their previous Sunday-only commitment to their faith.618

2. Process: How the Passing On Occurs

Associates in the PP and AIC describe having had particular affinities or tendencies in alignment with their group’s tradition prior to joining. Presentation associates mention having had long standing desire or commitment for direct action among the poor while AIC members point to their attraction to contemplative prayer or monastic life. Both sets of associates clearly see their subsequent formal commitment as the entry point to a different path of serious practice in the company of others. They speak of this with reverence and humility and admit to not entirely knowing how the transmission of the tradition happens. They speak about the surprise and delight of noticing at some point that the tradition of the religious had become theirs too. Though a mysterious element is present, associates say the passing on happens in distinct stages of formation by a varied mix of practices, mentoring relationships, and sustained reflection on the integration of these into daily life.

Ch.3-4 made clear that the tradition is infused into associates’ lives in several layered ways over time. As one AIC member relates,

I can’t say what the Cistercian charism is but I can say it is a lifestyle we developed in conjunction with relationship to the monks and nuns. It is hard to summarize in a few words. Practices are easy to talk about like divine office meditation, prayer. The core of the charism, though, is the values like humility

618 At the same time, associates seem acutely aware of the danger of essentializing a religious tradition. They go to great lengths not to sever the “values” or “principles” of the Cistercian or Presentation traditions from the whole way of life of the religious. AIC members, for example, rarely bring up obedience without quoting the Rule of Benedict, several Cistercian authors, and comments from their liaisons and monastic friends.
and obedience. We don’t hear about these in the world often and for those who live in the world exploring these is a challenge. Cistercians offer a foundation to explore them and the value of these values…and ways we can introduce them into our lives. It’s their charism infused into our lives.619

This associate’s perception clarifies stages of the reception process common to many interviewees. First there seems to be an organized and constructive chance to explore parts of the tradition. In so doing religious communicate and transmit how such parts of their tradition have been lived out in the past as well as how they are being lived out today. Through dialogue and friendship with other associates, new members are then sensitized to ways they might incorporate the tradition into their own lives. The work involved in doing so is taken seriously. It is “a formation process, thinking and living to decrease your own ego, a way to live with others,”620 as “translation from [religious] life to ours,”621 and as “work, discipline and patience of growing into the gift of unconditional love…doing the patient gentle work of love.”622 They understand this to be a slow process and an ongoing one just begun at the time of commitment. “It happens over time,” one AIC member emphasizes, “and it is not a conscious process.”623

Each association has a particular “flavor” of this transmission process. For AIC members, it seems to involve a gradual integration of contemplative life into their own active lives.624 “Monastics give advice and not direction, it’s a separate community like siblings, like growing up and living next door to each other,” a council member relates. She sees the values and practices as expressions of the charism and not the charism itself. The charism, she claims, is absorbed in the way a family’s character is absorbed, “like

619 Interview A4.
620 Interview A1.
621 Interview A1.
622 Interview A2.
623 Interview A5.
624 Interview A3.
living in a family and its particular ways of greeting the world. You either fit or not.”

Members describe drawing inspiration from the observable conversion toward holiness they see themselves and their group making, particularly when they see “people accepting who they are and who they are not” as happens in the best family circumstances.

Likewise the Presentation associates’ transmission process has its own flavor, marked by moving from attraction to the beauty, truth, and goodness of the mission to finding contentment in engaging that mission in small consistent ways. Associates tether their appropriation of the tradition to both Nano Nagle and the sisters, who “lead by example…their goals and mission are well integrated into who they are, so when they act it just flows right out.” Most Presentation associates describe drawing inspiration from watching themselves and their fellow associates fully embrace the commitment to undertake small constructive action on behalf of those in need. Associates and religious express certainty that the changes for the better they see in themselves and in their group indicate the Spirit’s guidance at work and this conviction leads them to routinely make space and time to listen to the Spirit as a group. In so doing associates embrace the emerging life of the association and join their own individual lives to it.

3. Becoming More Themselves: Identifying with the Lay Vocation

In this way what began as an individual’s narrative of desire for more than parish life and attraction to a charism becomes part of a larger story of an association’s growth

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625 Interview A5.
626 Interview A10.
627 Interview B4 and B2. The latter interviewee said the sisters push her, like Nano, to “go one pace beyond” in compassion.
628 Interview B3.
in holiness through appropriating a particular tradition. A final way of understanding the passing on of a congregation’s tradition lies in this juncture of an individual coming to locate himself or herself differently by a rediscovery and new appreciation of what it can mean to be laity within the church.

Both PP and AIC contrast their current life as associates with the “childhood faith” they had lived during prior years and the early stage of getting to know their association’s tradition. They now take daily active steps toward deepening their living out of the gospel through their tradition and also by the mutual accountability required by membership. Both sets of associates recognize that this maturing process requires a new kind of practice of selfless love. As parents, spouses, adult children, and friends, most associates have familiarity with the self-giving required of those roles, but they recount what a revelation and attraction it was to be challenged to give of themselves in such new ways as associate life invites. As mentioned previously, associates willingly change habits of consumption, misusing resources, media reception, speed, indifference to the poor, and over-commitments as they come to know the tradition and watch themselves grow in humility, patience, perseverance, hospitality, trust, and love of Christ.629 Two insights during this appropriation process result in associates’ deepening identification with a lay vocation: 1) they realize they are not members of the religious congregation and 2) they realize they are not simply consumers of the tradition, but are truly part of it. As the bond between religious and associates deepens and the tradition becomes familiar, associates can say with equal weight that these religious are like them in many ways and are also “other” in profound ways. One AIC member who spent three months living with

629 Interviews A3, A10, A1, B3, B8.
the sisters as part of becoming an associate concluded her stay with the insight, “There is no way I can begin to understand what it is like to live as a Cistercian monastic person.”\textsuperscript{630} Another AIC member realized, “There are things about the monastic world we cannot replicate and shouldn’t try. We are in one kind of pressure cooker and they are in other.” She continues, “The Spirit mediates for all of us and Christ and the Spirit dwell in all of us. If we are open to the grace and charisms he gives us, God will teach us how to proceed within this life.”\textsuperscript{631} Her statement precisely relates the insight into being active participants in the whole tradition rather than consumers of its attractive parts. The reverence for the Spirit at work seems to go hand in hand with the strong sense of taking up a call to action. “The uniqueness of the AIC lay vocation lies in appropriating the practice of Cistercian values and taking it out to the world,” a founding member claims.\textsuperscript{632} They and their monastic liaisons see this as enriching the order and following the Spirit’s leading for the charism. But how does this manifest?\textsuperscript{633} They themselves answer by recalling particular instances of melding their lives with the tradition and maintaining the integrity of each, as one AIC member has come to embody quite comfortably.\textsuperscript{634}

\textsuperscript{630} Interview A10. Her story will be addressed in Ch.6.
\textsuperscript{631} Interview A2.
\textsuperscript{632} Interview A10.
\textsuperscript{633} Associates are not following the mold of porter and choir monks or sisters nor do they follow the third order way of life mentioned in Ch.1.
\textsuperscript{634} Interview A10. One AIC member tells a story about appropriating simplicity: “My life isn’t simple,” she admits, citing care of elderly parents, adult children, and a teaching career. “I’ve cut back, but there are many ways I don’t live Cistercian simplicity. For example I love to go out and have a nice dinner and glasses of wine with my husband and friends. I love to get dressed up and that doesn’t trouble me at all. It is part of me and my spirituality.” She goes on to describe how prayer and reflection on simplicity with the AIC led her to make several pivotal changes in her life, particularly some that helped her deepen care of her “primary community”—her family and extended family. Other AIC members describe how their marriages have been enriched by participation and how their creativity and personal gifts have been tapped for the first time since childhood as in Interview A3 and A2.
These fledgling insights into what happens during the permeation of tradition into associates’ lives offer a starting point. Ch.6 examines particular narratives of both dramatic and ordinary integration, probing just how associates see the Spirit’s presence within them. Is also asks in what ways members of the movement anticipate associates’ living out an order’s tradition changing in ten or twenty years when communities of religious will likely have altered dramatically.

II. The Church Question: Between Two Institutional Expressions

So far this study of the AIC and PBVM Presentation Partners’ ways of life has dwelled close to a description of their individual daily lives and the group life evident in their meetings, service, and worship. Such a close view offers the great benefit of an understanding of the association’s inner workings. A broader view is also needed in order to make sense of the nature and significance of associate life as it fits with the larger church, particularly since associates themselves see their organization connected to a variety of layers of church community. This section explores the nature of these broader connections and finds that the PP and AIC see their groups both arising from and serving the wider church.

The correlations composing associates’ relationship to the church are both new and far from self-evident. Since they are neither a parish nor a religious community, they do not follow the traditional patterns of relating to local and universal church that these two institutional expressions follow. Yet there remains more to say about their institutional fit. To those unfamiliar with associate life, their connections to the local church often appear subtle and hidden at first because associations are rarely found in the church’s public spotlight. However, despite these factors, it is possible to listen closely
to associates’ lives and perceptions as revealed in interviews and archival material and arrive at how they themselves make sense of their layered and undeniably firm ties to the larger church.

The following three subtopics entitled A. Comparable Groups, B. The Parish Question, and C. Who is Served?, organize a discussion of associates’ perceptions and practices of their fit with the local diocese and particularly their parishes. Unlike Ch.3’s focus on gathering together associates’ self-perceptions, this section introduces and employs a reflective comparison between the typical ways parish based organizations, new ecclesial movements, and ministry groups interact with the PPs and AICs, connecting them to the larger church. The comparison shows associates to be a distinct species within the genre of new ecclesial movements since Vatican II, at least regarding the nature of their exceptional bond with the parish and local church.

A. Relation to Comparable Groups

Since the late 1970’s and 1980’s, mainstream and even ‘border’ U.S. Catholics have been exposed to and encouraged to participate in regularly meeting small faith-based groups. As Bernard Lee attests, defining the ever changing SCC movement in the U.S. presents several challenges, but his 2000 study worked with some basic parameters: small groups of mostly Catholics, meeting regularly, seeking faith enrichment as a complement to parish life, who consider themselves a community.636 Differing from older devotional and charitable societies in U.S. Catholic history

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636 Ibid., 43. He names associates as a related category and intentionally excludes them from this study.
including confraternities and sodalities, the NEM and SCC offered several attractions within the postconciliar U.S. context, among them a way of maintaining close and even intimate social ties with other church members during the ongoing breakdown of the Catholic parochial sub-culture. Small groups encountered scripture together in an ongoing way, shared the process of integrating scripture and church teaching into the contexts of their lives and, particularly in the case of the NEM, held one another accountable for an all-embracing commitment to spiritual growth inspired by Vatican II’s teachings on universal call to holiness and the vocation of the laity.

Much of the same context and form for the NEM and SCC can be attributed to the lay associate movement arising during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. At the same time, though, the lay associate movement cannot simply be called a synonymous event because of the distinctness of their way of life and their belonging to multiple faith groups.

1. Parish Group Belonging

Whereas Ch.3 discussed the parish service and ministry commitments of PP and AIC members, this section focuses on exploring their participation in four general kinds of parish based groups: temporary groups, faith sharing groups and bible studies, groups with ties to national or international organizations, and those that might be called the special cases that do not neatly fit these categories. Overall parish based group participation holds a place of value and commitment for associates even as they remain clear about their associate belonging having priority. To begin, a good number of associates regularly participate in small faith groups that meet for the weeks of Lent or

\[637\] See Ch.1’s discussion of precursors to present day SCC and lay associations. Some interviewees say they consider the influence of Protestant small bible study meetings within this list.

\[638\] See Bernard Lee, *The Catholic Experience*, Ch.5 Perspectives and Portents for a discussion of these issues.
Advent or for another period under twelve weeks long. In speaking about these short term groups, several associates added comments about their dissatisfaction with them.639 One member offered a Lenten scripture study to her parish. She was discouraged when three fourths of the group left and she was asked to ‘bring [her teaching] down a level,’ something she decided she could and would not do.640 However the AIC did receive her contributions in the form of several topical presentations at monthly meetings. Other associates have had only positive experiences with temporary parish groups and found them enriching.641

Faith sharing groups and bible studies also attract associates who describe them in largely positive ways.642 One AIC member says he can always “get his faith sharing” through a parish or in his case a congregation-based group, but by contrast does not seek that at AIC meetings.643 They cite the socializing, learning about the faith particularly with scripture, and praying together with others who have been in relationship with them for years as the attracting factors. Both PP and AIC members’ participation in such parish groups fits their routine of monthly associate meetings and weekly bible studies or faith sharing groups. PP and AIC have within their ranks a good number who participate in parish based groups with national or international ties,644 a zazen meditation group,645

639 Interview A3.
640 Interview A5.
641 Interview B3.
642 Interviews B9, B2, and Questionnaire QB15. Others describe enjoying their belonging in long term ways to a Catholic Women’s study group, a bible study, an RCIA team with regular faith sharing, and a rosary society.
643 Interview A6, Interview A10 says “we are not a faith sharing group...that isn’t what we do. We’re not a support group. Our primary focus is how we can learn about aspects of Cistercian monastic spirituality and take it into our lives and make it a significant part.”
644 Questionnaire QA6 and QB6. Among these are charismatic groups and Life in the Spirit seminars.
645 Interview A1.
St. Vincent de Paul, and the Knights of Columbus. For most of these associates, such ties to larger faith based organizations predate and complement their associate involvement.

Along the same lines, an Episcopalian AIC member has served as a facilitator of a Benedict’s Toolbox group for several years, a national program that involves a small group reading about Benedictine tradition and then sharing with one another about its implementation. One married member reflects that TOOL addresses “secular” aspects of her and her husband’s life, including their roles as consumers, investors, parents, and partakers of a political climate. In her view these contrast with AIC’s focus on spiritual life, prayer, silence, and “focus on what preserves us from the secular.”

Lastly, associates interviewed in this study occasionally mentioned involvement in parish based groups that do not easily fit into the schema presented here. One AIC member mentions links to recovery groups and how his “taking recovery seriously” shaped his receptivity to associate life while another attends a parish based social group for seniors but is otherwise uninvolved in parish life. Some associates describe participation in Catholic professional associations and only rarely mention involvement in parish and diocesan-based organizations.

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646 Interviews B8 and B10.
647 Interview A2. He describes this work as “a mutual ministry with a great degree of openness and trust. We share gifts of the Spirit and new knowledge tempers my pride.”
648 Interview A3. She describes how her TOOL group has come to respect their meeting times and arrange TOOL meetings around them. She and her husband occasionally skip a TOOL event to attend AIC meetings. She clarifies, “we are in the secular life. It’s where we have been placed. It’s not the enemy but we can bring some harmony of the liturgical and daily cycles of prayer to it.”
649 Interview A1.
650 Interview A8.
Two associates spoke about their failed attempts to find a fit with a parish and their consequent and current efforts to start an alternative worship community. A small group of AIC members has elected to meet outside of monthly gatherings to support one another in similar searches for “where we belong in the church.” Speaking about these efforts, one of the associates explains, “I’m called to the world serving others, but Cistercians are hidden and that’s a difference. Unlike a monk or nun we take what we’ve learned and go outward with it. Some associates take on the hidden aspect. There is space for both and no one size fits all here.”

2. Religious Order Based Group Belonging

Some PP and AIC even overlap their associate belonging with other forms of lay groups bonded to religious orders. The degree of coalesced community life and expectations of Christian practice found there is often quite less than that of the PP and AIC. The most common form is the “prayer affiliate” model in which laity pray for and with a vowed religious congregation in a regular way and often receive a monthly paper or electronic newsletter describing ministries, events, prayers for the living and deceased, and needs. An Episcopalian AIC member relates his prior commitment to a Franciscan version of this affiliate model saying he sees the two belongings as overlapping and complementary and never conflictual. Generally associates see the commitments as complementary and ordered to a priority on associate life, stating, “[Our associate

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651 Interview A10. They say they seek a kind of intimate, weekly, and long-term small faith group to complement the primarily monthly interactions at associate meetings, a point worth further study.
652 Interview A10.
653 Interview A6. His attraction to the prayer associates stems “a sentimental attachment” to the Franciscan teachers he had as a child who “gave [him his] social conscience and ethics.” Commitment as a prayer associate largely involves praying for the intentions of the sisters and sometimes involves going to an annual gathering of prayer affiliates and lay associates.
membership] is our highest priority and grounding though. It allows a spiritual
mindfulness to flow out into all the other areas.”

3. New Ecclesial Movements

That their associate membership takes precedence over other small group
ministries and commitments is one among several characteristics PP and AIC have in
common with other lay movements. As Ch.2 stated, European NEM remain less than
integrated into parish life, ranging from simple unawareness of their presence to full
blown conflict with the local bishop.655 Brendan Leahy quotes from author Julian
Porteous who observes:

They [parishes] can feel that the movements demand a total adherence to their life
and activities and so limit the availability of their members to assist in the life of
the parish…Parishioners can also feel second rate in the level of their life and
services when they see what a movement is capable of doing…Movements can
also give the impression of being separatist with their own spirituality and
practices.656

Ideally NEM have a clear ecclesial fit. Leahy writes, “movements are not merely
pious groups on the margins of parish life…but rather express within the parish a “co-
essential” charismatic dimension of the church.”657 He writes: “movements need not
think of themselves as the only way of being church and detached from institutional
structures….Parishes too don’t have the only valid ecclesial structure for carrying out the
apostolate within the parish pastoral plan.”658 Associates may be seen as a charismatic

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654 Interview A3.
655 Tony Hanna, New Ecclesial Movements, 244.
656 Brenan Leahy, Ecclesial Movements, 146 quoting Julian Porteous, A New Wine and Fresh Skins, 150-151.
657 Ibid., 148.
658 Ibid., 147 and 146. This ecclesial fit emerges from the thought of John Paul II and is confirmed by
Benedict XVI. According to Leahy, by 1997-1998 John Paul II was encouraging parishes to receive NEM as
presence in a parish just as Leahy indicates about NEM. On the one hand it is possible that lay associations may need ripening time before the full potential of their parish integration is realized, but on the other hand it is also possible they may have reached their potential already---as somewhat hidden leaven within the ministry, small group gathering, and worship in the context of the local church.

B. Fit With The Parish

For most of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians and Presentation Partners parish belonging precedes the joining of a lay association, and most see the two loyalties as complementary but not always clear-cut. In contrast with early concerns about associate life from the late 1980’s which anticipated an exodus of committed parishioners from the parish setting, most PP and AIC are quick to explain that associate participation enhances and inspires their worship and service within a parish. They describe how a major force of attraction to associate life was that it met desires and needs left lacking in parish participation. These two forces in the relationship between associates and their parishes initially seem contradictory, yet associates’ self-descriptions reveal them to be working together by means of a priority placed on associate life over parish as a primary faith community.

1. Enhancement of Parish Engagement

One Presentation Partner reflects on how he and members of his group are “energized and strengthened for parish work” by associate belonging. He goes on to describe how he sees the whole parish benefiting when individuals, such as the three

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enrichment especially for the young, for spiritual life, and for outreach to the needy. Benedict XVI added to this list their influence on the formation of small Christian communities and a sense of belonging.

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659 Ibid., 149.
fellow parishioners in his small associate group, are strengthened in their faith and faith-centered action.  

Another PP echoes his view as she describes how, even though her extremely active parish belonging predates her associate belonging by around thirty years, associate life helped her move from a sense of “lostness” in her parish’s life to a place of contentment.

For the most part parish engagement benefits from associate life.

Secondly, when AIC and PP serve their parishes, they tend to do so in line with the charisms of their unique association. Thirdly, sometimes the enhancement of parish involvement takes more hidden forms. In one case an AIC member gradually dropped all her parish ministries except for her work as a Eucharistic minister who takes communion to the dying in a hospice in order to become “more focused on seeing more fully, slowly, and in a hidden way the Christ in each person.” Her parish engagement has been enhanced in quality of presence, she says, rather than in quantity of committees or ministries.

2. Left Hungry by Parish Life

Associates with otherwise quite different profiles share a common narrative of moving toward associate life when spurred by a sense of being “left hungry” by their parish belonging. The something lacking is often named simply “opportunity” just as the associate in the previous paragraph desired. The opportunity seems missing in parish life because of conflicting views, an inability to share the context of their lives, a need for

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660 Interview B10.
661 Interview B6. She sees her experience as a common one among some of the women in her associate group who “have misaligned themselves with parish and the hierarchical structures of the church and are into women’s leadership” but who have found peace in associate commitment as a means of belonging in the church.
662 Interview A3. “Maybe it’s not a given that [associate life] enriches and fills out parish life for everyone,” observes one associate as she remembers negative comments about the church shared informally at meetings by a few members.
663 Interview A3.
community, and, perhaps most importantly, examples of desiring deeper access to the Catholic tradition. For this reason they go out from the parish toward formation and ultimately commitment in an associate program that often lead them back to a transformed parish commitment. Whether their parish loyalty finally falls inside or outside of official parish belonging, associates seem to concur that their way of life operates in correlation with the parish.

Associates recall the dissatisfaction accompanying the realization that they held such unknown and possibly different views from the parishioners in the Sunday pew around them. They seem to want a chance to express, clarify, and deepen their most driving views and values among fellow church members. Members of the PP and AIC also want to bring their lives into their faith community more meaningfully than their encounters with parish life seem to allow. A long time AIC member who has had negative experiences in seven parishes explains how troubling it is that she “cannot bring [her] context to the parish.” Associates seem attracted to the growth offered by different social “spaces and places” than parish life allows. As one founding AIC member puts it:

We live in a spiritually illiterate culture…we need to learn to lead and nurture and educate and feed the things that will feed our spirits….in our culture and church there are not a lot of things that [teach us to live a loving life]. We need people and places and experiences that will help us do it.

Most associates in this study speak about how crucial it has been to find a faith community outside of their parish in which they had the Eucharist but lacked friendships,

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664 Interview A1 and B6.
665 Interview A10.
666 Interview A10.
sustained times to pray and reflect deeply on scripture and tradition with others, and times to simply enjoy meals, study, or grow in the faith together. Whether they were seeking the like-minded “alignment” with care of the poor that marks the PP, or whether they wanted to be among those who would not find regular visits to a monastery strange, associates initially hoped for sharing their particular flavor of being Catholic with others.

3. Accessing the Tradition

When associates speak about their hunger for faith development within parish life, they also describe a dimension of unmet desire to access the tradition. They relate a sense of intellectual stuckness “at high school religion level” perpetuated by simplistic homilies. They want to learn about holy men and women’s lives, about the early church, about the tenets of the faith, about virtues, about the beatitudes, about sin and penance and more. Yet, associates also convey a desire to encounter the living examples of people who take their faith seriously. They want relationships with such people and they want to be like them, not just the chance to read or hear a lecture about them. For both PP and AIC, the strength of attraction to a bond with religious and the consequent serious commitment to relationship with them reveals this want. As one founding AIC member puts it, “men and women at the monastery have a much different understanding of Christianity and their faith because they’ve been living it. They can speak and share on a level I’ve never found in a parish. That is what feeds me…more

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667 Further study could explore to what extent Catholic subculture provided these real or imagined benefits in the past.  
668 Interview A5.  
669 Interview A4 and B5.  
670 Interview A4.
than a parish." Likewise Presentation Partners cannot seem to say enough words of admiration for the whole-life of dedication of the sisters. Associates’ “parish-trouble” can be positively interpreted in light of this desire for an alternative to a Sunday-only compartmentalized Christianity rather than just a yearning for a like-minded religious enclave.

4. Associate Life as Nourishment

Given all these perceived lacks in parish life, just how does life as an associate in the AIC or PP remedy them? While official literature for new members in both groups makes it clear that they do not set out to offer anything but a complement to participation in a church parish or congregation, associates themselves understand that their way of life satisfies their parish-induced hungers in several concrete ways. Bernard Lee’s description of the benefits rendered through small Christian community life seems to apply aptly to them as well:

The growing phenomenon of small Christian communities in the U.S. appears to be addressing a need that Catholics have for intimate, formative community and reflective engagement with the Gospel and the Church. They help Catholics form close friendships in an explicitly Christian context. They encourage Catholics to make the connections between the Christian story and their own life stories. They provide a venue in which adult Catholics can grow into an adult level faith. They are helping people live out the universal call to holiness. They are addressing some needs in this present context that parishes, for whatever reason, do not always seem to be fulfilling.

When asked about just how associate life meets the needs parish life neglects, the PP and AIC depict it offering: a particular foundation for being engaged in their parish, a

671 Interview A4.
672 Interview B10 and B8.
close community, acceptance and accountability for their efforts to integrate their faith and life, and engagement with the content of the tradition in a “something more” way.

First, with associate life as an anchor, members find ways to make parish engagement their own. As one long-term AIC member puts it, “I belong but in my way.” Second, associates say they find life-giving close community relationships in associate life. “AIC is a deep and intimate bond,” explains a member of the AIC, “but it is of a different kind than in my parish and in Teams of Our Lady.” Third, associates appreciate the combination of support and challenge to grow offered by their community. They appreciate how “radical community gets rid of distractions.” Additionally, they appreciate watching themselves grow in the Cistercian or Presentation charism among others, particularly among the blend of religious and lay faithful moving together toward a challenging ideal of sacrificial love in a particular spiritual tradition.

Fourth, closely tied to the community benefit of associate life is the unreserved acceptance members find among their fellow participants. “It is a place where we can be real and accepted and there is nothing more powerful and valuable than that,” relates an AIC member. Associate communities seem to offer life within a kind of delicately balanced intimacy akin to some types of religious congregations in which much is shared but much also remains private. Members of both groups enjoy close relationships in which the family life, work, and personal history can be brought, yet at the same time there is a level of hiddenness from one another in the wider group life. All the details of

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674 Interview A5. “We are a Catholic group,” he emphasizes, “it’s the foundation for us.”
675 Interview A3.
676 Interview A1.
677 Interview A1.
one’s views, perspectives on church, personal histories and cultural stances are not necessarily shared.\textsuperscript{678}

Fifth, accepting communities would not fully meet the gap left by parish life without accountability. Both PP and AIC highly value that others hold them to a high standard of self-giving, saying, “The accountability helps me do things that are good, thoughtful, and important when I wouldn’t choose to otherwise.”\textsuperscript{679} Regular meetings and yearly events with attendance expectations, one on one accompaniment during formation, smaller groups for discussion and prayer within the larger associate group, checking on absent members, and annual (or longer) renewal of commitment statements all contribute to an ethos of accountability. One AIC member summarizes: “What is most important is that we hold each other accountable and share our struggles and our attempts to get it all together.”\textsuperscript{680} Formation in a charism, community, acceptance, and accountability combine together to offer the “something more” that parish life and even small groups do not seem to offer.

Most associates in this study understand their fit with the church ideally but struggle with it personally. Where to worship? How to participate? Can associate belonging receive priority? They say, “[our association] is the church but when we leave

\textsuperscript{678} Interview A1. One associate recalls, “A woman asked me whether AIC were liberal and I said I didn’t know. Even those I know well I don’t know about their politics and theology. This community is serious, accountable, and a place to transcend differences….there is much we just don’t ask about.” In Interview A6, one associate describes only realizing there were homosexuals in his group when a table discussion leader gave guidelines reminding participants to use inclusive language. In doing so the leader named several categories to be sensitive toward within the conversation emphasizing that members of the AIC fit each category.

\textsuperscript{679} Interview A1.

\textsuperscript{680} Interview A10.
it where do we belong and how do we fit?"681 Perhaps their dilemma plays out best in individual stories of dissonance and harmony as in when an AIC notes, “what first seemed like two separate ways of living the spiritual life (Cistercian and Catholic) now seem complementary and I have found my place.”682

C. Who is Served?

Associates are not “lifestyle enclaves”683 because they are rooted in service by and for the church. That is, associates’ activities, beliefs, and belonging in the PP and AIC are integrally bound up in both the internal and missionary life of the church. Most PP tend to view the service factor in straightforward ministerial ways whereas most AIC see it as bound up in the foundational work of appropriating Cistercian tradition within the context of their lives. In both cases, the life of these associations embraces more than that of a charitable or support group.

1. Presentation Partners’ Service and Support: The Poor and Us

For the Presentation Partners, service to others in the manner of Nano Nagle provides the horizon and ideal for their outward energies. Such efforts are, as expected, directed toward a long list of ministries and projects benefiting: at risk youth in New Orleans, older PBVM sisters, women, children, immigrants, sisters stationed far from the

681 Interview A10.
682 Interview A3.
683 Vincent Miller discusses the dangers of such groups in On Faith, Washington Post Online, March 3, 2008 “Culture of Choice Creating Religious Enclaves,” http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/03/culture_of_choice.html (accessed July 14, 2011). Associate life counters the description of these enclaves in that they are engaged with and challenging the world, and do indeed “school [members] in getting along with others amid disagreement.” For the AIC this schooling largely occurs within the association and for PP it seems to work out within the conversation between sisters with a variety of views and associates with a variety of views on the future of religious life. See Ch.6 for more on this issue.
motherhouse, students, dying people in hospice, the hospitalized and home bound sick, the poor in rural areas, the poor in particular communities, the families and catechists of a religious education program, all those affected by the production of nuclear weapons, young teens and adults on short term missions, policy makers in Washington, those who are hungry, homeless, and in need of medical care with no way to pay, and those in need of advocacy in the justice system. Associates tell stories of coming into contact with and sometimes forming long-term bonds with people in dire poverty or tremendous physical suffering in a way they never would have had they not become members. The works proffered among these populations, as detailed by interviewed associates, typically include prayer, a listening ear, and caring relationships. They might also include the administrative work of coordinating fundraisers or collections of material aid. Or they might entail teaching the faith, or teaching high school, lobbying the government, writing and reading about injustice, and serving food to hungry people, tutoring English, crocheting blankets, wrapping children’s Christmas gifts, or navigating U.S. life alongside new refugees.684

Although asking who is served by direct action entails a fairly straightforward response, it also raises a question about who does the serving. Associates serve individually and in small and large groups.685 In another illustration, one immigrant served by associates and sisters as she studied English and took her citizenship tests later became an associate herself and now shares her first language with associates and sisters studying it to enhance their ministries. Who is served in these cases becomes a bit blurred.

684 Interviews B4 and B3.
685 Interviews B9 and B10.
In addition Nano Nagle’s model of service also seems to extend to a more hidden kind of care for vulnerable members of the local church. Rather than flee the parish altogether, associates list parish and diocesan service fairly highly on their “who is served” lists. Some PP for example were inspired by their associate participation to undertake the three year lay formation for ministry certification offered for a time by their diocese and commit to long-term engagement in particular forms of service as part of it. Several single women who found themselves “lost” in parish life found fit with the local church by their associate belonging. Also, a growing number of PP who are retired, elderly, and even infirm find the community support they desire in the association. A final vulnerable population served by the PP association is the small number of former religious, some PBVM and some others, who have become members. These women describe how their particular alignment with the PBVM charism creates a situation of difficulty fitting in a satisfactory way within parish life alone; they miss the spiritual, social, and ministry opportunities religious life offers and enjoy the long-term, intimate, and prayer and mission-driven community of associate life.

2. The AIC Serves Monastically

Because the AIC interviewed all seem accustomed to critiques of selfishness or escapism, they have a great deal of practice communicating the traditional monastic

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686 Interview B6 and B10. One associate sees one component of his parish service as simple education. He hopes to inform parishioners about the sisters who are part of his parish and help those who are “unaware” of their character and work to come into relationship with them.
687 Interviews B5 and B6. In interview B5 the associate described belonging to her parish for over forty years but only reaching peace with her “church fit” after becoming an associate in the late 1990’s.
688 Interview B6.
689 Interview B5. This associate attended mass at the motherhouse for years and only recently has considered joining a parish because the teaching ministry her associate commitments strengthens her to undertake seems to require it.
responses with their own stamp upon them. In their literature, service finds a well-
considered place: “[they] are called to live the Gospel message in the world even though
to do so often involves choices and behaviors that are countercultural.” At the 2008
ILC conference in Huerta, Spain, they affirmed that their unique calling as lay Cistercians
involves being “an active witness to 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.” These statements say Cistercians serve through their prayer-
focused way of life, which understandably looks different for lay Cistercians than it does
for the monks and nuns. It is in moving from casual awareness and respect to serious
appropriation of Cistercian values such as obedience, stability, conversion of heart, and
community that AIC serve the church and world.

Previous chapters have recognized that the AIC see themselves benefiting from
AIC participation spiritually and socially, and they usually tie these elements together.
One member describes their “highly disciplined prayer life full of spiritual friendship.”
A long standing member describes how belonging to AIC is valued for its “serious
community” and saying, “something is happening here and I’m not sure what it is….but

690 Ch. 2 addresses critiques of lay associate life.
691 “What is the purpose of AIC?”, AIC Website, http://aicassociates.org/qanda.asp?q=q1 (accessed
October 15, 2012).
692 “Lay Cistercian Identity,” Final Version, Fourth International Lay Cistercian Encounter, May 31-June 7,
October 15, 2012).
handbook, the AIC quote OCSO Abbot General Dom Bernardo Oliveria’s 1995 letter to members of the
order on this topic. He describes how the Cistercian charism is a gift,
That seeks mutual expression (monastic and secular)...In the Church-Communion, states of life
are linked together in such a way that they complement one another. Even if their deep
meaning is common to all, each has its original and unmistakable profile. At the same time, they
exist within a mutual relation of service.
694 Interview A10.
695 Interview A6.
people are being fed and nourished together.”

Some members have undergone profound personal and ecclesial transformation by belonging and others would describe the benefits as largely colored by political or moral conversions. Generally AIC members describe being served deeply and in several simultaneous ways beginning with growth in their faith and relationships.

Members quickly convey the influence their AIC participation has on their families and work. By watching their parents live out AIC life and by occasionally attending family-oriented socials, children witness a monastic model of Catholic spiritual community. Additionally several AIC described the positive enrichment of their marriages as a result of participation, renewing appreciation for the sacredness of ordinary life and noticing the difference in marital interchanges when comparing the months she attends meetings and those months she has to miss a meeting. Moreover, a professor and a pastor both notice that their work is markedly different from before they were members and that those among whom they work and minister benefit from the change.

Both members and religious concur that the life of the AIC is also of service to the monks and nuns of New Melleray and Our Lady of the Mississippi. There is evidence that both Cistercian communities find encouragement for their vocations in the

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696 Interview A1.
697 Interviews A1 and A2. For examples of conversion and transformation stories see Ch.6.
698 Interview A1 and A4. They witness associates come together to support a dying member and mourn her loss.
699 Interviews A10 and A3.
700 Interview A5.
701 Interview A5.
702 Interview A7.
703 Interview A3.
presence of the AIC. This primarily stems from discussions in which associates and religious recall how they have integrated Cistercian tradition into their living. Most AIC also offer some small regular assistance to one or both of the monasteries including farm chores and landscaping, free photography for websites and publications, celebrating, mourning, and praying with the two communities and more.

This service to the Cistercians also extends to the larger Cistercian family nationally and internationally. AIC is a driver of the fairly young conversation about their way of life within the larger spiritual family. They are advocates of the value of diverse ways of life among lay Cistercian groups and at the same time they put forth great effort toward maintaining constant communication and collaboration among them. Among U.S. groups they are considered one of the eldest and most well-established. The AIC also continues to hold the unique place internationally of the only lay Cistercians with strong bonds to monasteries of both men and women.

AIC members interviewed seem in agreement that their time together also serves the goal of fostering unity among Christians. Baptist, Congregationalist, Episcopalian, and Methodist members join with Catholics in the prayer of the church, in taking up Cistercian tradition into their lives as laity, and as friends. Early on AIC saw their ecumenical bent as “a Spirit-led thing,” and now it is a valued and integrated part of their identity. Several interviewed members referenced an AIC member who lives out both Catholic and Baptist church commitments while one leadership council member

704 Interview A4. “We help young groups make an ideal for themselves,” states one council member.
705 Interview A1.
706 Interview A6 stated that he was attracted to join AIC when he noticed it taking over a year before his denomination even came up during a casual conversation. For him this example showed how mature and integrated the Christian unity commitment is for the AIC.
thinks most AIC have had an agnostic or even Buddhist phase in their faith
development.707 Members of the leadership council clearly see the presence of multiple
Christian traditions within AIC life not as potential conversions to Roman Catholicism
but rather in itself integral to the well-being of the group since they need one another’s
help to draw forth Cistercian ways of life into the contexts of their homes and families,
workplaces, friendships, and wider community engagements.

Finally, the AIC serves former AIC members and lay Cistercians who do not live
in geographic proximity to a collaborating monastery through the online lay Cistercian
association Conversi. Founded by AIC members six years ago, the association models its
life upon the AIC but geographically widespread members “meet” in online forums, blog
posts, and chat rooms.708 As the AIC provides oversight and resources to Conversi, they
can be said to have participated in the associate equivalent to the monastic missionary
work of “planting a monastery.”

D. Conclusion: The Question of Priority

This chapter has demonstrated that PP and AIC members do not see their
associations’ way of life in isolation, but rather understand it as a means of engagement
with the broader church. The primary institutional relationship is with each group’s
religious congregation and is marked by commitment to nurturing mutuality and
maintaining the boundaries of each group’s vocation. Additionally, the chapter showed
how the PP and AIC are tied to the local church, other new ecclesial movements, and the
various categories of people served by their work as associates. PP and AIC tend to give

707 Interview A7.
708 Interview A5.
priority to their associate belonging over their parish belonging.\textsuperscript{709} For most associates interviewed in this study, their associate group has truly “become their stability,”\textsuperscript{710} but this does not necessitate their withdrawl from the local church. In fact one positive outcome may be their role in expanding a religious congregation’s engagement in the local church by extending the reach of their charism. This work of extending the reach of religious institutions shows the PP and AIC to stand firmly at the intersection of the institutional church and the church as “buried, half-anonymous, in society, forming opinion, offering hope to the desperate, putting love where otherwise there would be none.” Ch.6 revisits these layers of community as associates’ lived vision of themselves as the “church buried” in society.

\textsuperscript{709} See Appendix table on results of this question from the questionnaires. Other associates from both groups were adamant that part of their Catholic identity required them to list parish belonging before associate belonging.

\textsuperscript{710} Interview A7. The interviewee contrasted this stability with her former parish belonging, but some interviewed PP and a few AIC would not put them in such strong opposition.
CHAPTER 6

STORIES AND VISIONS FROM “SAILORS ON THE SAME SEA”: ASSOCIATES’ FORMATIVE NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL-ECCLESIAL PERCEPTIONS

Associates and religious gather together to share the intersection of their lives and their faith as manifested in a particular spiritual tradition. To accomplish this they act together in prayer, study, worship, oversight of group life, and service. Yet within these more observable initiatives they also work together in more hidden acts of constructive reflection. So far in this study, claims about the data presented in Ch.3-4 have given rise to Ch.5’s investigation of practices surrounding these reflective acts. Here Ch.6 opens a third tier of reflection that critically analyzes the cumulative effects of these reflective acts. From a casual walking conversation on the monastery grounds between an AIC mentor and member in initial formation, to the official chronicled responses of small Presentation associate groups to “heritage” reflection questions in the Associate Connection Handbook, associates are continually building up a treasury of memory made up of reflections and perceptions about the past, present, and future intersections of faith and life. Neither promoting nor criticizing associates’ way of life, neither leaning on their own promotional and foundational materials nor their personal reflections alone, this chapter analyzes the geography of the inner landscape of the AIC as it emerges from qualitative data in interviews and archives. Patterns emerge from these lived history
sources that give rise to each group’s ideal self-perception. The thesis of this chapter is that the ecclesial implications of the PP and AIC’s self-perceptions operate by driving their actions, holding them accountable,\textsuperscript{711} and connecting their way of life with a larger vision of church.

This inner geography only partially overlaps with that of associates’ respective religious congregations because it focuses on associates making sense of their way of life in the contexts of their lives and the larger church. Sources for this reflective work can be gleaned from ways the PP and AIC communicate about their way of life in interviews, archival material, and official identity documents. However, this chapter approaches such sources seeking evidence of a vision rather than practices.\textsuperscript{712} Distilling something about their inner geography furthers the work of comprehending the distinctive tradition associates both receive and shape through their belonging and participation. Associates’ store of memory can best be ordered and analyzed by considering the past, present, and future through their own eyes as evidenced in their interviews and archival documents. Their memories of the past, sense of their fit within their wider contexts now, and anticipation of what is to come for their groups serve to give rise to key landmarks in locating associations ecclesially. For this reason, this chapter explores associates’

\textsuperscript{711} The chapter also judges the accuracy of this self perception to some extent, not as an anthropologist’s tools might, but by weighing whether associates’ view of themselves lines up with a view of the church emerging from Vatican II.

\textsuperscript{712} Ch.3-5 approached some of the same data with questions about practices. The difference may be likened to the difference between investigating a textual and an oral tradition.
dramatic encounters with God and the church, their ecclesial perceptions as shaped by Vatican II, and their visions of the future.\textsuperscript{713}

The chapter opens with several instances of associates’ momentous conversions and deepened Christian commitments by means of their participation in their tradition.\textsuperscript{714} Members of both groups tell these narratives with as much reverence as they relate the founding stories of their associations. Such recollections of personal mountaintop moments within associate life figure prominently in their sense of the value of associate life and help them to comprehend and express what it means to be an associate. These dramatic narratives also dwell within and animate the consciousness of the association. In the recurring telling of these narratives to one another, they serve as touchstones for associates’ ongoing work of making sense of the intersection between their way of life and the life of God.

The chapter’s second section examines to what extent there may be common perceptions of culture and church among the AIC and PP respectively, particularly in reference to the context of their reception of Vatican II. Ch.5 demonstrated that associates see themselves as a diverse group that prides itself on acceptance of one another in the midst of wide ranging viewpoints on church. Though this characteristic may be accurate, associates’ actions, the ways in which they tell the narratives that constitute their personal and shared histories as shaped by associate life, and their shared

\textsuperscript{713} A further relevant question not addressed in the scope of this study is to what extent the ecclesial vision of the PP and AIC aligns with events and influences within American Catholic History during their origins in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

\textsuperscript{714} These conversions particularly come out of what Bernard Lonergan names the dramatic pattern of experience in contrast to the practical or everyday pattern discussed in previous chapters. As used here the term will refer to conversions as “transformations of the subject” entailing a “new course and direction”. See Bernard Lonergan. \textit{Method in Theology}, University of Toronto Press (Toronto: 1999): 128.
intricate common sense world indicate each association may share a “group personality.” Such unity of inner meanings seems especially apparent when it comes to the ways they are interpreting the culture and church surrounding them. It is given that associates are neither formally nor informally bound to perceive their cultural ecclesial context in comparable ways, yet, just as with the dramatic narratives, the fact of this tendency toward common viewpoints contributes to the formation of individuals and shapes the life of the association.

Lastly, this chapter explores the extent to which associates share a vision of the future and how it might serve as an organizing principle for understanding the relationship between the dramatic and ordinary aspects of associate life. Members seem to agree that vowed religious congregations are getting older and smaller, new members continue to join their association, and their association will likely take new forms and continue its commitment to service of, with, and as the church. These perceptions of the future reveal that, alongside their friends in religious life, associates see their religious communities as living entities in an historical narrative, and they see themselves contributing to its present and future unfolding as a drama of relationship with the divine.

I. The Past: Extraordinary Encounters Effect Conversion to Tradition

Though associates were not directly asked about profound conversions or encounters with God during this study, many spontaneously offered accounts of such events as they tried to communicate associate life’s meaning and value. In some cases an extraordinary encounter with God and the church occurred as part of their earliest days as associates and continues to shape their vision. In other cases associates’ ongoing
formation has enabled them to look back upon the most graced moments of their lives with more complete understanding. These experiences are life changing and have a lasting effect. The common thread binding these narratives is the clear role played by associates’ absorption of their congregation’s tradition.\(^\text{715}\) In each case it provides railroad tracks to guide their conversion, their integration of that conversion into daily life, and a spirit of humility, prayerfulness, and humor with which to go about it.

A. The Healing of Wounds

In recalling the mountaintop events that shape their current life of faith, associates tend to reveal points of personal woundedness that were healed by one or more aspects of associate life. A homosexual man who grew up Catholic but left to join another Christian church returns as an associate and finds respect from other Catholics. An associate with social anxiety disorder finds a way to engage with a faith community. Single associates find a way to live out their faith among close others in ways parish life does not often foster. An AIC member finds a hidden Christian life of prayer to offer an alternative to the driven and ambitious model of life offered by her family. Women who struggle to find fit with their local church find ways of serving in leadership and fully sharing their gifts as associates in both groups. While not every associate in this study expressed a clear wound being healed, enough see a narrative of healing as integral to why they remain committed to associate life that sharing such memories as part of their gatherings serves to humanize all participants.

B. From Pursuit of the Mystical to Daily Walk within a Tradition

Less commonly associates describe their way of life as having a tempering effect on their pursuit of sensible encounters with God. The same associate mentioned above, as a result of the framework offered by his AIC formation as well as the OLM sisters, can now say that he is a contemplative and that in AIC life the “lights came on and the windows opened” as he grounded his religious experiences within a “structure and a community.” He can now say, “We can have big moments of grace but we can’t dwell on them. Our purpose is to grow day by day and walk in gratitude in the small things of life….My practice is to guard my heart and tongue and change over the long term.” 716

C. From Being Inspired to Being Committed

Early chapters made reference to the question of initial attraction to associate life. For most associates attraction is spurred by an extraordinary experience of being compelled by observing others embodying the congregation’s charism. In describing the origin of her attraction to the PP, one associate recalls her unanticipated and stirring encounter with the work of PBVM sisters in New Orleans just after Hurricane Katrina. During a vacation she and her husband decided to visit the Lantern Lights and Café Reconcile, two PBVM ministries in low income areas of New Orleans. 717 As some of the homeless men steered the couple to where a PBVM sister was working, she had a chance to talk with them and hear how they were waiting for food, medical aid, groceries, financial aid, or help getting identification documents together so they could qualify to spend a night in a local shelter. She simultaneously realized their enormous needs and

716 Interview A2.
717 Lantern Lights offers services to the homeless and working poor in partnership with other religious communities. Café Reconcile offers culinary apprenticeships to teens.
her inability to meet them as an individual. This trip opened the associate’s eyes to poverty and to the sisters’ dedication. Though she had a longstanding attraction to work among the poor, it solidified to a permanent commitment in seeing how well, how long, and how clearly the sisters and volunteers were “doing God’s work...all working alongside one another.”

D. From Childhood to Adulthood Living Out the Faith Best among Religious

Another PP member’s current strong alliance with the sisters has its roots in an extraordinary practice of worship she encountered as a child growing up in Dubuque. This associates’ family belonged to the local parish but attended mass at the Dominican priory. She recalls the priory as a “relational, focused, and stimulating” environment and an unforgettably strong influence on her growth in the faith. She especially came to love the homilies in which the Dominicans “were intellectuals and didn’t talk down to the people. Instead everybody had to reach up if they wanted to grab it.” These homilies challenged her to learn, critically consider Catholic Social Teaching, and eventually inspired her to become a teacher. Later, as a single adult, having become dissatisfied with parish life, she felt drawn to seek out religious-based worship again as an associate going to mass with the sisters.

E. From Individual Attraction to Generations of Commitment

The conversion from “me” to “we” often happens in the course of associate life as Ch.5 explored. Most members enter the process of formation as individuals with individual attractions to the religious or their charism. For this reason it was particularly

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718 Interview B3.
719 The priory was associated with the Aquinas Institute and has since moved to St. Louis.
720 Interview B5.
life changing for one AIC member who happened across details of her grandmother’s life as a third order “associate” after her own commitment ceremony. As a child her grandmother became attracted to religious life when some Poor Clare nuns visited her home. She wanted to join but later married and had children. Upon her death it became clear that her grandmother had enjoyed a somewhat secret life as a third order lay Dominican. She had “lived a quiet life and spent most of her day in prayer.” At her funeral the family was surprised to see her dressed in a black and white habit of the Dominican order and to observe how Dominican priests traveled far to say her mass. For the AIC member it was especially pivotal to see her grandmother for the first time as “part of a larger community…receiving final closure” and living on in the lives of others.

She cites her grandmother’s life as a compelling force in sustaining her own associate commitment, seeing herself following the ideal model offered by her grandmother of living a quiet, hidden, prayerful associate life imbedded in the larger church but manifest in concrete strength of love of the people around her.  

II. The Present: Cultural and Ecclesial Perceptions

Besides the dramatic events discussed in the previous heading, associates’ shared perceptions also come out of their more commonplace acts of interpreting their cultural-ecclesial surroundings. As active members of the faithful who have chosen a path of ongoing prayer and spiritual growth, intellectual formation and service, the Cistercian and Presentation associates in this study tend to see themselves as participants in Vatican II’s universal call to holiness and mission. Consequently they also have much to say

721 Interview A3.
about how this call unfolds in the contexts in which they live including the prominent characteristics of the church and surrounding culture as they see them. Members take up common viewpoints that distinguish the reflective dimension of their profile from that of other members of the faithful and contribute to their role as an engaging site of ecclesial vitality.

Reaching for the shape of these views requires pulling them together from a variety of sources, including not just what they say on pertinent issues but also how they say it. A sorting must occur between individual opinion and threads of commonality running through most associates’ reflections. The larger challenge is the interplay of cultural factors, a sense of the lay vocation, and views on the church. This section posits that associates do have common viewpoints identifiable by examining associates’ “read” of the worlds of meaning surrounding them within the church, the lay vocation and mission, and cultural perceptions. Isolating and examining associates’ views on these topics through representative examples establishes groundwork for understanding how these perceptions function together and influence associates’ lives both individually and as a group. While all members of the faithful can engage in this work of “making sense,” associates offer something unique in sharing the reflective tasks and living out their influence together according to their respective charisms.

A. Views on the Church

For the lay Cistercians and Presentation Partners, Vatican II’s influence upon their life as associates can be chiefly sensed when they reflect on the church. In particular, effects of the council color their relationship with religious, their sense of a widened church, and their sense of freedom to join with others in a mix of relationships in order to
live out their Christian commitments. Some members use Vatican II as an adjective with ambiguous meaning, calling the AIC “Vatican II people” in the context of emphasizing her view of them as hospitable to other Christians. But for the most part, it is associates’ perceptions and reasons for their actions that best indicate absorption of council themes. As Ch.3 made apparent, most AIC and PP lived through the council and participated to greater or lesser extents in its aftermath either as cradle Catholics, as converts or reverts, or as onlookers from other Christian communities. A few have theological training and a good number have some kind of ministerial training, largely inaccessible pre-council. Among their numbers are fairly new forms of church employment—parish and diocesan employees and those who have undertaken formal lay ecclesial ministry certification. When they list the ways they are currently engaged in their local parish—parish council, Eucharistic ministry, Directors of Religious Education and Faith Formation, Teams of Our Lady—they are most often listing activities made possible by Vatican II.

1. Religious are our Peers

On a cultural level, most associates have much in common with the religious with whom they bond including some experience of Catholic education or CCD taught by sisters, a fairly high rate of post-high school education, having lived through the tumult of the first post-council decades, having close friends and family members who have left the church, and having enjoyed some theological education and spiritual formation made possible by council changes. Members of both associate groups indicated that there remains a difference of exposure to spiritual life between themselves and their religious.

722 In Richard Gaillardetz. *The Church in the Making, Rediscovering Vatican II*, (Paulist Press Mawah, NJ: 2006), xiii, reference is made to this linguistic habit and “place marker in the ecclesiastical and ideological geography of contemporary Catholicism.”
They look to religious as those more “steeped” in the resources of the Christian life. Religious see them, in turn, as tremendously “hungry for spiritual formation.” However, associates of the AIC and PP come to share the common viewpoint that the vowed religious with whom they affiliate are their peers. By living in a formalized bond with particular religious communities for several years, and in some cases several decades, associates come to see more precisely just what they and their vowed friends have in common and just what it is that distinguishes them. One AIC member describes the shift as moving from a view of opposing ways of life to a view of complementary ones, “both channels of God’s grace.”

On the side of the vowed religious communities, fostering such judgments and commitments among their associates was an intentional move. Great changes within religious life resulting from Vatican II compelled most religious congregations to extend their life, and particularly their charism, to the non-vowed faithful in a variety of ways as Ch.1 discussed. *Lumen Gentium* especially calls for new connections between laity and religious, and reminds the church that religious are to be a sign for all people, especially by emphasizing the evangelical counsels as marks of the Christian life.723 For monastics these teachings led to a series of momentous changes724 as well as to “the search for

723 This refers especially to *Lumen Gentium* 4,5,6. A recent set of articles by Benedictine scholars identifies other specific portions of council documents and their varied reception by religious. These authors describe a heavy emphasis on *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Lumen Gentium*, for example, and only a modest embracing of *Gaudium et Spes*. See Barbara Mayer, OSB, ed. “How Vatican II Changed the Church and Religious Life,” *Benedictine Review* LXVI: 2 Fall/Winter 2013.

724 For example nuns did not attend general chapters of the order until Vatican II. Groups of monastic women were attached to a monk’s house that provided mediation with the order at large. O’Neill, Kathleen, OCSO, “Cistercian Mothers,” *Associates of Iowa Cistercians* vol.1 No.2 (October 16, 1995): 3.
ways they can assist other people in their quest for God.” The OLM sisters responded by opening their home to long term guests and their way of life to associates who wished to study and emulate it. For Presentation Sisters, the integration of Vatican II’s invitations to religious happened through gradual decisions made over thirty years with a cumulative effect of a permeable membrane within which their “charism of hospitality” is shared with non-vowed laity in the Partnership program. They challenged themselves to reach for cohesiveness among the different aspects of their life such as celibacy and ministry and expressing it, “such that others can see and understand it.” The associate practice of regularly gathering around table among religious as equals for meals, group business, prayer, and formation serves to humanize perceptions of both the religious and the associates. The familiarity and collaboration cultivate an atmosphere that allows good-natured teasing and humor to accompany lessons learned about community life on both sides.

From the beginning of the AIC and PP, associates’ stories of attraction to the group have often included an invitation to join offered by a sister or monk. Considering the OLM, NM, and PBVM congregation’s efforts to implement Vatican II’s renewals by extending their charism, this is not an accident. Because of the mutuality and collaboration that characterize the associate-religious bonds in this study, associates have picked up on the fact that the religious are inviting them to join in their congregation’s life for reasons related to Vatican II. While the religious are more likely

725 O’Neill, Kathleen, OSCO. Forward to Day, Trisha. *Inside the School of Charity.*
726 Interview B5.
to have read and studied entire documents of the council and secondary literature interpreting it, what comes forward in the common associate viewpoint is that religious see themselves responding to the universal call to holiness.

For example, AIC members received copies of a 1989 survey of religious and associates. The study showed that 83% of women religious, 58% of men religious, and 60% of associates say that Vatican II’s universal call to holiness was the primary reason for religious to sponsor an associate program. These three groups also identified sharing charism and collaborating with laity as significant motivations, with only a minority of respondents pointing to the attraction of new members as a motivating factor. For AIC members, this (now dated) study likely confirms what they encounter in their conversations and teaching sessions with the monks and sisters; monastics desire to aid in their response to the call to holiness and are fostering an associate program as one means of doing so.

Beyond initial motivations for starting or joining an association, the views of the vowed religious matter in other ways too. While associates certainly have their own distinct treasury of reflections, they remain heavily influenced by their relationships with individual sisters and monks and by the shared “culture” of their particular congregation that comes forward in the ambiance of their home, interactions with their members, their print and electronic communications, in the tone their reputation carries, and in the literature they have written. As mentioned in Ch.5, the early histories of the AIC and PP and the language implemented to describe their way of life pivot on the heavy teaching

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729 Both AIC and PP’s formation programs do entail some reading of excerpts from council documents, particularly *Dei Verbum*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Gaudium et Spes.*

and guiding roles of religious. Words of encouragement from religious\textsuperscript{731} and informal conversations between religious and associates about current events also reveal particular perceptions about the current ecclesial climate that are, in turn, taken up in whole or in part into associates’ views.

One illustration of this dynamic can be found in an associate’s response to the recent controversy surrounding the CDF’s communication with the LCWR. His description of what happened, what it meant, and what should be done about it almost echoed that of a sister in his small associate group interviewed at a later date. In brief, both described the CDF’s report as “painful” because it did not fully appreciate the contributions of women religious and questioned their loyalty to the church. Both also saw the best response as one of inattention to the CDF’s critiques and continuing their labors among the poor in their city, asking “what can Rome know about our work in this neighborhood?”\textsuperscript{732} While this study encountered no evidence that all PP shared their views, it indicates that these were the common sentiments among members of this small associate group.

Another example of this sharing of perceptions can be seen in how AIC members take up the narrative about how contemplative prayer and the attentive practices that go with it can break through stereotypes to meet a real cultural need for perceiving the presence of God in daily life. In her book, \textit{Inside the School of Charity}, AIC co-founder

\textsuperscript{731} Dom Bernardo Olivera’s famous letter to International Lay Cistercians and the associate column in the \textit{Presentation Periodical Doorways}, both discussed in Ch.2-3, are prime examples of this kind of encouragement.

\textsuperscript{732} Interviews B8 and IRB1. Associates in this study has shown themselves to be quite diverse in their opinions of the magisterial aspects of church. Most interviewed members are not easily put in categories like progressive or fideistic; rather they seem comfortable with aspects of their way of life remaining in tension.
Trisha Day articulates well a narrative reiterated in most of this study’s interviews with AIC.733 In contrast to the widespread presumption that contemplatives have their “head in the clouds pursuing sublime religious experiences,” she comes to see that in praying contemplatively the sisters become “firmly grounded in paying attention to the presence of God in the here and now of their lives.”734 She returns to this insight frequently, contrasting it with how our American culture would have us “sever our spiritual lives from all else.” Later, trying to integrate her monastic stay into her life at home, she takes up a developed faith perspective on how it is in “everyday circumstances I am both most likely to encounter and miss the sacred” and this fact calls for discipline.735

For example, Day came to see the discipline of joy requiring developing an ability to see God in all things, even hardships.736 Day’s writing offers a slow motion examination of an associate forming her perceptions into those viewpoints commonly held among AIC members. These viewpoints, inspired and shaped by Cistercians but actively formed by associates, are the work of digging for the meaning of contemplative prayer, spiritual reading, and the discipline of joy within their lay contexts. In these ways, associates’ coming to see religious as their peers is a living out of the council by breaking boundaries among states of life. In a limited way it can be compared to lay ecclesial ministers crossing boundaries between laity and clergy in seeking to live out their baptismal call through pastoral service. In both cases the chance is opened for members to find each other as peer witnesses to holiness. Again, most members of the associate

733 Day’s work underscores the thesis of this chapter, that the self-perceptions of the AIC and PP align with Vatican II’s ecclesial vision and operate as the driving, correcting force as they live it out.
734 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 69-71.
735 Ibid., 116 and 159.
736 Ibid., 110.
movement do not want to inappropriately blur the boundaries between states of life but rather seek to live out the council’s invitation to find commonality among the states of life.

2. Church is Wider

Yet associates’ sense of the post-conciliar church goes beyond views influenced by religious. A second shared perception among AIC members and PP members respectively is a judgment that the church is “wider” than they had previously envisioned it. Other Christians in their groups are invited and welcomed, the desire for Christian unity is actively cultivated and prayed for, and there is a wide umbrella in each association for Catholics of varying outlooks. For AIC members the widening seems to refer to both the presence of other Christians within their group as well as the broadening of relationships with lay Cistercian groups from around the world and from other Christian churches. Conversation, formal and informal reflection, and even some of their study materials encourage members to see the Cistercian tradition, Catholic practice, and even Eucharist through the eyes of Christians from other churches.

At an International Lay Cistercian conference in the late 1990’s, AIC representatives stated that, though they understood the mixed Christian denominations in their association had the potential to pose problems, none had occurred yet around this issue. Rather, the AIC sees itself dealing with an open question of dialogue and prayer. At the same time they see themselves obeying a leading from the Holy Spirit to share growth in the Cistercian path for Christian life. They went on to point out how much the other Christians contribute to the association, particularly around discipleship. They also
point out that other Christians have taken initiative to “put old categories aside” and be with the AIC so the Catholic members ought to reply with at least as much hospitality as they can. The AIC representatives described this call to hospitality as entailing “sharing what we have…just as the monasteries do with other Christians…especially offering our focus on community and depth of prayer with the church.” Such things can be offered even as members together with monastics wrestle with the question of how much the Cistercian charism is a “seeking that transcends faith communities.” They conclude with the assessment that other Christians’ presence is valued during ongoing formation as “[their] whole experience of church is in transformation.”

With less experience incorporating other Christians into their midst, the Presentation Partners’ shared sense of a wider church stems from both sharing ministerial efforts with groups from other churches and increasing contact with the realities of poverty-induced suffering. One associate expressed a sentiment shared by several interviewees that, “the magisterium is necessary but touching people’s lives in a Christ-like manner is more inspiring to their spiritual growth than a letter from Rome.” He recounted how undertaking ministry among homeless and abused women as a result of his associate commitment opened his eyes to the meaning of poverty and the desire Christ has for his church to be unified with the poor. For this associate, realizing his associate identity within layers of community also entailed a realization of being called to

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737 Archival Document, “AIC Presentation,” Executive Summary Cistercian Associates Conference, 5/23/97, pp. 17-18. At the end of their statement to the conference, the AIC representatives state “Our spirituality is Christ centered not Catholic centered; St. Benedict was writing for Christians.” This comment may not reflect the “AIC mind” as much as well as their previous description does, since, for example, interviews indicate a spectrum of views on the leadership council decision to remove Eucharist from monthly meetings. Some members might argue more than others that their spirituality is Christ centered by means of the Catholic tradition.

738 Questionnaire B1. This associate is a member of the clergy.
human solidarity. As part of their orientation process, associates study a lesson on the “call of the church.” In this context they read portions of *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* and hear a reflection emphasizing how “Christian community is...linked with humankind and its history, bearing a message of salvation intended for all people.” Later in the lesson they hear quotes from Oscar Romero, Mother Vincent (an early PBVM), and others who model the value of acting in small good ways in the face of injustice.739

There is also evidence that they are slowly developing their own voice. As a result of both this common reflection and comparable experiences engaging corporal works of mercy among the poor, most associates arrive at a view that the church should be one “with and in” the poor.740 Associates also express an appropriation of the “small things” path of service inspired by Nano Nagle and adapted to their lay lives.741 Presentation Partners show themselves to be not only engaged with these issues but also self-reflective about “what the Spirit might be saying to the church through our commitment to this [associate] process.”742

3. Brothers and Sisters Can Be Found Outside the Parish Too

A third way associates’ common viewpoints surrounding the church manifest in this study is through their convictions that 1) the Christian life requires social bonds with

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740 “Associates: What do Presentation associates say about their experiences?” Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, IA http://www.dubuquepresentations.org/member_associate_stories.cfm Accessed 12/10/13 On the PBVM website one associate voices this vision: “Being a PBVM associate gives me a way to live out the Vatican II call for the laity to be light to the world...The Sisters’ legendary hospitality inspires me to reach out to those around me who are under loved....My heart has been broken open by service projects in inner city Detroit, Chicago and Kansas City.”
741 Interview B3. Like many other interviewees this associate notes PP life helping her come to value her “small contributions” to national and local charitable efforts as well as toward fostering her grandchildren’s faith education.
742 This was the theme of the Midwest Associate Meeting held in April 2004.
other Christians, 2) the parish’s ability to offer those bonds is usually quite limited, and 3) it is an application of Vatican II’s universal call to holiness to seek groups beyond parish life for spiritual growth and renewal and bonds of mutuality with religious. Both the AIC and the PP share these views, and though they arrive at them through different histories, they seem to hold their implications in common. Members of both groups, for example, talk about what a gift their association has been in their lives and how this gift is seen as an extension of the gift character of the church. In other words, the associates in this study see their participation in associate life as not only a remedy for the social limitations of parish life but as active participation in the Spirit’s will for the church; they are responding to a gift given by and for the church.

Associates in this study express clarity about both the goods and limits of parish life, but they commonly point to the social and formation limits there as a reason to seek bonds with other faithful elsewhere. AIC members tend to be of like mind that unlike a parish, their group offers formation, support, and aid in living counter culturally.743 Though the AIC is neither a “social club nor a perfect lay Cistercian community,” it is a site of “formation, support and encouragement” that has benefit to the world:

The AIC is a vital part of the inner life of the church, we are souls that resonate together as a fervent cell of the mystical body of Christ and that resonance, if we are faithful—cannot help but affect the life of our local church. We challenge one another, strive to serve, obey, share, support, respect and hold each other accountable. …our diversity, even with non Catholics, provides wider perspective adds richness and spreads the Cistercian charism even further into the universal body of Christ and the world.744

The life of the AIC, then, exudes this fairly sophisticated common viewpoint about what it means to seek and find brother and sisterhood outside of parish life.

On the Presentation side, associates put across a similar shared narrative about just what desire and fulfillment are matched in their way of life. A small associate group in rural central Iowa describes themselves in this way: “Teacher and nurse, principal and pastoral associate, religious educator and retreat minister, spiritual director and farmer, they all join together to encourage each other and bring Christian Spirit to each other, their families and their workplaces.” They see themselves choosing to both “more deeply live out their baptismal commitment and spread the PBVM tradition” in becoming associates.

In interviews, questionnaires, commitment ceremonies, and periodicals PP members bring to light a surprisingly common view of the desires that drive their group. They desire to further the PBVM charism of hospitality, they want opportunities for friendship, hospitality and celebration, and they desire prayer, reflection and faith sharing. They want to share their skills and talents in service “within the life and ministry of the Church.” When asked about possible changes in her views since joining the PP, one associate replied that though there was nothing different in the way she sees the church broadly speaking, participation has “given a place and a way of contributing” that were not present before and this fact has been life-shaping for her. She confirms an outlook

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745 “Associate Update,” Doorways vol. 45 no.2, (Summer 200): 10.
746 “Who are Associates?” Doorways vol 53 no. 3 (Fall 2010): 13 This is also found in Archival Document, Commitment Ceremony, 11/30/10
748 Questionnaire QB15.
held by most Presentation associates—one marked by few grand transformations of ecclesial perception but indelibly altered by new ways of finding connection and serving.

B. Viewpoints on the Lay Vocation and Mission

Renewing baptismal commitments at mass, reading portions of *Lumen Gentium* and other council documents at catechist trainings, RCIA meetings, bible studies, seasonal faith sharing groups or in ministry, studying church history in Catholic schools, it is likely that associates pick up a general awareness of Vatican II’s call to holiness before becoming associates. Parish engagements such as these might even lead them to join with others in formally learning about and assenting to the teaching in a broad way. However, what distinguishes associate life when it comes to understanding the distinctly lay vocation and mission promoted by the council is that their assent is not the end point of shared judgment. In other words, instead of holding a general sense of the call to holiness in common and then leaving the majority of the understanding and living out of that call to individuals, associates commit to sharing the interpretive process and its implementation with one another.

As shown throughout this work, what most distinguishes associates from other groups of faithful engaged in understanding and living out the call to holiness is their committed bondedness to a particular religious community and its charism. Because of their trust in the Holy Spirit’s gifting of the charism to them, AIC and PP members understand that “it is not only possible but necessary for some of [them] to live it in the world. It is an interior disposition, not limited by location or vocation. It is given to
[them] individually and to [them] as a group.”749 In this way the AIC and PP understand themselves to be following a distinctive channel for living out the call to holiness. In particular, their reflections on 1) work 2) marriage 3) prayer and 4) ongoing conversion reveal just how they see the call and response to holiness unfolding in associate life.

1. Work

Most PP interviewed expressed some variation of the belief that their primary spiritual work is to live out the PBVM spirituality and mission by “each day doing little things for Christ” in the poor.750 The tasks of this work differ from one associate to another (and one small associate group to another) depending on age, health, education, and employment and also on variations in personality and capacity.751 Sewing cloth shopping bags out of old blue jeans alongside sisters, lobbying congress about justice for immigrants, and helping a single mother enroll her children in Religious Education might all fall under the PP’s shared view of the content of their daily work. But it is working collaboratively to identify needs “in the narrow lanes” in the shadow of Nano Nagle and shoulder to shoulder with PBVM sisters that sets them apart from a social ministry committee at a parish engaged in comparable tasks or a small Christian community with concern for social justice.

Similarly, AIC’s shared viewpoint on their primary work surrounds the Cistercian charism. Comparing her “job assignment” as a wife and mother, friend, daughter, sister, teacher, and community member to the rotating work roles assigned to sisters at OLM, Trisha Day writes, “those of us who have been given a chance to share the wisdom of the


750 Questionnaire QB23

751 Interview B3
Cistercian charism have been “assigned” different vocations in which to apply it. What I can recognize and affirm…is that although my specific “job assignment” is quite different it is no less important.”

Her view communicates a position shared by most AIC in this study; their outward lives are somewhat different than vowed religious but they are called to live them steeped in the work of practicing Cistercian values.

2. Marriage

Most associates in this study are married, though only a few married associates have a spouse who is a member of the same association. This strong presence of married members has an influence on each group’s reflection on the vocation to holiness. Associates themselves acknowledge more reflection and unearthing of perceptions must be done on this topic. At this point it is at least possible to note that married PP are effusive in their gratitude for the chance to undertake community life and ministry together, growing together in faith by means of a particular spiritual tradition. In cases in which only one spouse is an associate, members frequently relate stories of the sisters and association extending familial warmth and opportunities for prayer and service to the spouse as well. But the shaping power of married associates goes much further than these sentiments.

Just as NM monks speak of the associate program affirming their vocation, so too married associates (the majority of associates) often relate how their vocation to married life has been clarified and enriched through associate participation. Even those who also

752 Day, *Inside the School of Charity*, 236.
753 Archival Document, “The Associate Vocation,” pp1-2, August 2007. They are not “pretenders, but fellow sailors on the same sea with monastic brothers and sisters though living apart.”
754 Interview A10
755 Interview A10, B10, B8, A4
belong to Teams of Our Lady or other widespread couple-focused ecclesial groups can affirm this judgment. Single members talk about how associate participation has renewed their sense of baptismal call and affirmed their contributions to the church by means of the single vocation. On both the PP and AIC sides, members mention enjoying a renewed sense of the value of marriage as a site for living out the Christian call.

In her book Trisha Day describes how it is in living and associating with the monks and nuns that she came to understand her marriage as a means to holiness. She examines the example of sisters’ vows to *conversatio morum*, ongoing conversion, and the practice of virtues supported by loving community which “show it is a way of life that takes Christ’s message very seriously—so seriously that they are willing to spend the rest of their lives trying to figure out what it means to put it into practice.”756 She has the insight that married people are invited to do the same, to see their twoness as a community of support, stability, and formation. In this way a marriage can be open to “the transformative nature of God’s grace and how we can be a source of it for one another.” Fidelity then, in light of the monastic example, entails aligning “choices and decisions” with the gospel while sustaining receptivity to God’s creative action as well. 757

With regard to her marriage, one of the most fruitful encounters with Cistercian tradition for Day was her consideration of stability. Like other AIC members she encountered this virtue within the course of several month-long studies culminating in Saturday-long exploration of the subject as a group. Her views were also transformed by

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757 Day, *Inside the School of Charity*, 211.
the example of the sisters gleaned during her three month stay with them in 2001. Having closely observed how stability ties a religious to her community of love and the practices and attitudes they help each other prioritize, she came to understand that “it is not so much where we live but rather how we live inside a place that matters.” She acknowledges that a monastery eases this effort in some ways but those outside the monastery can take the monastic example to heart by “treasuring family’s history and heritage,” putting self-interest aside, and attending to the sacredness of the environments where they live. The “ambiguous and impermanent” attributes of the culture surrounding married life in the U.S. require ongoing conversion to uphold truth, beauty, and goodness in a way of life patterned after the monks and sisters.

3. Prayer

A third focus of associates’ living out of the call to holiness can be found in how their prayer develops through membership. The common viewpoint here for both the AIC and PP can be said to begin with PP’s expression when Day states, “I simply pray more now.” Members of both associations recall how commitment to associate life asked them to become more disciplined in their daily prayer and more skillful at praying with one another.

Presentation Partners tend to keep the particular forms and content of their personal prayer rather private, even from one another. What they hold in common and openly share, however, is their commitment to pray in some way daily and to make a significant part of that time spent with scripture and with the intercessions on behalf of

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758 Day, *Inside the School of Charity*, 185 and 187.
759 Questionnaire QB19
the poor and for those needs circulated to all PBVMs and associates every few days. Despite their reticence they do reveal that they have integrated new methods of prayer and ways of encountering scripture learned during associate meetings and retreats. The primary prayer practice conducted together can be said to fall into the category of faith sharing in that it involves an oral reading of a text and a time for individuals to respond in a context of prayerful listening. These texts come from scripture, a saint’s writings, or a spiritual author. What sets this group practice apart from parallel faith sharing practices in a parish setting is the frequent and cumulative shared reflection upon texts about Nano Nagle and from the PBVM heritage. Over time associates come to “pray with not like” the sisters by reading the needs of the local poor and their own works of service through these texts, asking for the grace to live out the Presentation charism.

“More prayer” summarizes the AIC experience in a general way as well but theirs is a different kind of prayer. Though many AIC members described already praying in the ways members are asked to prior to joining, most said crossing the threshold into commitment solidified their consistency and added an element of discipline to these channels of prayer. Together and apart dedication to these forms of prayer unites them as association also binds them to their monasteries, other lay Cistercians, and the church universal; “Even though we are miles and miles apart, the fact that we are all …praying these same prayers has linked us into a vast spiritual network.”

Associates themselves are the first to admit such prayer commitments do not look the same for each person and most have modified the monastic rhythm of liturgy of the

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760 Members are asked to incorporate lectio divina, liturgy of the hours, prayer of quiet, and spiritual reading into their regular daily prayer practice.
761 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 67.
hours in particular to better fit their daily responsibilities. However it is precisely in this adaptation process that the Cistercian connection is made between associate life and the call to holiness. Associates and sometimes their spouses consider the Cistercian prayer tradition as the topic weaves through their three year study schedule. In this way they regularly consider their own lives in light of it, modifying the hours, choosing short constructive *lectio* texts, and finding small windows of time to dedicate to quiet prayer. The judgment and insights required by this process are taken up into the life of the association through discussions, mentoring and spiritual direction bonds, retreats, and shared intercessory prayer. The result is a group of people sharing the work of responding to the call to holiness. Their response is both distinctly lay and definitively Cistercian.

4. Ongoing Conversion

Lastly, in becoming associates a commitment is made to ongoing spiritual growth in relation to a horizon of holiness. Certainly other kinds of small groups within the church can and do foster ongoing spiritual growth with the same aim. Associates of religious orders are distinctive for undertaking this work together in nearness to a particular community of vowed religious. Unlike most parishioners, associates develop enduring bonds with these living models who incarnate the charism they revere. To this end sisters help direct PPs’ “hunger for spiritual matters” toward the Presentation spirituality of “uniting hearts with Jesus and responding to the call to conversion”762 and AIC members see themselves actively cultivating virtues of humility and obedience

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(among others) that help them engage in an ongoing process of transformation. As Day explains:

The Christian life requires conversion…this is our avenue for conversion…the charism gives us a language for seeking and us God speaking to us….we learn balance of work and prayer from AIC, from order, from Benedict from church. When compiling a survey of members we realized that Cistercian practices truly do permeate our daily lives. We can be found practicing the Cistercian Way not only while together monthly but also when apart at home with spouses alone in our personal enclosures on the way to work in tense business meetings, early in the morning, at lunch, late at night and all times in between. Cistercian practices involve the hard personal work that opens us to the conversion that makes us more Christlike. They make gradual but inexorable personal change possible in each of us. These external practices facilitate internal changes that orient us toward God and his will for us in the world. They change the way we live as Christians as we begin to see the world through Christ’s eyes and to follow his example in our interactions in the world--as Cistercians. Cistercian practices bear fruit for us individually and as a community in mindfulness, Christ-centeredness, self knowledge and simplicity.

Participants in the AIC and PP were already followers of Christ through the church prior to joining their associate group but the ongoing process of being formed into the associate way of life renews their grasp of their vocation and its implications for mission. The nature of the renewal seems to entail making an ideal livable in a real but less than perfect way; their new understanding helps them change habits and in daily small ways operate with a sacramental worldview.

763 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 192, 195, 207 They call this process conversatio morum as per the Cistercian tradition.
764 Archival Document, “The Associate Vocation,” pp.1-2, AIC Archives, August 2007 Here the phrase Cistercian practices refers to the appropriation of Cistercian practices discussed in Ch.3.
765 Interviews A10 and B6. The leadership of the AIC and PP would say members live out the ideal in varying degrees. For more on sacramental worldview as an aspect of the tradition passed on to others see Ch.2’s discussion of Catholic identity at Catholic universities and other institutions.
C. Cultural Perceptions

For all their differences of personal background and ways of appropriating the charism, the members of the AIC and PP respectively do share some cultural perceptions. In fact, they share enough of them to warrant the judgment that the association’s life seems to provide a kind of hermeneutic for making sense of a life of faith with broad implications for the contemporary U.S. As associates’ reflective acts toward living out their charism amid the pressures of their lives begin to accumulate, patterns emerge within the narratives they tell about their surrounding context. Among the most frequently addressed perceptions for both groups are those surrounding consumerism, the right use of time, and getting along with other people.

First, with the AIC and PP respectively, communal views can be found about the dangers of consumerism. PP members studying the PBVM Earth Charter line by line usually begin talking about having their eyes opened to the “craziness” of the pre-Christmas shopping season and the over-abundance of consumption-based activities for retirees in their communities. Moreover, associates also grow in awareness of their own tendencies toward consumerism, and they desire to remedy them. Several interviewed AIC members described feeling alienated in their faith communities because of their attractions to the contemplative and monastic ways of life. They reject constant media consumption, the illness of busyness, and biases against silence and solitude. Interviews with PBVM’s also repeatedly critiqued an emphasis on the person as consumer and on a societal tendency to simply ignore those who are hungry, ill, poor, unemployed, homeless, or marginalized. They reject the passivity of perceived helplessness in the face of these injustices. As a result of sharing in this mindset, associates typically embark on a path of
making consistent small changes for the better in this area. They hold one another accountable for them and reinforce the desire to regularly be among others who share these efforts. By adhering to sacraments, liturgy of the hours, intercessory prayer, and ongoing learning about their faith in community, they are also rejecting a kind of individualized consumer spirituality severed from the other people and the church.

A second cultural perception in common among AIC and PP surrounds the right use of time and a clear sense of the pervasive cultural pressure to misuse time which manifests as a “habit of doing things that keep us constantly on the go cramming as much as we possibly can into our already overscheduled agendas.” PP speak with admiration of the counter-cultural Nano Nagle who also had a full agenda, but it was one of round the clock care for the poor in her city. The AIC devote an entire month to studying monastic approaches to time according to the Cistercian tradition. Members of both associations begin to “participate in the sanctification of time” by praying common prayers when alone, regularly gathering together, and do their best to live out the charism in their relationships, homes, churches, ministries, and workplaces. Associates say this remedy works to alleviate cultural ills in themselves and in the world. In previous  

766 Day, *Inside the School of Charity*, 189. For example Day speaks about eliminating TV and Interview B7 addresses changing shopping habits. Many interviewees gave examples of these two changes in particular. See Ch.4’s discussion of spiritual practices, including examples of AIC members who conducted media fasts.

767 Day, *Inside the School of Charity*, 130.

768 “Associates: What do Presentation associates say about their experiences?,” Sisters of the Presentation PBVM, For Presentation associates making time for the poor becomes realized ideal through changing small daily habits, like the kind of news consumed. One associate observes, “I especially appreciate the connection that being a Presentation associate gives me to a world-wide grass roots network. The sisters work globally, and the stream of information that they share provides insight into events happening around the world that I don’t hear in the mainstream media news. Through the network of sharing, I learn about the particular suffering of girls and women due to gender issues, the plight of indigenous, and the effects globalization have on the poor. The Presentation sisters even have a representative at the United Nations, a connection that gives me a window into international policies and politics.”
chapters examples were given of associates slowing down the pace of their lives by taking on less or no work and by being selective about their ministries. Day even talks about how “multitasking makes absolutely no sense to [her] anymore.” Associates in both groups have appropriated a “lesson on the importance of slowing down in order to be attentive to those aspects of life worth reverencing….It is impossible to notice and appreciate what is significant if [we are] constantly rushing right past it.” 769

Finally, associates seem to hold a shared perception of the cultural ills most likely to detract from forming right relationships with other people. Among these are cultural strivings for control, achievement, and speed. 770 Contrasting this sense of cultural illness, Day and other associates point to ways life bonded to religious has provided an antidote for them. Day talks about noticing not just that sisters grow in holiness within a serious community life but also that they “seem to really keep in mind that others are made in God’s image.” 771 Associates immediately recognize the value of practicing discernment and hospitality (among other virtues) in religious life and grab hold of their potential to transform relationships at home and in the workplace. Members of the AIC take this model seriously enough to add the ideal of right relationship to a constitutive statement of the International Lay Cistercians published in 1996.

Each of us called to contexts and circumstances in which we must build relationships with other people with whom we interact on an on-going basis…We all share a basic responsibility to foster attitudes and behaviors that are based on Christ’s teachings about how we ought to live together. Inside or outside a monastery Cistercian tradition teaches us…to be a school of charity and suspend tendency to pass judgment or assign blame learning to forgive, our communities are fundamentally different from

769 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 234.
770 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 25.
771 Day, Inside the School of Charity, 18.
monks or nuns but the basis for living together as Jesus Christ models…in our families, our local communities, our local monastery and associates, associates of the region, and Cistercian order and the church.\textsuperscript{772}

But in addition to the disciplines of community life, Ch.4 mentioned both groups have a dimension to community life made up of celebration and aiding each other in savoring the joys of life with other people. Associates of the AIC and PP show themselves seeking to be in but not of the world.

D. Insights and Limitations of the Group Personality

The dramatic events and more everyday interpretive acts discussed so far in this chapter come together to shape a set of shared viewpoints for each association. While each associate carries a slightly different mix of particular dramatic personal recollections and particular examples of having interpreted the church and culture surrounding them, they share in common that this reflective activity happens at the site of associate life. Unlike a member of the faithful unaffiliated with an associate group, these lay Cistercians and Presentation Partners accumulate acts of understanding their past and present lives of faith within the framework of shared relationship to each other, to a charism, and to a particular religious order. Both groups make a practice of regularly re-reading their charters and asking to what extent they live up to them. The testimony of associates indicates that they would say these ongoing acts of interpretation of themselves, the church and the surrounding culture are transformative acts, gradually bringing each area of life in line with the Christian call.

Whereas there are challenges posed by inquiring into this invisible backdrop of cultural-ecclesial perceptions, even a broadly painted mapping provides a window into

\textsuperscript{772} Archival Document, “School of Charity,” Response to Dom Bernardo Olivera Letter on behalf of International Lay Cistercians, draft 5/31/96.
what makes an associate an associate. It also contributes an influential piece to the portrait of distinctly associate narratives. This window might prove less helpful if the AIC or PP diversify drastically in a demographic way over the next twenty years as they are expected to. For now it offers a glimpse of how associates’ common perceptions of the past and present and shared practices inform one another. In short, associates’ understanding of their Christian calling and what is possible in their response to it are made new. The next heading furthers the exploration of shared associate perceptions by asking how they anticipate the future.

III. The Future: Perceptions of Associate Life’s Expansion

When contemporary religious from U.S. congregations are asked about the future of their way of life, no matter how many urgent concerns they name, most respond with a foundational steadfast trust in the Spirit’s work within their tradition. Associates, for the most part, have absorbed this trust. A few members even express outright a lack of desire to speculate on the future of associate life, taking the long term historical view of, “We’re becoming involved in a 900 year old tradition and we’re young.” Most members partake in a common stance of fundamental trust in divine-human collaboration insisting, “We’re part of the Spirit’s leading to find out if [the congregation’s tradition] is translatable.”773

Right alongside these expressions of trust they willingly share their speculations and hopes for the future of their group. As the headings below on religious life, new forms of associate life, and ongoing church service show, associates’ views on the future reveal a piece of how they understand their identity today. When they do hypothesize

773 Both quotes from Interview A1
about the future, most associates generally foresee their organizations expanding. They say “it is here to stay but the shape is being worked out.”\textsuperscript{774} Most point to the ever increasing numbers of new initiates and anticipate an ongoing increase in size over time. This growth is “necessarily slow,”\textsuperscript{775} but they foresee an ongoing steady increase in members. At the same time, a minority of members have considered the possibility that the size of their associate group may decrease, particularly within the next twenty years as a good number of present members become elderly or die. This concern leads some associates to anticipate a growth in quality instead, a deepening of spiritual enrichment, and the service their group offers beyond itself.\textsuperscript{776}

As the discussion of cultural ecclesial perceptions earlier in this chapter indicates, most associates in this study show themselves to be savvy about their context. They can see, for example, that much problem-solving lies ahead because the number of associates already outnumbers the number of vowed religious. When asked about the future, they raise concerns about the importance of the presence and proximity of the religious. Monetary and space concerns arise right alongside these anxieties, since they seem to indicate major proximate changes in the current ways of operating. Many see their own parish life changing rapidly and this seems to increase their tenacity to developing a rich associate life.

Some see an increase in the strength of horizontal relationships as crucial, enabling associate groups to be in regular contact nationally, internationally, and online. Many associates worry about the small numbers of younger members in their 20’s and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{774} Interview QA4
\item \textsuperscript{775} Interview QB18
\item \textsuperscript{776} Questionnaire QB21 QB4
\end{itemize}
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30’s and wonder how to attract and sustain their commitments. Why have these groups not been heavily populated by Hispanic Catholics and could that ever change? And would it ever be advisable for entire families to participate as they do in other lay ecclesial communities? As associates ruminate about their future, one way of clarifying this stream of concerns is to observe how they fall along three central questions: 1) How will the relationship to religious be affected by the changing nature of religious congregations? 2) To what extent are new forms of associate life possible? and 3) What can be hoped for continual and increasing church service?

A. Concern about Changing Religious Congregations

Though the AIC and PP are not privy to all the details surrounding the Iowa Cistercians’ and Presentation Sisters’ internal planning for the future, they enjoy enough closeness to see that the communities will likely be much smaller in ten to twenty years if not sooner. At the same time they can see their own numbers steadily increasing. What they anticipate and hope for most in the face of this situation is ongoing relationship. AIC have already contributed to fundraising for a new infirmary at New Melleray, for example, and PP have participated in discussions with Presentation sisters about how best to serve their elder members. But other kinds of friends and donors do these acts as well. Associates’ reflections indicate a readiness to deepen the question of how ongoing relationship will happen from their unique contribution.

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777 Interview A1, Though this statement expressed most associate’s perceptions of the overall movement, one member of a small associate group in rural Iowa said, “it has been two or three years since a new member joined our group.” Interview B10
This desire for partnership manifests in several ways. Associates from both
groups express “hope it…offers mutually beneficial relationship” in the years ahead,
hope their group becomes even more “helpful to the sisters,” and hope that, in the case
of PP, they go “forward hand in hand with sisters toward Nano’s vision.” Associates
also have some specific ideas for what ongoing drawing close may entail. One PP
describes how they will:

Help the sisters in any way they need help. In projects, missions, transportation…
not only praying together but working together in different missionary ways.
Anything we can do in [the sisters’] efforts to help the students (in an after school
program) and the sisters themselves we will do. I hope the Holy Spirit helps us
work together and look for ways to help others that I might miss on my own.

More of the same shared acts they have been doing as they engage the tradition
seems the primary desire for ongoing relationship. This desire is mutual and also
tempered by the realism that the structural ways of sustaining shared action necessarily
must change. For example, when looking to the partnership of the future, both religious
and associates find themselves reconsidering issues of physical space for meeting. Small
PP groups and associates scattered in other states find themselves rotating between
houses and borrowed rooms in parishes. Increasing ill health among the “hosts” of the
house meetings and restructuring of parishes can create a need for new spaces. On the
AIC side, expanding numbers have created challenges for how to run Saturday meetings
in small monastic spaces, which directly hinders the commitment of the group to be in
relation to the whole monastic community and at least share meals, hallway

778 Interview QB1
779 Questionnaire QB19 and QB20
780 Questionnaire QB3
781 Interview B10
782 Interview IRB1
783 Interview IRA1. Particularly, when they sometimes meet at Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey “it only
works if they come when we’re (the sisters) not here,” explains a sister.
conversations, and prayers during their monthly gatherings. An AIC member notes that so far the accommodations regarding space remain tight but manageable: “[The sisters] are incorporating us more in supportive ways without damaging their enclosure, but the future is yet to be revealed.” 784

Both AIC and PP members express anxiety about “what happens when [the religious] are not here” 785 in the ways they are now. Both groups of associates wondered whether their religious would one day become too small in numbers to sustain their own congregation and choose to combine with another congregation, convent or monastery. 786 Accepting that associates currently outnumber religious, they mostly fear an overpowering of religious such that a small handful had to serve in relation to a large associate group. In small associate groups with no sisters, members heavily rely on their memories and stories from experiences as students, colleagues, and associates alongside Presentation Sisters. Success may depend on just how formed in the tradition the most long-standing associates are and whether they can effectively communicate the tradition in ways that form others.

B. New Forms of Associate Life

Thus far the data has shown that associates and religious expect significant changes in the future and desire to maintain their current collaboration. Their ideas remain in the nascent stages of creative conjecture and not all associates and religious are

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784 Questionnaire QA11, International Lay Cistercian Documents also discuss the future of associate life but because not all groups are in the situation of decreasing vowed religious faced by the AIC, these comments are omitted here.
785 Interview B7
786 There is local precedence for this. Some Sisters of the Visitation, for example, currently live on the motherhouse grounds of the Presentation community for this very reason and, though most are elderly, they participate in some Presentation activities while maintaining their own congregation.
in agreement about the “how” of the future. Yet, they find accord in the judgment that new forms of associate life will soon be required.

In keeping with the slow and steady temperament of both groups, some AIC and PP members foresee the gradual introduction of new forms of their current life. A PP member sees the looming need to do something lucrative with the large motherhouse property and proposes turning it into “both ministry and sustenance” as a home for Catholic school teachers, a spirituality or retreat center, or even a hospitality kitchen.787 Others would like to see a more prominent place in parish life for associates, in part to attract greater numbers.788 One PP says her group should further their commitment to “extending the work of the religious” that is particular to them as laity by implementing these changes. Her suggestion raises the point that these visions of the future always offer a glimpse into their current self identity, especially what associates desire and the benefits and limitations of their current form.

A Presentation sister who has been active with associates for many years finds signs for the future in the “more openness, hospitality, service mindedness…and longing” of the younger (in their 30’s) members. She foresees the biggest change in associate life to be simple: getting over their “shyness” to be more diligent about inviting new members.789 On the other hand, some of these same associates, and perhaps more often some religious, propose fairly large shifts in their current form of life. For example, one AIC member encountered a Cistercian monk who suggested that in the near future associates could sign “OLC” to stand for Order of Lay Cistercians after their names.

787 Interview B5
788 Interview B2
789 Interview IRB1
Another AIC member has noticed her fellow associates raising conversation about living together both now and in the future. In both these cases the associates relating the stories did not agree that these were good courses of actions and in fact preferred that they not happen in order to maintain the character of the non-vowed aspect of being lay Cistercians.\textsuperscript{790}

Much creativity about new forms of associate life rests on the idea of shared living. One PBVM sister says, “I see nothing but value and good coming from this idea and it needs to go that way…Associates like to be with the sisters.”\textsuperscript{791} Presentation Partners who disagree about other aspects of their way of life seem to find alignment in the view that fresh forms of community would foster sustainability for both sisters and associates. One member says, “I would like to have the sisters in my life and share my retirement with them if that is possible. I would love to have a sister stay with me and rent a room in my house.”\textsuperscript{792} Those who are not satisfied with individual sporadic cases of associates and sister living together want to see a shared community space, perhaps even one that fosters a new kind of religious community.\textsuperscript{793} One Presentation Partner hopes for changes in canon law that will permit a kind of temporary profession for those in co-ministry with the sisters. Though her fellow associates might not share this opinion of the need for a temporary profession or of Nano Nagle as a radical, most do agree that

\textsuperscript{790} Interview A1 and A10
\textsuperscript{791} Interview IRB1
\textsuperscript{792} Interview B2
\textsuperscript{793} Interview B6
"it is difficult to model one’s life after Nano Nagle’s witness" and they would do well to join together in ever increasing ways as they try.⁷⁹⁴

AIC members have also considered the prospect of living together,⁷⁹⁵ but these suggestions seem to be in the minority for the lay Cistercians. Most AIC see their group continuing in a similar practice of monthly gatherings surrounding encounter with select Cistercian values. However, they realize that there is a possibility that real changes in the form and content of their life as a group may lie ahead “without having a monastery to be associated with” should New Melleray and OLM become small enough to need to close. Because small local groups may not be able to provide the depth of formation the large council-based group does, one member foresees a less formal association.⁷⁹⁶

C. Ongoing Service to Church

The AIC and PP anticipate ongoing and expanded service to the church in the years ahead. They want to be “leaven that helps the gospel live in the US church.”⁷⁹⁷ They see themselves “continuing the prayer life and charitable work [of religious] with eagerness.” The anticipated ongoing service to the church in the years ahead includes five main undertakings: serving together, enriching individuals, maintaining the benefits of their de facto canonical status, taking up a challenging Christian path, and helping spread awareness of their spiritual tradition.

⁷⁹⁴ Interview B5 The interviewee mentions that another reason she would not become a sister is that she has seen examples of the sisters vows and informal community rubrics hindering their ability to follow Nano Nagle’s mission.
⁷⁹⁵ Questionnaire QA1 One member has a vision of “lay Cistercians and their families establishing small settlements near monasteries in a reverse image of the first monastic communities on city outskirts.”
⁷⁹⁶ Interview A8
⁷⁹⁷ Interview B4
1) The AIC and PP commit to service together as an association rather than as individuals. Some associates and several religious remain concerned that if the vowed religious are no longer present, individual commitments to the mission will overshadow commitments to the organization and the group will fragment. If associate life only entails individuals hearing, learning and responding to the tradition, it runs the risks of following a consumer-model and a loss of the order’s community-life-teachings. Associates seem protective of the necessity of their tradition being a communal one.

2) It has already been noted that the associations in this study see themselves continuing to serve the local church by enriching the spiritual lives of individual parishioners. Together they live out their commitments and offer a community model of “a deep and committed lifestyle” that goes beyond “entry level Christianity” often found in parish life. One PP envisions associates and sisters collaborating on a specialized local ministry. Associates take seriously the church service rendered by studying and appropriating the charism into their lay lives. Presentation Partners describe this as “continuing Nano’s work.” AICs see their contribution as sharing the attractiveness of the charism by living it out in ongoing learning, devotion, and service.

3) At recent International Lay Cistercian conferences participants have considered whether or not to seek canonical status for their group, making them in effect more like a third order. In the end, they decided not to seek formal canonical status because both associates and religious argued that their group derives its vitality from the localness of

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798 Interview IRB2  
799 Questionnaire QA9  
800 Interview B3  
801 Questionnaire QB22  
802 Questionnaire QA7
their bond with individual monasteries. AIC members strongly approve this decision, viewing part of their service to the local church as their inimitable bond with the two monasteries.

4) The AIC and PP seem to succeed in fostering a way of life that serves as something akin to a climate of tradition for themselves in the wake of the loss of a Catholic subculture. Socially they continue to live in their own homes but have set themselves among faithful others in a context of shared life. The AIC describe how attractive it has been to them to be challenged beyond “Sunday only” engagement with the Catholic tradition, asked to give more of themselves, and participate in ongoing conversion. In describing how she sees these contributions manifesting within the next ten to twenty five years, one sister from OLM states:

It is clear we are meeting a need in the church. I don’t think it will be the same need in 10 years. However, monastic life will be around for a long long time. Even if our communities here do not exist in twenty five years, monastic life will exist. The place of the laity in the church will grow stronger and their place in monastic life will grow too.

5) Finally, one of the less discussed forms of service is the AIC’s contribution to fostering monastic vocations. Two current monastics had their start in the AIC and the small number may make members slow to raise the topic as a contribution, though it remains a serious one. Members interviewed also reflect about how they pray for the wellbeing of the monastics, encourage them to continue living their lives in the enclosure, and foster a relationship with the local community by hosting Monastic Day picnics including invited neighbors. As has already been discussed, AIC also act as ambassadors

803 Questionnaire QA8
804 Questionnaire QB17
805 Interview IRA1
for monastic life to their local church communities. To a lesser extent, even PP members find themselves fostering vocations in a way they would not have prior to becoming associates.

The Associates of Iowa Cistercians and Presentation Partners do not seem to wrestle with what their future impact will be within the church. Rather they have confidence that the model of their entire way of life will continue to be the contribution: to themselves, their families, the religious, their parish, and the people among whom they minister and live. They have no designs on viewing themselves alone as the future of either the congregation or the charism. Having created a “new form of community” is the service, most centrally as members “deepen their baptismal call and identify with the mission of Jesus” in their respective traditions through ongoing formation. The associate witness invites others to a fully engaged Christian life marked by prayer individually and with the church, committed relationship with other Christians, closeness to the poor and vulnerable, and a sacramental world-view.

D. Conclusion

Chapter 5 has posited that the AIC and PP possess an inner geography created by the accumulation of shared memories and shared recurring acts of reflection. This chapter has mapped the most significant contours of their inner geography emerging from patterns of topics found in source material: extraordinary experiences and the effect they have within associate life, a shared set of viewpoints on the church and surrounding culture, and a view of each association as engaged in ongoing call and response to the

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806 Questionnaire QA10
807 Interview B1
808 Questionnaire QB12
Spirit’s historical work in the church. While each of these topics’ contribution to a “group personality” for the AIC and PP has been shown to have some limitations, and while this study has made only a beginning at identifying the components of each group’s personality, overall it has been shown how these three topics come together in ways observable in both individuals and in the lived characteristics of each association. It is clear not all participants think alike about everything. Yet two judgments about group personality emerge here that further this dissertation’s assessment of the comparison of associates to religious. First, this chapter demonstrates that each association is engaged in the kind of ongoing collaborative sorting out of what their group is about and what that means typically found in the inner life of religious institutes. Secondly, at the same time, both associates’ reflective practices and the vision resulting from those practices are distinct from those of religious. As the overall argument of this dissertation claims, this vision encompasses associate identity, a sense of religious and laity’s vocations, and an understanding of the church all in light of the council. According to the evidence emerging from their living out of this vision, it is a mostly accurate self-perception; these are the ideals their practice strives for. In Ch.7, this claim will be developed in more detail by showing how specific aspects of the AIC and PP’s ecclesial vision and self-perception align with Vatican II themes of the lay vocation, the universal call to holiness, ecumenism, renewal of religious life, and an expanding of the theology of charism.
CHAPTER 7
TOWARD THE “WHY” OF ASSOCIATES’ ECCLESIAL FIT

“Maybe we are greenhouses within the church!” suggests one Benedictine interpreter of *Perfectae Caritatis*, speaking about the post-conciliar role of monasteries in the church.\(^{809}\) This chapter suggests the same might be true of the PP and AIC to some extent. So far this study has examined associate life from a detailed historical perspective and also from the point of view of associates’ relational ties and commitment to a new way of life with the ongoing conversion it requires. These two perspectives together build a descriptive account of who associates are and what their life entails. These descriptions have approached and even begun responding to the question of what associate life means ecclesially, but this chapter maps and builds upon prior chapters’ reflections to ask, now that the study has offered a clear picture of the PP and AIC way of life, what does it mean for the Christian life of the people involved? In particular how can and should these associations be best understood with regard to the life of the church? How far do associates’ own reflective contributions move toward answering these concerns? Along with Ch.6, such questions fit into the third of three tiers of reflection constituted by gathering together major themes uncovered by the previous chapters.

\(^{809}\) Marie Therese Long, OSB, “*Perfectae Caritatis*: Foundational Document on Religious Life,” *Benedictines LXVI* v2 (Fall/Winter 2013): 34. She is responding to PC, 9 that calls monasteries to “carry in themselves the seeds of growth of the Christian people.”
The present chapter especially focuses on the visions emerging from the inner life of the PP and AIC, and interprets them in light of the Vatican II documents and vision sketched in Ch.6. Four main viewpoints result: 1) The PP and AIC can be seen as aspiring to be living interpretations of Vatican II. 2) Associate Life can be seen as an innovation in collaboration with religious. 3) Associates can be located at the intersection of several avenues of contemporary tradition-tapping and layers of ecclesial community. 4) Most outstandingly, associates can be seen as offering an ideal of a new kind of collective charism to the church. Though associates readily admit their living out of these ideals is less than perfect, their way of life shows that the ideals are truly present and driving their commitments to a spiritual tradition and to one another.

This chapter opens with I. Framing the Question, a short review of what the descriptive data has shown about associates and where it leaves off. In short, Ch.1-6 of this dissertation asked what associates are doing when they live out their way of life. Ch.7 now asks the question, why is doing that a living interpretation of the Council, an innovation in religious-lay relations, and a unique path among various types of ecclesial communities? Taking portion of this framework in turn, II. A Living Interpretation of Vatican II, III. Relation to Religious, and IV. Fit with Church, will show how the data of previous chapters gives rise to a view of associates that incorporates all three. Ch.7 then addresses the AIC and PP’s collective responses to a call and charism in V. Minding Our “Group Life,” particularly emphasizing the distinguishing contribution of their group life within the church. Here the chapter shows how, as characters in the life of the church, lay associations develop, mature, become self-critical, and begin participating in the task of understanding themselves theologically.
Today at twenty years old, the PP and AIC have an opportunity to cultivate this group life as their major contribution to their respective orders and to the larger post-conciliar church. While other aspects of their way of life are repeatable in various contexts and communities, it is their distinctive group life and the care they take of it that sets them apart as a unique ecclesial cell. As the portraits of the Associates of Iowa Cistercians and Presentation Partners offered in Ch.3-6 emerged, it became clear that because of the nature of their way of life they must be interpreted on several levels and from several perspectives. The difficulty in such an approach is that it has the potential to result in simply a collection of angles, an inconclusive stack of perspectives on what they are all about. This chapter overcomes that difficulty by showing how by working though each level of description, naming patterns and areas of correlation among the parts of associates’ way of life and identifying further questions, the inquiry can begin with a lived history account of their life and end up closer to an explanatory one in which truths about associate life and truths about the church itself provide ways of understanding one another.

I. Framing the Question

A. General Descriptive Reflection on Data: Who are They?

What follows is perhaps a somewhat idealized narrative image of a typical PP or AIC associate, as revealed by the sources employed in Ch.3-4. The narrative begins this chapter’s discussion by posing a possible model for the shift between the tasks of
inquiring into who associates are and inquiring what that might mean. This narrative was shared with several interviewees who confirmed it as a reflection of their experience.810

A typical associate of either the PP or AIC is likely a woman between the ages of 45 and 75 and may be single or married with adult children. First and foremost she is a believer in Christ and a participant in her local church. She may be active in several social and liturgical ministries or she may demonstrate faithfulness as a mass-attender, daily pray-er or even prayer line member. She likely has a college education, perhaps even a graduate degree, and has served as a leader professionally and perhaps in her ministry. Seeking a deepening of her faith and maybe something more of social belonging among fellow believers, she takes up a word of mouth invitation from an associate or sister or monk to explore associate life. While it would be inaccurate to say she is entirely steeped in the individualism of her context, her Catholic cultural practice has been formed with significant influences from parish life and American culture.

As she undertakes orientation and then formation in an associate program several changes occur in her Christian practice. Perhaps she commits to more regular prayer and gradually takes up common prayer practices of her association including daily intercessory prayer with common intentions, lectio divina, and maybe even liturgy of the hours. Maybe other associates and religious will influence her to shift her occasional spiritual direction practice to be more regular, even monthly, and maybe she will join other associates and religious for retreats one or two times a year. Perhaps her bedside table at home will be occupied by a common spiritual reading book and a few articles on the current topic of study in her formation class. Maybe she will have known the authors

810 Interviewees: B3, B4, A1, A2, Personal e-mail correspondences with author, November 2013.
or topics a little before but now is glad to have extended reflection and discussion of them with her peers.

As she completes formation and makes her initial commitment during an ceremony at the convent attended by her family, friends, the few friends and many acquaintances met through her small associate group including religious, she and the associate community exchange promises of fidelity to one another and to the charism that has taken root and been nurtured in her. As five years go by she finds herself readily making a renewal of commitment and can no longer imagine her life of faith apart from her associate participation. She talks about her associate group as her “spiritual home.”

She has come to learn about and befriend Christians from other traditions and has contributed in small ways to the reflective efforts of the wider associate community in her region and beyond. She is aware of the concerns of associates from other congregations and how her own group lines up with them. Her parish and ministry commitments have taken on a renewed meaning in light of her commitment to the charism and she has let go of some activities and taken on new ones in response. The acts of her Christian life have become more focused and intentional. Her family and friends support her regular attendance at associate gatherings and even attend a few themselves, extending their social circle, and giving and receiving care during times of need. Sometimes people ask her to explain what an associate is or ask if she is trying to be like a monk or sister.

B. What More Emerges from the Data? An Explanatory Reach

Her response gives a window into the growth in understanding that has taken place as a result of her associate commitment. Maybe at first she was struck by the
language and framework offered by the dialogue among associates and religious around women in the church, particularly in leadership and ministry, and she has begun to understanding her own experiences in this light. Perhaps she learned new ways of understanding the call to draw near the poor and caught a glimmer of the sacrificial love that unites their suffering and liberation with her own. Maybe she had the chance to update her childhood impressions of religious life, coming to appreciate religious for their distinctness and as peers. Maybe a few religious thanked her for insights she shared or questions she raised and she has come to better appropriate her role as a lay member of the faithful with a unique vision because of her context. Most importantly, maybe her very sense of self has changed and is now seen more as part of an interconnected “we” than before.

Over time she becomes both aware of her sense of the church broadening both in terms of its basic diversity but also in terms of its various images and capacity to develop over time. She is aware this sense emerges with the Council and was taken up by the religious in her congregation. The typical associate likely has come to know of the Council’s universal call to holiness and something of its new look at the dynamism of charisms and ways these have shaped the last few decades of religious life. Maybe she will have heard from other associates about the uniqueness of their chance to take up these calls as members of a lay community united to a religious order.

Finally she will have partaken in the groups’ inner life and, if she has been a member for over ten years, maybe she has even helped craft their reflective framework for it. She has a sense of her association as both deeply linked to a religious order but also a unique entity, with its own history and need for appropriating the traditional
community practice of discernment of spirits. Perhaps she has had a chance to serve her community as an associate leader and in doing so has witnessed the group’s inner life grow in response to conflict, development of identity documents, and fostering of a dialogue and mentorship practices. She may have participated in mediating between her group’s work in these areas and the work of parallel groups met at the regional, national, or international level. In all these reflective acts she has had small insights into both the preciousness and limitations of the young vocation of the lay associate, and is inspired by the gift and responsibility of its fit with the larger church.

II. A Living Interpretation of Vatican II
A. Studying Connections to Vatican II

Not only did the PP, AIC, and most new wave lay associate groups come about in the wake of the Council, but also most members and supporters lived through the Council during their youth or young adulthood. Their memories of the Council and its aftermath therefore carry much weight and shape the associate movement. For many engaged in the movement, the actions taken, bonds formed, and reflections constructed represent the fruit of the Council’s reception in their individual and collective lives. Twenty to thirty years after the call to holiness was promulgated, PP and AIC members of the associate movement manifest their response in a public way. This occurs initially through the commitment ceremonies. Later it occurs through ongoing renewal of commitment and dedicated integration of their charism in the life of their group, local church families, workplaces, and cities.

The Council’s influence can be traced in the language and ideology of each group’s constitution and publications. It can also be traced in practices such as the
centrality of engaging scripture together and the genuine unity of Catholics and other Christians making up the fabric of each group. Moreover associate life has brought about a formalized bond with religious that upholds distinctions among states of life and yet opens the way for mutuality of responsibility for a congregation’s charism.

At the same time, the evidence within this study shows that associate life has in turn affected Vatican II’s reception. This is true for the Cistercians of NM and OLM and the Presentation Sisters of Dubuque, for the associates themselves, and the families, friends and fellow parishioners—believers and unbelievers—with whom they come in contact. It is also true for the broader Cistercian order and larger Presentation congregation, the diocese and the newly formed networks of associates to which they belong such as Conversi, ILC, and NACAR. The PP and AIC associate programs can be counted among the successful experiments in ecclesial organizational life inspired by Vatican II’s spirit. As such they witness to a deepened sense of the laity’s vocation, the universal call to holiness, the spread of spiritual ecumenism, and the renewal of religious life. They give flesh to several theological strands of thought and model a way of life that holds them all together in an interconnected cell of ecclesial vitality.

These living cells witness to a communion ecclesiology that works. They hold together contrasting viewpoints and join people in fellowship who ostensibly would fit the profile of polarized groups within the church.811 The more than thirty year history of the PP and AIC shows they have found a way to bring about space for conscious, attentive, reasonable, and responsible acting as a unified body. Conflict becomes a

811 As Ch. 5-6 showed, associates in this study can be said to fit all three of Joseph A. Komonchak’s “types” of Vatican II interpretation—progressive, traditional, and reformist.
chance for discernment and a unique kind of listening to both their lives as laity and the charism mediated through the religious and practices particular to each group. Sensitivity increases to the graces within daily life.

Studying these links to Vatican II requires several levels of observation and reflection. It is not just the story of individual religious and associates undergoing conversion to a way of life but also the story of the life of a group coming into being in a particular time and place. The group struggles with all the forces in the air of their post-conciliar rather middle-class and Midwestern U.S. context and yet comes out the other side not only enduring but thriving, growing, noticing spiritual fruits, and having formed strong intentional ties with the larger church. To adequately understand the dimension of the PP and AIC’s group life then is to attend to evidence of both the common sense and theoretical ways of operating at work in the data of this study. Each associate group formally professes an ideal, sets of values, a mission statement, and official documents including acts of charter and constitutions that combine together to form what might be termed an attempt at a theoretical self-understanding of what they are and how they fit with the church. This type of self-understanding develops over time and even changes in response to internal conflict or external pressures. This layer tends to leave a lengthy paper trail though group archives and contact with national and international levels of organization.

However, each associate group is also constituted by the kind of quotidian self-understanding found in the ways they engage their practices, changes in their attitudes and perceptions as they become seasoned members, the ways commitment and belief operate in their daily lives, and the ways members themselves express the ongoing
conversion at the center of their lay associate vocation. This layer of self-understanding, which tends to manifest itself in non-textual types of sources, can be unearthed and examined for its theological implications.

For these reasons an accurate theological portrait of the PP and AIC must attend to both the vision as well as the lived history of each group. This is just as true when constructing their general portrait as when understanding their engagement with any aspect of Vatican II. Both layers of self-understanding then will be taken into account in the following reflections on lay associates’ particular contribution to interpreting Council teaching on A. The Lay Vocation, B. The Universal Call to Holiness, and C. Ecumenism.812

B. Lay Vocation
1. Sacramentality Beyond the Sacraments

Of the several ways PP and AIC members manifest growth in their understanding and living out Vatican II’s call to a renewed understanding of the lay vocation, their conversion to a deeper appropriation of sacramentality within the context of daily life makes the biggest impact. Members of both groups report coming to realize that the experiences of Christ met in others, of peace, communion, and sacrificial love admired during visits to Mt. Loretto, OLM, or New Melleray were available within the life of their families and within their workdays, in their ministries, and in their place of employment. But the possibility of a sacramental worldview taken up through associate life extends beyond noticing and helping cultivate these good events. Associates report in interviews and also write in their formation materials about a development in their sensitivity to the

812 The order of priority for these teachings follows the order of emphasis given by the PP and AIC’s self-reflections as evidenced in Ch.3-6.
sacred dimensions of certain places and times, to the Christ within people they encounter, and to the simultaneous closeness and transcendence of God drawing them in ongoing conversion toward love. Though this study’s data clearly shows associates to be engaged in the church’s sacramental life as rooted in the actual seven sacraments, it also shows them taking up their calling to be leaven in the secular aspects of life, in this case by extending their sacramental imagination beyond where it was when they were not yet associates.

2. Mission

For the PP and AIC, an increased sacramental sense is then implemented in a strong response to the Council’s call of the entire faithful to mission, regardless of their state in life. Each group takes this command to go forth with the good news in its own way. The PP share in Nano Nagle’s commitment to search out and draw close to the hidden poor, attempting to meet their needs. They see themselves in mission as they prepare Christmas gifts, collect socks, spend their summer vacation in an impoverished community, teach at a school, serve in ministry, tend the sick, and live out married and single life in their cities. At the same time they are united with one another, with the sisters, with other PBVMs, and with those all over the world devoted to Nano’s mission. The AIC are no less aware of this call to mission, as Ch.5-6 showed. Like the PP, they bring the fruits of their formation into their homes and workplaces, but AIC’s self reflection is quite clear that their manner of doing so is more akin to the monastics’ sense of service as hidden yet at the heart of the church. That is, they see themselves as living out the Cistercian way of life, committing a set of regular prayer and study practices including intercessory prayer and fostering contemplative Christianity as best they can in
their parishes and communities. Their service to one another through AIC work and regular volunteering at the monasteries also emphasizes that their calling is a relational one, rooted in the Spirit’s going forth from and returning to the church.

C. Universal Call

1. Individual vs. Collective Response

It has been mentioned in Ch.2 that associates refer to a conversion from an “I” point of view to a “we” point of view as they progress in community life in the same way as do the Monastic Institute members and those who belong to New Monastic communities. But for the PP and AIC this change is explicitly discussed in relation to the Council’s universal call to holiness. As Ch.6-7 explored, associates in this study may initially be attracted to the group for reasons of individual enrichment and personal faith development but, through their formation in community life and charism, they are speaking about a shared pursuit of holiness and kingdom of God by the time of their commitment ceremonies. What exactly has shifted?

Certainly a socialization process has occurred but more significantly members have recognized their own call to and desires for holiness in the course of encountering and studying the documents of Vatican II alongside religious. When it comes to reflection upon their response to this call, members look to religious, who not only have years of practice responding to the call to love through various spiritual exercises and good works, but also have lived the rigors and joys of community life. Associates also observe the difficulties of a life of discipleship. As they observe holy men and women and ask why they have come to be this way, both through the guidance of religious and by their own growth in understanding, they come to see the practice of committed
community life among others who share the commitment as not only an inspiring idea but also as a possible and crucial piece of their own associate path. They too want to be challenged and changed, supported, and encouraged to grow by those who know them both intimately and with supreme respect for their life with God.

While other members of the faithful have taken up Vatican II’s call to holiness as individuals and even as groups of laity in forms such as lay ecclesial ministers, new ecclesial movements, or in devotional, ministerial, or formative groups, associates uniquely pursue a collective response to the universal call while remaining unvowed faithful who are in close formally committed relationship with a vowed religious community. Implications of this collective response are only beginning to be explored by the PP and AIC themselves. This chapter’s heading V. Minding Our “Group Life” suggests this collective response may form the heart of their contribution to the church.

2. Equality of States

In various ways this study has demonstrated that in fostering associate programs as serious contributions to a religious congregation, both associates and religious, and to some extent even the people they touch in their social contexts, come to live out the Vatican II teaching on the equality of the traditional states of life, married, single, and holy orders. Associates describe gradually having to correct their misperceptions of religious as they grow in associate life; they realize religious and their communities are not perfect and sometimes struggle to live out their commitments and tradition. They appreciate how religious can find humor in these struggles. At the same time religious describe coming to appreciate the distinct rigors and joys of lay life, married life, and parenthood in new ways by spending time among associates. They
also express ongoing surprise and delight at associates’ spiritual hunger and capacity for committed shared life under a charism. Quite visibly and on a common sense level laity and religious engage in similar prayers, share reflections, study the same texts, engage in comparable service, worship at the same masses and prayer times, and honor the same founders and holy figures. When asked what they understand themselves to be doing, they say they are aspiring to holiness by means of the same charism.

Yet both groups have shown themselves beginning to engage this question at a more theoretical level as well. They show an historically minded and self-critical sensibility. As a group their ongoing conversions on multiple levels including the moral, social, and spiritual make them fairly aware of their “groupness” and its development. This sensitivity may have been absorbed from proximity to the Cistercian and Presentation congregations’ post-conciliar heightened awareness of their order as historical characters on the move, with charisms and founding stories to share, and developing over time through engagement with the world. They are willing to face conflict and change both actions and perceptions accordingly. Beyond and correlated to this kind of reflection, both groups engage in discernment of spirits in individuals and in their life together as it fits with larger movements of the Spirit within the church. This receptive listening and desire to understand are evidence of them operating with more than a common sense horizon. In these ways the associates and religious live out Vatican II’s call to better recognize the equality of states, but they go further and create ways of living out their complementarily as well.
3. Holiness as Unity with Christ in the World

The third aspect of Vatican II’s call to holiness taken up by the associate movement is what can be called engagement with Christ in the world. The Council emphasized a positive and missional stance toward peoples and contexts previously deemed outside the church. For apostolic religious this emphasis affirmed and deepened a sense of commitment to carry and meet the gospel within hidden and neglected places of the world. For monastic religious this emphasis stirred a reclaiming of the founding communities’ practices of radical hospitality, living in a way alternative to and outskirting the dominant culture, and innovative outreach efforts to educate about monastic and contemplative avenues to Christianity.

This study has shown that associate programs generally and those studied here originate in the midst of these renewals within religious life. The evidence shows how PP and AIC at first wholly absorbed religious’ views, echoing them in their documents, pamphlets, and early reflections, praying in similar ways and admiring from a distance religious’ way of life. But quite soon associates began engaging conciliar ideas critically, realizing they would need to appropriate its call in their lives as laity. They specifically began bringing more aspects of themselves to the table including their marriage, childrearing, and employment.

They began to understand the charism as something with which they can have a distinct relationship coming out of a unique call as laity to be leaven in the world. This development is marked by the crossing and blurring of boundaries. On the one hand, AIC and PP associates today can be found shoulder to shoulder with Presentation and Cistercian religious, praying liturgy of the hours or intercessions, serving at the food bank,
reading the same newsletters and spiritual books, and attending some of the same retreats and workshops. PPs may at times speak about following the model of Nano Nagle’s charity and AICs may even speak about enclosure or humility in ways indistinguishable from those of their counterparts in religious life. Yet, on the other hand, such blurring does not seem to be the case on associates’ deepest levels of self-understanding. Rather, despite the remarkable amount of genuine shared life with religious both groups have cultivated over time, PP and AIC seem quite aware of their distinctness as non-vowed members of the orders and place tremendous value on sustaining a boundary of protective privacy around some aspects of religious’ lives.

They express a self-critical awareness of ways their living out of the charism meets the world differently, putting slightly different contexts, temptations, and responsibilities in their path. Working through the integration of the charism into their lives, sharing what that is like with one another, and being affirmed in this pioneering effort by the religious, associates come to appropriate with simultaneous regard that 1) they are truly called to this charism, 2) this charism presses them beyond themselves, their group, and the order to share love, time, and attention with others in direct service and prayer and 3) they are called to make all of this effort their own as laity in new ways that, while holding much in common with religious life, requires innovation and improvisation.

D. Ecumenism

1. Mutual Conversion

This study has shown that PP and AIC members demonstrate several elements of the spiritual ecumenism promoted by Vatican II. Most striking among these are instances
of mutual conversion at work between Catholic associates and those belonging to other Christian traditions. On the quantitative side, PP in Chicago, for example, discussed in interviews how their regular meetings attracted a few elderly women from other Christian churches gradually became regular meeting attenders and dedicated volunteers for the associates’ ministries. As discussed in Ch.4-5, the AIC also saw cases of Episcopalian, UCC, and Baptist members converting to Catholicism and likewise cases of Roman Catholic associates converting to the Baptist tradition all while remaining AIC members.

On a qualitative level, associates and religious of all represented Christian backgrounds described conversion of perceptions and biases toward one another’s viewpoints. The long-term committed bond among associates and their specific common daily prayer practices foster listening to the Spirit’s call to Christian unity, kindling it, and inviting members to take it seriously. Associates grow in willingness to address and work through obstacles to unity together. On the policy level AIC’s shift in Eucharistic practices illustrates this point, and PP’s receptivity to new members and collaborators in ministry also supports it.

On a more intersubjective level individual Catholic members have expressed an increased openness of heart toward Christians of other backgrounds, beginning with simple awareness of what it might be like to live within a different Christian tradition and moving all the way toward a widened sense of church including a new familiarity with various rites within Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and a spectrum of Christian churches along with their regional differences. At the same time members of other Christian traditions have expressed how their initial cautions about partaking in a primarily Roman Catholic group gave way to a sense of being respected and accepted. They cultivated a curiosity
about how Roman Catholicism and their own churches compare. While some converted most remained in their denomination glad to have forged real community with people once considered “others.”

2. As Praying Church

As has been noted, both AIC and PPs come to incorporate prayers for Christian unity into their routine. While a few were already engaged in such prayer and work for unity, most associates came to take up a daily commitment to pray for unity as they grew in associate life. Such prayers happen for the PP during shared prayers and reflections at associate meetings or within their common Lenten prayer and for the AIC they occur as part of their intercessory prayer during liturgy of the hours. These prayers not only continually express and foster each group’s awareness of other Christian traditions and desire for unity, but also serve to open the group’s sensibilities, making hospitality concrete in welcoming conversion stories, clergy from various traditions, and members from mixed tradition marriages.

3. As Formation in Spiritual Ecumenism

As associates make the prayers and culture of the group their own, one outcome often reported by members themselves is a kind of overall formation in spiritual ecumenism. That is, becoming an associate often means becoming more deeply aware of the presence and gifts of other Christian traditions and at the same time cultivating a desire for Christian unity. These actions at work in individuals set up conditions for dialogue and the addressing of tradition-based conflict when it arises in the life of the group. Less observable but still present is the virtue of humility arising within the group itself as it responds to differences among traditions. Among PP’s there is a tone of the
practical necessity of collaboration and genuine friendship among Christians to make
ministry successful. The AIC learned to move cautiously and with much patient listening
when the concern about their Eucharistic practice was first raised and even when conflict
between different types of Catholic views threatened to dismantle their intercessory
prayer practice. There is a common recognition in both the PP and AIC that the shared
life among different kind of Christians within their group constitutes a small but good
labor toward the church’s overall unity. These good movements are a beginning. Both
groups have realized they have not yet fully taken up the opportunity to study one
another’s traditions beyond an occasional prayer or reading. And they acknowledge
more can be done to become places of deeper hospitality to all kinds of Christians, as
they see their religious counterparts offering from their convents and monasteries.

This formation in spiritual ecumenism deepens the connectivity of as associate
group; they now see themselves a small unit that is part of a larger church in a wide
network of ways, with all the responsibility and humility that entails. This shift in
perception adds to the overall conversion from “I” to “we” undertaken by both
individuals and associations as a whole and thereby offers another way of connecting the
internal work of each group with the work of the larger external church.

III. Innovation in Collaboration: Relation to Religious

Conditions for the PP and AIC’s distinctive relationships with vowed religious are
made possible by religious congregations’ work of integrating Vatican II into their
communities’ lives. In particular the Cistercians and Presentation Sisters had been
making strides toward appropriating the renewal of religious life and a reach for the
founder’s original vision for nearly two decades by the time the first ideas about starting
an associate program emerged within their order. Both congregations were quite clear that the Council had implications for the pursuit of holiness among all of the faithful. Ch.5 demonstrated how associates do not simply parrot the religious’ understanding of these Vatican II teachings. Rather individuals tend to spend a period learning about the Council from religious and soon move into a second period of integrating the call to holiness with other seasoned associates as guides. The histories of the PP and AIC also follow this trajectory, moving from teacher/student relationship with the religious regarding the Council into ongoing and shared study of the Council among peers.

Despite evidence of their blossoming maturity and autonomy as an organization, associates in this study remain tenaciously bonded to their religious congregation. Nearly all involved characterize the bond as mutually supportive and enriching. This bond has several implications. It offers opportunities for associates and religious to witness to one another regarding the pursuit of holiness under a particular charism. It creates a rare collaborative space among the variety of mission dispersal approaches employed by each congregation. Moreover, the bond provides the most direct tie to the larger church for each association. Though members participate in the local church and often have leadership roles within the diocese, it is through the channels of the religious congregations that associates meet and form alliances with other associates and religious engaged in the movement. It is through the congregation that associates discover ways of addressing issues of canon law, conciliar interpretation, and the development of charism to meet the needs of particular contexts. The congregation’s model of leadership rather than the diocesan’s is also the more formative model for the PP and AIC.
One of the more weighty implications of the bond between associates and religious is the new kind of shared responsibility for the charism taken on by all parties. The nearly thirty years of development of associate life has witnessed a change over time from the early model of religious giving their charism to associates to today’s model of religious and associates receiving the charism as a dynamic gift of the Spirit adaptable to several forms of life and community models. Associates have also proven themselves interested in serving as caretakers of this charism, particularly alongside decreasing numbers of religious in their congregations and ministries. These associates clearly are neither idle consumers of a spiritual tradition nor do they seem to be simply interested in personal development. They desire to be formed in particular ways and challenged to give generously of themselves.

With the shared responsibility for a charism at the heart of their bond with religious, associates’ ongoing growth in relationship with them both crosses and maintains boundaries between the two states of life. Ch.7 detailed several examples of this dual manner of two groups relating. It is clear that the work involved in becoming aware of these boundaries and becoming intentional about their maintenance or dissolution is an innovative kind of work within religious life. It yields clarity and encouragement for both the vowed religious and laity’s vocations and most often it fosters deepened desire to develop as organizations alongside one another into the future. Just as the post-conciliar development of a theology of lay ecclesial ministry and even the permanent diaconate served to work out the correlation between laity and clergy, this work of boundary-navigation with religious serves to work out the correlation between
religious and laity, a serious contribution to the Council’s interpretation within the church’s social structure.

IV. Fit With Church: Tradition and Layers of Ecclesial Communities

A. Charism

One of the earliest insights within the PP and AIC communities was the realization that members were describing their reason for attraction to the program as being a recognition of the charism they already lived. This fact forced each group to come to terms with the outdated sense of charism as a commodity owned by religious and distributed to select others who passively receive it. Associates and their religious mentors began a lengthy process of re-thinking a theology of charism, going back to sources from the early church and the Council and bringing the nascent experiences of committed associates to bear on the issue. Two main outcomes have arisen so far in both the PP and AIC. First, both groups tend to see the charism as a living gift, not as a fixed entity. The charism is upheld by narratives, founding stories, artistic expressions and texts, but it also includes the living models of a way of life, both vowed and lay. Secondly, it is a commonplace among both associations that their spiritual tradition, including the charism, is on the move, changing rapidly, adapting to circumstances in the world and the church. This concept too emerges from the Council mediated through the religious-associate bond. A charism in motion, then, gives and receives from laity as well as religious, and the associate perspective on living it out is already shaping the tradition passed on within the formation programs for both PP and AIC’s new members.
B. Layers of Community

The multilayered belonging of associates within the church has been addressed from the sources in Ch.5 and from a relational perspective in Ch.6-7. All the layers are not apparent all at once as the associate goes about the routine of daily service and prayer, monthly meetings, and occasional workshops, retreats and celebrations. A diagram found in the appendix attempts to express how the multiple layers of community in which an associate engages do not detract from the central unit of self and small group associate community upon which their larger belonging rests. It features a circle in the center including the associate and her smallest associate group of about six people. This unit resides within the larger association which dwells in concentric circles near the religious congregation, charism, and parish. These ties are hemmed in then by the larger organizational ties both within the particular associate movement and within the broad category of new ecclesial movements and other lay associations. This self and community interchange initiates and sustains all the other layers of connectivity and reflection and is consequently the one about which associates spoke most often during interviews. Yet, most associates would say their belonging is not only about their small group. The small community offers intimacy and agapic commitment while it also mediates forces, trends, and pressures from the congregation, the local church and the internal and external “cousin” groups at the larger geographic levels of organization.

C. Relationship Between Church and World

Ch.2 explored some of the dangers European new ecclesial movements akin to associates are having with regard to their sometimes adverse stance toward the local church and world. Associates in this study for the most part do not share in this negative
stance and would, in fact, find it strange since so much of associates’ lives parallels that of a typical parishioner in the local parish. Associates rather actively cultivate a missionary outlook and seek out ways to meet those standing at the edges of belief or standard church life. Such a view has commonality with the current missions of the Presentation Sisters and Cistercians, but is not borrowed from them wholesale. Associates, by virtue of their in between-ness as laity taking on life under a charism, seem to occupy a unique venue for contact with the world and likewise bring the fruits of this viewpoint back to dialogues with religious in their congregation. The PP and AIC themselves seem to recognize that this valuable contribution is worth more reflective attention.

V. Minding “Our Group’s Life”: Theological Effects of a New Kind of Collective Charism

All that has been drawn together so far undergirds the claim that associate life as expressed in the PP and AIC offers a new kind of collective charism to the church. Like the religious they have befriended, associates hold an ideal of living out the Council’s universal call to holiness, but they do so as laity who also in a sense “live in community” even while residing in their own homes. The PP and AIC, in different ways, express a growing self-consciousness about the distinctiveness of this “group life” contribution and have established group routines, leadership structures, and practices to sustain it, most importantly the ongoing discernment of the Spirit’s work within their life together. Both groups have appealed to the early church in describing the character of their group but

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813 It is fairly common within interviews of the PP and AIC to encounter the view that associates see a parallel between the life of their group and the intimacy of Jesus with his disciples.
seem historically-minded enough not to make such claims uncritically. Both groups have shown themselves to be willing to engage in conflict resolution and the examination of biases as they correct the course of their development over time and hold themselves accountable to one another, their charism and spiritual tradition, and the multiple layers of the associate leadership and religious oversight.

While they see themselves as a young movement with much room for growth, they have already established a firm foundation based upon ongoing conversion, dialogue, and formation. These ideals maintain the long-term shift from “I” thinking to “we” thinking held as the ideal for individual and group mindsets. Ongoing conversion, dialogue, and formation also build up the rigor associates expect of one another with regard to living out the Christian life in this manner; they uphold for one another the attraction of an ideal of practicing what Tony Hana calls “intense religion.” At the same time they support and encourage one another when they inevitably fall short of this ideal.

Associates offer a contemporary model for the Christian life in the U.S. Catholic context for several reasons. They stand at the edge of the parish and congregation’s institutional structures and yet are tightly bound up in them. They present a venue for laity’s agency and leadership and at the same time present a venue for the true submission to one another and tradition required of religious community. Associates also take up a way of life that requires a great deal of them and commit to serve within it for years or even for a lifetime.

But above all these reasons, it is their shared life as a group that most vividly models the Christian life in their context. Their group’s life together is cared for,
nurtured, adapted, and documented. It becomes immensely valuable to individuals and to larger layers of community surrounding them and even takes on a personality. The life of the group draws individuals into relationship with one another, the church’s history and tradition, and the larger church and presses them toward holiness, not as an individual’s prize but as the destination for the group’s travels. Most simply, lay associations stand out among ecclesial communities because take up a call to work toward the ideal of a Christian life rooted in the church, engaged in the world, and shared in a way that foreshadows the layered brotherhood and sisterhood of the kingdom.
CONCLUSION

I. What the AIC and PP Teach Us about Associate Life and its Study

This dissertation has shown that the “quiet, hidden, ways” of the AIC and PP are not insular and merely self-serving ways. From its origins the life of each group has demonstrated sensitivity to the ecclesial implications of its actions and beliefs. These implications reach back to Vatican II and also reach across a network of ecclesial structures, most poignantly religious institutes. In bringing to light what associates are saying about their way of life as well as what can be observed on both a common sense and an explanatory level, a thorough portrayal emerges of each group. These members of the faithful stumble along the path to holiness, appropriate charisms as individuals, yet retain a steadfastness of spirit attributed to the driving force of their common life. This way of life’s value is lived out in both the individual lives of associates and the group’s shared life as a community. Members demonstrate some awareness of the exchange at work between the two.

The nature of associates’ common life is colored by their unique collaboration with religious and exploration of the capacity of the lay vocation to engage a collective charism. Both these aspects are heavily shaped by associates’ ongoing living out of an interpretation of Vatican II within their cultural and vocational contexts. At the same time, the life of each association in turn shapes the church in several ways, not the least
of which is through strengthening individuals for living out their marriages, ministries, and commitments to participate in the worship and service of the local church. The common life of the AIC and PP also shapes the church by means of nurturing the exceptional bond they enjoy with vowed religious. It is a bond marked by mutuality and shared striving for holiness and the kingdom of God. The bond also reaches a kind of intimacy wrought by sharing a charism and spiritual tradition that makes each side able to both see the other’s foibles as well as their living out of Christian commitments. Far from the misconception that associates want to replace vowed religious, they staunchly advocate fostering and communicating religious’ distinctive vocation and way of life within the church.

It is in when the common life of each group begins to take on a particular personality that the nature of their fit within the church becomes most clear. To the larger conversations about small faith groups in the life of the church and their engaging of vowed religious traditions, this study contributes both an in-depth representation of two specific lay associations and a suggested method of clarifying their ecclesiological self-understandings.

II. Further Questions

At several points along the way this study indicated its own limitations in scope. To more comprehensively portray the AIC and PP several further questions would have to be investigated. First, the work of situating these two organizations in the life of the church would be enhanced by more deeply considering their shared diocesan and
geographical belonging. To what extent does this particular diocese lend itself to flourishing lay associations? What was happening in the diocese in response to Vatican II at the time of their origins? To what extent are these religious and associations touched by Dubuque’s history of conflict between Protestants and Catholics, between descendents of Irish and German immigrants, between the Caucasian “old guard” and the city’s more diverse newcomers, and between religious from urban and rural families?

A second category of further questions can be termed “demographic.” Ch.4 noted the specific demographic description of the AIC and PP, but it did not develop the question of why other groups of people are not often found within their membership. For example, why are certain Protestant traditions represented more commonly than evangelicals or peace church members? Why do the Hispanic and Black Catholic and Protestant members seem disproportionate to their numbers within the diocese? Is there any further meaning to be gleaned from the high numbers of middle class women of retirement age within each group? How do the seasoned or elderly associates understand their participation in relation to the rest of the church as compared to the twenty-year old members? Are there indeed generational divides within associate life as the movement’s early writers attest? Why are there no deacons and their wives present within the AIC and PP? Does this absence indicate anything about which kind of local church leaders are more attracted association and why?

On the level of connections with other church bodies, this study mapped out the broad strokes of relationality, but more precise examinations are possible. Regarding the relationship of these particular associations to the U.S. church, can anything be said about differences in region among the associate groups within their national conferences? For
example, does the striking difference between the Georgia Cistercian associates and the AIC indicate anything about Southern vs. Midwestern Catholics or their reception of the council? This study benefitted from a side by side comparison between associates of apostolic and religious congregations and found them quite parallel in many areas but distinguished by their contemplative and apostolic missions. Might there be more at stake in this distinction of type? Could it shape each side’s interpretive work on the council or shape the degree to which associates make the charism their own? Moreover study of an apostolic men’s congregation would balance the view offered by a women’s apostolic community and men and women’s monastic groups observed in this project. Likewise consideration of associates with links to women’s orders belonging to the Council of Major Superiors of Women in addition to those, like the PBVMs who belong to the Leadership Council of Women Religious would balance the investigation. A comparison of Roman Catholic lay associates with those from other traditions might also complement this study’s viewpoint.

Lastly, the group Conversi growing out of the AIC raises the question of technology and globalization within associates’ efforts to retain both spiritual intimacy and a degree of privacy about the details of their lives. A further study could rely on similar historical methods to inquire about Conversi member’s sense of group life and ecclesiality from their disparate (even international) locations. More proximately, further inquiries could be posed to AIC and PP members directly about the technology at work in their communication with one another and what it means, both questions of which this study only began answering. Lastly, do the forces of globalization as described in current
conversations\textsuperscript{814} have any bearing on associates’ ecclesial fit or their perception of it? Certainly this study has demonstrated associates’ tremendous attraction to intimate belonging with like-minded believers and shown how the AIC and PP are not religious enclaves. Yet, is there more to be discovered on this subject, particularly concerning the crossing of local and national church boundaries to attend associate meetings and the anticipated impact that the shrinking, consolidating, and closing of vowed religious congregations may have on associates’ bondedness, legal and canonical status, and sense of independence as an ecclesial cell?

III. Implications for the Church

In addition to furthering the historical and ecclesiological work on associates, this study engages several threads of conversation about the contemporary church and offers them as a unique model for the Christian life. For religious embroiled in planning for a future of smaller numbers and institutional engagements, the images of the AIC and PP show examples of real collaboration in keeping the charism alive. Not only do Cistercians and Presentation sisters acknowledge the presence of the charism within their associates, but in addition they recognize that the missionary spirit at the center of their spiritual tradition is also alive and well within associates’ way of life. Associates are speaking about the orders’ founders, and both verbally and in their living making the

congregation’s mission known beyond the reach of limited vowed religious. They are aiding elderly religious, helping care for their property, accompanying the congregations as they make their own private financial and structural decisions for the future, and even attracting new people to participate in and take responsibility for the charism.

For individual members of the faithful, the AIC and PP represent a widening of the horizon of what is possible within the lay vocation. These groups show it is possible to live out a more than Sunday-only response to the call to holiness and to do so with others in the context of a committed group. At the same time it is possible for a member of the faithful---lay, religious, or clergy---to integrate their own vocation with a profound tie to the charism, traditions, and concrete people of a religious community.

For parishes, diocese, and even certain members of religious congregations, this study dispels some common false assumptions about who associates are and what they want. Ch.5-6 show how interwoven in parish life and local ministry most associates are and Ch.7 proves their group as a whole desires to remain closely tied to its many intersecting ecclesial bodies. Associates do not want to be quasi-religious and in fact have a strong stake in helping religious maintain the boundary surrounding their consecrated life.

Ch.3 of this study showed that associates are neither the first nor only lay-led group to live out the teachings of Vatican II. Unlike the small Christian community movement studied by Bernard Lee with which associates otherwise have much in common, the groups in this study do not see themselves as marginal to the local church
waiting to be integrated into its ecclesial self-understanding. Rather they see themselves firmly located within the local church through multiple loyalties to religious congregation, parish, ministry, and other small groups. Members relate how, though associates remain a quiet presence within the diocese, people tend to have a favorable opinion of them. Similarly, lay associates can for the most part be counted among the new ecclesial movements blossoming since Vatican II in form and practice. Yet, they seem neither to share the extreme characteristics of resistance to receiving the Council described in Faggioli’s critique nor the total embodiment of the Council’s spirit implied by Maskulak’s work. Rather, associates seem to be exemplars of integration in their appropriation of the Council’s calls and dedication to living them out within the messiness of daily life.

For Christians seeking to live out their faith in the active and full-hearted ways urged by the council, the current state of the U.S. church in many areas is marked by parish closings or reconfigurations and by the closure or transitions of once vibrant religious orders and their institutions. Associate life offers a way of engaging some of the positive aspects of these institutions while still standing outside of them as an independent lay-driven movement. This boundary-crossing position seems to attract a variety of Catholic expressions, members of other Christian traditions, and believers who describe themselves as standing on the fringe of the local church. It not only attracts these faithful but also elicits from them a commitment to remain in relationship with people unlike themselves.

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Finally, for the church broadly speaking, this study’s portrait of associate life and its sense of the church raise a question about how much our human and Eucharistic communities should intersect. Associate life as described here says they can and do. Might associate life offer a way forward for the call to genuine fellowship that is rooted in the Council and which thereby takes on a character of Christian unity, equality of states in life, a *telos* of holiness, and a dedication to mission? Associates may already be stepping into the breach left by diminishing parish and religious community life, living out a model of shared Christian commitments that is neither nostalgic for a Catholic sub-culture nor given over to the cultural dangers of globalization. In this way associates offer a held-in-tension, Catholic way of living out the faith.

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[The celebration of the Eucharist] originally comprised, of course, both the liturgical meal and an ordinary, “physical” meal shared by Christians meeting together in one large unit. The liturgy and ordinary living had not yet become separated. This situation cannot be reconstructed under present circumstances, but Schurmann rightly points out that the need still remains for parishes to develop appropriate forms of community life outside the liturgy in order to supplement the liturgical gathering and make possible direct brotherly contact. The forms will vary according to circumstances, but we may make one general point: inasmuch as brotherhood in the parish is, as it were, divided up among different societies or organizations, it is necessary to keep bringing people together in larger groups in order to emphasize their relationship to the greater unity of the parish. The individual organization is justified only insofar as it serves the brotherhood of the whole community. This aim of making the parish community a true brotherhood ought to be taken very seriously.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. Archival Materials

Association of Iowa Cistercian Materials: rites of initiation and commitment, membership data, website Conversi data, records of monthly meetings since 1990’s, correspondence, record of relations with International Cistercian Associates, constitutional statements

Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Archives: rites and liturgical guides, demographic information, correspondence, newsletters, constitutional statements, historical studies

B. Interviews

1. Oral Interviews
   Leaders and Members of the Association of Iowa Cisterians

   Community Members, New Mellarey Monastery and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey

   Leaders and Members, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Associates Program

   Community Members Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

2. Written Interviews and Personal Correspondence
Members Association of Iowa Cistercians
Members, Presentation Partners of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

C. Personal Communications

Berns, Karla. Personal e-mail message to author, May 26, 2012.

Day, Dennis. Personal e-mail correspondence with the author, September 5, 2013.

Faggioli, Massimo. Personal e-mail message to author, June 29, 2013.

McMahon, McMahon. Personal e-mail correspondence with author, July 13, 2012.

Pryce, Paula. Personal e-mail correspondence with author. May 1, 2013.

*Additionally, personal correspondence with several anonymous interviewees appear in the text by date.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Articles


“Associate Update.” Doorways vol45 no2 (Summer 200): 10.


______.“The Sock Project No time for Bare Feet,” *Presentation Doorways* vol. 55 no 1 (Spring 2012): 12-13.


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“What is the purpose of AIC?.” AIC Website.  

Wittberg, P. "Outward Orientation in Declining Organizations." in N. Foley, ed.  


B. Dissertations and Theses


C. Books


APPENDIX A

Associate Symbols

1. NACAR Symbol

This image appears on the pin given to Presentation Partners at their commitment ceremony. Diane Geesen, an associate from Fargo, created the design in 1998. She describes the cross at the center with four equal lines reaching in each geographic direction, a circle at the center with the inscription PBVM just as the sisters’ emblem has, and a border of text spelling Presentation Associates. For Geesen, the image represents the sisters’ heritage of global outreach in service and the “added support and strength to continue the ministries they have started” as associates.
3. Symbol on Associates of Iowa Cistercian Medal

This image appears on the medal given to AIC members at their commitment ceremony. The image was designed by a sister from OLM and includes the image of a glorified Christ with arms outstretched in a cross surrounded by the OLM and NM church windows, with two smaller figures of associates standing underneath the outstretched arms. Archival Document, OLM Monastery News, vol.2 issue 2, May 2001, pg. 2-3 and “Our Guest House and Programs for Guests, New Melleray, http://www.newmelleray.org/guests.asp (accessed March 1, 2013).
APPENDIX B

Primary Source Data

1. Interview Categories

The following data was collected from July 2011-July 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
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<th>Interviews Round 2</th>
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<td>PBVM Religious</td>
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</table>

2. Index of Interviewees

Index of Abbreviations for Interviewees

Associates of Iowa Cistercians (All Designated with “A”)

Questionnaire QA1 9/15/11, Cedar Falls, IA
Questionnaire QA2 11/14/11, Oregon, WI
Questionnaire QA3 11/16/11, Ames, IA
Questionnaire QA4 10/5/11, Sioux City, IA
Questionnaire QA5 10/15/11, Cedar Rapids, IA
Questionnaire QA6 10/14/11, Peosta, IA
Questionnaire QA7 11/14/11, Peosta, IA
Questionnaire QA8 10/15/11, Cedar Rapids, IA
Requests for interviews with three other Cistercian religious were not answered or impossible due to poor health.

Presentation Partners (All Designated with “B”)

Questionnaire QB1 9/3/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB2 B. 9/1/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB3 9/10/11, Oak Lawn, IL
Questionnaire QB4 9/5/11, Peosta, IA
Questionnaire QB5 9/3/11, Leland, Iowa
Questionnaire QB6 9/14/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB7 9/28/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB8 9/29/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB9 9/5/11, Forest City, IA
Questionnaire QB10 10/3/11, Peosta, IA
Questionnaire QB11 9/13/11, Forest City, IA
Questionnaire QB12 9/13/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB16 9/6/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB19 9/4/11, Mason City, IA
Questionnaire QB20 9/3/11, Mason City, IA
Questionnaire QB21 9/29/11, Dubuque, IA
Questionnaire QB23 8/30/11, Kansas City, MO
Questionnaire QB24 9/26/11, Lansing, IA
Questionnaire QB25 9/4/11 Kansas City, MO
Questionnaire QB26 9/13/11 West Bend, IA
Questionnaire QB27 9/15/11, Holy Cross, IA
Questionnaire QB28 9/10/11, Oak Lawn, IL
Questionnaire QB29 9/26/11, Kansas City, MO

Interview B1: 12/9/11, Written
Interview B2*: 1/16/12, Written
Interview B3: 1/27/12, In Person, Mt. Loretto
Interview B4: 1/6/12, In Person, Mt. Loretto
Interview B5: 1/2/12, In Person, Mt. Loretto
Interview B6: 12/1/11, In Person, Mt. Loretto
Interview B7: 2/4/12, Phone
Interview B8: 2/4/12, Phone
Interview B9: 2/9/12, Phone
Interview B10: 2/9/12, Phone
Interview CB1: 3/10/11, In Person, Mt. Loretto
Interview IRB1: religious who participates as a partner, 8/28/12, Phone
Interview IRB2: religious who participates as a partner, 8/31/12, Phone

*Indicates Round 2 Interview. Data provided after Round 2 interviews comes solely from personal correspondence with the author and is noted in the bibliography.

Locations were not included for phone and written interviews to protect anonymity.
3. Sample Questions Interview with Associates

Outline for Interview with Associates

November 2011

Participant Name or Code_____________________________

Date and Location_____________________________

I. Introduction

A. Review Cover Letter----nature and purpose of study, confidentiality practices, ways to leave the study if needed, the expectation of checking quotes before I use them, contact information for UD, my background and interest in associates, what I’m looking for

B. Description of Interview----one hour long, nature of recordings, topics to be addressed looking for opinions and personal experiences without right or wrong responses, freedom to pass on questions, hope for second round of interviews for clarification if necessary

II. Relationships

The Associate Partnership is often described as a bond among sisters and associates. Could you describe what this bond means for you?

“Support” often comes up as a key element of being an associate. To what extent is support part of your experience as an associate? What is “support” for you?

What roles do friendship and mentorship play in your relationships with other associates and sisters?

Can you describe the people among whom you minister and what your relationship with them is like?

How would you describe the relationship between sisters and associates?

Are there any difficult aspects of this relationship?

What is the best future you can hope for in the relationship between sisters and associates?

Sometimes associates provide a link between people who have never heard of Nano Nagle and her mission. Would you offer an example of a time you witnessed to Nano Nagle’s mission?

How would you describe your relationship to her?

III. Identity
How would you describe what it means to be a PBVM associate?

How is being an associate different from being just a Catholic?

If someone asked you what kind of Catholic you are, what might you say?

Some people describe the place that they feel most connected to God and others as their “church home.” How would you describe your church home?

If you are not a Catholic, what compelled you to take up associate life among Catholics?

If you are not a Christian, how do you see yourself “fitting” with the PBVM associate partnership?

If a child or grandchild noticed that you are an associate and asked what that means, how might you explain it to her?

To what extent do you share that you are an associate among family members? At your church? At your site of ministry? Among non-associate friends and neighbors? Give an example of what you might tell them.

PBVM sisters and associates seem to have a special concern for fostering the wellbeing of women. How does this show up in associate life?

Most associates seem to be of similar age and state in life. Is this correct? What difference do these things make in the life of an associate group?

People who study associates often talk about tension surrounding the term “membership.” Some people feel strongly that they only associate with members whereas others consider themselves members of the congregation to varying degrees. Do you consider yourself a member of the PBVM’s? Why or Why not?

Can associates use the PBVM name publicly, for example in a lobbying or protest situation?

IV. Belonging

Would you please rank the following in the order that suits you most?

I belong to the Catholic Church.
I belong to the PBVM Associate Partnership.
I belong to my parish.

How much time do you spend on associate activities per month?
How much time do you spend on parish activities per month?
How much time do you spend in ministry or service per month?
Have you ever encountered a time when family, parish and associate commitments conflicted?
How do you navigate that circumstance?
How do you imagine this plays out for other associates?

Some critics of associate programs are concerned that they take gifted parishioners away from parish life. Other critics raise concerns about an imbalance in the “mutual” relationship between religious and associates. Still others express worries that the religious congregation is putting a great deal of time and energy into a program that does not directly lead to new vowed members or provide for their future. Have you ever encountered these critiques or others like it? How do you respond to them?

Some articles about associate life describe people who become associates as a way of remaining Catholic without having a parish as the primary place they experience church. Some dislike the institutional church or have had negative experiences in a parish. How do you respond to this claim?

How would describe your relationship to the Catholic Church?

Have you ever lived in community among other associates or PBVM’s? Has the topic ever come up in discussion?

Some associates see their local group as a means of enriching themselves and bringing more to their parish work. Others see their local group as meeting a need for sharing faith in a smaller setting than a parish. How would you describe the relationship between your associate belonging and your parish belonging?

Do you attend weekly mass? If so, where?

Do you attend daily mass? If so, where?

Do you attend confession? If so, where?

Do you attend prayer services or groups outside of Sunday mass? If so, where?

Besides being an associate are there any other Catholic organizations to which you belong? (for example professional, service or devotional organizations)

What is the range of participation among the associates you know?

V. Ministry

What can you say about the ministry/service you are currently undertaking?
What do you see yourself offering?
Why do this work at this time?

When is ministry successful for you?

What are some of the challenges in this work?

How do you see God at work in this ministry?

Would you consider this work a mission of the PBVM’s?

Would you consider this work connected to the church’s mission in any way?

How are you a different minister in this work because of being an associate?

Do other sisters or associates work with you? What is that like?

Have you ever had a leadership role in this ministry? What would it take for you to take on a leadership role in this ministry?

There are numerous models of a life of service among the saints and holy men and women in our church. What is it about Nano Nagle’s example that resonates with you to the point of committing to associate life?

VI. Founding Stories

Tell me about how the PBVM Association Partnership began.

Tell me about the start of your local associate group.

What can you say about Nano Nagle’s life?

Can you tell me how the PBVM Sisters came to be?

How did you come to be an associate?

VII. Membership

What characteristics do members have in common?

What is the initiation process like?

What difference do you see between new members and seasoned members?

What are you looking for in potential members?

Tell me about your commitment ceremonies?

How did you first learn of the associate program? And what sparked your initial consideration of associate life as a path for yourself?
What mix of people (potential members, associates, sisters) comes to your group meetings right now?

Would you give some examples of financial matters that you and your associate group have discussed?

Some associate programs have non-Catholic or even non-Christian members. How do you see this situation?

If you and your spouse are both associates, what is that like for your marriage and family? What is that like for your associate group?

VIII. Communication

What can you tell me about a typical renewal day, retreat day, founder’s day?

How many mailings do you receive each month from associates?

How many emails a week do you receive?

Are you a part of the email prayer line? What is that like?

Do you have any contact with non-Dubuque associates or international associates?

How is your associate group like or unlike those you’ve encountered elsewhere?

Do you feel the nature and frequency of your associate meetings is appropriate?

How do you keep your associate group history?

IX. Practices

Can you describe how being an associate shapes your prayer life?

What are some songs you sing when you get together?

Do associates pray like PBVM Sisters?

Is there a unique PBVM way of praying?

Tell me about the funeral practices for associates?

Tell me about how scripture is encountered when associates are together.

Tell me about things that always happen when you are together with other associates.

How does a typical meeting go?

What are some ways you undertake evaluation of how the group is going?

How are leaders chosen?
Have you ever read books or articles about associate life? Which ones?

X. Shared Culture

What books or movies have you encountered alongside other associates?
Have you learned any new skills alongside other associates?
Do you pray with the Lenten booklet created by sisters and associates?
What holidays are part of your life now as an associate?
What are some of the annual events in which you participate?
What do sisters give to associates and what do associates give to sisters?

The Earth Charter and the congregation’s Mission Statement are studied and appropriated little by little by associates. Could you give one example of something from these documents that your associate group studied, prayed about and made their own?

XI. Holy Spirit

Have you ever described the Holy Spirit as active among your associate community? In what way?
What are signs of the Holy Spirit’s work within your group?
What are some ways you listen to the Spirit speaking as a group?
Where would you say the Spirit is leading associates?
What would you like the partnership to look like in five years? In ten?

XII. Sacraments

Review responses to sacraments questions on initial questionnaire.

What kind of sacramental participation is expected of associates? Do you attend the same mass as other associates or sisters?
What is your best guess about how many associates attend daily mass?
Are you aware of any associates who do not attend mass?
Has the topic of confession ever come up in conversations among associates?
XIII. Jesus, Mary, Saints, Church

How did becoming an associate connect to your relationship with Jesus?

When you became an associate, did anything change about the way you see the church? Did anything change about the way you see your own place in the church?

Can you tell me the story of the Presentation of the BVM?

How does Mary fit in your life as an associate?

What kind of relationship do you think Nano Nagle had with Mary?

Do the associates celebrate any Marian feast days?

Have you every prayed a rosary or novena with other associates?

How does Nano Nagle show up in prayer times?

XVI. Links to Regional, National, International Groups

Describe your participation in regional, national or international associate groups?

Of the PBVM associate groups living closest to Dubuque, whom do you see most frequently?

Do you have contact with associates from other non-PBVM groups?

If you’ve ever attended NACAR, what was that experience like? How did it shape your perspective of your own associate group?

What, in your opinion, is the future of associate life in general and for PBVM’s?

Thank you very much for participating in this oral history interview.

As the research project unfolds, there may be need to clarify certain responses by means of a second interview. Would you be open to completing a second interview during 2012 if necessary?

Yes No
4. Sample Questions Interview with Religious

Interviews with Religious
Questions—My Copy
Aug/Sept 2012

Associate Life in General

Some authors refer to the wave of new associate programs emerging since the late 1970’s as an “associate movement.” Have you encountered this phrase? Do you see your group as part of this movement? If each associate group has a distinct personality of sorts, what binds them together into a movement?

Most associates fall into a similar age bracket. How do you see this situation?

In your view, what attracts associates to the program?

Have you noticed a difference between the older and younger or first and more recent new associates on this matter?

How do you see the seeming lack of cultural/ethnic diversity in your associate group?

Can you confirm that the canonical status of the PBVM’s is a de facto association of the faithful? Have you ever considered it becoming otherwise?

Because of its monastic approvals and affiliations, does the AIC group have canonical status? Which status?

Can you show me the acts of chapter that made approval of the associate program?

What was that discussion like?

Can you tell me how the associate program came into being from the perspective of your community?

Do your formal histories of the congregation include anything about associates?

Blurring and Roles

Some critics of associate programs say a “blurring” occurs between vowed and laity in their language, ministry, leadership and ways of praying and nurturing the spiritual life. How do you see this critique in light of the mores of relating you’ve developed?

What ways of associates relating to vowed religious have you resisted or drawn boundaries around?

Can you give an example of a time a conflict arose within the association and the role you played?
To what extent have you guided the development of leadership within the association?

Can you give an example of a time you witnessed the Spirit’s movement within the association as a group?

Could you describe your first exposure to associates?

What drew you to engage with associates in a committed way?

What has surprised you about that engagement?

Many interviewees talk about the mutual giving and receiving between associates and vowed religious. What do you see as given and received by each?

There is much controversy over “mutuality” within the associate/religious relationship. Some say it must be mutual and others say that because of all the teaching and learning of charism and community life it can never be mutual. How do you see that discussion?

How do vowed members of your community view the associate program?

Describe how your community’s relationship with associates has changed over time.

How did your congregation present the possibility of contact with associates?

Among those in your community who have serious critiques about the associate program, what is the most common concern?

I’m told that the whole community is in relationship to the whole associate community. How did you come to this practice and how does it manifest?

Practices

Can you describe a time of worship in your chapel in which associates and vowed members were present? What are those times like? Can you describe the role of vowed members during the commitment ceremonies?

I’m interested in group life practices, especially discernment and decision making. What would you say the associate group has learned from vowed religious about these matters? How?

How has the associate program changed over time?

What can you share about the story of associates sharing your spaces and places of worship?

I’m told that the communities (lay and vowed) pray for one another. Can you describe how?
Traditioning

I’m interested in the process of an order’s charism being transmitted to laity. Is this possible? To what extent? How do you see it happening? How is the process different than your formation process for new vowed members?

Is the charism changed in the transmitting?

What are the checks on the process? How do you know if it is working or not working?

Are there concerns about how it is being appropriated? How are these addressed?

How does this transmitting process affect the vowed community?

What issues do associates struggle with most as they try to live out the charism?

Would you say a particular image of Jesus is transmitted to associates?

Would you say a devotion to Mary is transmitted to associates?

Would you say a devotion to Nano Nagle/ Cistercian founders and holy monastics is transmitted?

Contact with Larger Church

What is the strongest influence upon the ways you relate to your associates?

What kind of contact do you have with other religious who guide their own associates?

What historical precedents in the church, monastic, or religious life traditions do you rely upon when thinking about your associate program and what it is trying to do?

Tell me about the presence of non-Catholics in your group. What did the conversation about their presence entail for your congregation?

In what ways is the associate program serving the church and world?

Can you give an example or two about ways your local associate program experience becomes part of the larger national or international associate movement and likewise examples of ways movement within the larger national/international associate organizations has affected your local group?

Can you describe the conversation about associates as you’ve encountered it among networks of sisters from different congregations?

What kind of relationship does your associate group have with the local church? What about the relationship with local parishes?

Have you ever heard a U.S. bishop speak about associate life?
Future of Associate Life

To what extent has your community ever discussed the possibility of associates living together in community with or without vowed members?

What can you say about the question of vocations arising from associate programs or lack thereof?

How do you see the growing size of the associate program with regard to space issues?

What is your best hope for a new associate as she or he grows in understanding and practice of the charism and relationship to your community?

What, in your view, is the future of associate life generally?

How does your associate program look in five years? In ten or twenty?

Your archival material describes the emergence of the associate program as a movement of the Spirit. Can you say more about this claim?

5. AIC Saturday Meeting Schedule

The typical AIC monthly meeting schedule is as follows. At 9am there is an informal gathering in the community room. Members then pray Terce at 9:15am. Terce and all the hours are prayed in the main church, and AIC sit together with other guests in the back pews behind the black iron gate. At 9:25am members gather in the community room for announcements and a reading from the Rule of Benedict both offered by volunteer members. At 9:35am members pray lectio with a reading selected by a volunteer. Some choose to sit in the guest chapel for lectio. At 10 am members share a time of quiet prayer in the community room during which they engage in a variety of forms of contemplative prayer. There is a short break at 10:20am during which members can move around the community room, visit, walk outside, or visit the library or bookstore. A silent and respectful decorum in hallways has come about through leadership council requests and in conversation with the monks about the AIC’s effect on
those in enclosure. The initial and ongoing formation groups then meet (sometimes together and sometimes separately with one in the community room and one in the pillar room) for a 10:30am conference following the three year long cyclical schedule of topics listed in the Life of Members section. At 11:45am members pray Sext and then at noon they gather in guest dining room for a brown bag lunch and often a spiritual reading by a volunteer. A short community meeting follows at 12:45am in the community room and at 1pm there may be teachings for initial and ongoing formation, an optional prayer or lectio time, a chance to walk alone or with another in a “one on one” faith sharing conversation, or a chance for someone to share about a pilgrimage or special topic. Members spread throughout the visitor portions of the grounds during this time. At 1:45pm members come together again in the main church to pray None. At 1:55pm there is time for small groups to discuss the five or six questions for reflection given at the prior meeting concerning the morning’s conference topic. By 2:50 pm members have gathered in the community room for recollection and intercessory prayer, and a closing prayer all led by a volunteer member. Members begin leaving around 3pm.
6. Poem by AIC Member Trisha Day

Brother Walter Tells Us of Psalm148

Brother Walter prays this psalm by heart. 
Words drift from his lips and float across the choir 
like threads of incense 
winding round the rafters of the darkened church.

He sings from memory— 
of when he used to walk out beyond the monastery 
at this same late hour 
to tend the cattle. 
He had the words for such moments: 
praise of the shining stars, the moon in the highest heavens.

He went hooded against stormy winds and snow 
on those fierce winter nights 
knowing the barn would be warm with the steamy sanctity of animals. 
He sang then in praise of their holiness— 
of the glory of beasts wild and tame, small creatures and flying birds.

No wonder Brother Walter tells us to learn the psalms by heart. 
It is where we are most able to feel the pangs of reverence. 
It is where prayer begins.

APPENDIX C

IRB Documentation

1. IRB Approval 2012 and 2013

The University of Dayton’s Institutional Review Board approved the participation of human subjects in this study with no qualifications on two occasions: July 5, 2011 and June 6, 2012 (renewal).

2. Informed Consent Form

The following is a copy of the Informed Consent Form approved by the IRB and signed by each participant.

Consent to Participate in Research

Study on Lay Associations in the U.S. Catholic Church

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Susanna L. Cantu Gregory, from the Department of Religious Studies, University of Dayton. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

• PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to understand what lay associations are and what they mean theologically for the church in the U.S.

• PROCEDURES

This study seeks to hear the voices of lay associates and religious as they speak about their experiences with associate life. You may qualify to participate if you are currently a lay associate, are in formation to become a lay associate, are a former lay associate, or a religious who has some experience with associates.
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you are asked to do the following things:

Read the cover letter. Note any questions you may have for the researcher.
Complete the initial questionnaire and return it to the researcher.
Complete this informed consent form prior to an oral or written interview and sign in the presence of a witness.
Attend an hour long one on one recorded interview with the researcher in person or by phone about your experiences of associate membership at a mutually agreeable time and location. Email or paper interviews are possible upon request.
Contact the researcher at least 24 hours in advance if you need to reschedule.
Contact the researcher by phone as soon as possible if you choose to withdraw participation.
Indicate to the researcher whether you would be willing to participate in a follow up individual or group interview in 2012.
At the researcher’s request, review quotations for accuracy as needed.
As desired, attend a time of sharing the results of the research with all participants at the project’s end.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

To ensure confidentiality of responses, interviews will be conducted in quiet locations agreeable to both the participant and researcher, interview recordings and notes will be kept confidential, and pseudonyms will be used for coding records at the request of the individual participant.

Participants may end the interview or use of interview materials at any time for any reason by notifying the researcher.

To ensure accuracy in representation, the researcher will ask participants to check quotes and paraphrases attributed to individual participants before they are included in the final dissertation.

- **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher aspires to benefit the participants by offering a study of their experiences that portrays them in detail and with accuracy and that sheds light on the larger context and significance of associate life.

- **ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**

As mentioned above, participants may help choose locations and times for the interview
They may also choose whether or not to request anonymity of their responses.
Participants may choose to omit any question during the interview.
• PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Interviewees will not be paid for their participation in the study.

• IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS and PROCEDURE IN CASE OF RESEARCH RELATED ADVERSE EFFECTS

If you are experiencing any kind of discomfort as a result of your participation in this study or if you have any questions about this research, you may contact the researcher directly or the researcher’s faculty advisor.

Susanna L. Cantu Gregory
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Dubuque, IA 52001
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563-552-7382

Professor Dennis Doyle, Ph.D,
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300 College Park, Dayton, Ohio 45469
dennis.doyle@notes.udayton.edu
937-229-4219

• CONFIDENTIALITY

See Potential Risks and Discomforts.

When the results of the research are shared in a public dissertation defense, published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity without your permission.

Interview notes and recordings will be stored confidentially with the researcher and used only for research purposes.

• PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with the associates in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or penalty. The investigator may withdraw you from
participating in this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Dayton Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Mary Connolly, PhD, (937) 229-3493, Mary.Connelly@notes.udayton.edu, Kettering Laboratories Room 542, 300 College Park Dr., Dayton, OH 45469-0104

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**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)  
______________________________________________

Address
___________________________________________________________________
____

Signature of Participant
________________________________________Date___________

---

**SIGNATURE OF WITNESS**

My signature as witness certifies that the Participant signed this consent form in my presence.

Name of Witness (please print)
___________________________________________________________________

Signature of Witness __________________________________________________
Date___________

*(must be same as participant signature date)*
TABLE 1
Hereford Table on Associates and Canonical Relation to Religious

Embedded Model over Time
The following table reflects the responses of AIC and PP study participants within each of the demographic categories on the left. The totals reflect a selected pool of participants chosen from among the 64 associates who filled out an initial questionnaire. Interviewees were later taken from this select pool. These counts do not portray the overall demographic of the AIC and PP. Rather, they show that the characteristics of the participants in this study generally align with the demographic portrait of each association discussed in Ch.3. It can be observed from these totals that representatives from each group in this study tend to be female, in their 60’s, Caucasian, Roman Catholic, with nearly a decade of experience as an associate on average. The AIC members had a slightly stronger tendency to have graduate education, be married, and have a longer history in the association.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>PP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>4/17 male</td>
<td>3/23 male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>61 yrs average</td>
<td>68 yrs average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>All 17 reported Caucasian</td>
<td>All 23 reported Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify as Roman Catholic</td>
<td>4/17 reported other</td>
<td>All 23 reported RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education College</td>
<td>16/17</td>
<td>16/23, 6 reported HS only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Post-Graduate</td>
<td>13/17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>5/17 single</td>
<td>9/23 single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time as an Associate</td>
<td>14 yrs average</td>
<td>9 yrs average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3

Diagram: Differentiated Communion of Communions for Associate Life

This diagram shows an individual associate’s connections to widening layers of communion within the church. The smallest associate group, as in the discussion groups of the AIC and the small groups of the PP, is marked by a circle in the center. This unit resides within the larger association. The association itself has links to the local religious congregation and local church. These ties also extend to the larger congregation and larger charism, though the charism extends beyond them. The local associate group also enjoys ties to larger levels of organization within the international associate community. Finally, the broad category of new ecclesial movements and other lay associations situates the specific lay association within the juridical structure of the church.