

Way of Life of the Assumption Laity



Text approved by the CGP
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Jesus Christ

The Eternal Word,
sent by the Father and consecrated by the Spirit,
was made flesh
and dwelt among us.

Son of God and Son of his People,
He became part of human history,
choosing the same way as his brothers and sisters,
proclaiming the Gospel to the poor.

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He came to gather into one People
the scattered children of God
making Peace by the Blood of his Cross.
So God, raising him from the dead, has made him **Lord**
to the praise of his Glory.

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Adorer of the Father and Saviour of humankind

Christ calls us,

us, the Assumption Laity
to follow Him each day
and to commit ourselves to know Him and make Him known,
to love Him and make Him loved,
thus extending His Kingdom.

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The Incarnation,

the mystery in which man is divinized
and all things are reconciled in Christ,
is the foundation of our spirituality and our action.

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In the footsteps of Marie Eugenie,
in communion with the Religious of the Assumption,
rich in the spirit of the Church,
afire with love for the Gospel and for our times,
we, the Assumption Laity, desire to work
for **the extension of the Kingdom** in the world,
glory of God and happiness of humankind.

The source and strength of our apostolic commitment are
prayer, adoration and listening to the Word.
The spirit of faith, the zeal, interior liberty, and joyful detachment,
which animated Marie Eugenie,
will help us to live our vocation fully.

Trusting humbly in the tender love of God
we commit ourselves to help and encourage one another on the way of love,
living a **covenant** together and with the Religious of the Assumption
which opens us to a universal fraternity.

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Through **Mary**, we allow ourselves to be led to Jesus
Because in the Assumption
“All is from Jesus Christ,
All belongs to Jesus Christ,
All must be for Jesus Christ”¹.

¹ Instruction of Mother Marie-Eugénie, 2 May 1884

INTRODUCTION

*"I bless Yahweh, who makes himself a councillor for us...
I keep Yahweh always before my eyes ...
You will reveal the way of life to me"*

Psalm 15

We, the Assumption Laity committed to this Way of Life, are Christians who want to live our baptismal commitment at the heart of the Church, grow towards holiness and make ours the spirituality and mission of the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption.

We entrust ourselves to God, we nourish ourselves on God's Word so that God may make known to us the way of Life that will be revealed to us day after day. We want to follow Jesus, the Christ, *"The Way, the Truth and the Life"*².

We live out our bond with the Congregation in Assumption Together, forming community with other laity, committing ourselves to live the spirituality of Saint Marie Eugenie with the three dimensions of the Assumption charism, gift of God to the Church:

- Fraternity and community
- Prayer and contemplation
- Mission in the service of the Kingdom

The Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption commits itself to accompany these communities.

As committed laity in the Way of Life, we want to have an attitude of "joyful detachment"³, of listening to the cries of the world, of commitment for justice, solidarity, care of creation and the defence of life, with a special attention on the educational dimension in all our activities.

We want *"to know and love Jesus Christ, to make Him known and loved"*⁴ and to *"discover in what way God can use us"*⁵ for the realization of God's Kingdom. We incarnate ourselves in the world in which we live, looking on it with confidence, trying to see it as God sees it, sharing Saint Marie Eugenie's ideal *"to transform society with the weak means of the Gospel"*⁶.

² John 14:6

³ *"Why not have joyful detachment? Does not everything lead us to this? God being a Father, let us trust Him, raising our hearts to Him who is infinite Goodness and whose mercy triumphs over justice. This disposition goes well with an adoration that receives everything from the hand of God; thus, this acceptance is not sad and sorrowful but joyful and confident. Before even knowing the will of God, we are trusting, and when we know it, we take it from the best side with a certain joyful detachment from all human and worldly views » Chapter of Saint Marie Eugenie to the Sisters on May 19, 1878*

⁴ Words of M. Marie-Eugenie as quoted in the Sisters' Rule of Life: "Make known Jesus Christ and his Holy Church." (Statutes of the Congregation 1854, Constitutions 1866, 1898)

⁵ Mother Marie-Eugénie, 1884

⁶ According to M. Marie-Eugenie: *"with the means of faith, the poor and powerless means of Jesus Christ."*

Chapter 1: A Community Life

1.1. We feel called to live a welcoming brother-and-sisterhood, open to diversity, capable of promoting and enhancing the gifts of the other, always ready to listen, full of joy. We want to live simple and sincere relationships that lead to peace, with the family spirit that characterizes the tradition of the Congregation⁷.

1.2. We live this style of relationships in **the family** into which we were born, in the family we have founded, in our work, and wherever we find our sources of life, enriching each other mutually.

1.3. We want to form a community with other lay people of the Assumption (called, according to the various regions of the world, either “**Assumption Fraternity**” or “**Lay Community of the Assumption**”).

Being a cell of the Church, each of our Fraternities (Lay Communities) tries to live, day after day, “*united in heart and soul*”⁸, a sharing of faith, of life and prayer enlightened by the word of God. This is done according to a rhythm decided together, which allows for true sharing, mutual knowledge of each other, mutual help and active solidarity, the drawing up and carrying out of service projects.

Each Fraternity (Lay Community), has a Community of “Reference” of the Religious of the Assumption.

1.4. Joining a Fraternity (Lay Community), we commit ourselves to a regular and active presence at community meetings. Within this Fraternity (Lay Community), we want to learn how to better live out friendship, prayer and solidarity within our group, in the Church and with those around us. In this way, we want to witness to a Church that is close to people.

Any Sister or all the Community of Religious of reference will participate in our meetings whenever possible. We are truly Assumption-Together with them.

1.5. Our Assumption Fraternities (Lay Assumption Communities) are places where two objectives are pursued and reinforce one another: fraternal love within the group, and fraternal love outside the group.

⁷ Based on St. Marie Eugenie’s words on August 18, 1884: “Always keep the spirit that marked our beginnings: there was an open-heartedness, a simple kindness among us”.

⁸ Acts 2:46

Chapter 2: Life of Prayer and Spirituality

2.1. Desirous to know better the spirituality of the Assumption, particularly as expressed in the writings of Saint Marie Eugenie, we seek to root our personal spiritual history in the charism and the spirituality of the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption.

2.2. Through adoration, regular listening to and reading of the Word of God, and the celebration of the Divine Office, we recognize that God is the centre of History and of our lives and we learn to have a positive outlook on the world, on our own natural family, and on our environment.

2.3. We have a special love for the Eucharist, in which all is gathered and presented to the Father to be transformed by Christ.

2.4. With Saint Marie Eugenie “we ask God for the gift of continual prayer.”⁹

We choose to give time daily for a personal encounter with God that maintains and deepens our life-giving communion with Him.

If possible, we pray as a family.

2.5. Together we live common times of prayer illumined by the Word of God, in order to grow as community, celebrate our fraternity, and present to God the great issues of the world.

As much as possible, our Fraternities (Communities):

- set aside a time of prayer at each of their meetings,
- organize times more specially dedicated to prayer (e.g. retreats),
- celebrate the Eucharist together,
- participate in the prayer of the nearest community of the Religious of the Assumption,
- join in the prayer proposed by the parish or the diocese.

2.6. Each of our Fraternities (Lay Communities) fixes the times devoted to prayer, to the deepening of the spirituality of the Assumption and to the sharing of the Word of God, which is most beneficial for the group. They will have at heart that the members, wherever each one may be in the spiritual life, find through this practice, the nourishment they need to walk on this chosen Way of Life.

2.7 Accompaniment in one’s personal journey is a valid tool in human and spiritual growth. Where possible this is to be promoted and encouraged.

⁹ From the Retreat Notes of M. Marie Eugenie n°204, 1847.

Chapter 3: Mission and Service

3.1. Whatever our profession, our role in the Fraternity (Lay Community), our age, our health or our talents, we have it at heart to “*discover in what way God can make use of us*”¹⁰ to establish His Kingdom in the world.

We recognize that the grace of our baptism is a joyful, urgent and on-going invitation to make us active messengers announcing the Good News of the love of God for all people.

3.2. We want to be prophetic voices of the Church in our personal environment. We are conscious that our voice will be better heard if the Gospel nourishes us, if we try to conform our life to the Gospel. If this inspiration coming from the Gospel fosters joy in us it will also be so for all those we encounter.

3.3. We make ourselves available for the Congregation and at the service of the local ecclesial community, thus showing that the charism of the Assumption is at the service of the Church.

3.4. We are attentive to the world’s questions and we commit ourselves in favour of justice, solidarity, care of creation and peace with particular attention to the educational dimension.

3.5. We seek that each of our Fraternities (Lay Communities) can choose a commitment of service as a group having at heart to favour the most disadvantaged. Personal service options are assumed by all the Fraternity (Community) assuming them in a spirit of sharing and in prayer.

Chapter 4: Formation

4.1. We yearn that the Way of Life to which we are committed becomes a way of growth:

- in faith and in the knowledge of the Word of God
- in the knowledge and understanding as well as in the living of the values of the Assumption charism
- in the community dimension
- in the understanding of the world in view of an effective proclamation of Jesus Christ
- in skills allowing us to fulfil the service that we want to render to the Church and to the world.

We seek to form ourselves in these areas, individually and with the Fraternity (Lay Community) to which we belong.

4.2. In the measure of our possibilities, we profit of the means proposed by each Province to facilitate encounters between persons engaged in the Way of Life for formation and sharing.

¹⁰ From an undated letter of M Marie-Eugenie, probably to Father Lacordaire sometime between 1841 and 1844. Foundation Texts p. 117.

Chapter 5: Initiation Process

5.1. A person wishing to live his/her Christian life in the Assumption charism and spirituality in a close and enduring relationship with the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption can ask to commit with this Way of Life.

Verified the solidity of this desire, after a period of at least one year of participation in the life of a group, and of formation with accompaniment by one Sister and/or a Fraternity (Lay Community), we propose to the person a commitment of one year which will be formally made during a Fraternity (Lay Community) meeting.

5.2. Before the commitment ceremony, the person expresses in writing, if possible, the motivations for a commitment in the Way of Life and shares this with those who have accompanied him/her during this process. This discernment is shared with the Provincial Superior for her knowledge and acceptance.

5.3. In places where there are no Assumption Fraternities (Lay Community) there could be members of Assumption-Together who express their desire to commit themselves in this Way of Life. They will discern with the nearest community of Religious of the Assumption the process they must follow and the best way to concretise the communitarian dimension of their commitment.

Chapter 6: Commitment

6.1. Our commitment is made in Assumption-together. Where possible, it is made in the presence of our Fraternity (Lay Community) and of the Sisters of the Community of reference of the Religious of the Assumption. The Eucharist could be celebrated at this occasion in thanksgiving.

6.2. The commitment to the Way of Life is a help to grow in our Christian life as lay persons in the Assumption. It should not be confused with religious vows.

6.3. The commitment takes place at two moments of the ceremony: after a time of prayer together and meditation on a passage of the Word of God, **the Assumption Lay person expresses his/her wish** by saying:

“On this day, before the Fraternity of the Assumption (Lay Community of the Assumption) of [place], I, [name] want to make my commitment as an Assumption Lay woman/man.

I want to be faithful to my Baptism and united to Christ present in all my brothers and sisters. I want His love to be the source and model of this unity.

I want to allow myself to be enlightened each day by the Word of God, which is strength and light, which helps to make all things new, which challenges me and gives me the strength to work for justice, peace and solidarity.

I want to strengthen my faith through the sacraments and to live my commitment as an Assumption Lay woman/man in the Church.

I want to make mine the burning desire of Marie Eugenie to know Christ and to make Him known, to love Him and make Him loved.

And I commit myself in the Fraternity (Lay Community) of [place]...to pray together, to help one another, and to pursue a project of service according to the Way of Life of the Assumption Laity.”

At the end of this ceremony of commitment, the new Assumption Lay person receives a sign of affiliation and a copy of the *Way of Life*. This sign of affiliation is a silver-plated cross modelled on the bronze cross of the Religious of the Assumption.

Afterwards the **Fraternity (Lay Community)** that receives the new Assumption member says a prayer of thanksgiving. The following prayer or any other depending on each place can be said together:

“Thank you, Lord, for your faithfulness.

Thank you for increasing our faith, the strength which makes us go forward and which gives meaning to our life.

Thank you for these months during which we have been able to share experiences, joys, sadness, difficulties, hopes, projects and dreams with You and within our Fraternity (Community)

Thank you for having gathered us in one Body, forming us into one family.

Thank you for the friendship that unites us and gathers us into community.

Thank you for this new brother (this new sister) who has joined us so that we walk together more closely.

Thank you for Mary, the first believer, the woman of faith who said ‘yes’.

Thank you because she knew how to receive the promise of God and to let it take flesh in her.

In and through her, the promise of salvation was announced and accomplished.

Thank you, Lord, for inviting us to be your disciples following the example of Marie- Eugenie.

Encouraged by her and following in her footsteps, we say again that we want to:

Be messengers of the Good News in our families, our daily work, in the place where we live, in each one of our actions, in each of our gestures, in each one of our words. Make of our life a place of joy and, day after day, to bring to the weakest and neediest of our brothers and sisters a transforming love, as a sign of the Hope you offer us.

Today, for all this, in joyful knowledge of being immensely loved by you, Lord, we put our hands in your hands and commit ourselves to work for the extension of your Kingdom.”

6.4 The renewal of these commitments for those among us who desire it, is done in community in the dates decided on by each Province, repeating the commitment formula during a time of prayer. Each province can decide the period of renewal (between 1 and 3 years).

6.5. If any member of the Lay Community (Fraternity) does not wish to renew his/her commitment, he/she shall inform the Community (Fraternity) and hand in the sign of affiliation.

This Way of Life is an itinerary proposed to those who want to live, as laity, their baptismal grace in the charism of the Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption and the spirituality of its foundress Mother Marie Eugenie. It is a spiritual invitation for all those who desire it.