



Congregazione delle Suore della SS.ma Madre Addolorata
del Terz'Ordine Regolare di S. Francesco d'Assisi

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SSM VOLUNTEER MINISTRY

GUIDELINES

*As a way to share our charism,
be in relationship with others,
and have others participate in our ministries,
we will focus on international volunteer efforts.*

(Enactment X, 19th SSM General Assembly)

August 2004 – Revised February 2010

Revised August 2016
Sr. M. Teresina Marra, ssm
General Superior

SSM CONGREGATIONAL LOGO



... To bring fuller life to others

Reflection on the Logo

Circle drawing / spiral: Breath of God's Spirit (Ruah) surrounding everything in its action of Creating and Redeeming, as an inexhaustible source of new life. Symbol of God to whom we address in contemplation and towards whom our individual and community contemplative life is focused – *"we seek the Lord about all"* (Our Way of Life, 4)

Crucifix and Tau: The suffering world, but redeemed by Christ and healed by the life-giving grace of the Spirit of the Risen Christ. *"We can enter into the paschal mystery, wherein we are able to die to self and rise so closely united with Christ that his life transforms our dying."* (Our Way of Life, 11)

Standing near the Cross, *"humble discipleship"* (Our Way of Life, 3) Mary, Mother of God and the Church, deeply involved in the plan of salvation. Since Mary is the Community model and help, the Community is called to serve the Crucified Love together with their sisters and brothers, in joy and poverty, following the example of Francis of Assisi and Mother Frances - *"we care for those in need, especially the poor, and in our own poverty seek the Lord above all"* (Our Way of Life, 74) and *"to give ourselves completely to Christ as instruments to bring fuller life to others"* (Our Way of Life, 51)

THE MISSION STATEMENT of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi

***The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
participate in the mission of Jesus
to bring fuller life to others by revealing the Love of God
for all, especially the poor.***

(21st SSM General Assembly – October 2012)

Sources - Inspiration

Vita Consecrata, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, numbers 54, 56

Communion and Cooperation with the Laity

54. In recent years, one of the fruits of the teaching on the Church as communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church's mission. This helps to give a clearer and more complete picture of the Church herself, while rendering more effective the response to the great challenges of our time, thanks to the combined contributions of the various gifts. Contacts with the laity, in the case of monastic or contemplative Institutes, take the form of a relationship that is primarily spiritual, while for Institutes involved in works of the apostolate these contacts also translate into forms of pastoral cooperation. Members of Secular Institutes, lay or clerical, relate to other members of the faithful at the level of everyday life. Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that *their charism can be shared with the laity*. The laity is therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.

Associates and Lay Volunteers

56. A significant expression of lay people's sharing in the richness of the consecrated life is their participation in various Institutes under the new form of so-called associate members or, in response to conditions present in certain cultures, as people who share fully for a certain period of time the Institute's community life and its particular dedication to contemplation or the apostolate. This should always be done in such a way that the identity of the Institute in its internal life is not harmed. This voluntary service, which draws from the richness of the consecrated life, should be held in great esteem; it is however necessary to provide proper formation so that, besides being competent, volunteers always have supernaturally motivated intentions and, in their projects, a strong sense of community and of the Church. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that initiatives involving lay persons at the decision-making level, in order to be considered the work of a specific Institute, must promote the ends of that Institute and be carried out under its responsibility. Therefore, if laypersons take on a directive role, they will be accountable for their actions to the competent Superiors. It is necessary for all this to be examined and regulated by special directives in each Institute, to be approved by higher authority; these directives should indicate the respective responsibilities of the Institute itself, of its communities, associate members and volunteers.

Consecrated persons, sent by their Superiors and remaining subject to them, can take part in *specific forms of cooperation in lay initiatives*, particularly in organizations and institutions which work with those on the margins of society and which have the purpose of alleviating human suffering. Such collaboration, if prompted and sustained by a clear and strong Christian identity and respectful of the particular character of the consecrated life, can make the radiant power of the Gospel shine forth brightly even in the darkest situations of human life. In recent years, many consecrated persons have become members of one or other of the *ecclesial movements*, which, have spread in our time. From these experiences, those involved usually draw benefit, especially in the area of spiritual renewal. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that in certain cases this involvement causes uneasiness and disorientation at the personal or community level, especially when these experiences come into conflict with the demands of the common life or of the Institute's spirituality. It is therefore necessary to take care that membership in these ecclesial movements does not endanger the charism or discipline of the Institute of origin, and that all is done with the permission of Superiors and with the full intention of accepting their decisions.

PART I

PREPARATION OF VOLUNTEERS

1. Sources

From the Second Vatican Council:

- *Apostolicam Actuositatem* of Paul VI (on the apostolate of laity)
- *Vita Consecrata* of John Paul II (on the consecrated life and its mission in the Church and the world)
- *Christifideles Laici* of John Paul II (on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world)

The above documents can be found on the web site: www.vatican.va

2. Brief Founding History of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi

The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother are a multicultural and international Franciscan community founded by Mary Frances of the Cross (Amalia Streitel) in 1883.

It is said that God acts through the desires of the heart. This is how the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, now in existence about one hundred and twenty five years, came to be - through the desires and vision of one woman.

Amalia Streitel was born in Mellrichstadt, Germany, on November 24, 1844, the first of four children.

Nurtured in Catholicism by reverent parents and educated to be a teacher of music and languages, Amalia felt called to religious life when she was seventeen. Almost four years passed before she was able to persuade her parents that religious life, rather than marriage, was her vocation. At the age of twenty-one she joined the nearby teaching congregation, the Franciscan Sisters of Maria Stern in Augsburg. Wholehearted generosity, simplicity, and prayerfulness characterized the way she lived religious life within the community but she struggled for years with the growing desire to give herself more completely to the Lord. In order to fulfill that desire and to seek God in deeper solitude and contemplation, Amalia transferred from the Convent of Maria Stern to the Carmelite monastery, Himmelsporten, in Wuerzburg, Germany, in 1882. Here she intended to spend the rest of her life. Here also in the austerity of Carmel a totally unexpected development in her vocation took place. In prayer she was given to understand that her life mission would not be to live in solitude but rather to bring about a renewed form of religious life, a form that would unite the contemplative life with the active life of ministry.

Trusting that this vision was from God Amalia left the cloister to begin again.

In 1883 she answered an invitation from Father Francis Jordan to come to Rome to cooperate in expanding Father Jordan's newly founded Catholic Teaching Society to include women. For two years Father Jordan and Mother Frances Streitel tried to develop this cooperative endeavor but they both eventually realized that their difficulties and misunderstandings emerged from the individual fidelity to different charisms. While each was being faithful to the guidance of the Spirit, each was trying to express in concrete form very noble but different ideals. In 1885 this conflict of ideals culminated in a change of direction.

The two-year-old institute led by Mother Frances Streitel of the Cross and thirty-five women who had joined her, was separated from Father Francis Jordan by church authority and placed under the direction of Monsignor George Jacquemin, the canonist and theologian who was the confessor of the sisters. At

this time the congregation was approved as a diocesan institute in Rome and given the name Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, the title, which it bears today.

The community followed the Franciscan rule and, though they were very poor, they sought to share with others whatever they had. Their spirit was manifest in kindness and simple generosity: giving hospitality, food, service, and prayer to whom they found needing.

In the sixth year of its existence the community began to expand both in Europe and in the United States. The simple generosity of the sisters was rewarded; and many people, especially in the United States, Austria, and Poland, gave freely to the mendicant sisters so that the community could begin mission activity.

The early religious houses established by Mother Frances gave a specific character to the nature and kind of service given by the sisters. Most often it was the poor, the forgotten, and the uncared-for who were ministered to. Hospitals and homes for the sick were opened, homes for neglected children and the aged were provided, and schools were established. Wherever human need presented itself the early community offered to give of its human and material resource in whatever form it was able, thus grounding its service in the mandates of the gospel. The rapid development of the community in different countries from 1889 to 1895 occasioned much hardship and difficulty for the congregation. Mother Frances was often ill and had to rely on others to carry out the practical implications of her spiritual wisdom. Her holiness was obvious to all but her vocation was not yet complete. Repeatedly her fidelity to the Lord was challenged through misunderstanding, suffering, and surrender.

In 1896, through a series of misunderstandings, Mother Frances was relieved of her office as leader of the community. The spirit and foundation, which she had nurtured, were carried on by others while she lived a life of quiet seclusion at the motherhouse in Rome, assisting her successor with her counsel and supporting the entire community through her prayer. The last six years of her life were spent at the kindergarten mission in Castel Sant'Elia, Italy, where she cared for needy children, giving simple witness to the way of life, which she had begun.

On the day of her death, March 6, 1911, Pope Pius X gave final approval to the constitutions of the congregation, thus ratifying a form of religious living that is still viable today.

3. The SSM Apostolic Mission

Teaching and healing in the name of Jesus have been the primary apostolic works of the congregation since its foundation. Education and health care for those who suffer because of their poorness powerlessness, or deprivation continue to be the focus of our apostolate. (Our Way of Life, 52)

We serve the poor by sharing God's love through apostolic service and contemplative prayer. Our mission is to be instruments of Christ bringing fuller life to others

We are present and minister in Austria, Germany, Italy, Brazil, United States of America, Tanzania, Dominican Republic, Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad/Tobago.

4. Social Commitment in the History of SSM

As Jesus sent his apostles to teach and to heal in his name, so we are sent by the Church, through our legitimate superiors, to be disciples who proclaim the gospel message, build up the community of faith, and give dedicated service. The apostolic and spiritual heritage which we have received from St. Francis and Mother Frances, challenges us to give ourselves completely to Christ as instruments to bring fuller life to others. (Our Way of Life, 50-51)

In the early history of our community, as well as now in our day, there is a ministerial focus on services for the poor. We also are attempting to address structures that oppress the poor. In the first years, our sisters were sent to various countries in Europe and the USA to seek funds for the poor in Rome who knocked on the door of our first community. In the USA, the sisters first began to minister to immigrant workers who had no health care. Profit hungry employers were exploiting workers. It was also the time of

the document “*Rerum Novarum*” where Pope Leo XIII declared the right of workers to have just wages and that employers had responsibilities as well as rights.

In 1961, Pope John XXIII in his document “*Christianity and Social Progress*” indicated it was the duty of the more wealthy nations to help the poor. He encouraged those nations who had sufficient means to help the nations that were poor. He further wrote that in giving aid, it is every country’s duty to respect the latter’s culture and to refrain from domination.

Trying to focus on the “signs of the times” and the request of Pope John XXIII, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother evaluated their ministerial efforts and their use of their congregational resources. In light of the evaluation, sisters were missioned to the islands in the Caribbean and to Brazil to minister to those who had unmet needs.

In 1965, after Vatican II, in the social teaching “*Gaudium et Spes*” of Pope Paul VI, Catholics were referred to as “the People of God”. In this encyclical the Catholic Church explores the relationship between the Church and humanity. It is a call to all persons to work to improve the world. In the Catholic Church, the concept was strengthened that all Baptized have the right and the duty to commit to expand the spread of the Gospel through their words and actions. In 1967, Pope Paul VI, in the document titled “*Populorum Progressio*”, that is “The Development of Peoples” stressed that we are to foster the full development of people. We are to be concerned not only about the physical needs but to focus on the development of people socially, culturally, and spiritually. We are to evaluate the root causes of poverty and inequalities that exist.

Despite many limitations, the response from the congregation came quickly. New realities and needs were addressed by the congregation in various areas of the world, particularly in the 90s, when we started the ministries with and for the poor in the Dominican Republic, with the Native Americans in the United States and with the Xavantes Indians in Brazil. In 2006, we started the mission in the villages in the Diocese of Kahama, Tanzania.

In recent years, the congregation has been committed to work against human trafficking and to provide hospitality for refugees. This work is being achieved through collaboration with other national and international organizations. In Castel Sant’Elia, Italy, in the house where Mother Frances Streitl lived for six years and where she died, space has been made available to accommodate refugee women and children or victims of human trafficking. Hospitality and support for refugees and victims of human trafficking are also given in other houses of the congregation; especially in the Convent Marienburg in Abenberg, Germany.

Our congregational ministries have always collaborated with the laity and involved them in the mission of Jesus, bringing fuller life to others.

PART II

PREPARATION OF THE COMMUNITIES OFFERING VOLUNTEER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Specific information to be given to the volunteer

1. Short history and clear description of the ministry which is requesting volunteers

Describe briefly the purpose, the mission of the ministry and the activities which are currently carried out to address the identified need

Examples:

- We are dedicated to promoting a culture of peace. Right relationships and community are nurtured in the Franciscan tradition of compassion, moderation, simplicity and reverence for all creation.
- We provide basic health care to those who lack
- We provide human and Christian education to children, teen-agers and young people who are in need
- We provide health care to the sick and elderly in order to give support to their families
- We provide an opportunity for women and men to live out their baptismal commitment through ministry with the SSMs.

2. Identification of the need to be addressed – Opportunities

Make a simple statement, which clarifies the identified need that the ministry is addressing. This will help the potential volunteers discern if they can be committed to the ministry.

Need to be addressed - Examples:

- Dental care in Day Program
- Health care, health center
- Nursing
- Professional advice and hydraulic/electric repair
- Arrangement of external/internal areas
- Teaching short courses
- Entertainment/Animation/Sports

Ministry opportunities - Examples:

- Child care worker
- Teaching (specify what area)
- Accounting
- Secretary
- Computer expert
- Maintenance and carpentry
- Seamstress
- Cook
- Emergency food distribution
- Leadership development
- Other

3. Description of Needed Volunteers

Individual volunteers – Examples

- Single persons or married couples are needed for short-term projects. The usual length of service should be indicated. The ministry requesting the volunteer needs to determine what is the shortest period of time one can serve for the need to be addressed. Also what is the longest period of time one can serve
- If families are accepted, there needs to be a role for them as well

Work teams - Examples

- A group sponsored by a church or organization that comes to address a specific project. Length of service should be determined.
- A group sponsored by an organization that comes to address a specific project. Length of service should be determined.

Medical teams - Examples

- Groups of people who come to address a particular need. Length of service should be determined

4. Length of service

Short term (from one to three months)

- This is usually the best term of service for a specific project, (especially for a volunteer's first experience).

Medium term (from three months to one year)

- For integration into a SSM sponsored ministry

5. Requirements – Information

Requirements are specific to the area in which the volunteer will be serving.

Essential requirements

- Good medical health
- Good motivation
- Flexibility
- Humanitarian sense
- Sense of humor
- Positive presence
- Commitment to reflect on the experience

Essential information

- Married, single, Christian, Catholic, man, woman, age limits
- Specify if persons of all the faith traditions are accepted
- Licensure/Permits /Liability Coverage for professional people - If there is a liability coverage requirement it should be mentioned in a statement included in the general information
- Indicate if there are language requirements. Even though some people have no difficulties with the communication, do not take language for granted because people who do not speak the language become frustrated. Their little travel book phrases do not work in ministry
- Life style, ability to live a simple life style, ability to live in community, in another culture
- Community experience with other volunteer organizations, not necessarily religious congregations
- Get reliable references or previous working experience with the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

6. Living accommodations

- Accommodations at the residence of the ministry if possible
- Participation in household chores, cleaning own room etc.

7. Expenses covered by the volunteer during his/her service

- Travel to the volunteer site, international airfare
- Immunizations and medications required for service in the country
- Visa and passports
- Personal expenses
- Personal long distance phone calls
- Any personal trips or outings
- Any expenses for any stay longer than the scheduled service time

8. Expenses covered by the organizing Ministry of the volunteer service during the time scheduled

- Housing, food, laundry
- Clean safe water and food
- In country transportation for volunteer service
- When ministry is being carried out in a different culture, no one should consider accepting volunteers without providing community support; providing community support would not be needed when the volunteer is local.
- Volunteers are not receiving payment for their service. If a stipend is to be provided this fact should be included in the information sent to the volunteer

9. Local Coordinator for Ministry/Volunteer Service

This person is usually a SSM who is involved in the Ministry and committed to making the volunteer program successful. This person will have the following responsibilities:

- Develop the service program to be carried out by the volunteer
- The information given to the volunteer should include any specific requirements particular to the country of service such as visa, specific immunizations, physical requirements, medical treatments, statement regarding bringing one's own personal prescription medications for length of service
- Introduce the volunteer to the community and to the employees
- Introduce the ministry to the volunteer
- Provide for formation of the volunteer
- Provide support during the service of the volunteer
- Daily work and contact with the volunteer
- Meet with the volunteer to resolve problems

10. Application process

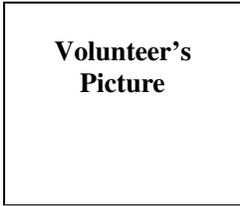
An application form needs all parts to be filled in and signed by the volunteer and returned to the responsible person for the ministry for which the volunteer offers his/her service. (See form example)

11. Liability Release

The liability release needs to be written and signed by the volunteer. It can be on a separate paper from the application. (See form example)

Application Form for Volunteer Service

**Volunteer's
Picture**



Heading (Ministry for which a volunteer is to be offering service)

.....
.....
.....
.....

I, the undersigned,
hereby request to participate in a voluntary service for the above mentioned Ministry for the period
from..... to

References (including a reference from a SSM sister who knows the volunteer)

.....
.....

Listing of previous volunteer experiences

.....
.....

Area for related skills

.....
.....
.....

Have you ever been convicted of a felony, misdemeanor or other criminal offence (including a civil
forteiture) or are any criminal charges pending against you?

___YES ___NO If yes, explain 1) nature of offense _____, 2) date of conviction
___/___/___ and 3) municipality or county and state in which convicted _____.

Names/Telephone numbers of who to contact in case of emergency and relationship to volunteer

.....
.....

I attest that all information contained in this application is true, to the best of my knowledge.

Volunteer's Signature

Date

Liability Release

I hereby release the SSM _____ Ministry, its agents, employees, volunteer assistants and Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother from any liability whatsoever arising out of any injury, damage or loss, which may be sustained by said person or said person's property during the course of involvement with the _____ Ministry.

Application Signature

Date