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Rome, March 27, 2014  
*Feast of the Good Father*

## **REFLECTION ON FORMULA OF COMMITMENT TO THE SSCC SECULAR BRANCH**

The coordinators of the team of spiritual animation of the Secular Branch (SB) sent out a questionnaire to all the Sectors of the SB in the Congregation. There was a good response to this even if certain sectors didn't respond.

In one of the questions in the questionnaire, we wanted to know the formula used when a member of the SB was making commitment. Article 31 of the Statutes of the SB asks that each Sector have a commitment formula and a ceremony of acceptance of members, followed by inscription in the register of the SB. Following on from this, as you know, with the information which we have received from the Sectors, we have been able to create the first "big register", an "Index" of all those who are presently members of the SB.

The theme of this brief reflection, which the animating team presents to you, is centred on the "formulas" used for the commitment of members of the SB. In the responses to the questionnaire we have fifteen different formulas for the commitment ceremony. There is such disparity within these formulas of commitment that we saw the need to perhaps "guarantee" certain elements that would help to maintain the same spirit in the different formulas. Another way of saying this is: what are the essential elements which must be present in the commitment formula of a member of the SB?

We are not saying that there must be one and the same formula for the whole SB, as is the case for the brothers and sisters of the Congregation. This might help unity, but would lose the diversity which is a source of richness for the SB who is called to carry out its mission in the social reality where the members find themselves. Thank God they are present in a variety of places with their own proper evangelizing and prophetic style.

The aim of this reflection is to help each Sector to revise its formula so that it can add, if necessary, the elements which are missing, or to synthesize in fewer words the essential elements of the formula. It is really basic material through which we will enrich our commitment formulas. We hope that this will be a worthwhile contribution from us as a team of the General governments.

## ELEMENTS OF A FORMULA OF COMMITMENT FOR THE SSCC LAITY

1. Every good formula of commitment must begin with the personal call **I**. This might appear simple; but when we pronounce “I” we must not forget that it is laden with the meaning and weight of commitment.

When I pronounce « I »in the formula, I commit my whole being with my carefully reflected conscience. I commit my whole person, all the dimensions of my life, the totality of my existence. To be a Christian, and to be so as an SSCC lay person, involves all of who I am.
2. The ‘I’ making the commitment is not an abstract being who cannot be found in society. One of the elements that identifies us in this world is our **name**. This element is very important; every person has the right to have a name. In some cultures there is a whole ceremony to name a child. Our name within the formula of commitment, identifies us and inserts us within the society where our only concern is to build a world modelled on the Heart of God.
3. The committed and identifiable ‘I’ makes a commitment before a series of **witnesses**. For us, the primary and true witness is the God who calls us. The act of commitment invites God to intervene; God who knows us in the depths of our being; the One who reminds us when our doubts, our pride or our fidelity are tested.

God acts as “witness” to our service for the good of his people. We collaborate with God in our prophetic journey of evangelization so that he can, at the same time, be our strength and the “reference” for our action and commitment. The one making the commitment knows that only in God, will he place his hope and his love. He takes God as his witness because he knows that God does not mislead nor change his story according to the circumstances.

From the beginning of time, God has always given part of the responsibility to humankind. That is why, these people gathered together in the Church of Jesus-Christ and with specific mission within it, can also help us to remain faithful to our freely accepted mission. In many instances, the brothers and sisters of the Congregation and/or family members are quoted. In short, this is to show that the commitment is not just a private and personal affair. It is also a “public” affair that is lived with others. These “others” are witnesses of our mission and service.
4. Knowing that the human person is limited in time and in space, it is good **to determine the length of time** of our commitment. In relation to the question of time, the Statutes of the SB give us already a clear orientation. *“The commitment to the mission and the engagement of the members of the SSCC lay community is for one year for the first commitment. This is followed by a commitment for a period of three years, which is renewable indefinitely”.* (Art. 32)

Determining the length of time of the commitment of laity is an intelligent aspect of the formula because it gives the freedom to continue or not with the commitment made in the Church and in society. Naturally, if it happens that a person does not renew their commitment as a member of the SB, this person is no longer a member of it. The temporality of the commitment of the laity in the SB is a characteristic element of them, as definitive commitments are generally reserved for options of state of life, such as marriage, religious life, or the priesthood.
5. **The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts: the place and manner of living the commitment.** We say that all commitment is determined in time and in space. We cannot

make a commitment without a point of reference. Ours is the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and of Perpetual Adoration. This reference reminds us that we are entering into a history that began many years ago and in which we are called to faithfully live our mission as baptized members of the SB of the Congregation. The way we live out our baptism is shaped by the reference to the Congregation, which at the same time shows us how to live it. It expresses our desire to belong and to be a member of a group, the "Secular Branch", called to live their faith through the vocation and mission of the Congregation.

A commitment with its own characteristics is thus expressed: to live the gift of SSCC charism which has been received as a lay person, committed to the SB, in one's family, at work, in society in general... working for the transformation of a more just society and a more humane world.

The name of the Congregation is a reference which causes us, like the Good Father used to say: ***"we will be failing in our most essential vow the moment we begin to work only for ourselves and not for the salvation of our brothers"***. This salvation of our brothers is lived according to the attitudes of Jesus, which caused him to hand himself over and give his life for the salvation of the world. Saying the name of the Congregation means that we accept its life project and mission.

**6. Every commitment is made in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** By making commitment, one is consciously saying that he/she is going to try to live in fidelity to God, counting on his grace. The invocation of the three divine persons is a reminder that our faith, our mission from baptism is trinitarian. The Father, sends his Son, who commits us and sends us the Holy Spirit, to enlightens us and to strengthen us in mission.

The Trinitarian invocation is accompanied by the sign of the cross. All of our lives is under the sign of the cross. To live as a member of the SB implies that we accept the cross as a consequence of living and of loving. The children of the Heart of Jesus are children of the cross, as the Good Father said.

Everything culminates in the "amen" which is a confirmation of all that we have said, and consciously accepted. We want it to be a sign of our fidelity to God's invitation, to the charism which we have received, to contemplate, live and proclaim to the world His love made manifest in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

If a little outline of a particular formula of commitment in the SB is needed, we would include the following elements:

- Element of identification( I and the name)
- Element of Church (the witnesses)
- Determining element (length of time)
- Element of place in the Church (as a lay person, lay community)
- Element of Mission (SSCC charism)
- Concluding element (sign of the cross and the Amen)

**The importance of the SB register must not be forgotten.**

Although it is not an element as such of the formula, we would like to remind you that the register is important on the day of commitment. This book must contain the names, the year, the place where the commitment took place, and two or three witnesses with their signatures.