

# GENERAL ORIENTATIONS OF SSCC SECULAR BRANCH 2017 – 2023



*You are where God placed you. Remain there calmly.  
The wind shakes but does not overturn deep rooted trees."*

**Good Father**

(Correspondence, Vol III, LEBP 451)

*"Let us all be of one heart and one soul serving the good God! Let us be entirely  
His and all will become very easy for us!"*

**Good Mother**

(Correspondence, Vol VII, LEBM 1499)

# GENERAL ORIENTATIONS OF SSCC SECULAR BRANCH 2017 – 2023

## Introduction

These orientations are the fruits of the first international meeting of the SSCC Secular Branch. This meeting in which 25 lay members from different Sectors throughout the world. The meeting took place in El Escorial (Spain – Madrid) from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Apart from the participating members, there were also two members from the Spanish Sector as support persons, two translators, a theologian from the Congregation who comes from Chile (Eduardo Pérez-Cotapos), a lay Jesuit who came to give a conference (Alfonso Salgado) and our two Superior Generals, Emperatriz Arrobo and Javier Álvarez-Ossorio, who were present for the closure of this meeting.

## A Reminder of the History of the meeting

The first meeting of the Secular Branch had a lengthy preparation with the involvement of all the Sectors. The first letter announcing the possibility of such an event in the Congregation was dated the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

This letter was preceded by a questionnaire, the synthesis of which produced:

**The Theme:** *The lay vocation inspired by the SSCC Charism.* Looking to the past with gratitude; living the present with passion; embracing the future with hope.

The beginnings of a **content** with three principal moments:

- a) *Looking to the past:* the theme chosen is the history of the Secular Branch (social-historical context; the ecclesial context and its semantic evolution in the congregation until today).
- b) *Living the present:* Sharing the experiences of the Sectors (Prayer, Community life and Financial Solidarity, Apostolic Life, Formation (Initial and On-going) and admission of members).
- c) *Embrace the future:* the Lay Vocation (Identity and influence of the Charism of my life; the contribution of the Charism within your society and your Church; the challenge of the SSCC Charism for our Church and our world...)

## Why an international meeting?

The whole Congregation is celebrating the Bicentenary of its Roman approbation. Firmly believing that the charism of the Congregation is a gift of God for our respective churches in the world, a charism shared and lived by religious and laity, the Spiritual Animation Team of the Secular Branch in agreement with the two General Governments took the initiative to propose an international meeting of the Secular Branch. This initiative was welcomed by all the Sectors of the Secular Branch.

It is therefore, the fruit of nearly three years' work and dialogue between Sectors and in a special way, the group work and plenary sessions in El Escorial from where these orientations of the Secular Branch were born.

They are called « **orientations** » because this first meeting did not consider itself to be a decision-making body for the whole of the Secular Branch in the world, but rather an assembly where good ideas for the good functioning of our Sectors in the world and in our different local churches.

These orientations have been accepted by all the participants in the first international meeting of the Secular Branch. They have also agreed that the Spiritual Animation Team contextualize them. The Animation team did this during its October 2017 meeting.

We point out in passing that the original text of these orientations is in English. If in doubt about the translation, please consult the English text.

## **ORIENTATIONS OF THE SECULAR BRANCH**

After the group sharing and with the help of the team of «observers»<sup>1</sup>, the participants divided these orientations into 5 big blocks: life of prayer, community and apostolic life, formation, international solidarity, and the structure. The orientations finish with some recommendations for the sisters and brothers.

These orientations are a **common help** for the Sectors of the Secular Branch. This help does not in any way take away anything from the interior rule of life of a Sector. The content of these orientations from El Escorial follows:

### **A. LIFE OF PRAYER**

It was stated unanimously that prayer was an important element in the life of a Sector and of a lay Community. The importance given to this was also accompanied by difficulties, among which was the lack of consistency, fidelity in putting our community plans into practice, etc. In order to improve the life of prayer, it is recommended that:

- 1. Importance be given to Adoration as a community and individually.**
- 2. There is a resource of common prayers** (for example have a book of SB prayers from different cultures).
- 3. Encourage celebration of the Feast of St. Francis Regis** (the 16<sup>th</sup> June).

### **B. COMMUNITY AND APOSTOLIC LIFE**

SSCC laity are called to feel « responsible » for their community and their Sectors. The apostolate is an integral part of the life project of a member of the Secular Branch. In this sense every SSCC lay person should feel themselves to be « sent » by their community wherever they are.

In order to improve our apostolic and community life, it is recommended that:

- 1. More responsibility be taken for the life of our communities.**
- 2. We be open and promote the presence of new members and risk inviting young people into the Secular Branch.**
- 3. We be open and accepting of diversity/reality.**

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<sup>1</sup> An ad hoc team was formed, made up of three people, (Stefany REH, Michael CURTIS, Emilio LÓPEZ ANREUS) and their role was to gather the ideas that surfaced during the meeting so as to be able to draw up a document or folder

4. We live /understand the virtues of the **Evangelical Counsels** (poverty, chastity, obedience) as laity.
5. **Together we “SEE–JUDGE–ACT “for life review & apostolates.**
6. **We understand that we are sent by our community.**

### **C. FORMATION**

The assembly became aware that the Sectors produce plenty of material which aren't known or made available to other Sectors. On top of that, those responsible for the Sectors or the communities need a formation which is adapted to their service for the good of all.

Because of this, it is recommended that:

1. **Formation Materials and Information** (of the Sectors) **be shared.**
2. **Leadership Formation takes place.**

### **D. INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**

As members of the same family, the joys and pains of others are also ours. During the meeting, many of the participants valued the sense of solidarity among Communities of the same Sector. Another positive aspect was the financial support of certain Sectors in the missionary project of the Congregation.

On this point, it is recommended:

1. **Where possible have a common project with Brothers, Sisters and Secular Branch and also collaboration with other institutions of the Church.**

### **E. THE STRUCTURE**

Throughout the meeting, the importance of the role of the SSCC laity within the Congregation and the respective local Churches was emphasized. The participants felt the need to create certain international commissions to respond to the different challenges highlighted in this first meeting. Each language group is made up of three people chosen from among the members who constitute the group.

**Three International Commissions** were created:

1. Commission for Communication (made up of the “Spanish Group”: Latin America, Spain-Portugal)
2. Commission of Formation (made up of the “English Group”: USA, Indonesia and Ireland England)
3. Commission of Prayer (made up of the “French Group”: French Polynesia, Africa and Germany)

It is recommended to hold:

1. **National Meetings** (where they don't exist)
2. **A Continental Meeting** (if possible every three years)
3. **An International Meeting** (a year before the General Chapters, that is every six years)

## ⇒ REMINDER

The participants remind all the Sectors of the need to have certain documents which explain the organization and the way the Sectors function.

Having noted certain disparity in what is lived in our Sectors and a certain lack of knowledge of the documents which are important for the Secular Branch, the participants have not hesitated in reminding the Sectors of the importance of these documents:

1. **Statutes of the Secular Branch (1993)**
2. **Sector internal rule of life**
3. **Community life plan/project**
4. **And the need to share common practices among Sectors (Celebrations, admission of members, assemblies, formation content, formula of promises, etc.)**

## ORIENTATIONS TO SSCC SISTERS AND BROTHERS

The laity have thought it appropriate to address a word to the brothers and sisters so that their words would reach the upcoming General Chapters which will be held soon. The laity are anxious to build up the sscs family even more.

For this end, the brothers and sisters are asked to:

1. **Include in the Initial formation of Brothers and Sisters, knowledge of the Secular Branch (History, development, its growth in the world, lay theology, etc.)**
2. **Encourage Brothers and Sisters to as much as they can to fully promote the development of Secular Branch, particularly in parts of the world where SB is not fully embraced.**
3. **Study the possibility of lay participation in various Congregational meetings (Celebrations, Assemblies, Chapters, Retreats, etc.)**
4. **Have members of Spiritual Animation Team accompany the different SB International Commissions.**



Spiritual Animation Team  
Rome, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017