

THE FOUR PHASES of the LORETTO CO-MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

FOR CO-MEMBERS IN PROCESS

INFORMATION PHASE - PREPARATION PHASE - COMMITMENT PHASE -
ADMISSION AND CELEBRATION

INFORMATION PHASE

The Information Phase includes steps required prior to entering the co-membership process: sending in a completed Preliminary Information Form; going through a criminal background check; submitting the names of Loretto members who can recommend the individual; and having an Initial Interview. If any of the steps indicate the person is not appropriate for co-membership, the process ends at that point. If it is determined that more time is needed for the individual to get to know more Loretto members and the Community before entering the co-membership process, opportunities are suggested to provide for that.

Once it is determined that the individual is familiar enough with the Community and has been recommended by four Loretto members who know the individual well, the person enters the Preparation Phase of the co-membership process.

PREPARATION PHASE

INITIAL STEPS

The co-member in process (candidate) is appointed a Contact Person or persons by the Co-membership Team. This Contact Person(s) accompanies the person throughout the process. The candidate and Contact Person meet at least monthly via online or in-person, but personal meetings are preferred and encouraged. **A Co-membership Team Liaison is also assigned to support the Contact Person through the candidate's process.** The team liaison is there to answer questions and help guide the candidate's individual process, as needed.

INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS OF THE PREPARATION PHASE

1. The candidate begins the introductory elements which include participation in an *I Am the Way* study group, reading about the history and writings of Loretto, and attendance at Loretto gatherings and events.
2. **The candidate is asked to write their Personal Life Review** (f/k/a autobiography). This will be used to draft a **Discernment Plan** for the continued preparation phase for the candidate. A Discernment Plan can be updated and revised as needed.

OVERVIEW

The Essentials for Co-membership: Components of the Preparation Phase

There are four basic essentials that are suggested for preparation for co-membership in the Loretto Community. These include:

- An understanding of the history and present structure of the Community;
- A deep appreciation of Loretto spirituality;
- An understanding and willingness to commit to the mission of Loretto to act for justice and work for peace; and
- A supportive connection with Loretto Community members to sustain one's commitment over time.

The Loretto Experience. This event, which is held at the Motherhouse, gives the prospective Co-member an overview of the co-membership process and what is expected of a Loretto Co-member. It provides a unique opportunity to explore the history and heritage of the Loretto Motherhouse, to meet members of the Motherhouse community, to experience Loretto spirituality, and to deepen one's understanding of Loretto mission.

1. The First Essential for Preparation for Co-Membership is an Understanding of the History and Present Structure of the Community.

History of Loretto – An appreciation of Loretto history can be gained through personal contact, individual study and/or group study (in person or online). A suggested reading list is included with the initial packet to the candidate and to the Contact Person.

Present Structure of the Loretto Community - Community Group visits, *I Am the Way* and *Loretto Life* study groups, and a reading of the presentation by Mary Catherine Rabbit in 2013 on Loretto governance are some good ways to learn about the structures and forms of governance and decision-making within the Community.

2. The Second Essential for Preparation for Co-Membership is a Deep Appreciation of Loretto Spirituality.

There are numerous ways to deepen a candidate's understanding of Loretto spirituality:

- a) Study of various Loretto writings including *I Am the Way* and *Loretto Life*.
- b) Attending Community retreats.
- c) Participation in existing scripture studies, book groups, and discussion groups with Loretto members.
- d) Discussion about the rituals and reflections that are often an integral part of Community gatherings.
- e) Outreach "Spirituality Groups" in different geographical areas and through Zoom

3. The Third Essential for Preparation for Co-Membership is an Understanding and Willingness to Commit to the Mission of Loretto to Act for Justice and Work for Peace

Mission is a primary expression of Loretto's charism. The candidate will begin receiving the "Midweek Mission Message" which provides opportunities to engage in mission activities. Conversations with Loretto members about their current and past ministries, internship on a Loretto committee, participation in legislative actions, "border experiences" etc. will deepen the candidate's appreciation and understanding of mission, along with providing insight into why all the members of the Community are expected to be involved in the mission of the Community to the extent that they are able to do so.

4. The Fourth Essential is a Supportive Connection with Loretto Community Members.

Since group interaction and the building of good relationships and communication skills are important aspects of Loretto Community life, numerous ways to connect with Loretto members are suggested:

- *Interchange*, LWN and LEN newsletters, Loretto Outreach newsletter and other Loretto communication and information on the Loretto website.
- Various celebrations or gatherings, lectures and presentations.
- Loretto Community meetings, assemblies, regional gatherings, celebrations, retreats and social events.
- On-line gatherings and events sponsored by Outreach.
- Informal meals and social events.

The candidate will receive the Loretto newsletter *Interchange*, the Loretto Outreach newsletter, the community announcements and the "Midweek Mission Message" to facilitate ongoing understanding of the Community, its spirituality, and its mission.

REVIEW PRIOR TO COMMITMENT PHASE

If the co-member in process no longer meets the criteria or has not been able to complete their Discernment Plan, then, in consultation with the candidate's Contact Person(s), they will not continue in the program. The person can also personally decide to leave the program at any time during the preparation phase.

COMMITMENT PHASE

When the co-member in process has completed the Preparation Phase and met the needs identified in their Discernment Plan to the satisfaction of the Co-membership Team and the Contact Person(s), the candidate may be invited into the Commitment Phase.

- 1. Commitment Reflection.** A one- to two-page document stating why the candidate feels prepared for Co-membership and future involvement in the Loretto Community.
 - 2. Commitment Interview.** Scheduled once the Commitment Reflection is completed.
 3. If the decision is made to recommend the person for admission into Co-membership in Loretto, the candidate is requested to obtain four letters of affirmation from Loretto members.
 4. If the responses are positive, the candidate completes a Mutual Commitment statement and Request for Formal Acceptance form which are included in the packet submitted to the Community Forum recommending that the candidate be accepted into Loretto Co-membership.
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ADMISSION AND CELEBRATION

The Community Forum considers the request and makes a recommendation to the President. If the co-member in process is accepted, the new Co-member is welcomed into the Community. A celebration is planned by the Contact Person and the new Co-member. The Contact Person stays in regular contact with the new co-member for at least the first year of their co-membership and continued and expanded engagement with the Community is supported and encouraged.