

Historical development of the Association of the Holy Family

The Association of the Holy Family (AHF) takes its roots in the beginnings of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd in the first Constitutions of the Congregation in 1887 wrote the following:

"Just as Jesus, God Almighty, who did not need anybody to fulfill his mission of salvation and yet invited certain people to cooperate with himself, so also sisters for their mission will invite those whom God would give under their protection, among them also lay people, who will form a Confraternity of the Holy Family of Nazareth."

(Constitutions of 1887, Chapter XXI, & 1)

In the General Archives in Rome one can find a handwritten copy of the *Constitution of the Confraternity*.

The idea captured in the first Constitutions was developed at the General Chapters of 1925 and 1932. The Acts of the 1925 General Chapter speak at length about the importance of education and the upbringing of children and youth in Nazareth schools and other institutions. It was apparent that children and young people belonged to various associations, among them, the Association of the Holy Family. We learn from the "*Draft of the Statute of the AHF*" that it was addressed mainly to graduates from our schools. It is enough to read & 1 and 2 as an example:

&1

The aim of the Association of the Holy Family of Nazareth is to unite in one spiritual family all graduates from various Institutions run by Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. In that way our graduates will maintain contact with Institutions they graduated from and enjoy moral support from them. They will spread the Kingdom of God's Love where the Sisters themselves could not reach.

&2

The Associates will firstly introduce the spirit of the Holy Family into their own families, so that all family members might grow in faith and love, keep the commandments of God and the Church, and live in peace and harmony. Secondly, they will also spread this spirit among others.

In the 1928 newsletter, "Nazareth", we read about "Nazaretania", the Association of graduates from congregational Institutions run by the sisters in Poland.

The Book of Customs from 1929 speaks about *Sisters Associated*. The Acts of the General Chapter of 1932 changed the name of the Association to "Ladies Associates with the Congregation of Sisters the Holy Family of Nazareth" (in short "Ladies Associates of the Holy Family"). In 1942, Mother Lauretta Lubowidzka, the Superior General, presented the by-laws of the Association to the Sacred Congregation for Religious for approval (the document dated March 3, 1942).

The next important segment of the historical development of the Association began at the Fifteenth General Chapter of the Congregation held in 1977. The Acts of the Chapter state:

"Recognizing the importance of the family in the modern world, various pronouncements of the Church and the directives of our Mother Foundress, we wish to organize, within the next three years, in each province and if possible on local levels, an Association of the Holy family whose program would aim to contribute to the religious and moral development of its members and their families."

In the following years there were various initiatives undertaken to fulfill the call coming from the Chapter.

In 1985 the Associate Directors of the American Provinces established guidelines for the AHF in the United States. Gathered materials were finally approved in 1990 as "The AHF, Guidelines for Directors". The manual was also translated into Polish.

Foundation of the AHF in Europe dates from 1995. The first groups were initiated in France, and later, in Poland. Each Province adapted, according to their needs, the program and methods already in use in the US.

The 21st General Chapter in 2001 requested that the General Administration appoint a sister to serve as a liaison between the directors of the AHF and the General Administration (*Acts of the Chapter, Recommendation 2*).

To conclude this short presentation on the historical development of the AHF, it would be good to be reminded that the AHF is rooted in our charism and helps to spread it in various parts of the world. In the "Covenant of Love" we can read:

"In each province/region the members of the Association of the Holy Family share in our spirit, mission and ministry. They are offered opportunities to deepen their relationship with God through our Nazareth heritage as they seek to participate in the mission of the Church. Policies are determined on the provincial/regional level." Statutes &5.4.8

The first International Meeting of Directors of the AHF and Sisters involved in that particular ministry, took place on October 1 -5, 2007 in Żdźary, Poland. Participants of the meeting had the opportunity to learn about the current state of the Association in all Provinces, as well as plan for its best possible future development on a Congregational level.

Approval of the AHF Statutes

At the council meeting on November 7th, 2008, the General Administration formally approved the Statutes of the Association of the Holy Family. The Statutes were prepared by the General Coordinator of the Association in conjunction with the Provincial Directors of the AHF, under the direction of competent canon lawyers.

The *Sacred Congregation for Consecrated Life and the Institutes of Apostolic Life* approved the Statutes of the Association of the Holy Family on December 13, 2008. One can read in the decree that the Sacred Congregation recognizes the Association as **"a proper work of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and approves the Statues"**.

The recognition of the Statutes came from the Sacred Congregation for Consecrated Life and the Institutes of Apostolic Life due to the fact that the AHF does not exist in the Church as an independent association but is a form of realisation of our Nazareth mission. Otherwise the Statutes would be approved by the Congregation for Laity.