

The Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó

**Common
Framework
2019**



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Introduction



Dear Teresian Family,

We have been dreaming for a long time of creating a common framework in which we—all of us Teresians—could recognize and visualize ourselves as members of this Family.

Time and grace have preserved Henry de Ossó's vision—that of the tree of Teresa of Jesus, full of branches and Teresian fruits spread throughout the world. His dream and great aspiration were primarily to include as many people as possible in this endeavor to make Teresa available for everyone as a sure path to know and love Jesus. All could become Teresian apostles in any era within the great variety of personalities and calls in the Church.

A common frame of reference for Henry de Ossó's Teresian Family is seeing the light after years of searching and of mutual recognition between the different and complementary vocations of sisters and laypeople, and of welcoming the richness of many reflections upon and encounters with the roots of our charism and Teresian life in different countries and cultures.

This document offers us what we can say today—with a lot of consensus—about what it means so far to belong to this Family, what its origins and mission are, and how to augment its growth and join forces to serve today's world within the context of a new way of being church. Neither closed nor completed, it is a living document. From experience, we know that time and grace will work out the rest.

According to the petition expressed at the XVII General Chapter, some amendments have been made to the text presented in September 2017:

- This document was prepared to provide a look at the past, at our foundational roots, at the figures who are the living references of our way of being Teresian—Henry de Ossó and Teresa of Jesus. It does not pretend to include everything that can be said about them but simply to present the figure of the Teresian apostle Henry de Ossó, his passion for Jesus and Teresa, and his intentionality as the founder of the Teresian works.



- Because retracing the journey covered over the last 15 years was beneficial to the sisters and laypeople who attended the XVII General Chapter, we were asked to mention in this document a little of our history: how we got here, who had been involved in each of the steps, and the different moments in which the identity, the mission and what it means to belong to this Family have been deepened. The road we have travelled has helped us to refocus and increasingly renew our commitment to God's call to us, the Teresians of the 21st century.
- The third part is what has been expressed in the time since the V Centenary of Saint Teresa's birth in 2015 concerning Henry de Ossó's Teresian Family and its mission in the world as well as the different ways of being committed to it. What is being presented is a simple organization that will allow us to join forces, capitalize on personal resources and help keep newly formed Teresian groups connected. This section ends encouraging us to face some basic challenges that will help the Teresian Family take future steps.

We hope you enjoy reading this document and are moved by it because the Spirit of Jesus has accompanied this Teresian work from its inception to our time and will continue to do so.

General Government Team

Rome

March 28, 2019

Feast of the Birth of Saint Teresa of Jesus

Common framework of reference



1.

A WORD ABOUT THE CHARISMATIC ROOTS OF THE TERESIAN FAMILY OF HENRY DE OSSÓ

1. Henry de Ossó and Teresa of Jesus

We cannot address the origins of our Family without pausing to mention what Henry de Ossó means to it. We can never be grateful enough for the gift of Henry and what he represents to all Teresians: his passion for Jesus and the Kingdom as well as the dynamizing force of the Teresian charism that he left us as a precious heritage. Recalling his inherent traits allows us to identify the essential characteristics that will distinguish the members of the Teresian Family.

We know that Henry's greatest desire was *to know and love Jesus*, the summation of the eternal life he longed for. He followed Jesus as his master with the feelings and desires of Jesus' own heart. His deepest aspiration was *to become another Christ on earth*, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to be consumed by the same "fire" that burned within Jesus, with Jesus' passion for the Father and His Kingdom of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, love and friendship. In Jesus he has everything and he finds everything; Henry belongs to Him: "I will always be Jesus' missionary of peace and love."¹ Jesus is the way, the truth and the life that expands the human heart and gives back its true identity: *to be the daughter and son of all—a sister and brother to all*, to recreate with others a new humanity, according to the Father's plan.

**To
know
and love
Jesus**



For Henry, it is not enough to know and love Jesus; he is impelled to *make him known and loved by all*. We listen to him in his constant prayer: "I beseech You, enable me, the least of Your ministers, as You did Paul, to evangelize the whole world about the inexhaustible riches of love that You hold..."² "Do not let me leave this life, my Jesus, without my having loved You and having made You known and loved."³ And Henry will be gifted with the profound meaning of his vocation: *to set afire*⁴ other hearts with the same fire that burned in his innermost being and in that of his beloved Teresa, to incarnate apostolic love, the evangelizing power of Jesus.

This is also the fundamental reason why we can say that the presence of Teresa of Jesus in Henry's life was not an accident but a gift from heaven. For the man passionate about God and his people, who intuited spiritual pathways capable of regenerating Spain, encountering a woman with a heart like that of Jesus, expanded by the love of God and passionate about His interests, is a blessing and a gift from the Spirit. Henry, attuned to and forged by her magnanimous heart widened by love and trust⁵, does not allow himself to stand idly by before the evils of his time⁶ but cries out "to be able to serve in some way the One to whom I owe so much" and "to perform great works in the service of our Lord and our neighbor."⁷ "Zeal is like the burning flame of the fire of divine Love, a desire to make God known, and to form or perfect the adorable image of Jesus in all souls for the sake of their salvation, whatever the cost."⁸

Teresa and Henry teach us to live, in a congruent way, the love of God and neighbor⁹. The power of evangelization can only be born from a grateful recognition of God's work in each person: His constant communication through saving words and actions that "broadens the inner space" of our freedom, love, and commitment.



2. The Tree of Teresa of Jesus

This quick overview helps us to better understand Henry de Ossó's apostolic zeal that goes out of its way to bring forth good works¹⁰ that help others to know and love Jesus and to make Him known and loved by all, hand in hand with Teresa of Jesus. Enlightened as he was by her and sustained by her experience, Henry dreams of Teresian apostles throughout the world.

We quote here a text that begins to describe his apostolic dream that will be carried out in time. Henry de Ossó sustains the expansion of his Teresian work thanks to the confidence inspired by Jesus' words: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants."¹¹

Today, on the day of the Saint's death, in the month consecrated to the Guardian Angels, we sow a mustard seed in the Lord's field, in Mary's inheritance, in the country devoted to Saint Joseph. Teresa of Jesus will look with special predilection as a wife responsible for looking after Jesus' honor, doing whatever she can to promote His interests. We recognize that it is neither the one who sows nor the one who cultivates who is worthy of praise, but God, who causes the growth. Moreover, our planting is the work of Teresa of Jesus and no speculation or earthly ambition guides our pen. Therefore, we fundamentally trust that, because of the love and mutual interests that have always existed between Jesus and Teresa, this mustard seed will grow into a leafy tree whose leaves and fruits will be the source of salvation for the Spanish people. The birds of the sky will dwell in its branches and the creatures that crawl (for there will be a place for all) will be sheltered in its shade, singing to God hymns of admiration, gratitude, and praise for having honored us from among all the nations of the world by giving us Teresa of Jesus.



Soon after, Henry begins to write in the Teresian Magazine about the fruits being borne that make this “Teresian tree” grow more and more.

There are flowers named for Saint Teresa as well as sweets and quill pens named for her; why would there not be a tree named for her? She who loved so much to see fields, water, trees, and flowers—why wouldn’t she have had a tree in this arid and sterile land, which by its flowers and fruits, by its virtue and vigor would refresh her weary spirit even in heaven? Oh yes, and I have no doubt, my readers, that it would be a welcome consolation for her to observe how this tree of life and health spreads its branches and multiplies its golden fruits. Planted next to the streams of the Ebro River, the tree of the Archconfraternity of young Catholics has already given fruits of blessing and health. However, it is not our intention to point out fruits already borne and growing but those in the making that show promise...one that is most strikingly beautiful and precious is called the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

But this fruit of which we speak elsewhere would not have been produced by the Archconfraternity, to our way of thinking, if a delicate bud had not previously blossomed and, along with the gentle fragrance that its flowers scattered, caught the eye of the divine Gardener of souls Christ Jesus and gently moved him to bestow this precious fruit. This delicate bud is the Little Flock of the Child Jesus. Its motto, as we have said, is “Live Jesus”; its aim, “All for Jesus”; its claim, “I belong to Jesus.” And the only cry they want to hear from every heart is, “Let us love Jesus.”

The Teresian tree itself, then, has given its flowers and fruits. With time and the grace of God, may these flowers perfume the world with their heavenly fragrances; may these tasty fruits be beneficial to all people. We have no doubt we will obtain this grace because it involves Teresa’s honor, and therefore Jesus’ too.¹²



When it seems that the leafy tree has given all its possible fruits, a new endeavor will come to the mind and heart of the Apostle: the formation of the **universal Teresian Fraternity** that will be inaugurated at the end of the Teresian pilgrimage in 1877 in Alba de Tormes.

One of the most beautiful and precious fruits that has undoubtedly been produced by the first Teresian pilgrimage is the formation of a **universal Teresian Fraternity** that flows from the pierced heart of the Saint of our hearts. Its objective is none other than to devise ways to honor, as she deserves, the great Woman, Writer, and Saint, Teresa of Jesus. We must propose a universal way to honor Teresa and, later on, particular ways to be undertaken by each group. Whatever we do to honor Teresa of Jesus must be carried out in three specific areas: the study of her doctrine; the imitation of her holiness and virtues; and devotion to and veneration of her; in a word, to follow the example of her entire life.¹³

We will see later how Henry conceives this new proposal of the Teresian Fraternity to make universal the Saint of his heart. Teresa of Jesus belongs to all and is for all. But first, let's contemplate the same tableau that Henry de Ossó will contemplate with satisfaction and gratitude in 1878 when he writes:

What a magnificent and consoling picture is offered for our contemplation! To have **the Little Flock of the Child Jesus**, that is, the firstfruits and the most delicate and beautiful flowers of the Church's garden, cared for and protected by those who belong to Jesus and his Teresa: **the Teresian Archconfraternity**, welcoming into its bosom all young Catholic women and offering them life, light, and courage through their practices of prayer and solid piety; **the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus**, destined to infuse life, movement, and the Teresian spirit into these works and with them to regenerate the world



through the apostolate of prayer, teaching and sacrifice; **the Teresian Fraternity**, the new dovecote of the Blessed Virgin with its prayers and penances attracting extraordinary graces over all these works, extending its benevolent arms over all souls to save them from the universal shipwreck that threatens us; and finally, **the Teresian Missionaries**, along with the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, communicating through their teaching, action, and apostolic zeal this life and these graces merited through prayer and sacrifice. Oh, we repeat, this is an extremely magnificent and consoling picture! Just to contemplate it our heart is so overjoyed that we already believe ourselves to be happy with all the happiness that can be desired on this earth. "How beautiful are the feet of the one bringing good news, announcing peace," says the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

3. The Universal Teresian Fraternity

One cannot expect to find in Saint Henry's proposal of the **universal Teresian Fraternity** the actual origin of what today we understand as the Teresian Family. However, it is inspiring to perceive the spirit of Henry de Ossó when he creates the Teresian Fraternity, moved as he was by his zeal and his belief that Teresa is the privileged mediator to lead souls to Jesus. Our Teresian Family was born in a different ecclesial context, with different forms of organization, expansion, and commitment. However, listening to our Founder, one can recognize calls that are still valid today and a source of inspiration to our being Teresian—yesterday, today, and always—and so we offer some programmatic texts of the Teresian Fraternity:

It cannot be denied that Teresa of Jesus is one of those souls who offers to the whole world the best and most universal remedies to all evils. She is a leafy and fertile tree planted in the garden of the Catholic Church, whose leaves and fruits



are salvific for people. She is an inexhaustible source of pure, crystal clear water welling up to eternal life—cool, life-giving water, refreshing those who drink. She is the new Deborah who is to lead and command the armies of those who fight in defense of the interests of the God of hosts. She is, in short, the great Woman, Writer, and Saint.

Well then, the Teresian Fraternity comes to satisfy that universal aspiration, that cry of the enthusiastic soul before the great figure of Teresa. This Fraternity will be the tie that binds so many hearts searching for common ground so as to encourage one another and to work with zeal. It will be the center of all noble aspirations of the many souls eager to do something for the good of their sisters and brothers. If one day, in the not too distant future, we manage to gather around the great figure of Teresa the phalanx of Teresian Missionaries, the Teresian work will then be perfect and complete in all respects. And Spain and the whole world will be regenerated because the saving influence and life-giving action of Teresa of Jesus will reach everywhere. God willing, this year at the tomb of the Saint may we be able to offer this crown, this complement to all the Teresian works! God willing, on the day of the transverberation of her heart, may we be able to present her with Teresian apostles instead of Teresian pilgrims that we presented to her the year before! Then we would die happy because our heart would have nothing left to desire as a gift for the incomparable Teresa of Jesus.

It is necessary, if this Teresian Fraternity is to yield results, that its efforts must be neither individual nor isolated. It is indispensable—we repeat, indispensable—that all those who seek to look after the honor and divine interests of Jesus in Spain through Teresa of Jesus, expressly entrusted by Christ with this care, know and share the exact same determined

**The tie
that binds
so many
hearts**



purpose; and having done this, let us take account of our strengths, the means that we have on hand to achieve it. Only then will those who love Saint Teresa do all they can and must to fulfill their solemn commitment to look after Christ's honor.

In Teresa of Jesus, we have a mine of unfathomable heavenly riches that is, shall we say, ready to be mine. In past centuries, people began the work of uncovering this treasure but their work has come to us imperfect and fragmented, and it is up to us to continue mining this treasure.¹⁵

In the texts in which Henry describes in detail the meaning, purpose, and means, he underlines the universal character of this call that must be "within everyone's reach":

The Teresian fraternity requires practical conditions of piety in order to belong to it, which must be within everyone's reach, so that the devout person and the businessman, the scholar and the rural villager, the pious old lady and the tender young child cannot excuse themselves from being part of this fraternity with reasons that don't exist.¹⁶

Henry will describe in detail the various ways to be linked with this Teresian Fraternity according to one's way of being, individual calls and responses, duties and obligations.

We want to conclude this overview with a text in which Saint Henry shares with his readers about the attractive force of this woman, Teresa of Jesus, the "relentless negotiator," and her ability to "intertwine" hearts and create "holy entanglements":

And herein I have described this Teresian movement that has been followed in Spain for the last two decades. Since the relentless negotiator understood that this work is going well with her spouse Jesus Christ, she applies it to all her



followers and, day and night, continually cries out to them: Give me sons and daughters, give me followers, give me lovers of my Jesus...And every day the heart of Teresa of Jesus becomes ever more demanding on this point. It seems that the new and great accomplishments she makes daily fuel her desire to achieve even greater ones. "God free me from being very close to Saint Teresa of Jesus," said a soul who loved her a great deal, "because I fear she will make me one of hers, entangling me more and more." And that is exactly what happens. The things of the Saint start out small and soon one finds oneself caught up in so many things that one does not know how to get out of or escape from such webs and holy entanglements. Blessed entanglements and blessed webs! God willing, O great Teresa, on your Centennial may the whole world fall into them forever, never to escape but to be engulfed in the unfathomable divine eternal love!¹⁷

4. The Evangelizing Power of the Teresian Charism

In carefully analyzing each of the works created by the Teresian apostle, we can identify some dynamic traits and emphases generating new life that are repeated in all of them. They allow us to recognize the potential and the evangelizing power contained in Henry de Ossó's Teresian charism that the Teresian Family is invited to live today as an essential part of its mission in the world. The following offers a few of these aspects that give identity and power to the Teresian work:

- **A contemplative look at the world.** This stems from recognizing the presence of God in ourselves and in the fathomless depths of reality, a look that will lead to the discernment of timely, concrete, and ever-evolving responses. From the beginning, Henry de Ossó embodies that creative fidelity that makes the "tree of Saint Teresa" fruitful.



- **The unconditional confidence in and the prominence of women.** At the heart of an expansive, life-giving love Henry de Ossó places the woman, to whom he accords unconditional prominence and confidence. Her potential to give and to accompany life, along with her many talents and abilities—qualities Saint Henry was able to appreciate in a special way because of Teresa of Jesus—make her the best evangelizer of society of any time.
- **The dynamic of belonging to a community or an association.** This characterizes all of Henry's projects. With this movement he strengthens apostolic action, generates a new church and society, and transmits the mystery that drives the lives of those first followers, encouraging us to live it too. Teresa of Jesus becomes the great inspiration of Teresian groups, who live relationships of friendship and of interpersonal encounter as a way to follow the faith journey of the "steadfast friends of God." In speaking about them, Teresa will tell us that they need "to become shields for one another" and to mutually encourage one another in order to persevere in the mission entrusted to them.¹⁸
- **The strengthening of structures of community solidarity.** This way of being is a call still valid today for the worldwide Teresian Family, who are invited to strengthen the structures of community solidarity¹⁹ in collaboration with many other groups involved in reweaving the damaged social fabric of our cities and towns. If we believe in and commit ourselves to live the prophetic vocation of following Jesus in community, without letting ourselves be trapped by the conflicts that daily life and growing together with others entail, and if we recover or rekindle among the Teresian Family this "spiritual taste for being close to people's lives"²⁰ as Pope Francis reminds us, then we will find our true identity, which cannot be understood without this belonging and learning together as a community of disciples.



- **The transformation of society in Christ.**²¹ In all Teresian proposals, the dynamic of personal and social transformation, another essential component of the charism, must be present.²² Love is never idle; it asks for works, growth, and “to keep on striving to advance.”* Although educational action requires time, it is necessary to keep in sight the aims of transformation, humanization, and liberation as concrete ways of incarnating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Teresian Family.
- **The belief in the great dignity of each person.** This implies incarnating, in whatever apostolic activity, an education that expresses trust in the possibilities of truth, growth, and regeneration of the human being, and a transmission of the faith based on lived experience. Offering the “Teresian journey of faith”—the path travelled by each one of us—is simply to accompany, in different creative ways, the process of becoming believers and to put into play all that we are and have; to reorient our desires to attune them to those of Jesus; and to free ourselves to love and serve our sisters and brothers, especially the least ones, those who suffer, the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the outcast.



2.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR FRAME OF REFERENCE

The document we present today has a history and a journey that spans the course of many years. Although Henry de Ossó dreamed in some way of a large family united in the spirit of Teresa of Jesus, in our Teresian circles we begin to speak properly of the Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó for the first time in 2003 in the document *"The Sap that Flows"* (*Savia que circula*). It offers the fruit of research and deepening into Teresian spirituality made during three courses organized by the Teresian International Center between 2001 and 2003.

This document speaks of our vocation to be a Family that includes all those with whom the charism resonates and who are committed to living the Christian life from the Teresian vision of the Gospel and of reality.

The Teresian Family is like a mustard seed that a man of faith received and sowed at the center of the world. The seed sprouted and grew day and night, without him knowing how, and became a tree. The tree travelled, thanks to its seeds. It grew in other lands, was enriched with new minerals, and crossed the sea...it went far away and gave its fruits to people and populations previously unknown to it. It spent autumns and winters in desolation but springs also arrived with the hope of shared life. And from one season to another it grew stronger and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches.

**The
hope of
shared
life**



This insight opened to us a future of new possibilities to offer and share with others the essence of our charism in the realities and contexts in which we were present.

In the year 2005, the newly approved Constitutions of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus mention the term “Teresian Family.”

The Spirit continually re-creates in us and in the Teresian Family the spirituality that we received from Saint Henry de Ossó. The challenges that we face and the search for appropriate responses to each situation demand that we live, with a living faith, a spirituality that is incarnated, inculturated, liberating and committed. (Constitutions of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, article 3)

An attempt is made to explain who forms part of this big Family:

The Teresian Family embraces sisters, laypeople, and priests who share the charism and apostolic spirituality of Saint Henry de Ossó: The Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, Teresian Apostolic Movement, Teresian Missionaries, Associates, Honorary Members of the Society, as well as other members related to the Society by various kinds of bonds. (Directory of the Constitutions, no. 3)

In 2008 and 2009, the Teresian International Center convened sisters and laypeople to deepen into and reflect upon what it meant, at that time, to live or participate as a Family in the Teresian charism of Saint Henry de Ossó. It was the dawn of a new ecclesial era; putting into this new context religious institutes and laypeople attracted by the same charism inspired an essential change in the way we imagined our charismatic Family.



The new ecclesial ecosystem is marked by evangelical families, that is, those formed by institutions, and charismatic families, groups of believers united by the same foundational charism or the same charismatic root, but in different states of life and with different emphases on the same charism. (Antonio Botana)

A new awareness is born that would soon be spread to all our members: the center of our Religious Family's ecosystem is the Teresian charism of Henry de Ossó. This affirmation highlights the importance of recognizing all of us, both laypeople and sisters, as active bearers of the charism, responsible for generating life and incarnating the charism in the world today, from the plurality of vocations and calls that exist in the Church and in our Family.

In 2008, at an international meeting of Teresian sisters, the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus agrees to make walking together as a Teresian Family a priority and expresses it as follows:

1) Recognize and reaffirm ourselves as a Teresian Family and encourage new ways of gathering, formation, and bonding and 2) promote provincial reflection that will allow us to develop new forms and levels of commitment in which each person shares both the charism and the mission. (Inter-Chapter Meeting, Angola, October 15-30, 2008)

At the end of 2009, a survey was given to sisters and laypeople in all the provinces of the Society. From the results came a document entitled "We Recognize Ourselves as a Teresian Family." It strongly conveyed that living as a family is something groundbreaking that is created little by little among those who share the charism and dream. Knowing ourselves to be a Family from the beginning committed us to looking at the past together to draw nourishment from our charismatic roots and to



looking toward the future to give support to the impulse toward communion the Spirit is calling forth. The challenge was to find concrete ways to live this call. Everyone was invited to share their experiences and the steps taken in the different countries where groups of the Teresian Family were being born or were growing.

In the year 2011 many sisters are challenged by and committed to this process of creation-consolidation of the Teresian Family. The XVI General Chapter of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, held in September of that same year, agrees to do the following for the next six years:²³

As a Teresian Family, we want to continue jointly sharing and exploring our charism, to respond creatively and boldly to the new situations and challenges facing humanity. To take this particular course of action we need to:

- Strengthen the power of our educational charism for the Church and the world, sharing it with others as Henry de Ossó dreamed.
- Deepen into the meaning of being a Teresian Family with a common charism:
 - Explore the spirituality we have received and the mission we share.
 - Generate inclusive relationships of appreciation and trust in all contexts and settings.
 - Strengthen our identities as sisters and laypeople in relationship.
 - Create and recognize bonds among new and existing groups.



These agreements were further elaborated, inviting us to promote joint formation in our charism. The assemblies and chapters of the Teresian sisters were opened to the participation of laywomen and men who shared life and mission with us and felt a certain affinity with our charism. Special attention was given to the accompaniment of communities that might arise of laypeople and sisters with the desire to share life and mission.

Finally, it was proposed that the priority of the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus be to continue making progress in the joint reflection of who we are as a Teresian Family and the different forms of commitment based on reality. To this end, several meetings were promoted at all levels.

The existence of a significant group of Teresian Associates²⁴ in some countries where the Society is present leads the general government to elaborate a frame of reference for this group scattered worldwide.

Following this call from the Chapter, a decision was made to promote, make visible, and encourage this process by forming a Commission composed of sisters and laypeople. The goal was to listen attentively to what was happening in different places, and to shared life and projects about to start as well as to the needs and obstacles that surfaced. Its main goal was to be “a place of encounter” to develop relationships, join initiatives, and animate and encourage different stages in the process.

The feedback the Commission received contributed to the elaboration of a new document, *Another Step Forward: the Teresian Family around the Shared Table*. It clearly expresses that the Teresian charism of Henry de Ossó is increasingly becoming the reason why our Family exists. On the paths undertaken in Europe, Africa, and America, one notices that the efforts made to respond creatively and boldly to the new



situations and challenges facing humanity are in close harmony with the decisions made by the XVI General Chapter. We begin to see signs of greater visibility, recognition, and commitment on the part of all the persons, groups, and communities who form or may form part of the Teresian Family.

Between 2015 and 2017, there is a significant change concerning the recipients of the frame of reference requested for the Teresian Associates. Consequently, work is undertaken to develop the frame of reference of the Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó that will give an identity and sense of belonging to all Teresians. The life that already existed in each local reality and in the different groups of the Family, together with the impulse received from the celebration of the V Centenary of Saint Teresa's birth, formed an essential starting point.

Some dates set by the Commission led to a course of action that concluded with the international meeting of the Teresian Family held in Avila, Spain in January 2017. This work was carried out by the various groups and institutions of the Teresian Family and served as the basis for the reflections and contributions the XVI General Chapter had requested in 2011.

In January 2017, sisters and laypeople from the different realities and countries where the Teresian Family is present are convened in Avila. Participants were given the possibility of consulting all the documents, questionnaires, and agreements made during this period we are describing. New conclusions are drawn that capture the richness of the meeting: the reflection, discernment, and prayer of a group of people committed to offering their input and clarifying who makes up the Teresian Family, what its roots are, what mission it has and challenges it faces as well as what forms of commitment are recognized as belonging to it.

**The
richness of
encounter**



At the end of this meeting, the final document is submitted for review and its contents simplified for study and approval at the XVII General Chapter. The common frame of reference was intended to be simple, clear, open, and flexible as a starting point that could later be enriched by the life and commitment of the Family itself as it grew and spread its mission throughout the world.

At the XVII General Chapter, in the presence of sisters and laypeople from those countries where the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus carries out its mission, a new document was presented for study and approval: the frame of reference for Henry de Ossó's Teresian Family. The effort to answer who we are as members of this Family was welcomed with respect and gratitude.

The general government was tasked with completing a brief history of the steps taken to date, including a simple presentation of what we might call the foundational roots of the Teresian Family. There are many more aspects mentioned that could have been included but we think that they would convert the text into something more than a simple frame of reference.

Which brings us to our present day: we have the joy of being able to deliver this document so as to recognize and give thanks for the life the Spirit has created many times without our even knowing how. Our greatest desire is that we would not consider this work finished and that each one of us, the Teresians of the world, would write our own story and contribute the wealth and life our Family needs in order to grow into and become another leafy tree like the one contemplated by Saint Henry de Ossó.



3.

THE TERESIAN FAMILY OF HENRY DE OSSÓ

1. Who We Are

The Teresian Family was born from the spiritual encounter of Henry de Ossó and Teresa of Jesus as a far-reaching charismatic movement with a single mission: “to know and love Jesus and to make Him known and loved by all.”

Laypeople and sisters share the transforming power of the charism to respond creatively and boldly to the new situations and challenges facing humanity. United by the same foundational charism, our Christian identity is being enriched with the emphases and nuances we bring from different vocations and states of life.

Throughout these years along the road travelled, it has been confirmed that the Teresian charism is the centerpiece of Saint Henry de Ossó’s foundational work—and we want this to be the foundation on which we build the future of the Teresian Family as we continue moving forward.

We are witnesses to the revolutionary changes that have taken place in recent decades that have exponentially transformed our lives. We are entering into a new ecclesial era that demands alternative structures, as Pope Francis affirms: “I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are...I dream of a ‘missionary



option,' that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."²⁵

The Teresian Family is a community within this great ecclesial Family and it is imperative that we find, among all of us, responses we can offer in the new scenarios of the world to which we are sent. We are united by the same passion for Jesus of Nazareth and His Kingdom and the same fire to make others passionate; therein lies the strength of our common dream as a Teresian Family. From this same passion, which we recognize as our mission in the world, flows the creativity expressed in our ability to adapt our educational calling and design appropriate pedagogical strategies for the times in which we live.

We are invited to live the experience of the Teresian faith journey and thus learn to integrate faith and life, the contemplative look at all reality, and transformative actions. Teresian Spirituality has as its principle and foundation a God who wants to communicate with His creatures, the great dignity of each person, and the humanity of Jesus as the true way to know and love God. His Word and the words of Teresa and Henry guide us along this path of encounter with God and creation.

In our charismatic identity, we find a fundamental dynamizing force rooted in the power of relationships, of bonds, and the ability to create networks. Both Henry and Teresa are masters of the art of connection, able to resonate with and generate synergies among "like-minded friends."

All this richness experienced by many Teresians, the strength of the charism and the fact that we know ourselves to be a Family, encourages us to take a step forward. We need to continue

**To
integrate
faith
and life**



deepening in the joint reflection of who we are who form this Teresian Family, how we are going to connect with it to strengthen its mission in the world, and what we can offer to all those with whom the Teresian charism of Henry de Ossó resonates.

Sisters and laypeople are aware that to move forward on this path, we require a change of mindset that will help us to take on:

- the responsibility to continually renew the evangelizing power of the Teresian charism and respond to the challenges facing humanity,
- a new way of living in committed relationships as a Teresian Family,
- a sense of belonging that interconnects us and moves us to commitment,
- a way of organizing ourselves that helps us to care for and increase the life of this Family,
- a “real world” formation in which we accompany one another so as to offer the world the essence of who we truly are as a Teresian Family.

This process of growing as a Teresian Family also requires time to listen to one another and to progressively take steps that will require patience, confidence, and audacity.

2. Different Forms of Commitment

We visualize the Teresian Family as a network of people interconnected by the Teresian charism of Henry de Ossó, with a vocation to be universal and inclusive.



Since their inception, the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus and the Teresian Apostolic Movement (TAM)²⁶ have been an essential part of the Teresian Family; both religious and laypeople have contributed to maintaining and spreading the charism in a plurality of countries and circumstances. The existence of the Teresian Associates and the recognition of other people linked in different ways to the charism, projects, or aspects of Teresian spirituality lead us to describe the different forms of commitment we have discovered in our Family and help us to visualize it and give it consistency.

Without pretending to establish categories of greater or lesser commitment, to date we can identify in our Teresian Family the following ways of belonging:

Teresian Women and Men Involved in Projects

Those involved in projects are people expressing affinity, support, and commitment to some aspect, project or aim of the Teresian charism of Henry de Ossó: Teresian education in schools and other venues, catechesis, volunteer work, knowing and making Teresa of Jesus known, and pastoral ministries of Teresians and others. This relationship can be temporary or permanent and, depending upon one's degree of identification, will lead to different types or degrees of commitment, which each member will express in a free and personal way.

Teresian Women and Men with Whom the Charism Resonates

Those with whom the charism resonates are people who are attracted by Teresian spirituality or who participate in the various actions carried out by groups within the Family.

Teresian Women and Men in Mission

Those in mission are people who express a desire to belong to the Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó through their connection with and commitment to Teresian spirituality, which implies

a connection with and commitment to reality, the mission, and the community. They undergo a process of formation in accordance with the Teresian journey of faith and feel, in some way, responsible for the growth and maturation of this Family through their participation and leadership.

We recognize the diverse ways of living as Teresians in mission; all the same, each person should manifest his or her free and voluntary association with and level of connection and commitment to the Teresian charism.

Teresian Friends

Friends are people linked to this Family by affective bonds that lead them to connect, celebrate, freely collaborate, and participate in significant moments in the life of the Teresian Family.

These ways of visualizing ourselves as a Teresian Family challenge us to:

- Make known the different ways of bonding within the Teresian Family of Henry de Ossó.
- Recognize the different forms of commitment specific people have and help them to identify themselves as Teresian Family members.
- Create formation processes aimed at deepening and strengthening one's sense of belonging and progressing in the forms of commitment.
- Accompany one another on the Teresian journey of faith to be able to live with passion our own identity and respond to the challenges of humanity and of our common home. Identify new paradigms and let them inspire fresh ways to



- establish connections, based on the charism, with young people who may be attuned to our Family.

As a Teresian Family, we also celebrate the closeness and friendship of those connected—in whatever way—with the passion and the search awakened by the spirituality of Henry de Ossó and Teresa of Jesus, in people of different faiths and personal options. We are convinced that we are all invited to the Banquet of Encounter.

3. A Way of Organizing Ourselves

Organization must be at the service of generating, strengthening and consolidating the Teresian Family in different parts of the world. We propose a simple, flexible and effective structure to be used in this initial stage. In each reality we must reflect on the methods of organization that best fit the intended purpose.

To the extent that the Teresian Family grows and strengthens the bonds of all its members, we may have to think about other, perhaps more complex, methods of organization, without forgetting that any structure will only make sense if it serves the purposes for which it was intended. At every stage, decisions will be made and appropriate steps will be taken so that our way of organizing serves to strengthen the identity and mission of this Family.

As a start, we propose to:

- Create a General Secretariat, consisting of one or two people (a sister and a layperson) to inform, connect, network with, and make visible the Teresian Family.



- Establish or strengthen animating teams in each province, ensuring there is a basic representation of the different regions on the team. Its main function will be to encourage and coordinate the life of the members, groups, and communities of the Teresian Family in that country. The teams are accountable to the General Secretariat.
- Choose in each group or community in a locality an animator who is accountable to the country's coordination team.

4. A Way of Living Teresian Leadership

This new organizational culture of the Teresian Family requires a distinct way of conceiving leadership to accompany this stage. It involves strengthening our relationship as laypeople and sisters who drink from the same charism and who are jointly responsible for the same mission because we are all called to give impetus to this Family.

This style of leadership is humanizing: it focuses on listening and on seeing what is invisible to the eye, and helps detect the source of personal talents, empowering others to be their best selves. It enables the search for and realization of prompt and flexible responses. It builds a high level of both personal and community self-awareness as well as mindfulness of the global impact of each local action. This style is also flexible and resilient, able to make decisions in line with the vision and to manage both uncertainty and innovation. It establishes connections so as to incorporate other people or organizations in our environments attuned to our charism and/or mission, because what unites us is the good of humanity and of the planet—in short, God's plan for humankind and for our common home.

**To see
what is
invisible
to the eye**

Henry and Teresa are our living references of the Teresian leadership we need. They invite us to be true believers: simple,



welcoming, joyful, courageous, passionate and capable of having a positive influence on others.²⁷ We are all invited to live this type of leadership.

5. Our Challenges

Next, we present the challenges that were identified during this time period and that require responses in the near future. The life and journey of the Family in each reality will present new calls and challenges that will require fresh and creative responses, faithful to who we are as a Family.

a| Formation and Accompaniment in the Charism

- Develop with sisters and laypeople a plan of formation that includes a general framework and specifications for different groups, keeping in mind leaders and those who accompany others. Designate the persons responsible for carrying it out.
- Create opportunities to be formed in the charism that permit the different teams in our schools and other venues to make Teresian spirituality their own so that they live and convey that sense of belonging.
- Take care that the style of accompaniment is one of listening, respectful of processes, and establishes bonds of affection and nearness.

b| Leadership

- Lead, as a Teresian Family within the Church, a path conducive to experience a new way of being church.



- Promote a renewed organizational culture in which we all recognize ourselves as leaders and always aim for the common good.
- Know the different types of positive organizational cultures and reflect practices based on them.
- Devise learning sessions at programmed times with innovative methodologies to empower Teresian spiritual leadership.
- Design horizontal communication strategies between laypeople and sisters that help us dream, plan, and make mistakes together.

c| Networks and Communication

Create networks and communication channels within the Teresian Family that will help us to:

- Disseminate Henry de Ossó's Teresian charism and the life of the Teresian Family through social networks.
- Connect with the local, provincial and international Teresian Family through networks and face-to-face meetings.
- Promote experiential formats that make it easier to relate "virtually".

d| Communities Engaged with Reality

- Encourage the experience of open-door communities composed of laypeople and sisters that
 - Accompany different processes of personal and community growth according to the style of Teresa of Jesus.



- Welcome and live various forms of commitment, celebrating the joy of encounter.
- Share different prayerful and formative processes adapted to the different realities.
- Listen and respond to the cries of our world, in association with other groups and organizations, to humanize and transform it from the Gospel.
- Create bonds, sharing time to celebrate, recreate, communicate, converse and dialogue.
- Find new ways to organize and commit ourselves to the transformation of reality.
- Participate in platforms in different fields: ecology, justice and peace, solidarity-based economy, gender, politics, education, disaster prevention and response, and crisis management.
- Create information networks that help us contextualize and understand current problems in-depth.
- Facilitate experiences with different realities and design projects according to the needs of the reality, capitalizing on what every member of the Teresian Family can offer.

el Laypeople and Sisters Sharing Charism and Mission

- Place the charism at the center of the Teresian Family and get involved in its growth and vitality starting from our identity as laypeople or religious.
- Grow in the awareness of and joint responsibility for the common mission, drawing from the richness of the complementarity of our vocations.



- Value one another and recognize the characteristics of each one's vocation.
- Feel responsible for helping one another discover God's plan for our life.
- Form mutual relationships based on closeness, trust, humility, truth, and joy, including the cultural and generational diversity common to our Teresian Family.
- Jointly search for new ways to express the Teresian mission.
- Jointly schedule, carry out and evaluate formation and mission projects as sisters and laypeople.

fl Teresian Prayer

- Live the spiritual adventure of Teresian prayer with the intensity, radicality, and passion it implies and share this transforming experience.
- Explore new forms of prayer and risk praying in new ways.
- Accompany, encourage, and support one another in the process of prayer.
- Discover the possibilities that websites and networking offer as tools to support us in our prayer life.
- Utilize the internet and social media as tools to disseminate and generate the Teresian experience of prayer at the personal and community levels.



4.

WE ARE INVITED TO CARE FOR THIS FAMILY

The frame of reference of the Teresian Family is open and unfinished because we want to remain attentive to the changes and questions that life will raise. We will continue searching for answers, ways of organizing ourselves, and challenges and bonds that strengthen our relationships and empower our mission. We will continue allowing ourselves to be led by the Spirit as we make our way together because we are all invited to care for this Teresian Family.

We live in a time of hope and the right time to creatively display the evangelizing power of the Teresian charism. “Woe to me if I do not evangelize,” Saint Paul tells us. From each of our realities, we can enrich the Teresian mission, in dialogue with the cultures and circumstances in each country where we are present. “Let us be faithful therefore to the grace of vocation and let us fear nothing; for if God has called us, God will give us the efficacious grace to fulfill our mission, because the Lord’s word is upright and all His works are trustworthy.”²⁸

It is a time of fruitfulness and true joy, a time born from thinking, loving, praying, suffering, and living like Jesus. “Let all learned men rise up against me, let all created things persecute me...do not You fail me, Lord, for I already have experience of the gain that comes from the way You rescue the one who trusts in You alone.”²⁹

“This is not the time to be discussing with God matters that have little importance.”³⁰ It’s time to get going! All for Jesus!

**We will
continue
searching**





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3. St. Henry de Ossó, *Revista Teresiana*, "Desde la soledad" [Teresian Magazine, "From the Solitude"]. January 1896, p. 100.
4. RT, "La hija predilecta de Maria, Leyenda VII" [Mary's Favorite Daughter, Legend VII]. March 1882, p. 177.
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8. St. Henry de Ossó, *Guía práctica del catequista* [Practical Guide for Catechists], Ch. 6:26.
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11. RT, *Introducción* [Introduction]. October 1872, p. 13.
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13. RT, "Hermandad teresiana universal" ["The Universal Teresian Fraternity"]. September 1877, p. 351.
14. RT, "Hermandad teresiana universal I" ["The Universal Teresian Fraternity I"]. January 1878, p. 99.
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16. RT, "Hermandad teresiana universal II" ["The Universal Teresian Fraternity II"]. February 1878, pp. 141-142.
17. RT, "Hermandad teresiana universal" ["The Universal Teresian Fraternity"]. November 1881, pp. 34-35.
18. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Ch. 7:22: "There is so much sluggishness in matters having to do with the service of God that it is necessary for those who serve Him to become shields for one another that they might advance."
19. Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel* [Evangelii Gaudium], no. 188.
20. Ibid, no. 268. To be evangelizers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people's lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for His people...We realize once more that He wants to make use of us to draw closer to His beloved people. He takes us from the midst of His people and He sends us to His people; without this sense of belonging, we cannot understand our deepest identity.
21. Saint Henry will invite us to *regenerate the world* and this expression will constantly appear in his writings as the stated goal of each of his works. We offer, as an example, a few quotes: Society of St. Teresa of Jesus, *Documents of Perfection*, Ch. 1; RT, "Desde la soledad" [Teresian Magazine, "From the Solitude"]. July 1874, pp. 271-273.



22. Propuesta educativa teresiana [*Teresian Educational Proposal*], no. 80. / *St. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, II Mansion, Ch. 1:9.

23. Society of St. Teresa of Jesus, XVI General Chapter document, October 15, 2011.

24. The term lay associates is common in the ecclesiology of post-Vatican Council II. It refers to laypeople who, for affinity with a religious institute, accept to be bound in different ways to the charism, the spirituality, and mission. There are different forms of possible association: some concern people, others concern groups.

In the United States, Congregations define women and men who wish to formally associate themselves with a religious community, their mission and spirituality—regardless of their level of connection—as Lay Associates. However, when we speak of Teresian Associates, we refer to a more limited group that appeared for the first time in the Province of St Francis of Sales (United States) and that currently is spreading to other countries. These countries adopted the profile of an Associate developed in the United States and gradually adapted it to each specific local reality. According to this profile, we offer the following:

- Teresian Associates are laywomen and men who feel called by God to live their baptismal consecration from the Teresian charism of St Henry de Ossó, through his association with the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus, to reveal the kingdom of God in their own environments.
- They commit to living a daily life of prayer, to being nurtured by the sacramental life of the Church and to deepening into the prayerful reading of the Word of God and the writings of Teresa of Jesus and Henry de Ossó.
- They reflect their way of living community life in their relationship with other associates and sisters. They participate in days of reflection and prayer and other important celebrations.
- They express their connection with a commitment that may be renewed each year. (See the document, “Un paso mas, Familia Teresiana en una mesa compartida.”)

The question “Who are the Teresian Associates?” however will remain open-ended in light of such a diversity of people and groups.

25. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, nos. 25 and 27.

26. The form of commitment of sisters and laypeople belonging to the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus and to the Teresian Apostolic Movement is described in the Constitutions of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus and the Statutes of TAM, respectively.

27. Henry de Ossó, Documents of Perfection, Ch. 5, p. 31, contained in the Constitutions of the Society of St. Teresa of Jesus: “[Give] to the Church perfect apostles, zealous in spreading the knowledge and love of Jesus.”

28. St. Henry de Ossó, *EE0 II [Spiritual Exercises II]*, EE.O. II, p. 260.

29. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Ch. 25:17.

30. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, Ch. 1:5.



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