

Consider Your Call as an Associate Member: Living the Charism of the Sisters of Bon Secours

By Mary Herbert

WHEN THE SISTERS OF BON SECOURS offered Associate membership to persons interested in sharing their ministry in a more active way, they knew they were developing a program that was both risky and different. Risky because this was not a health care program. Different because they were inviting laypeople and clergy, Catholic and non-Catholic, to accept the call to live the Bon Secours charism outside of canonical community.

Bidden by the Spirit in Revolutionary France, and molded by the practicality of French spirituality, which challenges the individual to cooperate with – to *be* – God’s goodness in everyday activities, 12 women embraced a life of caring for *and with* those in need. The Sisters of Bon Secours of Paris still choose to be Christ to the unwell and dying. That is the gift, the charism, the talent, these women prayerfully accept from God and put into action. They take healthcare to a spiritual level. The Bon Secours charism propels a sister, as God’s instrument, to the sick person, simultaneously requiring the sister be open to accepting ministry *from* the sick person. This cooperative activity of the three principles in the healing process – God, the sister, and the sick person – makes Christ ever present in our world.

The Sisters of Bon Secours invite those considering the gift to heal within God’s plan to be love in the world and receive love from the world, to nurture that gift as their Associate.

The Baltimore Associates group is comprised of traditional healthcare providers and persons doing other kinds of work. Together we explore whether we too are called to be *Good Help*. We find ways to be compassionate and caring, to be healer

and liberator, as those moments arise in our lives. One Associate works in the procurement department of his organization and has opportunity to demonstrate compassion when processing supply orders. A retired nurse in our Baltimore group affords healing in the form of an attentive ear and prayers for family, friends, and even a stranger in a food store parking lot! Then there is our housewife who offers a homebound invalid liberation by providing an occasional meal and transportation for appointments and errands. In responding to these God-centered activities as opportunities present themselves, we are what the Bon Secours tradition is about: Continually choosing to be *Good Help*.

Involvement with the Associates does not make you into a pretend sister. It is a lifestyle that takes the charism of the Sisters of Bon Secours and explores how your faith experience enables you to live a more authentic Christian life.

If you have prayerfully asked for, and would like to explore whether you have received, the Bon Secours charism as a gift of God; if you are willing to open yourself to the Spirit and propel this gift into action in your personal life; consider extending the mission of the sisters, in your unique way, as an Associate member. Join us in bringing the prayerful and tangible presence of Christ’s healing hands worldwide through the Sisters of Bon Secours community. ♣

To learn more about the Associate process, contact Amy Kulesa, Associate Director: 410-442-3131 or amy_kulesa@bshsi.org.

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