

“CONNECTING THE DOTS”
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MENTORING STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS
ON THE IHM CHARISM

Introduction and Explanation of this New Initiative

- Contact the administrator to arrange a visit
- At the time of the visit reach out to the administrator to determine interest in participating and partnering in sharing the IHM charism. If there is interest, the procedures listed below may be helpful.
- Suggest to the administrator asking for staff and/or volunteers to assist with this initiative

Getting Started

Present the administrator with a written plan that provides historical, spiritual, and traditional information on the charism of the Congregation. (This information can be found in the charism Guide on the IHM website and it may be helpful to refer the administrator to this resource.) Throughout the year, this plan will serve as a touchstone for practical applications, which can be easily implemented by the administration and staff. Discuss suggestions for communicating with stakeholders such as staff, parents and/or parishioners the implementation of this new initiative.

Suggestions

Since the initiative of sharing the IHM charism with staff and stakeholders could be overwhelming especially for a new administrator, we suggest the following:

1. Implement a team of three to four staff members or volunteers to assist with the initiative.
 - In a school setting representative teachers from Early Childhood, Primary Grades, Elementary Grades, Middle School grades, and Specials may be appropriate
 - In parish and/or facility settings Heads of Departments or Organizations may help to form the team
2. Consider partnering with a nearby IHM school or parish and share planning and implementation ideas

Plan – (This can be done gradually at successive meetings).

1. Send/bring resources for use during the meeting. (Icons, Charism, Mission Statement, Belief Statements...) (Show them what we have.)
2. Briefly review the history of the Congregation with emphasis on responding to the emerging needs of the Church at this particular time.

3. Introduce the key founding figures of the Congregation with emphasis on the emergence of God's plan and will working through these individuals
4. Present, in brief, the spirituality of St. Alphonsus with emphasis on Crib, Cross, Eucharist and Mary, the Mother of God.
5. Present IHM devotional practices with emphasis on easy application of these devotions throughout the year
6. Present a workable plan for each month that celebrates special feasts, practices, and events as they occur within the liturgical calendar and dovetail with IHM tradition.

Examples:

- **October** – Month of the Holy Rosary – Suggest providing inexpensive rosaries for use by stakeholders. In a school setting build the rosary into daily prayer appropriate to the age of the students; in other settings suggest purchasing inexpensive pamphlets, which explain the method for praying the rosary, and make inexpensive rosaries available for stakeholders to take with them.
- **November** – Anticipate Founders Day with some instruction to the team about how to approach stakeholders with the history of the Congregation. In a school setting perhaps read with the students “The Amazing Adventure”. Anticipate Advent (Pre-Incarnation) by talking about St. Alphonsus deep devotion to Christ in the Incarnation.
- **December** – Celebrate “Crib” by continuing the conversation about the spirituality of the St. Alphonsus with regard to the Incarnation and suggest practical applications of an Incarnational approach to life and relationships. Introduce stakeholders to the devotional practice known as the “Courts of the King”.
- **Lent** – Emphasize the spirituality of St. Alphonsus in regard to the suffering and death of Christ. This is an excellent time to focus on “God’s redeeming love”. Suggest to stakeholders the praying of the Stations of the Cross according to St. Alphonsus. These Station books are still available for personal or communal devotion.
- **Post Resurrection (Easter)** – This may be a good time to develop and celebrate God’s redeeming love and His continuing presence with us because of that love as we celebrate Eucharist.
- **May** – Celebrate Mary as our Mother and Queen. Perhaps introduce a May crowning.

(The Crib, the Cross, Eucharist, and Mary, Mother of God are the four major themes in the spirituality of St. Alphonsus, as mentioned above. A detailed explanation of these themes in terms of Alphonsian spirituality can be found on the IHM website in the Charism Guide.)