



Society of St. Michael

Consecrated to the Lord for the Life of the Kingdom

A prayer ministry of the ICCEC
Cathedral Church of the Intercessor



Membership Manual

Definitions

Name: The name of The Society of St. Michael's is held for two reasons: (1) to identify with the ministry of *spiritual warfare* as represented by Michael the Archangel (2) it is the name of the founding Cathedral located in San Clemente, through which the *fellowship* of the CEC began.

Vision: A fellowship of ICCEC members, set apart and joined together in spiritual warfare for the Church, its leaders and all members.

Purpose: The first purpose is to be a faithful source of intercessory prayer for the ICCEC and particularly, its clergy. The second purpose is to be a fellowship ministry that strengthens and support the spiritual life of the Society members.

Confession of Faith: Given that the Society is a ministry of the ICCEC in submission to the authority of its bishops, the theology and confession of the Christian faith of the Society must always remain in agreement with that of the communion. Questions about ICCEC theology and practice can be obtained through the normal means of any ICCEC member, such as through local clergy, online resources, discipleship classes, etc.

Motto: "Consecrated to the Lord for the Life of the Kingdom" replaces "Kletoi Is Hagiotita" (Called to be Holy). The new motto not only reflects the call to personal holiness, but also the call to the mission of purposeful intercessory prayer.

Crosses: A wearable silver cross is to be given at the time of vows to those becoming *life-professed* members. The legacy "Orthodox" style cross may be used, and does not have to exactly match the custom cross historically used by St. Seraphim. Alternatively going forward, a "cross with shield" style cross may be used, which also matches the spiritual-warfare vision of the Society. Each cross does not have to exactly match for each member or local group of the Society, but Society leaders may offer guidance or advise limitations on the variations of crosses to be worn. It may be engraved on the back side. For the *novice*, a wooden cross of any style, symbolic of the tree Christ

carried and was crucified on, can be worn as one follows Christ in this ministry or tests one's call to the next level of commitment. For the *postulant*, no cross is to be worn. The cross serves not only as a reminder to the commitment level one has made, but also as a witness of the gospel to others in the Church as well as those in the world.

Emblems & Insignia: a Cross w/Shield and/or St. Michael the Archangel may serve as or be used to create new designs, which may be nominated.

Feast Day: The day is to be changed to the Feast of St. Michaels, September 29th.

Membership and Community

Levels of Membership: Each level of membership requires an application and discernment process, and the levels are defined as (1) *postulant* - one who is exploring the Society, for a period of 1 year or more (2) *novice* - one who commits to the Society with the intent to practice its "rule of life" and fulfill its purposes, for a period of 3 years or more (3) *life professed* - one who makes a lifetime vow to commit to the Society, its "rule of life" and its purposes.

Members at the *postulant* and *novice* levels are not required to move to the next level of membership, and may continue "as is", but are required to fulfill the minimum time-periods associated with each level in order to apply for the next. Each member is united in love and purpose to all others members regardless of level of membership.

Community: The Society is to exist within and among the community of the local church, as part of it; to live among it to help feed it the life of prayer through an exemplary and faithful discipline of daily prayer and loving fellowship, inspired by Benedictine tradition and ethos. Members of the Society are self-supporting, and may consist of both male and female, laity and clergy, of any age or marriage status. Their personal living arrangements are self-determined, no different from any other members of the church. Members may or may not be involved in other ministries of the local church.

The Society exists as a ministry of both the local CEC church and the greater ICCEC; but is more than a ministry in that it requires formal admission to varying levels of membership, after discerning periods of practice, with the most committed potentially taking vows to be *life-professed* members. Three levels of commitment are available, to remain at or grow into, but each practices the same "Rule of Life" as explained in that section below.

Rule of Life: The "rules" of the Society are several, but each are included to shape, grow, and preserve the holy life, character, and dual purpose of the Society.

1. PRAYER & SCRIPTURE

Morning and Evening Prayer ("Lauds" and "Vespers") is a spiritual discipline to be practiced by each member, but is the obligation of those *life-professed*.

Actual start times may vary according to each individual's daily personal schedule, but generally, a time in the early morning when you arise, and then a time in the evening. Historically, these hours of prayer occur at 6am and 6pm,

The exercise of daily prayer should always include usage of Old and/or New Testament Scripture readings or quotations, as the Word of God contains all things necessary for life and salvation, serves as a weapon of spiritual warfare, and since Jesus said, "if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted" (John 15:17), we want to follow Jesus as close as possible as true disciples.

The Society members are provided with a "customary" of Daily Prayer (which may be updated), but may use other ICCEC approved resources, such as the Book of Common Prayer, online resources, etc. which contain variations on the historical "Liturgy of the Hours", with approval. There is no official or recommended translated version of Scripture at this time.

Intercession is required as part of the specific ministry role of the Society. Prayers are to be said for the local parish, its clergy and Societal members; the local diocese and its Bishop; the national Primate, the International Communion and its Patriarch and other Archbishops..

"Praying without Ceasing" is an encouragement to maintain a prayerful attitude, with a readiness and willingness to pray throughout the day, realizing that God is always at work in us even as He is at work in the world. We are called to nurture sensitivity and obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Meditative Prayer is a period of time to dwell on or rest in God's Presence. A prayer rope, forms of centering prayer, lectio divina or bible study, Christian music, journals, etc. may be used as tools to assist you in these time periods.

Prayer times are not only for interceding, but also for listening and growing as disciples of Christ and members of the Society.

2. GATHERING WITH OTHER SOCIETY MEMBERS

Fellowship is vital for many reasons, such as: strengthening of relationships, the need for encouragement, the issue of commitment, unity of purpose, and the nature of the ministry. Attendance at 12 local monthly gatherings annually is required *for life-professed*, and a minimum of 10 out of 12 for *novices*, in order to apply to the next level, with some exceptions for issues such as employment, illness, and personal emergencies, etc. *Postulants* are required to attend a minimum of 7 out of 12 monthly gatherings over a period of one year, in order to apply to the next level of membership. These gatherings consist of group prayer, ministry updates, occasional teaching, and fellowship time. In cases where there is only one local member, fellowship requirements can be alternatively satisfied by participation in another prayer group or bible study of the local church until additional members are sufficiently added.

Retreats are also essential times to renew one's calling and commitments to both God and neighbor. One annual retreat or equivalent event is a minimum obligation for *novices* and *life-professed*, and is optional for *postulants*. Due to personal costs, the "obligatory" retreat can be either a Societal retreat or a retreat sponsored by and for the local church community. Flexibility is allowed due to the variations of local church and diocese configurations, development, distances, offerings and abilities. If both types of retreats are available, attendance at both is encouraged but not required. Determination as to whether to plan a local Societal retreat may depend upon the local variables, If sensible, retreats can be held annually at the local church or diocese for Societal members as an alternative, or in addition to.

It is important to remember that the Society exists as a ministry of both the local CEC church and the greater ICCEC, and is never to be held or developed as a separate entity.

3. PARTICIPATION IN THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The ICCEC abides in historical sacramental life of the Church, holding to the belief that grace is imparted through them. Members of the Society must therefore abide in the same belief, with acceptance and unity in love, although possibly differing on nuances of understanding, somewhat expected since there is mystery attached to the working of God's grace through the sacraments of the Church.

Baptism is the rite of initiation and commanded by the Lord Jesus and his apostles. All members must be baptized in the historical Trinitarian form as a prerequisite for initial postulancy.

Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, is of particular importance as the central celebratory act of worship and intercession in the Church. Regular weekly participation in the Body and Blood of Christ is expected of Society members, preferably on the Lord's Day. The ICCEC holds to the historic understanding of Christ's mystical but real Presence in the Eucharist, which is the covenantal meal of the New Covenant, which our Lord himself commanded we do.

Confession made privately twice a year with a Bishop or priest of the ICCEC, is required for both *life-professed* and *novices*, and can be accomplished anytime during the year, including at retreats, but is recommended during the seasons of Lent and Advent. *Postulants* are only required as a prerequisite to applying to become a *novice*, although it is encouraged anyways.

Sacramental confession is a spiritual discipline, that fosters humility and wise accountability, through which we also learn about the incarnational nature of God's grace and authority to forgive sins given to and through His Son Jesus, which is also based in Scripture. (ref. Mt. 9:6-8, John 20:23, James 5:15)

Anointing with Oil for healing of the sick was commanded by Jesus to the apostles He sent out and confirmed in the Epistle of James. Members are encouraged to seek God's help in such times of need, whether deemed spiritual, mental, or physical in nature.

4.. FASTING

Fasting is a form of discipline which fosters spiritual growth, challenging us in the Christian principle of self-denial, while helping us to better realize our dependency on God. While there are many forms and levels of fasting, varied at the discretion of the disciple, all member levels of Society are required to fast, at minimum, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Members who are *Novices* and *Life Professed* are expected to fast during the seasons of Lent and Advent, particularly on Fridays, and especially during Holy Week in Lent. Additional or regular fasting is up to the discretion of the member, but Fridays and/or Wednesdays are historically observed by Christians. Resources that instruct on the forms and levels of fasting should be provided to and through local and national groups.

5. SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

While spiritual direction is a practice that all Christians can benefit from, but given the importance and nature of this Society, it is required that all members seek guidance from one of the ICCEC clergy, preferably local, as a means of assistance in finding and following in the way of the Lord. The spiritual health of each member also affects the group as a whole. *Life-professed* and *novices* are required to meet for guidance at least once a year, and a *postulant* is recommended to meet at least once per year. This can occur coupled with a time of sacramental confession, if time allows, or separately. However, keep in mind, that topics shared in a past confession cannot be discussed again by clergy unless the confessor brings them up. Therefore it might be advisable to separate the two types of meetings.

6. WORK

While work is not typically considered a traditional spiritual discipline by most, in creation, God did put man into the garden to work it and take care for it, and created woman as his helpmate. Holy Scripture also instructs us to work six days before resting, speaks against idle hands while commending diligent ones, so we know that there are virtuous benefits and principles related to work. Therefore, it is expected that Societal members will practice a lifestyle that incorporates some form and amount of work, even if retired from secular employment, even such as gardening, volunteering, and serving others.

7. STUDY

Learning is inherently essential to the call of a disciple. As we study, and learn from the Lord and about the Lord and His Kingdom, we will hopefully grow in true knowledge, understanding, and wisdom; that we may grow as Christians in both theory and practice, in our service to both God and Church. Learning can be accomplished through various means, such as, books, podcasts, seminars, bible and theology classes, etc. Besides individual study, local group members could possibly arrange joint efforts to study together or allow times for discussion in group meetings, in an effort to foster learning.

Application & Admission: All members, regardless of levels, are expected to respect each other and take seriously the "Rules of Life" of the Society. Every new member must apply to begin as a *postulant*, may apply to be a *novice*, and then later, may apply to become *life-professed* member. The order of application cannot be changed or excused. Applications to any level are to be reviewed not only by the local church's Societal leadership, but must also be forwarded to the local ICCEC clergy who is assigned pastoral and ecclesiastical oversight of that local church's Societal membership, for approval.

Admission into any level of membership is not guaranteed, but pursuit is encouraged and supported by all. Admission is based not only upon requisite time periods but also on the readiness of the applicant as a disciple of Christ, as discerned by both pastoral and lay leadership of the Society.

All initial applicants must be a Christian baptized in accordance with ICCEC doctrine and practice, and an active member of a local ICCEC church or mission, in good standing, for at least 1 year prior to applying to the first level of *postulant*, and must be a minimum of 21 years of age.

Reception & Vows: Membership in the Society exists on different levels. Those who desire to commit to be a *life-professed* member may do so by taking vows of commitment after a determined period of discernment and practice in the life of the Society at the *novice* level. Again, members at the *postulant* and *novice* levels are not required to move to the next level of membership, and may continue "as is". Each member is united in love and purpose to all other members regardless of level of membership.

Besides the application process, there is no formal event to receive a person as a *postulant*. Once approved, they are welcome to begin. However, there is to be a semi-formal reception of a person who commits to become a *novice* and a more formal reception who commits to become *life-professed* member. In these instances, the local ICCEC clergy who is assigned pastoral and ecclesiastical oversight of that local church's Societal membership is to participate in the events, along with the Society's local lay leadership and other group members. These reception events may be scheduled and performed at various times, such as: during retreats, Sunday services, before or after monthly meetings, or as a separate event, but should always be performed as an event of the local Church community vs. a private one.

Vows that are made by those becoming *life-professed* members, are to be heard by either a Bishop, or the delegated local supervising ICCEC clergy appointed to oversee the local membership. A pledge of commitment is to be made by those becoming *novices*.

It is optionally suggested that those who have committed to the Society as *novice* and *life-professed* be publicly affirmed and prayed over on an annual basis, perhaps during a Sunday service in the Presence of the Lord and in the midst of the local Church community, and perhaps on the Sunday closest to the day marked as the "feast day" of the Society. Doing so would serve as an annual return blessing of prayer, strengthening, and thanksgiving, for the daily intercessions made throughout the year, particularly for the clergy of the ICCEC.

Issues with Membership: Relationships within the Society are based upon love and respect for both God and neighbor. Commitment to one another, to support and pray for one another, is expected. Any relational issues among members are expected to be worked out in a Christian biblical way, with help if necessary, from fellow members, Societal leaders, and pastoral staff. If a member of the Society is acting in ways non-agreeable with Societal expectations, leaders may find it necessary to address these issues for the sake of both the member and the Society.

While it is desired that each member remain faithfully committed, growing in all aspects of the Society fellowship and purpose, actions such as: suspension, temporary or permanent withdrawal, and even dismissal, are possible. Hopefully such instances, if any, occur before the *life-professed* level of membership. In any case, attempts will be made and time given, to work-out any issues, hopefully resulting in continuation of membership. The attempts and time given may vary depending on the level of membership and the particular conditions.

Official actions are to be requested or given in writing between a member and Societal leader, also being forward to the local clergy assigned pastoral oversight. It is advised that sufficient consultation be sought before any official actions are taken.

If a member withdraws but later desires to rejoin the Society, they may apply to be re-admitted. If allowed to pursue re-admittance, a 2nd renewal period of discernment will be required before being officially re-admitted. During this renewal time, the withdrawn member is expected to participate in all aspects of the Society as per their last level of membership. The time period for re-admittance will vary for each level of membership: 3 months for a *postulant*, 1 year for a *novice*, and 3 years for a *life-professed*. After these time periods are completed, those re-admitted will be officially restored to their former level of membership and equivalent to the time at which they had withdrawn. This is a general rule, and may be changed with pastoral approval, as there may be great variations in each individual circumstance and time periods spent in withdrawal. If a member in renewal does not gain official re-admittance to their previously achieved level of membership, for whatever reason, they may continue as a member of the Society but at the level of membership one-level down from when they had withdrawn.

For example, a withdrawn *life-professed* who does not meet the criteria for official re-admittance to that level, can still actively participate as a *novice*; and likewise, a withdrawn *novice* as a *postulant*. A *postulant* who withdraws and is not officially re-admitted after 3 months, must reapply to be considered a *postulant*.

If a member has been dismissed, the same rules for re-admittance apply, but may be changed, and time periods even extended, depending upon the circumstances and time periods spent in dismissal.

Since the Society is a ministry of the ICCEC, a break in fellowship from the ICCEC is an automatic break in membership from the Society, and the same rules for re-admittance will apply if sought after, following a return to the ICCEC

Organization: The organization of the Society of St. Michael's will dispense with the delineation of local chapters/regions and the appointments/titles of Superiors and Regional Deans and Motherhouse, etc., and will instead simply follow the ecclesiastical organizational chart of the ICCEC which is made up of episcopal dioceses with local churches, under the episcopal authority of the ICCEC. Just as local clergy will be appointed pastoral oversight of any local Societal members by the local bishop, a lay leader will be appointed for each local church where there is a member, if and when deemed necessary. When there are multiple members in multiple churches within a diocese, then one of the lay leaders from one of those local churches may be appointed as the leader for the diocese, if and when deemed necessary, and likewise a member of the clergy. If the organization of the episcopal diocese changes, then leadership changes to the Society at the diocesan level will also be made to synchronize with and follow those of the ecclesiastical organization, so there is always harmony between the two. Financially, the Society will follow the same pattern as any local ministry of the local church within a diocese.

At this point in time, no regional delineations or appointments of leadership are necessary. If growth demands it, then additional steps will be taken out of necessity. For now, the renewed Society will be organized at the local church and diocesan level, with the Cathedral Church of the Intercessor in New York, providing general leadership for all.

Orthodox cross



Cross with a Shield (examples)

