

MHSF Official Discernment Packet

We are so excited about your interest and discernment in the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family!

This discernment packet has been created to be a more formal guide in your discernment process with MHSF. The purpose of discernment is to assist you with a greater understanding of how the Holy Spirit is calling you in deepening a docility towards His gifts, charisms, and mission, particularly through the 'lens' of MHSF.

This packet will walk you through what you can expect in your discernment, and as preparation for giving your best “yes” or “no” to the mission and vision of our apostolate. Just follow the steps in concordance with the couple leading your chapter and you'll know where you are on the pilgrimage of discernment!

To God be the Glory!



Missionaries of the
Holy Spirit
in the Family

Our Logo



Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family

The Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family are founded upon the reality of Christ's promise in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) comes as the Helper, bringing true life and love to the Sacrament of Marriage. He is our main focus, and our aim. The Holy Spirit acts within the domestic church (the greenhouse) causing growth of love between husband & wife and their entire family. The Holy Spirit enables the family to “become what you are”, as St. John Paul II taught, restoring the primordial covenant of marriage.

The Greenhouse has a twofold meaning. The first is of the “domestic church”, the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith and the fundamental community or cell of the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church. Secondly, the Latin word for ‘seminary’ means greenhouse. MHSF is a seminary of sorts for those who desire to fully live out the beauty of the Sacrament of Marriage. A greenhouse provides a place of protection, proper nourishment, nurturing and light. The seedling can grow deep roots in order to become what it truly is. As it becomes strong, it can be transplanted outside where it will then be able to withstand the storms of life.

The Vines within the greenhouse symbolize God's original plan for man and woman in the garden of Eden as the two are at the service of unity, becoming one flesh in the mutual exchange of love, and at the service of life as they are fruitful and multiply. It also symbolizes the growth that occurs in the seminary of MHSF. The vines intertwine producing an almond shape, which in sacred iconography is known as the *mandorla*. It symbolizes the marriage of divinity and humanity which happened in the person of Jesus Christ at His Incarnation. The Sacrament of Marriage represents this in the indissoluble communion of the two persons who have entered a covenant of their whole lives.

The logo was envisioned by Father Ben Holdren, and Lora & Chance Unger and was created by Mackenzie Bartek and Tess Sousek

Step 1: Our (His)tory

Through Him, with Him, and in Him- we are the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family. It is our mission as husbands & wives to ignite the bond that knits families together, that is- the Holy Spirit, in order to sanctify the domestic church. We exist in order to take action on living out our marital covenant to be true, to love and to honor our spouse and family in order to build up the culture of life and engage the New Evangelization within the ordinary and extraordinary parts of life in the family.

MHSF and its formation was a “call within a call” for the co-founders, Chance & Lora Unger. After a family tragedy, the question arose: is it possible to live a married life worthy of heaven in this life? Has Christ given us the possibility of sainthood through marriage? The upfront and clear answer is of course yes, but how does one do that well?

MHSF became a reality with the help of Father Ben Holdren, who has been the primary spiritual guide of the apostolate, teacher and architect of most of the MHSF formation, and counselor through the beginnings and growth of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family.

Through shared community, formation, and spiritual care we want couples to be given the opportunity to completely give their lives over to the Holy Spirit, who is the bond between husband and wife in the Sacrament of Marriage.

Though slightly dated, you can **watch this video** (click link) to hear about the testimony of MHSF and it’s beginnings.

(If you are using a printed version of this document you can go to YouTube and search: “*HuskerCatholicLive Unger*” without spaces in the first three words as is printed here.)

Step 2: MHSF Formation

Overview

The primary goal of MHSF is to provide a formation model, an environment, and community that fosters a depth of growth and vulnerability in married life through the Holy Spirit. This is done by imitating the ‘apostolic way’, and strengthening small groups of husbands & wives to “cast into the deep”, and live as true witnesses to the power of a life lived in the Holy Spirit. The basis from this comes directly from the foundation of the Church.

“The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

- in the **Scriptures** he inspired;
- in the **Tradition**, to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses;
- in the **Church's Magisterium**, which he assists;
- in the sacramental **liturgy**, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ;
- in **prayer**, wherein he intercedes for us;
- in the **charisms** and ministries by which the Church is built up;
- in the **signs** of apostolic and missionary life;
- in the **witness of saints** through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 688)

“To the injustice originating from sin-which has profoundly penetrated the structures of today's world-and often **hindering the family's full realization of itself** and of its fundamental rights, we must all set ourselves in opposition through a conversion of mind and heart, following Christ Crucified by denying our own selfishness: such a conversion cannot fail to have a beneficial and renewing influence even on the structures of society.

What is needed is a continuous, permanent conversion which, while requiring an interior detachment from every evil and an adherence to good in its fullness, is **brought about concretely in steps which lead us ever forward**. Thus a dynamic process develops, one which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God and the demands of His definitive and absolute love in the entire personal and social life of man. **Therefore an educational growth process is necessary, in order that individual believers, families and peoples, even civilization itself, by beginning from what they have already received of the mystery of Christ, may patiently be led forward, arriving at a richer understanding and a fuller integration of this mystery in their lives.**”

(Familiaris Consortio, paragraph 9)

Formation Outline (24 monthly sessions)

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction to MHSF, Consecration Preparation

FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO – Part 1

2. The Church at the Service of the Family; The Precious Value of Marriage and of the Family; Bright Spots and Shadows for the Family Today
3. The Plan of God for Marriage & Family
4. The Role of the Christian Family - Family, Become What You Are

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

5. What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?; International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Doctrinal Commission
6. Biblical and Patristic Foundations
7. Personal Preparation for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit
8. Baptism of the Holy Spirit Retreat

PRAYER

9. Spousal Prayer & Lectio Divina
10. Spousal Prayer & Ignatius' Discernment of Spirits

CHARISMS

11. Charisms & Signs of Apostolic Missionary Life- Charism Overview
12. Charisms & Signs of Apostolic Missionary Life- Called & Gifted Workshop
13. Charisms & Signs of Apostolic Missionary Life- C & G, Individual Charism Interviews
14. Charisms & Signs of Apostolic Missionary Life- C & G, The Apostolate of Laypeople

FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO & SUPPLEMENTS – Part 2

15. Serving Life: The Transmission of Life
16. Serving Life: Education
17. Parenting for Character
18. Parenting for Purity
19. Participating in the Development of Society
20. Sharing in the Life and Mission of the Church
21. The Christian Family as a Community of Dialogue with God
22. The Eucharist and Marriage

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY & CONCLUSION

23. Reflections on the Nuptial Prayer & Spousal Meaning of the Body
24. Living a Life in the Spirit; "Protecting the Garden"
Total Consecration of the Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Formation Vision: “Family, Become What you Are.”

Objectively we ask the question: “What are we?”- The Church’s teaching on the family & the family according to what God Has revealed

Subjectively we seek: “How do we become that?”- Our response to Truth. Once we know what the family is we can begin to live as called and respond to the objective truth.

Chapter Meeting Structure

- Communal Meal (45 min)
- Formation/Spiritual Direction & Small Group Discussion (1 hr 15 minutes)
- Adoration & Confession (1 hour)

Additional gatherings outside of monthly gatherings include:

- Men’s and women’s small groups
- MHSF annual retreat
- Social gatherings (local, regional)
- Additional ways of connecting digitally are plentiful.

Step 3: Vision of the “New Normal”

MHSF has an identity built up around the practical application of the New Evangelization in the Domestic Church to build up the culture of marriage & family. It is our vision to build up a culture of marriages that are solidified by holy formation, an intentional community, and deep encounter with God, who is perfect familial communion.

For MHSF, this is an “up and out” approach, done through the gradual process of apostolic multiplication particular to your family and particular to you as an individual. We want to give you the tools to create a new normal in marriage and family life for your home, your community, and the culture at large.

What would your parish or community look like with families who were fully living out their sacramental vocation? What would life be like if the best and fullest things of our faith were lived out on a regular basis, as a normal way of life?

How do you imagine a “new normal”, (based on our mission statement below)?

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Step 4: The ‘MHSF Greenhouse’

The “**MHSF Greenhouse**” is our current and primary (online) platform of communication between missionaries.

We use an app called Mighty Networks, which houses the name of our ‘network’ called the MHSF Greenhouse. As you enter into discernment, you will be invited into a “Discernment Network” that will help facilitate communication between discerning couples, the lead couple facilitating your chapter, and the MHSF founders.

After your discernment, when official MHSF Formation begins, the old network will be deleted, and you will be invited into the MHSF Greenhouse, where all of the current and former MHSF missionaries communicate, and where our primary mode of communicating with you will come from.

The app will have features that instruct you in how it should be used, as well as how to create settings to send automated emails to you, in the case you wish to use the app less, or want to get notifications by email.

Why “greenhouse”, though?

The Latin word ‘seminary’ means greenhouse. A greenhouse provides a place of protection for a seedling. Within the walls of the greenhouse, through proper nourishment, nurturing and light, it grows deep roots and begins to become what it truly is. As it becomes strong, it can be transplanted outside and will be able to withstand the storms of life. MHSF is a seminary for those in the Sacrament of Marriage.

Through human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic formation, spouses receive the wisdom and beauty that God has revealed about marriage. Through meaningful relationships with other couples, they realize it is normal to receive God’s plan for marriage and family and so be fully alive. As St. John Paul II was fond of saying, “Family, become what you are.”

Step 5: Financial Commitment in Your Formation

Similar to any other formation, we do have costs that exist for things to exist and grow. Your formation will include some fees, which we have outlined below. Essentially, these fees for missionaries cover the costs of:

- Using space for your chapter gatherings
- Book materials (Formation manual, greenhouse, books to supplement manual, etc.)
- Fees for programs (eg. Called & Gifted program) and miscellaneous retreat costs
- Helping administrative costs

Here are a list of reading materials that come as a part of your fees (not including the MHSF Curriculum):

- Familiaris Consortio (St. John Paul II)
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit (ICCRS)
- In the School of the Holy Spirit (Fr. Jacques Philippe)
- Spousal Prayer (Deacon James Keating)
- Parenting for Character (Andrew Mullins)
- Called & Gifted Workshop & Materials (Catherine of Siena Institute)

The total fees for your two year formation will be **\$300 per couple**. Again, this covers all the cost of materials you will receive, any space being used, your retreat(s), and all the above items (and more) over the time of your formation. This ends up being about \$12 per month per couple. Thank you for making this a prayerful part of your discernment.

If for any reason the financial commitment is an undue burden or is unattainable for your family, please feel free to talk with the couple in charge of your chapter about your needs.

Thank you for being intentional with helping us create a sustainable model of MHSF!

Step 6: Action Steps Moving Forward

Take an adequate time frame for your and your spouses discernment. Usually we recommend about 2-3 months, and within that time frame, here are the logistical steps, and timeline you can expect into further discernment and the commencement of your chapter:

1. Join the chapter's MHSF Discernment Network
2. Complete a Novena to the Holy Spirit
3. Discernment Discussions:
 - a. Meeting briefly with one person from the Lead Couple of your MHSF Chapter or any of the MHSF co-founders.
4. Attend Discernment Event
5. Choose your chapter's Patron Saint
6. Chapter Initial Meeting & Consecration
7. Begin small group meetings

Optional: feel free to attend the adoration & confession component of any MHSF gatherings nearby. You can find the schedule of this by contacting the couple leading your chapter.

Action steps 3-7 will have specific dates and times for those further along in discernment who join the apostolate. You will be given dates specific to your group as your chapter begins.

From personal and lived experience, as well as the testimony of the many couples who have gone before you, MHSF has been a profound blessing in the lives of those who rightfully discern "yes". The Lord has great plans for your marriage and family. Thank you for taking the time to be intentional about discernment with MHSF!

Be assured of our prayers for you! Family, become what you are.

-Chance & Lora Unger and Father Ben Holdren

Appendix

Discernment Questions for Couples

Thank you for your careful discernment of becoming Missionaries of the Holy Spirit in the Family! Please take the time to pray about the desires of your own hearts and the path that God is calling you to at this time in your life.

These questions may help guide your discernment as a couple. We are grateful to have you and are praying for you! Feel free to reach out if you have questions as you discern. We look forward to chatting with you soon. God Bless!

Desire

What are the current needs and desires of your family?

Does the vision and mission of MHSF align with these current desires?

Would your family benefit from the formation, community, and “normal” offered by MHSF?

Do both husband and wife share in the desire to join the mission of MHSF?

Time

Are you able to commit to a monthly meeting (on a Friday evening), and a separate small group meeting for men/women every 4-6 weeks?

If not, are you willing to lessen current commitments to make MHSF meetings a priority for your family?

Openness

Are you willing to allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life and in your marriage?

Are you open to sharing your own personal experiences with other married couples seeking to grow in holiness?