



## FAQ: frequently asked questions

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### 1) Lay Salvatorians

#### a) What are Lay Salvatorians?

Lay Salvatorians are members of the International Community of the Divine Savior (ICDS). They are Christian men and women, married or single, following in the footsteps of the Savior, with a call from God to live and announce God's unconditional love, inspired by the universal Salvatorian spirituality.

Their relationship to God, to live in the permanent awareness of God's presence and to the Salvatorian community, is the center of their life.

One becomes a Lay Salvatorian by means of a personal commitment as a member of the ICDS through a local unit.<sup>1</sup>

Lay Salvatorians live the Salvatorian spirituality and experience it in a contemporary form, communicating it to everyone who is open and interested in it.

*Note: Salvatorian spirituality and charism mirror the verses of John 17.3 and 1 Peter 3.15-17 in that we seek to make God known by all ways and means according to the signs of our times.*

#### b) What are the goals of Lay Salvatorians?

To bring God's love to all they meet by living the gospel message to assist in providing the basic needs of life. They aim to bring awareness and sensitivity regarding those suffering in all forms of poverty. They assist in the eradication of exploitation and discrimination. A few examples are:

- adult literacy programs
- reaching out to homeless and refugees
- creating awareness of the multi-facets of human trafficking
- sending aid to underdeveloped regions
- educating society about the exploitation of the environment through workshops and by using internet communication.

#### c) What is the mission and tasks of the Lay Salvatorians?

Following the Salvatorians key verse: *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17,3)* – Lay Salvatorians try to bring the love of God into their neighborhood, into their workplace and wherever they stay or live. They do that by all ways and means which God inspires. Their ministries (apostolates) are as diverse as life itself. Therefore, they focus on the billions of little daily things rather than focusing only on big things.

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<sup>1</sup> → see section 3a: Commitment of Lay Salvatorians

*d) Who would be invited to become a Lay Salvatorian?*

Catholic lay people who are genuinely interested in the welfare of their fellow human beings and seek answers to the burning questions of life today and who desire to make the world a better place.

*e) How is a Lay Salvatorians identified?*

Lay Salvatorians are members of the lay branch of the Salvatorian Family and are committed to embracing Salvatorian spirituality. Due to their Salvatorian universality there are many ways to identify a Lay Salvatorian. Some of the common identities are an open mind for a wide range of interest's, the need for on-going formation and a response for the smaller and bigger needs of our time.

## 2) Becoming a Lay Salvatorian

*a) What do I need to do if I'm interested in becoming a Lay Salvatorian?*

It will be important first to find answers to the following questions about yourself:

- Do I find in myself any kind of vocation according to the Salvatorian spirituality and charism?
- Do I ask myself seriously if this kind of lifestyle and focus on the Salvatorian mission is what is missing in my life today?

If your answers to these questions are yes, contact a Salvatorian you know or the coordinator of the unit where you live or contact the ICDS secretary at [office@laysalvatorians.org](mailto:office@laysalvatorians.org). The coordinator or responsible Salvatorian for vocations will tell you then the next steps.

*b) Is there a formation program for Lay Salvatorians?*

Yes, and it is divided into different stages:

- “Interested Person” (→ getting to know the Salvatorian community)
- “Candidate” (→ Initial formation)
- Commitment to the ICDS.

All members of the Salvatorian Family are strongly encouraged to continue, through ongoing formation, growing closer to God and using that growth to make known the love of God to others.

*c) Is it always necessary to do the formation program?*

Yes, it is always required. The formation program is one of prayer, education, and discernment. If one has truly been called to a vocation as a Lay Salvatorian then the natural response would be to request commitment after the “candidate stage”. The “candidate stage” is an opportunity to learn and understand the identity, mission and spirituality of the Lay Salvatorians as well as a time for the local community to learn and understand who the candidate is and to assist him/her in their discernment process.

If one chooses to take the next step and requests to make his/her commitment, then the local community must discern. If the local community response is “yes” then the candidate is invited to verbalize and sign a pledge at a formal ceremony. Without that formal commitment you cannot be a member of the ICDS.

*d) How long is this formation program?*

The length of time for the formation processes depends on the knowledge of the candidate and how long he/she has known the Salvatorian Family. Each local community determines how often the “teaching group” meets and how well the process is running. Normally, the interested person stage is one year and normally two years for the candidate stage. Each person is considered individually so the times may be shorter in certain circumstances.

### 3) Commitment of Lay Salvatorians

*a) Is it necessary to make a commitment to become a Lay Salvatorian?*

Yes, based on the current Statutes of the International Community of the Divine Savior a commitment is required. It is the solemn pledge in the presence of other Salvatorians to be a part of the Salvatorian Family as a member of the International Community of the Divine Savior. First and foremost, it is a YES to God, to follow His call through a vocation as a Lay Salvatorian.

Whoever wants or expects something from someone has also to give or to bring something, otherwise a serious collaboration cannot be possible. If you feel that there is a kind of Salvatorian vocation working and/or it starts to burn within you, there will not be a question about a commitment because this will be self-evident.

*b) Can the person who participates, studies, prays, and works with the Salvatorians but does not feel in a position to make a formal commitment, be considered a "Lay Salvatorian" and belong to the Salvatorian Family?*

There are various ways of being members of the Salvatorian Family, but a person who does not make the formal commitment to the ICDS is not a “Lay Salvatorian”.

*For example:*

If someone wants to play football he/she can do it in two ways:

- One is just for fun in the backyard or an open field with more or less open rules and without any commitment.
- The other is a serious club where a good playground, coaches, a friendly team and partnership will be offered. The public "signature" of the player is necessary to join the football team which is part of a “league”. In our case the “league” would be the two branches of the Salvatorian Family and other communities of faithful laities.

*c) Why does a Lay Salvatorian make a commitment?*

The commitment is an outward sign to the community and to one’s self that they are entering into an agreement to offer time, talent, resources, or services to the community. Commitment is a way of showing that they are willing to serve the community and expect spiritual support from the community in return. They are stating they agree with the Identity, Mission and Spirituality of the ICDS and agree to align their life according to these objectives and tasks. They are promising to conduct their life in such a way that is exemplary to their local, national and international society.

*d) To whom is the commitment of a Lay Salvatorian given?*

- The commitment is between the individual and God.

- At the same time, it is a commitment between the individual and the International Community of the Divine Savior (ICDS) in the presence of local members of the Salvatorian Family.

This commitment comes only after a period of initial formation has taken place and a written request to the national organization has been submitted and approved. The commitment is spoken to the local leadership of the ICDS unit. In case there is no local leadership in the unit, a person representing the ICDS will be sent.

*e) What does a Lay Salvatorian promise in the commitment?*

Lay Salvatorians reply to the call of God through a solemn pledge to live their life according to the Identity, Mission and Spirituality found in the International Community of the Divine Savior (ICDS)<sup>2</sup> and to support and promote the ICDS community and Salvatorian Family.

#### 4) The Vocation of a Lay Salvatorian

*a) What is the vocation of a Lay Salvatorian?*

First, Lay Salvatorians are called to recognize and promote their talents and skills and discover the love of God in their own life. Then they use their talents to serve others by all ways and means which the love of Christ inspires, living out the Salvatorian spirituality in their environment, transforming it to meet the needs of the present time.

*b) Do Lay Salvatorians have a unique vocation?*

Yes – they do. All vocations are unique and the Lay Salvatorian vocation is based on John 17:3 “to know the one true God and Jesus Christ who He has sent”. Lay Salvatorians support people to recognize God in their life by all ways of means which God's love inspires. Salvatorian universality opens a wide range of activities. Lay Salvatorians are called to live their vocation and mission everywhere; at home, at work, within their local environment, everywhere they go, bringing the goodness and kindness of the Savior to all they encounter along the way.

*c) How will this vocation be expressed through the members?*

This vocation is expressed by how they interact with other persons, their environment, and all of God's creation. It should be an outcome of their daily actions and lifestyles. Vocation is a way of life, an exciting adventure, an exceptional challenge to deepen our relationship with God. They are a Lay Salvatorians 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

#### 5) Living as a Lay Salvatorian

*a) Can a Lay Salvatorian be married?*

Lay Salvatorians can be married or single. If both people in a marriage are not joining the Lay Salvatorians it is important the other partner accept the decision. Membership in the Lay Salvatorians should never cause a division in a marriage.

*b) Does a Lay Salvatorian live in community?*

Yes, Lay Salvatorians are living in community but, the members normally do not live under the same roof. This is different from the two other Salvatorian branches. This kind of community is much more than living under one roof. This kind often needs more attention because it's not possible to see or meet one another face to face every day. Therefore, priority must be given by the individual

<sup>2</sup> → refer to the ICDS Statutes and Rules of Procedure (ROPs or operating guidelines)

and their community to ensure time is set aside to gather, to pray, to serve and to support one another.

*c) Do Lay Salvatorians live in a monastery or in common houses?*

No – Lay Salvatorians stay in their own houses and/or apartments. They live their daily life within their homes and through their chosen profession (i.e. teacher, nurse, lawyer, storekeeper, driver and so on). In some areas of the world there are Lay Salvatorians who live with other Salvatorians in community when they are collaborating in a ministry together but, this is rare.

*d) Lay Salvatorians sound so liberal. Do you consider yourself as a part of the Church?*

Yes of course we do. Within the Catholic Church there is a vast range of views and there is room for all. Through our Salvatorian charism we are encouraged to study current times and explore new ways to bring the love of God to all people everywhere<sup>3</sup>. This is supported by the call to live out our Salvatorian universality in both a spiritual and physical way. We strongly believe in the “Catholic Church” as the universal church as it is described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup>

*e) Do Lay Salvatorians have a life of prayer?*

The founder of the Salvatorians, Fr. Francis Jordan, was a man of prayer. To pray is an intense communication with God. Therefore, it is necessary for Lay Salvatorians to cultivate their life of prayer. To pray is a part of the daily routine. As Lay Salvatorians, it is not implicitly necessary to go to a church or a chapel to pray. Both praying alone and with community are necessary. Prayer has meaningful influence in the daily life of a Lay Salvatorian. There are always possibilities and minutes where you can come into prayer. Each one has to look for a possibility and is encouraged to be creative in ways they live out this part of their commitment.

*f) Do Lay Salvatorians follow the evangelical counsels? If so, how do they do that?*

Lay Salvatorians are laity with a vocation to a Salvatorian way of life. They attempt to transfer and adapt the evangelical counsels (→ poverty, chastity, and obedience) into their daily life. They are not bound by them as the religious are through their vows. However, this is part of their life style; thinking about how they as lay people living in the world can apply these evangelical counsels to their lives and lead others to Christ by living them out.

Lay Salvatorians try to live out poverty by living a simple lifestyle which includes a respect for all people’s dignity, and they are prepared to serve everyone without distinction. By listening to others and having sensitivity to God’s daily call they try to be obedient to that call. Having respect for God’s plan in their lives, they live out their state in life, married or single, by responding YES with body and soul to that plan.

*g) What is Salvatorian universality - how can I imagine that?*

The Salvatorian universality offers the possibility to respond to the needs of our times by all ways and means which God’s love inspires in us. This gives Salvatorians the liberty to choose their task/mission/apostolate. The task/mission/apostolate which is important at the moment will get priority. Salvatorians can change their task/mission/apostolate - always depending on and discerning about what is important for the society where they live today.

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3 → comp. Gaudium et spes → [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

4 → comp.: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p1.htm](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p1.htm)

### *h) Are there extra requirements/skills that a Lay Salvatorian should express through their life as a Lay Salvatorian?*

The answer is YES because there are two relevant statements which Lay Salvatorians have in their "compendium manual":

- one in the Salvatorian Charter: *"to open ourselves to the questions and challenges of our historical epoch, allowing the signs of the time to reveal to us the ways and means to respond."*<sup>5</sup>
- and this passage from the 1st Epistle of Peter in the Holy Scripture<sup>6</sup>: *"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil."*

One of the tasks of Lay Salvatorians is to try give answers on the questions of our time. The big questions bring a lot of little questions and challenges with it which are touching many of the people in their daily life. And to find answers on these little questions is important. This needs an open mind for the reality, a strong trust in the faith and God, and the willingness to change the world into a better place - even and especial in the small areas everywhere.

## 6) The Salvatorian Family

### *a) What is the Salvatorian Family?*

The Salvatorian Family is composed of three branches: Priests and Brothers (Society of the Divine Savior), Sisters (Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior), and Lay Salvatorians (International Community of the Divine Savior) who are all followers of Fr. Francis Jordan and Blessed Mother Mary of the Apostles.

### *b) Are there different degrees of belonging to the Salvatorian Family?*

Yes, there are different ways to connect or belong to the Salvatorian Family:

- 1) Priests, Brothers and Sisters, who make a religious vow and Lay Salvatorians who make a personal commitment make up the Salvatorian Family.<sup>7</sup>
- 2) Salvatorian benefactors and collaborators, people who are working for or with the Salvatorian Family in ministries/apostolates, etc. There are, in some places around the world, groups of people who support the Salvatorian Family through prayer but do not make a commitment as a member of any of the three branches.
- 3) Salvatorian sympathizers and friends, people who are connected to a member of the inner Salvatorian Family by friendship or family ties. This can include any future expansion of non-committed members of the Salvatorian Family.

### *c) Do Lay Salvatorians meet with members of the two other branches of the Salvatorian Family?*

Of course, because we are one spiritual family and the spirituality and charism exchanged between the three branches is especially important to all of us. Only in this way does the real Salvatorian charism and spirituality become more vivid and present in all members of the Family.

Lay Salvatorians unite with the other two branches of the Salvatorian Family in many areas of organization and tasks. It is common that a Lay Salvatorian group invite a member or members of

5 → Salvatorian Charter Section 2 point 8

6 → 1 Peter 3,15 -17

7 → comp. 3. e. in the text above

the other branches to join their regular gathering or meet collaboratively with the other branches of the Family, where possible.

*d) Can I ask a Salvatorian Priest/Brother/Sister I know about the Lay Salvatorians?*

Yes you can. All members of the Salvatorian Family should be able to answer your initial questions and direct you to the correct contact person within the Lay Salvatorians.

*e) Does there need to be a vowed religious member of the Salvatorians as leader of a Lay Salvatorian community or group?*

Normally, a Lay Salvatorian will lead a community or group as long as there are appropriate experienced Lay Salvatorians available. Lay Salvatorians are the third branch of the Salvatorian Family but they are autonomous in administration and financial issues. There is a common Salvatorian charism and spirituality however due to our different lifestyle there is also a specific Lay Salvatorian way of living. Certainly, there could be a vowed religious member who initiates a group but, it is not a requirement of any group.

*f) Are Lay Salvatorians independent and/or do they act under their own authority?*

Lay Salvatorians are responsible to his/her own Lay Salvatorian local community or unit and act autonomously within the Salvatorian Family. As such these regulations are found in the statutes of the International Community of the Divine Savior (Lay Salvatorians).

*g) When I make my commitment am I a member of the Society or the Congregation?*

Neither. Lay Salvatorians are members of the International Community of the Divine Savior, the third branch of the Salvatorian Family. A member of the Society of the Divine Savior must be a male and make religious vows as a Priest or a Brother. A member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Savior must be a female and make religious vows as a Sister.

## 7) Lay Salvatorians in a parish

*a) What is the difference between a Lay Salvatorian/Lay Salvatorian Community and any other person/ apostolate/ministry/group in a parish?*

It is impossible to compare apples and pears. Yes, in principle are both are fruits, but of different kind and taste. Lay Salvatorians have a special vocation, which inspires them to deepen their Christian commitment and live it out in a more conscious and serious manner.

Rooted in the Salvatorian charism and spirituality Lay Salvatorians try to bring the love of God to their surroundings by all ways and means – a very important task especially in our times where in some areas people start to leave the Catholic Church, because it has lost its credibility and may not offer young people in particular the right answers to their life questions.

In the course of this Lay Salvatorians are guided by the words: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence ... (1 Pete 3,15)

Last but not least, it is the Salvatorian Community that gives the lay Salvatorian their spiritual home to which they can return and recharge to fulfil their mission. Normal or simple parishioners do not have that and it is not expected from them.

*b) Are the members of a parish group in a Salvatorian parish Lay Salvatorians?*

No, parish groups are generally formed with a certain purpose to serve the needs of that parish and that does not require a Lay Salvatorian. Lay Salvatorians can participate in parish groups however, these groups are not part of the Salvatorian community.

In reality, there are some groups of people who have been labeled as Lay Salvatorians who are connected to the Society and/or Congregation but, without an adequate understanding and formation of the Lay Salvatorian vocation.

*c) Can Lay Salvatorians take over ministries or duties in a parish?*

If there is a need in the parish and with the permission of the pastor and parish government, they can. This activity is just one way a Lay Salvatorian can serve in their vocation; it is simply a way in which this Lay Salvatorian is serving God's people.

*d) What advantage is becoming a Lay Salvatorian instead of remaining just as simple catholic at the parish? What is the plus?*

To become a Lay Salvatorian requires a **vocation** to be a Lay Salvatorian. Lay Salvatorians are able to live in any parish, not only in one where Salvatorian priests are situated. Following this, it is a similar question if the presence of nuns from the Order of XYZ give the parish a plus or not. It can be or it can not be, because it depends always on the concrete persons and their interest, motivation, and engagement. The advantage is that additional people, solid in faith and with a clear vocation, can greatly enrich the parish life.

Also, in some parts of the world we see that parish structures, as we have known them so far, are changing and people are looking for a different approach to the Church. Here Lay Salvatorians can and should be the first contact and companion.

So the benefit for Lay Salvatorians is to be a part of a recognized Catholic organization and with that to give the Salvatorian mission a voice. Furthermore, the members enjoy a certain protection and legal security under the umbrella of the Catholic Church if they are working in different fields of "life aid".

## 8) Contacting Lay Salvatorians

*a) Where I can find Lay Salvatorians around the world, where on the Internet?*

At the address [www.laysalvatorians.org](http://www.laysalvatorians.org), there you will find also links to other interesting Lay Salvatorian activities, and web pages of some Lay Salvatorians from around the world.

Of course we are also on Facebook → <https://www.facebook.com/groups/304921663032905/>

On the Internet under [www.laysalvatorians.org/where-we-are.html](http://www.laysalvatorians.org/where-we-are.html) you will find an interactive map.

You can also write some lines to [office@laysalvatorians.org](mailto:office@laysalvatorians.org).



These questions and answers will be updated annually,  
but if you have any questions or remarks in addition, contact us!