

We rejoice in the way of salvation which God has opened to us through Jesus Christ. We accept the New Covenant which He has made with us through His own Body and Blood. We believe that this Covenant is made with the whole Church, living and dead. We declare that we are in communion with the Holy Roman Catholic Church and Her Pope and Bishops. We believe that we are called to be part of the one Body just as there is one Lord, one Spirit, and one God and Father of us all.

We also rejoice in the special call which God has given to us. We believe that He is calling us to be True House. We have heard this call through His Word, one another, His gifts, and the desire He has put into our hearts. We believe that He is calling us into a holy association with one another in order to deepen His work of sanctification and salvation among us. Because of this faith, in order to yield more fully and generously to His grace, and for the coming of His Kingdom, we commit ourselves to True House. In so doing, we take heart in the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council encouraging voluntary associations which promote a closer harmony between daily life and faith.

We commit ourselves fully to one another as brothers and sisters, entrusting our lives and welfare to the love which He has placed in our hearts for Him and one another. We commit ourselves together and individually to seek and to assist one another in seeking His perfect Will in all things. We commit ourselves to ordering our lives and to helping one another to order our lives to His Will as He reveals it. We subordinate everything to that Will, knowing that our ways are not His ways, and wanting to follow His ways at all times. We consider this to be a solemn and serious agreement into which we have freely entered in good conscience and in faith.

In joy and peace, therefore, we turn to God and ask Him to bless this Covenant which we make with Him and one another. Freely and openly we declare that we believe that this is a primary way He wishes to use for our sanctification and we willingly ask Him to so use it.

We agree to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We agree to assume responsibility for maintaining the community order.

We agree to assume responsibility for supporting a program of initiation and formation.

We recognize the publicly designated ministries of Coordinators, Handmaids, and Servants and agree to support, respect, obey correct and pray for them as heads of True House.

We agree to assume financial responsibility for True House.

We agree to be held to this Covenant and to hold one another to it.

TRUE HOUSE COVENANT COMMENTARY

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I. We agree to love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ

All of our relationships must be fully in Christ. We believe that Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). We believe that God has set Him over all things (cf. Eph. 1:20ff and Col. 1:15-20). We believe that Jesus is worthy of all worship and praise (cf. Rev. 5:9ff). We accept as true the teachings of scripture as understood in the Church. Consequently, every member of True House seriously commits himself to a sincere love of the truth (cf. John 1:17; 3:16-21) since Christ Himself is the truth. (John 14:6) Every member of True House commits himself to grow in personal holiness, to daily personal prayer, to grow in openness to God's Word, and to obey the Commandments and the basic moral law.

Our love for one another must be an ordered love. We recognize that not everything done in the name of love is love. In the first place only those actions and thoughts which confess Jesus to be Lord are true. (I John 5:10-11) Secondly, all our relationships must be founded on agape love and right reason. It was this love which led Our Lord to lay down His life for us. (John 15:13) It is this sacrifice and service which we recognize to be the only acceptable basis for all of our relationships. We reject the patterns of emotionally based and erotic relationships which are common to the world about us and hold fast to the standard of relationships which Our Lord has called us to. We recognize that there is a wisdom in love, and that certain things are appropriate to some relationships and inappropriate to others. We commit ourselves to seek perfect charity in all our relationships.

We recognize that Our Lord has called us to have a special love of the brethren (philadelphia) who affirm the Christian faith. This love of the brethren we hold in special esteem. (Gal. 6:10) We also hold in high esteem the practice of Christian hospitality. We seek to maintain good will with all men. We consider it a special burden of love to share the riches which God has bestowed on us through Christ.

We agree to forgive one another from the heart and to seek forgiveness should we offend a brother or sister. (Col. 3:13)

We agree to be held to these agreements and to exhort, rebuke, and encourage one another. We count on one another to hold one another to these agreements. We consider failure to do so a serious breach of charity. (Gal. 6:2)

II. We agree to assume responsibility for maintaining the community order.

A common order is necessary if a community is to exist. This is especially the case with an intense community. If things are to be done in common, there must be an agreed upon common way. For there to be order, this common way must bind all the individuals who have agreed upon it. Inasmuch as they have agreed to a common course of action, they have relinquished their freedom of choice with regard to that particular action.

II. We agree to assume responsibility for maintaining the community order.

Continued from previous page.

The common areas of concern which are affected by the community order are: order of assembly, households, hospitality, and teaching.

In order for this order to be just, it is necessary that everyone in True House have an opportunity to express his or her opinion about the common agreements which make up the community order. These agreements--Community Agreements and Specific Agreements--must be reached in Community Assemblies and announced by the Coordinators so that there can be no confusion as to what we have agreed upon.

Having agreed upon norms and standards of behavior, everyone must be bound by these agreements and must agree to hold one another to them and want to be held to them.

III. We agree to assume responsibility for supporting a program of initiation and formation.

Initiation is to be understood as passing from a way of life outside True House to one inside it. This life must be founded fully in Christ with repentance and faith; it must be fully open to the work of the Holy Spirit. There is a need, then for a full transformation. This is a call to a new way of life.

In this process, we make the distinction between "initiation" and "formation". Initiation applies more properly to those first stages of a person's entrance into the community. It includes the Life in the Spirit program and continues until an individual chooses not to continue in it or until he or she makes a Temporary Covenant. The formation program begins with the Temporary Covenant and continues until an individual has made a formal public commitment to the community.

The program is designed to bring a new person to a basic stability as well as Christian maturity (or else in a position to become mature.)

No one should be prayed with to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit by our community unless there is a serious desire to come into our community and unless we are able and ready to help him or her. The Initiation process is the special responsibility of the Coordinators.

At each stage there is a need for pastoral discernment about who should continue. This is especially true before affirming an underway covenant and the public covenant. This discernment will be exercised by the Coordinators.

Initiation is a corporate process. It should involve a team whenever possible. The team should be conscious that it is in the love shown by them for one another that the essential nature of our community will be communicated.

The community assumes the responsibility for supporting and encouraging the process of initiation/formation according to the established order.

- IV. <sup>ly-designated</sup> We recognize the public ministries of Coordinators, Handmaids and Servants and agree to support, respect, obey, correct and pray for them as heads of True House.

Responsibility of Subordinates

We recognize the need for designating certain leaders.

We agree to be in a relation of subordination to them with regard to the common life of True House. We recognize that this role involves an active responsibility for the life of the community on our part. We recognize that there is a call for a special love of those selected in this ministry. (I Thes. 5:12 and Heb. 13:17)

Responsibility of Heads

The Coordinators have an overall responsibility for the life of True House and its public ministry, as well as its regional and national ministries. They have a special responsibility for guests, new members and those in need of special care. They are responsible for maintaining the community order according to the Covenant and Community Agreements. (I. Peter 5:1-5; Mt. 20:25-28)

- V. We agree to assume financial responsibility for True House.

We agree that our sharing as a community is not merely a matter of sharing spiritual things but also material things, and we will be seeking more wisdom on this matter.

VI. We agree to be held to this Covenant and to hold one another to it.

We consider it to be charity to remind one another of the pledges we have made to one another. We count on one another to remind us of our pledges and in a spirit of gentleness to correct us if we should in any way violate it. If a brother or sister sees someone violating the Covenant and fails to serve him by bringing this matter to his attention, he has wronged the person who was committing the violation and has himself violated the Covenant.

The Covenant represents a serious and solemn commitment on the part of all who affirm it. Its terms are to seek God's perfect will for ourselves and one another. It is not, however, an irrevocable commitment nor a vow. An individual retains his freedom to withdraw from it. Should an individual become convinced that it is the Lord's will for him to go elsewhere or to withdraw from True House, we commit ourselves to joyfully support him in that decision.

Leaving or withdrawing from the Covenant is not, however, purely a private decision. It is to be hoped that in the spirit of fraternal charity an individual would not arrive at such a decision without having prayerfully consulted some of the brothers and sisters, as well as one of the Coordinators. While this consultation is not, strictly speaking a binding requirement, it certainly represents in a serious way the spirit in which the Covenant was formulated and the way of life and sharing to which True House is committed. To act independently without having even consulted a brother or sister would violate that spirit.

The Covenant has been formulated with the understanding that there will be some who will reside in South Bend on a temporary basis and others who intend to make their commitment to True House a long range commitment. Our intention is that the commitment be a full one for whatever range of time and that the question of staying or leaving be one which can clearly be resolved in the Lord. It is only to be expected of each of us and all of us that we keep our hearts open to the Lord's will in these matters because our ways are not His ways.

THE COVENANT AND COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- 1.) There are three types of agreements into which we will enter: the Covenant itself which will commit us to one another and to True House in a formal and serious way.
- 2.) a series of Community Agreements about common life style and common patterns of life. Those areas of our life which True House wishes to reserve as common will be bound by these agreements. They will serve as basic principles for the everyday life and activities of the community.
- 3.) a series of Specific Agreements which will be agreed upon for specific time periods and which during those time periods will have the same effect as Community Agreements, but which will be revised as circumstances and situations require.

This method of determining common life might be compared to the American system of government in a sense. There is a basic Constitution which is a solemn agreement which defines and limits all other agreements which Americans enter into. This Constitution can be changed, but only by serious undertaking. On the other hand, there are a number of laws which are passed by the Congress which regulate the normal course of affairs and which also set the general principles by which the ideals and agreements set forth in the Constitution are to be interpreted. For instance, the Constitution permits the government to tax and lays down several conditions. The rates, forms, systems, etc., however, are determined by laws which can be changed by another law. In the same sense, the True House Covenant will set forth the general principles which bind us together, while Community and Specific Agreements will determine how these principles are to work themselves out in our common life.

Such a method has several advantages. It provides for a basic agreement which preserves and clearly states the general principles. At the same time it is loose enough to provide considerable flexibility with regard to actually carrying out the general principles. The importance of this method is that the Covenant does not spell out the means by which the ideals are to be carried out. By agreeing to general principles separately, we are able to adapt them as experience and the Lord teach us without changing the basic agreement. The Covenant thereby becomes a simple statement which in a few words describes the basis of True House. It is something which can be readily understood and remembered. Furthermore, the basic agreement does not need to be changed every time some external circumstances forces us to do something differently. For example, if, after a period of time, the True House Community prayer meeting were impractical on a night we had agreed upon, we would not have to change the Covenant in order to agree upon another time.

By stating only the essence of what we have agreed upon, the Covenant remains a stable living agreement even in the midst of considerable practical change. The True House Covenant expresses the basic principles which the Lord has been teaching us about our common life. These principles are not just methods or ideas which we have dreamed up, but ways which He is giving us by which we can be sanctified if we want them and accept them in faith.



THE COVENANT AND COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS- - - Continued, p.2.

It is important that the Covenant be accepted in faith because it expresses the call which we believe God is giving us. In assenting to it, we are saying "yes" to a way of life which we believe God is asking us to live. Such an article of faith and for faith ought not be tampered with lightly lest it become a scandal to our faith. The Community and Specific Agreements, on the other hand, provide us with a means of flexibility which is vital to any living organism. Changes which are not basic, therefore, can be easily made without in any way undermining our common basic commitment.

The following is an outline of the areas of Community Agreement:

I. "Covenant and Community Agreements"

II. Community Order

- A.) Assemblies
- B.) Households
- C.) Hospitality
- D.) Teaching

III. Initiation & Formation

IV. Ministry

V. Finances--Stewardship

## II. Community Order

### A. Assemblies

#### I. Community Assemblies.

- A. Some activities are to be designated as "community assemblies of the Covenant community."
- B. These are of three sorts.
  1. A regular weekly meeting
  2. Special meetings to be called by the coordinators and designated as community assemblies; the coordinators are to notify each covenant member of these meetings.
  3. Periodic meetings: there will be at least two community retreats, one before the opening of each semester; the coordinators are to make a decision about a third retreat to be held at the close of the spring semester in preparation for the summer.
- C. Each member of True House is to consider attendance at community assemblies a serious obligation.
- D. The decision NOT to attend a community assembly is not a private decision; it is to be made in consultation with another member of the community.
- E. The person consulted in such a case is to inform the coordinators if his brother or sister will not be attending a community assembly.
- F. Community assemblies are open only to members of True House; others may attend only by invitation from the Coordinators, under one of the following conditions:
  1. Someone who is involved in the process of initiation into community.
  2. A community guest, at the discretion of the Coordinators (this might include visitors who are part of other covenant communities or core groups, or those who are invited to participate in the teaching ministries or special cases.)

#### II. Community Activities

- A. Community activities are different from community assemblies. Types of gatherings which would be classified as community activities include?
  1. Regular activities anyone may attend (such as Mass)
  2. Regular activities open only to True House members but at which attendance is not mandatory (such as growth groups)
  3. Special activities (such as social gatherings)
    - a. For True House only
    - b. Open to anyone
    - c. Semi-public, with some procedure of invitation
- B. Community Activities (as opposed to activities community members happen to attend, singly or together) are sponsored by the community: we agree to take the responsibility of supporting them by praying for them, financing them, and respecting rather than undermining them, whether or not we actually attend each.

## II. Community Order

### B.. Households

#### I. Recommendations

The purpose of these recommendations is to focus on the relationship between True House and the households in which its members live.

- a. It is desirable for every community member to belong to a household.
- b. A household is the environment in which the constant care, encouragement, and responsibility which the members of the community have pledged to one another works itself out in ongoing, daily relationships. A household should provide its members with a stabilizing and sanctifying pattern of relationships ordered to an explicit commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.
- c. For a household to be a stable part of the community, there should be an explicit commitment to one another including an agreed upon pattern of life and relationships, a common understanding of purpose, and an accepted order of making and implementing decisions, including an agreed upon headship.
- d. A household, while good in itself, is not sufficient unto itself and must always be considered in the context of the whole community. Its relationship to the community is like that of an organ to the body of which it is a part.
- e. Good order must be supported and respected by all-- headship in the household, headship in the community; the agreement of household members, the True House Covenant; the order of life in a household, the community order.
- f. The formation of households by community members is of special concern to the community and should be done in cooperation with the Coordinators.

#### II. Community Households

- a. Households which wish to have the community formally assume responsibility for their welfare and to assume responsibility as a household for the life of the community can be formally recognized as a Community Household. Upon request of a household, Coordinators will determine whether a particular household meets the conditions agreed upon by the community, and make recommendation publicly at a community assembly where it would be acted upon.
- b. The responsibility of True House to a Community Household is to protect, preserve, encourage, and care for it and to respect its order and integrity.
- c. The responsibility of a Community Household and its members to True House is to assume responsibility for the life and good order of the community. It agrees to be subordinate to the community order in the following areas:

## II. B Households, con't.

guests and hospitality  
 order of assembly  
 new members  
 entertainment, parties, and dinners  
 apostolic activities  
 and in other areas which may be agreed to and  
 announced as part of the order of the community.

- d. Both the Community Household and True House--especially those in publicly designanted ministries--agree to give and accept correction and admonition should these agreements be violated in any way.

## II. C

## II. Community Order

## C. Principles of Hospitality

- 1.) Hospitality is a Christian responsibility. The scriptures admonish us to show hospitality. (cf. Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13) St. Benedict in his rule taught that all guests should be received as Christ. (Chapter 53 ). Our Lord has told us that what we do for the least of the brethren, we do for Him. (Mt. 25:40).
- 2.) Hospitality means sharing materially and spiritually with those who come to us the life which the Lord has given to us.
- 3.) Hospitality affects the whole community in some way, and so, is subject to the order of the community and to the order of the respective households.
- 4.) There are personal guests and community guests. Personal guests are the responsibility of their host. Community guests must work out with the Coördinators and respective households the reasons and terms of their stay. These conditions will be considered the norms for all relations between guests and the community and both agree to be corrected and admonished should they fail to follow them.
- 5.) Hospitality to the community guests is the responsibility of the whole community. Administration of community hospitality is the special responsibility of a Community Servant, the Guestmaster.
- 6.) Guests will be expected to respect the community order especially with regard to teaching, giving spiritual direction or advice, and prophesying.
- 7.) The households which receive guests are to be conscious of their serious responsibility before the Lord and the whole community. A household should receive guests graciously promptly advise them of household order so that no misunderstanding can take place, and provide for their needs and comfort. It should especially be conscious of the spiritual needs of guests and should share generously the fruits of our common life.

## II. Community Order

## D. Teaching

1.) Teaching is an important means by which the ideals and goals of our common call are brought to the attention of the community and clarified.

2.) Teaching is used by the Spirit to effect the renewal of our minds and hearts. (cf, Rom. 12:1-2.)

3.) Such teaching can enable us better to understand and attain our goals through helping us judge the standards and claims of the world in the light of God's plan and revelation. (cf. John 2:15-17; John 16:8-11.)

4.) All teaching in True House must be faithful to God's revelation as set forth in scripture as understood and explained in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. (cf. Dei Verbum).

5.) We believe that Jesus has established in His Church Bishops who are our shepherds and teachers. We welcome and submit to their teaching. We also recognize the teaching ministry of priests.

6.) We recognize that the Lord has also conferred teaching gifts on other members of the Body. Such gifts when employed in submission to the teaching and order of the Church can serve to build up the Body. (cf. Lumen Gentium #12) In our own assemblies, this gift is respected and encouraged.

7.) We hold the Coordinators of our community especially responsible to provide for sound and orthodox teaching which lead us to greater fidelity to our call. They will be expected to hold us faithful to our common ideals and to prevent teaching which might be disorienting or harmful to the common good.

8.) We assume responsibility to grow and deepen together in our understanding of the Gospel. Opportunities for ongoing teaching and formation which are provided for by the community are to be taken very seriously. Every member of True House should be constantly seeking to appropriate teaching to his life and life style.

### III. Initiation/Formation

The responsibility for establishing a program of initiation/formation rests with the Coordinators. The following represents a basic outline of that program.

1.) An explanation session at one Mass per week. The Charismatic Renewal would be described.

2.) The Jesus Retreat. This retreat would outline the need for a commitment to Christ, God's plan of salvation, etc.

---BOTH OF THESE EVENTS WOULD BE OPTIONAL AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COORDINATORS. THEY ARE SUGGESTED BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT STAGES THROUGH WHICH ONE MUST GO.

3.) Life in the Spirit sessions. (Necessary)

4.) Community Retreat (Necessary). This retreat would give candidates an opportunity to consider True House as an option for them. They would receive an explanation of what True House is and would have the question posed to them: "Is God calling you to True House?"

---AT THIS STAGE THE FORMATION PROGRAM WOULD BEGIN FOR THOSE WHO ANSWER "YES". AT THIS TIME, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT WHEREVER POSSIBLE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO BECOME A MEMBER OF A HOUSEHOLD.

5.) Temporary Covenant. The Coordinators would talk with the individuals who had made the Community Retreat and invite those who were interested and, in the opinion of the Coordinators, able to make a Temporary Covenant to the community to do so. They would be invited to the Core Meeting, introduced, and have an opportunity to publicly address the community and voice their commitment. This should be attended with the laying on of hands by the entire community.

6.) Foundations course. Those affirming the Temporary Covenant will be expected to attend the Foundations Course which will introduce them to the varied aspects of community life. During that time they will have an opportunity to understand the call of Christ to sanctity, to study the obstacles to their Christian life, and to re-examine their personal relationships. During this time, it would be appropriate for the individuals to learn about the prayers for healing of memories and deliverance. (This must be judged by Coordinators.)

---BY THIS STAGE, THOSE IN THE FORMATION PROGRAM SHOULD BE RECEIVING REGULAR COUNSELING FROM A MATURE MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY AND SHOULD HAVE FORMED A COUNSELING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM.

7.) Private Retreat. After the Foundations Course, the individual should be encouraged to make a private retreat supervised by one of the Coordinators during which he or she seriously faces the question of whether or not to make the public commitment to the community and to affirm the Covenant. By this time, it should be clear whether or not God will bless this relationship with the community and he should decide whether he wants to make it stable and regular.

8.) After consulting with the Coordinators and upon their recommendation, he will be presented to the entire community at a designated community assembly. At that time he will make a public commitment to the community and will affirm the Covenant and the community will receive him or her as brother or sister.

#### IV. Ministry

##### A. General Principles

- 1.) The Holy Spirit gives ministry gifts to every Christian which are for the upbuilding of His Body. As the Second Vatican Council states, "alloting His gifts to everyone according as He will" (I Cor. 12:11), He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank." (Lumen Gentium, 12)
- 2.) Our Lord entrusted the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, with certain ministries which are foundational to the life and well being of the Church. We believe that the College of Bishops with its Head, the Pope, are the Shepherds to whom Our Lord has entrusted the responsibility for and authority over the whole Church. (cf. Mt. 16:18-20; Eph. 4ff.)
- 3.) We recognize that in a Christian community within the Church, the Spirit gives particular ministry gifts which are for the welfare of the whole group.
- 4.) We recognize the need for publicly designating certain ministries for the common good and the life of True House.
- 5.) In no way are we attempting to parallel or contradict the hierarchy of the Church. Rather, we are anxious to submit in every way to our pastors and Bishops.
- 6.) The authority for these publicly designated ministries proceeds from the common discernment and agreement of the whole community.
- 7.) The publicly designated ministries will be modelled according to the example of Our Lord, the teaching of scripture as understood in the Church, and especially the life of the early Church.

##### B. Mutual Responsibilities

- 1.) Those in publicly designated ministries assume responsibility for a special care and concern for the whole life of the community and the sanctification of each member especially through their personal example.
- 2.) The whole community, its households, and each member assumes responsibility to love, encourage, obey, correct, and pray for those in publicly designated ministries.

##### C. Definition of Specific functions and responsibilities:

- 1.) We recognize three orders of publicly designated ministries: Coordinators, Handmaids, and Servants.
- 2.) The Coordinators, Handmaids and Servants share a special responsibility for the welfare of the whole community, functioning according to the agreed upon division of responsibilities, and maintaining communication for the proper ordering of community life.
- 3.) The Coordinators have overall responsibility for the life of True House and its publicly designated ministries, as well as its regional and national ministries, They should care for each member of the community, and especially new members, community guests, and those in need of special care. They should preserve, uphold, and protect the order of the community according to the Covenant and the Community Agreements. The Coordinators assume joint responsibility for decisions and are subordinate to one another in agreed upon areas of competence.
- 4.) The Community Servants are responsible for Administration under the supervision of the Coordinators. (cf. I Cor. 12:28)

IV. C. Continued from previous page.

5.) The Handmaids share the responsibility for the pastoral ministry of the community and support the overall work of the Coordinators by their advice and prayers. They have special responsibility to serve, encourage, and minister to the women of the community, as well as women guests, new women members, and women who need special care.

6.) Public designation occurs when an individual is proposed to the Community by the Coordinators, tested during a trial period, and formally appointed after consultation with each community member affected.

D. Pastoral Ministry

1.) The Coordinators should encourage every member of the community to establish a regular counseling relationship with a mature member of the community.

2.) The advantage and importance of spiritual direction from a wise and prudent priest should be recognized.

3.) Ministry to those who need special care is an important part of the community life. Agreements which are reached in these situations must be respected as part of the Community Order.

4.) Potential leaders should receive from the Coordinators the type of attention necessary to develop their gifts so their service may benefit the whole community.



## V. Finances

- 1.) We each agree to be responsible financially for ourselves and those dependent on us.
- 2.) We recognize the importance of insurance so as to prevent accidents from making us a burden on the community.
- 3.) We recognize the dangers of idleness and believe that everyone should not only support himself, but should be dutifully employed. (cf. 2 Thes. 3)
- 4.) We recognize the desire to share personal property and encourage this practice, since it helps prevent selfishness. Nevertheless, we recognize the responsibility we have not to take advantage of one another or to in any way infringe upon one another's generosity. The need to care for borrowed property and to reimburse expenses incurred must be recognized.
- 5.) We agree to hold a common fund which will pay for expenses incurred by community activities and projects.
- 6.) This fund is to be administered by the Community Servants and records are to be kept which are to be opened to any community member on request.
- 7.) Expenditures from this fund must be authorized by the Coordinators. Major financial policy would be agreed upon by the Community.
- 8.) As a community, we will set aside 10% gross of our common money as a portion for the Lord.
- 9.) We encourage members to tithe regularly since all money is the Lord's and greed is the root of all evil. (cf. I Tim. 6:10) Everyone should earn what he needs and some extra for good works.
- 10.) We encourage all members to contribute regularly to the community.

## TRUE HOUSE IS...

...not a physical building but a people.

...a Catholic charismatic community called into covenant

Catholic:--composed entirely of Roman Catholics

--in faithful and loving obedience to the Church and her bishops

--known and approved by our bishop

--grateful for the grace of the ordained priesthood and blessed by the sacramental and teaching ministry of God's servants among us

--nourished by regular and frequent participation in the sacraments

charismatic:--experiencing the reality and power of Christ to transform men's lives and relationships through baptism in the Holy Spirit and His ongoing work of conversion and healing

--utilizing the charismatic gifts (such as tongues, prophecy, inspired teaching, and healing) to serve and build up the body of Christ

--a community rooted in prayer, personal and corporate

community:--a people who have asked God not to sanctify them as individuals but to treat them as one, to make of them one holy body, to sanctify them through each other

--the unity Christ experienced with His Father and promised to His followers

--a people who believe Jesus is Lord and are striving to center their individual and common lives on Him, to put on His heart and mind

--the Kingdom of God beginning to be manifested in space and time, a kingdom of light set on a hill as a witness to those living in the darkness produced by the values of this world

--not only daring prayer and worship but living together and growing in sharing our lives, our joys, our cares, and our decisions

called:--together for no natural reason such as similarity of affinity

--proceeding in faith, in response to the call of God, and in love for that call and for this body He has called together

covenant:--together not by accident but by intention and choice

--committed to cooperate with God as He makes us one in True House

--a people who have said to one another, "I surrender myself completely to God in Christ; I promise to love you as brothers and sisters, and to be loved by you in True House."

--in covenant relationship since September 13, 1971

## THE MEMBERS OF TRUE HOUSE ARE...

...an incredible family!

...60 in number as of January 13, 1973 (having grown from 21 in September of 1971)

...predominantly male (17 women)

...31 undergrads, three graduate and one law student; others employed at Notre Dame, in South Bend, or by Charismatic Renewal Services

...married (four couples), single, and celibate vocations

...two professed sisters in addition to lay members

...average age 23, youngest 18

...from 20 different states

...in ten households, two on- and eight off-campus

## A MEMBER OF TRUE HOUSE...

...is not a member just because he desires to be, or likes what he sees here.

...has a genuine call from God to this way of life and salvation, and both he and the coordinators recognise this in faith.

...has gone through the Life in the Spirit Seminars and a True House Weekend and has made a covenant with the whole community.

## A MEMBER OF TRUE HOUSE (continued)...

- ...is by his covenant only beginning the serious business of being transformed into Christ
- ...is taking advantage of the Foundations series, individual counseling, the sacraments and spiritual direction, and participation in the community and his household to begin to put on a whole new way of thinking and being centered on Christ and devoted to the coming of His kingdom
- ...is joined to the community not so much in space and time as in attitude of heart
- ...does not promise to live in South Bend for the rest of his life, or to maintain a particular state of life, but does believe that God will not lead him as an individual apart from the community, but that even the decision to go elsewhere is to be submitted to his brothers and sisters, trusting that God will work and speak through them
- ...knows that God has intended in True House a work that will last through time and is considering his own vocation in the light of that reality

## A HOUSEHOLD IS...

- ...a unit of from 2 to 12 members living together and caring for each other on a daily basis
- ...a place to learn to die to oneself in loving
- ...a group of brothers or sisters sharing regular prayer, meals, discussion, recreation, service to the community, and responsibilities
- ...a unit with a head and an agreed-upon method of coming to decisions

## SOME OF THE THINGS TRUE HOUSE DOES TOGETHER ARE...

- ...gather once a week for a covenant meeting which includes mass, dinner, sharing, teaching, and prayer; this meeting is central in our life together, and an individual cannot choose not to attend without submitting that decision to a brother
- ...go away together at the beginning of each semester for a retreat where God's word to us can come into clearer focus and we can renew our commitment to Him and to one another and ratify the direction in which He is leading us
- ...celebrate the Eucharist together daily as a community, where our unity is a real witness to God's presence; keep Lent and feasts together
- ...gather for social events and parties, especially as part of Sabbath re-creation; hold special dinners at Thanksgiving and Passover
- ...support an apostolic prayer meeting at the University of Notre Dame once a week, where the good news is proclaimed to those seeking new life
- ...sponsor "Jesus Retreats" to introduce people to Christ and the meaning of being a Christian, especially at Notre Dame
- ...minister not as individuals but as a body and in teams to those seeking the Lord
- ...lead new people to receive new life through the "Life in the Spirit Seminars"
- ...sponsor True House Weekends where those who have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit may enter more deeply into the meaning of True House and face the question of their own relationship to the community
- ...serve a national charismatic retreat program in conjunction with Fatima Retreat House
- ...provide teaching for those who have become members of True House on growth in the Spirit through two fourteen-week series of courses called "Foundations in Christian Living"
- ...sponsor individual retreats and special ministry for particular needs
- ...serve the national charismatic renewal by putting on the annual International Conference, by sending teams to speak to groups in other places, and by welcoming guests to share our life in True House
- ...make contributions for various religious and charitable purposes

TRUE HOUSE IS GOVERNED BY...

- ...the Covenant and community agreements accepted by each with a willing heart
- ...consensus on all major decisions and directions
- ...three coordinators (Jim Byrne, Peter Edwards, and Joel Kibler) whose headship has been tested and accepted by the whole community and blessed by the Lord, who have an overall pastoral care and concern for True House in its spiritual and temporal dimensions
- ...three handmaids (Joan Edwards, Sr. Marie Catherine Olinger, Sr. Anne Valentyne) set apart with the laying on of hands to share as women in the community in the coordinators' care and concern
- ...a variety of stewards and committees chosen to take responsibility for specific areas of community life such as initiation of new members, care of guests, music, volunteer services, and administration of our temporal possessions

LEGALLY, TRUE HOUSE IS...

- ...a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation
- ...the owner of four houses which are furnished and financed through responsible planning and the generosity of members and friends

TRUE HOUSE WELCOMES...

- ...your earnest prayers that the Kingdom of God may be manifest in our midst
- ...financial contributions, which are tax-deductible; send checks to True House, Inc., Box 26, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556
- ...guests; address inquiries to John Hittinger, 1203 N. Notre Dame Avenue, South Bend, Indiana 46617 (2119-234-3529)

A REPORT ON THE TRUE HOUSE COMMUNITY

February 1972

Revision

July 1973

## I. IDEALS

True House is not an accident or a loose association of people with similar eccentricities. It is a highly complex association of young people with a very deliberate common goal. They have banded together in order to make it possible for one another to live a vital Catholic Christianity in the modern world. True House is a community with a definite life style and order which has evolved as a result of the efforts of its members to follow faithfully the call of our Lord.

It arose out of the efforts of students at the University of Notre Dame who had experienced a spiritual awakening through the charismatic renewal and desired to enter more fully into the life of Christ and to share their new-found experience with others. They began to discover that it was not easy to live an intense Christianity at Notre Dame and that there were serious intellectual obstacles on the part of young people to even hearing the Gospel, let alone living it out in an intense and meaningful way. What followed in the years after 1967 was an increasing understanding of the makeup of modern youth. Much of this came from personal experience and contact. Their conclusion was that young people today are closed to the Gospel and Christianity in important ways, because they have had most of their ideals and values formed by and in a secular culture. In a very real sense, the younger generation has been secularized to a degree inconceivable to the older generation. Any effort to proclaim the Gospel to most young Americans must not be viewed simply as an effort to awaken dull Catholics, but as an effort at fundamental conversion: that is, to make them Catholics. Although a number of young people today are looking for answers to the problems of life, they are not, generally speaking, open to pursuing them in the context of the living Church. This distaste for the Church, her sacraments, her teaching, and authority results from formation by modern society. In order to overcome it, a totally different world view must be given to young people.

It is such a world view which True House is seeking to uncover and share. As fully as possible, our community is seeking to grow in its understanding of the mysteries of Christ as revealed in the Church. It is this task which gives meaning and purpose to all that we are and do, and it is to this task that we have committed our lives, money, and energy.

## II. HISTORY

True House began with the first stirrings of the charismatic renewal at Notre Dame in the spring of 1967. Its purposes first worked themselves out in a crude form in the efforts of two students, Peter Edwards and James Byrne, to try to live out the spiritual awakening which the charismatic renewal had brought to them and to communicate with others. In their efforts to persevere and grow in grace, they began to discover that the pressure of studies, current notions about Christianity, modern values, etc., made it difficult

for them to grow. Also, they discovered that students with whom they shared their experiences would often experience an awakening themselves, but would not persevere. Again and again, the pressure of their environment, scepticism, or personal obstacles would prevent them from entering into an intense Christian life. Gradually, Edwards and Byrne began to discover the importance of an environment which reinforced an intense Christianity and a process of formation which enabled them to help others to adjust their ideas and ideals to putting God and His Kingdom first.

In 1968, the two graduated from Notre Dame and, after prayers and consultation with many others, decided to stay in South Bend in order to make it possible for others at Notre Dame to experience the fulness of God's life. They did so without any clear goals or means in mind, trusting to the Lord's providence. Their trust seemed to them to have been justified in that, within a month after their decision, Dr. Herbert True, a layman in South Bend, offered them the use of a house for an apostolic center. They accepted it, naming the center "True House." From the fall of 1968 until the summer of 1970, the apostolate continued out of True House with some moderate successes. A variety of programs were undertaken, including retreat work, door-to-door visitations in the halls at Notre Dame, flyers, etc. In addition, some time was devoted to other apostolic endeavors, usually in connection with the charismatic renewal, either in South Bend or around the country.

In the summer of 1970, though, they reached a turning point. They could continue the apostolate they had begun or take an approach which would be immediately directed at building up a community among the students. After much prayer and discussion, they decided by December, 1970, to attempt to form with seven others an intense Christian community and to invest five years in this effort in order to see whether God would bless it. From this point, they began to share their vision with the young people with whom they had been working. Some were attracted to this ideal of intense life; others felt that they were not ready for it; still others felt that they would prefer to live a communal Christian life with another group which was forming in the South Bend area. By September, 1971, a group of twenty-one agreed upon a Covenant which formulated their vision and desires for a common life as Catholic Christians. In the group were two Dominican nuns from Racine, Wisconsin, who had joined the group with their order's permission as an apostolic project, seven Notre Dame graduates who stayed on after graduation, and several who had no contact with the University except through the group.

### III. TRUE HOUSE AT PRESENT

At present, True House has seventy members. These include men and women, students and working people, religious and laymen, young families and individuals dedicated to a celibate vocation, two faculty members, two graduate students, a law student, and a C.P.A. Fourteen are graduates of the University of Notre Dame.

The order, life style and formation program of True House are adequately described in the Covenant and community agreements.

Some of the significant features of its life since the formation of the Covenant are:

--households. There are ten households in the community. Each household has a common order and rule of its own. Two are located on the campus of Notre Dame. Although the students do not necessarily share the same room, they meet together twice a day for prayer, have common meals, and recreational activities together, as well as a weekly meeting to share with and encourage one another. The off-campus households vary in size and composition. There are four married households, two households of single women, and three households of single men. Several of these men are students, but a majority are employed.

--assemblies. The community meets daily for Mass on campus; this daily Eucharist has become the heart of its life together. There is a deep and real devotion to the Mass and to the Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. The community also holds an open prayer meeting each week. Once a week the entire community gathers for a meeting open only to members. This includes mass, dinner, sharing, teaching, and prayer.

--initiation and formation. The community sponsors about five twenty-four hour retreats each semester. These "Jesus Retreats" are designed to present the Gospel to Notre Dame students. Further teaching is provided in a seven-week "Life in the Spirit Seminar," a fourteen - week series in the "Foundations of Christian Living," and in retreats.

--finances. The community presently donates ten per cent of its income to charity and has contributed to a number of causes, such as the Holy Cross missions in Pakistan, several poor families in South Bend, a scholarship for a black student at St. Joseph's High School. Many members make regular contributions to the community.

--teaching. Two systematic theologians, Frs. Robert Nogosek and Edward O'Connor, CSC., have taught the community on a regular basis, and one priest is a member of True House during his graduate research in anthropology.

#### IV. REMARKS

True House is still a small experiment. So far, it has successfully enabled its members to live out lives of greater charity toward one another and others, and has brought them more fully into the life of the Church. The only member of the community who was not a Catholic was received into the Catholic Church a year ago. In addition, True House has enabled many Catholics, who had effectively or formally left the Church, to return to the sacraments. A sign of our increased devotion to the sacraments is the desire of the community to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in one of our community houses, and the practice among several households of a weekly hour of adoration.



There are signs that the Lord is building something permanent among us in True House. Although individuals are not being encouraged to make a lifetime commitment at this point, all of us feel strongly that God wants to establish a community here for our children's children. Steps are being taken, in this long-range perspective, to help individuals with vocational planning and to lay foundations for administering a much larger community. True House currently owns four houses south of Notre Dame campus, and others of its members own or rent houses in the same neighborhood. Another encouraging sign of "putting down roots" is our multiplication in the past year from one to five married couples. We now have four small children and expect three more before the end of 1973.

These are some of the signs that this experiment has great vitality and potential. A spirit of self-sacrifice and dedication of a high degree exists, and already a number of University graduates have decided to spend several years of their lives here. Several have given up promising careers in order to devote themselves to the work of the apostolate, and several are seriously considering a commitment to a life of celibacy. All in all, True House could become a model for a Catholic Christian community in which a variety of vocations exist and strengthen one another and in which many of the mistaken trends of modern society are effectively countered.

July 9, 1973

Brothers and Sisters in True House,

I wish to share a few thoughts of my own, as well as an excerpt from a Bishop's document. I share them in love, not in a condemning spirit, but out of a desire to see True House grow into the fully Christian community the Lord has called us to be.

There are many areas in which we are called to administer our goods in a "Christian" way. But it seems that the purchasing of land and houses is the most dominant one. That is to say, the purchasing and administering of houses, more than other areas involving money and time, can determine whether or not our life style is a fully Christian one--both as a community and as individuals.

For instance, the fact that True House and members of True House will have spent approximately \$250,000 on the four houses it now "owns" by the time their mortgages are paid off--this fact has and will tend to determine how we use our community money and our individual money and time.

We must ask if we are exercising that "sparingness" the Bishops and Pope have called us to. Are we administering our "goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor"? Are we sharing the material wealth we have? (Not just monetary donations, but using our houses to proclaim the Gospel to the poor.) Or has buying houses in a relatively "well-off" block kept us from both saving money and being present to the predominantly poor people west of Notre Dame Avenue?

The purchasing of another house for a contract price of \$50,000 would, over time, cost at least 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> times that figure. That means we would have put \$125,000 more money over 20-30 years into a supposedly "good investment". Perhaps a real estate man would consider it a good investment, for instance, to get the "1104" house at that price, but as a Christian community, will we use that house and our four other houses for the Lord's work among the poor, as well as His work among students and other young, predominantly white people that True House now serves?

Or would it be better to buy houses west of Notre Dame Avenue or in other areas where we can get houses of adequate size for only 1/3 or 1/4 the "paid off" price of houses in the block where 1003, 918, and 1104 are located?

Over 20 years, four older, less expensive houses of comparable size in the "poorer" neighborhood would cost about \$70,000, compared to the \$250,000 that the four community houses will cost us. That is a difference of approximately \$180,000. To my mind, that gives us a lot of room to grow in "sparingness" without living as though we were destitute. Furthermore, where we live is itself a proclamation--both to our neighborhood and to the many people in the country who are and will be relying on our leadership.

I strongly recommend that True House not make more "heavy investments" until we have decided how we should be more sparing and how our goods and lives can more clearly proclaim the Gospel to the poor. Because of our commitment to the community, any decisions to buy houses affect the individual members' availability and financial means to share with the poor. Therefore, the coordinators and elders should understand and explain how we can follow as a community the teachings of the Bishops on justice and temporal possessions, before we extend our financial liabilities any more.

Your brother in Christ,

*John Ferrone*

Pete  
Joel  
Jim  
Jim Burke  
Don  
Paul  
Maria  
Phil  
Kem Mitani  
Pat. M.  
Sr. Ann  
Sr. Marie C.  
Fr. Vince  
Fr. Ken  
Fr. Ed.  
B. Colson