



POLICY COMMITTEE

Position Paper

MEN PARTICIPATING ON WOMEN'S WEEKENDS (AND VICE VERSA)

ORIGINAL DATE: March 2, 2019

POSITION PAPER

MEN PARTICIPATING ON WOMEN'S WEEKENDS (AND VICE VERSA)

PURPOSE: It has come to our attention that, in some communities, men are being recruited to act out the Via Deloroso and/or other skits on womens weekends. This includes men taking on the roles of merchants, buyers, on-lookers, Centurians and, of course, Jesus.

BACKGROUND: This was originally a question posed by one community; specifically how this practice differs from the Serenade and Mananita since they also involve members o f the opposite sex taking a significant role in the weekend. However, we learned that this is a practice that is being condoned by other communities; thereby requiring a Position Paper rather than simply a formal response to a question.

DISCUSSION: (Please see the related Position Paper entitled "Review of Cloister As It Applies to the Tres Dias Weekend." Dated March 11, 2017 for further background).

- 1) **DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN THE SERENADE / MANANITA AND THIS PRACTICE:** In our deliberations, the Policy Committee firmly agreed that the Serenade (and Mananita) were, indeed, violations of the Cloister since they involve people coming from the outside to minister to the candidates. Since these activities were so ingrained in the "DNA" of the weekends, we felt that to prohibit them would likely have caused damage to the ministry.
 - a. As such, we stretched to say that, since there's no "personal contact" with the candidates, that we would provide an exception for these two activities; based solely on the fact that they had such a history and were so ingrained in the communities, that we didn't want to cause harm to the ministry. Other common practices with a long history of usage were also permitted with modifications. (See the document noted above).
 - b. We also understand the reality that communities will almost always want to INCREASE the number of activities on a weekend, often without regard to the impact on the Cloister or even the Essentials; thus our focus on protecting the integrity of the Essentials to the best of our ability. Along with this is the understanding that most communities will be far more likely to look for ways to "go around" the Essentials than they will in looking for better ways to stay in compliance.
 - c. Although technically permitting men to act out the Via Delorosa on a women's weekend would be the same violation of the Cloister as the Serenade / Mananita, it does not have the same historical standing. So to permit yet another exception would begin to open the door to more and more exceptions; which is something the Committee is not willing to permit.

2) IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES ON THE ESSENTIALS

- a. Any activities outside of the Essentials should be clearly led by the Holy Spirit and not just because it's a good experience or that it "feels good." And it must certainly be in compliance with all aspects of the Essentials, including the Cloister.
- b. The focus (and take-away) of a weekend should NEVER be about all the "stuff." It should be about seeking the Holy spirit and His impact on the weekend and on the candidates. Anything beyond that is pretty much man-made "fluff" that tends to focus on manipulating emotions rather than simply creating an atmosphere of trust and acceptance so the candidates can be open to whatever the Holy Spirit has for them.

SUMMARY / POSITION: The practice of having male volunteers actively participating in a Via Delorosa (or any other similar practice on a women's weekend – or women playing roles on a men's weekend – are violations of the Essentials and are not to be condoned or practiced on a Tres Dias weekend.

With the exception of the Serenade / Mananita and the limited other exceptions noted in the March, 2017 Position Paper entitled "Review of Cloister As It Applies to the Tres Dias Weekend," there are no situations where it would be appropriate for a man to directly participate on a women's weekend other than those serving as Spiritual Directors. Men or women can certainly assist in the background (out of sight of the candidates) for support and heavy lifting, but there should be no direct interaction, physical contact or communications with the candidates. These are all violations of the Essentials and must not be permitted.

- The same standards apply to women actively participating on a men's weekend.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Mehl

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Policy Committee Chair

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