

## ***You will fish for people*** (Lk 5,10)

# **THE JOY OF TRANSMITTING AND SHARING A CHARISM**

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### **Synthesis:**

In this Church that feels itself to be the People of God,  
the Spirit calls us today to be mediators of the Claretian charism  
to serve together the ecclesial Mission,  
building the charismatic Family in a synodal style.

### **THE CALL THAT CALLS US: YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE (Lk 5,10)**

We come to the third stage of this congregational journey following the Gospel story of Luke 5:1-11. We have contemplated the experience of failure and frustration of the fishermen. We heard Jesus' invitation, against all logic: *"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch"*. And Peter's response, bewildered, but with a remaining confidence that relies only on Jesus: *"...because you say so, I will let down the nets"*. Then comes the joy of the abundant catch, by the grace of God alone; and the need of the others: *"So they signaled their partners..."*. Finally, we hear Jesus' command: *"You will fish for people"*.

That is the call that summons all of us today. Because the mission requires and commits each and every one of us, without exception. In this case, with an accentuation that comes from the charism that has been given to us, inherited from Saint Anthony M<sup>a</sup> Claret and the Venerable M<sup>a</sup> Antonia París.

Let us contextualise the sending of Jesus to Peter in our ecclesial and social present. It will always be the proclamation of the Gospel and the coming of the Kingdom of God, but in this context of a Church that is being renewed, that has rediscovered its identity as the People of God and is trying to recover its vitality in order to serve the evangelising mission. In this synodal Church, the Spirit helps us to understand the meaning of Jesus' invitation to us today.

## **1. IN THIS CHURCH THAT FEELS ITSELF TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE...**

### **1.1. The synodal journey of beginnings**

*"The path that God is indicating to the Church is precisely that of a more intense and concrete experience of communion and journeying together"*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Address of Pope Francis to participants in the conference organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. Saturday, 18 February 2023

The path that is proposed to us today has not been invented now. It is a synodal path, made of vital relationships, of belonging and mutual dependence, of complementarity and solidarity. And it was like that in the beginning.

We have a faithful portrait in the final chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans (16,1-16), a very personalised farewell that reflects very well how they share the mission in the origins of the Church: *"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me."*

And there follows an account made up of greetings, in which a great diversity of people are mentioned (up to 28); all of them participate in the evangelising mission with Paul, from different life situations. They are *co-workers in Christ*. It is a brief narration of a living Church in which people from very different walks of life are united in communion and mission, from a common point of connection: fidelity to Christ. They are all "rooted in Christ", and it is this common rootedness that makes them co-responsible for the mission and supportive of each other, regardless of the existential conditions in which each one lives his/her life.

Some, like Paul, are *consecrated for life* to the ministry of the Word; others carry out with greater or lesser intensity *explicitly missionary tasks*, including two married couples; many others simply bring the *charism of presence*, affective support, solidarity in difficulty and suffering.

They all *share the risk of faith* for the cause of Christ. Their social backgrounds are very varied: men and women, slaves and free.... Of many of them Paul underlines his admiration and gratitude, and emphasises the family ties that have been created between them, beyond flesh and blood: *"Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too"* (Rm 16,13)...

It is not only collaboration in the work, but *communion in lives*, fraternal relationship, declared affection, shared responsibility... and without "a priori" precedence of one over the other.

## 1.2. The Church-Communion ecosystem, a matter of relationships

This was the setting of the ecclesial mission at the beginning, and this is the one that the Second Vatican Council wanted to recover. More than a scenario, it is a whole ecosystem, which includes the environment, the relationships between the living beings that compose it, the way it is fed, the interdependence...

"This means recovering an "integral ecclesiology", like that of the first centuries, when everything was unified by membership in Christ and by supernatural communion with him and with our brothers and sisters. It means leaving behind a sociological vision that distinguishes classes and social rank, and is ultimately based on the "power" assigned to each category"<sup>2</sup>.

It is the "Communion" ecosystem, which develops when the Church sees itself as the People of God, as the Council has pointed out (*Lumen gentium*, 9) and as Francis insists. It is a

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<sup>2</sup> Francis, Id.

giant leap in the internal understanding of the Church: from the pyramid to the horizontal circle. It is not surprising that many members of today's Church, both in the hierarchy and among the laity, have felt a kind of vertigo, a sense of emptiness, and want at all costs to return to the previous ecosystem, that of the pyramid.

“The Church still has a long way to go to live as a body, as a true people united by the same faith in Christ the Saviour, enlivened by the same Spirit of holiness and directed to the same mission of proclaiming the merciful love of God our Father”<sup>3</sup>.

The Church-Communion has identified the heart of its own identity and defined it as “*Mystery of communion for mission*” (cf. ChL 19 and 32); by this it expresses that its essence consists in revealing God's plan of covenant, of communion with humanity and of humanity with each other. From this heart springs the life that is developing the new ecosystem. And from this awareness of being essentially covenant and communion, a type of relationship is established between its members, each of which lives in relation to the others, without losing its specificity, which is a richness for the whole.

### 1.3. A common ground on which to relate to each other

These vital relationships are made possible by the *common ground* that sustains all members of this ecosystem, and where the following basic components stand out:

- a Church that is all ministerial, whose mission is shared by all;
- the vital principle to which we must all refer is the Sacraments of Initiation as the common source and foundation of all Christian life;
- the dignity is the same for all, since it comes only from Baptism;
- all are equally called to holiness; the call to evangelical radicality is presented as a baptismal characteristic that can be lived in a diversity of Christian vocations;
- All have a common right, which is also a duty, to participate in the evangelising mission of the Church.

The new relationships in Church-Communion are established on the basis of what unites, not what separates. This was not the case in previous “ecclesial ecosystems”, which preferred to emphasise the differences between the members of the Church and, as a result, forced separation, distances, privileges and greatness on some in relation to others. In recovering the awareness of the common ground, this is like a great treasure that makes us all equal in the fundamentals, in common dignity and in common duties and rights.

“Emphasis needs to be placed on unity, not on separation or distinction. The layperson is more than a “non-cleric” or a “non-religious”; he or she must be considered as a baptized person, a member of the holy People of God, for that is the sacrament which opens all doors. In the New Testament, the word “layperson” does not appear; we hear of “believers”, “disciples”, “brethren” and “saints”, terms applied to everyone: lay faithful and ordained ministers alike, the People of God journeying together”<sup>4</sup>.

Here consecrated persons are no longer *separated* from other Christians - and even less *above them* - but *together with* and *in function of* other Christians. They do not have exclusive tasks; what is proper to them is to be a sign that invites us to move forward in

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<sup>3</sup> Francis, Id.

<sup>4</sup> Francis, Id.

reference to God and his Kingdom, in communion and in the most committed aspects of mission.

And with regard to the laity, the emphasis is placed on their right and responsibility for evangelisation. Precisely because they had been excluded, reduced to being the recipients of the evangelising action of the other members of the Church.

#### **1.4. A paradigm shift for religious life: from: from "fuga mundi" to being "in the heart of the people" (EG 273)**

The paradigm that has served as a reference for religious life in the times prior to Vatican II and for many centuries has been that of the "fuga mundi", understanding by "world" not only the whole of society but also that of lay believers who, as such, were only the object of evangelisation, and not partners in the evangelising mission. In the face of this "world", it was necessary to protect the "state of perfection" which defined religious life; this is why *enclosure* was an element of protection which characterised, more or less strictly, every religious community, not only the so-called 'contemplative' ones.

The common ground that the Church-Communion ecosystem has claimed for all its members establishes another paradigm for consecrated life, another model to which to adjust its lifestyle, always based on its own charism. We can express it in the words of Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium: To be mission in the heart of the people* (EG 273). Not *above* the people, but *within* the people, feeling ourselves *part* of the people, being mission *with* and also *for* the people.

«My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life (...) is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. *I am a mission* on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world» (EG 273).

And there, among the people, we meet « people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others» (id). Each one must carry this conviction in his heart: *I am mission*. Reciprocally, he will also be able to say from his heart to each of the others with whom he shares the mission, consecrated and lay: *You are mission*.

"A People united in mission. Synodality has its origin and ultimate purpose in mission: it is born of mission and directed to mission"<sup>5</sup>.

In this reciprocity are woven the bonds that concretise and express the decision to "be with" and "be for". We discover what we are "together", the common treasure on which we base our Christian identity; and what we are and mean "for each other", with the gifts and differences that allow us to enrich each other in order to better serve the common mission.

"...what truly distinguishes us as the People of God is our faith in Christ, not our state of life considered in itself. We are the baptized; we are Christians; we are the disciples of Jesus. Everything else is secondary"<sup>6</sup>.

And so we discover the absurdity of the temptation we have often fallen into, to begin to define ourselves by what makes us different. The core of our identity lies in what brings us closer to others, in what is human with the rest of humanity, as Francis emphasised in *Fratelli Tutti*; in what is Christian with all the other followers of Jesus... And the differences come from

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<sup>5</sup> Francis, Id.

<sup>6</sup> Francis, Id.

the emphasis we place on that which is common, never exclusive, and which we make into a sign for others. Consecrated persons are invited to be especially *experts in communion and guides of spirituality* (cf. VC 46 and 55).

## 2. “YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE”

### ...THE SPIRIT CALLS US TO BE ITS MEDIATORS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE CHARISM

#### 2.1. A new way of being: “together with”, “in function of”

Stimulated by the new paradigm that the Church-Communion brings us, we are modelling in ourselves a new way of being, of relating, of situating ourselves in humanity and in the Church alongside other men and women of good will and other brothers and sisters in faith. It is the option of “being with” and “being for”, which brings with it the attitude of knowing how to be “together with” and “in function of”.

In “*being with*” is expressed our willingness to build the Kingdom and to carry out the ecclesial mission in solidarity with other people and especially with other Christians. Together with the laity, religious men and women will be at the side of the laity without unnecessary protagonism, but at the same time aware of their specific contribution to the mission. *Together with* the laity, they should be characterised by a fraternal way of relating to one another, as befits those who have the same dignity and share the same common Christian patrimony.

At this level of horizontality and fraternity we live “*being for*”, where we find our reason for being. What characterises religious men and women as specific to their consecrated life is assumed as a gift to be shared at the common table: the cultivation of the search for God, the predisposition to ask oneself the fundamental questions that seek the meaning of life, the experience of community, the availability for mission. And to those who are in tune with their charism, they offer to deepen it, aware that they are not its owners but those who have first benefited from it.

And so they discover themselves as *mediators* of the Spirit in the transmission of the charism that has given meaning to their lives, in our case the Claretian missionary charism.

#### 2.2. Releasing gifts, potentialities, life...

How can we carry out this mediation that the Spirit asks of us? With the gifts that he himself has given us. They are in our pantry. It is simply a matter of realising that they are gifts to be shared. So... let us widen the table!

From the consecrated life we make accessible what we have received thanks to the foundational charism. And from the moment it is on the table, it becomes the patrimony of the charismatic Family. They are not gifts that we give from above. We share them while inviting the other diners to share their own gifts and enrich each other. Thus the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves of bread and fishes is repeated. This is how the charismatic Family begins to grow.

And this is the essential key to this new stage: the “for” within the “with”. The image is the table, at which we all sit on the same level. And the environment is the community, which is built by those of us who live there every day and those who identify with it and its

project; in it we welcome those we invite and those who come to share their gifts, in it we prepare ourselves to serve the mission together, and to it we return with the echo, the concerns and the problems of the mission.

So let us see what we have in our pantry. It is a question we must always keep active, because you cannot give what you do not have. The gifts to which we are going to refer do not come “canned”; they have to be cultivated so that they can grow, bear fruit and be shared.

### **a) The experience of communion**

The experience of communion has defined consecrated life from the beginning, seeking to emulate what was a distinctive sign of the christian community of the origins, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles: “All the believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 2:44). It is this ideal of fraternity, which belongs to the whole Church, that has guided the birth of the various religious Institutes, thus serving as a *living memory* for all christians. Today it is also the ideal of the charismatic Family.

It is not only a way of life in order to be able to dedicate oneself to an apostolic task. It is something that has value in itself, as a sign of the covenant that Jesus expressed with his “new commandment”. We consecrate ourselves in order to grow in fraternity, to experience God's love in depth by becoming his mediators, first of all with our brothers and sisters in community, and then to bring this gift that has grown in us to the most disadvantaged.

The experience of building a fraternity in which we discover one another as brothers and sisters is the best sign we can give to those we meet; the first sign, of course, and also the one that makes the others credible. It is the bread with which we accompany the other foods.

The experience of fraternity includes and requires *vulnerability*, a willingness to be wounded by the problems, hurts and weaknesses of others. Without it there will be no deep relationship with one another. Beware of structures, defences and barriers that protect us from the friction of those who do not belong to the institution! They make us *immune*. We need to recognise and identify these barriers in order to overcome them and to be able to go out to meet those who are different; then we can build a new fraternity. Of course, then we lose our immunity, everyone becomes vulnerable to others. That's what it's all about.

We have a challenge to be aware of and to face with creativity: **we need to reinvent communion in the charism**. Because our communion has been formalised within the outlines of the “*fuga mundi*” paradigm, and we have to redesign it “*in the heart of the people*”. And we have to do it in line with our own charism.

### **b) Sensitivity towards the periphery**

Pope Francis frequently uses this term, *the peripheries*, to express the permanent challenge to consecrated life not to remain closed in on itself, to find justification for its own existence. But he also uses it to propose it to the Church as a whole, because *the option for the poor* belongs to the whole Church. “This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us” (EG 198). The periphery is a source of light and meaning.

To be grounded in the charism means recovering the sensitivity that pushes us to the periphery. This charismatic gift, which sometimes remains dormant within us, we awaken and revitalise it by putting it on the table of the open community to share it with the laity. It will

not consist only in doing activities together, but in being open together to situations of need, in order to allow ourselves to be questioned and wounded by them.

Francis says it best: “Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way” (EG 46). The signs we must give are those that lead to understanding life as a *time for interactions* (Fratelli Tutti 66).

Questions to be answered by those who are already living the charism: How do we spread the sensitivity that comes from the charism? How can we bring it as a precious gift to those with whom we share the mission and the charism? How do we help the laity to discover the marginalised and accompany them in their commitment to them? How do we make the community a place of sending for all those who come into contact with us? And these same questions are then repeated for all those who have come to the table, religious and lay, to share the charism.

### **c) Spirituality that knows how to re-read history and make paths of humanity**

John Paul II reminded us in *Vita Consecrata*: “In whatever activity or ministry they are involved, consecrated persons should remember that before all else they must be *expert guides in the spiritual life*, and in this perspective they should cultivate the most precious gift: the spirit” (VC 55). And he urged us: “That every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality” (VC 93).

However, this experience of spiritual life has not infrequently been reduced to the cultivation of a devotion, which is what was then passed on to the laity. Here too we are challenged to rescue from our charismatic treasure that most precious talent: the spirit, which is beyond devotions. It manifests itself in the ability to look beyond the immediate, the ability to “re-read” reality to find what is not evident to all.

Re-reading, that is, reading history, events, creation, life itself, with a reading key that allows us to go beyond what is apparent, beyond what is said “at first sight”, to recognise the presence of God and the action of the Spirit in creatures, in cultures, in events. This is what is genuinely characteristic of “*religious*” spirituality, but it is also the great lesson provided by the Word of God written in the Bible, and it is for all believers.

It is an anti-ritualistic spirituality, which refuses to be reduced to pious formulas and devotions. And it is also a dynamism that is carried in our gaze, that helps us to recognise in each of the people we serve, their dignity as children of God; and it is this that we want to promote by attending to their most immediate needs.

How do we cultivate this spirituality and turn the community into a school of evangelical spirituality?

### **d) The gift of charisma**

The foundational charism is shared at the same time as *the experience of communion* is shared, the *sensitivity towards the peripheries* is transmitted and *the spirituality that rereads history* and discovers us as *mediators* of God's love is communicated.

Charism is neither in a skill nor in what one does, but in what drives one to do it. It is a *motivating force* for the individual and for the group that is in tune with it, and a *prophetic force* because of the values of humanity that it awakens in institutions and in society.

Every foundational charism today becomes a *meeting point* with many other believers who share that charism, and will therefore be a place of mutual enrichment. Pope Francis affirms about foundational charisms: *“They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channelled into an evangelizing impulse”* (EG 130).

The consecrated community which accepts its responsibility to be the mediator of the Spirit makes it possible for the charism to continue to live. Through its mediation, the charismatic Family appears in the context of the Church-Communion. And so, what once made religious men and women feel apart, different from other Christians, today gives them the perspective to see themselves as a way of being Christians, even coinciding with many lay people who come to live this same charism, and at the same time as their own particular way of being consecrated.

But also, at the same time, members of the Institute have to assume that lay people do not come to share the charism “of the Institute”, just as they do not come to share the mission “of the Institute”. They come to share with religious men and women a charism that belongs to the Church and a mission that is the mission of the Church, the only ecclesial mission developed in a multitude of facets. And in sharing the foundational charism, the *charismatic Family* is being formed. The Charism that possesses us, in our case, the Claretian foundational charism, inherited from Saint Anthony M<sup>e</sup> Claret and the Venerable M<sup>e</sup> Antonia París, also integrates us into the same Family so that within it we share in communion our particular charisms and serve together the mission entrusted to the Family.

### **2.3. “Bring some of the fish you have just caught” (Jn 21,10)**

With these gifts on the table, the community becomes a place of encounter, of communication and diffusion, of exchange of gifts between religious and laity. We have to find the right strategies to share them. These strategies take the form of the multiple links that community dynamism is capable of developing, through the simple informal meetings and the varied celebrations of daily events, the occasional or programmed moments of reflection and formation, the times of prayer, the participation in the mission...

Jesus' commission, *“You will fish for people”*, is prolonged in this other one: *“Bring some of the fish you have just caught”* (Jn 21,10). How can we make our community a good mediator of our charism so that it can be communicated to young people and adults?

The following criteria can help us to develop strategies of encounter and communication:

1. *Form ourselves in order to be able to relate to others.* We need to know which Church we are in, and which Church we want to build. Religious men and women need to revise their paradigm of religious life. The great majority have not been formed for that which calls us “in the midst of the people”, but for that of the “fuga mundi”. As for the laity, they have not been stimulated to be protagonists of the ecclesial mission



either. What ecclesiology are we moving in? And the ecclesial ecosystem in which we find ourselves, is it one of communion?

2. *Relate to others in order to be able to form ourselves.* We should not wait until we are “well-formed” to promote the religious-laity relationship. Because it is this relationship that will really change our mental and affective patterns. Once the relationship has begun, it is necessary to promote formation *together*, as far as possible, religious and lay people.

3. *The option of “being with” and “being for”* must be the orientation of our whole strategy of relationship between religious and laity. Our attitude must be that of being “beside”, “together with”, sharing on the same level, avoiding any clerical or paternal/maternal attitude. And at the same time, to live our possibilities as gifts to serve, to promote the protagonism of the laity.

4. *Let us use our gifts,* Let us use our gifts, those which, in the previous section, we have laid out on the table and other more specific gifts of our foundational charism. We need to bring them out of reclusion, out of “seclusion”, and let each one of them become an attraction, a gateway, a sign that summons other believers and perhaps other non-believers who are searching and with whom we can make a journey together.

5. *Let us be creative.* We can no longer limit ourselves to repeating old patterns, nor be afraid of making mistakes. We must be ready to invent new ways, to give new answers, and to unite lay people and religious in them.

### 3. TO SERVE THE ECCLESIAL MISSION TOGETHER

#### 3.1. Blessed are those who are called to participate in a charism that makes a family!

The lay christian does not need the reference of a foundational charism to “live the mission” and “be mission” in the Church. One can “be mission” apart from any of the so-called “foundational charisms”. Or one can simply live the mission on the basis of one's own gifts or charisms, which the Holy Spirit grants to each of the faithful.

But we can also affirm:

*Blessed are those who feel called  
to participate in a charism that makes a family,  
because they will experience the joy of a mission  
multiplied from communion,  
and the joy of communion lived for the mission!*

The foundational charism, when it takes hold of a person, affects his whole life, his way of relating to God and his Kingdom, his identity in the Church, his life choices and his way of integrating into society. *The charism becomes a vocation*, and the person responds to this vocation with a project that encompasses the whole of existence. The charismatic family offers the possibility of grouping and structuring personal projects in the corresponding ecclesial communities, of religious life, of lay communities, and establishes between them a relationship of communion.

The foundational charism has been lived in religious life in an existential project typical of religious life: in the community forms, in the religious vows, in the spirituality proper to religious life... The charism is now to be poured into the “lay recipients”, and structures of communion and forms of encounter between one and the other are to be developed, always with the final aim of mission.

It is an authentic re-foundation of the charism in this Church-Communion ecosystem, so different from the one in which our founders received it. In this re-founding, those who have come from behind and those who are starting out now must be involved.

### **3.2. The new common home: Home and School of communion**

Along the way, the new common home is taking shape. Because this is how I understand the charismatic Family: as a place of living together, of communion, of mutual support, of dreaming together of a better world and turning that dream into common projects, a place to celebrate together the presence of Jesus and to present ourselves together as his witnesses. It is a *home* and also a *school of communion*, taking up the challenge that John Paul II presented to the Church for the new millennium (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 43).

It is a new home, still under construction. The partitions are being made and rebuilt as the relationship between its inhabitants progresses, as they share the mission, learn to discern together, make common projects. The common rooms and the rooms that belong to one or the other are being defined. The membership of the laity and the possible degrees of membership are established with regard to the Family, not to the Institute. In the same way, the Institute, each Institute, is defining its integration into the Family, alongside the laity who share the same founding charism, which requires the Institute to modify its own structures of animation and government (Chapters, Councils...) to the extent required by the new structures which bring together lay people and consecrated persons in the discernment of the charism or in the co-responsibility of the mission.

The charismatic Family is a new creature, born in a new ecclesial context, *the Church-Communion ecosystem* described above. It brings with it a profound change in the way of understanding the relationship between religious and laity. It is not constituted “around” a religious Institute, nor to support or accompany that Institute or to collaborate with the religious in what they determine and as they say. Its central axis is not the Institute but *the foundational charism*, lived out in different forms of christian life. And its purpose is to serve the mission indicated by the charism, in a co-responsible way, with a creative capacity to invent new works and not simply to prolong those that the Institute had.

From now on, the creative fidelity necessary to maintain and continue the charism in the Church will no longer depend only on the Institute which until now has represented it, but on the various groups which make up the charismatic Family and on all those who come to be associated with it.

## **4. BUILDING THE CHARISMATIC FAMILY IN SYNODAL STYLE**

### **4.1. Walking together in the light of the Spirit**

The new common home, the Claretian charismatic family: that is our future. We are building it in the present. What must we do in the present so that the future can exist? Let's

start with a “ready-made” answer: we have to make a path that leads to the future. The answer lies not in isolated actions and not even in individual actions, but in processes that allow us to make the way, step by step and together.

This is the synodal dynamism that Francis desires for the whole Church and which begins with this heading: “*Walking together*”, and doing so “*in the light of the Spirit*”. Let us take this as a criterion for every line of action: in the meeting of people, in community life, in the creation and accompaniment of groups, in the development of formation itineraries, in the preparation of lay formators, in the creation of new structures of animation that allow an authentic co-responsibility of the laity together with consecrated persons.

The most effective decisions are those that set in motion processes of change in people and institutions. And the changes culminate in attitudes, behaviour and new ways of living communion for the mission.

It is the synodal way; and *it is a way of being* that the Church rediscovers as substantial to its christian identity. In this way we foster *communion, participation and co-responsibility in mission*, as Francis proposes. The order is not indifferent: it is not possible to live co-responsibility when one has not had the opportunity to participate in the life of the community and in the involvement in the mission, and both need to be supported by the experience of communion that is obtained in the interrelation of people.

**...In the light of the Spirit:** The synodal dynamism emphasises the protagonist who drives it and gives it meaning: the Holy Spirit. It is not a simple devotion, but an attitude of discernment to seek the light of the Spirit. And it is not for an occasion or a time of prayer, but for a way of life, in a *vocational attitude*. The vitality of the charism in a charismatic Family will depend on the vocational attitude being kept alive in those who come to join the Family.

What is displayed on the lintel at the entrance of a charismatic Family that aspires to keep its charism alive is a prophetic attitude, not a docile collaboration. The invitation to take responsibility for the gift or charism entrusted to it is inseparable from the fraternal welcome to be found in those who wish to be part of the Family. This responsibility is inherent in the vocation with which one feels oneself to belong to a charism.

It is a disposition to listen to the Protagonist in the mission of the Church and, therefore, of the charismatic Family, the Holy Spirit. The awareness of being possessed by the foundational charism must arouse the concern to be faithful, not to inherited structures, but to the dynamism that the charism promotes unceasingly among those who live it. The action of the Spirit awakens and reawakens our sensitivity to certain situations, needs, necessities... It opens our eyes to those people or circumstances where the urgency of God's love is manifested, and helps us to discover in ourselves all those gifts through which we can give a positive response.

It is these motivations that must be present in the communication of a charism, not the incentives of institutional organisation or the needs of the business management of the works run by the religious Institute. It is not a question of giving continuity to the works, however good and profitable they may be, but of raising up people *with a vocation*, possessed by the charism, capable of being leaven and memory of it in the works that already exist, and with creative daring to generate new responses that rethink these works or invent others on the fringes of the existing ones.

The person who begins to follow a charism or has been following it for a long time, must be able to see himself in a new way, in a vocation that is recreated because it urges the person to ask the Spirit for his ways, and these are never routine, they are always challenging his freedom and creativity.

It is on this path that we will develop the processes we propose below.

#### **4.2. Three simultaneous processes**

The path that makes the charismatic Family possible is driven by three dynamic currents, three processes that intertwine with each other, for they are not successive but simultaneous and mutually supportive: *the process of communion, the process of identification with the charism and the process of commitment to the mission*. In each of these processes it is necessary *to invest* in order to obtain the desired fruit.

1. In the first, we invest in *relationship* (“creating bonds”) and we obtain *belonging*.
2. In the second, we invest in *accompaniment and formation* and we obtain *identity*.
3. In the third, we invest in *shared animation of the mission* and we obtain *co-responsibility*.

Let us look at each of these separately.

##### **a) The first is the communion process**

It consists, basically, of a handcrafted work of creating bonds; in this way, the charismatic Family is woven and the affective basis of the collective identity is laid, through which each one feels part of the subject “We”.

It is about establishing bonds that create relationships, bonds that facilitate the rapprochement of people, mutual knowledge, the communication of experience and the celebration of faith.

They begin to be woven at the moment of welcome, and continue all the time, in accompaniment and formation, stimulating the feeling of mutual belonging and solidarity among the people who are forming the charismatic Family.

In this way, the Province of the charismatic family goes beyond the religious Province, it is enlarged with the groups and communities of lay people and with the communities that integrate lay people and consecrated persons.

##### **b) The second is the process of identification with the charisma**

It requires personal accompaniment and formation. It is not equivalent to “learning” knowledge that has to do with the history of the institution or of the founders or with characteristics of spirituality. All this is good in its time and in its measure, but it is not what determines the process of formation in the charism.

It is the *acquisition of an identity*, which requires the transformation of the person, which begins just at the existential point and moment in which he/she finds him/herself.

It is an itinerary in which these three threads must be interwoven:

- the development of *life experiences* in which the charism is condensed or manifested, and which are normally located in the life of the founders and in the founding history that has given rise to the collective identity of this Family;
- *the project* that realises the response to the mission, and where we identify the keys so that we can bring it up to date in our time and in our Church;
- and *the spirituality* that gives meaning to the project, enables us to value the mission as God's work, and us as God's mediators and instruments in his work of salvation.

In the medium term, the formation plan should include the *preparation of lay formators* who can participate with the religious formators in the accompaniment of those who join the process.

### **c) The third is the process of shared animation of the mission**

It goes hand in hand with the previous two and depends heavily on them. It promotes *co-responsibility*. It is an apprenticeship in which people, encouraged and identified with the foundational charism, discover their protagonism in the mission and assume it creatively. In this way they come to consider their commitment to communion and mission.

This “commitment” refers, above all, to the dimension that marks life in depth, although it can be lived in greater or lesser intensity. It is not a dedication of time or a particular effort. It is a life choice, a vocational approach that assumes the objectives of the charism with regard to the mission, as well as the values it promotes. It is made from the specific human situation in which the person finds himself (and this includes the limitations of health, the couple or celibate project, the multiple family obligations, etc.) and not in spite of it.

This personal process must be accompanied, at the institutional level, by the development of structures of discernment, accompaniment, animation and decision making in which lay and religious are united on equal terms. It is not a question of applying the structures of animation and government proper to the Institute to the animation and government of the charismatic Family.

## FOR DIALOGUE AND GROUP REFLECTION

1. The whole synodal journey is based on a way of understanding the Church as the People of God, the relationships between its members “based on what unites, not on what separates”, and the model of consecrated life “in the heart of the people”, the decision to “be with others and for others”... Is it this “integral ecclesiology” that is determining our relationships between religious and laity? (Review the whole of section 1). What lights and shadows do we find? What do we need to correct?
2. Let's look at the pantry we have to share. In section 2 we suggest some challenges and questions that can help us to complete the table.
3. *A new home*, still under construction...: What is the moment in which we are living with regard to the construction of the charismatic family? What steps have we taken? What are we missing? What difficulties do we feel to be able to move forward? And what strengths do we have to make the journey?
4. And from the answers given to the previous questions, what *challenges* do we recognise as the most urgent in order to promote the project of this house under construction?
5. Do we have a plan of formation in our charismatic identity, in various itineraries, in which religious and lay people participate, leading to integration into the charismatic Family? What elements do we already have in this plan, and what are we lacking? Do we already have a group of formators, composed of religious and lay people, to carry out this plan? Or what do we need to form or promote this group?
6. - *To answer only for the laity*: From our perspective, what are we lacking, what do we need to feel fully integrated members of this charismatic Family, in full co-responsibility with the religious, and from our identity as lay people? What can we contribute to this Family and to its mission, as lay people? And what do we expect from the religious sisters to help us to advance on this path?  
  
- *To answer only for religious sisters*: From our perspective, what is hindering, and what is favouring on our part, the construction of our charismatic Family with the full integration of the laity? What should be our more specific contribution as religious sisters? What do we have to change in ourselves, in our institution, so that the co-responsibility of the laity and religious sisters in the mission and animation of the Family is possible?
7. In section 4, three “investments” (invest to obtain...) are proposed: in relationships (*creating links*), in accompaniment and formation, in shared animation of the mission. In each of these three *investments*, what challenges do we face, what plans do we need to develop, what efforts do we religious sisters and lay people have to make?