

BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

---

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE  
CHARISM TO THE LAITY

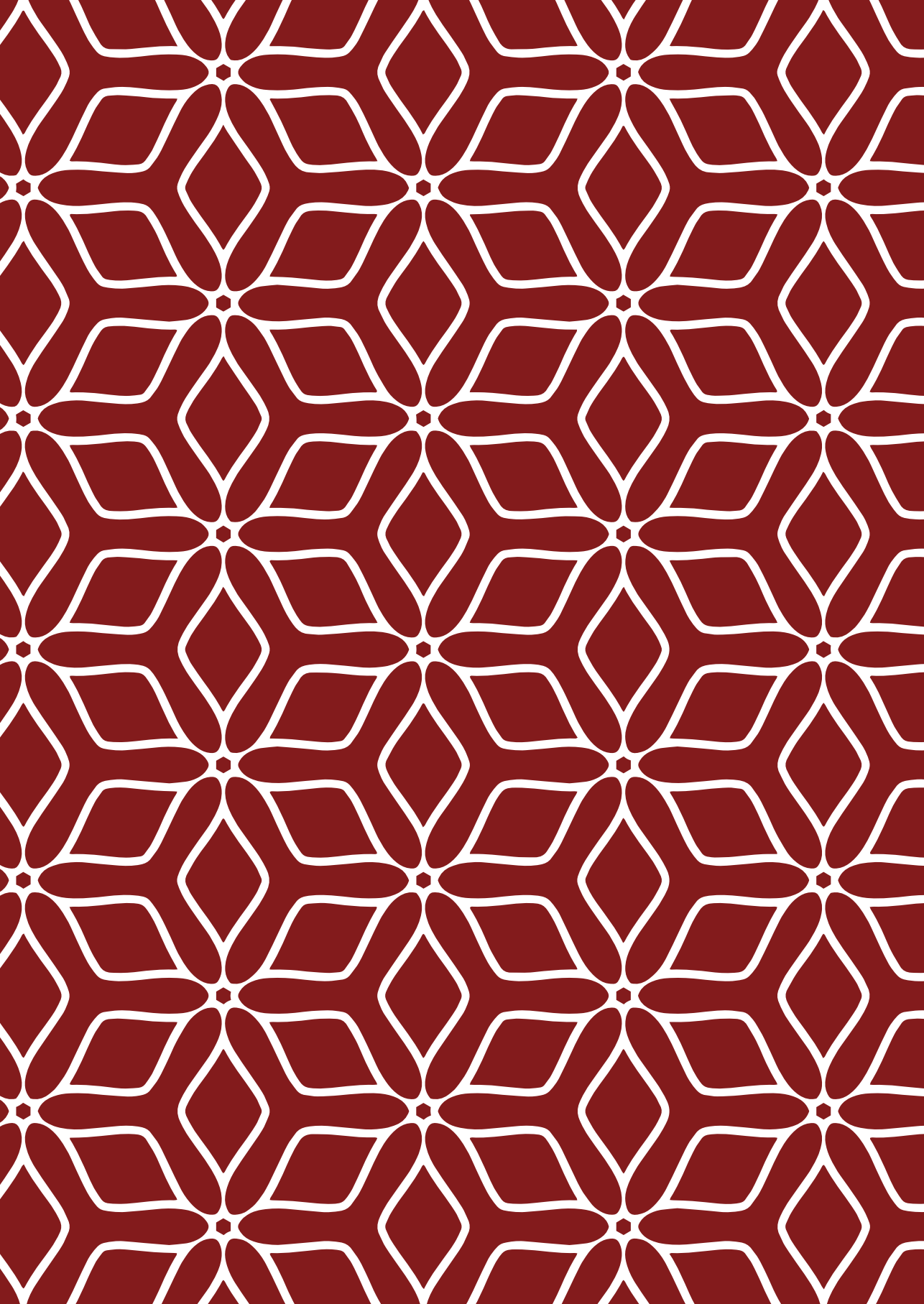
AUTHOR

ANTONIO BOTANA, FSC

La  Salle

MEL BULLETIN

58



# The transmission of the charism to the laity

ANTONIO BOTANA, FSC



## Brothers of the Christian Schools

MEL BULLETIN N. 58 - September 2023  
Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools  
Secretariat for Association and Mission

Author:  
Antonio Botana, FSC

Editorial Coordinators:  
Mrs. Iliaria Iadeluca - Br. Alexánder González, FSC  
[comunicazione@lasalle.org](mailto:comunicazione@lasalle.org)

Layout: Ms. Giulia Giannarini  
[ggiannarini@lasalle.org](mailto:ggiannarini@lasalle.org)

Translation: Br. John Blease, FSC

Service of Communications and Technology  
Generalate, Rome, Italy

**\*This work has been previously published in:  
Frontera - Hegian. Cuadernos de Formación Permanente para  
Religiosos. 118. Vol. 4- 2022**



FRATRES SCHOLARVM CHRISTIANARVM  
THE GENERALATE

# Table of contents

FOREWORD	7
INTRODUCTION	10
<b>FIRST PART</b>	
<b>A RELIGIOUS LIFE CAPABLE OF GENERATING NEW LIFE</b>	13
Our reading filter: First Isaiah (Isaiah 1 to 39)	14
1. Hope in the experience of reduction	16
<i>Holy offspring is the trunk</i> (Isaiah 6:13)	
2. The proposal is: revive the vocation	19
<i>"Here I am, send me"</i> (Isaiah 6: 8)	
3. What does this people need?	21
<i>This is the way; walk in it</i> (Isaiah 30: 21)	
4. Let us ask for our eyes to be opened	24
<i>"Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God"</i> (Isaiah 7:11)	
5. Dare to recognize the signs	26
<i>The Lord himself will give you a sign</i> (Isaiah 7: 14)	
6. Called to become roots	28
<i>Your dead shall live</i> (Isaiah 26: 19)	

7. The gifts that open us to life	30
<i>The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him</i> (Isaiah 11: 2)	
a) The experience of communion	31
b) The gift of the charism	32
8. Our charisms have become rivers	34
<i>The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water</i> (Isaiah 35: 7)	

## **SECOND PART**

<b>A RELIGIOUS LIFE MEDIATED BY THE SPIRIT</b>	38
Our reading filter: Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40 to 55)	39
1. Leave self references behind	41
<i>In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord</i> (Isaiah 40: 3)	
2. A new paradigm is the basis for our mediation	43
<i>Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not</i> (Isaiah 43: 18)	
3. To be refounded in the charism	45
<i>Look to the rock from which you were hewn</i> (Isaiah 51: 1)	
4. In the vulnerability of a fraternal relationship	49
<i>... That I might know how to answer the weary a word that will waken them</i> (Isaiah 50: 4)	
5. The transmission of the charism	51
<i>Upon him I have put my spirit</i> (Isaiah 42: 1)	

5.1	The experience of the Spirit	51
5.2	What role does the figure of the Founders play in the transmission of the charism to the laity?	53
6.	Proposing a vocational “attitude”	55
	<i>Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life</i> (Isaiah 55: 3)	
7.	Processes of change	58
	<i>Enlarge the space for your tent</i> (Isaiah 54: 2)	
7.1	Processes for making the journey, step by step	58
7.2	Three dynamic currents	60
7.3	How to deal with disappointments along the way?	63
8.	The transmission of the charism to non-Christians	64
	<i>I myself have spoken, I have summoned him</i> (Isaiah 48: 15)	
9.	A heart in which to engender the community	68
	<i>See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth</i> (Isaiah 43:19)	

### **THIRD PART**

	<b>A NEW FAMILY THAT WELCOMES CONSECRATED LIFE</b>	72
	Our reading filter: Third Isaiah (Isaiah 56 - 66)	73
1.	A new creature: the Charismatic Family	75
	<i>Your people shall rebuild the ancient ruins</i> (Isaiah 58: 12)	
1.1	Change of Leadership	75
1.2.	The Charismatic Family and the Ecclesial Family	79

2. The new bearers of the charism	81
<i>The spirit of the Lord God is upon me (Isaiah 61: 1)</i>	
3. Return to the peripheries, the source of life	85
<i>...To bring good news to the afflicted... (Isaiah 61: 1b)</i>	
4. The challenge of innovating communion	89
<i>They shall bring all your kin from all the nations (Isaiah 66: 20)</i>	
4.1 The dynamic of communion	89
4.2 Intentional communities	91
4.3 Participation in the Charismatic Family	95
5. A spirituality project for the world	97
<i>Upon your walls, Jerusalem, I have stationed sentinels; By day and by night, they shall never be silent (Isaiah 62: 6)</i>	
6. The future of Charismatic Families	100
<i>They all gather and come to you (Isaiah 60: 4)</i>	
6.1 “To embrace the future with hope”	100
6.2 Daughters of Church Communion	102
6.3 Co-responsible leadership of the Family	103
6.4 A Charismatic Family capable of regenerating consecrated life in its inner core	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111



# FOREWORD

**Y**ou may have heard of Brother Antonio Botana; you have probably read some of his writings or listened to some of his talks. He is the author of several Lasallian publications which have been translated and distributed throughout the Lasallian world. Among the most relevant, “Lasallian Association: the Ongoing Story” (2000, MEL Bulletin no. 2)<sup>1</sup>, “Thematic Vocabulary of Lasallian Association” (2008, Lasallian Essays no. 3), “Basis for a present-day model of Lasallian Family” (2008, Lasallian Essays no. 4) and other writings such as “El relato de la espiritualidad lasaliana” (2013)<sup>2</sup> and “Un camino de oración guiados por J. B. de La Salle” (2016)<sup>3</sup> .

For many years Brother Antonio has been accompanying the formation in shared mission of many congregations in the Spanish-speaking world. He has recently participated as a speaker at the Encounters of Charismatic Families which take place in our Generalate in Rome... and he has just published a very interesting text in a Spanish magazine of Religious Life which we now wish to place in your hands.

The document you are about to read is addressed to charismatic congregations and families in general. For this very reason, we thought that this ecclesial approach, offered to all religious congregations, can also help us Lasallians to appreciate the paths of shared mission and association, synodality, which we ourselves have been following for many years.

We have respected the original text of the publication, which is addressed to both religious members and committed lay people who are building up the respective charismatic families. Through the texts of the prophet Isaiah the author leads us, engages us, in his reflection. At the end of each theme, he offers us some “Tips for personal and community reflection” which will surely be a pedagogical aid for deepening the document in our Lasallian communities, and we encourage you to do so.

---

1 MEL Bulletins can be found at <https://www.lasalle.org/en/publicaciones/mel-bulletins/>

2 A review of this publication can be found at <https://espiritualidad.lasalle.es/el-relato-de-la-espiritualidad-lasaliana-libro/>

3 PDF version at <https://ciencia.lasalle.edu.co/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=libros>

We would like to thank Editorial Frontera - Hegian<sup>4</sup> for authorising the translation and internal Lasallian publication of their publishing initiative.

Thanks to Brother Antonio Botana for his constant, resilient, profound effort to put into words what the Spirit seems to be saying not only to Lasallians, not only to congregations, but to the whole Church. Thank you for your prophetic voice, so much sought after and recognised beyond our own communities. We are convinced that it will also be an enlightening word for our communities.

Ms. Heather Ruple and  
Brothers Néstor Anaya and Paco Chiva.  
Secretariat for Association and Mission.  
Rome 1 June 2023.

---

4 Cuaderno no. 118 (vol. 4-2022) 95 pages. Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain 2022.

# INTRODUCTION

*RAISE A GLAD CRY, YOU BARREN ONE,  
WHO NEVER BORE A CHILD  
(ISAIAH 54: 1)*

**C**an the founding charisms, which have given rise to so many religious institutions and many charismatic Families, be transmitted to the laity, without their having to become members of the corresponding religious Institute? And who can transmit the charism but the Holy Spirit, who is the author? Is there any role left for religious life, having been the main repository of said charisms? And if so, what is her role as mediator of the Spirit to give continuity to the founding charisms? Under what conditions should this be done? And what will be the consequences for religious life and for those who will benefit?

These are the questions that are in the background of our reflection and which we will try to answer in these pages. The framework in which we place ourselves is that of the idea of Church Communion, that ecclesial ecosystem that has tried to develop and grow since the Second Vatican Council, and which introduces a new relationship model between the members of the Church. And a religious life whose mediating function we want to highlight is the one that today appears to be marked by *reduction or by being reduced*.

Religious life is in the process of reduction, even threatened by disappearance and death... wouldn't it have to worry about itself, to provide the means to survive? What ability can you have to infuse the spirit of new life into other believers? Isn't this a way of escaping so as not to face one's own problems? And still, there is the inevitable suspicion of others: it seems there is a resignation to search for an easy substitute in order to continue the works that the religious personnel are already unable to maintain.

We need to make an objective reading of reality, but a reading that is believable, not a myopic one. A reading that allows us to contextualize our reduced presence, as well as each of our lives and our institutions, in the panorama of the History of Salvation. To make this journey we have been given Holy Scripture. But let us not seek in this reading concrete answers to our daily problems. We have been given light and keys, the keys to the History of Salvation. Light and keys that allow us to see and to recognize the answers that we do indeed find in our daily history, in the events that

we have to live through. That is the light that illuminates our present to see it as part of a story in which God is Lord.

In the reflection that we offer here, we have allowed ourselves to be enlightened especially by a book of Sacred Scripture: Isaiah. Its light is not always pleasant, not even when the intent is to comfort his people (cf. Isaiah 40:1). But it is a prophetic light, which at the same time denounces the infidelity of the people and rubs their eyes with the reality of the reduction they are suffering until they remain in a barely visible remnant. It also proclaims the creative mercy of God, which produces new paths in the desert, and it makes prodigiously fertile what was barren, which is capable of resurrecting his servant from the grave, who gathers a new people together with the small remnant of Israel with people who come from abroad and entrusts his Spirit to them. And to the surprise and bewilderment of this small remnant who cannot understand what is happening, the prophet reminds them: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways – oracle of the Lord.” (Isaiah 55: 8).

The prophet has the ability to see what most do not see. But not because he is a fortune teller, but because of his determination to look beyond the apparent, motivated by the hope that his faith in the covenant that God has made with his people gives him. He converts the dynamics and direction into images that he has grasped about God’s ways. In this way he offers us a reading filter to understand, from faith, our reality: he helps us open our minds to glimpse God’s plans and make us effective instruments in their execution, not hindrances. Although his paths do not match the ones we walk. With the awareness that God’s ways are always the best, even if they seem crooked to us.

The book of *Isaiah* actually contains the messages of *three prophets* who live in different times: the first, which gives the book its name, before the exile, in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century before Christ; the second, during the exile, in the sixth century before Christ; the third, after the exile, shortly after their return and their meeting with other groups that had remained in the country. Each of them with their own accents will serve as a reference for one of the three parts around which we have developed our work.

# FIRST PART

A RELIGIOUS LIFE CAPABLE  
OF GENERATING NEW LIFE

## Our reading filter: FIRST ISAIAH (Isaiah 1 to 39)

**T**he prophet after whom the book of Isaiah is named lived in the second half of the eighth century before Christ, during the time that preceded the Babylonian exile. His message is marked by two reference points:

- On the one hand, the awareness of being a mediator between God and his people: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am,” I said; “send me! And he replied: “Go and say to this people...” (Isaiah 6:8-9). He is an envoy, that is his vocation. It is a memory that reminds the people of the covenant that God has made with them: “Sons have I raised and reared, but they have rebelled against me!” (Isaiah 1:2). A covenant that is not expressed in legal terms, but in a love relationship, for which Isaiah uses various images, such as the parable of the vineyard, so frequent in the Old and New Testaments:

“I am going to sing on behalf of my friend a love song dedicated to his vineyard. ... What could be done for my vineyard that I have not done?” (Isaiah 5:1-7).

- Consequently, and this is the other reference point, the prophet is attentive to reading the reality of the people, the religious, social and political reality; and in that reading he denounces the sin, the infidelities of the people; and he calls them to conversion, which is not reduced to a liturgical relationship with God, but to law and justice within the people: When you spread out your hands, I will close my eyes to you; Though you pray the more, I will not listen... Seek what is right, protect the oppressed, help the orphan, defend the widow” (Isaiah 1:15-17). “Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and her repentant ones by righteousness.” (Isaiah 1:27). With these conditions he reminds her of God’s promises, he urges her to revive his messianic hope:

“On that day you will say: God indeed is my salvation; I am confident and unafraid. For the Lord is my strength and my might, and he has been my salvation.” (Isaiah 12:1-2).



It is a *time of reduction* that the people are experiencing. And Isaiah, far from hiding it, highlights it strongly and describes it in extreme terms, but he points to the salvation which, ultimately, comes from God, who is always faithful to his promise: “If there remain a tenth part in it, then this in turn shall be laid waste; As with a terebinth or an oak whose trunk remains when its leaves have fallen. Holy offspring is the trunk.(Isaiah 6:13). “Everyone who remains in Zion, everyone left in Jerusalem will be called holy (Isaiah 4:3). And this remnant will be the starting point for a new Israel that, upon its return from exile, will reach a more universal dimension: “But the Lord will take pity on Jacob and again choose Israel, and will settle them on their own land; foreigners will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.” (Isaiah 14:1).

In the increasingly deteriorated and politically precarious social situation in which he is immersed, the prophet brings the signs of hope represented by the children of the “Book of Emmanuel”, as chapters 7 to 12 of Isaiah are known. Among these children, the one named Emmanuel, “God with us,” occupies a central place. His birth is a symbol that God accompanies the people and saves them when all seems lost.

## 1. Hope in the experience of reduction

### *Holy offspring is the trunk (Isaiah 6:13)*

**I**saiah gives us a reading of the reality of his people, made with two complementary perspectives: a criterion of realism that makes him recognize the collapse that the people are suffering in every sense, in religious experience, in solidarity and in social justice, in national consistency in the face of foreign attacks; the description is made with gloomy and ruthless overtones: “Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness, evil offspring, corrupt children!... Your country is waste, your cities burnt with fire; Your land – before your eyes strangers devour it (Isaiah 1: 4-7). But there is also a criterion of faith and hope because the covenant of the Lord is unbreakable, and He is determined to save a remnant with which the restoration of the people will be carried out, or rather, a new people will emerge: “On that day, the branch of the Lord will be beauty and glory, and the fruit of the land will be honor and splendor for the survivors of Israel.” (Isaiah 4: 2).

### **The awareness of precariousness**

Consecrated life is suffering today from a strong experience of reduction, as it had not experienced in several centuries. It does not affect only some Institutes or some types of religious life, nor is it exclusive to any country or culture. Certainly, the phenomenon is more virulent in the West and in the most economically developed countries, just as there are Institutes that have dealt with it better than others. But it is a global and worldwide phenomenon, about which a simplistic analysis would not do justice, since there are many factors that affect it: sociological, cultural, religious, ecclesial, or the clash of paradigms between what religious life drags from its past heritage and those who today are imposing them on society, and also on the Church.

Our objective now is not to analyze this phenomenon, but rather to verify the reaction of consecrated life, of the Institutes of consecrated life to this

phenomenon, which is not reduced to a circumstantial, occasional or accidental change, where everything consists of waiting patiently until everything returns to its course, the one before. It is a change of era, and nothing will be like it was before.

Every change of era brings with it the disappearance of many entities belonging to the previous era, the transformation of many others and the birth of new ones. Immutability does not belong to this world. There will be no subsistence without adaptation, and even that is not ensured.

The awareness of precariousness has been taking shape in us, men and women religious, in reference to our respective institutions. Our most powerful works and structures cannot disguise the fragility of their existence. That consciousness is, in itself, positive; and it is necessary to avoid the temptation of remaining settled in the inertia of a false security that lulls us into the routine of inherited forms and habits.

The statement of our precariousness provokes very diverse reactions, even opposing ones. There is the position of denial: “It is not possible for us to disappear. We are too important. God will manage.” And the reaction of passive resignation, that of letting go with a “Whatever God wants.” There is the obstinacy of those who try to resist by anchoring themselves in outdated structures, because “consecrated life is above fashion.” And the discouragement of those who make an effort to publicize their religious institution and the idea that “they are not getting vocations...”

## Reading criteria

It is not enough to be aware of our precariousness. We need to view it as a *criterion for reading life*.<sup>1</sup> Which will lead us to two convictions:

---

1 Cf. A. POTENTE, *Es vida y es religiosa. Una vida religiosa para todos*. Pauline Publishing, Madrid 2018, page 10.

- The most immediate is a kind of de-centering, stop looking at our navel: our institution, each and every one of the institutions of religious life, are not essential. They can all disappear, and in fact this has happened with four fifths of the religious Orders and Institutes founded in the history of the Church. Religious consecration is just one way of living the baptismal consecration existentially. This is essential, the other is just a means. And so it is with religious life in relation to the Christian life: the latter is essential, the other is only a means, no matter how important the service it provides to the Christian life as a *memory* of the way of life of Jesus, a function that does not belong to it exclusively.

Feeling like this, with this awareness of our transience, must prompt us to turn our gaze to what unites us with the other members of the Church: baptismal consecration, following Jesus, the Christian life, the search for and proclamation of the Kingdom of God. And to ask ourselves what it is, really, that our institutions can offer to the Church.

- The second conviction, in parallel with the previous one, has to do with the answer to this question: What do we value the most, over and above the institution itself? What gift have we received that has been the cause of our existence? The answer points to the founding charism. From the previous conviction we have assumed that this is a gift granted to the Church to develop its mission, it does not belong to the religious institution.

The effect of looking at oneself when the whole body is shrinking is impotence, withdrawal, discouragement. It seems that we are at the limit of our strength... Where is God pointing in this situation, in our *reduction*? That is where you have to look. Then the word of the prophet comes to us: "The wilderness becomes a garden land and the garden land seems as common as a forest" (Isaiah 32:15). Do we discover the path that God is opening in the Church? On this path, religious life plays a decisive role, even though it only seems like a *remnant*. To this remnant, God makes the promise: "Holy offspring is the trunk" (Isaiah 6:13). Everything depends on knowing how to discover in ourselves the seed that is waiting to be sown.

## 2. The proposal is: revive the vocation

*“Here I am, send me” (Isaiah 6: 8)*

**T**he reading that Isaiah makes of the situation of his people is not that of an observer who narrates with more or less objectivity that which does not affect him personally. Quite the contrary, Isaiah feels doubly involved: as a member of that people whose situation brings about intense suffering, and as an Israelite who loves his God and who also suffers in the rupture of a covenant which the people have forgotten. He confesses his belonging to the sinful people: “I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). And even knowing that he is unworthy, he feels called by God to be his voice in the midst of the people, to denounce his infidelity to them and at the same time give them reasons to hope and trust in the Lord. It is God himself who enables him: “Now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.” (Isaiah 6: 7). And in that crossroad of belonging, to God and to the people, lives the deepest experience of the prophet; what he has to do will not be on his own initiative but because God sends him: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” “Here I am,” I said; “send me!” (Isaiah, 6: 8).

### The first reference point of our religious life

The first reference point on which the prophet’s personality is built is his vocation: being called, knowing himself to be sent and being an instrument of God. This is also the first reference point that we must renew and revive in our religious life, the purpose of which is not to maintain an institutional structure, but rather to respond to God’s call, to serve as an instrument to keep alive in the Church and for all Christians the commitment to evangelical radicalism.

It is difficult that in a crisis situation as strong as the one that religious life suffers today, where the threat is its own extinction, the proposal to revive the vocation is made. Perhaps many would be inclined to express this de-

sire: “Teach us to die with dignity.” But “the art of dying well” is not the object of this exercise. Quite the contrary, we allow ourselves to be enlightened by the message of Isaiah, who proclaims life where there seems to be no hope, and presents the remnant of Israel as the starting point for a new creation (cf. Isaiah 4: 2-3).

## Consecrated life is not timeless

But the new creation is not a repetition of the same, nor is it an extension of a way of life. In recent decades, many new religious institutions have appeared in the Church: many of them are nothing more than reissues of forms of consecrated life belonging to the past, to another era, to another culture, to another Church. It seems as if the sacred had to be timeless, and consecrated life had to place itself in that range of the sacred and give it meaning with its “timelessness.” It is a prison in which we confine ourselves and with which we turn our backs on the novelty that the Spirit brings with it.<sup>2</sup>

There is, inevitably, a discontinuity between the religious life that we have experienced and this new creation that the Spirit is promoting. Breakups are always difficult, they are painful, especially when they refer to elements that we have surrounded with the aura of the sacred. And the more anchored we are in the old structures, the more difficult it is to recognize the new that is being born, in such a way that the accusation that Isaiah has to transmit is fulfilled in us: “Go and say to this people: Listen carefully, but do not understand! Look intently, but do not perceive!” (Isaiah 6: 9).

When we recognize the confusion and uncertainty that shake religious life today as a sign of the Spirit, we are already prepared for the next step: asking ourselves what the Spirit is creating, and what it expects of us to contribute to the life that is being born. Thus the vocation revives in us and, without fear of seeing the institutional structure that has sustained us die, we will make the experience of the prophet our own: “Whom shall I send?” I replied: “Here I am, send me.”

---

2 Cf. R. COZZA. Ningún carisma basta por si solo. El final de los espacios cerrados. Pauline Publishing, Madrid 2010, page 159.

### 3. What does this people need?

*This is the way; walk in it (Isaiah 30: 21)*

**T**he question that heads this section accompanies the life of the prophet, as a consequence of his vocational commitment. In order to carry out the mediation that God entrusts to him, he must carefully read the situation in which the people live, the options of their leaders, the coherence between religious formalities and justice, the living conditions of the poor and underprivileged... "When you come to appear before me, who asks these things of you? Trample my courts no more! To bring offerings is useless; incense is an abomination to me" (Isaiah 1: 12-13). "My people! Your guides lead you astray and confuse your ways. ... By what right do you crush my people, and crush the faces of the poor?" (Isaiah 3: 12 - 15).

And after the discernment will come the denunciation that calls for conversion and the proclamation of the God who saves: "On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a scroll; and out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly shall again find joy in the Lord, the poorest rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 29: 18-19). "But the Lord waits for the moment to take pity on you, and he wants to show you compassion... Your Master will no longer hide, with your eyes you will see your Master; when you deviate to the right or left, you will hear with your ears a word behind your back: "This is the path, follow it." (Isaiah 30: 18-21).

#### A question from within the people

*What does this people need?* If we live in the awareness that the meaning of our life comes from being called by God, this is the question that must be disturbing our thoughts. But the answer will not be the same if the question has been asked from outside or from within the people; It will not be the same if the person who makes it feels superior to the people or if that person is one of the people.

The Second Vatican Council proposes a figure of the Church to which it dedicates the entire chapter II of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: “The People of God.” A people in which “all the Christian faithful, of whatever condition and state,... are called by the Lord, each one in his way, to the perfection of that holiness with which the Father himself is perfect” (LG 11). In the same chapter the bases are established to reconstitute the common treasure of this People, whom Christ has made a “Kingdom of priests for God, his Father,” in which all are consecrated by baptism, witnesses of Christ by confirmation of the Holy Spirit, and enriched by him with various charisms (cf. LG 10-11).

In the post-conciliar period, the Church has continued to deepen its identity as the People of God that embodies the covenant renewed in Christ, and has repeatedly expressed it as “Church Communion” (cf. *Christifideles Laici*), highlighting the deep relationship that exists between the various states of life of the members that compose it, since all “are related to each other in such a way that they are ordered to each other. Certainly its profound meaning is common – rather, unique – that of being the manner of living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love.” (Ch. L. 55.3).

Could consecrated life remain on the sidelines of this recovery of the Church in its consciousness of “people” or “Church Communion”? Could it continue with its secular “state of perfection” mentality and the corresponding logic of separation from the rest of the faithful?

“The spiritual savor of being a people” is the title of the section of *Evangelii Gaudium* (268-274) in which Pope Francis invites us to recognize and savor this belonging, as a condition to be evangelizers of souls (EG 268). And it is not merely an accessory, since it is directly linked to our vocation, our awareness of being called: “He takes us from among the people and sends us to the people, in such a way that our identity is not understood without this belonging” (EG 268 ).

Giving up self-referencing is how we can honestly ask ourselves the question: What does this people need? We accept that what is important and what fulfills us in the vocation received is no longer whether our institution



or all the institutions of all religious life will continue to exist in the future. The important thing is that this people of believers to which we belong needs to know that God continues to act among us, that his Kingdom is coming, that his Spirit is still present and summoning his Church. This people must be given a sign that God continues to call, convoke, gather, and offer us a new messianic hope. This is the work of the prophet.

In religious life we feel called to respond by offering that gift of which we are depositories, but not owners, our founding charism. The sign will be a community of believers, religious and laity, gathered around the charism, to build a fraternity based on the mission.

## 4. Let us ask for our eyes to be opened

*“Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God” (Isaiah 7:11)*

**T**he proposal that Isaiah makes to King Ahaz is curious, and his response seems very reasonable: “I will not ask! I will not tempt the Lord!” (Isaiah 7:12). The situation that Israel is experiencing is delicate, with the Davidic dynasty at risk of disappearing; and Ahaz has already made his own choices and alliances that he supposes will ensure the stability of his kingdom, regardless of God’s promises, in which he does not trust. In this context, his response is not one of respect, but of disinterest in God’s signs, lest they force him to change his position!

Ahaz deserves the same reproach that Isaiah addresses to the people: “For this is a rebellious people, deceitful children, children who refuse to listen to the instruction of the Lord; Who say to the seers, “Do not see”; to the prophets, “Do not prophesy truth for us; speak smooth things to us, see visions that deceive.” (Isaiah 30: 9-10). Ahaz and his people are clear proof that an apparent and deceitful religiosity may be living, full of rites but void of faith and deaf to the word of God.

### Misunderstood Fidelity

The signs of a new life are there, even if they seem dim. We must look for them with an attentive gaze, but it is risky to recognize them because they force us to change our customs, they propose another lifestyle within this Church Communion, in the context of a people of believers where the founding charisms are shared.

In this context, daring to ask God for signs is asking him to open our eyes and to help us recognize the signs of this new creation that his Spirit is illuminating in the Church. The signs are never in massive quantities, they are not imposed by their magnitude. They tend to be something very discreet,

like mustard seed... If they are taken care of, they grow later and become leafy trees that are home to a multitude of birds.

But it is easier to “piously” reject the prophet’s proposal and stay with the idea of Ahaz, “so as not to tempt the Lord.” We then take refuge in the safety of our religious structures, because they “guarantee” our fidelity. We are afraid to ask for signs that break our stability, signs that force us to recognize our situation of reduction and the need to open ourselves to another way of living the consecrated life in a society and in a Church that are no longer those in which our institutions were born. Creative fidelity (VC 37) is the attitude that a foundational charism requires, because fidelity without creativity is a simple routine that denies the essence of every charism, which, as the action of the Spirit, is dynamic and a living response to the needs of the world and of the Church.

In most religious Institutes, a periodic prayer for vocations is maintained. But what is the object of that prayer? If it is simply “asking for vocations to the Institute itself”, then let there be no doubt: it is a mistaken prayer. Let us dare to ask for discernment to know how we are preventing the emergence of new vocations, let us dare to ask for light in order to change everything that has become outdated in us, let us be grateful for the new forms of vocations in which the Spirit manifests itself and let us offer ourselves to support and accompany them; let us make ourselves available to be mediators of the Spirit in the transmission of the charism to other believers with other forms of life, and let us commit ourselves to developing communion with all of them.

## 5. Dare to recognize the signs

### *The Lord himself will give you a sign (Isaiah 7: 14)*

**I**saiah's reaction to Ahaz's rejection was to go ahead to affirm that the sign is already in sight, for whoever wants to see it: "Look, the young woman is pregnant and gives birth to a son, whom she names Emmanuel" (Isaiah 7: 14). The Christian re-reading interprets the term *young* as *virgin*. That is, she who was not able to procreate, by the power of God, gives birth to a son and names him *God with us*.

Before the people who look for signs in idols which they have made with their own hands, Isaiah dares to present himself with his children, a gift from God and a sign that points to the future, as witnesses of the Lord: "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me: we are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:18). The prophet becomes a sign for the people with his whole life.

### *The sign is in sight*

Is religious life capable of giving birth to new life? The sign is already in sight. There are many lay people who are attracted by the founding charisms that religious Orders and Institutes are living, and they want to live them from their lay condition, in all the fullness of their baptismal consecration. It is an authentic birth, which is made possible because the corresponding religious institutions have opened themselves to the inspiration of the Spirit and have accepted that their founding charism does not belong to them: thus they become *midwives* of new life.

Giving birth and the relationship it entails do not end at birth. A new family is created where bonds of communion are developed that include accompaniment, joint formation, mutual discernment, solidarity, co-responsibility in the mission. In this communion of religious and laity, religious life can no longer be the same, it must necessarily change, not only in

structures, but above all in the way it feels that it is within the Church, in relation to the other members.

But this cannot be done by institutions anchored in their past, reluctant to imagine consecrated life in another way, in the context offered by the new ecclesial ecosystem promoted by Vatican II. Francis warns us in the homily he delivered on the XXVI World Day for Consecrated Life (February 2, 2022): “The Lord never fails to give us signs that invite us to cultivate a renewed vision of consecrated life. We need to do this, but in the light of the Holy Spirit and docile to his movements. We cannot pretend not to see these signs and go on as usual, doing the same old things, drifting back through inertia to the forms of the past, paralyzed by fear of change. I have said this over and over again: nowadays the temptation to go back, for security, out of fear, in order to preserve the faith or the charism of the founder...is a temptation.”<sup>3</sup>

Given the signs that the Lord himself gives us, the time of reduction in which we live is no longer seen simply as a threat of disappearance. The reduction is necessary for transformation, to create something new. And so we become part of the new. A religious life with labor pains... Yes: with the joy of giving birth to a family.

The sign of religious life giving birth to new charismatic Families is a sign for the Church that aspires to be *Church Communion*. It is a sign that *God is with us*; and his Spirit continues to act, in its own way, tracing new paths of communion within the Church.

---

3 [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220202\\_omelia-vitaconsacrata.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220202_omelia-vitaconsacrata.html)

## 6. Called to become roots

### *Your dead shall live (Isaiah 26: 19)*

**I**saiah opposes the sterility of the people, incapable of offering life by itself, and the fecundity of God, by the paths that He has traced: “We conceived and writhed in pain, giving birth only to wind; Salvation we have not achieved for the earth, no inhabitants for the world were born. But your dead shall live,... for dew of light is your dew, and the dead will rise from the earth” (Isaiah 26: 18-19). Salvation is not in our strength, proclaims the prophet, but in the power of God; and this manifests itself in the form and in the time that He establishes. It may seem naive to those who only look at themselves, but for those who have learned to recognize the signs of God’s action in history, this is the attitude that counts: “Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock” (Isaiah 26: 4).

### *The question is: how to revive?*

Together with the experience of sterility, made fruitful by the power of God, is the evidence of death, assumed as an event that is not the end in God’s plan. Death, not only of the individual but also of the institution, must be contemplated as a reality through which we have to pass, not as the fateful conclusion of a more or less long history, which always seems too short, but as a step prior to the Resurrection. “What must be sought in Christianity and in religious life is not the idea of not dying, but rising again. But death is the path to resurrection. And religious life is a voluntary acceptance of death.”<sup>4</sup>

So, then, the question today for religious life is not “how not to die”, but “how to rise again?” In other words, the concern should not be in “saving the furniture, the house or the entire Institute”, but in “how we prepare for a new life.” Somehow, the allegory that Saint Paul uses in the first letter

---

4 Marko I. RUPNIK, María CAMPATELLI, *Veo una rama de almendro. Reflexiones sobre la vida consagrada*. Pauline Publications, Madrid 2015, page 122.

to the Corinthians to help us to glimpse the nature of resurrected bodies can help us, much later on, to understand the leap that is proposed to us: “What you sow is not brought to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be but a bare kernel of wheat, perhaps, or of some other kind; but God gives it a body as he chooses, and to each of the seeds its own body.” (1 Corinthians 15: 36-38).

Death is the biggest sign of discontinuity in a project. It can simply mean the end of it. But it may be the necessary step for another level of life that implies a radical transformation of the project. This is what we are talking about. And I still allow myself to abuse Paul’s words in his attempt to clarify the meaning of the resurrection: “We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15: 51). In the end, this is what matters: the new life is not a repetition of the old one; it implies a profound transformation that reaches those of us who came before as well as newcomers.

The option is not an easy one, and it is not even pleasant; but what does it mean to opt for life? We would like to be a flower, but do we accept becoming roots? I take the image, and the challenge that comes with it, from Pope Francis’ address to Christians and Jews at a meeting in Budapest on September 12, 2021. He quotes the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, imprisoned by the Nazis in a concentration camp, just because he was of Jewish origin: “In the end, in the sad solitude of the concentration camp, as he realized that life was withering away, Radnóti wrote: “I am also a root now... I was a flower, I have become a root” (*El Cuaderno de Bor, Raíz*). We too are called to become roots. We often look for fruits, results, affirmation. But He who makes his Word bear fruit on earth with the same sweetness of the rain that makes the field germinate (cf. Isaiah 55: 10), reminds us that our paths of faith are seeds, seeds that become underground roots, roots that feed memory and make the future germinate.”<sup>5</sup>

What is it that will allow us to reach a new life, even if it means through death?

---

5 <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/september/documents/20210912-budapestconsiglioecumenico.html>

## 7. The gifts that open us to life

*The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isaiah 11: 2)*

**T**he prophetic language of Isaiah (“First Isaiah”) uses children as signs of a new life for the people, of the messianic hope already realized in the future, and which brings with it great joy for this people who have been so punished: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. ... You have multiplied their joy, you have increased their joy. ... Because a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us (Isaiah 9: 1-5). His existence represents the saving presence of God in the midst of the people, as revealed by the names that Isaiah attributes to the child (cf. Isaiah 7: 14 and 9: 5).

The new relationships, based on law and justice (Isaiah 9: 6) are expressed by Isaiah in an idyllic way, always involving the presence of the child: “The wolf will live next to the lamb, the panther will lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion. they will graze together; a little boy will take care of them” (Isaiah 11: 6). Its value does not come from the fact that it is “new”, but from the creative will of God and his fidelity towards the people and, ultimately, because the spirit of the Lord is with him: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this” (Isaiah 9: 6). “The spirit of the Lord will rest upon him: the spirit of intelligence and wisdom, the spirit of counsel and courage, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11: 2).

### *Keys for the response*

Isaiah offers us here some keys to find an answer to the question that we formulated at the end of the previous section. In the first place, the new life is made up of *new relationships* based on justice in the biblical style: relationships of brotherhood, solidarity, mutual knowledge; with new ties between those who did not even deal with one another, and who now together carry out God’s project, the Kingdom of God. And second, the new life is nourished by the *spirit of the Lord*, which we will list here with a capital letter, since it deals with the Holy Spirit himself through the various charisms.



Consecrated life has within it what is necessary to engender the new life that the love of the Lord wants to create in his Church: it has *the experience of communion*, which it now has to transmit and promote among the other members of the Church, beyond the Institute itself. And it has the great gift of the charism or *foundational charisms*. Each Institute has to ask itself and make sure that these gifts are alive inside, because they are the ones that will allow it to be part of the new life, even if it has to pass through death.

### *a) The experience of communion*

The experience of communion has defined religious life from the beginning, trying to emulate what was a distinctive sign of the early Christian community, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles: “All the believers lived together and had everything in common” (Acts 2: 44). “The group of believers thought and felt the same, and no one considered anything that he possessed as his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 4: 32). This ideal of fraternity, which belongs to the entire Church, is what has guided the birth of the various religious Institutes, thus serving as a *living memory* for all Christians, as is recognized by *Vita Consecrata*, the apostolic exhortation of Saint John Paul II: “The consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep alive in the Church the obligation of fraternity as a form of witness to the Trinity” (VC 41).

It is not just a way of life 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” and the giving of himself until he gave his life on the Cross: “In community life, then, it should in some way be evident that, more than an instrument for carrying out a specific mission, fraternal communion is a *God-enlightened space* in which to experience the hidden presence of the Risen Lord” (VC 42).

The explicit request, almost like a challenge, that *Vita Consecrata* made to consecrated persons, is far from being a mere pious exhortation; it is, in reality, a condition of life, a condition for the consecrated life to engender a new life: “Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion

and to practice the spirituality of communion as ‘witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God’s design.’” (VC 46). “Experts”, not “scholars”: involves “a way of *thinking, speaking and acting* which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension.” (ibidem).

How to turn this internal experience into a proposal for a Christian life in which they come together from their own charism with other believers? How to make it a family experience, an experience shared among people from different states and life situations, among them consecrated persons?

### *b) The gift of the charism*

The gifts that the Spirit has bestowed on the consecrated life do not have religious Institutes as their ultimate recipient, but rather the Church. “Special gift of the Spirit” is the reciprocal love of those who make up the community (VC 42), a gift that cannot end inside the Institute, but is poured out in the Church, or even better, in the People of God. With that gift goes this second one, the founding charism, which cannot be sustained without it. At the same time that *the experience of communion* is delivered, the founding charism is shared, which is *the experience of the Spirit*.<sup>6</sup> The charism is transmitted by the Spirit; we can be the mediators of it by sharing it.

For a long time, the founding charisms have been considered the property of religious Orders and Institutes, confused with the projects of religious life in which they had materialized. Finally, the charisms have jumped out of the wells in which they were imprisoned and have become rivers that want to fertilize the entire surface of the People of God and which cannot be stopped: “These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. 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 center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 130).

---

6 *Mutuae relationes*, 11. Rome 1978.

The charism is neither in a skill nor in what is done, but in what drives one to do it. It is an internal dynamic that is manifested and projected in many ways: it offers a global perspective of the Gospel; it facilitates a unified vision of all life and the mission in which our life is projected; it refines our gaze to make it sensitive to certain needs, and it stimulates creativity to respond to those needs; it makes us perceive values that others miss. For all these reasons, the founding charism is, at the same time, a *motivating force* for the individual and for the group that is in tune with it, and a *prophetic force* that awakens in institutions and in society a horizon of justice and humanity that tends to fade within them.<sup>7</sup>

The charism is manifested or projected in a way of life. Traditionally, the religious way of life has been the facilitator of the founding charisms. Hence the ease with which these have been confused about that. In a Church that has rediscovered the unique and shared mission among all its members, charisms have also been recovered as gifts that can be shared from different forms and states of life. In this way, each founding charism becomes a meeting place with many other believers who are in tune with that charism, and therefore it will be a place of mutual enrichment.

The contribution of the consecrated life, by sharing the founding charisms in the Church and in society, could be compared to the work of a dowser (one who uses a divining rod) who discovers veins of water in an apparently arid terrain. The dowser does not “give” the water; he merely detects where it is because he is sensitive to it; he can signal its flow because he tunes in to the dynamic of the aquifer current; he has experienced it within himself and therefore he values it. His objective is not to use the water for his own benefit, but to make it easier for land users to enjoy it. Starting to use it and enjoying it will depend on the users themselves. Then, when the water is already flowing, there will be users who say: “I felt something inside; somehow I knew it was there...” And the land will stop being arid and become fertile. And the dowser will be able to say: “I have accomplished my mission. It doesn’t matter if I disappear, if the water is already flowing and has to reach many others...”

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Luigino BRUNI, *La destrucción creadora. Cómo afrontar la crisis en las organizaciones motivadas por ideales*. Ciudad Nueva Publications, Madrid 2019, page 21.

## 8. Our charisms have become rivers

*The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water (Isaiah 35: 7)*

**T**he remnant, the rummage, the renewal,... are various names that Isaiah uses to speak of that little thing that will remain of the people of Israel, not to mention even *the dead that will rise from the earth* (Isaiah 6: 19). There are many threats that, according to the prophet, have harassed this remnant, and much more than what will have to be converted, but in the end there is a new reality that surpasses all of the above, and that the prophet announces with various images that express the novelty and the power of the Lord that makes it possible: it is the image of the *feast on Mount Zion*, since “the hand of the Lord has rested on this mountain” (Isaiah 25: 10); they are the roots that Jacob will put down, through which “Israel will flourish and bear fruit and fill the world with its fruits” (Isaiah 27: 6); It is the fertile land that will *bloom like the daffodil* (Isaiah 35: 2), because “waters will sprout in the desert and streams in the steppe; the moor will become a pool, the thirsty land a spring” (Isaiah 35: 6-7).

### Like rivers that fertilize the earth

We link that last image with which we concluded the previous section. The founding charisms have become rivers capable of fertilizing the earth, beyond religious institutions. But it will depend on these, to a large extent, that these charisms can be discovered and savored by other believers. In this way, the *remnant* will have become a *charismatic Family*, or better yet, will be integrated and renewed in this new ecclesial reality.

*Vita Consecrata* (1996) already hinted at this phenomenon: “We may say that a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.” (VC 54). Pope Francis introduced the Year of Consecrated Life (2015) with a letter that he addressed “in addition to consecrated persons, *to the laity who share with them ideals, spirit*

*and mission*” and who “feel called, precisely in their lay condition , to participate in the same charismatic spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

In the background is the rediscovery of the charismatic reality of the Church, a direct consequence of recognizing the leading role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization, as the Council already said: The same Holy Spirit not only sanctifies and directs the People of God... but also distributes special graces among the faithful of any condition...”(LG 12).

Surely we will still find ourselves among the jealous, those who fear that their charism will be squandered, misunderstood or undervalued by newcomers. Those who are tempted by these misgivings would do well to remember and imitate the attitude of Moses towards that of the young Joshua, the latter jealous because some Israelites were prophesying in the camp, without it officially corresponding to them. Moses does not feel that his own identity as a prophet is threatened, for this reason he responds to Joshua: *If only all the people of the Lord were prophets! If only the Lord would bestow his spirit on them!* (Numbers 11: 29). The idea of “*If only*” cannot be reduced to a sterile desire but it must be projected into a strategy of recognition and accompaniment of the laity who themselves recognize that they are attracted to the charism.

The prophetic image of Isaiah – “water will sprout in the desert and streams in the steppe” (Isaiah 35: 6) is reflected here, where the fecundity of what seemed sterile, consecrated life, is projected because, letting itself be carried away by the Spirit, it has been able to recognize the founding charism beyond its own institutional structures, and “reposition it where the different states of life can assimilate it in the manner proper to each personal vocation.”<sup>9</sup>

The consecrated community that accepts its responsibility to be a 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 “shared

---

8 POPE FRANCIS. *Apostolic letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*. 21-11214, III-I.

9 R. COZZA, op. cit., pages 71 - 72

mission” that corresponds to the idea of Church Communion. And so, what once made religious men and women feel apart and 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 that same charism and at the same time it is their peculiar way of being consecrated. We’ll see this fleshed out more in Second Isaiah.

### *Guidelines for personal and community reflection*

1. At the beginning of each section there is a brief review of First Isaiah as it relates to the specific topic of the section. It may be useful to read these reviews “continuously,” beginning with the one that begins the chapter, and discuss them based on those reviews: what do they suggest to us, what signs do we find to be able to interpret the current moment in which we live, to be able to recognize our current history as a *history of salvation*?
2. How are we affected by our awareness of “reduction” regarding religious life and our own institution? What feelings does this awareness raise in us, positive or negative? Does this awareness serve as a *criterion for reading life*?
3. What is there in everything we are experiencing that invites us to revive our vocation? How can we describe the *discontinuity* between the religious life that we encountered at the beginning of our vocational journey and the one that we understand today which the Spirit is promoting?
4. “The spiritual taste of being a people” (EG 268): How do we show that we feel we belong to the people, that we do not place ourselves above, that we are concerned about everything that concerns the people of God?
5. What signs do we recognize that God continues to act in the Church, recreating it with new life? And in the consecrated life, do we find signs of renewal that affect us in some way?

Our prayer for vocations, how do we judge it? Does it commit us? Doesn’t it force us to discern in ourselves what favors or hinders the

emergence of new vocations? Does it make us responsible for our mediation in the transmission of the charism?

6. Does our consecrated life, our community, our institution promote new vocational life in the Church based on the charism that gave rise to us? How do we foster it, or what makes it difficult for us?
7. "*How do we prepare ourselves for a new life*": what does it look like? What does it mean for us to accept becoming roots? The quote from Pope Francis cited here, in which, in turn, he quotes the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, what does it suggest to us, based on our own experience?
8. The experience of communion: does it stay within the community, or do we make it reach out to the people with whom we relate, and especially those with whom we share the mission? Do we turn it into a proposal for the Christian life?
  - Do we live our founding charism as a *place of encounter* with other believers? What does the image of the dowser (section 7b) suggest to us regarding our mediation in helping others to discover the charism in themselves?
9. Does the fact that the founding charisms, ours among them, have become more ecclesial and are seen as gifts that can be shared from different states of life, does that seem something positive for ourselves? Are we comfortable with this prospect of sharing the charism, or does it raise fears in us, and, if so, what are these fears?

SECOND PART

A RELIGIOUS LIFE MEDIATED  
BY THE SPIRIT



## Our reading filter: SECOND ISAIAH (Isaiah 40 to 55)

The prophet behind chapters 40 to 55 of the book of Isaiah lives in the second half of the sixth century BC, when the time of exile is coming to an end, and later, when the first ones who have returned to Palestine are trying to establish themselves, in the midst of rejection or even persecution by their own countrymen.

“Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God” (Isaiah 40: 1). Consolation is the first key to this prophet’s message. And immediately he invites the people to prepare the way, because the Lord is coming.

To a people that is plunged into despair, while suffering in exile, the prophet dares to announce that liberation comes to them through a foreigner, a pagan, Cyrus, whom he points out as an instrument and servant of God, which will be a scandal for many Israelites. The prophet meets the resistance of a deaf and blind people (Isaiah 43: 8), who distrusts the promises of the Lord: “My way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God” (Isaiah 40: 27). The myopia of their eyes prevents them from seeing beyond the present moment, and the prophet helps them to contemplate history in its entirety and to recognize their God as *Lord of history*. He is the one who chooses Cyrus: “Who has performed these deeds?” The one who determines from its origins the course of history: “I, the Lord, am the first, and at the last I am he.” (Isaiah 41: 4).

The situation of reduction, of annihilation, appears as a “God-enlightened space” in which God is present, God rescues the people to make a new exodus that surpasses the old. In this exodus the creative power of God is revealed: “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the wilderness I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers” (Isaiah 43: 18-19).

Especially illuminating, within their own mystery, are the four songs of the Servant of the Lord, which helped the first Christian communities to better understand the figure of Jesus, the suffering and apparently failed

Messiah, but finally exalted by the Father. In them the leading role of the Lord stands out, who chooses his Servant according to the saving plan that God has from the beginning (Isaiah 42: 6). The Servant acts as a mediator and a sign of a covenant between God and his people, bearer of light, not only for Israel but for all peoples, to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49: 6). The Servant performs his work with meekness, supported by God and moved by his spirit (Isaiah 42: 1). He lives the experience of failure and contempt, but his strength is found in God. The last of the songs (Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12) takes the reduction of the Servant to the extreme: dead and buried. But it is not a useless death, "he has not suffered in vain", "through him the plans of the Lord will succeed" (Isaiah 53: 10-11). From that abyss God lifts him up.

Before concluding, the prophet addresses a declaration of love to Jerusalem in the name of God, in which he announces to her that her sterility is not final, that God will give her the fertility that already seems impossible to her: "Raise a glad cry, you barren one who never bore a child... For more numerous are the children of the deserted wife than the children of her who has a husband, says the Lord. Enlarge the space for your tent... For you shall spread abroad to the right and left" (Isaiah 54: 1-3).

The power of the Word of God exceeds our forecasts, the prophet emphasizes, and it is to that word that we must be attentive in order to know God's plans, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways – oracle of the Lord" (Isaiah 55: 8).

## 1. Leave self references behind

### *In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40: 3)*

**S**econd Isaiah is full of paths: paths to be followed, paths to be discovered. Some are paths that the people must prepare for the Lord to arrive (Isaiah 40: 3); others are those that the Lord builds to lead the people to freedom (Isaiah 42: 16; 43: 19; 48:17; 49:11; 51:10); and we must seek them carefully, because the ways of the Lord are always so different from ours (Isaiah 55: 8-9). It is not presented as an easy task: the roads that the people have to prepare, like those that the Lord offers us, will be traced in the desert (Isaiah 40:3), in the steppe (Isaiah 43:19), that is, they will be new, out of the ordinary. And so many structures and traditions will have to be modified to make way for new paths: “Let the valleys rise, and the mountains and hills fall; let the crooked be straightened and the rugged be smoothed out” (Isaiah 40:4). “I will turn my mountains into paths and my paths will be made level” (Isaiah 49:11).

In this openness to God’s plan, the prophet speaks about finding the essential, in the face of everything that is outdated: “The grass withers, the flower withers, but the word of our God remains forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

### **Paths for the encounter**

This is the task that religious life must face today: to trace a path in the desert, where there are no paths and where everything has to be made new; dismantle the mountains and hills that have kept us high, raise the valleys of our comfort zones and so many situations of inferiority or comfort that have confined us and separated us from a cooperative relationship between believers, lay people and religious. They are paths for the encounter, ways to carry out together God’s saving plan, the ecclesial mission.

Going out on the road has a prerequisite: it is the renunciation of self-referencing. In this case it is not a question of others approaching us, or that they

come to live our way of life, or that they integrate into our structures... Rather the opposite, and that is where the difficulty lies. We go out to encounter and to journey together. What will we have to change that is not essential? "I lead you on the way you should go" (Isaiah 48: 17): Let us open our eyes to the change in the historical cycle that is occurring at the social level, and let us look at the great clues that the Second Vatican Council has indicated in the ecclesial field, clues that the ecclesiology of communion has been making explicit and multiplying in the post-conciliar stage until reaching Pope Francis.

The religious life that we have inherited is frequently too starched by "accessories" that have been elevated to the category of the sacred, with a prayer so formalized and canonically justified that it hardly admits of changes, and with community structures subjected to rigid schedules that, supposedly, ensure regular observance. What is needed is to break the mold, to be silent in order to listen to the Spirit, whose voice has been drowned out by so much cultural clothing. In silence, separated from the dry grass and the withered flower, we identify what is permanent, the word of God that has been transmitted to us in the charism of the Spirit. It is this with which we go out to journey along new paths for the encounter.

Going out on the road requires practicing the *art of divestment*: of so many appendages that have attached themselves to us, of cultural forms... to commit oneself to the *asceticism of encounter* and communion with the laity in the Spirit, in the charism with which we have been made mediators. And this is an art, because at the same time care must be taken to save what is genuinely specific to the consecrated life.

It is not, then, about going out and improvising. Quite the opposite. In this we risk what life has given us and which will also be the origin of the new life: the charism and its transmission. "Revitalization is not a random event. It's not something that happens to a group, out of the blue, unplanned and by surprise. Revitalization is the conscious process of being willing to live in a new and changing world, even when others are not ready to do so and the world does not want the changes."<sup>1</sup>

---

1 Joan CHITTISTER, *Tal como éramos. Una historia de cambio y renovación*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2006, page 284.

## 2. A new paradigm is the basis for our mediation

*Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago  
consider not (Isaiah 43: 18)*

**T**he Lord of history continues to act, his plan has not been extinguished. We are not living in the residue of yesteryear, but in the dawn of a new age: this is God's time. This is the message that the prophet tries to present to the people who live in the nostalgia of the past; he invites him to discover what is already reality, even if it is only in the making, and to focus his attention on what is coming, not on what has already gone: "Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?(Isaiah 43: 18-19). The people are reborn because God takes care of them: "Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand." (Isaiah 41: 10). The last and the least of the people attract God's attention in a special way: "The afflicted and the needy seek water in vain, their tongues are parched with thirst. I, the Lord, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them" (Isaiah 4: 17).

### Are we preparing for the new?

"Now, not from of old, they are created, before today you did not hear of them, so that you cannot claim, 'I have known them'" (Isaiah 48:7). The fullness of the prophet helps us to highlight the novelty of what we are beginning to live. It is a new paradigm that gives foundation to the mediation entrusted to us, the transmission of the charism.

The paradigm that guides us has some features that make it profoundly different from the one we had to live in before the Council:

- The framework that shapes it is that of a Church that feels, above all, that it is the People of God; over and above any type of classification and with the same dignity, all its members form the group of *believers in*

*Jesus*, united to build the Kingdom of God. “One body and one Spirit...” (Ephesians 4: 4).

- The center is only one: *Christ and the Gospel*. It is not my founder nor my method, nor my pathway nor my institution, all of them are at the level of mediation or instruments that come from the center.
- We recognize the *Holy Spirit* as the main protagonist of the entire ecclesial mission. He distributes its charisms, among them the founding charisms, which are gifts for the Church and the world, and which can be lived out in different ways, in the religious or lay sphere.
- The question about our own identity, as well as our charismatic identity, does not begin with “Who am I?”, but “for whom am I?” (cf. Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*, 286), and that question tends to unify the whole person and not just one aspect or dimension of the person.
- In the same way, the charismatic identity is not made up of an individualistic process or in the isolation of those who are different, but in community interaction. The central thing is not the I but the we, the otherness. “We are invited to convene and meet in an “us” that is stronger than the sum of small individual parts” (*Fratelli tutti*, 78).
- Just as when referring to the Church we have begun by highlighting the Whole, the Church as a People, with the sole purpose and common mission, with a single Center and a single Protagonist of evangelization, so too in this transition from the Institute to the charismatic Family we highlight the original source from which we all drink, the *common charism and the network or relationships* that must flow between the various groups that make up the Family.
- The change of accent from a cultic type of religious life to a Samaritan religious life is projected and shared in the charismatic Family. The founding charism summons the entire Family to meet those who are on the peripheries, on the margins of humanity: there one learns to rise again. It is there where the urgency of God’s salvation is generated; and God, in his response, urges the involvement of those He calls as instruments of his salvation. The giving of oneself to the least is how the source of energy is activated that will give vitality to the founding charism.

How do we internalize this new paradigm? How do we join it?

### 3. To be refounded in the charism

*Look to the rock from which you were hewn (Isaiah 51: 1)*

**S**ome powerful roots are supporting the people of Israel, and the prophet remembers them because the path of liberation that he announces to the people will not be done by breaking with those roots, but by recovering them. The images that he uses carry that force that characterizes the prophetic expression: “Look to the rock from which you were hewn, to the quarry from which you were taken” (Isaiah 51: 1); and he invites them to look at the founding patriarchs of the people: “Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (Isaiah 51: 2). In those origins is the election of Israel, and in them the belonging to the people to God is sealed: “But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, Jacob, and formed you, Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.” (Isaiah 43: 1).

#### The return to love in maturity

The poetic expression in this section would have been “The return to love first.” But I opt for a more realistic expression. Each age and each moment of life has its way of living and expressing love. For me a more appropriate expression is: *the return to love in the stage of maturity*. What it is about is rekindling the awareness of an intimate relationship with God, which has possibly remained entangled over time in a jungle of doctrinal formulations, ideological justifications, and routines. In this relationship goes the realism of our weaknesses, of our assumed frustrations, of knowing that we are led by God on a path that does not coincide with that of our desires. It is not the love expressed in youthful fire, but rather in the confident abandonment of the one who carries us in his hands and to whom we belong, because *from the depth of his love we were extracted*.

Recovering this relationship of love is an essential condition to participate in the new life that the Spirit is giving rise to in Church Communion. For

each Institute in particular it is a challenge and it is also a responsibility, because without fulfilling this condition it will not be able to mediate the transmission of its founding charism to the new generations, and more specifically to the laity who might feel called to participate in it.

In some cases spiritual anemia; professionalization devoid of witness, in others; self-referencing, which puts the prestige of the institution on top; ideologizing the charism, separated from the Gospel and the Church to which it has to refer... these are real and current obstacles that are preventing a good part of religious life today from re-founding the charism, from *returning to love in maturity*.

That is what *refounding* is: allowing oneself to be carved anew in *the rock from which we were carved* in our origins, to recover *the depth from which we were extracted*, to relive the experience of feeling touched by the wounds of humanity and of the Church, to listen to the calls of the Spirit to find new answers beyond the structures that we have inherited, to return to the heart of the Gospel in order to connect with what moved our founders to face their founding experience, and to be able to harmonize this conversion with what the Church itself is carrying out in order to recover its identity of *communion for the mission*.<sup>2</sup> Only when we are reviving that dynamism of re-foundation can we feel qualified and legitimized to be mediators of the Spirit in the transmission of the charism to newcomers. Otherwise, the only thing that we will transmit will be the ideology of the charism.<sup>3</sup>

## The recovery of the essential

For a charism that has traditionally been lived out only in consecrated life, it is logical that all its cultural “charge,” language, experiences, symbols... would be closely linked to the context of consecrated life. Before applying

---

2 Cf. J. CASTELLANO, *Replantear el carisma y los carismas de la vida consagrada desde la misión compartida: forma de vida y misión*. B. FERNÁNDEZ y F. TORRES (EDS.), *La misión compartida*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2002, pages 135-141

3 Cf. SICARI, Antonio M.: *Gli antichi carismi nella Chiesa. Per una nuova collocazione*. Jaca Book. Milano 2002, pages 58-66.



it to lay life, an effort must be made to identify the essential core that sustains it, which will always refer to the Gospel, to following Christ, to the passion for the Kingdom, to living out the mystery of Church Communion. This *charismatic core* is beyond the forms of Christian life in which it is made visible and experienced.

The recovery of this essential core must be done in the light of the evangelical journey of the founders, identifying in it the life experiences where the appearance of the charism occurs in a more evident way. Simultaneously, religious and laity try to identify in their own experience, in their own life journey, this essential core common to one and the other, and they willingly allow themselves to interact with one another in order to differentiate the charism of any of the projects or forms of life in which, historically, it has materialized. In this way, all the participants are called to the responsibility of becoming, together, the face of the gospel which the charism offers to the Church.

This means recovering the original roots and living them out in the new socio-ecclesial ecosystem. Or, if a more “constructive” image is preferred, it means identifying the authentic foundations that support us, and on them building a “habitat” that can be recognizable in the new socio-ecclesial context. Roots and foundations refer us to the founding charism and the core of an identity that, more than ever, is “contextual,” since it develops in communion with other identities that participate in the same charism from different vital projects, and with which it shares the same mission.

## **A vocational vision of the charism**

*Refounding oneself in the charism* is also, for consecrated persons, affirming it as the origin and root of their consecrated life, of their religious vocation, which represents the particular way of following Christ in a community and institutional life program. The realization of this existential program enables them to become *experts in communion and guides of spirituality* (VC 46 and 55.3) in service of the Christian people and, above all, it makes them *signs and prophets* of that same charism that unites them with many

other people. This *vocational vision* of the charism will be necessary for them so that, in their role as mediators of transmitting the charism to the laity, they can help them to live out their identification with the charism as a type of vocation.

In this complementarity of vocations within the same charism, consecrated persons learn to renounce the security and stillness of the “state of perfection” and the separation of places where the Christian life is carried out, and to opt for the tension that the dynamic of communion and coexistence of different existential projects bring at the service of the common mission. They renounce their role as protagonists and promote that of the laity, becoming collaborators with them, without ceasing to contribute what corresponds to their own religious and prophetic identity.

## 4. In the vulnerability of a fraternal relationship

... *That I might know how to answer the weary a word that will waken them* (Isaiah 50: 4)

**T**he poems of the Servant that we find in Second Isaiah speak to us of an intimate, deep relationship between the Lord and his Servant, but also of the relationship that reveals the meaning of the figure of the Servant, since he does not exist for himself or in function of the Servant himself, but for the people, for humanity: “I set you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations” (Isaiah 42: 6). The Servant is “covenant”, he is relationship, he is communion. And it will not be an easy role, but a conflictive one, a cause of suffering for the Servant. He will have to learn to carry it out, with an opportune word, but also with an attentive ear: “The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, That I might know how to answer the weary a word that will waken them. Morning after morning he wakens my ear to hear as disciples do; The Lord God opened my ear; I did not refuse, did not turn away” (Isaiah 50: 4-5).

### Renouncing immunity

The dynamic of communion to which we have referred in the new relationship between religious and laity includes and requires *vulnerability*, the willingness to let oneself be hurt by the problems, wounds and weakness of others. Without it there will be no deep relationship with each other. The institution, with its structures, its defenses, and its barriers, protects us from the friction of those who do not belong to it: it makes us *immune*. But when the institution breaks down its barriers and we go out to meet those who are different in order to build a new fraternity, then we lose immunity, each one becomes vulnerable to the others. “Fraternity is anti-immune.”<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising characteristic in the figure of the Servant in the four poems of the second Isaiah is precisely his vulnerability, which

---

4 L. BRUNI, *op cit.*, page 38.

goes hand in hand with his deep respect for the vulnerability of others: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench.” (Isaiah 42: 3). Consecrated life becomes vulnerable and weak when it enters into that dynamic of communion that sharing the founding charism with the laity leads it to. The temptation will be to take refuge behind its structures, well entrenched by tradition, and to try to “shape” the secular based on the religious system.

But the founding charisms are not servants of such structures, nor do their vitality and operation depend on them. The laity who are in harmony with the charism must find their own ways of incarnating it, and the religious Institute(s) must follow this path of re-foundation in fraternity with the laity, supporting and sustaining, collaborating in discernment and paying an attentive ear to the suggestions and questions that come from the laity.

The development of a charismatic Family must have among its referential icons that of the Servant, called to be *covenant* based on an attitude of vulnerability. The charismatic Family is a new occasion for life and for making communion effective in a new form of relationship between the various forms of Christian life. A new *way of being* has to be cast in a new *way of relating*. In the Family, consecrated persons find a privileged means of living the experience of being together with other Christians and, depending on them, in service of the common and unique ecclesial mission.

## 5. The transmission of the charism

*Upon him I have put my spirit (Isaiah 42: 1)*

**“H**ow beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news and proclaiming salvation” (Isaiah 52: 7). “Come for water all you who are thirsty; Come even if you don’t have money. ... I will make with you an everlasting covenant.: Isaiah 55: 1-3). The poetic image of the messenger’s feet enhances the importance and excellence of the good news that he proclaims. This is great news, because it will be like a new exodus that culminates in a new covenant.

It is announced to all the people, but especially those who are thirsty are invited, those who seek; and it is given freely. The gifts that are announced, liberation, peace, building a future of prosperity... are preceded and enlivened by something deeper, which is the spirit that the Lord instills in his Servant: “Upon him I have put my spirit” (Isaiah 42: 1), from which the people also benefit: “I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring, my blessing upon your descendants” (Isaiah 44: 3).

### 5.1 The experience of the Spirit

This description that the prophet makes of the messenger seems very appropriate to apply to the consecrated community that goes out from its “reduction” to share and transmit its founding charism with all those lay people with whom it shares the mission or who wish to do so.

The community goes out to encounter people, accepts them as they are, expresses solidarity with their needs, is involved in achieving their happiness, provides them with the training and motivation necessary to find meaning and value in what they do, makes them co-responsible in the common mission. The community communicates its internal experience of fraternity, its sensitivity to the needs that its mission calls for, its experience of spirituali-

ty. And while the community “gives of itself,” many of the beneficiaries will start sensing what it is that gives life, the charism.

A story by Anthony de Mello helps us to understand this: “A monk found a precious stone and took it with him. ... He then hands it over to a traveler who has seen it and asks for it. ... The traveler returns the stone and says: “Now give me something more valuable than this stone: give me what has allowed you to get rid of it and give it to me.”<sup>5</sup>

Basically, the generator of this dynamic is the founding charism, which is none other than an experience of the Spirit. In 1978 the Vatican document *Mutuae Relationes* defined the original charism “of the origins” or “of the Founders” as follows: “The charism of the Founders is revealed as an experience of the Spirit, transmitted by them to their own disciples, to be lived, guarded, deepened and constantly developed, in tune with the Body of Christ in continuous growth” (number 11).

It is the Spirit who awakens our attention to an external reality of need or lack. But always from an inner attitude: the contemplation of God’s saving plan, which makes us his instruments. The action of the Spirit makes us feel impressed by this reality, prompts us to recognize it as a call from God and moves us to give a creative response from a Gospel perspective also inspired by Him.

The experience of the Spirit lived out by the founders is reproduced in their followers, in various forms and with different intensities. And this experience will lead to different projects. Or again: it is going to be poured into different vessels, religious and lay, which will give it a different shape and appearance.

The founding charism encourages each member of the community to discover the various gifts that the Lord has given them for the mission, to bear witness to God’s love for them: life, education received, personal

---

5 Cited by R. COZZA, op. cit, page 11. El cuento completo en *El canto del pájaro*, Sal Terrae, Santander 1996, page 182.

preparation, such qualities or abilities, the ability to give of oneself and generosity...; or special gifts such as the *discernment of spirits*, or celibacy for the Kingdom (cf. Matthew 19: 12), or knowing how to make of *marriage* a “two person” project for commitment.

Within the charismatic Family, consecrated persons will learn to be complementary in the shared mission which the whole group carries out, and to allow themselves to be complemented by others. And they will be concerned above all with contributing what characterizes their religious identity in particular, to remind the whole Family of that conviction which the Church has acquired about herself, and which is equally valid for the Family, that its reason for being, its vocation, its deepest identity, is to evangelize (cf. EN 14); that it exists for the mission, and that any other action or objective that the project includes will have as its ultimate goal to better serve the mission. Its presence must be a living memory for all that “the mission is a passion for Jesus, but, at the same time, a passion for his people” (EG 268)

## **5.2 What role does the figure of the Founders play in the transmission of the charism to the laity?**

The Founders are like bridges of the Spirit, chosen by the Spirit to pass on their founding charisms to the Church. They are like the messenger whose feet on the mountains poetically described in Second Isaiah (Isaiah 52: 7). They are not the message nor are they above the message, since their entire function is to transmit it. They have played a fundamental role in the reception of said charisms, and they have lived out in a special way the experience of immersion in the mystery of Christ according to the new light that the charism in question projects on it. They are expected to be able to communicate this privileged experience to their disciples.

After the founder or foundress, whoever feels called to participate in this same charism must also go through the experience of entering into the mystery of Christ in the particular light that the founding charism projects and live it out in their own way, never by copying someone else’s way. Then,

in communion with the other partners in the charism, together they will be able to reflect this particular face of Christ for the Church and the world.<sup>6</sup> And this configuration with Christ goes hand in hand with the construction of the Kingdom of God: building it up and letting oneself be shaped by it, always from the perspective or mystery that the charism enhances.

In the transmission of the charism to the laity, the figure of the founder continues to have that referential position. It is not a question of knowing many details of his biography or the history of the Institute. Beyond a simple admiration, devotion or affection, the laity's relationship with the founder must manifest itself in harmony or in consonance with the life experience discovered in the founder. From this harmony, the laity comes to refer to the founder as *our* founder, teacher and guide on the path of development of the charism. Without forgetting the initial community that formed around the founder, and which often exerted great influence on his person.

---

6 Cf. SICARI, A. M, pages 29 - 34.



## 6. Proposing a vocational “attitude”

*Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life*  
(Isaiah 55: 3)

“**F**or my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways – oracle of the Lord” (Isaiah 55: 8). The prophet invites the people to recognize their short-sightedness and accept that God’s thoughts are not reduced to our expectations, but are often far from them. It is necessary to pay attention to the signs that the Lord gives us, to live in an attitude of searching, listening to his word. “Seek the Lord while he may be found (Isaiah 55:6). The new covenant which the Lord offers his people depends on their being able to put aside what now occupies them: “Why do you spend money on what does not satisfy...?” (Isaiah 55: 2) and open themselves up to the word of the Lord: “Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life. I will make with you an everlasting covenant” (Isaiah 55: 3).

The prophetic text of Second Isaiah culminates in this message of conversion, of change, in the urgency of finding the ways of the Lord, so different from ours, and adapting to them: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55: 9).

### People “possessed” by the charism

The transmission of a charism cannot be confused with the invitation to enter into some structures or to accept certain modes of conduct, uses, expressions, routine, to which entry into an institution could be reduced, including the charismatic Family, if a vocational “attitude” does not come first. This requires the initiative and creativity of both the subject and the community. The vitality of the charism will depend on the fact that the vocational “attitude” is kept alive in those who come to join the Family.

It is an attitude of listening to the Protagonist in the mission of the Church and, therefore, to the charismatic Family, to the Holy Spirit. The awareness of being “possessed” by the founding charism must awaken the concern to be faithful, not to some inherited structures, but to the dynamic which the charism incessantly promotes among those who live it out. The action of the Spirit awakens and revives our sensitivity to certain situations, deficiencies, needs... 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 by means of which we can give a positive answer.

The bush burning on the mountainside is only recognized by those who carry that same bush inside them. Moses already had the anguish for the slavery of his brothers in Egypt, when he had that experience on Mount Horeb. The bush burned inside Moses, but he had to recognize it as the call and being sent by God to free his brothers. Whoever discovers a charism, if they feel attracted to it, it is because they already carry it inside them.

Whoever performs the function of “transmitter” must adopt the pedagogy that is revealed in the passage from Exodus (Exodus 3: 1-4,17) that we have mentioned: awakening sensitivity to slavery and needs, then to recognize them as *sacred land*, a place where God himself expects to be helped, a place where we experience that God counts on us, sends us, while promising us: “I will be with you” (Exodus 3:12). Then comes the realization of our possibilities, the gifts with which we can give a better response; and notice that, by our side, is our brother Aaron, on whom we can lean and with whom we can complement one other. The founding charism always integrates us into a Family, with whom we carry out the mission, never alone.

It is these motivations that must be present in the communication of a charism, not the incentives of the institutional organization or the needs of the business management of the works directed by the religious Institute. It is not about giving continuity to the works, no matter how good and profitable they may be, but about raising up people with vocations, “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 reconsider these works or invent others apart from the existing ones.<sup>7</sup>

The people who begin to follow a charism or who have been following it for some time must be able to see themselves in a new way, in a vocation that is re-created because it urges them to ask the Spirit for his pathways, and these are never routine, they are always challenging their freedom and creativity.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. L. BRUNI, *La destrucción creadora*, pages 44-45.

## 7. Processes of change

### *Enlarge the space for your tent (Isaiah 54: 2)*

**T**he Lord of history has his plan, he does not act lightly. The prophet repeats it over and over again and invites the people to trust in the Lord because he will not disappoint them: “Then you will know that I am the Lord and that I do not disappoint those who hope in me” (Isaiah 49: 23). His plan of salvation is not limited to the people of Israel, but is offered to other nations: “I will deliver the nations with power, and the distant peoples who hope and trust in me” (Isaiah 51: 5). And although it is not easy to recognize it, the Lord is present, walking alongside: “Therefore my people shall know my name on that day, that it is I who speaks: Here I am!” (Isaiah 52: 6). His servant acts as a mediator, carrying out his plan, even though others despise him: “The Lord’s will shall be accomplished through him” (Isaiah 53: 10). The people are urged to enter into the will of the Lord, who breaks with the old structures and narrow horizons: “Enlarge the space for your tent,... lengthen your ropes, because you will stretch out to the right and to the left” (Isaiah 54: 2-3).

### 7.1 Processes for making the journey, step by step

Where do the Lord’s plans point? If we already recognize that in his plan there is the participation of the founding charisms by believers from different walks of life, and the development of charismatic Families in the Church Communion, what processes should be set in motion and promoted by the communities? And by Religious Institutes, if they want to be active participants in the generation of the new ecclesial life?

But the processes of change include the religious institution itself, which must ask itself at the same time: *How does the change that is taking place affect us as consecrated persons, the ecclesial life that is being born, the expansion of our founding charism in new vocations that are being lived out in a different way than what has been traditional? What is it going to make us change? What*

*structures of ours can (or should) be affected? What new structures will have to be created to facilitate the development of the new life?*

We put these questions on the table with an open attitude when considering what we have to do in the present so that the future can exist. The answer does not lie in isolated actions, but in processes that make it possible to make progress, step by step. And the path is not traced by Chapter declarations that come from the top down and adorn the great documents of the Institute. The pathway materializes thanks to the decisions that are located where life is: in meeting people, in community life, in the creation and accompaniment of groups, in the development of formation journeys, in the preparation of lay formation personnel, in the creation of new structures of leadership that allow an authentic co-responsibility of the laity.

Every decision, no matter how bold it is, does not save the time that is needed. The processes that lead the way need time, because their objective is the transformation or conversion of the person, the change of attitudes, the acquisition of values, the development of abilities. People need time to change, to show solidarity, to enter into communion, to learn, to recognize themselves as part of a story, to feel integrated into a human group, to become co-responsible for the leadership of the mission...

For this reason, the most effective decisions are those that start processes of change in people and institutions. And the changes culminate in attitudes, behaviors and new ways of living communion for the mission, such as the following:

- The laity participate and are integrated into the relations of communion and belonging between persons and communities. And consecrated persons stimulate communion by opening their communities to the participation of the laity and joining in joint actions with the other members of the Family, without being unnecessarily overbearing.
- The laity identify with the charism, delve into spirituality, participate in joint formation processes with consecrated persons. And they recognize and value other ways of living out the charism, different from those of

religious life, while the religious positively receive the contributions of the laity in living out the charism and spirituality.

- The laity feel urged to take responsibility and to discern the mission; and together with the consecrated persons they decide the responses and the resources to be used. In other words, they become co-responsible for the mission, as well as for the creative fidelity with which the charism is to be lived. And that co-responsibility of both of them is manifested in the various structures that are established for this purpose in the charismatic Family, in which both can participate with equal voice and vote.

## 7.2 Three dynamic currents

These changes are what make up the horizon in which the future of our charismatic Families takes shape and becomes possible. But this does not happen by spontaneous generation. The path that leads us to that horizon is driven by three dynamic currents, three processes that intertwine with each other, since they are not successive but simultaneous and mutually supportive of each other: the process of communion, the process of identification with the charism and the process of commitment to the mission. In each of them there must be an investment in order to obtain the desired result.

- In the first we invest in *relationships* (in “creating ties,” as the fox said to the Little Prince in Saint-Éxupéry’s work) and a sense of belonging is achieved.
- In the second we invest in accompaniment and training and then identity is achieved.
- In the third we invest in shared leadership of the mission and co-responsibility is achieved.

We’ll look at each of these separately:

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

It basically consists of a grass roots work of creating ties; this is how the charismatic Family is woven and the affective base of the collective identity is laid, through which each one feels part of the subject WE. It is about establishing ties that create relationships, ties that facilitate “approachability” with people, mutual knowledge, the communication of experiences and the celebration of faith.

The Charismatic Family begins to be woven at the time of first encounter, when a person arrives to join any of the institution’s works, be it as a worker, volunteer or direct beneficiary. They must be able to feel the communion: that they have not entered a workplace or an organizational structure as a priority, but rather interpersonal relationships, where the person comes first.

The creation of ties must continue all the time, in accompaniment and in formation, stimulating the feeling of mutual belonging and solidarity among the people who are forming the charismatic Family. The ties are created from the bottom up, they are in the relationships between the close-knit groups, between the communities that make up the Province: the religious community that opens up and facilitates the participation of the laity in its various activities; the lay community that develops its own project and shares with the religious community; and the mixed community, made up of religious and lay people, with a common project that respects and facilitates the sharing of the wealth of different identities.

In this way the Province or territorial demarcation ceases to be the religious Province, even if it might include this, but it is expanded with the groups and communities of lay people and with the communities that integrate lay people and religious.

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

This process requires personal accompaniment and training. It is not equivalent to “learning” knowledge that has to do with the history of the insti-

tution or the Founders or with characteristics of spirituality. All of this is good in its time and in its measure, but it is not what determines the process of formation in the charism.

It has to do with the *acquisition of an identity*, which requires the transformation of the person, which begins right at the existential point and moment in which they find themselves.

It is a journey in which these three threads must be intertwined:

- the development of *vital experiences* in which the charism is condensed or made manifest and which normally involve the life of the founder or foundress and in the “initial myth” or founding story that has given rise to the collective identity of this Family;
- the *project* that is carried out in response to the mission, and where we identify the keys so that we can update it in our own time and Church;
- the *spirituality* that gives meaning to the project, and allows us to value the mission as the work of God, and us as mediators and instruments of God in his work of salvation.

### *c) The third is the process of commitment to the mission*

This goes hand in hand with the previous two and depends heavily on them. The process promotes *co-responsibility*. It is an apprenticeship in which people, led by and identified with the founding charism, discover their leading role in the mission and assume it creatively. In this way they come to make their commitment in communion and in the mission.

When we speak of “commitment” with regard to a founding charism, we are referring, above all, to the deep dimensions of life, although it can be lived out with greater or less intensity. It does not refer to the dedication of a particular time or effort. It is a life option, a vocational approach that assumes the objectives of the charism with respect to the mission, as well



as the values it promotes. It is done based on the specific human situation in which the person finds himself (and this includes health limitations, married or single state, multiple family obligations, etc.) and not in spite of one's situation.

But this personal process must be accompanied, on an institutional level, with the development of structures for discernment, accompaniment, leadership and decision-making, in which laity and religious come together on equal terms. It is not valid to apply the leadership and government structures proper to the Institute to the leadership and government of the charismatic Family.

### **7.3 How to deal with disappointments along the way?**

The most difficult thing about a process, like a path, is not starting it, but persevering in it, even if there are failures. Disappointment can come from trusting people who, at a given moment, have not responded positively or who have gone away. Or because we expected the results to happen in less time or to be more evident. Or because the religious personnel seem to disengage from the whole process. There could be many other reasons.

One has to be patient with the experiences, give time for these experiences to sink in, make second chances possible, start over with whoever shows up on the road. Negative reactions or results are not, by themselves, reasons to discard the process, but to question ourselves about their causes and then to produce the necessary corrections, identify obstacles and see how to correct them, consider whether the goals are appropriate, adjust the stages of the process. It would be well not to fall into the error of “going back to business as usual”, which gives security.

Progress in these processes of the transformation of people is never linear, but “like a see-saw”: you advance a little, go back or stagnate a little, another “push” is needed... Discernment must become habitual and include as much as possible in it for all agents involved in the process.

## 8. The transmission of the charism to non-Christians

*I myself have spoken, I have summoned him (Isaiah 48: 15)*

**T**he preponderant role attributed to Cyrus throughout Second Isaiah is surprising, as an instrument chosen by God for the restoration of the people of Israel. Perhaps this insistence of the prophet is explained by the refusal or reluctance of many Israelites to accept the divine choice of a foreigner (cf. Isaiah 45: 9-13), someone who does not even know the God of Israel: "I called you by name, I gave you a title even though you didn't know me. ... I have given you authority, although you do not know me" (Isaiah 45: 4-5); or by the theological reflection after the exile, on the importance that this figure has had in the liberation of Israel. He is sometimes named explicitly, putting the words in the mouth of God: "I say of Cyrus, my shepherd! He carries out my every wish" (Isaiah 44: 28). "It was I who stirred him up for justice; all his ways I make level." (Isaiah 45: 13). Other times, without naming him, he is spoken of clearly by his actions (Isaiah 41:1-5; 48,14-15).

But what attracts the most attention is the personal relationship of friendship that God establishes, on his own initiative, with this character, a foreigner and pagan: "Thus says the Lord to his anointed, Cyrus, whose right hand I grasp... I will walk before you" (Isaiah 45: 1-2). "I myself have spoken, I have summoned him, I have brought him, and his way succeeds" (Isaiah 48: 15).

To understand this very special relationship, the prophet provides us with the context. He speaks to us of a God, "I, it is I who am the first, and am I the last." (Isaiah 48: 12), who leads history, all of it; that he is present in all events, not causing them, but making use of all of them: "I say that my plan shall stand, I accomplish my every desire" (Isaiah 46: 10). God's plan is "that my salvation reach the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49: 6). If he chooses a people in particular, it is so that they may be his witnesses (Isaiah 43: 12) of the salvation that is to come to all. But He is not limited to his own people, but he chooses his witnesses and envoys in any other place and among any type of people. Cyrus is his sign.

## A Spirit that knows no borders

Beyond the historical role that the figure of Cyrus had in the recovery of the people of Israel after their exile, the prophet's message exceeds the expectations of so many believers of yesterday and today who live safe and secure within the walls of his Church; this message shatters the exclusive image of a people that, more than being chosen, had taken possession of God; and of a Christian Church which, instead of feeling itself to be an instrument and sign of God's covenant with the entire human race, intends to limit the sanctifying action of the Trinity to its own baptized faithful.

There are no borders for the Holy Spirit. And we have proof of this in the founding charisms: they are those *rivers of the Spirit* that have overflowed the walls of religious Institutes, but are not limited to the official borders of the Catholic Church or of Christian Churches either. They are builders of the Kingdom and they connect with the depths of the human being to rescue, value and promote everything that favors its realization, everything that can make a better world. They are not limited to religious aspects and are not owned by the Churches. The dynamics of the Holy Spirit can be found in any person, regardless of any religion or agreement with any of them.

The Second Vatican Council based this reflection on what it called the *seeds of the Word* (Ad Gentes, 11.2, 15.1), which can be found in other cultures and other religions. Many elements that we Christians associate with the message of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, are already a seed in other cultures and religions, and we can recognize them in non-Christians.

In the little experience that we have had with people from other religions and humanitarianism, we have realized that when they come into contact with value systems or schools of spirituality with Christian roots, they feel comfortable in them because they find many reflected or enhanced values and contributions of meaning that are also present, explicitly or implicitly, in their own religion or in their own sense of life.

If we start from a founding charism that has been lived out in an explicitly Christian tradition and, more specifically, in religious life, we will need to highlight the "layers" that make up that charism internally, so as not to con-

fuse it or reduce it to the “covering over” of Christian or religious culture in which it has been expressed up to now, and to be able to communicate it in what is perceptible from the most profoundly human perspective.

Let us give a concrete example, from the experience closest to the one who is writing this, of how a founding charism dedicated, in this case, to the human and Christian education of the young, especially the poor, can be shared with educators of different religious and humanistic orientations.

- We find a first layer that is essentially human or “humanistic.” This refers, for example, to the absolute assessment that is made of the person of the student, beyond the qualities or defects that he has, and whose needs are perceived as calls for the educator. The spirituality developed by this charism underscores the mystery of the person, who is capable of overcoming his present reality, is endowed with freedom and can decide between good and evil. It highlights the relationship of solidarity in which students must be educated and the special attention that those who are poorest deserve. It presents the educator as a mediator in the integral development of the student, and reminds him that his most important contribution to the education of the child does not consist in theoretical knowledge but in a way of life, which is transmitted by example, rather than by words.
- The second layer gives religious meaning to the previous one and reveals the relationship of the person of the student and the person of the educator with God. Each will be able to translate into their religious categories the mediation taken on by the educator, and equally the mystery and interiority of the person, the work of salvation that God carries out through us, the concern due to the poorest...
- The third layer, explicitly Christian, gathers the previous ones and interprets them from the history of salvation presented to us by the Bible and in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ. A large part of the vocabulary, expressions, symbols and images that make up the way of expressing our charism by those of us who have lived it out up to now belong to this layer.

In the first layer we can find and recognize a large part of the educators. This is the first level of transmission and communication of the charism. The second layer will favor dialogue in multi-religious and cultural environments and will help people of other religions to tune in to the charism and feel they are heirs of it. The third layer will allow us Christians to recognize and appreciate the wealth that we have received through our faith.

## 9. A heart in which to engender the community

*See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth*  
(Isaiah 43:19)

**T**hat which is new resonates in the message of Second Isaiah as an ongoing characteristic of his proclamation and as something that is already part of the present, “it is already springing forth” (Isaiah 43: 19), or is about to happen, “my salvation shall not tarry” (Isaiah 46: 13), which prevails over what is already past and surpasses it (Isaiah 43: 18). The novelty is expressed in an exultant way under the figure of fertility, which now comes by the work of the Lord to Jerusalem, which was like a barren woman: “Sing for joy, barren, you who did not give birth; she breaks into singing for joy... because there will be more children of the abandoned than the children of the married, says the Lord “ (Isaiah 54: 1). And the new situation of fertility will be such that it will force her to enlarge the space of her dwelling (Isaiah 54:2) and to forget her time of sterility: “You will forget the shame of your singleness, you will stop remembering the reproach of your widowhood” (Isaiah 54: 4).

A sterile womb that rediscovers fertility. Consecrated life has within it a capacity to generate life, about which religious Institutes are often not fully aware. The well that should provide life-giving water has been clogging, thanks to the structures, the rites, the practices which, in principle, had been installed with the good intention of facilitating access or circulating water, but later they became self-justified, becoming impediments in achieving their purpose or, at least, their substitutes. What we are talking about is *fraternal communion*.

“By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that *sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships* and create a new type of solidarity.” (VC 41). The “Common way of life” is precisely that well whose purpose is to be a life dynamic and a sign of fraternal communion, but it can also become

a sterile and sterilizing womb which, in addition to hiding or repressing the life that justifies it, it prevents its inhabitants from being prophets of brotherly love beyond the walls of the community.

Here, too, the novel way of thinking announced in Second Isaiah undergoes a refoundation, in a double sense:

- in reaffirming fraternal communion as the center of our way of life, as a *God-enlightened space* in which we can experience the promise of the risen Lord:

“Where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20); and for that purpose we make relative each and every one of the structures that contribute to shaping our community life;

- in turning our community into a means of communication with the laity, especially with those with whom we share the mission; Let it be a meeting place, a privileged center for the transmission of the charism, to share the experience of communion, the experience of spirituality, immersion in the mission.

The community has been for consecrated life the maternal womb in which its members have received the Spirit, who has united them in the communion of fraternal life and who has guided them in the fulfillment of their mission of service to the Church and to all of humanity. (cf. VC 42), following the given charism. At least, that is how it has been as long as the community has not allowed itself to be trapped and suffocated by routine practices that were imposed on the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships.

The community will also be the womb in which the laity will be able to be born to the life which the founding charism brings them, which goes through the multiple ties which the community dynamic is capable of developing, through simple informal meetings and various celebrations of daily events, occasional or scheduled moments of reflection and formation, times of prayer, participation in the mission... At first it will be necessary to seek the opportunity for the invitation, then participation will become

more and more frequent based on personal freedom; according to the cases or the type of consecrated life, the affiliation or association of the lay person to the community may happen. But another community can also be formed that brings together the laity who are already initiated in the charism, who will establish their own community dynamics. Between both communities, religious and lay, among all those that are being formed, a strong relationship of brotherhood must be sought, something which is far from paternalism.

All of this will bring with it the need for many changes for consecrated persons, changes in the way of living their religious life, their community life, changes that will have to be discerned and that do not have to affect the substance of their consecration.

### *Guidelines for personal and community reflection*

1. As in the previous chapter, at the beginning of each section there is a brief review, in this case from Second Isaiah, regarding the specific theme of the section. We propose reading these reviews “continuously”, beginning with the one that begins the chapter, and discussing them: what do they suggest to us, what signs do we find to be able to interpret in the moment in which we are living, to be able to recognize our current history? *As a story of salvation?*
2. What paths do we need to take from our consecrated life in order to go out to the encounter and establish a positive relationship of cooperation between believers, laity and religious? What mountains will we have to dismantle and what valleys will we have to raise? Do we identify the “starved” areas that need to be made more flexible? For us, in what can the *art of dispossession* consist?
3. The text speaks of a paradigm shift in ecclesial relations, and therefore, in the mediation which we have to exercise in the transmission of the charism. What seems to us to be the most essential features of this, to which we are less accustomed, perhaps because of the training we have had?



4. Do we need to *refound* ourselves in the charism? Which aspects of the re-foundation seem most urgent?
5. Has the opening of our charism to the laity and the consequent encounter and closer relationships with them meant special difficulties for the religious community? And has the community learned how to open up and renounce immunity?
6. When trying to share or transmit our charism to the laity, what is the most difficult thing for us to communicate? And in the presentation of the figure of our founder or foundress, are we correct in transmitting the charismatic experience, beyond just the biographical anecdotes?
7. *A vocational attitude*: this is what we intend to awaken by presenting our charism to other people. What should be made manifest? On what do we have to rely so that the presentation of the charism provokes more searching rather than the simple continuity of the inherited works?
8. *Processes of change*: Is consecrated life involved in the change that comes with sharing the founding charisms? What about our Institute?
  - *The pathway materializes thanks to the decisions that are made where there is life*: Apart from what is written in our documents, what processes are taking place in the environment of our communities, which will favor a new way of living communion for the mission between laity and consecrated persons?
  - *Invest in relationships, in accompaniment and in formation, and in shared leadership for the mission*: how are these three processes being carried out in our institution? Do we think that the investment is being made thoroughly and with planning?
9. Do we have experience of sharing our charism, on some levels, with people of other faiths, or with non-believers? In which layers of this charism do we find it easier to harmonize?
10. To what extent and in what concrete way is our community a meeting place and a means of communication with the laity, a center for the transmission of the charism...?

# THIRD PART

A NEW FAMILY THAT WELCOMES  
CONSECRATED LIFE

## **Our reading filter: THIRD ISAIAH (Isaiah 56 - 66)**

**T**hird Isaiah (Isaiah 56 - 66) carries out his prophetic activity during the time immediately after the Exile. His great objective is the formation of a people or community that renews its covenant with God, but a covenant that is also new in many aspects. It is a radically different situation from the one they lived in the past; and it is a heterogeneous group in which many foreigners are integrated, new residents who must be recognized and accepted by the previous ones as full members, and who must also identify with the alliance that gives life and cohesion to the people (cf. Isaiah 59:21; 66: 21).

It is a new and difficult era because everything is yet to be built. They bring with them old customs and practices that they have to modify or renounce. They are carried away by disappointment and discouragement, they mistrust newcomers and despise them; resources are scarce, and structures useless.

The prophet does not hide reality. He describes it, denounces it (Isaiah 58:1) and calls on the people to assume their responsibility, to trust in the fidelity of God and his creative power, to accompany worship with justice, to live in solidarity and with care for the oppressed and impoverished. Then, “you shall be like a watered garden, like an inexhaustible spring; you shall repair the ancient ruins, you will build on the old foundations; “Repairer of the breach they shall call you, restorer of ruined dwellings” (Isaiah 58:11-12).

In that palpable frailness, that is where the prophet proclaims his message of hope and reveals a reality that escapes the eyes of the majority: a new Jerusalem in which, along with its ancient inhabitants, many foreigners are welcomed as full members” who decide to unite and serve the Lord, who surrender to his love and service... and are faithful to my covenant” (Isaiah 56: 6). It is the power of the Lord that will bring about the communion of many peoples in the new city of God. With these sentiments, the prophet writes the beautiful poem that occupies the entire chapter 60: “Rise and shine, Jerusalem, let your light come. ... Raise your eyes and look around you: they all gather and come to you.”

The prophet does not act on his own initiative. All this work of gathering, summoning, encouraging, raising awareness... is driven by the Spirit of the Lord, who has called, anointed and sent. The proclamation of the vocation of the prophet occupies a central position in this third part of the book of Isaiah. For the first Christians it is a text that reflects, in summary, the plan of the mission of Jesus, and he voices it (Luke 4:16ff), since in him it acquires full fulfillment:

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted...” (Isaiah 61: 1).

## 1. A new creature: the Charismatic Family

*Your people shall rebuild the ancient ruins (Isaiah 58: 12)*

**I**t is another era that the prophet who is behind “Third Isaiah” announces from the beginning. It is the passage from Jewish particularism to the universalism of a covenant that is not determined by hereditary ties but by a personal decision to serve the Lord and fulfill his will. Only on that condition, those who had traditionally been excluded from the covenant “Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer” (Isaiah 56: 7).

The new ones do not come on loan, nor will they remain on a second level; but those who had been scattered are not forgotten either, but all are gathered into one people: “Oracle of the Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel – Others will I gather to them besides those already gathered” (Isaiah 56: 8). It is a “re-foundation”: “You will build on the old foundations” (Isaiah 58:12). And the guarantee of its authenticity will be the Spirit that the Lord gives it: “My spirit which is upon you and my words that I have put in your mouth” (Isaiah 59: 21).

### 1.1 Change of Leadership

In this third part, the main character is no longer consecrated life or a particular religious Institute. A new creature comes into play: the *charismatic Family*, which, as Francis defines it, “comprises various Institutes that recognize themselves in the same charism, and above all lay Christians who feel called, precisely in their lay condition, to participate in the same charismatic spirit.”<sup>1</sup> And while the latter grows and matures, there is an interaction and a change of leadership between the consecrated life

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis. *Apostolic letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*. 21-11214, III-I.

that strives to integrate into the charismatic Family, and the latter that welcomes the former, without diluting it, enriching itself at the same time with the gifts and prophetic signs that the consecrated life contributes to the Christian life.

The universalism expressed in Third Isaiah has been promoted by the Second Vatican Council through the idea of Church Communion. Each charismatic Family tries to embody it from its founding charism. In it, summoned by the charism, the various states or forms of Christian life come together, and are experienced as “different yet complementary, in the sense that each of them has a basic and unmistakable character which sets each apart, while at the same time each of them is seen in relation to the other and placed at each other’s service.” (Christifideles Laici 55.3).

In this small ecosystem where equal dignity, the common vocation to holiness, diversity and complementarity come together, the religious Institute has to position itself and take steps so that the entire charismatic Family takes center stage; and their own contribution, far from inhibiting the other members of the Family, stimulates them so that they also make their contribution with the greatest creativity and seeking the complementarity of all.

### *From paternity to fraternity*

There is a first moment in the birth of a charismatic Family that certainly has something of a paternal-maternal element. The religious Institute has traditionally been seen in this role. Perhaps it is more appropriate to compare the intervention of the Institute in those first generative moments with that of a midwife, who watches over the best conditions for giving childbirth, knowing that the generating force is due to the action of the Spirit in its wife, which is the Church. The Institute does not give “its charism,” but it shares with other believers the common charism received from the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the frame of mind that must prevail in their relationships with the other members of the charismatic Family is a fraternal one: they are all brothers and sisters in the same charism, in the same Family. And that

frame of mind is revealed in the efforts and strategies taken so that the laity assume their own responsibility and take the initiative into their own hands in the way of living out the charism and mission.

It is appropriate that we make a clarification here, which is at the same time a type of option from a global perspective, since the system of relationships and structures of co-responsibility that will be defined as the charismatic Family develops will depend on it. The entry of a lay person into the charismatic Family is not equivalent to, nor does it depend on his joining, in some way, the religious Institute that is at the origin of the Family in question. The Institute continues to be made up, solely and exclusively, of the consecrated persons who profess in it, according to the way it is recognized canonically.

The generative dynamic which is at the base of the Charismatic Family does not produce the movement of the laity towards the Institute, but rather that of the latter and of the laity towards the Charismatic Family. Belonging then, is given with respect to the Family; and the possible degrees of belonging are established with respect to it, not to the Institute. And it is this integration of the Institute in the Family, together with the laity who share the same founding charism, which will require the Institute to modify its own structures of leadership and government (Chapters, Councils...) to the extent that the new requirements require it. structures that bring together lay people and consecrated persons in the discernment of the charism or in the co-responsibility of the mission. All of this always respects the specificity and internal discipline of the Institute itself.<sup>2</sup>

### *Along with fraternity, experience*

The fraternal frame of mind must be combined with that of the expert. That is why the religious Institute offers its experience, backed by its own history, of the charism, of spirituality, of service to the mission. Consecrated persons who accompany or participate in the formation of the laity do so, not because their vows give them authority, but because they have become *experts*.

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. VC, 56.

Logically, as the laity begin to participate fully in the life of the charismatic Family and are rooted in the spirituality that is proper to them and they commit themselves to the vision and acquire the culture that has produced this story... from among themselves *experts* will also emerge who can be leaders in formation and be companions, not only for other lay people, but also for men and women religious.

This will be the moment in which the charismatic Family reaches maturity, when the charism is being shared fraternally based on different identities and life plans, the differences are positively valued without breaking the fraternity, and each vocation in the Family contributes to all the others a sign that reveals the richness of the charism.

### *A new creature that seeks its foundations and builds on them*

Unlike the religious Institute, which, even if only by canonical requirement, remains clear about its borders and strict in the membership criteria for religious profession, the Charismatic Family tends to adopt more inclusive membership criteria, fundamentally based in harmony with the founding charism. On this foundation the house is built: there is a seeking to integrate the Institutes of consecrated life and other lay groups and associations born based on the same charism.

The Family takes on another task that is still pending in more than a few cases: that of identifying the great rivers from which we come and from which our immediate founders are indebted, as well as the rivers that have been derived from ours. I use here the simile of the river, applied to the founding charisms, as opposed to the wells that are hidden within the fenced properties. Communication with the great river from which it was born has often been cut off, and vice versa. The time has come to recover lost ties and revitalize one other. The possibilities of expansion of the charismatic Family are barely spoken about.



## 1.2. The Charismatic Family and the Ecclesial Family

They are two creatures of the Church Communion, with a very strong and close relationship, so that they can be confused with each other, even in the name whose use is still haltingly used.<sup>3</sup>

“Ecclesial Family” is officially considered as a New Form of Consecrated Life.<sup>4</sup> But many of the characteristics with which it is defined are perfectly applicable to the other reality that is the object of our reflection in this booklet, the charismatic Family. See, for example, the concept of “ecclesial family,” as defined in the Acts of the V Meeting of the New Forms of Consecrated Life (2019): “By ecclesial family we understand the association of various states of life enriched by a single charism.” “The ecclesial family is a charismatic concretion of the ecclesiology of communion. A step has been verified based on the communion between the states of life in the Church, to the communion between the states of life in a charism.”<sup>5</sup>

“Charismatic consecration” is the term that seems to be agreed upon among the Ecclesial Families to designate, in an inclusive manner, the ties that unite the members of an Ecclesial Family, although each one works it out as specific to their state of life: priests, religious, married couples. There is no essential difference with respect to charismatic Families, in which it is common to find some ties in terms of consecration, offering or alliance, which could fit perfectly within that term.

Without going on to analyze and compare many other elements that we can find in both types of Families, let us now look at the main difference and see if its consequences are significantly different. It is clear that, both in one and in the other, the charism is the founding stone and the directional

---

3 Cf. Acts of the V Meeting of the New Forms of Consecrated Life (2019), numbers 22-23. In L. GROSSO GARCÍA (ed.), *Vocación y carisma. La vivencia de las Familias Eclesiales*, Madrid 2021, p. 277.

4 There are already several that have obtained canonical recognition at the pontifical level. Of those born in Spain: The Work of the Church (1997), the missionary Fraternity Verbum Dei (2000), the Id Institute of Christ the Redeemer, missionaries and identical missionaries (2009).

5 Acts of the V Encounter of the New Forms of Consecrated Life, numbers 10-11.

axis of all the development and growth of the Family, as well as the glue between the various states of life that come together in it. In the charismatic Family, the founding charism pre-existed the ecclesial ecosystem promoted by the Second Vatican Council, and it is by re-founding itself in this Church Communion ecosystem that gives rise to the charismatic Family. On the contrary, in the Ecclesial Family the founding charism was born in this ecosystem, and it is the founder or the foundress who sets in motion the process of sharing the charism between the different states of life.

In the first case, a conversion of the people and institutions that come “from behind” will be necessary, from another way of living the charism “exclusively,” normally based in the religious life, and there must be a significant change of structures that make possible the communion and the living out of the charism in communion. The process can be long and it runs the risk in which the obstacles of tradition keep newcomers as mere collaborators.

In the second case, everything seems to be easier because, apparently, you start from scratch, without having acquired vices, and fraternal communion can be brought about naturally. However, experience warns us that “old vices” surreptitiously seep into the new structure if care is not taken to detect and combat them before they take up the “right of residence.” This is what happens with clericalism, “one of the worst evils that the Church has today,” in the words of Pope Francis, and which it is not exceptional to find its manifestations in some internal relations of the Ecclesial Families.

Both the medicine, for some, and the antidote, for others, was suggested in the apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata*, by John Paul II, when speaking of the *new forms of evangelical life*: “The older Institutes... can be enriched through dialogue and an exchange of gifts with the Foundations appearing in our own day (VC 62). We apply it here to the fruit of the old and new charisms in the context of the Church Communion. The two creatures born should not ignore each other, but quite the contrary, they should engage in a dialogue from which both will greatly benefit. The synodal environment that we are living in the Church also pushes us in the same direction.

## 2. The new bearers of the charism

### *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me (Isaiah 61: 1)*

**A**t the center of his message, and as if wanting to give strength and justification to everything he proclaims, Third Isaiah places this affirmation about his own vocation, in which the initiative is entirely God's: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me" (Isaiah 61: 1a). And then he presents his mission, attributing it directly to the one who sent him: "He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted..." (Isaiah 61:1b); he does not introduce himself nor does he claim the initiative; but at the same time he seriously takes full responsibility for his mission.

The first Christians read these words and saw that they are fulfilled in a paradigmatic way in Jesus, for this reason the evangelist Saint Luke puts them in his mouth, in the reading that Jesus gives before his neighbors in Nazareth, and he adds later: "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4: 21).

### **"Today this is fulfilled in your hearing..."**

The affirmation of Jesus in Nazareth after reading this passage from Isaiah becomes a reality in each charismatic Family with each new member that joins it; but not in an automatic way, but as a utopian challenge that is always beyond all human achievement. Because it is not the act of one day, but a vocation for a way of life. And it is not the eager reaction to a promise of happiness, but the awareness of being summoned, gathered, consecrated and sent by the Spirit, in the lay or religious way of life.

Whoever arrives attracted by the charism of a charismatic Family, they need to find in this attraction an offer to join it is a path whose program can be summed up in the words of the prophet: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal... and to announce liberation...* And the condition that is placed on him to be accepted is his personal

commitment and solidarity with the whole Family, to make verifiable, each day a little more, these words: *Today this is fulfilled in your hearing...*

It is, therefore, a prophetic frame of mind, and not a docile type of collaboration, which is exhibited at the entrance threshold of a charismatic Family that aspires to keep its charism alive. The invitation to take responsibility for the gift or charism entrusted to them is inseparable from the fraternal welcome that those who want to be part of the Family must find. This responsibility is inherent to the vocation with which one feels that they belong to a charism.

We borrow here the words of Luigino Bruni: “There is a mystery of solitude at the heart of biblical prophecy and in every vocation to a charism. The prophetic vocation is not in the first place a call to a happy personal life, but rather to a mission to be carried out and a task of liberation and happiness for others”<sup>6</sup>

## **The lay invention of the charism**

Lay people who identify with a charism that comes from being lived out only by men and women religious, have to discover or invent the lay way of living it out. This must be done in dialogue with the religious, but the main initiative and creativity must be from the laity. They do not have to invent “another charism,” but rather its expression, their way of living it out, which in many ways will be similar to that of religious life, but in many others ways it must change. The new bearers of the charism will have to make their contribution to a reformulation discerned by all. If this charism is capable of inspiring the new generations and in ways of life that do not coincide with the traditional ones, a significant response to the needs that exist in the current era is that the Spirit continues to be present in them, keeps them alive and dynamic.<sup>7</sup>

---

6 L. BRUNI, op. cit., page 84.

7 D. O'MURCHU, *Rehacer la vida religiosa. Una mirada abierta al futuro*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2001, page 28.

The search for a new expression can come after living out the charism, identifying with it; after feeling possessed by the charism. The encounter is not an intellectual one, it is not the result of knowledge or of knowing things about the charism. It is the inner experience of feeling that the charism is revealed, or unveiled: as if it has revealed what we had inside of us but did not fully know it.

The harmony with the charism is not equivalent to accommodating something external; it refers rather to the discovery and identification of one's own image, recognized in the charism, by which one comes to say: *this is my identity*. From that moment on, one realizes that many of the words or symbols with which the charism has been presented clash with what they are living out, or they are like shoes or clothes that do not correspond to their style: then they try to find other expressions from the culture, the environment and the mediations by which their lives are shaped, that better reveal what they experience deep within themselves.

The Family begins a fruitful stage when the *lay charism "hatches,"* when the laity are not limited to copying an inheritance, but are capable of enriching it with their own originality and creativity. The beneficiaries are not only the laity, but also consecrated life if it knows how to be attentive to their contributions. The lay contribution, while being discerned, will help to critically review the cultural expressions inherited from past times in religious life, to relegate those that have become outdated or inappropriate for today, to assume new ones and, above all, to better identify what is essential and in how the lay life can coincide with the consecrated life.

### **“Because the Lord has anointed me”**

Feeling *anointed* or *consecrated* by the Lord is a consequence of knowing that one is touched by the Spirit, or “possessed” by the charism. The way to recognize that consecration is to enter into communion with others who have been “possessed” by the charism. In the history of religious life, entry into community and the corresponding acceptance by the community has been the way to recognize oneself and to be recognized as *consecrated*, before

any of the rites that, over time, were established to note and to celebrate the consecration. In a similar way, the laity who have been graced by the charism manifest it by integrating into the charismatic Family, in its dynamics and structures of communion. Baptismal consecration finds here a path of maturation, of perfection in love according to one's own state of life.

There may be rituals, gestures of alliance, expressions in the form of promises or vows, for the laity who feel called to express their consecration in the charismatic Family in this way. But none of these gestures consecrate, just as neither do religious rites or vows consecrate those who make them.<sup>8</sup> They are signs that publicly announce what is already being lived with integration into the Family, in communion and in the mission.

Each gesture is equivalent, in a certain way, to the affirmation that Jesus makes before the residents of Nazareth after reading the text from Isaiah that he is already embodying: "Today this is fulfilled in your hearing." This proclamation does not make Jesus more or less consecrated, nor more nor less sent. But it is a call to attention with which he publicly announces his consecration, his sending and his commitment to the announcement of the Kingdom to the poor, and that is the sign that causes astonishment, surprise and the opposition reaction in some or the decision to join the path indicated by Jesus, in others.

---

<sup>8</sup> "Consecration comes before the vows, includes them and goes beyond them existentially." CIVCSVA, *Identity and mission of the religious Brother in the Church*. Rome, 2015, 18.

### 3. Return to the peripheries, the source of life

*...To bring good news to the afflicted... (Isaiah 61: 1b)*

**T**he vocation which the prophet proclaims at the center of his message, and for which he attributes all the initiative to God, is inseparable from the mission that gives meaning and justifies that very vocation. The mission is remarkably selective: its direct recipients are not everyone in general, neither are they the most religious or the most faithful, but they are weakest of the people, those who suffer the most, the last: “He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners” (Isaiah 61: 1b). This selective announcement is not new in the context of his message, it coincides with the proposal he makes to the people in the name of God and with which he urges them to review their religiosity: “If you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom shall become like midday” (Isaiah 58: 10). Attention to the latter becomes a source of light. In tune with the two prophets that have preceded him First and Second Isaiah, Third Isaiah also leaves no room for doubt about what God expects of his people, what satisfies him, what causes his glory: “...bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house;

Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard” (Isaiah 68: 7-8).

#### Source of light and meaning

It is, to say the least, shocking that we are referring to “the peripheries” as a source of light and meaning. Pope Francis frequently uses this term to

express the ongoing challenge that is posed to consecrated life so that it does not remain withdrawn in itself, to find the 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 all of her. “This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 198). There is no alternative to this option, and Francis strongly emphasizes it in *Fratelli Tutti*, taking as reference the parable of the good Samaritan: “It speaks to us of an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity: we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love. We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering. That is the meaning of dignity.” (FT 68).

The *Periphery* is associated with the remote, the insecure, the margins, the borders, the impoverished areas, the waste of society. Even beyond this, breaking the limits of the periphery are the discarded, the excluded, the surplus, those who do not count or belong to society and must be hidden at all costs (cf. EG 53).

Christ, born on the periphery, identifies with those who are there: “For I was hungry and you gave me food” (Matthew 25: 35ff), “and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven” (EG 197). They are a source of evangelization. Contact with them dwarfs our internal problems, reveals to us the value of simplicity, shows us the suffering Christ in the variety and depth of human pain, confronts us with our Christian identity as mediators of love and salvation for those who proclaim the God of the poor. “Love also impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging. As Jesus told us: ‘You are all brothers’ (Mt 23:8).” (Matthew 23: 8). (FT 95).

A large number of Institutes were born out of the encounter of our founders with those on the periphery. Each time the Institutes distanced themselves from the periphery, they lost their reason for being they closed in on their



own problems and, in a supposed spirituality made up of rites and empty and disembodied forms, they ceased to be signs for the Church and they became useless. The charism was deprived of its force of attraction towards the hurtful reality of humanity and became an ideology that is resorted to in order to justify and to mask institutional tranquility.

The charismatic Family assumes this as an essential part of its identifying project, following the impulse of its charism: the return to the peripheries, recognizing them as a source of light, life and meaning, and not simply with a welfare attitude. “Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programs of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other ‘in a certain sense as one with ourselves’” (EG 199).

“True love is always contemplative” (ibidem). It is this contemplative attention that allows us to discover the poor in all their value, “in their own goodness, with their way of being, with their culture, with their way of living out the faith” (ibidem). This becomes revelation for us.” For this reason, the first concern will not be running a frenetic activity to solve the needs that are urgent for us. “Many times it is better to slow down, put anxiety aside to look into the eyes and listen, or to give up urgent needs in order to accompany the one who faltered along the way” (EG 46). The signs that we must give are those that lead us to understand life as a *time of encounter*: “By his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions” (FT 66).

As always, it will be easier to maintain the “welfare” structures inherited from the religious institution, and perhaps in many cases it will be the most effective. But it will be necessary to put *contemplative attention* first, which frees us from falling into a state of “welfare,” it awakens us to be in harmony with the poor, it reveals their mystery to us, it put in a frame of mind of discernment and it stimulates our creativity to seek new answers: “I ask you to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call” (EG 201). It is the solidarity embodied by the Good Samaritan: “The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society

of exclusion, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good” (FT 67).

The Charismatic Family must be distinguished more by a community search for new paths than by its ability to maintain works of doubtful evangelical significance today. Surely the contribution of the laity can emphasize the greater fluidity of structures, which makes it possible to reach out to those who are less visible in the peripheral areas of society; and in the small signs of daily life and close relationships with specific people. For their part, the members of Institutes of consecrated life have to be the *memory* for the whole Family that the periphery is waiting for everyone, and show it with their availability to go and to be in situations and places where others cannot go. All this should be done while knowing that neither one nor the other are mutually exclusive in any particular role.

## 4. The challenge of innovating communion

*They shall bring all your kin from all the nations*  
(Isaiah 66: 20)

**T**he new people that the prophet announces, in the universalist current that he himself advocates in interpreting the will of God, results in a heterogeneous group. Coexistence will not be easy. That is why he encourages them not to look back: “The former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind” (Isaiah 65: 17), and to build for a future that God himself guarantees: “They shall build houses and live in them, they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit; ... my chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isaiah 65: 21-22).

Images are recovered from First Isaiah to represent the good coexistence between such different people: “The wolf and the lamb shall pasture together, and the lion shall eat hay like the ox” (Isaiah 65: 25). And without fear of diversity, they will go out in search of the new calls: “I will place a sign among them; from them I will send survivors to the nations... which have never heard of my fame, or seen my glory. ... They shall bring all your kin from all the nations as an offering to the Lord” (Isaiah 66: 19-20). And all those foreigners will be fully included among the people, in such a way that any of the privileges that seemed more reserved for the pure elite of the people, are now available to the newcomers: “Some of these I will take as priests and Levites, says the Lord” (Isaiah 66: 21).

### 4.1 The dynamic of communion

Each charismatic Family is called to become a powerful agent of communion in the Church and in society. But this commitment implies a challenge: to develop a dynamic that creates ties between the its various component and produces channels for encounter outside the Family, with other Families, with other ecclesial and social groups, for the benefit of the mission entrusted to it.

The challenge is to *innovate* communion: the response requires creativity, because the standards of past times cannot be applied to the “liquid” society that prevails in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is not worth imitating the structuring and regularized membership that has characterized religious communities and institutions in order to give shape to the dynamic of communion which the charismatic Family needs to promote.

Although it may seem contradictory given what has been said, we must affirm: the community is necessary. Without a doubt, the charismatic Family must take the community as the driving and organizing center of its entire process of communion. And it is there, in the constitution and approach of the community, where the challenge to which we alluded to innovating communion is located.

We should take into account some criteria to adequately address the challenge<sup>9</sup>:

- First of all, let’s separate these two concepts: “community” and “life in common.” The second is a way of fleshing out the first, and has especially characterized religious life, but with notable differences between the various Orders and religious institutions. Community does not necessarily mean “life in common,” and one does not always imply the other. In fact, the Christian communities that Luke ideally sketches for us in the Acts of the Apostles are not communities of common life, under the same roof, but rather groups of believers who, united by faith (Acts 2: 42), develop ties of brotherhood and communion; the accent is placed on the fact that they “thought and felt the same thing”, or that “they were of one heart and one mind” (Acts 4: 32). This is communion.
- The subject in these communities is not limited to “us”. The art of combining and balancing the “I” with the “we,” personal autonomy with the community in solidarity, the capacity for discernment and individual decision-making with the integration that makes a common project possible must be cultivated. Without these two forces present and in dialogue in the community, one of two things will happen: either it disintegrates and breaks up, due to the sheer individualism of its

---

9 See the article by L. BRUNI: *La era de la comunidad infinita*. <https://www.avvenire.it/opinioni/pagine/luiginobruni-logica-carismatica-1>.

members, or it becomes a gregarious group that nullifies differences and personal richness and prevents the processes from maturing people's vocations.

- We have to imagine communities where more attention is paid to openness and welcoming of those who come from outside than to the protection and defense of those who are inside. Communities that are more concerned with building bridges than with building walls. The effort of imagination will have to be greater in those religious communities that have prolonged a pre-Conciliar way of living "inwards," in a *fuga mundi* (escape from the world) that protected its cloistered members from the dangers of the surrounding world.
- They must be communities where the incentives to fulfill or to go forward in the plans and proposals in communion, mission or spirituality, are not so much seen in the obligations and commitments contracted, but rather in the desire to excel in achieving new goals. In the challenges that the current reality presents to them in order to advance towards tomorrow, in the needs of the mission that the charism proposes to them and, above all, in the renewed awareness of a vocation in which the Spirit chooses them, reunites them with their brothers and sisters and makes them responsible for the mission entrusted to them.

## 4.2 Intentional communities

An *intentional community* is the type of community which the Charismatic Family aspires to develop among its members. When we want to show the importance of the commitment or the intensity of the ties by which the members of the community join it, and the strong influence that the community and its charism have on the various aspects of the life of its members, then we say that it is an *intentional community*. In saying this we make implicit that it is not limited to being a group of prayer or reflection or social commitment, but that it assumes all these aspects and many others, integrated into the *communion of life for the mission*.

For a community to be intentional, it is necessary that its members take on the *intention*<sup>10</sup> of building the community, following the inspiration of the charism around these three axes: *communion, faith and mission*. This intention is not equivalent to a benevolent contribution to an external cause, but rather to the *vocational commitment* of the person: the person fulfills his vocation through his intentional involvement in the community.

Without that intention, the community loses its reason for being. It could be a work team or a space for reflection or entertainment, or an affective support group, or a structure to meet the basic vital needs of its members. But a community will only be *charismatic*, that is, animated by a charism, if this charism is present and active in its members, which is revealed in the *intention* with which they unite to achieve the goals of the community.

### *A community with the intention of living fraternity*

It is a question of assuming a community dynamic which, first, creates ties between people and, then and simultaneously, is structured in various forms of community, according to vocational options, personal processes, identities... and according to the invitations which the Spirit is proposing to us in the Church Communion. Fraternity is projected in a firm and affectionate type of solidarity, as a prophecy for a society of liquid existence where one lives as a “multitude of individuals” or as a “solitary multitude.”

Community fraternity is a gift to be celebrated, cultivated and transmitted; a gift that we receive gratefully, a gift that we share as a task to build with the concrete people that make up the community, and a gift that we give in the mission. It is given to us as a seed, we are left with the task of making it germinate, grow and mature, which consists of a process of *communion for the mission*; it is the exercise of creating bonds of brotherhood, each time stronger and deeper, beyond just sympathy and immediate benefits.

---

<sup>10</sup> The RAE dictionary defines *Intention* as “Determination of the will in order to achieve an end”.

The concern of the members of a community will be to strengthen the bonds of communion day by day. Community structures must serve to flesh out these ties. They become useless or harmful when they tend to hinder or replace the ties. We do not measure the wealth and vitality of a community by the quantity or complexity of its community structures, but by the intensity and quality of the bonds of communion that unite its members.

*A community with the intention of listening to God;  
a community of faith*

A community founded on faith as an *intention* towards seeking God. It is not just a distant religious reference, but an inner dynamic that moves the intention of the community to seek God, to be encouraged by his Spirit. It is not faith of knowledge, but of a relationship with someone alive.

It is a community of faith, always with the intention of looking beyond the apparent and the immediate. Its frame of reference is to re-read the history of each day in the light of faith. The community sees itself as a mediator of God's action and love, and with that vision the community engages in self-discernment.

Because it is a community of faith, it is a *community of obedience*, in the most original sense of its etymology: "ob-audire" (*to listen intensely*). It takes on the commitment to listen intensely to the word and signs of God. It is *obedience* understood as an evangelical dimension, common to every believer, not as a religious vow: it is the commitment to seek God's will together, to be attentive and to listen to God's calls. This obedience creates communion and unites the wills of all in the service of the common mission.

### *A community with the intention of serving the mission*

A believable frame of reference of obedience allows the community to live while wanting to do God's work. The community receives its mission as a great gift from God which it must discover day by day. It believes in God's saving plan and feels called to collaborate in that plan.

The charism establishes a close affinity between the mission and the community: the community allows itself to be challenged by the mission, it sees itself in terms of the mission, it develops all its creativity in order to better serve the mission. The mission is the life motivation for the community.

The community thus discovers its "place of mission": it is in that place where it must "reveal" God and "be revealed by God." Each one from their own experience of the Christian mystery; this is not "apart from" or "despite" their other obligations as a spouse, father or mother, or member of a religious institution, but based on these identities and even being supported by wealth that they bring.

The community becomes *a provocative memory* of the God who saves from inside humanity, of the God who is incarnated in the most needy of human realities.

Each member of the community is in solidarity with the mission of the community and feels *responsible* for it, in terms of ensuring its continuity and achieving its objectives. The forms of solidarity can vary greatly according to the possibilities of the people and even within the same person, according to ages or situations: some may manifest this solidarity through their direct participation in the various activities carried out by the community program; others, as in the case of the sick and the elderly, through their prayer of support for the action of others; all, through their openness and attention to the needs of the recipients, the joint search for answers, the analysis and critique of the plans that are already in process...



Thus, involvement in the mission is not defined only by “what is done,” but by solidarity and identification, expressed in one way or another, with the ministry entrusted to the community. The important thing is to promote the awareness that, in the community, we carry out the mission in solidarity, and this refers above all to the concept of the project, its discernment and evaluation in community, more than the way of carrying out specific tasks.

### 4.3 Participation in the Charismatic Family

The community subject “WE” of the charismatic Family is, in principle, plural, not something uniform. It allows for various forms of participation, with certain conditions that become a challenge, since they give rise to a tension that should be enriching, but which can be unbalancing when ties of integration are not well defined or do not adapt to the vocational reality of the subject and the life situation.

*What is included in that “WE?”* It is a plurality of individuals who belong to distinct groups and who participate in various groups (social, religious, sports, political, social commitment groups...): some have opted for celibacy; others for marriage. For some, their life (and agenda) is marked by exercises and community practices; for others, by very varied types of participation, including the family, social groups...

*How is this “WE” constructed?* How do the individuals that compose it interact or integrate with one another in order to give rise to the community project? It is not the simple result of a sum of individuals, but the fruit of a relationship in which the feeling that *we belong* to each other, the experience of mutual *solidarity* based on communion in a *common spirit*, and *co-responsibility* with regard to each other are combined, a *common project* of mission.

The community is the place par excellence for the building of the subject that makes up the charismatic Family, both individually and as a community. The ties of belonging or participation with which each one decides to join the community will determine the strength and consistency of the “We”.

It could be a *bond of deep belonging*, if the person takes on the community project as a priority and turns it into a place for discerning personal options. It will be a *bond of selective participation* if the person adheres only partially to the community project and participates occasionally in community practices.

The bonds of deep belonging provide cohesion to the inner community core. In this nucleus it is the whole person who is committed; there is mutual interdependence, solidarity goes beyond immediate benefit. The founding charism needs this nuclear community in order to be transmitted.

But also, the existence of a circle of members who participate selectively provides the community with other views, it opens it up to other concerns and other horizons, and it helps it not to close in on itself.<sup>11</sup>

---

11 This section is amplified in Botana, A. *Volver al mundo a la misión que nos convoca*. Colección Frontera-Hegian, 101, pages 81 - 84.

## 5. A spirituality project for the world

*Upon your walls, Jerusalem, I have stationed sentinels; By day and by night, they shall never be silent (Isaiah 62: 6)*

**T**hroughout the book of Isaiah there is a strong demand for a spirituality that is not reduced to mere ritualism, but that comes from within, one that is accompanied by justice, that seeks the ways of the Lord and listens to his word. Third Isaiah reinforces this prophetic call in the form of denunciation, challenge, and promise. It is necessary that the people being formed establish themselves in a relationship with God that does not ignore them, but reconnects them to the relationship with their neighbor and, especially, with those most in need. “I dwell in a high and holy place, but also with the contrite and lowly of spirit” (Isaiah 57: 15). “Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, sharing your bread with the hungry?” (Isaiah 58: 6 -7).

Some have the special task of being a memory for the people, to keep them aware of God’s promises: “Upon your walls, Jerusalem, I have stationed sentinels; By day and by night, they shall never be silent” (Isaiah 62: 6). The central memory, the one that must be the foundation of the religion that the people must practice, is the love that the Lord has for them: “The loving deeds of the Lord I will recall, the glorious acts of the Lord, Because of all the Lord has done for us...” (Isaiah 63: 7). And despite the complaints that the prophet makes about the infidelities of the people, the accent is on the mercy of God; It will be a filial and trusting relationship: “Yet, Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you our potter: we are all the work of your hand” (Isaiah 64: 7).

### Open window to spirituality

Charismatic Families are born in the Church Communion with a spirituality plan for the members themselves, but with the desire of being a reminder to

other believers and also a sign to the world: *sentinels on the walls*, according to the expression of Isaiah (Isaiah 62: 6). They take on the challenge that comes from a world that is closed to transcendence and that at the same time has an agonizing need for meaning, fulfillment, and salvation.

Charismatic Families face the urgent challenge of developing a spirituality “for the world,” both for lay people and for religious: a spirituality capable of making us feel that we are part of this world, created and loved by God, redeemed by Jesus, renewed and sanctified by the Spirit; a spirituality capable of making us see this world and the humanity that inhabits it, as the mediation through which God reveals himself to us day by day and in which he wants to establish his Kingdom using us as instruments.

Each charismatic Family wants to be, for this world, a window open to spirituality. Open window, no screen; that is to say, what it shows must be credible, because it is not a simple projection of virtual images, but a reference of what is being experienced in life, in relationships, in commitment.

What in another time was the responsibility taken on by religious life, to find the words and symbols with which we give meaning to our relationship with the world and with God, today it is the charismatic Family who has to exercise this in a shared way among all its members. But it is the laity who have the greatest urgency to find, from their experience of daily reality in the most common social structures, the cultural and linguistic forms that are intelligible to the contemporary world, and to show a spirituality that is essentially a relational one, a search for a God who loves us and comes out to meet us, and not so much a set of rules, rites and practices.

## **A spirituality for the mission**

What prevents a charismatic Family from being reduced to a welfare service organization is precisely the founding charism, which provides the people who make it up with a horizon that goes far beyond the satisfaction of basic human needs.

Historically, religious life has been highly appreciated for the services of assistance it has provided to society with which it has responded to the numerous needs of the human person, and especially of the little ones and the abandoned. Teaching the ignorant, curing the sick, sheltering the homeless,... are paving stones with which religious life made *pathways of humanity*. But religious life was not only a “slayer of paving stones.”

The founding charisms have helped consecrated persons to set their sights on the horizon; and with that tension in their eyes they became *civil engineers*. Their ultimate concern was not with the lesson they taught, or the wound they healed, or the loneliness they accompanied, but rather that each one of the people they cared for reached their fullness, discovered and savored their dignity as a human person, felt inside the strength and vitality of God’s love and became an intermediary of this for humanity. This is the spirituality of the mission. The person discovers himself as a mediator of God’s love.

It is this dynamic look, provided by the founding charism, that religious life must share with the entire charismatic Family. Its function is to provide prophetic signs that point out the pathways of humanity and point to the dignity of the person as a child of God.

## 6. The future of Charismatic Families

*They all gather and come to you (Isaiah 60: 4)*

**T**he culmination of Third Isaiah offers the vision of a new people that overflows the limits of ancient Israel and forms a great community where foreigners can integrate without being discriminated against. The Lord is the one who gathers and congregates and guides with his spirit all those who have responded to his call: “I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; they shall come and see my glory” (Isaiah 66: 18). The pilgrimage that was mentioned at the beginning of the book (Isaiah 2: 2-5) returns here as an image to reinforce what the people have become. God remakes his covenant and this will be guaranteed by the Spirit which the Lord has instilled in those who are here now, and it will continue with their descendants: “This is my covenant with them, which I myself have made, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you and my words that I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouths of your children nor the mouths of your children’s children from this time forth and forever, says the Lord.” (Isaiah 59: 21).

### 6.1 “To embrace the future with hope”

This was the third objective proposed by Pope Francis for the Year of Consecrated Life, 2015.<sup>12</sup> A hope, Francis added, “ which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future.” Great history? For those who continue to look at religious life or the Institute itself in a self-referential way, in the style of the pre-conciliar Church, that “great history” cannot be other than the repetition of the glorious times of the past, of the great religious institutions carrying out great apostolic works in solitary.

---

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Pope FRANCIS *To all consecrated people* on the occasion of the year of consecrated life (21 November 2014), I.3.

But it is not about making a new edition of the past. The future towards which, in the words of Francis, “the Holy Spirit leads us to continue doing great things with us,” is situated within a context: that of Church Communion. It is in this ecosystem which has recovered the common ground, where the mission is unique and shared, and has brought together the common treasure that includes the founding charisms, that is where we are called to “continue writing great history,” no longer with religious life alone, but alongside many other believers who participate in the same charisms based on different states of life.

The Charismatic Family offers a real content to that “great history” that we are already writing while we are making progress in its construction. It is on the journey that we ask ourselves the question of the future. Let’s not wait for the answer of a fortune teller. Let’s build the story of our own collective experience, contrasted and discerned, and fix our eyes on the horizon that is drawn as we move forward.

Let’s not fool ourselves by trying to put numbers to the Charismatic Family. Francis’ warning is also valid here: “We must not give in to the temptation of numbers and efficiency, and even less to trust in our own strength.” That future has to do with the ability to inspire, to communicate life, to build the Church, to serve the mission. It has to do with the ability to become a witness of fraternity, of “communion for the mission.” It has to do with the ability to make manifest the beauty of the Gospel, but also the beauty of one’s own charism, and to become an attractive face of the Church.

The future will be the work of the Holy Spirit. We do not know what his plans are, with which he always surprises us. But we do know that He will not do anything “in spite of” us, but counting on our availability, or better yet, our creative fidelity. Therefore, as far as we are concerned and without questioning or wanting to guess the plans of the Spirit, we can be well assured that we are preparing for the future in the present. It is through what we see and what happens in the present that we can predict, to a certain extent, what the future will be like. “Examine the horizons of life and the present moment with vigilance,” Francis told us in the aforementioned letter.

## 6.2 Daughters of Church Communion

The call for synodality that resounds urgently in the Church today is one more sign that something is changing, that the image of the pyramid is giving way to the circle, now irreversibly so. The development of the charismatic Families is in this movement of ecclesial re-foundation and recovery of its foundational covenants. These are places of experimentation of Church Communion. Each one must be a reflection of it, and places emphasis on the relationships between the various members that make up the Family. They are fraternal and complementary relationships that are sustained in a frame of mind, or better yet, in an “in-depth decision” that radically guides life. We will also say it in the words of Pope Francis, when he invites us in *Evangelii Gaudium* to place ourselves in the mission as “*people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others*” (EG 273).

Each one of the members of the Family carries this conviction in his heart: “I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world” (EG 273). Reciprocally, he can also say from his heart to each of the others with whom he shares the mission, consecrated and lay people: *You are mission.*

In that reciprocity and complementarity, the ties that specify and express the decision to “be with” and to “be for” are woven. We discover what we are “together,” the common treasure on which we base our Christian identity; and what we are and what we mean “to each other,” with the gifts and differences that allow us to mutually enrich each other to better serve the common mission.

The center in this relationship is the founding charism, lived based on different forms of Christian life. Its purpose is to serve the mission indicated by the charism, in a co-responsible way, with the creative capacity to invent new works and not simply to prolong those inherited from the past.

A simple image can help us *to see* the essence of the charismatic Family, constituted as an icon of Church Communion: it is the *common home* of those who have been *called as a vocation*, “possessed” by the founding charism. The house, a place of coexistence, of communion, of mutual



support, of dreaming together a better world and turning that dream into common projects, a place to celebrate the presence of Jesus together and present ourselves together as his witnesses. It is *home* and also a school of communion, assuming the challenge that John Paul II presented to the Church for the new millennium (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43), because it is a place where one experiences, learns, shares a way of being and transmits it to new generations.

This *common home* does not coincide with the religious Institute, which, naturally, has made its margins more flexible or “elastic” in order to allow the participation of lay people within it. Nor is it equivalent to a *circular crown* around the religious Institute: like a separate space in which the laity who come to participate in the charism are located, and where their dependence on religious and the separation from the laity are maintained – religious life with respect to lay life. Both schemes are clearly self-referential and try to prolong a past that no longer corresponds to the idea of Church Communion.

It is about a *common home* in which the Institute(s) of men and women religious and the lay groups coexist and integrate. It is a new house, still under construction. The partitions are made and remade as the relationship between its inhabitants progresses, they share the mission, they learn to discern together, they carry out common projects. The common rooms and those that belong to each other are being defined. Identities or differences are not erased, but everything that unites them is evident and they complement each other to promote together the mission that has been entrusted to *their home*.

### 6.3 Co-responsible leadership of the Family

We now refer to the consistency that we have stated about participation in the charism, becoming co-responsible for the mission, living communion based on solidarity and complementarity. The Charismatic Family cannot accept the dependence of one group on others, of the laity on religious, or of women on men. The leadership of the Family in all that is common

must be co-responsible, and for this the exercise of leadership will need structures that allow the participation of the various groups that make it up.

It is normal and understandable that the charismatic Families that have their origin in a religious Institute begin their journey using the structures that are proper to it, and that are subject to canonical regulations: General and Provincial Chapters, Councils... Lay people are invited to participate in these structures, in whole or in part, but they cannot do so with equal voice and vote with religious representatives. There comes a time when you have to opt to place yourself within what is new in order to create what the new needs.

Let us resort to the terminology used by Jesus: *new wineskins* must be created for the *new wine*; at the same time, it is necessary to modify the *old skins*, so that they leave space for what the *new skins* need.

Let us first clarify this terminology that comes to us from the gospel, in this context:

- *Old wineskins* are the structures that correspond to the religious institution. In itself it is not a pejorative concept. It is about the wineskins that have allowed a wine to mature. A good wine has been made thanks to those wineskins.
- *New wineskins* are the structures that facilitate a new relationship between religious and laity as they participate in the charism and the mission. They are wineskins for a new wine, for a new time, for Church Communion. With the expression "*new wine*" we refer to the laity who come to participate in the founding charisms in a new way, but also to the relationship that is created between laity and religious in this new situation.

We need *new wineskins* that allow the new wine to mature. The new situation needs to be organized within the proper parameters of Church Communion.

### *Creation of new wineskins*

It is about the development of structures (collegial and personal) of discernment, coordination, decision-making, in which the laity and religious can intervene, on equal terms. The type of structures will depend on the type of mission, the extent and complexity of the works...; but all levels and plans of the mission must be taken into account.

When starting up the new structures with the new members incorporated into the mission, it is not a question of making a duplicate of those that the Institute has for its operation. Let us value and promote the ability of the laity to see reality with new eyes, to discern the calls of the charism and the invitations of the Spirit with a new sensitivity. For this reason, the organization of the new wineskins must facilitate interpersonal encounters, mutual listening, and shared discernment.

The same observation can be made with regard to the authority of these structures within the charismatic Family. It is not an authority “over” the Family, but from within the Family. It is not raised in juridical terms, but rather in communion with the charism. It is in the same way that the relationship within the charismatic Family is not considered in juridical terms but rather in communion with the charism for the mission.

For this reason, the authority of these structures does not have to create conflict with those of the religious Institute. It is not of the same type. The authority, for example, of the general assembly of a charismatic Family, or of the assembly of an area equivalent to a religious province, is not equivalent to nor does it replace that of the general or provincial chapter of the Institute or of the Institutes integrated into the Family in question. Said assemblies, formed by the representatives of the groups and institutions that make up the Family, have to fulfill the functions of communion in the founding charism, they are forums to share experiences and to discern the calls and responses that the charism awakens in the mission.

The authority comes from its ability to illuminate and guide the paths to be followed by the charismatic Family. It is, therefore, a moral authority, as a light that imposes itself when it helps to light the way, and it must

integrate these two qualities, as lines of force that must move each assembly: *fidelity and creativity*. Thus it can be described as *prophetic authority*. The discernment it provides must then be put into practice in the decision-making bodies that correspond to said groups and institutions.

What we have just said is not in opposition to – on the contrary – it demands that the new structures take on functions that until now were only of the religious Institute and they become common to the entire Family. We can see this below.

### *Adaptation of the old wineskins*

The new wineskins will not work if they do not have adequate space, that is, if the field of attributions attributed to them is still occupied by the old wineskins. It will be necessary to adapt the discernment, coordination and decision-making structures that are proper to the religious Institute (Chapters, Councils, Leadership Teams...), which, until the beginning of the concept of shared mission, were in charge of managing everything related to the mission: even reserving final decisions in everything that corresponds to the patrimony of the Institute, they must cede or delegate to the new structures of shared mission the functions that they take on.

At the moment, then, in which the charismatic Family begins to take shape and, with it, the new wineskins for its leadership and coordination, the process of *emigration of furniture* also begins, that is, of the themes that were the object of discernment and decision-making in the organs of a leadership and government proper to an Institute that walks alone, towards the organs of a charismatic Family that *contains* the Institute. It is not about an indiscriminate transfer, but it is about everything that is shared regarding the mission, formation, the reading and discerning the challenges that come from society and the Church, and the answers that can be given, in complementarity, based on the entire Family.

But there is a second element of adaptation that has to take place in the Institute's own structures, as a consequence of the existence of the new wine and looking at the Institute's own interest and the religious life of its members: that is, even when it comes to issues that affect the Institute, there is the need to have the contribution of those who are already living the same founding charism based on other forms of Christian life. They are no longer called to feel part of this Family, but because they are part of it, they are asked for their contribution as experts in the charism.<sup>13</sup>

#### **6.4 A Charismatic Family capable of regenerating consecrated life in its inner core**

We began this reflection by referring to the capacity of consecrated life to engender new life when the Spirit is alive within it. Many charismatic Families have been born from this idea and capacity to generate. Now is the time to find reciprocity: a Family that allows itself to be enlivened by the founding charism will also be capable of regenerating the consecrated life within. In the way it was, or in a *new form of consecrated life*? There is no *self-evident* answer, since it will be the vocations that the Spirit awakens that will come about in one way or another, always in dialogue with the whole of the Family, and with the Church and its hierarchical representatives.

The consecrated life is a living memory of the Spirit in the charismatic Family: non-conformist, provocative, "dangerous" memory (J. B. Metz), which brings to consciousness the actions of God, his gifts and his calls, and remains actively open to the invitations of the Spirit (cf VC 33). Each founding charism tends to give rise to the consecrated life as the promoter of the prophetic force contained within it. The consecrated life revives in the Family sensitivity to human needs and the urgencies of the Kingdom of God, it makes itself attentive to the calls of God and of the Church. At least, that is its function, although it does not correspond exclusively to it.

---

<sup>13</sup> Other suggestions on the structures that will facilitate the communion and leadership of the charismatic Family can be found in Botana, A., *Sharing the charism and mission with the laity*. Frontera-Hegian Collection, 62, chapter 5, especially pages 89-91.

It is concerned, then, with making present in the charismatic Family the root that sustains it, the Mystery to which it must refer, the Plan of God of which it is the instrument. Above good planning-organization-efficiency, the consecrated life must contribute to the Family project concrete signs that the first value is God, the Gospel, faith (cf. VC 25). It has to communicate the habit of continually raising the profound meaning of life, the habit of seeking God and discovering his action and his signs in history, the habit of seeing ourselves as instruments in his saving work.

The charismatic Family cannot afford the fatal oversight of losing the consecrated life within. An institution may disappear, many works may be lost that over time become useless or outdated. But it will be necessary that among those who make up the Family there are those who feel vocationally called to proclaim with their lives, as a memory that resonates throughout the Family, the message of Third Isaiah: “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted...” (Isaiah 61: 1).

### *Guidelines for personal and community reflection*

1. As in the two previous parts, at the beginning of each section there is a brief review, in this case from Third Isaiah, regarding the specific theme of the section. We propose reading these reviews “continuously,” beginning with the one that begins the chapter, and discussing them: what do they suggest to us, what signs do we find to be able to interpret the moment we are living in, to be able to recognize our current history as *salvation history*?
2. What does the title of this third part awaken in us: “A new Family that welcomes consecrated life?” Does this change of leadership cause discomfort or positive acceptance?
  - It is not “the movement of the laity towards the Institute, but that of the Institute and of the laity towards the charismatic Family”: What does this statement have to do with the way we are to proceed?

3. *The lay invention of the charism*: What is the scope of this expression in the case of our founding charism? What do we see as necessary, and what seems risky to us?
  - “To feel consecrated,” “possessed by the charism,” “to enter into communion”: In the text these three expressions are closely related. What visible or public aspects should that relationship translate into?
4. *The peripheries*: what concrete meaning do they have for us? What are the peripheries that await our contact, our help, our solidarity? How are they part of our community prayer, our formation, our contemplation, and how are they included in our mission?
5. Starting from the reality of our community and from the community structures in which we move, what changes or innovations do we need to incorporate so that our communion is significant for the Church and society today, and so that the new ones “possessed” by the charism can participate in this communion?
  - How can we explain in our own terms that our community is intentional, and that the community called together by a charism must be intentional, without also having to be religious or consecrated?
  - What should we take into account in order to achieve a constructive balance within the community, between personal autonomy and community solidarity, between recognition of the “I” and the need for the plural subject “we”?
6. What elements of our way of living and expressing spirituality are favoring its concealment or preventing its understanding by people who are in tune with our charism? How can we update it? What aspects of our spirituality help to better grasp the meaning of the mission that we carry out?
7. What data, what signs allow us to affirm that we are *already embracing the future with hope*? What factors affect our charismatic Family in becoming a reality, and which are serving as obstacles? On the part of consecrated persons, is there an awareness and will to build the Family based on a fraternal relationship with the laity and with a frame of mind of service?

- Can we describe the path we are taking in terms of co-responsibility of the laity with the religious personnel in the Charismatic Family? What new wineskins have been created, how do they facilitate this co-responsibility, and how have the old wineskins or structures of the religious Institute been adapted to make it possible?



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARDANZA MENDILIBAR, M<sup>a</sup> Isabel, *Sabiduría Cristiana de la Reducción*. Colección Frontera-Hegian 106, Ed. Frontera, Vitoria-Gasteiz 2019.

ARNAIZ, José M<sup>a</sup>., *Por un presente que tenga futuro. Vida consagrada hoy: más vida y más consagrada*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2003.

BOTANA, A., *Compartir carisma y misión con los laicos. La Familia evangélica como horizonte*. Colección Frontera-Hegian 62, Ed. Frontera, Vitoria-Gasteiz 2008.

*Volver al mundo a la misión que nos convoca*. Colección Frontera-Hegian 101, Ed. Frontera, Vitoria-Gasteiz 2018.

BRUNI, L., *La destrucción creadora. Cómo afrontar las crisis en las organizaciones motivadas por ideales*. Ed. Ciudad Nueva, Madrid 2019.

CASTELLANO, J., *Replantear el carisma y los carismas de vida consagrada desde la misión compartida: forma de vida y de misión*. En *La misión compartida*. 31<sup>a</sup> Semana Nacional para Institutos de Vida Consagrada. Publicaciones Claretianas. Madrid 2002, pp. 131-160.

CENCINI, A., *Abrazar el futuro con esperanza. El mañana de la vida consagrada*. Sal Terrae, Bilbao 2019.

CHITTISTER, J., *Tal como éramos. Una historia de cambio y renovación*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2006.

COZZA, R., *Ningún carisma basta por sí solo. El final de los espacios cerrados*, Paulinas, Madrid 2019.

ESTRADA, Juan A., *Religiosos en una sociedad secularizada. Por un cambio de modelo*. Trotta, Madrid 2008.

GROSSO GARCÍA, L. (ed.), *Vocación y carisma. La vivencia de las Familias Eclesiales*. Edice, Madrid 2021.

O'MURCHU, D., *Rehacer la vida religiosa. Una mirada abierta al futuro*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2001.

POTENTE, A., *Es vida y es religiosa. Una vida religiosa para todos*. Ed. Paulinas, Madrid 2018.

RUPNIK, M. - CAMPATELLI, M., *Veo una rama de almendro. Reflexiones sobre la vida consagrada*. Ed. San Pablo, Madrid 2015.

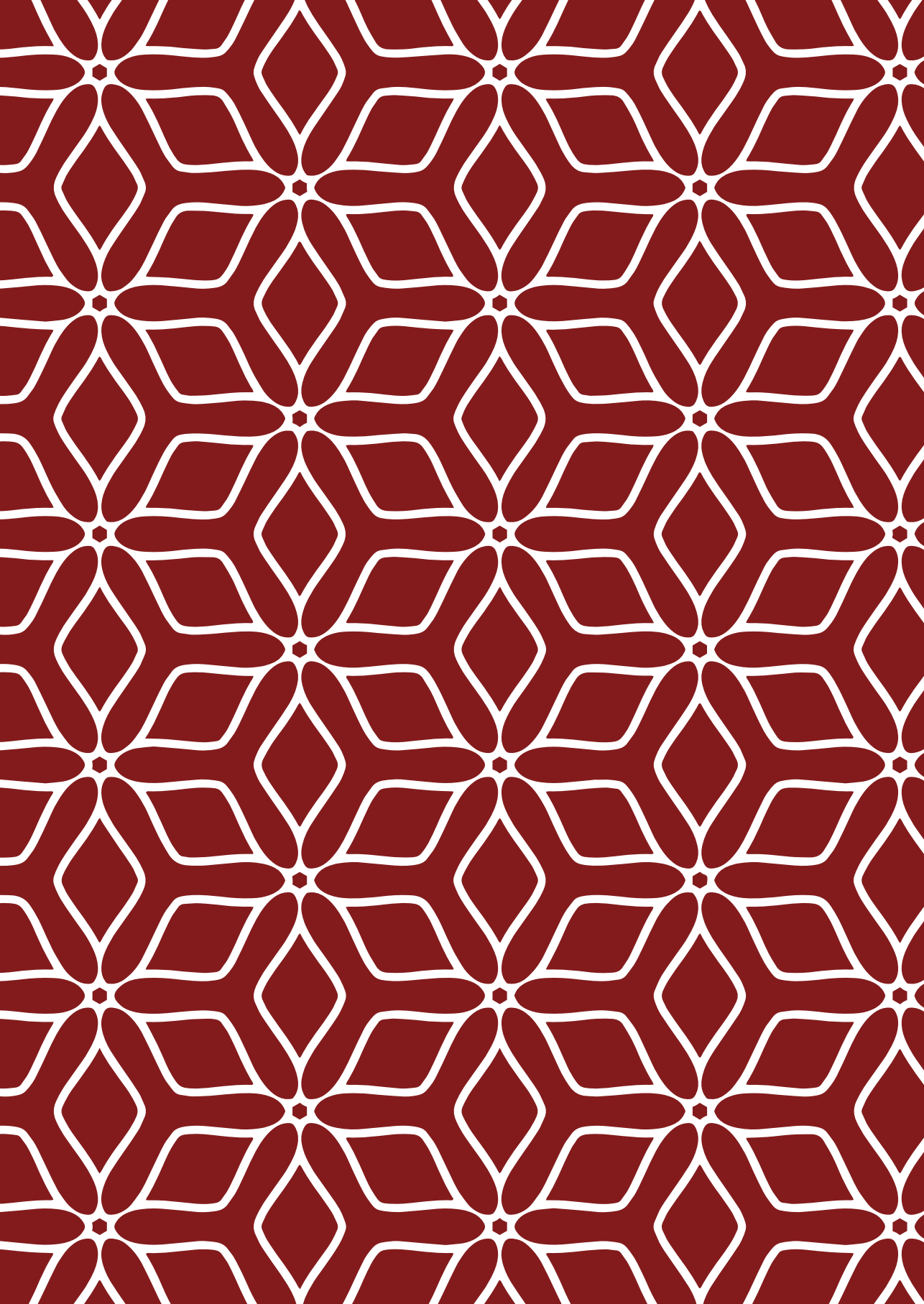
TEJERINA ARIAS, G., *Signum Communionis. El carisma de la vida consagrada en la comunidad eclesial*. Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid 2016.

WIRTZ, P. – GOROSTOLA, L., ¿Carismas con futuro más allá de las instituciones? En *La misión compartida*. 31ª Semana Nacional para Institutos de Vida Consagrada. Publicaciones Claretianas. Madrid 2002, pp. 161-176.











# Brothers of the Christian Schools



**lasalleorg**

[www.lasalle.org](http://www.lasalle.org)