



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 1: "VOCATION, CHARISM & MISSION"

sheet 4

2. Charism

[I] In Particular & Of St Francis



Here we go again— 'charism'. So, what on earth is that? [Even Microsoft doesn't recognise it!]

Okay. '**Charism**' comes from a Greek word, 'charisma' meaning a gift freely and graciously given. In Greek Christian literature it came to refer solely to the gift of divine grace. **It can be used to describe earthly goods given by God—privileges granted to the people of God** [Rom 11.29 'For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable']; gracious gift of rescue from danger [II Cor 1.11 'You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us in answer to many prayers']; spiritual possession of the believer [Rom 1.11 'for I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you']; gift of redemption [Rom 5.15f 'But the free gift is not like the trespass...And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin']. **It can describe a special gift of a non-material kind—bestowed by grace on individual Christians** [I Pet 4.10 'As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace']; gift of an office by laying on of hands [I Tim 4.14 'Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the council of elders laid their hands upon you']; of the power to be sexually continent [I Cor 7.7 'But each man has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another']; spiritual gifts in a special sense [Rom 12.6 'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...'].



For centuries after apostolic times, 'charismata' [gifts] designated only the exceptional gifts of the Spirit [I Cor 12-14] for Church edification.

Today 'charisma' means a special quality that attracts to, or distinguishes, an individual; and 'charism' is a distinguishing 'flavour' that marks one thing out from another. There are numerous 'Orders' [things]; only Francis' Orders have 'Franciscanus' as their charism [flavour].

Whether extraordinary or simple and humble , **charisms** are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men and to the needs of the world.

Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them, and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms. [Catechism, 799 & 800]



CHARISM OF THE FOUNDER:

It is the gift [or gifts] particularly granted by God to a believer that leads to the foundation of an institute or religious movement and that includes a specific way of being through exclusive spiritual experiences that God grants to him.

CHARISM OF THE INSTITUTE OR THE MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTE:

This is the specific mission, the goal, the apostolic task of the members of an Institute, transmitted by the Founder who, by his example and his life draws and convinces others to follow him. The members receive the particular grace of vocation to follow this life experience and, in some way, to be associated to the charism of the Founder.



Charism of Founder “transmitted” > followers
 Charism of Francis transmitted > members of Franciscan Family



From 1209 > present day



The charismatic character of a Founder is certainly unrepeatable. But in some way a channelling of his charism takes place as to allow that what is unrepeatable to be repeated. The Institution [or Rule] offers this channel, which in some way transmits and makes accessible the charism of the Founder in the course of history. This happens, by analogy, between the Incarnation and its prolongation in the Church, and the charism and its prolongation in the followers of a Founder: both occur by the action of the Holy Spirit—for believers, in baptism; for followers, in Profession. That is, Franciscans “catch” Francis’ charism as they live according to the Rule.