



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module1: "VOCATION, CHARISM & MISSION"

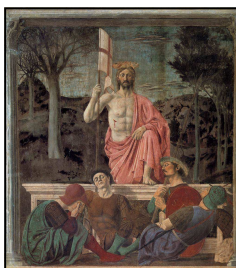
sheet 5

2. Charism

[II] Of the Franciscan Family

To an exceptional mission there must be a corresponding extraordinary charism to accomplish it—a comprehensive gift that radically remoulds the whole life in all its expressions and enables it for the mission.

A very special gift enabled Francis to share the very same feelings of Jesus-Son, who made himself poor, took the condition of a servant, was obedient all the way to death on a cross, acting always in harmony with the Father—Phil 2.5-8. By gift, Francis thinks with the **mind of the son**, sees with the **eyes of the son**, loves with the **heart of the son**, acts with the **abandonment and dedication of the son**. And by virtue of this most peculiar gift Francis is configured to Christ, founder of the Church, and can be the one to “repair” that Church.



Francis used to say, ‘I desire to be found always and completely in harmony with and obedient to God’s will alone in everything’ - a comparability with Jesus who said, ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.’ [John 3.34] Francis experienced ‘his’ emptying, ‘his’ total self-emptying—though his humility never let him make comparisons. God in Christ was the eternal object of his love, ‘O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles himself that for our salvation he hides himself under an ordinary piece of bread!’





But Francis was exceptional. God called him; God gave him this charism. Where does that leave me?

All of us, the children of Francis—OFS, 1st, 2nd, 3rd Order—are called to participate in his exceptional gift-charism and to pursue his mission. He is the master and model for us all. Today, more than ever, Francis indicates to us the way to follow, to live in full awareness our vocation and effectively accomplish the mission entrusted to him. As Pius IX, praying at the tomb of St Francis, reminds us:



‘You [Francis] entrusted the reforming mission to your children who responded well to this high task’

How will I know if this is for me?



If you find the humble God, the simple God, the servant God, the God who has emptied himself, and if you find him in the Son and if in finding him, you make him not only the object of intellectual reflection but you manage somehow to make him the foundation of your life and practice, as Francis did, then, this is a Franciscan vocation. The gift that was already in you, in embryo, becomes more and more manifested according to the eternal plan of God for you. You will, then, discover that the purpose of your life is to follow Jesus in the steps of St Francis of Assisi.



Then what?

Then St Francis’ *charism* starts working in you to transform you and enable you for the mission, in a *personal* way, blending in with your own charisms [gifts]. Francis remains always the example, the model, and by looking constantly to him I will be the better able to define my charism in his, becoming a living continuer of his mission. By embracing St Francis’ form of life—according to our state of life—through profession we *constitutionally* receive his charism.



Okay. I think I’ve got it now. **Receiving his charism** means: receiving Francis as my model enables me to **receive his ‘spirit’** [like Elisha? - II K 2.9, 13,15]; getting a **special grace** which God gives his children [a state springing from profession?]; **constitutional intercession with St Francis** [we become his spiritual children?]; and **inclusion in the Franciscan Family** [with the vital reciprocal communion that goes with it?]



I couldn’t have done a better summary myself!