

Horizons of the Charism

Religious and Lay Partnership

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History of Associate Programmes and their connection to Religious Institutes



Early Monastic Period - 6th Century

- Benedictines began forming fraternities of prayer
- Purpose: Offered masses and prayers for success of apostolate and repose of the dead
- Widened gradually to almsgiving to the poor and visiting the sick
- Finally accepted oblates – these made a formal private promise



Middle Ages – 12th/13th Centuries

- Juridic forms established with their own rule
- Under the Religious Order's direct supervision
- Example: 3rd order of St. Francis



17th Century

Many religious orders had laity share in the spirit and apostolic endeavour either as

- 3rd order or
- Public or private Associations of the Faithful



1917 Code of Canon Law

- Restricted 3rd orders
- Religious Congregations could not themselves form associations
- Special approval from Rome needed
- Most activity regarding lay associates cantered around Catholic Action Groups and Secular Institutes



1983 Code of Canon Law

- Reflected the theology of Vatican II
- Allowed for associations connected to religious institutes
- Directed that institutes that have associates joined to them have a special care that these associates are imbued with the genuine spirit of the founder

Charism



History of Religious Life

5 Great Ages

- Desert
- Monasticism (e.g. Benedictines, Cistercians)
- Mendicant Orders (e.g. Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites)
- Apostolic orders (e.g. Jesuits)
- Apostolic Congregations (Teaching/Nursing, e.g. Mercy)



Characteristics of Each Age

- Foundation Period (10 -12 years)
- Expansion Period (2/3 generations +)
- Stabilization Period (century or more)
- Breakdown (loss of identity and purpose)
- Critical period (extinction, minimal survival or revitalization)



Revitalisation

- Revitalisation is a transforming response to the signs of the times
- The deep story emerges as charism when it is able to rise to the occasion- which is the contemporary world in all its concreteness

Charism



Converging Stories

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- Allowed for associations connected to religious institutes
- Directed that institutes that have associates joined to them have a special care that these associates are imbued with the genuine spirit of the founder
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Charism



Charism

- Gift given by the Spirit for the renewal and building of the Church
- Given to all members of the Christian faithful
- *Evangelica Testifica* says charism does 2 things in Religious communities:
 - *Gives the dynamism that defines it*
 - *Provides for the future: constancy of orientation/continual change in external forms*
- *Vita Consecrata*
'A new chapter rich in hope, has begun in the history of religious between consecrated persons and the laity'



Catherine's Story

- Charism of Mercy alive and active in her long before she became a religious
- Intended exercising the charism as a lay woman with other like minded women
- Church's view at the time:
 - Religious life was a higher calling
 - Apostolic work could only be carried out within the structures of the Church



Vatican II

- Emphasis on complementarity and collaboration (while respecting vocation of each)
- Called religious to re-interpret charism in the context of gospel, vision of foundress and signs of the times
- Called laity to participate more fully in mission of the Church



Call of Gaudium et Spes (Call to exercise charism of Mercy)

*'The joy and hope, the grief and anguish
of the people of our time,
especially of those who are poor or afflicted
in any way,
are the joy and hope,
the grief and anguish,
of the followers of Christ as well.'*



Gift of Collaboration

- Mutual deepening of spirituality through the lens of the charism
- Re-imagining of charism through a shared perspective
- Relationship of reciprocity in calling forth in each other the unique gift we bring to the whole people of God.



Challenge

How would Catherine
respond to today's needs
if she lived in our times?

