

## **A SHARED CHARISM**

**April 2016**

The following materials were adapted from materials presented by Sister Marie-Reine Gauthier, F.D.L.S., to SNJM Associate Leaders on October 10, 2008.

### **MATERIALS**

**1. Discussion Leader's Guide (Pages 2-6)**

**2. Handouts**

**Worksheet (Page 7)**

**Copy of Slides (Separate Attachment)**

### **VENUE**

It is recommended that these materials be used in a discussion setting. The material can be discussed in several sessions. Allot sufficient time for deep personal reflection, small group discussion, and large group sharing as appropriate.

Feel free to ask worksheet questions throughout the session as you see fit.

The hand out of power point slides is for each participant to annotate as appropriate and to have reference materials to keep.

**Red** refers to an accompanying slide in the handout.

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## DISCUSSION LEADER'S GUIDE

### Introduction of Session by Leader (specifics dependent on group gathered)

#### A Shared Charism

In the past 35 years, we have seen a new dynamic arise in the Church, that of associates being called to the charism of a religious Congregation. This leads us to reflect on the meanings and the implications of this new reality for the Church and on the relationship between the associates to the charism and to the Congregation.

#### Early History

In the early history of our Church, those who were baptized shared the same spirituality founded on baptismal faith and gifts of the Spirit. The baptized lived this spirituality in many ways. Over centuries, a hierarchical organization of states of life developed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the Church rediscovered secular values and the importance of the laity, and acknowledged the theological and spiritual value of secularity.

#### Vatican II

With Vatican Council II, in 1963, a move toward a Church of communion gradually took place. The call to sanctity of all baptized persons was affirmed in *Lumen Gentium*. It was a unique sanctity that the baptized, moved by the Spirit of God, cultivated in various kinds of lifestyles and in different occupations. The Council text called for the shift from a hierarchical organization to an organization in which the states of life complement each other, and whose rich diversity finds its source in baptism and the gift of the Spirit. The most important change was to establish that the laity participates in the three functions of Christ (priest, prophet and king) and in the same mission in the Church.

## **Post Vatican II Period**

The post-conciliar period saw the birth of numerous movements. Hundreds of groups formed to share the Gospel and to witness to their faith in their everyday lives. In addition, we witnessed the birth of ecclesial movements such as Encounter, Cursillo, and the Charismatic Movement, etc.

What was happening in religious life at the same time? For over fifty years, religious life has gone through a period of transformation: major changes made after the Council, loss of members, few recruits, repercussions arising from changes in the situation of the Church in secularized societies, fundamental reflection on the charism of the foundation and its relevance today. This redefinition brought about an upheaval in the touchstones and the traditional understandings of religious life.

## **What is the Phenomenon of Associates Living The Charism of A Congregation??**

On the other hand, we witnessed the emergence of new communities, some of whom have broken down boundaries between religious life and lay life. A number of groups of the laity were formed around religious communities who never had any before, either at the request of the laity themselves, or on the initiative of the community. Because of this, the phenomenon of associates to the charism of a Congregation was born.

**How does the call to be an associate fit within the basic call of all who have been baptized?**

## **Baptism—Foundation of Christian Life**

### **Baptism**

The call of associates to a Congregation is rooted in the fundamental call of baptism.

***“Where do you live? – Come and see...” (John 1:39)***

The fundamental call to all baptized persons is a call to follow Christ in his relationship to the Father, in his relationship to people, to Creation and in his mission. The “I believe” of baptism is a first response. Baptism incorporates us in Christ.

***“I no longer call you servants but I call you friends...” (John 15:15)***

Through baptism, we become sons and daughters of God, disciples of Christ and participants in the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). All disciples, established in one and the same dignity as children of God, are therefore called, through different paths, to a common vocation, holiness (*Lumen Gentium* 32 and 40). There is not holiness for the elite and holiness for the common, “two-speed” spirituality or a hierarchy of states of life. Baptism stresses the common dignity and the common vocation of all disciples.

***“That all may be ONE...” (John 17:21)***

Since by baptism disciples participate in the Spirit and are united in Christ, they become brothers and sisters of one another (Eph. 4:25). They must “help one another mutually, according to the diversity of the gifts received.” (*Gaudium et Spes* 32). The common belonging to Christ results in communion among Christians. Baptism integrates us into communion.

***“I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27)***

Through baptism, Christ makes his disciples participants in his mission: to be in the service of the Reign of God. Baptism and Confirmation, which confer upon all the Holy Spirit, call each one to participate in the unique mission of the Church. The variety and diversity of the gifts received from the Spirit serve to bring this mission to reality. The baptismal commitment takes shape in a specific vocation, and is expressed in a call to a state of life.

## **Baptism**

### **SPECIFIC VOCATION**

The Spirit gives to each disciple the means of putting into practice his/her following of Christ in a state of life (religious life, consecrated laity, marriage, celibacy). The person living his/her Christian life participates in the proclamation of Jesus Christ and in the coming of the Kingdom by actualizing the unique gifts bestowed by the Spirit. The grace of marriage, the grace of consecrated life or the grace of celibacy is God bursting into our lives.

## **Our Unique Call**

### **PARTICULAR VOCATION**

A new call can make itself heard: to give a certain colour to one's Christian life. In what does this particular call consist as it is addressed to certain persons to live the charism developed by a Congregation? Before attempting to respond, let us define what a charism is and what is a founding charism?

### **What is the meaning of the call of associates to live the charism inherent to a Congregation?**

#### **What is a charism?**

A charism includes three fundamental elements: a gift of the Spirit, made to the Church, with the purpose of building it up. The goal of the charism is always the building up of the Body of Christ, the actualization of the Church in its dimensions of communion and mission. It is oriented toward others, for the good of all.

### **The Call of Associates to Live The Charism Inherent to a Congregation**

What is the call of associates to live the charism developed by a Congregation? It is a specific call of the Spirit to associate with a particular and strong spiritual intuition. This leads to finding a way of living one's Christian life in the world and to formulating a commitment which is sometimes expressed in a work or a form of life, and which represents an actualization of the following of Christ in a certain historical and social context.

#### **How Is A Charism Lived?**

A charism takes shape in a spirituality. It includes the two first components of charism: vision and incarnation.

As SNJM sisters and associates, we are called to live the charism as embodied by Blessed Marie-Rose. The SNJM charism is an active love which moves persons to collaborate with others in the Church's mission of education, a mission of liberating action which aims at the full development of the human person. This mission is rooted

in a spirituality centered on the mysteries of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Sisters and associates live the charism in different, complementary ways according to our states of life.

Associates live the charism in accordance with the secular nature of our call. What is this secular nature? “God has handed over the world to women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, freeing it, and sanctifying themselves in a family, in a profession and in various activities of society.” (Christifideles Laici 15, I) This charism and spirituality are the legacy of Blessed Marie-Rose to the Congregation.

### **Our Associate Future**

The charism, gift of the Spirit for the Church and Creation, is called to continue to grow and spread.

As we leave this time of reflection and sharing,

***What gives you hope as we move into the future?***

**Closing (Leader’s discretion)**

## **A SHARED CHARISM**

### **WorkSheet Reflection Questions**

***What did I hear?***

***What fires were stirred in my heart while listening?***

***What do I want to share about my own call as an associate, as a sister?***

***What are the common threads in these stories, threads that can be identified as SNJM threads?***

***What have I heard in my group that is important for the whole group to hear?***