



May/June 2017

### *Thoughts about the Salvatorian Charism*

*Dear sisters and brothers,*

Already in the first chapter of the Salvatorian charter we get confronted with the Salvatorian charism. So, what can be closer than to occupy ourselves with the great gift of the Holy Spirit to Fr. Jordan and the Salvatorian family, with a view to the upcoming Feast of Pentecost? So let me share a few thoughts about that.

The term *charisma* is from the Greek χάρισμα (*khárisma*), which means "favor freely given" or "gift of grace". It's originally found in the Jewish-Christian tradition (Philo, Septuagint, New Testament) meaning a gift of God to the humans, whereby the word emphasizes benevolence as motivation for the gift. Paul, the Apostle, used it often for spiritual skills, and theologians and social scientists have expanded and modified the original Greek meaning into the two distinct senses<sup>1</sup>:

1. compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others,
2. a divinely conferred power or talent.

Fine – this is the theoretical part, but how do we see it in practice? And what exactly is charism? We know from some people that they have charism – or that certain something. If they enter a room, they are eye-catchers and get attention from all sides. The term is difficult because it describes something abstract, an aura. Therefore, it is not surprising that the term has different meanings: in the religious sense, "charismatic" means that a person has the gift to experience revelations or enlightenments.

If we follow the lines of the Salvatorian Charter, the Salvatorian Family mirrors the Salvatorian Charism.<sup>1</sup> The Salvatorian Charism appears through the aura of the Salvatorian Family and each member contributes to it in his/her way. This is expressed also in the text of the Apostle Paul<sup>2</sup>:

*If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.  
Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*

We Salvatorians see the foundation charism as special grace, which was given to Fr. Jordan by the Holy Spirit for the church and the world. This is rooted particularly in four biblical texts<sup>3</sup>, which take on a key role in the life and work of Fr. Jordan. They are inseparably connected to the nature of the charism, which was imparted to the Salvatorian Family by Fr. Jordan. These passages characterize and empower the Salvatorian vocation and we can find the following key elements in there:

- ) *To know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.*
- ) *Following the footsteps of the apostles.*
- ) *Make all people of all nations to your disciples.*
- ) *Guide others to the eternal truth and justice.*

<sup>1</sup> → comp. Salvatorian Charter, part 1: Our mission

<sup>2</sup> → 1 Cor 12, 26 -27

<sup>3</sup> → John 17,3; Matt 28,19; Marc 16,15, Daniel 12,3

- ) *Proclaim the universality of Jesus's message.*
- ) *Be able to recognize the signs of the time and respond accordingly.*
- ) *To support each other in our commitment to apostolic life*
- ) *To include others in this mission.*
- ) *To emphasize the role of the laity as apostles*
- ) *To proclaim the message to all people, everywhere and at any time, and in every way and means that the love of Christ inspires.*

And how does someone recognize this charism? An interesting question which is already answered by Fr. Bonaventura Lüthen, as he said:

*„Try to meet every one in this way, that he/she is glad to have the opportunity to meet you.“*

Outgoing from our understanding of today it means to meet every creature with respect and cultivate a dignified dealing with your next. Take him on like you meet him in this moment, unconditional and without prejudice.

Of course this can be from case to case a real challenge and it will not succeed always in the necessary way. Important is to have this idea in your mind and not forget - and by time it will become more and more routine. In the same way dignified dealings with respect to culture are also necessary if you meet someone from the opposite sex. Here we should remember the so called “golden rule”, an old and good known principle of practical ethnics:

*“One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself.”*

This is especially valid to overcome the traditional roles of men and women, a concern of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salvatorian sisters. In the opening Sr. Therezinha Rasera said there:

*As women we dream to live completely our identity and our mission in this world. We dream of overcoming the disunion and the stereotypes of the sexes that have been imposed upon us for centuries by a society that sees in us beings who are unable to think, fragile beings, humbled and abandoned, abused, to be raped in heart and mind. For this reason the word of God to Jeremiah has a big importance: that we in our inner hearts destroy the identification with this negative model of womanly, which are imposed upon us by our cultures. Let's build up new real human relationships between the sexes.*

Men and women are naturally diverse but they have a lot of common, too. The common joy, grief, the feeling and experience - as long as this has not been spilled in childhood by being pushed into a certain role behavior. Of course, to overcome the norms of this society one needs to try to understand the situation and the role of life of one's counterpart, to assist in finding answers to his questions and needs. Therefore relevant background knowledge is needed; this is one reason for the Lay Salvatorian requirements, to be up to date through permanent education by diverse methods.

Another help and support of the Salvatorian charism is the universality, which opens the door to several areas and situations of life. The sentence: “by all ways and means, which the love of God inspires” get here a special importance, especially if the words “in season or out of season” are added. Today we are confronted with the challenge to proclaim the gospel in a world that provides similar challenges than of Fr. Jordan's times but the language has turned into another one. People are still searching for answers on the burning questions of their life and time. Cute phrases or fine words alone will not help - they sound antiquated and unrealistic and do not touch the hearts. Therefore the Salvatorian spirituality with its intrinsic universality is tailor-made for it. It's our turn to use it in the right way and to discover it as our biggest treasure.

No one will really escapes from the effect of the Salvatorian charism, as long the following points are included:

- ) The relationship and respect an individual Salvatorian has with other Salvatorians in the Salvatorian Family.
- ) The attitude in which we work and live as Salvatorians.
- ) The network, in which we Salvatorians are embedded.

According to the lines above a big concern of Lay Salvatorians should be to seek always on points of agreement and not of disagreement. Let's ask and pray that this will succeed more and more in our life and guide us in and to our Lay Salvatorian vocation.

That all may know the Savior, yours very truly,



Mr. Christian Patzl  
Vice-President of the ICDS

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<sup>i</sup> → Authors of Wikipedia (2015): Charisma. Published by The free Encyclopedia Wikipedia, last actualization 14.10.2015, last proof 19.10.2015.