



# WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE CHARISM OF THE SACRED HEART IN A COMPLEX TODAY?

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The topic I have been invited to share with you is a question each one of us can answer from our unique and unrepeatable experience. For some of us, it will have greater significance than for others, or the meaning some will give to it will be different from that of others, but all meanings have value, profoundness and Gospel.

## **What does the charism of the Sacred Heart mean for me today?**

During the last decade of last century, it was already said that we were living a change of times. They insisted: this are not times of changes but a change of times. It has been 25 years since then and, how many things we have seen and lived!

When I think about all this I marvel at observing we enjoy the privilege of participating in the configuration of a new era of humankind.

This is a gift and it is also a great responsibility. We are not only spectators, we are not only actors within the great scenery of the world, and we not only enjoy or suffer what is going on: We can participate as authors of a new age as human kind! We can do this from our closest setting, with planetary possibilities of communication and interconnection and with a consciousness that is more alert, more profound and more challenged to live solidarity. We can do it with the color of the ink provided by the charism when we write history, charism that, ultimately, is Gospel.

### **A. What is a charism?**

The word 'charism' has many and diverse meanings. From the ecclesiological perspective, a charism is a gift, with own features, that God makes to the Church for participating in the care and unfolding of life.

Although charisms have been related to religious congregations, and their founders, God makes his gift in the lay world, in the middle of the world, and only after do congregations emerge. There are many laypersons here who have perceived in their hearts the tuning with the charism of the Sacred Heart and who, every day, seek to live it and enrich it in their relationships, their commitments and their searches.

People who receive a charism, or who participate in this gift; are people with a capacity for profound openness, for attentive listening and contemplative look, and bold creativity.

In order to better understand the meaning of a charism, it is helpful to see the dimensions which constitute it and pass through it.

From my point of view, a charism is the fruit of a fruitful encounter, which take place in the interior of the individual, between the experience of the socio-economic, political, cultural and religious environment and the experience of God.

- ▶ Experience of the environment. It is generally about a suffering reality, some extreme situation that claims to be transformed.
- ▶ Experience of God. It takes roots on the faith transmitted from the most proximate space-time coordinates (family, parish, school); this is, in the inherited faith. The experience of God, in interaction with the environment and the personal history, configures and drives the step from the inherited faith to an own faith. Sometimes, the own faith is a mature and adult faith capable of a free, clear and loving answer.
- ▶ From this fruitful encounter a channel to extend, communicate and transmit the gift received arises. In our case, it is about the commitment with a transforming education.

Everyone here today has experiences of our environment and we cultivate an own experience of God. We listen, we contemplate, and we search and try to answer through the commitment with education. That is why we have tuned in with the charism of the Sacred Heart and, at the same time we receive it, we constantly enrich it and update it with our contribution and our practice.

As persons who are bearers of a charism, we perceive the grace of God intertwined in our human nature; we recognize how the divine manifests in our humanity, and we put at the service of life our capacity for profound openness, attentive listening, contemplative vision, and courageous creativity.

#### B. Fruitful encounter in Madeleine Sophie Barat:

We know Madeleine Sophie Barat, we know about her peasant roots, her religious education, her broad general culture... We know she was an inquiring woman eager to perceive, embrace and transmit the charism God gave her. A woman with the capacity for profound openness; attentive listening and contemplative look, and bold creativity.

Today, we are interested in remembering that, when Sophie was defining her life project, she thought about entering the Carmelites in order to live a life devoted to God through contemplation; eventually, she chose the path of education as channel to answer to the calls contemplated in her environment and to the love of God she experienced.

So, we see that, in Sophia, the following were gathered:

1. the experience of a world wounded by impiety, this is, an ethical void generated by the French Revolution, in which the industrial revolution and the upswing of reason before religion (illustration and encyclopedists) coalesced; and.
2. the experience of God, rooted in an own faith, sterling, mature and centered in the love God expresses through the Heart of Jesus, school of interiority and transforming commitment.

From this fruitful encounter a Mission generates in Sophie: “Discover and express the love of God in the wounded heart of humanity” and, also a vision of future that will give sense, guidance and horizon to her life arises: Forming a multitude of worshippers: women leaders who, from their faith in the love of God expressed in the pierced heart of Jesus, are capable of influencing the weaving of a different society.

In order to make this dream possible, Sophie chose to dedicate herself to education without foregoing contemplation. Rather, because she discovered the enormous transforming potential of contemplation; she chose to commit herself to education through four means: education of intern students; free education for poor girls, spiritual exercises and relation with the Laity.

From the fruitfulness of the encounter, Sophie drafted the Plan of Studies, with academic rigor and a clear orientation: knowing and loving Jesus Christ in order to make Him known and, in this way, be yeast of transformation. She took care, with dedication, of everything that contributed to the shaping of interiority and to the commitment of transformation. Her educational intentionality was not erudition, but expanding the potential of the students in order to influence social change.

### C. Key for looking into the meaning of the charism

In order to enrich our experience of the charism and comprehending its meaning in this complex today; I am going to stop in some concepts I consider key:

- Integrity of the Creation
- Human beings and the meaning of life
- Spirituality
- Questions to be answered by the Educational Model

#### 1. Integrity of the creation

Based on the so-called “Cosmotheandric Intuition”, Raimon Panikkar helps us understand what “integrity of the creation” means<sup>1</sup>; it is about a philosophical intuition that falls fully within the current comprehensive ecological sensitivity and in the desire to walk towards a holistic view of the Reality.

Panikkar explains that from the union between the Heaven (Teos-God) and the Earth (Cosmos: matter and energy); life emerges, human life and life in any expression. Teos and Cosmos, united, support all the creatures.

The cosmos is not only an organized addition of matter and energy, but a whole that contains a ‘plus’, something more than the eyes can see, than the mind can understand or than can move the heart; that something else than the human being can perceive, understand and feel represents the divine dimension in which the cosmos lives, supports itself and exists as Paul tells us in the Areopagus of Athens cf. Acts 17, 28.

All creatures integrate the entire universe as a living organism; fruit of the divine life. The human being participates in and from the life of the universe as one of its multiple

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<sup>1</sup> Raimon PANIKKAR, *Cosmotheandric Intuition. The three dimensions of reality*. (Madrid: Trotta), 1999.

micro- cosmos. It is formed by star dust, by energy and by a single divine puff that transcends it; that cannot be manipulated and that lives eternally and beyond the space-time coordinates.

Cosmotheandric intuition states that Cosmos – Theo (God) -- Anthropos (men and women), the earthly, the divine and the human, are the Reality; a weave without stitches, in which Everything is inter and intra-related. Reality, like this, is Solidarity, because; in the occurrences of the universe the Whole is implied and all occurrences have universal repercussions.

## 2. Human beings and the meaning of life

Human beings are the conscious reality in the Whole. Up to now, we are the only living beings capable of experiencing the profoundness of our own being, of acknowledging our identity as creatures, of asking ourselves about our origins and our end and of confessing that the multiform face of the divinity appears in human life and in all expressions of life.

Our original essence is divine. Our vocation and our fullness are to express it. This is the primary blessing that guides and gives meaning to our lives.

At the same time; we are also beings who are in need of, vulnerable and finite. We have a need for food, health, protection, affection, belonging, acknowledgement...and, when shortage is imposed, a wound appears. Wounds hurt but pain can be transformed into opportunity for broadening the opening that takes us to recognize our thirst for infinite or, as Pope Francis tells us, it takes us to confess our profound need of God.

Open wounds in our vulnerable and deprived being, the awareness of our impotency before sickness and aging; the fear of death and observing the force of evil in our world can also take us to build barriers and isolate, to harm others and to become part of violent, harmful and painful dynamics. This way we cannot hear the voice God pronounces from within everything that exists. This way we are incapable of perceiving and capturing what is beyond the material and intellectual world. Like this, we bury our inner life.

And then it happens that, just any day, in an instant, we gain consciousness that life in its current expression is ephemeral and that death is undeniable. When sickness, suffering and death visit us, they stir up the pain and rise questions to life, to death, to the human mystery and to God. What meaning does my life have? Where is it heading? What is the purpose of so much efforts and so much pain? What is the meaning of my endeavor? What is the purpose of loving others beyond individual satisfaction? The answer to the question about the meaning can be sought through different paths.

Sometimes we seek for answer from an isolated conscience which is enclosed in ones' own interest, it is an answer that seeks the good for oneself, utility for the self, and a selfish gain, without considering the interconnection between all that exists. This answer offers ephemeral micro-meanings tagged by utility and individualism: having things as a house, car, health, job and rest; having friends, money, power, honors, control...

Although utilitarian micro-meanings, judiciously, have a reason for being; they are relative and profoundly insufficient, they are not particularly helpful before great questions. Thus, in order to alleviate the inner void, food, alcohol, drugs and narcotics are used in excess... more things are bought, extreme sexual and emotional satisfactions are sought; rapid, vain and disposable satisfactions.

From a religious perspective answers are also sought for the question about the meaning. There is an immense market of light spiritualities without God, which generate temporary feelings of wellbeing; but there also are others who shift toward fundamentalist, violent and confuse options, in the name of their god. Or, as we, there are others who enter through the slit that leads to the overwhelming and fulfillment-giver Mystery. We have ventured, in faith, to transit around here in the search for meaning.

### 3. Spirituality

Searching for the meaning from the experience of the mystery introduces us into the field of spirituality and spiritual intelligence.

Recently, neurosciences have proven that the site of spiritual intelligence is in the human brain, and even that we have an internal organ called 'divine spot' or 'God spot', through which we capture the Whole, the Reality that supports and unifies everything<sup>2</sup>.

Neurologists, biologists and scientists specialized in several areas describe spiritual intelligence as that with which we discern and answer our questions about the meaning and the sense of life. They say it is the only intelligence capable of explaining the richness of the soul and the complexity of human intelligence. They are convinced that it has to do with our 'primordial intelligence' capable of generating activity to imagine and dream new realities and to transform, with comprehension and compassion, the culturally-established situations<sup>3</sup>.

From a general perspective, "spirituality" means opening to what is beyond, the desire to get to know that which transcends the physical and rational limit; the field of the Mystery, of what is not seen. It is related with the concern for the essential of the individual, the friendship, life. It is associated with the experience of being part of a whole, of 'sensing' that everything that unites is stronger and more profound than what separates us. It nurtures a feeling of unity.

A narrower field of spirituality is that of "religiosity" in which a 'thou'; another one different, is recognized. Religiosity expresses otherness as a relationship and as a link with someone who is not me; with a 'thou' who we usually call God. Religiosity is not a stable whole, but it experiences transformations, changes, ruptures, shifts; but there is always another one, Another one, who is there.

For its part, the field of "confessionalism" gives the sense of belonging to a specific religious community; with sacred texts, within a symbolic framework, with rituals, with festivities where the intimate dialogue with otherness is developed; from a tradition.

In the field of Christian confession, within the Catholic Church, our Sacred Heart charism is located.

### 4. Questions to be answered by the Educational Model

One of the channels for experiencing and transmitting the charism are educational institutions which; on themselves, are of critical importance in the design of the coordinates that guide the life of an individual, in the configuration of the criteria of value with which one lives and in modeling the meaning of life and history.

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<sup>2</sup> Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, *Spiritual Intelligence*, Plaza & Janes 2001, 19-27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

Relationships established within the school setting are transcendental because human beings start being in an open process and a weave of intersubjective relations. Through encounter and dialogue, educators and students construct themselves in reciprocity, we acquire elements for discerning our style of life and our way of being in the world, we design the meaning of our lives and discover the meaning of history.

Intimately linked to interpersonal relationships, is the Educational Model and the answers it provides for five basic questions:

Question	View (Analysis)	Assessment (Criticism)	Implementation (Practice)
Anthropological	What perspective of the human being is generated by the educational process?	How humane is this perspective?	How to implement elements which are authentically humanizing?
Epistemological	What perspective of knowledge operates in the educational process?	How appropriate is this comprehension of the act of knowing?	How to enrich and/or transform knowledge processes that will guide the educational model?
Ethical	What perspective of good underlies the educational model?	What achievements and challenges do this ethics raise?	How to implement the ethical perspective that will support and produce a transforming education?
Sociological	What perspective of society does the educational process generate?	What aspects of actual society does this perspective of the society criticize and/or perpetuate?	How to live a fair, non-violent, ecological, and encompassing society in the school setting of educational processes?
Theological	What experiences of God does the educational process cultivate?	How Christian are these experiences of God?	How to cultivate Christian experiences of God?

#### D. The charism in our complex today

With these four keys as background let us look into the Charism of the Sacred Heart in our today.

## □ The Mission in our environment

As the subject question indicates, we live in a complex environment in which the concurrence of many forces is awakening consciousness and activating solidarities<sup>4</sup>. (At this time it is not for me to conduct an analysis of the environment; I simply enunciate some aspects).

One of the most powerful forces we can perceive is the force of evil for destroying and, paradoxically, for generating solidarities in views to eradicate it. Its devastating strength lies in that it articulates as a system of unfair, utilitarian and dehumanizing relations; which supreme rule is to obtain the highest gain “whatever the cost”. Technology and communications are at its service. Its culture identifies individuals as consuming objects and as disposable when they cease to yield benefits.

Interests in this system fragment Reality, cultivate isolated, egocentric and individualist consciences; generate superfluous needs at the expense of life in the planet, produce consumables capable of generating temporary, addictive and alienating pleasures and nourish the fear to the other, to the different others.

Free market, economic inequality, repression, war, insecurity and cultural invasion are all realities that permanently undermine human life and the various manifestations of life on the planet. In collective life, utilitarian sense invades it all.

Scientific and technological progress represent ambivalent possibilities which demand ethical and well-informed options before the hegemony of calculations, the useful and quantifiable, competition and everything superficial, appearances and; above all, greater profits.

In the name of progress and development, the gap of inequality has deepened. The rates for hunger, extreme poverty, violation to essential human rights, exploitation of our Mother Earth, consumption of human beings, migration to survive hunger, war, unemployment; are significantly high...

In order to perpetuate, evil needs the earth deprived from the divine breath, disposable human beings, matter without God, dry bones and without a spirit, practical and utilitarian reasons, with no spiritual depth, globalization of indifference and the loss of the ultimate meaning of life. Evil aims at the death of God, the death of human beings, the death of different expressions of life...

At the same time, before the deepening of chaos, every time more of us have an awake consciousness, capable of contemplating what happens and of looking other presences beyond our own; every time more of us are aware that evil perpetuates at the expense of the life of the majorities, at the expense of the life on the Earth we inhabit; at the expense of ones own life and at the expense of honoring the presence of the Life of God in daily life. Every time more of us broaden our consciousness until it reaches a universal horizon, encompassing, global. Every time more women and men know we are not the center of the universe but another element in the infinity of the universe; know the magnitude of phenomena and their interconnection; discover with astonishment that we can transform our way of being in the world; that we can go from being actors determined by a predetermined script, to being authors of new stories and realities and new relationships.

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<sup>4</sup> I suggest reading the exhortations of Pope Francis: *Evangelli Gaudium*, particularly Chapter 2 and *Laudato Sii*. Transforming our world. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development approved by the Assembly of the UN last September 5th.

This is the torn environment we continue receiving, as a gift, the Mission that is part of our charism: Discovering and expressing the love of God revealed within the open heart of Jesus. The heart of the world is punctured; the heart of humanity is punctured, and it is precisely in the punctured heart of Jesus where we contemplate how to transform wounds with the love that is stronger than death.

This Mission asks us to receive the gift, to bet life in it and to see the gain that, even if it looks like a loss; gives meaning to our lives.

We can ask ourselves: Have we received, in the cleft of our heart, the Mission to express the love of God in a wounded world? Do we have the capacity to perceive that we receive a shipment that is blessing, responsibility and opportunity? Do we communicate the joy we feel by the invitation to extend our loving capacity, love gratuitously, to love as much as we love ourselves, to love more than we love ourselves when the wound of others is deeper?

#### □ Spirituality as source and horizon

From the opening to the infinite that exists in the most in the most intimate part of our human heart, we search for God and we find Him as gratuitous disproportionate love. We find His presence in the Magisterium of Creation, in the Word of God, in pleasures and outcries of human kind, in existential peripheries and in geographical margins produced by misery and injustice; in the open wound of our world that suffers, that waits and that loves; in the solidarity of women and men who surrender their lives so that life may prosper; in the Ecclesiastical Magisterium, in the most intimate part of our own intimacy and in the open Heart of Jesus that is the school where we learn about His feelings and attitudes, His unlimited love as inner force and as transforming commitment.

We have rich and diverse experiences of God that originate and mature in contemplation, in silence, in prayer; in encounters, in joint searches and in solidarity and communion experiences.

As family of the Sacred Heart, we have profound experiences of God from the work dedicated to Justice, Peace and the respectful and reverent acknowledgement of the Integrity of Creation.

As family of the Sacred Heart we contemplate the environment with the contemplative eyes of our hearts and contemplate Jesus in the wounds of our world. From this double contemplation compassion emerges; the compassion as relationship that identifies us with the most vulnerable, as bond that binds us and as transforming force that drives us to safeguard and defend life passionately. Compassion provides depth to our relationships; sets the course of solidarity and defines the transforming intentionality of our commitment to education.

Chapter 2008 tells us that: “From our contemplation (of the Pierced Heart of Jesus) in the wounded heart of humanity flows the desire to commit ourselves with greater passion and compassion to justice, peace, and the integrity of” (C. 2008, 27). This is, for us, an expression of the utopia that gives direction and meaning to our life and towards which we want to advance with our eyes set on Jesus.

The slogan (motto) in which Sophie wanted to focus our spirituality is: “Cor unum et anima una in Corde Jesu”, this is: “One single heart and one single soul in the heart of Jesus”. It is a motto that speaks about interiority and solidarity, inclusion and equality, reconciliation and



communion, harmony and integrity of the Reality in its three dimensions: divine, human and cosmic.

Jesus is the human face of God, the divine expression of everything human and the revelation of the possibilities of everything human in history. It is not a reference, or an ideal model, or an idea; He is a persona who calls us to an intimate relationship in order to weave solidarity from the broken heart of Reality

Jesus is a relationship that takes place in our lives, which transforms our way of being in the world and opens hopes for the future of our personal and collective histories.

Through Jesus, following His way of being in the world, we start living in Christ; Christian symbol of Reality, extensive, infinite and ineffable mystery in whom Eternal Plenitude resides. Through Jesus, we have the certainty that God is hidden, with Christ, in each and every one, in all of us, in all things. (Col 3, 3).

#### □ Educating implies transformation

Positioning ourselves in the broad context of a mission, and of the convictions that drive it sheds light on our commitments in education that transforms.

We have already said that, as family of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in this complex today, we want to educate in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation.

Educating in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is a reasonable and loving, compassionate and committed answer before the outcries of our local and planetary environment.

Educating in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is offering basic coordinates that give a meaning to life and that provide value criteria for choosing the way of being in the world.

Educating in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is positioning us in a meeting point as family of the Sacred Heart; with other congregations and educational institutions, with ecclesiastical and ecumenical groups, with civil organizations and international organizations.

Educating in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is offering a daily channel for following Jesus and incorporating us in Christ resurrected cultivating interiority and committed to change.

Educating in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is a testimony that makes our faith believable and confesses to God as source and horizon of meaning.

Educating today in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation is present, profound and significant expression of the charism we have been given.

#### E. Undertakings we must include in our agenda

In order to educate in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation our agenda must include some undertakings we recovered from the constitutive dimensions of the charism:

environment and mission, experience of God and spirituality, education that transforms from Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation.

1. Environment and mission

- a. Contemplating local, national and planetary environment and cultivating a universal conscience open to the presence of other people and manifestations of life which require care, respect and reverence.
- b. Knowing and respecting Universal Human Rights with no respect of persons.
- c. Join forces in the task of “transforming our world” weaving networks with people and group working in favor of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation.

2. Experience of God and spirituality

- a. Cultivating inner life to learn how to contemplate the Reality with the feelings and attitudes of Jesus.
  - i. Meeting the inner needs of people and developing the own capabilities of spiritual intelligence: silence, admiration, discernment, ability to perceive the communion of everything that exists.
  - ii. Potentiating the awakening of individual consciousness – not isolated or egocentric – as an instance of decision, as opportunity for freedom and as determination for undertaking with meaning the consequences of decisions freely taken.
  - iii. Helping facing human situations of suffering and joy, failure and success, life and death, contemplating beyond what we see and perceiving the ineffable presence of the Mystery that transcends us.
  - iv. Favoring the experience of God as encounter that heals, that includes, which reconciles and saves.
- b. Profound knowledge of the nature of Christianity and facilitating its experience in institutional life.
- c. Facilitating opening to and comprehension of other religions. Helping become aware of the importance of religions in the history of mankind.

3. Education that transforms by working for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation

- a. Transforming school into a home in which everyone fits, and where each one is called by her/his name. Creating alternate ways of cooperation before competition, real, affectionate and stable relationships opposite to virtual, distant and temporary relationships. Fostering and appreciating the small gratuitous and daily sign, not monetarized or measurable signs such as the shared use of assets, mutual favors, expression of tenderness, company.
- b. Transform our educational institutions into space-time coordinates where value criteria that help design ways of being in the Reality with meaning and plenitude are lived. Make of every moment, every space, every rite, every pace, an opportunity for

strengthening the culture of essential care and sobriety, aware that each decision has an impact in the group of the educational community and in the whole of Reality.

- c. Favor the willingness to transcend ourselves; enable making fundamental questions and dilemmas without a clear answer, driving the leap from physics to metaphysics, from utilitarian micro-meanings to the ultimate meaning, from personal history of universal and planetary macro-history.
- d. Critical evaluation of the Institutional Educational Model, identify and implement the transversality of the commitment with Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation.

Lastly, I propose to practice daily the dance that goes from interiority to solidarity; from contemplation to communion, from the self to the us, from the silence to the compassion, from receiving the gift to expanding the gift, from learning from others to transforming along with others, in the certainty that our charism offers profound motivations, clear certainties, strong challenges and a profound meaning for our lives.

Recommended Readings:

- Pope FRANCIS, Exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Sii* and the speech he gave in his visit to the UN on September 25th, 2015.
- *Transforming our World. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*. Approved by the General Assembly of the UN on September 25th, 2015.
- Brian DRAPER, *Spiritual Intelligence. A new way of being*. (Santander: Sal Terrae), 2010.
- Francesc TORRALBA, *Spiritual Intelligence*, (Barcelona: Plataforma Actual), 2010.
- Id. *Spiritual intelligence for a new world*. DeustoForum. YouTube.
- Raimon PANIKKAR, *Cosmotheandrit Intuition. The three dimensions of reality*, (Madrid: Trotta), 1999
- Dana ZOHAR and Ian MARSCHALL, *Spiritual Intelligence*, (Plaza & Janes) 2001.
- Friar Marcos. Comments to the Gospel: [www.feadulta.com](http://www.feadulta.com)
- Weekly page of Leonardo Boff at [www.servicioskoinonia.org](http://www.servicioskoinonia.org)
- *Cosmos: A spacetime Odyssey – TV Miniseries (2014) (DVD)*
- *Theology of the laity*
- *Carmelite Spirituality: Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Ávila... cf. Editorial de Espiritualidad. Madrid.*

Thank you very much

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