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| **p. adam józef Sobczyk msf-pl.**  **CHARISM - CONFERENCE FOR MAY 2020**  “*He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him**.* **(Luk** **4, 16-20.)**  The spirit of the Lord rests on those who are open to his word. It offers gifts to each member of the Christian community to respond better and more complete the call to actively engage in the life of the Church. In the Greek word *charisma,* it is used to indicate this special gift from God. The conciliar definition of charism says you need to make a Christian able to experience ecclesiastically his service to the growth of the Mystical Body of Christ. So far, the ministry of the Christian for the good of the Church and of its individual members.  This grace has been received 125 years ago by Venerable Fr. Berthier. After many years of effort, he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family. In presenting the charism of the Congregation, we will take into account both the charism of the Founder and the charism of the whole Congregation.  **1. The charism of the Founder**  The expression "charism of founders" appeared in the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI *Evangelical testificatio* of 29 June 1971. It means the gift of the Spirit, given to some men and women, to awaken in them the proper ability to establish new communities of consecrated life in the Church. It is mostly a personal gift that transforms the person of the Founder in order to prepare for a call and a special mission in the Church; it is also a communitarian gift because it involves more people to the historic implementation of this mission; finally it is ecclesiastical because through the Founder and his community is offered to the Church for its dynamic development.  The charism of the Founder includes the personal charism of the Founder, which is non-transferable, and also the charisma is transferred into the Congregation as a way of special spiritual life of the first community, which is based on the so-called founding experience.  The personal charism of the founder is a gift of a general nature, since the person of the Founder, to give the start to a new foundation. Considering a question of the personal charism of Jean Berthier, you should examine the socio-religious situation of the times in which he lived. The need for missionaries came from the social situation in France and around the world. Our author has often repeated the words of Christ: "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few" (Matthew 9:37). At the beginning of his book, "The work of the late vocations", Fr. Berthier was referring to the teaching of Leo XIII, in the Encyclical *Sancta Dei* he expressed his motivation for this regret and sorrow. The Founder wrote a desire to save all people and to lead them to the truth, to imitate Christ and the unity. He revolved his heart before the nations who have never received the light of the Gospel. He noted that although seminaries were forming priests for the dioceses and novitiates for religious men and women, the seminaries too rarely prepare missionaries. He encouraged people so that they sensed the need to create the missionary schools to educate and train missionaries.  He emphasized the need to establish schools, designed to accommodate and educate young people with aspirations to the apostolic life. These schools had to accommodate young men who, because of age and the parents' poverty, could not complete their studies. They, through the study and practice of the evangelical counsels, had to prepare the apostolate so that when have been educated will become teachers to other candidates in schools for late vocations or even missionaries to take the gospel to the nations who did not yet know Christ  Berthier added that these schools were for those days. They blend perfectly with the views of other schools and apostolic seminaries. Do not deprive candidates to anyone but providing educational opportunities to those for whom there was no room in other schools or seminaries. He highlighted that these schools have a chance of success, because the age of those with late vocation, although it may not be as favorable to study and learn, is characterized by maturity and conviction for what they want to do. This allows you to work fruitfully for the salvation of souls.  To this end, he decided to found the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family for late vocations. His work was inspired by the words of Our Lady of La Salette: "My children, pass it on to all my people." Berthier was believed that there was nothing more effective in the missions that prepare missionaries. He confirmed it with the words: "This was my conviction." It was the personal charism of the Founder. Now he could not help but accomplish this project, starting to present the project to the Pope. It emerged the charism of the foundation (founder).  **2. The charism of the act of foundation**  The difference between the charism of the act of foundation and the charism of the founder is that the first also contains the charisms of the first students. It is allowed to create and develop a new community with its unique features which can survive for centuries, thanks to the identity of the vocation given by the Holy Spirit to some people. The charism of the act of foundation is necessary to fulfil a personal charism under certain social conditions for the good of the Church.  The charism of the act of foundation also includes a special spiritual way of life of the first community, which is based on the so-called founding experience. It is created in the community of life of the students and the Founder at the time of establishment of a new community and throughout the life of the Founder. They are produced typical characteristics of the charism (life and mission). The fruit of the founding experience becomes the center of charism beyond reform, which has to survive among all that is changing.  Knowing the biography of Jean Berthier, you can see that the fulfilment of the personal charism, which he discovered, was not easy. On the one hand, it had to settle things in the Congregation of Missionaries Salettian and to get approval for the realization of his work by the Church, on the other, to prepare for the opening of the new Congregation.  Therefore, the first step of Father Berthier was to find a house for his work. Berthier discern perfectly the spirit of the times and, anticipating that France would have evicted the congregations from his country or limited their activities, he sought a country where he could implement the idea to found the Congregation. He chose the Netherlands. Another step: finding material resources to maintain and develop the work. By that time, the economic sense of Berthier Father became more explicit. He was able to sell his books and found many benefactors who either once help the Congregation or become regular donors.  Berthier underlined that the Congregation needs right persons, young people, God-fearing, pious, generous, ready to leave their proper family and home for good, hard-working, intelligent, gentle, reasonable, obedient, physically strong, honest appearance and good health. Applicants should be aged between 14 and 30 years old, determined to dedicate their life to the practice of the evangelical counsels, to educate other missionaries and to go for foreign missions. These three elements: missionary spirit, religious and formation of missionaries constructed the basis and at the same time the aim in admitting young people to the Congregation. We find them in paragraph 18 of the questionnaire that the pastor compiled on behalf of the candidate who wanted to join the Congregation. At this point we read, "wants all his life to keep the evangelical counsels and dedicate themselves to educate other missionaries or to work in the missions?" Berthier thought that "to dedicate their life to the apostolate is a good thing, but to multiply missionary vocations is even a better thing." In this way you achieved the charism of the act of foundation of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.  In his spiritual testament he wrote to his followers: "Do not forget that the Congregation was called into being by multiplying the number of missionaries to send to foreign missions; the best and fastest way to do this work for the will of God's providence it is to establish and develop apostolic schools, and whereas in these schools admit especially those who cannot achieve their purpose elsewhere because of poverty or a late age. "  **3. The Congregation’s charism** - is a gift of the Spirit that allows religious to read faithfully and to update the original Evangelical inspiration of the Founder. It is a kind of "evangelical genetic code", which means the capacity of the community to reborn. The relationship with the Founder cannot be broken ever, but the original idea is always considered and put into practice under the new historical needs and according to the new sensibility, always under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.  The current and concrete tasks that the Founder comprehended during his life should not be the only ones. Specific Gospel values, fulfilled in the era of the Founder, should not exhaust the charism of the Congregation. Therefore, in order to read as faithfully as possible and to accomplish the Congregation of MSF’s Charism - its members shall engage on the one hand to know the idea of the Founder and the other hand to update and adapt of the original Evangelical inspiration of Fr. Berthier to the needs of today. In this way, the relationship with the Founder is not interrupted, but the original idea is updated that based on new historical needs and according to the new sensibility. This is confirmed, for example, the extension of the charism of the Congregation in the aspect of the specialized pastoral care of families, that today, in times of struggle to preserve the Christian model of the family, plays a key role in many provinces.  An important aspect of the charism of the Founder was his conviction of its validity. Berthier asked his successors to avoid introducing changes and innovations, because they often lead to evil and to make the originally designed work losing its own character. In his Testament, Father Founder ends with words of encouragement so that its students shall not be afraid. If they are truly children of the Holy Family, they will not miss anything.  This task is accomplished by 125 years. Thanking God for the gift of Fr. Jean Berthier and his successors, we ask the Holy Spirit for more inspirations and the ability to read the signs of the times to continue in serving fruitfully the people of God who is near, and those that the Lord calls from afar. |  |  |