

The Canossian Charism

A formative approach



Presentation

I thank the Lord with my whole heart for the **precious gift** that He is bestowing on our Canossian Family, at the beginning of the third millennium in history; that of **having in our hands** a text that contains, in a descriptive form, the immense treasure of the Canossian charism bestowed by the Spirit to the Church.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Priests and Sisters who have contributed their services generously – mind, heart, time and passion – to come up with this highly formative working paper. May the Lord Jesus reward each one of them in the way He knows best.

This text is intended as a **working paper** *at the service of dialogue among Sisters, Brothers, Laity and various organisms in the Institute*, in order to encourage the deepening of the charism received from the Lord through St. Magdalene of Canossa, at a time when its fruitfulness is calling us to a deeper incarnation in the different realities and cultures where we are called to be present and to serve.

According to the directives of the Chapter Resolutions, this working paper must provide a “synthesis and a theological basis for the charism in its fundamental elements, in relation to our faith and ministries”, so as to help the Institute live up to the “unity of the charism in the variety of its incarnations”¹ to which it is called.

As a document, it does not claim to be exhaustive in its approach. The Institute has already made available, besides the *Rule of Life*, a series of documents which deal with different aspects of the charism and some fundamental implications.

¹ Cfr. XIV GENERAL CHAPTER, *Chapter Resolution*, p. 4.

Among the most recent are the following: *The Plan of Formation of the Canossian Daughters of Charity* (1996), *Basic Guidelines for the Ministries of Charity of the Canossian Daughters of Charity* (1996), *Canossian International Voluntary Service* (1996), *Basic Guidelines for Canossian Youth Ministry* (2000), *Interministeriality in the Canossian Community: visible sign of Charity* (2002), *Basic Guidelines for Canossian pastoral and vocational Animation* (2002).

In addition to these documents of the Institute, various published or unpublished studies have been carried out by Sisters, Brothers and Lay Canossians on the person of St. Magdalene, her charismatic intuitions and their implementation.

The specific feature of this working paper lies in the use of a **synthesised genetic perspective** from which the charism is presented. This implies that the charism is presented following a logical sequence which highlights the central nucleus, around which all its elements converge and in the light of which they are understood. As a working paper, it is not meant to be comprehensive. It presupposes a return to the sources, as well as the study of other texts of the Institute mentioned earlier. As a synthesis of the charism beginning from its origin, it could help us, in the study of its various parts, not to lose sight of its totality, but to be able to fit each element into the overall picture.

To reach this goal, the text has been divided into three parts:

- ▶ **The first part**, which is an introduction, defines the charism within the Christian faith and the life of the Church. By virtue of the gift of the Spirit, every charism is always the development and living out of the faith, and finds, in faith, the source of its fundamental growth.
- ▶ **The second part**, also the most extensive, presents, in a series of ten points, the profile of the charism, showing how its **source**, which is also its **centre**, outlines a specific model of Christian, religious and apostolic life.
- ▶ **The third part** looks at the way the charism is being nurtured by the life of the Church. It offers its unique contribution so that

the Church may be for the people, especially the poorest, sign and instrument of the Lord's love, in such a way that everyone, especially the most needy, may have a place and a voice within the Church.

Given that the **text is a synthesis**, the footnotes will be particularly significant. They contain clarifications and references to the sources, calling for a close, attentive reading so as to gain a correct understanding of the text itself and its background.

The purpose of this working paper makes it, by its very nature, an **open text** accompanying us on our spiritual journey. Its usefulness and effectiveness will be largely connected to the journey to be carried out within our own communities. We are actually dealing with a "**formative text**", which can be made use of in a number of different ways, allowing each Province or Organism of the Institute the freedom to outline in creative and constructive ways, within its own cultural context, programmes for further study, research on and inculturation of the charism itself.

As a simple example, a basic outline has been suggested below. For each aspect (or a few aspects together), a series of five steps may be followed:

- ▶ *an exchange of lived experiences or of answers to questions raised on the charism,*
- ▶ *a study of one or more passages of the recommended source texts (the footnote references would be very helpful here),*
- ▶ *the deepening of biblical foundation (and eventually an understanding of the theological perspective and the teachings of the Church),*
- ▶ *the implementation of the charism in the Rule of Life or in the recent documents of the Institute,*
- ▶ *comparing the way this is currently being practised in our communities and identifying further steps towards a better understanding and inculturation.*

As a working paper for dialogue, this text also **awaits a response** which will lead to an eventual evaluation with suggestions for more productive and practical ways of using it. It will be in the hands of all, at the service of dialogue and the building of fraternal relationships.

I am convinced that the personal and group study of this valuable working paper will bring about further reflections, valid deepening and new discoveries which will become, in turn, resources for all and fruitfulness for the Kingdom.

Unity in the charism, set against the diversity of cultures and the span of time, remains always our common patrimony, our family treasure and the guarantee of communion. For all this, let us thank the Holy Spirit who continues to bless our “little Institute”.



M. Marie Remedios
Superior General

Rome, 8 December 2002
Feast of the Immaculate Conception

I ndex

Presentation

0 *I ntroduction*

1 *T he charism within the Christian faith*

2 *T he charism of Magdalene of Canossa*

- The love of Jesus Crucified – source of the charism of Magdalene
- The love of Jesus Crucified – the fulfillment of Magdalene’s search
- The fullness of the love of Jesus Crucified
- The twofold commandment of love
- The Eucharist as the place where Jesus Crucified reveals his love in the Church
- Mary at the foot of the Cross, Mother of Charity and “Foundress” of the works of Magdalene
- Charity according to the mind of Jesus Crucified shapes the fraternity of the community
- The ministerial nature of universal and integral charity
- The charism of Magdalene: practice of the contemplation of the charity of Jesus Crucified
- “Daughters of Charity – Servants of the Poor”

3 *Charism and Spirit of the I nstitute*

- The charism in the life of the Church
- The charism in the life of the Institute

Abbreviations

Ps	Book of Psalms
Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Jn	Gospel of John
1 Cor	1st Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians
Heb	Letter to the Hebrews
Rev	Book of Revelations of St. John the Apostle
UR	Unabridged Rule, Magdalene of Canossa, Milanese manuscript, Rome 1981 (English edition)
Rol	Rule of Life of the Canossian Daughters of Charity, Rome 1991
M	Memoirs, Magdalene of Canossa, edited by E. Pollonara, Milan 1988
Ep	Epistolario, Letters of Magdalene of Canossa, edited by E. Dossi, Rome 1967-1983
R.s.s.	Magdalene of Canossa, rules and spiritual writings, edited by E. Dossi, Rome 1984-85
P	Plans, Magdalene of Canossa, in Ep II/2
LG	Lumen Gentium, Vatican Council II, 1967
PC	Perfectae Caritatis, Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, Vatican Council II, 1965
ET	Evangelii Testificatio. Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, Rome 1971
VC	Vita Consecrata, Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, Rome 1996

0

I ntroduction

The description of a charism¹ can be made from many viewpoints:

- a) *its biographical origin*: Through the stages in the life of the founder/foundress, and his/her experiences, the charismatic insights are progressively revealed, clarified and stabilised, until they are shared and become operational as a “work”/ an institute.
- b) *analytic-synthesised* (or documentation): The various expressions and aspects of the charism that emerge in different moments and the documents in which it is formulated are analysed. (In the case of Magdalene, the documents are: the Letters of Don Libera, the Plans, the Memoirs, the Unabridged Rule, the Letters (Epistolario), the Catechesis. In addition, a different emphasis is given for the foundation of individual houses...). At a later stage, the constant factors are highlighted and a synthesis is made, distinguishing the basic constitutive elements from those that are variable and related to particular circumstances.

¹ Charism is a term which is not unambiguous in meaning. Already in the N.T. (used 17 times, 16 of which are found in Paul), the term is used with a general meaning: free and unconditional gift, grace given to all, and with a specific gift which manifests the pluriform grace of God shown in diverse ways in individual Christians, different members of the one body of Christ, which is the Church. (1 Cor. 12; Rom 12; Eph 4). It is the source of a service, a responsibility, a way of being and working which serves to develop Christian life and the life of the Church. Vatican Council II does not describe religious life directly as “charism”, but is pointing to this direction when it describes religious life as a *gift of the Holy Spirit*, as the *diversity of gifts* giving rise to *stable forms of life*, which the Church recognises and which contribute to the up-building of the Church and her mission. (LG 43-44; PC 1).

Paul VI in *Evangelii Testificatio* (1971) speaks of “the charism of the founder/foundress” in the sense that he/she has been inspired by God. With regard to religious life, charism refers to the gift of religious life to an institute and its identity and mis-

c) *Synthesised in a genetic-formative way:*

This approach presupposes, to a certain extent, the first two approaches and aims to identify the central life-giving nucleus of the charism discovered by the founder/foundress and around which everything has been re-interpreted. In the light of this centre seen as foundation and future direction, the degree of coherence in its application, such as the style of life and specific services, are reviewed, and the implications for formation will emerge. The choice of this third approach, without rendering the other two superfluous but rather necessary, is due to the need of using a brief and open presentation of the charism as a point of convergence and of dialogue. It also offers a formative approach to deepen and update the charism in the diversity of cultures in which the Institute is rooted and alive.²

sion (ET 11). John Paul II, in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (1996), speaks of the religious life as a specific gift of the Holy Spirit, which deepens and develops our baptismal consecration and contributes towards the holiness and mission of the Church (31-32). In short, according to current usage, we can take *charism* to mean *a specific way of living the following of Christ, moved by the Spirit and recognised by the Church, contributing to the up-building of the Church and her mission.*

² The brevity of the text is necessary because of its synthetic nature. As a matter of fact, the Institute, in addition to its Constitutions – *Rule of Life*, already has a number of documents developed in response to the need for deepening and updating, for formation and for the explanation of its ministries in the changing socio-contexts. Its open nature responds to the aim to be of service in the midst of cultural pluralism in the parts of the world where the Institute is present. It also allows dialogue and exchange so as to recognise and maintain its charismatic identity in diverse situations, and to promote the understanding of how the same charismatic richness can be expressed in different ways. This calls for understanding the need to interpret the charism as a condition for living it faithfully in changing historical conditions. To interpret means to recognise that the charism does not coincide with the way it has been expressed

historically. To understand the charism means going through the process that led to its different expressions according to changing circumstances in which it finds itself. Vatican Council II has reminded us that the proper renewal of religious life “involves a constant return to the sources of all forms of Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes, and at the same time, the adaptation of these institutes to the changed conditions of the times” (*Perfectae Caritatis* 2). Among the criteria used by the Council text, after the reminder on the fundamental following of Christ, two criteria seem to be particularly useful: the understanding of the spirit and aim of the founders/foundresses and the knowledge of the conditions of the times, of persons and of the needs of the Church. Another relevant reminder is that renewal and updating are a duty for all members of the institutes (PC 4) and that this calls for a great attention to be given to formation (PC 18). It actually means to encourage the encounter between the intelligence of the past, where the charism first took shape and became “tradition”, with the intelligence of the present, where the charism is called to serve the Reign of God in the Church and as Church, according to its specific nature. The protagonist of this intelligence is, first and foremost, the protagonist of the charism, that is, the individual communities into which the Institute is grouped and through which it finds its living expression.



1

*The charism
within the
Christian
faith*

The understanding of a charism takes place in the understanding of faith and of its structure, that is, of faith as a choice, as a consequence and as an attitude. The Christian faith is a personal choice of adherence to the Gospel, an act of free will in receiving the Good News of Jesus. This Good News has as its consequence the privilege of knowing God as our Father and Mother, in the humanity of Jesus who, in becoming one of us, works in us and among us through the gift of his Spirit given to everyone. This faith possesses, at the same time, personal, communitarian (ecclesial) and practical features. To understand the charism in relation to its foundation of faith and its place within it, some essential points must be considered.

Faith as encounter

The basic image of Christian faith is that of the encounter¹ resulting from an event and proclaimed by the witnesses of this event. It is the encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, prophet of the Reign of God, dead and risen, Son of God and Lord of all, believed in, celebrated, witnessed and proclaimed by the Church.

¹ It may be noted, first of all, that even from the anthropological point of view, the encounter (not merely as a physical act, but as an intentional one) takes place in life itself. In fact, it gives each one the experience of seeing one's own value recognised (besides the satisfaction of one's needs), and the possibility of discovering, in the form of witnessing, promotional values that are worthy of being pursued. In that way, one finds the possibility of giving direction to one's own life, of structuring one's own resources adequately, and gratefully receiving what is being shared, while taking into account the inevitable difficulties and moments of solitude. This is because we are committing ourselves to something worthwhile but which has not yet fully become our own identity.

Invitation

This encounter is seen as an invitation of the availability of God's love expressed in human terms in his Son Jesus. It has the potential to become in us a resource of life which is filial and fraternal, thanks to his Spirit.

Decision

This invitation which, for us is an unending discovery, enables each one of us to arrive at a decision, a choice that adds value to our life, and to commit our personal and cultural resources towards attaining its fulfillment.

Deepening

This decision of faith continues to be nurtured by the benefits of the encounter which first initiated it, according to the forms used by the Lord Jesus and which the Church has adopted: the Word, the sacraments and the ministry, in the unceasing creativity of the Spirit. The decision of faith is modelled on its foundation, the Lord Jesus, and on the relationship with him, through which we come to a gradual understanding of what it implies.

Attitudes

The decision of faith and its consequences call for and nurture coherent attitudes like listening, internalising the Word, the understanding of signs, the cor-

dial and humble acceptance of fraternal service. These attitudes make it possible for the decision of faith to become fidelity, perseverance and trustful surrender to the Lord. Without these attitudes both the decision and the consequences of faith will lack the elements to foster their growth. At the same time, without the act of decision, the consequences risk becoming mere intellectual concepts. Similarly, perseverance without caring for the consequences may be reduced to mere devotion.

Plurality of charisms

Because of the abundance of gifts that the encounter with the Lord offers, no single Christian will be capable of expressing the faith completely. Every person forms part of the great number of witnesses who have benefited from the encounter, in the communion that lives by grace, in a variety of ways and of works, which in themselves prove that they are not all-embracing.

It is this richness of the Spirit that sustains the Church and contributes, according to the gift received by each one, to help her become what she is called to be. It is the totality of the gifts of the Spirit that permits the Church to continue exercising its role throughout history, faithful to the charity of God to remain open to everyone, especially the poor and the dispossessed of our times, with whom the Lord wants to be in solidarity, to the point of identifying himself with them.

Religious consecrated life

Among the many charisms within the Church, the multi-faceted tradition of consecrated/religious life finds its origin and its purpose. It points to the transcendence of the Kingdom of God, to its surpassing value against all other historical realities, as it highlights the unconditional love of God for everyone. Religious life is closely linked to the event of the incarnation as it underscores its transforming value. Religious life within the Church does not imply an escape from the world perceived as a temporary refuge but is meant to become prophecy which evokes and works for the anticipation of what is definitive – eternal life. It is a particular prophetic stance which takes shape according to the diverse impulses of the Spirit and in response to the needs of the historical conditions of the times, so that it makes visible the salvation of the world. This salvation is accomplished obviously beyond the limits of history, but it is the salvation of history and not an escape from it². The recipients of salvation are our world and our society, called to be purified and matured to the full stature of the sons and daughters of God. Every person is called to experience resurrection in the “flesh”, that is, in the network of personal relationships and in the journey through which he/she is called to live these relationships and develop them.

Eschatology does not mean reducing the world to square one, from which it would have to start all over again in ways disconnected from what it has experienced

2 It is to be noted that, in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, the icon of transfiguration was used to represent religious life.

before. It appears instead as judgment that discerns and brings to fulfillment what has been lived according to the goodness of God, recognised in the words and actions of Jesus and received through the inspirations of his Spirit. What is certain does not devalue that which is temporary, but rather points out its value to be lived in a prophetic way.



2

*The Charism
of
Magdalene
of Canossa*

The charism of Magdalene of Canossa can be summed up in synthesis from:

- the memoirs, written “out of obedience”, of the spiritual journey she undertook in order to give life to the work of the Daughters and Sons of Charity¹,
- the writings in which she communicated the charism to her daughters²,
- the events through which she became gradually aware of it³, and
- the dialogues, especially her letters, where she is urged to clarify it in order to spell out its specific nature⁴.

We shall try to sketch it out briefly according to its origin and allow the formative nuances to emerge.

1. *The love of Jesus Crucified - source of the charism of Magdalene*

Magdalene realised that her life and work are deeply influenced and directed by the paradoxical contrast that she contemplated in Jesus Crucified. While Jesus seemed externally reduced by historical circumstances, to the powerlessness of the cross, struck down by rejection and by the absence of love, his

¹ Magdalene makes this note in the beginning of her Memoirs: “*being compelled by obedience to reveal by what means and ways God deigned to begin the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, I will write to the best of my ability all I can remember.*” (M. I,2)

² Reference is made in particular to the *Unabridged Rule*, written probably between 1814 and 1815, as Magdalene herself affirms in the Preface, to indicate the “*means*” necessary for living the charism. In the Plans, Magdalene presents to the ecclesial and civil authorities her motivations and the objectives which she intends to achieve with her institution.

³ The foundation in Venice (1812) is particularly significant, as it was made under very difficult conditions, “*without any support*” (M. III,14). In fact, Magdalene herself says: “*God started also this house, which being the first to have all the three branches of charity, can be considered the first house of the Institute*” (Letter to Carolina Durini, 30.1.1816; cfr. to the same on 9.8.1812).

⁴ The exchange of letters with A. Rosmini between 1821 and 1835 is very enlightening. In the

inner life was very active, as he exercised virtue to the highest degree and practised charity towards God and neighbour in an unsurpassable manner⁵. The Lord Jesus did not allow himself to be conditioned by external forces, but continued to live a life interiorly moved by *his most amiable, most generous and most patient Spirit* (UR Preface). This freedom to love, freeing a person from slavery, constitutes the apex of the revelation of God, and becomes the great attraction as well as the grace that inspired Magdalene: “*I felt transported to love Jesus with the heart of Jesus as I could not do so by myself*” (M. XIII, 10).

2. The love of Jesus Crucified - fulfillment of Magdalene's search

In Jesus Crucified and in the revelation and fulfillment of his love on the cross, Magdalene finds the integration of motivations, yearnings and tensions she has sought and struggled to achieve in her youth. From her “Memoirs” we can identify five such yearnings:

- ◆ The search to please God - the desire to anchor her life in the one only God, and “God alone” is the path that leads her, at the beginning of her spiritual life, towards the cloister⁶.
- ◆ The need to help the poor, those who are marginalised and deprived of the opportunities that society offers. These are the “neighbours in need”, those whose abandonment does not help to show that God is the Father of all.⁷

long letter written to him on 8 January 1826, Magdalene specifies the way she intends to live Charity in her Institute. It is different from the way of her most esteemed friend from Rovereto, who holds that the most extensive and universal form of charity is connected with the ministry of the Church. For Magdalene instead, the main aim of charity is the need of the poor and to find ways of being as close to them as possible (Cfr. A. Cattari, E. Dossi, M. Nicolai, *Magdalene of Canossa in Dialogue*, III, 197-340).

⁵ Cfr. UR, *Charity towards God, Poverty 1; Charity towards Neighbour 1*. It is important to observe that in this intuition, Magdalene recovers the deep meaning of devotion to Christ Crucified, saving it from the risk of considering suffering as the only meaning of the cross. Magdalene's perspective appears to be particularly close to that of John who sees the Lord's passion as the hour of glory and as the splendour of love that remains faithful even when its efficaciousness is challenged and when it is misunderstood to the point of being rejected (cfr. Jn 12:23-28; 13:1, 31-35; 19:28-30).

⁶ Cfr. Letters of Don Libera; Memoirs I,3-15. The Letters of Don Libera are a precious indirect source on the search of young Magdalene.

⁷ Cfr. Plans, starting from the first Plan B6 (1799), Memoirs I:25 (inspiration from the Book of Tobias); UR, *Preface*: “*as servants of the poor we owe them our attention, labour, care and thoughts*”. With reference to Mt.

- ◆ The commitment to counteract evil and to foster all that is life-giving, so as to release the salvific energies of the Gospel⁸
- ◆ The missionary thrust, the understanding of the universality of the gospel as the unconditional love of God for all people⁹.
- ◆ The search for the glory of God, of the divine glory (M. I,29), the desire to “*seek only the glory of God and the salvation of souls, surrendering to him the thought of everything else*” (M. II,50).

These five yearnings, which spurred Magdalene to look for possible solutions to lessen one or the other of the tensions, find their source of integration in the two-fold commandment of love, expressed by the Lord Jesus on the cross. There he shows his love for the Father by giving his life for the love of people, thus giving glory to God as well as sanctifying men and women. In the cross of Jesus, Magdalene sees the indivisible integration of the religious thrust and the empowering-missionary thrust that she feels deep within her being. In this source of integration, Magdalene recognises the configuration of her charism. This has become the path for her, the purpose that leads her to planning and implementation.

18:5 and 25:31-46, Magdalene reminds us that disregarding the poor means disassociating ourselves from the Lord's love. (UR, *Rules of the Schools, Introduction*). The two traits of our identity as “Daughters of Charity-Servants of the Poor” are inseparable.

⁸ Cfr. UR, *Directives for implementation, Rules of the Schools, Introduction* (pp 95-95), *Memoirs I*, 27 (inspiration from Ps 50:15), 30. Again, at the end of the *Memoirs*, Magdalene recognizes her vocation in “*seeking to prevent sins, moved by the sentiment of love*” (nourished by the Eucharist) (M. XV, 74).

⁹ Cfr. *Memoirs*, I,28 (inspiration from Mk 16:15); 31 (concern for the reunification of the Greek Church with the Catholic Church).

3. *The fullness of the love of Jesus Crucified*

The contemplation of the love of Jesus Crucified leads Magdalene to understand three inter-related aspects:

- ◆ The full and definitive revelation of the merciful love of the Father for everyone, of the “*effusion of the Divine Mercies*,” of “*Divine Charity*”, “*Divine Goodness*”¹⁰. In a historical period conditioned by structures that create discrimination and gaps, situations of poverty and emargination, God intervenes by coming among us, bringing healing and reconciliation. Through his mercy, God restores the dignity of the human person through fraternal relationships. Fidelity to “*God alone*” and the search for his glory led Magdalene towards contemplation and the three branches of Charity: to be “*alone with God alone*” and “*most zealous in working for the Lord*” (M. XIII, 13)¹¹.
- ◆ The revelation of the way in which God is moved by love to come to us. In Jesus, God becomes one of us, subjecting himself to humiliation, to poverty, to the lowliest condition, to the point of being “*stripped of everything except love*”, “*breathing nothing but charity*”¹². It is the way that Magdalene finds Paul proclaiming in the christological hymn of his letter to the Philippians: “*for our sake, the Divine Lord became obedient unto death, death on the cross*”¹³. Jesus himself refers to this when he presents himself and his ministry to the disciples (cfr. Mk. 10:45 ff.): “*Our Divine Saviour, when he*

¹⁰ Cfr. UR, *Virtue of Mortification*, pg. 265; Plan B 8-8; B 5-5. Expressions like “*Divine Love*”, “*Divine Charity*” (UR, *Charity towards God, Virtue of Humility*, Rule 1; of *Poverty*, Rule 1) highlight the love of the Father, whom we can contemplate through the Lord Jesus on the cross. (cfr. UR, *Charity towards God*, Rule 1).

¹¹ In the context of M. XIII,13, the “*alone with God alone*” has marked soteriological character: relationship with God is the only way by which we receive total liberation from our weaknesses. We can therefore well understand that this relationship animates our work, so that others may also gain access to God.

¹² Cfr. UR, *Charity towards God, Poverty*, Rule 1, *Virtue of Fraternal Charity*, pg. 243.

¹³ Cfr. UR, *Vow of Obedience: Rules of the Hospital*, XV.

appeared visibly on this earth for our salvation, even though he was Omnipotent and God most High, he stated that he had come to serve and not to be served"¹⁴. This is the way that Magdalene summed up in writing of the virtues of Jesus Crucified: obedience, humility, poverty (*UR, Charity towards God*). It is the way that Magdalene herself embarks upon, not limiting herself to shower the poor with charity as a noble lady, but making herself a servant of the poor, becoming poor to serve the poor. Magdalene understood that she could not love the poor as a rich lady, but it was the love of Jesus Crucified which gave her the honour of serving them. ¹⁵.

- ◆ The revelation of the same purpose that God had when he came to meet us along the way of love. It was to enkindle the same love in us because it is there that we find life, the salvation of life and the fullness of life in God. By making Jesus Christ known, "*first of all, we arouse holy charity in the heart, and then teach them how to practise it*" (*UR, Rule for Doctrine, Introduction*).

¹⁴ Cfr. *Rule for Doctrine, Introduction*.

¹⁵ Cfr. John Paul II, *Homily at the Canonization of St. Magdalene of Canossa*, 2 October 1988. This is what Magdalene experienced in a most intense way during the foundation of her Institute in Venice: "*God led me not only to do this work, but to really live without any support, just as he had many times moved me to desire*" (M. III,14). It refers to the style of service that Pius XI has summarized in the motto: "*charity in humility, humility in charity*" (Speech given on the occasion of the reading of the decree on the heroicity of the virtues of Magdalene of Canossa, 6 January 1927). Magdalene explicitly mentioned these two virtues in M. XIV, 52: "*In Milan, I was determined to practise in particular humility and charity*". Pius XII, in turn, commented: "*love cannot stay far away from those who are loved [...], Magdalene of the poor considered herself servant and sister*" (Discourse for the beatification, 9 December 1941).

4. *The Twofold Commandment of Love*

The contemplation of love in Jesus Crucified led Magdalene to understand the meaning of the twofold commandment of love in a very special way, as the synthesis of life according to the Gospel. Charity towards God and towards neighbour is enlightened “by the examples of the Spirit of Christ Crucified.”¹⁶

The imperative “*look and do as the exemplar*” (M.I,32; Ex. 25:40, interpreted christologically in Heb. 8:5) indicates the way that leads to the fulfillment of the twofold commandment of love. The contemplation of the virtues of Jesus Crucified spurs us to love God in response to the love which God reveals to us in human form in our history. The same love contemplated in Jesus Crucified guides us in our love for neighbour, not by our own efforts but as God’s sharing of his love towards all, in a particular way towards the poor. Our love is the “active imitation”¹⁷, or following of the Lord in his dedication to every sister and brother, especially to the poorest. In recognising and sharing the love of God shown to us through Jesus Crucified, every person can reach fulfillment and thus celebrate the glory of God and of his love.

¹⁶ Cfr. UR, *Preface; Charity Towards God*, Rule 1; *Charity Towards Neighbour*, Rule 1.

¹⁷ Cfr. UR, *Charity Towards Neighbour*, Rule 1.

5. *The Eucharist as the place where Jesus Crucified reveals his love in the Church*

The Eucharist has the most outstanding place in the charismatic experience of Magdalene. It is the spiritual “climate” which permeates her entire life journey. From the Eucharist, she draws “*deep peace, joy, the desire for heaven; but at the same time, the desire to work much.*” The reason for this is “*the love which the Lord manifested for his people, in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist*” (M. III, 45-46)¹⁸. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Magdalene perceives the constant availability of the love of Jesus Crucified and finds the grace to live this love through generous service to those who have not known this love. In a very special way, the Eucharist reminds her of the *moment* and the *way* in which the Lord has entrusted us with his commandment of love. The Last Supper and the handing on of “his” commandment to the disciples are so closely linked together that they can be experienced as *effective union of hearts* and sharing. In turn, the close connection between the Last Supper and the passion of the Lord underscores the absolutely unconditional and immeasurable nature of his love (*UR, Instructions to her Daughters, Virtue of Fraternal Charity*)¹⁹.

18 There are numerous references to the Eucharist in the “Memoirs”, cfr. I,25; III,19; III,33; IV, 11. 19.40; V, 6.14.36; VII, 7.16...

19 Cfr. M.III,46-49: “*Having read something about the Last Supper and especially of the love which the Lord manifested for his people, in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist [...], made me enter into myself to the point that I became recollected...; this insight into the love of Jesus for men and women...gave me a great longing to make him known and loved*”.

6. *Mary, Mother of Sorrows and Mother of Charity, "F oundress" of the works of Magdalene*

Magdalene perceived in Mary the one in whom the love of Jesus Crucified found acceptance in its fullest form. The Daughters of Charity are called to learn from her how to be totally open to the charity of the Lord. By the gift of the Spirit and in the communion of saints, Mary is an example of maternity, a maternity that is clearly apostolic. Mary, at the foot of the cross, participates in the struggle against evil, and in the commitment to accept unconditionally anyone marked by the wounds of sin. Mary is "*constituted Mother of Charity under the Cross when, at the words of her dying Divine Son, she gathered all of us, sinners though we are, to her heart.*" (UR, Preface).

Since maternity is a way of participating in the passion of Jesus for the redemption of all of us sinners, Magdalene finds a specific way of practising it in the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, dedicated to serve the poor who are deprived of education, instruction and assistance because of sin²⁰. In Magdalene's view, developing this maternal spirit implies the readiness to labour and suffer, so that every man or woman may arrive at the awareness of being a son or daughter of God.²¹

²⁰ Cfr. Ep. II/1, 505; II/2, 1135. 1426; III/1, 178. 240; III/2, 936.1001. 1266; III/5, 4050.

²¹ This apostolic characteristic of the maternity of Mary derives from a note taken from one of her companions during a conference given by Magdalene to animate the Daughters of Charity: "she showed that Mary's love was constant throughout the sufferings of Jesus, to the point of agonizing beneath the cross. Mary was always unshaken and constant in her sufferings. In the same way, a Daughter of Charity must be strong and constant in imitating Mary, even if it should mean losing her life in the exercise of the works of charity of the Institute" (RSS II, 222-223). Cfr. also the Plans of the Institution of the Tertiaries of the Daughters of Charity (RSS II,46).

7. Charity according to the mind of Jesus Crucified shapes the fraternity of the community

Fraternal relationships flow from a love that is unconditional and capable of healing any wound, a love contemplated in Jesus Crucified, celebrated in the Eucharist and fully incarnated by Mary, Mother of Charity. The strength of such relationships is proved in daily life and in the way of facing the trials of the apostolate, when the Sisters are *deeply rooted in the interior life*, that is, when the love of the Lord is the source and the rule of their life. (UR, *Virtue of Fraternal Charity*). We come to the fraternal community to be generated and re-generated by the daily, constant process of forgiveness and reconciliation, as “*it is also laid down that, should anyone fail in charity towards some Sister, she must ask forgiveness and be reconciled with her at least before going to bed*” (UR, *Charity Towards Neighbour*, Rule 5). Fraternal life is basically characterised by the mutual awareness that we have all been touched by the mercy of God in the love of Jesus Crucified. Thus, the fraternal community²² may be perceived as the first way in which the twofold commandment of love contemplated in Jesus Crucified is fulfilled. It is the indispensable condition for effectively preserving charity as the inspiration for all our activities, without which we are in danger of becoming “*phantoms of charity*”²³.

22 The binomial community-fraternity presupposes an essential correlation between the two terms which however do not refer to the same thing. Fraternity refers to a quality of relationship that is motivated by an intentionality which inspires those who are staying together. Community refers to the structure or organization by which the fraternity takes its form and which fraternity in turn gives itself, in order to ensure that it has the essential conditions. In the Christian tradition, fraternity consists in sharing, in mutually living the values of the Gospel and seeking together to do the will of the Father. This takes place when each one allows one's humanity to be purified and enriched by the values of the Gospel. Fraternity also gives all of us the opportunity to help one another to be open to the Gospel. The community with its variety of rhythms and means to reach this aim is part of this mutual help that we receive. The community is meant to be a laboratory of fraternity and thus becomes also a sign. (Cfr. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Fraternal Life in Community*, Rome 1994).

23 Cfr. UR, *Charity Towards Neighbour*, Rule 5; the *Virtue of Fraternal Charity*, pp. 244-247, refers to Jn. 13:34-35, in connection with the Eucharist and to Mt. 18:19-20, to the end of the treatise, pg. 259.

8. *The ministerial nature of universal and integral Charity*

From the very beginning, the ministerial nature of charity as a response to the conditions of human life has been an essential element of Magdalene's charism. The concrete needs of the poor have always determined the works of charity²⁴. According to the charism of Magdalene, the love of the Lord has certainly aroused the sense of gratitude and wonder in contemplation, but always in such a way as to point to some action inspired by charity. As she herself states, it means to "*imitate our Divine Saviour in carrying out the second commandment of charity*"²⁵. In doing so, there is a conscious acceptance of suffering as a sign of the struggle against evil. The effort and commitment required for this can be seen in the cross that the Lord carried. The "*torcular calcavi solus*" (M. V, 15, which refers to Is. 63:3, already interpreted christologically in Rev. 19:15) clearly evokes the determination and dedication with which the Lord fights against evil²⁶. Closely linked to the fight against evil is the attitude and style of humble service, which adapts to the state of those being served with the aim of promoting their growth so that they may find their place in society and in the church community, reflecting their rightful positions in God's plan for them²⁷.

The following three branches or ministries of charity form the permanent and stable expressions of the charism: education (or the redemption and promotion from poverty), evangelisation (revelation of the source and focal point of the dignity of the human per-

24 "We can identify three main needs from which derive nearly all the other ills which affect our neighbour: The need for education, for Christian instruction and for assistance in sickness and at the time of death" (Plan B6-6)

25 Cfr. *Charity towards Neighbour*, Rule 1.

26 The christological interpretation emphasizes that God's battle against evil is carried out in Christ, who by his life, death and resurrection, has stripped evil of any attempt of justification, crushed it definitively and removed all its power over human beings.

27 Cfr. UR, Virtue of Humility, Rules 1-3; *Charity towards Neighbour*, Rule 2; Rules of the Schools, Intro.; Rule XXXI

son) and assistance (witness/ proclamation that human weakness is not a sign of abandonment by God nor the end of life)²⁸. These three directions of charity emerge as the concretisation of love in the historical and structural conditions of the human person for whom the Lord died on the cross.

In them we can easily recognise an implicit anthropology of the charism which is the anthropology of charity. It requires us to be attentive to the conditions allowing persons to be free to recognise the love of the Lord and entrust themselves to him in an active willingness to share, in faithfulness and confidence.

The poor who are always disadvantaged and continually impoverished will be the acid test of how the charity of Christ, received and shared, can bring out and safeguard the worth of every person, and in particular, the sense of human dignity.

The ministerial nature of charity, which Magdalene intended to flow from the love of Jesus Crucified, includes the aspect of missionary openness to the whole world and to every place where the Lord is not known and where the human person is not the object of his love: “*I wish I could be reduced to dust if, in that way, I could be scattered to all parts of the world so that God would be known and loved*” (M. III,50)²⁹.

28 The Institute of the Canossian Daughters of Charity has two recent documents which deal with the three branches of charity as means for the integral actualisation of charity: *Basic Guidelines for the Ministries of Charity of the Canossian Daughters of Charity*, Rome 1996; *Interministeriality in the Canossian Community – visible sign of Charity*, Rome 2002.

29 Cfr. M. I,28; II,45-46. We can see the ecumenical openness of Magdalene in the same light, even though she did not have the opportunity to actualize it under the historical circumstances of that era. (Cfr. M. I,31; XIII, 77). The charity of the Lord is open to all who seek reconciliation.

9. The charism of Magdalene: practice of the contemplation of the charity of Jesus Crucified

The charism of Magdalene can be understood in synthesis according to its origin, as a particular insight into the charity of the Lord Jesus in the mystery of his passion. It is *totally free and unconditional, undeserved* (given to us even though we are unable to appreciate it), *fraternal* (implying an acceptance of mutual reconciliation) and *apostolic* (empowering one to serve in the style of the Lord Jesus, without any claim to being appreciated but only for the sake of *doing good to another*)³⁰. It is really this image of the love of the Lord, telling of the glory of God in his passion, the resurrection in death, that is also the source for a unity of life resulting from a lived charism. It is none other than the dynamism of a charity which is *contemplated, shared and given*. Magdalene summarised this when she affirmed: “*Make Jesus Christ known and loved, since he is not loved because he is not known*”³¹. The knowledge of the Lord, which is knowledge of his love for us, leads us to share his love among ourselves and with those who carry the pains of not having experienced love.

In the Church the charism of Magdalene has been lived right from the beginning, according to the statutes of religious/consecrated life, taking on the characteristic form of the profession of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the specific spirit and nature of the fraternal apostolic community³². The charism is also open to the participation of the laity, according to different modalities, which the experiences and documents of the Insti-

³⁰ Cfr. UR, *Rules for the Schools*, Rule 35.

³¹ UR, *Discipline for the carrying out, Rules for the Schools*, 1.

³² Cfr. UR, *On The Vows of the Institute*, pg. 64; *Plan B*. 10-9. Magdalene is aware that her Institute is not “*a monastic order, which is cloistered, yet [...] the individuals who belong to it must observe religious life*” (UR, *On The Vows of the Institute*), whose principal means are the three vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, fraternal life in community, according to the Rule (cfr. B.7-7).

tute have sought to implement and to communicate³³. In the different ways of participating in the charism, we recognise its ecclesial character, (which cannot be exclusively appropriated by anyone) and the priority of its aims and purposes regarding its application. We need, however, to give proper attention to those who identify themselves with the charism because they have assumed, according to their state of life, styles of daily living which nurture and keep the charism alive. In this way, the charism contributes towards the vitality of the Church and helps it to be sensitive to all the nuances of the Gospel.

10. "Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor"

The name *Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor* (UR, *Preface*) emphasises how the twofold precept of Charity gives identity to the persons who share the charism of Magdalene. They find their sanctification in the following of Jesus Crucified, as a commitment to the glory of God and the salvation of souls³⁴. It is the paschal dimension of charity that underscores the fact that the two aspects are inseparable. The passion of Christ reveals how his love is directed towards those who carry the painful consequences of not knowing love or of love being exposed to the possibility of rejection. The service of the poor is the specific name of the love of the Lord, according to the features revealed in his passion. It is a sign of his glory and his place as lord of history. It is the unspoken nobility of the Gospel that Magdalene understood from her contemplation of Jesus Crucified.

33 Cfr. XI GENERAL CHAPTER, *The Promotion of the Laity in the Church and the Institute Today*, Rome 1984; VO.I.CA, *Canossian International Voluntary Service*, Rome 1996, part. pp. 14-18.

32 The precept here does not refer to something which is imposed, but indicates biblically, that which cannot be renounced because of its value, of the greatness of the gift from which it springs (cfr. Beginning of the *Preface* of the UR).



3 *Charism and Spirit of the Institute*

In order to live the charism certain attitudes, conditions and initiatives, which express and develop the charism, are required. The charism is nourished by its own spirit, which is a reflection of the Spirit of the Lord expressed concretely by certain attitudes, lifestyles and service that have a lasting impact on formation. Magdalene speaks more than once of “*the spirit of the Institute that should be handed down in all its entirety and perfection to those who come after you*” (UR, *Conclusion*, pg 376), and “*to keep it pure and free from any entanglement*” (Ep. II/1, 149), just like the “*spirit of the Rule*”¹. There are essentially two places where the charism is protected and cultivated: the Christian community and the fraternal charismatic community – the Institute². In the Church there is a mutually enriching relationship between the Christian community and the Institute. The essential rhythm of the life of the Church expressed through the liturgical year and her concrete presence in human history are the basic ways in which the Institute shares with all the members of the Church. By virtue of the charism from which it draws life, the Institute, in turn, contributes to the journey of the Church and to her vitality. It is developed as a gift of the Spirit for the holiness of the Church, so that she can be present to people in ways that are in line with her mission. To cultivate the charism we need to be attentive to the conditions that foster this life-giving exchange.

¹ Cfr. UR, *The Role of the Superior*, pg. 304. The “spirit of the Institute” calls for attitudes and conditions referring not only to the moral or devotional life, but to the integrity of the person, therefore even to intelligence, to equilibrium, to freedom and responsibility. It involves a combination of “sensitivity” with practical exercises and structures that help to reveal the significance of the charism and what is required for us to incarnate it in our lives.

² The two subjects: Christian community and the specific charismatic community, are not externally separated one from the other. The Canossian fraternal community is within the Christian community, and lives the same faith, but is a distinct subject and bearer of a charism for the Church.

1. *The Charism in the life of the Church*

The charism is nurtured first and foremost, by the life of the Church, in listening to the Word, in the celebration of the sacraments that make her visible, through the ministries that ensure fidelity and unity within the Church. Through the charism, we participate in the life of the Church according to its specific nature and the history holiness that it has promoted. In this way it is helping to show God's grace at work in its numerous forms. The life of the community and its own personal journey do not pose any additional demands on the basic rhythm offered by the life of the Church, but rather requires attention to be paid to the source from which the charism draws life within the patrimony of faith, and how it, in turn, may also highlight certain of its features. This clarity will help in understanding and appreciating the prayers and practices assembled by the Institute in the course of its history and renewed and updated with the passing of time.

◆ *Centrality of Easter and the contemplation of the virtues of Jesus Crucified.*

Thus, the devotion to Jesus Crucified has its foundation and its place in the christological and paschal centre of the Christian faith, highlighting the demands of unconditional love, and related to this, its universal character. This is emphasised in the meditation of the Word and can permeate the entire experience of sacramental life, with the Eucharist at its center³. The meditation and imitation of the virtues of Jesus Crucified give us a profound insight into

³ This aspect is emphasized particularly in the Memoirs, where the eucharistic experience is often the meeting point of the riches of God's love with the fatigue of apostolic service.

the fullness of his life up to and beyond the point of his death, leading us to find ways of living it within the actual conditions of our role in the Church. It leads us to emphasise the aspect of service and to take on his attitudes. In this way, the Canossian charismatic inspiration becomes a specific proposal for interpreting the paschal mystery and contributes to the understanding and actualisation of the paschal grace which gives life to the ecclesial community.

- ◆ ***Eucharist and fraternity.*** By our participation in the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord's Paschal mystery, we are reminded continually that the communion of the Christian community comes from the gift of reconciliation and is open to all. The charismatic insight of Magdalene leads us to live the Eucharist with an emphasis on total confidence in the love of the Lord. The Eucharist thus becomes the place where we receive the commandment of love as a grace which teaches us how to live a fraternal life of service.

- ◆ ***Dedication to the Kingdom of God according to the twofold commandment of love.*** The twofold commandment of love, formulated also as search for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and linked to our personal sanctification (UR, *Preface*), corresponds to the absolute priority given to the Kingdom of God and his justice and constitutes the basic orientation of the Christian life which the Church guards and nurtures. The reading of the twofold commandment in the light

of the paschal mystery is specific to the charism and serves to highlight its source and its model.

- ◆ ***Mission of the Church and branches of Charity.*** The specific forms of ministerial Charity, expressed in the three branches of Charity, are ways in which we participate, according to our charism, in the mission of the Church to reveal and serve the saving action of God. We offer our contribution especially through the attention given to those who are poorest, so that the Church may be for the people a sign and instrument of the Lord's love and so that everyone, particularly those who have no voice or status, may experience it within the Church.

- ◆ ***Mary, Mother of the Lord and Mother of Charity.*** Even the place of Mary, Mother of Jesus in Christian life, becomes clearer from her special relationship with Jesus Crucified and the specific apostolic perspective of the charism. Magdalene saw in Mary Mother of Sorrows, the "*Mother of Charity at the foot of the Cross*". In the example of Mary for the Church as she journeys in history, the Canossian family discovers its own specific charism, which becomes its significant contribution to the whole Christian community.

2. *The charism in the life of the Institute*

The charism will exist in as much as it is lived according to the following three distinct and internally-correlated modalities. It exists at the emerging stage in the life of the foundress; it becomes an instituted form when it is shared and approved by the Church; and when it is personally accepted by each sister or brother called to participate in it. It operates unceasingly as *the charism of the foundress, the charism of foundation and the charism of an institute*⁴. Maintaining it in this fruitful connection and accepting the tension that this implies, is a formative task that cannot be disrupted.

◆ *Charism and formative processes*

Understood and lived in faith, the charism is for us *a constant reminder of our being in a state of formation*, without which it would risk either closing itself in one form (within a historical moment and a cultural context) or exposing itself to improvisations that will obscure the fruitful connection between experience and its original witness of the charism as gift.

At this point, we can briefly recall some basic processes of on-going formation as a guideline for dialogue and the shared journey⁵:

- *The discovery.* We are always living the charism in the context of formulated expressions (of language, lifestyle, service...) which we have received and according to our own subsequent experi-

⁴ It should be noted that this terminology can only be defined approximately. It has been introduced and it is useful to understand some requests for renewal that formation has to be responsible for. By the *charism of the foundress*, we can understand a total of three elements: an evangelical inspiration, a project that results from it, and the role of the initiator, also through gifts and attitudes that are strictly personal. The *foundational charism* refers to an evangelical value in line with the objectives arising from it regarding a specific situation around which it finds a convergence which is shared. *The charism of the Institute* is the foundational charism as it is received, understood and confirmed by experiences of the charism throughout the history of the religious family that embraces it. *The spirit of the Institute* involves all these moments of the charism and is renewed through the very process of promoting, in fidelity to the charism, its practical expressions. To understand the Pauline presentation of charism in connection to consecrated life and for such materials, which have been simplified into elementary and essential terms, reference can be made to G. ROCCA, *The Charism of the Founder*, Milan 1998, which also offers a bibliography on the topic.

⁵ This process can easily be recognized in a prominent way in the Preface of the Unabridged Rule and can be summed up briefly in the urgency of being "*well founded interiorly*" (UR, *Virtue of Fraternal Charity*, pg. 243).

ences. It is important that these be aligned, by means of useful and meaningful steps, to their origin, through a correct reading of the sources of the charism⁶ and of the faith in which the charism lives. The discovery will give rise to a new understanding for us and an opportunity to redesign our way of living and working.

- *Interiorisation.* We will not benefit from the re-discovery, if we do not find a way to arrive at the level of motivation, and if we do not nurture our memory of the origin, and our reasons for living, beyond the daily achievement of results (gratification and pressures). Of course, it is a question of the action of the Spirit, but there are, according to our human experience and the experience of the Church, certain tools and attitudes that accompany the process. An example of this is the use of shared reflection that attempts to confront life situations with the fullness of the charism in the light of the faith⁷.
- *Renewal.* The charism will become effective always through our resources and attitudes cultivated as skills. Whenever socio-cultural changes demand from us the use of new skills and tools, we are also faced with the task of realigning their use with the charismatic inspiration. No tool is neutral and the attitudes and concerns inherent within the charismatic inspiration will allow us to use these tools in a coherent way (and eventually to undergo a critical form of purification).⁸

6 For a simple and general indication, reference can be made to the paper: *For a reading of the writings of Magdalene.*

7 In Magdalene's language this corresponds to the need to translate the charismatic inspiration into virtues (cfr. *Instructions to the Daughters* in UR, but there is more).

8 The need for renewal seems to emerge above all in the Plans where Magdalene highlights the importance of acting according to the situations and in the UR where she even asks the Sisters to be respectful of places and customs (cfr. UR, *Virtue of Fraternal Charity; Role of the Superior*).

- *The Decision.* Each formative process, considered as the taking on of the charism in one's own life, arrives at a decision. This decision takes place on several levels: personal, community, provincial and institutional. Yet, it is important not to forget that every decision is the result of a process (that spells out the reasons and, therefore becomes a source of interior motivation), and calls for another process (with attention paid to the conditions for the practical implementation of the decision). Within this framework, community life projects and projects of the province can be drawn up ⁹.

These four processes are inter-related and continually affected by the journey of life, where new situations demand a fresh direction and new decisions which require rediscovery, and interiorisation, in view of renewal.

◆ *Life of the Institute and formation*

The life of the institute has a rhythm of its own with clear formative implications, emphasising from time to time, one process or another (or a group of them together). The General and Provincial Chapters are structures of renewal. Study seminars are opportunities for rediscovery and interiorisation. Commissions of individual ministries can in fact help us in the process of decision-making. These are important moments to exercise the spirit of the Institute and arrive at a responsible re-interpretation and owning of the charism ¹⁰.

⁹ The letters of Magdalene contain many interesting elements for processes of discernment and decision-making in line with the charism.

¹⁰ According to the Resolutions of the XIV General Chapter (2002), we can adopt as tools and categories which sum up the formative processes that of "story-telling" and of "style of life". In times of great and rapid changes and of the urgency of inculturation of the charism in diverse contexts, these seem to be particularly useful tools for fostering fidelity (in story-telling we are helped to proceed without interruption), and for highlighting the effectiveness of the charism "locally".

◆ *Fraternal community and formation*

The daily routine of fraternal life, in sharing the joys and labours of each day, in the exercise of attentiveness which our service demands of us, in the giving of mutual help in our life journey as Sisters, according to the grace of the Lord and of the charism, makes the community a special place of constant on-going formation. The community project together with its related process of discernment and evaluation, is a tool which helps us to remember to tell the story of God's love among us. It helps us to live with patient perseverance, a style of personal and fraternal life capable of proposing to people who live around us, the precious value of the Gospel and of the gift of the charism entrusted to us.

Understanding the charism in the Church for the world today and undertaking responsibility for its formative demands in the spirit of the Institute, we have the opportunity for encounter and dialogue that will permit us to recognise the value of the gift that identifies us. In doing so, we give thanks to God for this gift, just as we are experiencing it as a vitality for the Church and the glory of the charity of the Lord shining forth to tell the poor that his passion is for them, that they have reason to count on God's love and to open themselves to receive this love¹¹.

¹¹ Cfr. UR, *Rule for Doctrine, Introduction*.



CANOSSIAN DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

GENERAL CURIA

Via della Stazione di Ottavia, 70 – 00135 Rome

PRINTED IN ITALY
FEBRUARY 2003