

CHARISM

IS A GIFT FROM GOD FOR THE CHURCH

The word **charism**, meaning **gratuity** or **gift** in Greek, is found in the writings of Saint Paul where he lists the varied and individual gifts of the spirit given to persons. These gifts given by God to the individual belong to the entire church, as Saint Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12. A charism is given not for the glory or satisfaction of the recipient but as a responsibility to benefit others.

The charism of a religious congregation is the particular grace needed to live the mission of that congregation with fidelity.

Every institute is founded with a particular spirit to address a particular need to be used in the service of God's people. The development of a community's charism is traced back to a specific historical moment.

In the Bernardine Franciscan Congregation, it began with the gifts of our foundress, Mother Veronica Grzedowska, who responded to a call from her superior when the superior received a request from a pastor in America for sisters to teach the children of Polish immigrants.

The charism of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters is Trust in Divine Providence.

The story of the life of our foundress, Mother Veronica, reveals our charism in action. In her everyday life in her homeland and in the most significant ways in the new world as she embarked on American soil, Mother Veronica was very aware of God who worked in her life and she relied on His guidance.

Mother Veronica did not envision founding a religious community; she simply lived to meet the needs of her time whatever unfolded before her. Her great love of God gave rise to care for the orphans who came to her doorstep and to respond to pastors who requested the sisters to teach in their schools.

Young women witnessed her life and her trust in God and wanted to join her and so the small group grew into the Congregation of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters