

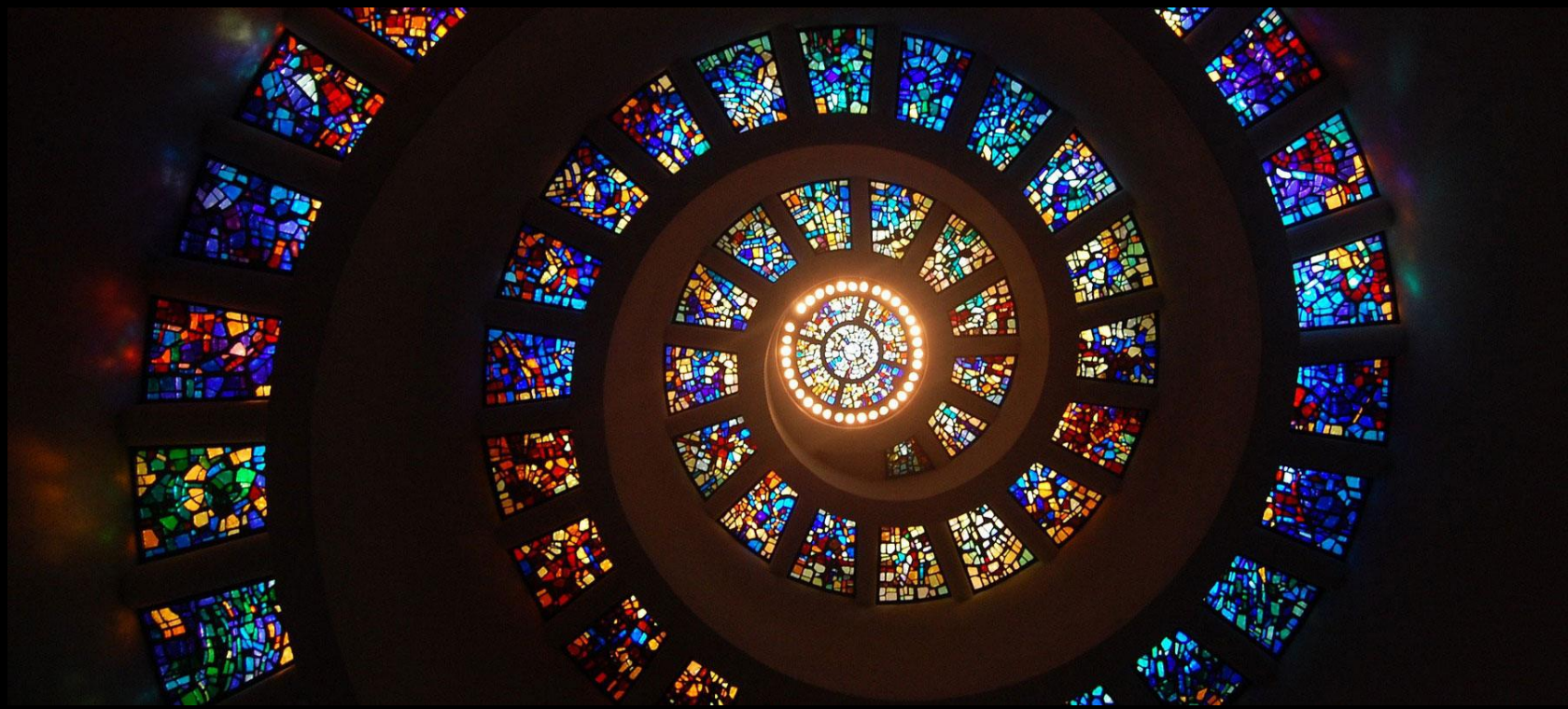
# *Living the SSND Charism 'Throughout The Whole'*



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# Part One

Theology: Laying the Foundations

# Overview of the Day

- This morning = **Theology** (laying the foundations for our ongoing response to the Call of the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter).
- This afternoon = **Spirituality** (how do we make the response and embrace of the SSND Charism *personal*).
- Going forth = **Action** (what can we do in our lives and sponsored ministries to put the charism into action with faith and purpose)

# Methodology

- I will offer some suggestions for reflection and discussion, which may be a *refresher* for some here and *new* to others (approx. 40-45 mins)
- We will have table discussions where those gathered can reflect from their particular positions, ministries, and experiences (approx. 30 mins)
- Then we will return to the large group to share highlights from the discussions and I am happy to field questions you may have (approx. 15 mins)

# I. Theological Foundations

I. What do we mean when we talk about *Charism*?

II. Exploring the *Theological Roots* of the Directional Statement

III. Revisiting *Catholicity* as a framework for living the SSND Charism today.

# I. Charism



# The Ancient Origins of *Charism*

- From the Greek word ***Charis*** (Χάρις) literally means “gift” but used in the NT by St. Paul to refer to “grace,” which informed the Greek word ***Charisma*** (χάρισμα) that is the root of the modern ***Charism***.
- “Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, **charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church**, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men [and women], and to the needs of the world” (CCC 799).



# Development of the meaning of *Charism*

- When associated with a religious Order, Congregation, or other form of Consecrated Life, **charism** refers to the specific gift or characteristic that inspired the community's founder(s) to establish a distinctive way of evangelical life.
- Often—though not always—the **charism** of a particular community is associated with forms of ministry or apostolic life (e.g., missionary efforts, education, healthcare, direct service to the poor, etc.)
- Case study: **SSND** vs. **OP** vs. **MC** vs. **OFM**



# Development of the meaning of *Charism*

**“There are in the Church very many communities, both clerical and lay, which devote themselves to various apostolic tasks. The gifts which these communities possess differ according to the grace [*Charis*] which is allotted to them. Administrators have the gift of administration, teachers that of teaching, the gift of stirring speech is given to preachers, liberality to those who exercise charity and cheerfulness to those who help others in distress (cf. Rom. 12:5-8). “The gifts are varied, but the Spirit is the same” (1 Cor. 12:4).”**

— Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 8

# Development of the meaning of *Charism*

- “A charism is the driving force that gives religious communities their purpose and informs the way they live out their faith. Charisms are typically apparent in the origin story of a religious order [or congregation]” (USD).
- While this is applicable especially to the professed members of a given religious community, a community’s charism is something that also animates and is shared with lay associates (whether as officially associated or on account of shared ministry or apostolic work)

# Considering the SSND *Charism*

**“Our charism, gift of the Spirit, was embodied in Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, who, longing for the oneness of all in God ... seeking God’s will, struggled for unity in our international community and responded to urgent needs, preferring the poor and educating with a world vision. In these **gifts of the Spirit** to our foundress, Mother Theresa, we recognize the **evolving charism** of our congregation.”** (from *YAS*, prol.)



# Considering the SSND *Charism*

The Prologue to the *Constitutions* of the outlines three ways the *Charism* originates in history and is transmitted today:

1. Through the vision, witness, and model of **Blessed Mary Theresa**, founder of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.
2. Informed by key **exemplars and models of Christian discipleship and practice** (including St. Augustine, Bl. Alix Le Clerc, St. Peter Fourier, Bishop Wittmann, Francis Sebastian Job, and Mother Carline Friess).
3. Ongoing openness to the **Holy Spirit** guiding the community today and into the future.

# Considering the SSND *Charism*

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- These foundational sources for understanding the living, dynamic, mission-oriented dimensions of the SSND Charism bring us to the **Directional Statement** (2023) that invites further reflection.
- The next section looks at some of the **theological roots** of the key themes in the Directional Statement to help us anchor ourselves in the work of responding to and embodying the SSND Charism today





## II. The Theological Roots of the Directional Statement and Call



# Opening Declaration

“Compelled by the urgent crises of our times, we, School Sisters of Notre Dame, ‘longing for the oneness of all in God,’ commit to actions that deepen our relationships of communion, wherever we are.”





**A. We strive to be credible witnesses of universal communion** through deepening our efforts to live as an **intercultural faith community** of one mind and one heart.

- **Credible Witnesses** = Sincerity in responding to God's challenging, costly call to *agapic* love, especially in the face of resistance or co-option (the Greek word for witness is *martyr*)
- **Universal Communion** = A recognition of our inherent relationship to all of Creation, including all our human siblings in a spirit of *Koinonia*
- **Intercultural faith community** = Interculturality is more than mere tolerance or multiculturalism, it is about building a genuinely new community, society, *ecclesia* in which all bring their authentic selves and contribute to in-breaking of the Reign of God

B. We are committed to **sustaining our charism** and **life in mission** as a faith-filled, welcoming, and **inclusive community**.

- **Sustaining our charism** = a living out of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* call to universal holiness and vocation; not just consecrated religious and the ordained, but all the baptized (as witnessed to among those gathered here).
- **Life in mission** = One way to conceive of this is to draw from Pope Francis's concept of **missionary discipleship** (*Evangelii Gaudium*), which speaks to ongoing conversion and community building in the spirit of Jesus Christ
- **Inclusive community** = illustrated by the commitment to be an "intercultural faith community" noted earlier.

**C. We acknowledge our own complicity in the social sin of our global community, and we commit ourselves to further systemic change.**

- **Complicity in social sin** = a wonderful recognition and ownership of the individual and communal understanding of the human person as good, yet sinful. Reflects a grounded theological anthropology.
- **Commit to further systemic change** = Multiple forms of conversion are necessary: “ecological conversion,” “antiracist conversion,” “LGBTQ+ inclusiveness conversion” and so on. This also arises from theological anthropology.

# III. Catholicity Revisited



# The origins and meaning of the word “Catholic”

Catholicity ≠ “universality” or “all-encompassing”

# The origins and meaning of the word “Catholic”

- Although in contemporary English we use “Catholic” and “Universal” interchangeably, their etymological roots reveal an important distinction, which has theological consequences.
- The work of Walter Ong, SJ has shed tremendous light on this point.
- The ancient church had access to the Latin word *universalis* yet decidedly chose the Greek term *katholikos* to speak of the: “one, holy, **Catholic**, and apostolic church”

# The origins and meaning of the word “Catholic”

*Universalis* = *unum* (“one”) + *vertere* (“turn”)



*Katholikos* = *kata* or *kath* (“through” or “throughout”) + *holos* (“whole”)



# The origins and meaning of the word “Catholic”

- The theologian Avery Dulles, SJ, explains that the term *catholicity* implies a “qualitative wholeness.”
- “Unlike universality, catholicity is a concrete term: it is predicated not of abstract essences but of particular, existing realities. Furthermore, it always implies intensity, richness, and plenitude. Unlike fullness, it implies a unitive relationship among things that are diverse.”

(Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 167)

# Thinking about authentic *Catholicity* as “Whole-Making” Today

Scripture Scholar Dianne Bergant writes: “Humankind’s participation within and oneness with all other members of this community [of creation] is the ultimate experience of catholicity, a catholicity that is universal in extent and encompassing all.”

(Bergant, *A New Heaven, A New Earth*, 4)

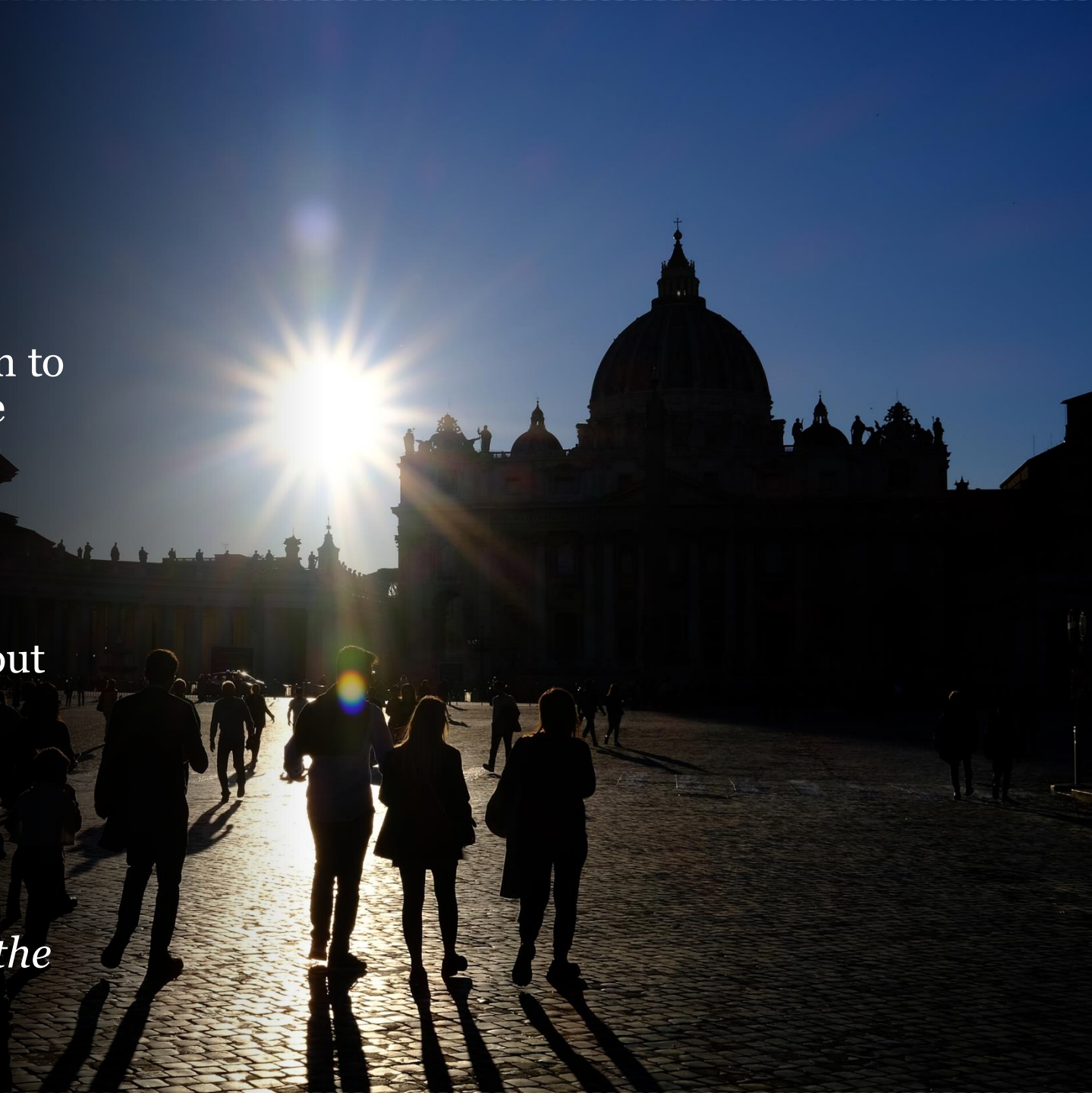
Thinking about  
authentic  
*Catholicity* as  
“Whole-Making”  
Today + Living  
the SSND  
Charism...

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# Some Discussion Questions...

- What does the concept of **charism** mean to me personally? What does it mean in the sponsored ministry where I serve?
- Are there elements of the **Directional Statement** that I find **challenging** (personally or institutionally)? What about the statement is exciting or inspiring?
- How might the theological notion of **catholicity** change the way I see or act? What can I do to better embrace and promote the SSND charism *throughout the whole* of my ministry?





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