

IHM Charism in Ministry

What's it all about?

(This sample presentation of the IHM CHARISM could possibly be adapted and used in programs for staff training and formation, board member orientations, classroom instruction, a retreat day, etc.)

We often hear about the culture of a work place, and that also applies to any IHM ministry or sponsored work. IHM culture revolves around the Charism of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – our beliefs, values, spirituality, traditions and relationships.

But what is Charism? The Catholic Catechism uses descriptions like the following to answer this question:

- 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 (all) and the needs of the world. (#799)
- A wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and the holiness of the Church (#800)
- Charism graces are at the service of charity, which builds up the Church (#2003)

According to Daniel Webster's dictionary definition "*charism* is an extraordinary power given a Christian by the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church". Our Christian tradition teaches us that each of us receives special God-given gifts, or charisms, to be used for the common good, for the building of the kingdom of God here on earth. We, as Christians, believe we receive these gifts at baptism. Therefore, it seems logical that those of non-Christian beliefs receive their gifts at the initiation rites of their faith. So, all of us here in this room have received charism graces for this building up of the kingdom.

Here at _____ (particular place or ministry), the *charism* of the IHM sisters defines the culture and, hopefully, it is experienced; it is compelling; it is contagious. Normally, charism is not something that can be taught or defined but, rather is something in the air. It permeates the way things are done; it creates an atmosphere; it has an animating spirit.

IHM's express their Charism in three simple, yet powerful words: LOVE, CREATIVE HOPE AND FIDELITY. While each person can define or explain these words as they are experienced in their individual and personal lives, here at _____, they are defined as follows:

We say LOVE shows itself in joy, respect, and reverence. It is tangible when we are kind and compassionate; when we are approachable; when we are available to one another and the needs of our _____ community; when we are just, yet merciful. It doesn't have to be

dramatic, though sometimes it is. It can be as simple as being patient with some person, student, staff member, co-worker, who pushes our buttons. It is as simple as promising to pray for someone in need or listening when someone is going through a personal crisis. This charisma grace directs us to love and care for the poor among us, those who are in need, those who are vulnerable or almost invisible.

[Cite examples of planned or current service projects in this specific location/ministry]

CREATIVE HOPE places confidence in God's Divine Providence. IHM's believe that God is in control. God has a plan even when one can't see it. Such hope sparks the belief that, as a _____ (parish, school, pastoral, etc.) community, we are called to make a difference especially in this time of violence and hostility in which we live. Creative hope prompts us to choose a different way of life that values the rights and dignities of each person, and to be counter-cultural in respecting one another. It envisions the future not with despair but with spirit and life. It reveals solutions rather than situations that end in complaining or throwing up one's hands to say what's the use of trying?

Who better exemplifies this than _____ (founder, hero or notable connected to particular place/ministry)?

[DESCRIBE examples of how this person demonstrated creative hope.]

FIDELITY, as a virtue, is a charisma grace that often suffers mockery or ridicule in our society today. Everything is temporary, including relationships. FIDELITY calls for "hanging in there", staying the course, especially when things become difficult. It calls for courage, for perseverance, for commitment. It enables us to be faithful to our vocation in life, to our beliefs and values, and to our God. It calls us to show support to one another, to show up day in and day out for the sake of the mission.

One model of FIDELITY that could inspire us is _____ (e.g. Mary, a patron saint, or other inspiring person) _____ persevered and allowed God's plan to unfold throughout her lifetime.

[Specify/describe examples of this person's FIDELITY.]

Remembering that charisms are gifts, let us recall those gifts that we have received in our lifetime. Some gifts we cherished (perhaps, identify specific examples) and others that we may not have liked or appreciated.

[Provide some examples of both]

Consider how you receive the gifts of LOVE, CREATIVE HOPE, FIDELITY... Are they going to be cherished and used as a hallmark of who you are? Or are they going to be used sparingly until you can get rid of them?

There is a reason you are here at _____, in this place, at this time. It isn't random, it isn't by chance. You are here to be intentional in living what has now, hopefully, become part of your own charism graces. Claim these God-given gifts, so that the kingdom of God is at home in your heart and here at _____. Be the face and visible sign of LOVE, CREATIVE HOPE, AND FIDELITY both here and everywhere you go! People will notice – and maybe even catch the Spirit!

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