

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Institute of Salesian Spirituality

Fall 2018

SP2130 - Salesian Identity and Charism

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Course Description

As a prelude for understanding the pastoral contribution of St John Bosco (1815-1888) and the various branches of the Salesian Family, students unpack the Christian concept of *charism* especially with reference to vocation and mission. The course begins with a survey of biblical concepts and follows the development of the theology of charism. The emphasis then shifts to consecrated life. Methods for identifying and rediscovering (re-founding) the charism of the founder will be explored. [3.0 units].

Format and Tools for Assessment

The course will develop through class-time lectures and group discussions based on assigned readings.

In addition to attending lectures and actively participating in class discussions, your progress in this course will be assessed on the basis of two reflection papers (5 pages), a short research paper (10 pages) and a class presentation (20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for feedback from the rest of the class members). Topics and due dates for class assignments and presentations are decided on the second day of class.

Text

Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, presented by Pascual Chávez Villanueva, translated into English by Julian Fox. Rome, 31 January 2012 [published first on the internet at www.sdb.org].

“Salesian Family: Identity and Charism.” Notes by Joseph Boenzi SDB for the private use of ISS and GTU students of the Spiritual Theology Course SP2130. TMs [photocopy], Berkeley: Institute of Salesian Spirituality: 2018.

Scheduling

SP2130 is slated to meet on Tuesdays and Fridays during the second morning period (9:40-11:00) at the Institute of Salesian Studies (1831 Arch Street, Berkeley CA 94709). During the first class, we will firm up the instruction calendar and due dates for assignments.

My office hours are set for Tuesdays, 13:30-15:30.

Joseph Boenzi SDB

Course Outline

Introduction: Why speak of Salesian Identity?

To launch our discussion of charismatic theology, we raise issues connected with identity formation. You will learn to identify criteria for describing *identity*, and to zero in on charismatic or spiritual components in the experience of Christian people.

Unit 1: Biblical Foundation for a Theology of “Charism”

In the second half of the 20th Century, Catholic theologians recovered a Theology of Charism. This was at the insistence of Vatican II, especially with regard to the renewal of Religious Life in the Church. Religious were invited to speak a new, biblical and theological language. This served as the key in their return to the *source*, that is, the Gospel, and to the *spirit of the founder*.

In St Paul’s letters, *charism* is a key term used to describe the fundamental Christian experience of the Holy Spirit’s Presence. Through a rich diversity of gifts, the Spirit builds on human capacities to make individuals and communities aware of God’s call (vocation), prompting total dedication (consecration) and an outreach to others, beginning with the building up of the community, but leading to bringing Good News to many others (mission). Charisms are a universal phenomenon.

In this unit, you will compare Pauline and Vatican II descriptions of Charisms, and to reflect on them as “spirit” and “fruit” of the Spirit in the way they impact different forms of life, for the building of the ecclesial community. You will also explore theological principles for an ordering of charisms.

Unit 2: Founding Charism

In order to better understand charismatic and spiritual experience in *Salesian* history, it is important to clarify our terminology. You will look at *founding charism* and the issue of *developing charism*.

There are several possible approaches to interpret what is called the *founding charism* of an institute and the development of that charism. In this unit you will discuss and trace the *historical approach*, the *experiential approach* and the *hermeneutical approach* for an interpretation of the Salesian experience.

You will learn to objective criteria that will enable you to identify the Salesian charism and spirit. Your task will be to explore the complimentary roles of charism and spirit as experienced by individuals and their communities or groups. As a learning outcome, you will gain skills in clarifying issues of leadership, and in identifying appropriate individual and collegial styles.

Unit 3: The Founder and Founding Charism

In the third unit, you will study the concept of *Founder* as it is used in Church documents, in both juridical and historical-theological literature. You will explore the theological, charismatic sense of *founder*. As a learning outcome, you will clarify the meaning of *spiritual experience* in church documents. You will identify essential elements of the founding experience in communities and movements that endure.

You will learn the theological notions behind the concept of *founding couples* and examine the experience of founding as an expression of Church.

Unit 4: Don Bosco: Founder of an Apostolic Family

Don Bosco's charismatic and spiritual experience was first documented in the beatification process. It was immediately apparent that this was a complex experience. He not only founded a religious community, whose life and mission he guided and shared, he also founded communities of which he was not personally a member.

In this unit you will identify concrete experiences that marked Don Bosco as a Founder. You will examine the impact of the founding experience on questions of identity, significance and enduring value over the course of time and in changing cultural environments.

Unit 5: Developing a Charismatic and Spiritual Salesian Experience

Charismatic elements that cannot be *transmitted* remain *living aspects* of the "original experience." You will examine the theological notions behind the Church's affirmations that a specific charism and spirit continues through the work of the Holy Spirit. You will learn how the Church speaks about the impact of charisms on personal and community experience. You will learn about forming, shaping, and developing creative responses to charisms.

In this unit, you will also discuss the "Salesian Family," and identify ways in which the charism and spirit can foster Christian discipleship. You will identify and discuss issues of inculturation and acculturation, as well as life-long formation.

Unit 6: Salesian Charism: Dimensions

Whatever the common and differentiated experiences, it is not possible to speak of continuing and developing a charism of consecrated life without clear references to a Founder. You will examine ways in which Salesian life can represent a particular evangelical perception and vocation. You will be able to discuss Apostolic Consecration and Lay Mission as complementary.

In this unit, you will examine the Salesian charism in terms of evangelical service and spiritual methodology. You will unpack the implications of the family-like and apostolic styles of communities that invite collaboration and animation. You will learn viable components of the Mission that transcends different forms of communities and lifestyles as embraced by the Salesian charism and spirit.

Unit 7: Salesian Spirit

In this final unit, you will examine the relationship between the Salesian charism and what the earliest generations of Don Bosco's followers called the "Salesian spirit."

You will uncover the theological distinctions between *charism* and *spirit*: how they are related and ways in which they complement one another (as invitation and response).

Conclusion:

In a rapid conclusion, you will scrutinize the vocational elements of Charism and Spirit, in a general and then in a Salesian context.

Selected Book List for SP2130

John Paul II, Pope. “Juvenum Patris.” Letter of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Reverend Egidio Viganò, Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de Sales, for the Centenary of the Death of St John Bosco, 31 January 1988, in *Salesian Bulletin*, 42.4 (July-August 1988): 4-26.

Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, presented by Pascual Chávez Villanueva, translated into English by Julian Fox. Rome, 31 January 2012 [published first on the internet].

Amato, Angelo. “The ‘Four Pillars’ of Salesian Spirituality.” *L’Osservatore Romano*; Weekly Edition in English, Vatican City, 38.2/1876 (12 January 2005): 8, cols. 1-4.

Chorpenning, Joseph. “Salesian Spirituality,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, 850-854. Edited by Michael Downey. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993.

Desramaut, Francis. *Les cent mots-clefs de la spiritualité salésienne*. Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2000.