

### Section 3

#### COMMON FEATURES OF THE CHARISM OF THESE SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

What have these men and women in common? As we have said before, they all have received a special Gift of the Spirit, and by responding to this Gift, they followed the guidance of the Spirit in their daily life, and in all their undertakings. The Spirit is always at work in each of us to deepen and strengthen our relationship with God and Jesus Christ as well as with our neighbors. Therefore, in the lives of all these great men and women, you will discover a profound, personal relationship with Jesus, even a passion for Jesus and his Gospel message, as well as a total commitment to the coming of God's Reign on earth, in personal relationships, in daily life and work, and in secular society.

These men and women also show us that by being faithful to the Gift of the Spirit in our hearts, we will be empowered in loving our neighbors, wholeheartedly. Indeed, *"God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled."* (Galatians 5:22 –23)

They all take seriously St. Paul's word: *"God has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts"* (2 Cor 1:21-22; see also 1 Cor 2:10-12), and are *aware* of the mystery of the presence of God's Spirit within their hearts. By doing so, they are able to show us a new way of life: not just following the current fads and fancies of public opinion, but living "from inside out". They call this 'inside' with different names. Jesus himself had already spoken about "the inner room" (Matt 6:6). Many centuries later, Teresa of Avila calls it the "Interior Castle". In modern times, Thomas Merton spoke about the "True Self". Other teachers simply refer to "the soul" or "the heart", meaning the inner core of the human person.

Now, as St. Paul often repeats, we are all gifted by the Spirit: “*God’s Spirit lives in you*” (e.g. Rom 8:11). The moments of our Baptism and Confirmation have made us aware of this mystery of the Spirit dwelling within us. The difference between these spiritual teachers and us is that *they* have explored this inner dwelling place of the Spirit, through contemplation and prayer. Moreover, they have shown others how to enter into this ‘inner room’, the heart. By becoming aware of the presence and the guidance of the Spirit within, we will feel urged to follow a new way of life, a way of relating to God and Jesus Christ, of associating with others and performing our daily tasks, according to this divine guidance.

#### **A reflective moment**

*“I used to keep my spiritual life in a tight space  
and felt that my work, my social life, my relational joys and struggles  
actually kept me away from God  
rather than teaching me  
and being sources of personal transformation for me.*

*Now I see all these differently.*

*I have come to believe that every part of my life affects  
or influences my life with God.*

*The world I live in, with its beauty and tragedy,  
with its creatures of all forms and shapes,  
is constantly offering me messages about who I am and who God is. Everything  
and everyone teaches me about God, life and myself.*

*I try now to approach each person, event, creature with two questions:*

*How are you my teacher?*

*What am I meant to learn?”*

(Joyce Rupp OSM, *The Cup of Our Life*, Ave Maria Press 2012)