The Society of the Holy Trinity
Its Gift and Service

A Pastoral Statement

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6, ESV).

1. Charism (plural: *charismata*, from the Greek, *charis* - grace) is the word used in the New Testament for "favor" or "gratuitous gift." Charisms are special gifts given to members of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit to enable them to be powerful channels of God's love and presence in the world. A charism is a special Spirit-given gift that is not the same as natural endowment or talent.

2. Charisms are given to individual Christians to be used in the service or ministry of building up the Church, the body of Christ. Each individual gift is therefore a special blessing to the whole Church. The gifts that build up the body are to be distinguished from the gifts given for personal sanctification.

3. Charisms have also been given to founders of religious communities and their organizations which distinguish them from other organizations in the Church. Each religious community or order has a special gift which it uses in the service of the whole Church. Various religious communities have manifested the gifts of prayer, teaching, serving the poor, the sick, etc. Each religious community is therefore a special blessing to the whole Church.

4. Religious communities share much in common with each other, and yet each one has its own unique charism. There may be more than one religious community with the same charism, but each religious community develops its own form and style of service.

5. The charisms of the individual or the community might not be discerned until the individual or community begins exercising the gift. It is therefore appropriate for individuals and communities to engage in discernment so that all may come to recognize and give thanks for the gift received.

6. Members of the religious community are formed in such a way that they come to share in the special charism and service of that community.

7. The Society of the Holy Trinity is a religious community. It takes the form of a pastoral society, a ministerium, an oratory.

8. The Society of the Holy Trinity did not have one founder, but many. Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, these founders were drawn toward forming the Society. In

response to the crisis of faith experienced in the Lutheran Churches of North America in the latter part of the twentieth century, they drafted *The Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity*.

9. The charism which we have discerned in the founders and continuing life of The Society is faithfulness -- faithfulness to one's calling to the Holy Office of the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, faithfulness to the vows spoken at one's ordination, and faithfulness to the Faith once delivered to the saints.

10. Members in The Society are formed into the charism of the Society by participating in chapter and general retreats and by living and acting according to *The Rule*, to which they subscribe at a general retreat.

11. The gift manifested in the Society is to build up its members in faithfulness, carrying out the call and office they have received. This in turn serves to renew the Church in which the members administer the divine means of grace and provide pastoral care and oversight (see *The Rule* chapter VII).

12. The special service of the Society is to support its members as each discerns how faithfully to exercise the pastoral office and ministry in its local and denominational setting. This is accomplished through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters, the practice of individual confession and absolution in chapter and general retreats, and in mutual visitation. These provisions in *The Rule* of The Society are especially critical during a time of crisis and struggle in the Church. The Senior of the Society and the deans of the chapters are to be faithful in carrying out these provisions in *The Rule* and the members of The Society are exhorted to avail themselves of these provisions for the sake of their calls as pastors of the Church.

By the STS Leadership Council, 10 February 2010

Society of the Holy Trinity
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