

Section 12

A MISSION OF THE HEART

(continued)

Because of his own experience in Bourges, Chevalier believed in the human heart's potentialities for loving and serving. He even spoke about "*the almighty power of love*", referring not only to the love emerging from the Heart of Jesus, but also from our own hearts. He was certainly aware of the fact that the human heart can become a source of evil. However, he was also convinced that the human heart is able to perform miracles of charity and courage.

He calls the human heart "*the most powerful means for doing good.*" To practice charity to the poor, he said, there is no need to be rich, "*it is enough to have a heart that is able to love ... and to be compassionate... God has given you a good, kind and sensitive heart.*" And he made an appeal to his audience to use the great power of their hearts in serving the poor, by going to visit the poor personally and to sit at the bedside of the sick.

For Chevalier, the formation of the human heart in accordance with the Heart of Jesus as a Model was of utmost importance. He stipulated it as one of the aims of the Society that he founded, not only for the religious and priests, but also for the lay members. When we neglect the formation of our hearts in conformity with Jesus' Heart, we run the risk of living our relationships in community life and family life in an improper way. And our missionary activities in pastoral care and social services, in education and medical work might become contaminated by selfishness as well. Later on in the course, we will come back to this central element of living a Spirituality of the Heart.

A reflective moment

*In order to practice charity to the poor,
there is no need to be rich,*

*"it is enough to have a heart that is able to love, to sympathize,
and to be compassionate....*

*God has given you a good, kind and sensitive heart...
The human heart is the most powerful means for doing good."*

(Jules Chevalier, circa 1860)