

Section 14

A SHARED MISSION

The participation of lay people in the Chevalier Family is the logical consequence of the social dimension of Chevalier's charism. Without the involvement of lay people, it would be impossible to practice a Devotion to the Sacred Heart as a remedy for the ills of the time and the evils of society. By practicing a Spirituality of the Heart as a way of compassion both in family life and at the work place, lay people give their contribution to the renewal of society.

It was Chevalier's intention that the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ be carried out in close collaboration of religious, diocesan priests and lay members of the Chevalier Family combined. That is why, in his Constitutions for the MSC, Fr. Chevalier put much emphasis on the formation of lay people. They should be introduced into the deeper meaning of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, not only as a devotional practice but as a way of life, that is, a Spirituality of the Heart.

It is clear that in Chevalier's mind a Devotion to the Sacred Heart or a Spirituality of the Heart is not only carried out through social projects and works of charity. The way he himself practiced this Devotion in daily life, makes it clear that for him praying and working were equally important. It was his conviction that any social activity, whether in family, in the community or in society, could only bear fruit when accomplished in unity with Jesus and in conformity with the desires of Jesus' Heart. A Devotion to the Sacred Heart, when lived as a

spirituality, that is, as a way of life, as promoted by Chevalier, surpasses any opposition between working and praying.

Nevertheless, Chevalier emphasized that the lay-members of the (at that time so called) "Third Order" should avoid anything that would give the appearance of being a religious. For him, it was very important that the laity would live their Christian vocation, within their families, and by carrying out their daily duties in society. Only in that way would they be able to participate effectively in Christ's healing mission in the world.

A reflective moment

*"New experiences of communion and cooperation
between consecrated persons and the laity
can give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality...
and facilitate more intense cooperation in view of the Institute's mission.*

*The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights
into certain aspects of the charism,
leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it
and helping to draw from it
directions for new activities in the apostolate.*

*Consecrated persons should cultivate "the most precious gift: the spirit".
For their part, the laity should offer Religious families
the invaluable contribution of their "being in the world".*

(Pope John Paul II, Vita Consecrata, Consecrated Life n.55).