

Section 22

The motive of Evangelization

Fr. Chevalier was filled with concern about the fact that so many people did not know Jesus Christ and even did not know what they were missing. He wrote: *“the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the only source of light, truth and life, is not sufficiently known, is not sufficiently loved. Yet his love has saved the world... and his loving kindness keeps it in being”* (Règles 1857, p.1; Daily Readings December 20). Talking about the Sacred Heart, Chevalier referred to the person of Jesus as appearing in the Gospels, loving with a human heart. He argued, when people get to know Jesus of the Gospels, their hearts and their lives will change. People will start to love him, and by loving him they will *“combat egoism and indifference.”* So in order to make known the *“greatness”* of Jesus Christ and *“the treasures of mercy which his heart contains,”* Chevalier intended to bring religious men and women, diocesan priests and lay people together in a society of the Sacred Heart (Règles 1857, p.1; Daily Readings December 20).

In his sermons Chevalier loved to tell the Gospel stories revealing how Jesus cares for the sick and the poor. With excitement, he spoke about Jesus' concern for a sinful woman caught in adultery; for Jairus, a synagogue official, whose daughter had died, and for the widow of Naïm, on her way to bury her only son. He underlined how Jesus' Heart, *“from the cradle to the cross,”* showed both *“gentleness and strength”* (Le Sacré Coeur, p. 200; Daily Readings July 13).

Also Pope Francis feels deeply concerned about the fact that so many people still do not know Jesus Christ. In *“Evangelii Gaudium”* he writes: *“Evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him”* (EG n. 15). He adds: *“If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life”* (EG 49). The Pope continues: *“Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties”* (EG n. 167).

A Reflective Moment

Pope Francis speaks with passion about Jesus in the Gospels:

*“How good it is for us to contemplate
the closeness which he shows to everyone!*

*If he speaks to someone,
he looks into their eyes with deep love and concern:
“Jesus, looking upon him, loved him” (Mk 10:21).*

*We see how accessible he is,
as he draws near the blind man (cf. Mk 10:46-52)
and eats and drinks with sinners (cf. Mk 2:16)
without worrying about being thought a glutton
and a drunkard himself (cf. Mt 11:19).*

*We see his sensitivity
in allowing a sinful woman to anoint his feet (cf. Lk 7:36-50)
and in receiving Nicodemus by night (cf. Jn 3:1-15).”*

(Evangelii Gaudium n. 269).

A Prayer to Jesus

Lord Jesus, *“your Father’s love was so unlimited
that he wanted us to know that love
and to find in it the fulfillment of our deepest desires.
So he sent us you, with a human heart big enough
to hold all human loneliness and all human anguish.
Your heart is not a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh;
not narrowed by human sin and unfaithfulness,
but as wide and deep as divine love itself.*

Your heart is open to receive anyone with total, unrestricted love.

For anyone who wants to come to you, there is room.

*You want to offer all people a home
where every human desire is met,
every human longing comes to rest
and every human need is satisfied.”*

(Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Heart speaks to Heart*, Three prayers to Jesus, p. 22).