

Section 23

A passion for Jesus and a passion for his people

Central to the vision of both Pope Francis and Fr. Chevalier is their understanding of 'mission' or, the word often used by recent Popes, 'evangelization'. Along with Fr. Chevalier, Pope Francis emphasizes that all Christians are called to take part in Jesus' mission in the world. For both of them, 'mission' or 'evangelization' has to play a vital role in the Church and in the life of every Christian.

The Pope describes 'mission' as *"at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people"* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 268). In section 8 of this course, we already spoke about Fr. Chevalier's great passion for Jesus Christ. In all his writings, he presented Jesus Christ as the model of our life and mission in Church and society. He invites us to look attentively at Jesus in his public life, so that we may follow him in his mission. What do we see? *"We see his Heart pour itself out on every sort of misfortune, on every sort of misery, moral and physical. All the kindness that Jesus sowed along his path, all the miracles he worked are so many outpourings of ineffable goodness of his Heart"* (Le Sacré Coeur 1900, p. 9). In the same book, Chevalier elaborates the meaning of this *"ineffable goodness"* of Jesus, by declaring: *"Goodness is gratuitous love."* Quoting Fr. Lacordaire OP, a famous preacher of his day, he states: *"He is good who loves for the sole happiness that he finds in loving"*.

Pope Francis sees this as the purest motivation for evangelization. He writes: *"Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary. This openness of the heart is a source of joy, since "it is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). And the Pope points to the many people who are "missionaries" just by the way they carry out their daily commitments: *"All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others"* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 272-273). And, we may add that all around us we also meet parents and children with soul, priests, religious and all kind of workers with soul. These are the people, the Pope says, who live with *"a heart attentive to others"* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 282). They are the people who *"generously give"* of themselves (Evangelii Gaudium n.

274). In Chapter 5 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope calls them several times “*Spirit-filled Evangelizers.*”

A reflective moment

*“Isn't it instructive
that the spiritual formation of the original disciples
happens with Jesus on the road?”*

*In effect, the disciples learn by doing.
They grow into an understanding of this God of love,
this God of compassion, this God who loves justice,
this God who makes all things new,
by participating as active observers
and agents of compassion, justice, and newness.*

*And, yes, necessarily, they pause with Jesus to reflect,
ask questions (sometimes stupid questions), and pray.*

*But the spiritual adventure described in the four Gospels
does not happen in the sanctuary;
it happens on the road,
in the company of beggars, prostitutes, and lepers.”*

Jack Jezreel, "To Love without Exception," *Oneing*, Vol. 4 No. 1, p. 51-52.