

Section 24

“A spirituality which can change hearts”

(Evangelii Gaudium n. 262)

James Cuskelly MSC, we already met in earlier sections of this program. He was one of the first MSC, who introduced the Chevalier Family to a Spirituality of the Heart. When we really want to live a Spirituality of the Heart, he declared: *“We have to go down in the depths of our own soul in a realization of our profound personal needs of life, of love and of meaning”* (Jules Chevalier, Man with a Mission, p. 128).

Why do we have to pay attention to our profound personal needs in the depths of our soul or heart, in order to live a Spirituality of the Heart? In his book published in 1900, Fr. Chevalier already gave a profound reason. He wrote: *“God reveals to us the aspirations of his Heart through the aspirations of our own heart. ... Whether one knows it or not, the truth is that our heart is made for his Heart.”* Indeed, he said, God creates *“needs in us in harmony with his desires”* (Le Sacré Coeur 1900, p. 77). St. Augustine, living in the fourth century, commended the faithful, saying: *“Return to your own heart...There you will find God, because you are formed in his likeness”* (Sermons on the Gospel of St. John 18:10, with reference to Isaias 46:8).

It is certainly God, who implants in our hearts our deeper aspirations, our desires for solidarity and justice, as well as our search for love and meaning in life. In *“The Joy of the Gospel,”* Pope Francis considers these deeper desires of people’s hearts, as well as their search for meaning in life to be a clear sign of people’s thirst for God, even if people are not aware of it. He points to the *“innumerable signs in today’s world, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life”* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 86). We may be sure, he states that it is, *“God’s presence*

(which) *accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find ... meaning in their lives*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 71). And when people foster *“solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice,”* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 71), God’s Spirit is certainly at work among them.

Implicitly, the Pope’s words also convey the message that it is important to pay attention to the deeper aspirations of our own hearts, our own *“profound personal needs of life, of love and of meaning,”* as well as our own desire to foster justice, truth and solidarity. Because, also in us, *“God’s saving love ... is mysteriously at work ..., above and beyond (our) faults and failings”* (Evangelii Gaudium n. 44).

A Reflective moment

In ‘The Joy of the Gospel’, Pope Francis draws attention to the fact that our own time is marked by

“the return to the sacred and the quest for spirituality ...”

He continues by saying:

“Today, our challenge is ... the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus, who demands nothing of us with regard to others.

These people should find in the Church a spirituality, which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness. If not, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God”

(Evangelii Gaudium n. 89).