

Section 27
“May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved”
(Third part)

Fr. Chevalier’s book “Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus” (the fourth edition appeared in 1900) opens with the words: “*God is wholly love. God is love himself, essentially love (1 John 4:16). From all eternity God formed the plan of revealing to us this love... God sends his Word on earth, that is to say, God’s only Son*” (p. 3). This is a beautiful confession of faith, being foundational to Chevalier’s spirituality during the last stage of his life, and to a contemporary Spirituality of the Heart as well. (See also section 10 of this course).

Yet, due to the theological climate of his time, Fr. Chevalier did not clearly recognize the other way God’s love is powerfully at work among us, namely through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the universe, secular society and people’s hearts. Sure, Chevalier acknowledged God’s work in our hearts through, “*the Spirit of power and love*” (2 Tim 1:7; Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus, p. 201), but, while holding on to the teaching of the Church at the time, he saw God’s Spirit only at work in the hearts of people baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. That made it difficult for him to discover any good, for example, in the hearts of a protestant reformer such as Luther, or contemporaries who campaigned for human rights.

Pope Francis expands our understanding of a Spirituality of the Heart by attributing an important role to “*the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 2). Not unlike Fr. Chevalier, he draws our attention to God, who sends the “*Spirit into our hearts*”, while making us “*God’s sons and daughters, transforming us and enabling us to respond to God’s love by our lives*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 112). The Pope emphasizes as well how “*the Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms.*” These charisms or “*Gifts of the Spirit*” (see section 2 and 4 of this course), “*are meant to renew and build up the Church*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 130).

What is more, the Pope urges us, “*to believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone.*” He declares, “*that the Holy Spirit seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds, knowing how to loosen the knots of the*

most complex human affairs” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 178). He states as well that, “*the same Spirit everywhere brings forth various forms of practical wisdom, which help people to bear suffering and to live in greater peace and harmony*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 254). And so, “*as Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries,*” as they “*can help us better to live our own beliefs*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 254).

Consequently, as “*missionary disciples*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 119), who are used to praying, “*may the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved*”, we should let ourselves be taught by, “*the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 2). We remember too, that it is this same Spirit which is powerfully active in the hearts of all people and in the entire secular society. (See Evangelii Gaudium n. 265). We are sent to “*cooperate with the liberating work of the Spirit*” (Evangelii Gaudium n. 178), in order to make Jesus and the yearnings of his heart, everywhere known and loved.

A Reflective Moment

*“Keeping our missionary fervor alive
calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit,
for it is he who “helps us in our weakness” (Rom 8:26).
But this generous trust has to be nourished,
and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly.
He can heal whatever causes us to flag in the missionary endeavor.*

*It is true that this trust in the unseen
can cause us to feel disoriented:
it is like being plunged into the deep
and not knowing what we will find.*

*Yet there is no greater freedom than that of
allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit,
renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail,
and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us,
leading us wherever he wills.*

*The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place.”
(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, n. 280).*