

Section 29

"OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART"

By promoting the title "Our Lay of the Sacred Heart", Fr. Chevalier wanted to integrate the two major devotions of his time, devotion to the Sacred Heart and devotion to Mary. In section 16 of this introductory program, we already presented the three common images of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. These images demonstrate that Fr. Chevalier always wanted to honor Mary as the Mother of Jesus.

In his book "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart", Jan G. Bovenmars MSC writes: *"It is clear that in Fr. Chevalier's charism the Heart of Jesus is most central. It is the incarnation of the love and compassion of the Father who cares for all people, especially for the most needy. For Fr. Chevalier and for us everything starts from there. But from the beginning there was also a deep relationship with Mary."*

Fr. Piperon reports how in 1859, when people were building the first part of the the Sacred Heart church in Issoudun (later on elevated to become the Basilica of Our lady of the Sacred Heart), Fr. Chevalier asked an artist to design a window representing Mary *"with her arms extended and her eyes modestly lowered towards Jesus.... The Child Jesus at the age of twelve was to be standing in front of her, with one hand pointing to his Heart, and the other towards his Mother... The child Jesus is represented at the age of twelve, because the evangelist, Saint Luke, after having related that Jesus was found by Mary and Joseph in the midst of the doctors, adds: "He went down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them." (Luke 2:51).*

Afterwards, the Vatican ordered Fr. Chevalier to change this image. The reason was that, contradictory to the intentions of Fr. Chevalier, the child Jesus had sometimes been represented at a very young age, as a little boy sitting at the feet of his mother. The first statutes and paintings, like the ones in Issoudun and Sittard, could remain in their places, but from 1878 on, new images had to present the Child Jesus in his Mother's arms.

In the years after the Second Vatican Council, the understanding of the meaning of the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was deepened.

Accordingly, also the representation underwent a change. From then on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was primarily presented as Mary, looking at the pierced side of her Son on the cross. A beautiful statue was created, now on display in the Basilica of Issoudun and called “the Calvary of Issoudun.” It represents Our Lady beneath the cross, with one hand showing the wounded heart of Jesus Christ, while the other hand is drawing us toward Jesus on the cross.

In her book “In the Company of Marie Louise Hartzler,” Gerardine Doherty FDNSC writes: “*At the foot of the cross, Mary remains present to her son while he is publicly executed. She remains present also to her own pain and grief, as together with Jesus and for Jesus, she innocently suffers at the hands of violent victimization. Her desire for oneness with Jesus in his suffering expresses at the same time, her steadfast solidarity with suffering humanity!*” (p. 50).

In his Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, Pope Francis put into words what could have been the thoughts of Fr. Chevalier: “*On the cross, ... Jesus could feel at his feet the consoling presence of his mother and [St. John], his friend. At that crucial moment, before fully accomplishing the work which his Father had entrusted to him, Jesus said to Mary: “Woman, here is your son”. Then he said to his beloved friend: “Here is your mother” (John 19:26-27). Jesus left us his mother to be our mother. Only after doing so did Jesus know that “all was now finished” (John 19:28). At the foot of the cross, at the supreme hour of the new creation, Christ led us to Mary. He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother.*” (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 285).

A Reflective Moment

*“Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus,
with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love. ...*

*She is the friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives.
She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword
and who understands all our pain.*

*As mother of all, she is a sign of hope
for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice.
She is the missionary who draws near to us
and accompanies us throughout life,
opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love.*

*As a true mother, she walks at our side,
she shares our struggles
and she constantly surrounds us with God's love. ..."*

Through her, many people
"find strength from God to bear the weariness
and the suffering in their lives.
Mary offers them maternal comfort and love,
and whispers in their ear:
"Let your heart not be troubled...
Am I not here, who am your Mother?"

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 286).

To read more

Jan G. Bovenmars MSC, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Rome: General House Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, 1993.

Gerardine Doherty FDNCS, In the Company of Marie Louise Hartzler, First Congregational Leader Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. DekoVerdivas, Tilburg, The Netherlands, 2014.

Announcement

Herewith, we come to the end of the first three parts of our On-line Program, entitled "A Spirituality of the Heart in accordance with the Charism of Fr. Jules Chevalier." After an "Introduction" (section 1 to 3), the second part (section 4 – 16), presents, "the Charism of Fr. Chevalier", while the third part (section 17 to 29), describes aspects of "Spirituality of the Heart in the Chevalier Family" which are also featured in the writings of Pope Francis.

After the General Assembly of the Laity of the Chevalier Family in Sao Paulo, July-August 2017, the General Chapter of MSC in Rome, September 2017, and the General Conference of FDNCS in Rome, October 2017, we will continue this On-Line Program. Any suggestions are welcome at <jjmkwakman39@gmail.com>.