

Jules Chevalier's Charism

and

the Identity of the Chevalier Family

HANS KWAKMAN MSC

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By Hans Kwakman MSC

Percikan Hati

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PREFACE

In recent decades, several writings of Fr. Chevalier have been made accessible. Great work has been done in this field by the confreres Jean Bertolini msc, Jan Bovenmars msc, Jan Kaandorp msc, Raymond Dossmann msc and Philippe Séveau msc. With angelic patience, they have spelled out the many letters, sermons, conferences and stray notes of Chevalier, as far as these are still preserved in the archives, in order to make them public.

The series “Fontes MSC” or “MSC Resources” have made available many important documents written by Fr. Chevalier, published and prepared with annotations by Jean Bertolini msc, Angel Gonzalez García msc, Jan Bovenmars msc and Philippe Séveau msc, while Jan Bovenmars has also enriched our knowledge of Chevalier with his compilation of thoughts, reflections and historical data, collected in “Jules Chevalier: Daily Readings”. Moreover, Philippe Séveau took the initiative of compiling a great number of Fr. Chevalier’s letters, conferences, articles and acts of his General Council meetings on CD’s, together with many testimonies about Fr. Chevalier, written down by confreres and lay people. In

the Bibliography, I specify all these contributions in more detail.

We are also grateful for the biographies, either written about Chevalier's entire life or a part of his life. Well known are the works of H. Vermin msc, E.J. Cuskelly msc, J. De Kerck msc, Jean Tostain msc and Maxime Berardi, as well as the study of Jan Bovenmars on Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Dennis Murphy msc wrote reflections on "The Heart of the Word Incarnate", using many quotations from the writings of Chevalier. In the Bibliography, one will also find articles of other authors. I am sure that in other languages, more books or articles about Chevalier exist, but unfortunately, because of language constraints, I am not familiar with these works.

Members of the "Cor Novum Team" in Issoudun, both in the past and in the present, have also contributed much to a better understanding of Fr. Chevalier and his Charism and Spirituality. Some of their presentations are listed on the web-site <cornovum.com>. In the following chapters, I often make use of papers prepared by Dennis Murphy msc, still preserved in the archives of "Cor Novum".

All these contributions have made it possible to get to know Fr. Chevalier better, his personality, as well as his ideals and concerns. They also open the way to make further studies about his charism and spirituality. The present book is an attempt to enter more deeply into Fr. Chevalier's special charism as a Founder, and will hopefully be followed by studies of other people. The idea behind this book is that a good understanding of Fr. Chevalier's charism is of utmost importance in strengthening our sense of identity and mission as members of the Chevalier Family in the Church and in society. I return to this point in the introduction "To

begin with...”

While writing this book, I nurtured the hope that it will be useful for everyone interested in the charism and identity of the Chevalier Family, and more specifically for formators as well as for young members in formation. Also, the growing number of lay members of the Chevalier Family will hopefully benefit from it. Being aware of the fact that for them not many resources are available, I often use quotations from Fr. Chevalier’s writings, in order to let him speak in his own words.

Even if sometimes, I highlight certain events in Fr. Chevalier’s life, this book is not meant to be a biography. Therefore, readers who want to get to know Fr. Chevalier better in his life and work, I refer to the biographies already mentioned above. In the following pages, I use the name “Chevalier”, when writing about Fr. Chevalier after his ordination, while I call him “Jules”, when referring to the time before his ordination. I use the term “Devotion to the Sacred Heart”, when speaking about Fr. Chevalier’s spirituality, while I use the term “Spirituality of the Heart”, when speaking about the spirituality of the Chevalier Family.

Finally, this book could not have been written and published without the special help of many people. First of all, I feel greatly indebted to Dennis Murphy msc, who in several articles and papers mentioned in the Bibliography of this book, has clarified our common charism in accordance with Chevalier’s basic intentions. Due to some technical communication problems, Fr. Murphy was not able to proof-read the text of this book, before it was sent to the publisher. Therefore, both the way of describing Chevalier’s charism and the inclusion of some of Murphy’s opinions into

the text of this book, are merely my own responsibilities.

As to the content, Fr. Philippe Séveau msc and Fr. Jan Kaandorp msc made some very valuable suggestions. Sr. Linda Strayer fdnsc of the 'Cor Novum' team in Issoudun corrected my English. Fr. Viany Untu msc and his team of "Percikan Hati" in Pineleng, Indonesia, formatted the text on the computer to make it ready for printing. Confreres at the MSC Generalate in Rome and at the MSC Provincialate in Jakarta offered to take care of the distribution. To all of them I am very grateful. Last but not least, I thank my colleagues at "Cor Novum" in Issoudun, as well as the members of the Chevalier Family participating in Spirituality of the Heart Programs, both in Issoudun and elsewhere. Their keen interest in my conferences on Fr. Chevalier and the Spirituality of the Heart has been a special incentive in writing this book. ***

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TO BEGIN WITH...

The main purpose of this book is to show that a clear understanding of the charism of Fr. Chevalier will help us to become more aware of our identity as Chevalier Family. We might strengthen our sense of identity, by being able to answer questions like: "What kind of spirituality do members of the Chevalier Family live and practice? What is the place of the Chevalier Family in Church and society?" "As Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Lay-members of the Chevalier Family, spread all over the world, living in different cultures, and in the 21st century, do we still live from the same charism as Chevalier, who lived in 19th century France?"

Identity

A Vatican document of 1978 concerning mutual relations between the local Church authorities and religious institutes spoke about the necessity of preserving "*the distinctive character of various religious institutes.*" The message of this

document, written more than thirty years ago, still seems to be valid today: *"In this hour of cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal, ... it is necessary to preserve the identity of each institute"*; if not, the document warns, a religious institute runs the risk of becoming *"part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way"*¹.

The "distinctive character" of the Chevalier Family, or our 'identity', is related to the reason for our existence in the Church, and the meaning of our presence in society. It finds its roots in the charism of Chevalier, who laid the foundation of what is now called, the Chevalier Family. In order to become more aware of our identity as members of the Chevalier Family, we have to go back to our roots, to Chevalier's charism, his deepest intentions and original dream.

A common spirit

In his ground-breaking work *"Jules Chevalier: Man with a Mission"*, Cuskelly points out two ways of uncovering a Founder's charism². Either by historical research and analysis or by looking at the way this charism is lived by his followers and expressed in their official documents. Both ways have their advantages and pitfalls. Cuskelly chooses the second way, by studying the expression of the "spirit" of the three Congregations related to Chevalier in their official congregational documents. By studying these documents, he discovered the following characteristics of a common 'spirit'. The three Congregations share: (1) a deep concern for humanity; (2) a belief in the love of God revealed in Christ, as an answer to people's deeper needs; and (3) a mission to give witness to this love to all people, through the practice of charity³. These three elements certainly belong to Cheva-

lier's charism, as I will show in the chapters to come.

However, Cuskelly, writing in 1975, could only use for his study, documents of the three Congregations dating from a time before the revision of their Constitutions, as prescribed by the Second Vatican Council⁴. More specifically in relation to the MSC, something that Cuskelly did not take into consideration was the fact that in the course of history, the MSC Constitutions had undergone a radical change. The revised MSC Constitutions of 1907 omitted some core elements of Chevalier's charism, as expressed in his original Constitutions of 1877.

A weakening sense of identity

The following elements of Chevalier's charism had vanished from the MSC Constitutions of 1907: (1) the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as a remedy for the ills of the time; (2) the, according to Chevalier, irreplaceable role of the laity in the broader Society that he had in mind; and (3) the task of the MSC to attend to the formation of laity associated with the Congregation, concerning a Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The fact that these elements, clearly formulated in Chevalier's officially approved MSC Constitutions of 1877, disappeared from the MSC Constitutions of 1907, resulted in the weakening of a sense of identity among the next generations of MSC. Afterwards, the MSC saw themselves just as a missionary congregation, not unlike many other missionary congregations, only with a special emphasis on a Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Therefore, since 1907, this deeper awareness of the 'distinctive character' of the MSC Congregation was lost.

Only after Cuskelly had published his work, "*Jules Chevalier, Man with a Mission*", was Chevalier's integral vision restored and reformulated in the MSC Constitutions of 1985. In the same spirit, the FDNSC Constitutions had already been renewed in 1983, while the Constitutions of the MSC Sisters followed in 1996. Later on, I will come back to the subject of this radical change in awareness of our charism, brought about by the MSC Constitutions of 1907.

In a chapter, entitled "*The First Three Works*" of Chevalier, and in the short "Note" at the end of a chapter entitled "*Spirituality, Charism, Mission*", Cuskelly speaks about the place of the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the life of Chevalier. He does not include this Devotion in his description of Chevalier's charism. This raises the question: was the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart just a sidetrack or an afterthought in Chevalier's view, or does it really belong to his original charism, as an integral part of his vision and mission? To this question, I will also attend.

Historical research

Stimulated by Cuskelly's administration and the next MSC General Administrations, a lot of work has been done to make Chevalier's writings more accessible, particularly his conferences and many letters. That has made it possible to follow the other way of uncovering Chevalier's charism, mentioned by Cuskelly, namely, the road of historical research and analysis. I will try to follow this road, without claiming to be an expert in history. I limit myself to Chevalier's texts, while neither entering into detailed text-analysis, nor extensively dealing with the historical background of his ideas.

A multi-faceted charism

As faithfully as possible, I have tried to follow this method, and by doing so, I arrived at the conclusion that Chevalier's great passion in life, his permanent vision and his sense of mission, taken together, form his charism. This charism is the special gift of the Holy Spirit that made him a Founder of a Society, consisting of different religious congregations and groups of lay people.

(1) The core element of his charism is a great passion for Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, as encountered in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. It was his growing love for Jesus Christ, which urged Chevalier to study, to live and to spread the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

(2) By continuously deepening his knowledge and experience of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Chevalier developed an increasingly comprehensive vision concerning this Devotion and the role of the Heart of Jesus in God's plan of creation, redemption and restoration.

(3) Chevalier lived and promoted such a *passion for Jesus Christ* and developed *his vision of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus* as a man with a strong sense of mission. He was appalled by the distressing situation of society at that time, and convinced that Jesus' love for humankind would accomplish a restoration, while a fervent devotion to the Sacred Heart would become a remedy of the ills of society. Therefore, he wanted to bring together as many people as possible to proclaim the 'good news' of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, while engaging themselves in Jesus' mission of restoration. Accordingly, for Chevalier 'mission' necessarily included:

1. 'A mission of the heart': while engaging ourselves in

Jesus Christ's mission in the world, we try to develop the qualities of our own hearts in conformity with the virtues of Jesus' Heart.

2. 'A social mission': our participation in the mission of Jesus' Christ should make an impact on healing the ills of society.

3. 'A shared mission': in performing this mission, religious men and women, priests and laity, should work together.

4. 'A mission everywhere': this mission should be carried out in all corners of the world and on all levels of society,

5. And accomplished, "*in unity with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*".

The Chevalier Family

In the first chapter, I will explain my understanding of a charism, distinct from and in connection with, 'spirituality'. In the chapters that follow, I will discuss the elements of Chevalier's multi-faceted charism, one by one. Obviously, as gifts of the same Spirit, these elements are closely interconnected with one another.

At the end of each chapter that deals with a different aspect of Chevalier's charism, I will try, very briefly, to indicate how the element in question might be lived in the context of today's Spirituality of the Heart as practiced by the members of the Chevalier Family. These parts, I entitle, "*Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family*". It is not my intention to tell members of the Chevalier Family how they should live and practice Chevalier's charism. I only hope that my brief descriptions of these elements will invite readers to reflect on their own way of living a Spirituality of the Heart, and will contribute to a process of growing awareness concerning

our common charism and identity as members of the Chevalier Family.

A reminder

Cuskelly underlines the “*intrinsic difficulty*” included in the method of historical research (that I try to follow in this study). The difficulty is, as he notes, that every researcher looks “*with time-bound and limited eyes at the time-bound and limited work of the Founder*”⁵. Therefore, I can only present this study as an invitation to further research, and invite everyone, who based on a close reading of Chevalier’s writings, arrives at a different vision - or wants to make certain corrections - to make his or her insights known. ***

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¹ “*Mutuae Relationes*” (= “mutual relations”) is a document issued by ‘the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes’ and ‘the Sacred Congregation for Bishops’ together. It is entitled “*Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church*” (1978)

² Cuskelly 1975, p. 110.

³ Cuskelly 1975, p. 113.

⁴ Cuskelly refers to the Documents of Renewal of the MSC of 1975, to the Constitutions of the FDNSC of 1969, and to the Documents of the General Chapter of the MSC Sisters of 1967.

⁵ Cuskelly 1975, p. 110-111.

CHAPTER 1

A CHARISM : A PASSION, A VISION AND A MISSION

Making a distinction between “charism” and “spirituality” seems to be a mere theoretical question, because in relation to Founders and their congregations, the terms are often used interchangeably. However, a clear distinction might lead us to a better understanding of both Chevalier’s charism and the charism of the Chevalier Family.

Charism

In its document concerning *the Renewal of Religious Life*, the Second Vatican Council, does not use the terms ‘charism’ and ‘spirituality’, but speaks about ‘the spirit’ of the Founder. As one of the principles of renewal, the Council stipulates that “*the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained.*”¹ Afterwards, Pope Paul VI recommended Religious Institutes to “*seek after a genuine understanding of their original spirit.*”² Pope John Paul II uses the term ‘charism’, and said: “*The fact is that charisms*

of founders must remain in the communities to which they gave rise. The charism ought to constitute the principle of the life of each religious family at all times.”³

I mentioned already that according to ‘Mutuae Relationes’, “the distinctive character of various religious institutes” is created by the charism of their Founders. The document continues: “The very charism of the Founders appears as an “experience of the Spirit,” transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth.”⁴

Spirit

The word ‘Spirit’ is the common notion underlying the terms ‘charism’ and ‘spirituality’. Both words refer to the Spirit of God. The Greek word ‘*charisma*’ means a free gift of God’s Spirit, a spiritual capacity resulting from God’s grace (‘*charis*’).⁵ More specifically, the word ‘charism’ refers to the gifts of God’s Spirit, poured out in our hearts. The word ‘spirituality’ derives from the Latin ‘*spiritualitas*’, a word related to ‘*spiritus*’ and ‘*spiritualis*’, which were used to translate Paul’s ‘*pneuma*’ (Spirit) and ‘*pneumatikos*’. For Paul, the ‘pneumatic’ or ‘spiritual’ person is one whose whole being and life are led by the ‘Spirit of God’.⁶

So, we may say that the Pauline word ‘charism’ refers to a gift of the Spirit, while the originally Latin word ‘spirituality’ refers to the way of life of the person, gifted by the Spirit. However, it is impossible to separate ‘charism’ and ‘spirituality’ from one another. While a charism forms the heart of a spirituality, every sound spirituality is the

embodiment of a charism. Without a charism, a gift of the Spirit at its origin, there is no true spirituality. On the other hand, a charism can only be shared through a lived spirituality of a certain person or community.

The Fire and the Flames

According to St. Paul, God's Spirit is poured out in our hearts, empowering us with her gifts.⁷ This is the same Spirit, which in the Acts of the Apostles appeared as "tongues of fire", filling the apostles with the Holy Spirit, while changing them from frightful cowards into brave witnesses (Acts 2). Probably inspired by the Pentecost-event, some authors, talking about charism and spirituality, refer to 'a fire', or 'a spark' that sets our hearts aflame.

Cuskelly, for example, when speaking about the relationship between 'charism' and 'spirituality', writes: *"The charism is the central focus, the intuition, the inspiration – that vision of Christ that takes hold of a human person. This central intuition is like a spark, which sets a flame going through all of one's life. It must become incarnate in the wider circles of knowledge and practice. In this way it gives rise to a whole way of spirituality to which it gives its own particular tone or color."*⁸

Without using the word 'charism', Ronald Rolheiser OMI, speaks about "the fire that burns within us", and identifies this fire as our deeper desires. He adds: "What we do with that fire, how we channel it, is our spirituality."⁹ Using the same imagery, we might say that searching for the charism of Chevalier means looking for the fire of passion that sets his heart aflame and that keeps burning during his whole

life. Chevalier's charism points to the burning desires of his heart, the passion that inspired him, and which gave a clear direction to his way of life and works.

The source and the river

Another striking image to explain the relationship between charism and spirituality is that of the source and the river. The charism is the source and spirituality is the river. The river may run through different landscapes, while receiving fresh water from many tributaries, but given the one source, it remains the same river. For example, the Mississippi River runs through 10 states in the USA, but in all these states it is called the Mississippi, because from its origin at Lake Itasca to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico, it carries water from the same source. Without water from the source, the river would lose its identity. Without the river, adjusting itself to the different landscapes, the water of the source would never irrigate the land and reach the ocean. In the same way, when lived without its source, i.e. a charism, any spirituality would lose its identity, while any charism would remain unfruitful, when not expressed in a spirituality, the river.

Also the spirituality of the Chevalier Family is like a river, originating from its source, Chevalier's charism. The river has been and is still in the process of being enriched by the contributions of so many people (the tributaries), living in different cultures and periods of time. However if the spirituality of the Chevalier Family ceased to participate in the charism of Chevalier, this spirituality would become disconnected from its powerful source. On the other hand,

without a spirituality adapted to the needs and challenges of different cultures and times, Chevalier's charism would become fruitless.

Passion, vision, mission

Cuskelly describes a charism as, "*a gift of the Spirit to an individual for the good of others (that brings the Founder) to focus on some particular aspect of Jesus' life, leading him to follow Jesus and to serve others for his love in a particular way.*"¹⁰ In this description, a charism is in the first place a gift of the Spirit. A gift of the Spirit sets someone's heart afire: it is a *passion* that dominates the person's whole life. This spiritual passion gives birth to a *vision* and a *mission*. In Chevalier's case, the vision is a way of looking at Jesus, while the mission is a particular way of following Jesus, serving others, and spreading the message, in accordance with the vision and moved by the passion.

Clearly, a charism is not something superficial. It is not just a good idea that happens to crop up on a certain day. Being a gift of the Spirit, it is present as the deeper call in the heart of certain persons, guiding their whole life, as a fire that sets their hearts aflame with a *passion*. Such a *passion* implies a vision that is a new insight, and a *mission* or lifelong commitment.

Along these lines, when searching for the charism of Chevalier, we look for the passion, the fire that kept burning in his heart *during all his life*; we also search for the vision that became the central focus of his preaching and writing, as well as for the initiatives, which with unremitting dedication, he wanted to realize in carrying out his mission. In short, we

search for the *passion* of his heart, the *vision* of his mind, and the *mission* of his life. Together, they form his charism, the *integrating force*, which unified all the achievements of his life and work from the beginning till the end of his life as a Founder.

So, in relation to Chevalier's charism, I will deal with the following questions: what was Chevalier's great passion in life? What was his special vision of Jesus Christ? How did he understand the *mission* originating from this vision? That includes questions like, how did he want Jesus to be followed; how did he want people to be served, and in what way did he want the message to be spread? Together, the answers to these questions will give us a deeper insight into Chevalier's charism, and consequently, into the charism and identity of the Chevalier Family.

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (1)

A long time before the Second Vatican Council (as quoted above), Fr. Piperon msc already noted, "*if a religious family does not wish to perish, it must preserve lovingly the spirit it has received from the Founder.*"¹¹ The spirit, we have received from our Founder, we call the charism of Chevalier. The charism is the fire that creates the flames; the source that gives the river its identity. The charism of Chevalier should become the charism of the Chevalier Family, and the source of its identity. It is *the unifying force* that creates coherence and integration in the variety of ministries and services, performed by members of the Chevalier Family.

Our *spirituality* is what we do with Chevalier's charism; the way we channel and express it through our life and ministries. For example, the way members of the Chevalier Family in Australia and in South America live a Spirituality of the Heart may differ from one another. Or, *lay* members of the Chevalier Family may live a Spirituality of the Heart in quite a different way, compared with *religious* members of the Chevalier Family. However, as long as everyone is living from the same source, that is, the charism of Chevalier, they live from the same spirit, and are rightfully called members of the Chevalier Family.

Dennis Murphy MSC states it in this way: *"Research into the past would be fruitless, unless it prepared us for the same 'experience of the Spirit' that moved our Founder. This does not mean that we are asked to imitate every detail about Father Chevalier; our task is to discover his essential concerns. The creative power of the Spirit can bring this to life again in us today in new ways and help us contribute to the Church's Mission as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,"*¹² and I may add, as members of the Chevalier Family. I nurture the hope that the following chapters may create more awareness of Chevalier's *essential concerns*, not just in order to enlarge our knowledge of the past, but to deepen and enrich our common charism, and to strengthen our sense of identity as members of the Chevalier Family. ***

¹ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 1965, n. 2. Austin Flannery (editor), *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Vol. 1, New York 1998.

² Paul VI, *Ecclesiae Sanctae* II, August 1966: *Norms for implementing the Decree: On the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life*, n. 15. See: Austin Flannery, note 1.

³ Address to the major superiors of Institutes of Spanish origin, *Origins* 23 (1982) 12, p. 363, n. 2; quoted by John M. Lozano, CMF, Foundresses, Founders and their Religious Families, Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, Chicago 1983, p. 29.

⁴ "Mutuae Relationes", May 1978, n. 11.

⁵ See The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, Ed: Michael Downey, The Liturgical Press, 1993, Edward Malatesta, s.v. "charism", p. 140.

⁶ E.g. see 1 Cor. 2:12, 14 in: idem, Walter Principe, s.v. "Spirituality, Christian", p. 931.

⁷ E.g. Rome 5 :5 ; 8 :11 ; 2 Cor. 1 :21 ; Gal. 4:6;

⁸ Cuskelly, 1978, p. 26. See also Cuskelly, 1975, p.104-105.

⁹ Ronald Rolheiser OMI, "The Holy Longing, the Search for a Christian Spirituality", Doubleday, New York 1999, p. 6-7.

¹⁰ Cuskelly, 1975, p. 110.

¹¹ Piperon, p. 249.

¹² Murphy, Laity, p.6. (Accentuation by Murphy).

CHAPTER 2

A PASSION FOR JESUS CHRIST

Living and spreading the Devotion to the Sacred Heart belonged certainly to Chevalier's Charism. However, as Vermin points out, it was not the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as such that called forth this passion. He had been familiar with this devotion from early childhood on.¹ Therefore, we have to ask, what particular aspect of this Devotion attracted him so much that he tirelessly dedicated his whole life to it by deepening and sharing his knowledge about it.

A doctrine touched his heart

We follow Chevalier's own account of what happened at the end of 1848², when at the Major Seminary of Bourges, Chevalier's professor of theology³, "*with much knowledge and piety*", developed a thesis on the Sacred Heart. "*This doctrine went straight to my heart,*" Chevalier writes "*The more I went into it, the more attractive I found it*".⁴ Cuskelly makes the comment that the words "*this doctrine went straight to my heart,*" show how "*for Fr. Chevalier it was a deeply spiritual experience,*" a "*spiritual and apostolic inspi-*

ration⁵,” an experience, we may say, related to the birth of his charism.

Based on the lecture notes, taken by Jules himself⁶, the professor spoke about the history of the Devotion. Using the theological language of those days, he explained its material and formal object. In this Devotion, he said, we look at the person of Jesus Christ himself (“the material object”), from the viewpoint of his immense charity, both divine and human, seen under the symbol of the heart (“the formal object”)⁷. This technical language did not prevent Jules from being deeply touched, while discovering that the essence of Christian religion is not found in theoretical formulas, but in a living person who loves with a human heart, Jesus Christ, God’s Word Incarnate.

Spiritual Background

So, Jules’ ‘spiritual experience’ throughout this introduction into the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, actually consisted of discovering a new vision of Jesus Christ. It was the birth of his passion for Jesus Christ, who loved him personally. Taking into consideration that the Spirit is working through human experiences - including unpleasant experiences - we should look closely at Jules’ spiritual condition at the time he felt so touched by the explanation of this Devotion.

In his *Personal Notes*, Chevalier describes his feelings during his first years of study at the Major Seminary in Bourges. He notes that he did not at all find himself attracted to the kind of philosophy and theology, which he had to study. He writes: “*I studied the philosophy of Descartes whose genius we were led to admire, and the theology of Bailly who was set before us as a practical author of sound opinion. God gave me*

the grace not to share these sentiments. To me the Cartesian system seemed false and dangerous, and despite the respect due to the professor, I challenged it in class⁸.” “As for the theories of the arch-gallican Bailly, I had an instinctive horror of them⁹. The discussions were therefore very heated; I was regarded as an ‘ultramontanist’, but I was not alone – almost everyone opposed the author and the professor¹⁰.”

Cuskelly remarks that “in those days dogmatic theology had little if anything, about the love of God. Moral theology was concerned with man’s duties and the commandments which had to be observed scrupulously¹¹.” Neither the study of philosophy nor theology gave Jules any spiritual inspiration or emotional satisfaction. Therefore, the discovery of Jesus, loving with a human heart, as brought forward by the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, came down upon him as a refreshing rainfall after a long dry season. It was like a spark of the Holy Spirit that set the dry wood of his heart afire.

A continuous process

Cuskelly notes that, “against this background, we can easily understand that when Jules Chevalier discovered the Heart of Christ, he did far more than find a new devotion or a set of pious practices¹².” He was caught by a passion that would direct his whole life and mission. His passionate devotion to the Sacred Heart was actually a passion for Jesus Christ, who had shown so much love and mercy. This passion became the driving force behind all his further initiatives in life.

However, what happened during these lectures in Bourges, was just a beginning. It certainly was an overwhelming experience, but Jules had still to undergo a long process, guided by the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the full impli-

cations of this new vision. He started this process by reading the Life of Blessed Margaret Mary.

Margaret Mary Alacoque

In his *Personal Notes*, Chevalier tells us that his confessor lent him a substantial volume about Margret Mary Alacoque by Bishop Languet. *"This work stirred up in me a keen desire to become the apostle of this devotion that Our Lord had himself given to the world as a powerful means of sanctification and which he wished to see spread everywhere"*¹³. At this moment, his passion and new vision awoke in his heart a strong desire to participate in Jesus Christ's mission in the world.

In his introduction to the writings of Margaret Mary, Bishop Languet highlights two points that will also become central in Chevalier's understanding of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. First, in this devotion, the Sacred Heart refers to Jesus' person as a whole; and second, in this Devotion, love is the principle of our entire spiritual life¹⁴. Some words of the Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary Alacoque, made a deep impression on Jules. First the words that he afterwards will quote so many times in his writings: *"This is the Heart that has loved humankind so much that it has spared nothing"*¹⁵. These words became the foundation for his unshakable trust in Jesus' love for humankind.

Another declaration of Jesus to Margret Mary explains why the spreading of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was for Chevalier a matter of such great urgency. Jesus had said to Margaret Mary that he desired to show his Heart as a last hope, a last effort of love for humankind, while the world was coming to an end¹⁶. For Chevalier, these words of Jesus, spoken during an apparition, were as important as the

words of Holy Scripture. They explain, why spreading the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was such an urgent matter for Chevalier. They urged him to fulfill his mission to spread the Good News of Jesus' immense love for humanity, by every means available¹⁷.

This passionate devotion to the Sacred Heart, stirred up by lectures and readings, brought about a conversion of heart, a great commitment to his mission, a consistent way of life and ministry, and an unflagging energy in research and publications. To his conversion of heart and commitment to mission, I will return in the following chapters. In this chapter, I will briefly highlight the way his new passion shaped his way of interacting, praying and serving, and his amazing efforts in the field of study and writing. Concerning his work of research, we should take into consideration that Chevalier did not immediately discover the love of the Heart of Jesus in its full sense. Only in later years he will realize that there is a harmony between Jesus' love and the Father's love for humankind and that Jesus' love reveals the Father's love. That happened not through a momentary inspiration, but through a long process of reflection and study, more specifically by meditating on Jesus in the Gospels.

Meditation, study and writing

In a letter of December 1862 to the Jesuit, Fr. Ramière, while referring to an article in the "Messenger of the Sacred Heart", Chevalier wrote: *"You are doing what I have always thought.... That is how I understand devotion to the Sacred Heart: it embraces everything; is the answer to everything"*¹⁸. Chevalier himself was still meditating and studying the deeper meaning of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

and the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and felt not yet able to fully express his insights in words. The only thing he had published until that time, was at the end of 1862, a little brochure about Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. However, he recognized his own thoughts in the article of Fr. Ramière, and found himself confirmed in his growing insights. Moved by his great passion for Jesus as discovered in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he continued spending all his free time in reading, studying and writing, trying to express his deepest thoughts and then sharing them with his audience, as clearly as possible.

Piperon, his companion of many years, notes that, *“God had not given his servant a keen intelligence, a quick perception which makes mental work a relaxation rather than a fatigue. Far from it! All study, all mental exercise cost the Rev. Father long and hard labor. In the full sense of the word, he was a worker.”* Piperon continues: *“Never have I seen him idle for a single moment. His power of action was far above the ordinary... This explains the numerous and important works that he has left as a heritage to his disciples¹⁹.”* Even if he was not a student or a writer by nature, and constantly occupied by his duties as a parish priest and General Superior, Chevalier still found time to study and to write²⁰. Piperon points out that the research, writing, editing and re-editing of his major works about the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, took him 20 years²¹.

Through his continuous research and study, Chevalier obtained an increasingly broader vision of the role of the Sacred Heart. In his book entitled *“Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus”* of 1900, he discusses the role of the Sacred Heart in the work of creation and redemption, in Church and humankind, in personal and eternal life. He approaches his subject

from the viewpoint of Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, Church history, philosophy, modern sciences, dogmatic theology and mystical theology. He explores the role of the Sacred Heart in relation to the human heart, and underlines its relevance for the ills of society. Even if many of his thoughts were compiled from other sources, they show his wide range of interest concerning the central passion of his life: Jesus Christ, as brought to light by the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

A way of life

By living the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in a consistent way, Chevalier became increasingly aware of the wide range of Jesus' all-encompassing love. He was convinced that this Devotion embraced *everything* and was the answer to *everything*; it should be spread *everywhere* by *everyone* – priest, religious or lay –and by *every way of life*. Not only did he share this conviction in writing and sermons, but also in his daily life, and in his way of caring for the people around him. Accordingly, he had his own way of practicing this Devotion. Fr. Hériault, his assistant-parish priest in St. Cyr for many years, gives several examples of how Chevalier lived this Devotion.

Well-known is Chevalier's capacity to forgive. Some people openly or secretly opposed him. As Fr. Hériault indicates, those people could be found among his confreres in the Congregation, among the clergy of the Diocese, as well as among the authorities in secular society. However, even the enemies, who tried to destroy his work, or to get him removed from his position as parish priest or General Superior, he was able to forgive - as it seems, almost effort-

lessly²².

Hériault also notes that Chevalier did not have, “a demonstrative piety”. We would say, he was not a man who liked to show off his devotions. He himself practiced what he recommended others to do. “*His piety consisted above all, Hériault writes, in carrying out his obligations. He never neglected any of his spiritual exercises, despite his involvement in an extraordinary number of things²³,*” neither did he overlook any of his duties as parish priest of St. Cyr²⁴. He always paid special attention to the sick and the poor. “*The poor knew his charity and the kindness of his heart. They knew they would not be refused²⁵,*” writes Hériault. Visiting the sick and the poor families was for Chevalier one of the ways of practicing his passionate love for Jesus. That was also the way he taught to his parishioners²⁶.

After his death, a friend of Chevalier, Abbé Belleville, a priest of Bourges, describes very well the profound impression Chevalier had made upon people close to him. Writing an “In Memoriam” in the newspaper “L’Univers”, he gives this testimony: “*It looks as if Father Chevalier entered life with one idea to which he devoted himself without reserve and without turning back. It is a mystical idea, devotion to the Sacred Heart; it is a practical idea, the foundation of a Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. This sums up his whole life. He is a man with an idea and a concrete project²⁷.*”

Chevalier’s way of living, ministering, as well as his writings about the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, show us a man who became more and more captivated by the person of Jesus. In his sermons and books, we still feel his admiration of Jesus, the Word Incarnate, not unlike the sense of wonder later on expressed by the Second Vatican Council, which talking about the Incarnation, wrote, “He, the Son of

God, ... worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, he acted with a human will, and with a human heart he loved²⁸.” For Chevalier, the essence of Jesus, the Word Incarnate, is summed up in the symbol of the Heart, namely the human Heart of Jesus that reveals Jesus’ identity, or using the words of Dennis Murphy, “what makes Jesus to be Jesus²⁹.” Jesus’ human Heart – traditionally called “the Sacred Heart” - is the centre of his loving relationships with his Father and the Spirit, as well as with humankind as a whole and with each of us personally. As Chevalier puts it, “In Jesus, everything leads back to his Heart³⁰.”

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (2)

Chevalier’s intention of founding his congregations is clear. He had only one purpose in mind and heart: “to make known the treasures of mercy this Heart (of Jesus) contains³¹”. The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was for him the way, announced by Christ himself, “to spread everywhere the sacred fire of (Christ’s) love”³². The same purpose also forms the basic reason for the existence of the Chevalier Family. As members of the Chevalier Family, we are, by our way of life and caring, called to perform one and the same mission, that is to spread and promote spirituality, a Spirituality of the Heart, by giving witness to the treasures contained in the Heart of Christ as a revelation of God’s love for humankind.

Living a Spirituality of the Heart involves a profound desire to take Jesus, who loved and loves with a human heart, as a model before us; while, in the concrete circumstances in which we live, the Holy Spirit, guiding us from within, shows us the way of following Jesus. By listening to what the Spirit

is saying to us, deep within, may we become as enthusiastic about the person of Jesus, as Chevalier was.

Dennis Murphy MSC writes: *“Enthusiasm is one sign that we have really heard what the Spirit is saying to us.... ‘Enthusiasm’ means to be possessed by... a power greater than our own limitations and frailty... To share in Father Chevalier’s own ‘experience of the Spirit’ is to be given the gift of rediscovering today his enthusiasm, an enthusiasm capable of carrying him through extraordinary difficulties and disappointments³³.”*

Chevalier was an ordinary man, with ordinary talents, as pointed out by his friends³⁴. However, he became a spiritual giant³⁵, by allowing himself to be caught by an enthusiasm or passion for Jesus. This passion, he nurtured during his entire life. He shows us what can happen with ordinary people, when allowing themselves to be caught by Jesus, while remaining faithful to the Spirit at work in their hearts. ***

¹Vermin, p. 71-72.

² By following the sequence of events as reported by Chevalier in his Personal Notes, we can say that this event took place in November or December 1848 (Personal Notes, p. 13).

³ Fr. Bertolini notes that this professor was named M. L. Pellisier, who lectured at the Seminary of Bourges between 1846 and 1848. (Personal Notes, p. 55).

⁴ Cuskelly 1975, p. 115, see also Personal Notes p. 13, (DR December 5).

⁵ Cuskelly, 1975, p. 116.

⁶ A copy of Chevalier’s annotations is still preserved and has been published in Manuscripts SCJ, p. 11-15, entitled “La Thèse de M. Pellisier”. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 11-15.

⁷ For a more extensive analysis of Chevalier's notes, see Vermin, 1957, p. 78-79.

⁸ Personal Notes p.12f. (DR. December 3). Descartes was a philosopher who broke with Scholasticism, the official philosophy and theology of the Church of that time. Instead of revelation, Descartes accepted reason as the basis of all science.

⁹ DR. December 3. The supporters of "Gallicanism" (from Gallia or Gaul, a former name of France) wanted greater autonomy for the local Church of France, while reacting against the absolute authority of the Pope. In 1852, the theological manual of Bailly was placed on the Index that is on the list of forbidden books, published by the Vatican, with the annotation "donec corrigatur" that means "until corrected."

¹⁰ "Ultramontanism" (from "ultra", beyond, and "montes", mountains, in this case, the Alps), supported firmly the universal authority of the Pope, also over the Church in France.

¹¹ Cuskelly, 1978, p. 22.

¹² Cuskelly, 1978, p. 22.

¹³ Personal Notes p. 13.

¹⁴ Vermin, 1957, p. 79. Mgr Jean-Joseph Languet, *La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Marguerite-Marie*, Nouvelle edition, Paris 1890, p. 50 ff. Murphy, *The Heart*, 2003, p. 17.

¹⁵ In his conferences and sermons about the Sacred Heart, brought together in *Manuscripts SCJ*, Chevalier refers at least 35 times to Margaret-Mary (also called "La Bienheureuse" or "La Sainte") or quotes her writings directly. See also *Ses Ecrits*, *Manusc-SC*.

¹⁶ Languet, p. 220 : « Voici mon cœur, qui est si passionné d'amour pour les hommes » ; Languet, p. 241 : « Voila ce Cœur qui a tant aimé les hommes » ; Languet, p. 366 : « .. dans ces derniers siècles, ce dernier effort de son amour » ; *Vie de la B. Marguerite-Marie* «... c'est un dernier effort de mon amour, une dernière planche de salut que je leur offre.»

¹⁷ For a short assessment of Margaret Mary's messages received during the apparitions, see Cuskelly 1975, p. 133-135. See also Kwakman, 2011 (1)

¹⁸ Letter to Fr. Ramière SJ, 9 December 1862 (DR August 16). *Ses Ecrits, Lettres*, p. 41.

¹⁹ Piperon, p. 147.

²⁰ Besides published books, brochures and articles, Chevalier wrote a great number of letters. Philippe Séveau, one of the editors of Chevalier's writings made available on CD, estimates that when in

Issoudun, he must have written an average of 10 letters a day.

²¹ Piperon, p. 237.

²² See the testimony of Fr. Hériault in "Notes sur T.R.P. Chevalier", Témoignages, 71.

²³ Hériault, DR. October 11. Témoignages, 71

²⁴ Hériault, DR October 23. Témoignages, 71

²⁵ Hériault, DR September 14. Témoignages, 71.

²⁶ Manuscrits SCJ, (Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC) contain several conferences of Lent 1857, given to the men of Issoudun concerning the poor and visiting the poor of Issoudun.

²⁷ Death Notice in the newspaper L'Univers, November 1907. (DR. October 29). Témoignages 31.

²⁸ Church in the Modern World, no. 22.

²⁹ Murphy, The Heart, p. 46. See also the preceding chapter 3 « The Heart as Centre ».

³⁰ SCJ, 1900, p. 76 (DR June 14).

³¹ Règles 1857, (DR December 20). Œuvre Normative I, p.140.

³² Règles 1857, (DR December 20). Œuvre Normative I, p.140.

³³ Murphy, The Laity, p. 6-7.

³⁴ Piperon, p. 147 and the testimony of Abbé Belleville, see Cuskelly 1975, p. 282-285. Témoignage 31.

³⁵ Témoignage 93 : Extrait de la Semaine Religieuse de Bourges. Original in the French « Annales de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur », Juin 1924, pp. 185 – 202.

CHAPTER 3

A DEVELOPING VISION OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

From the beginning, Fr. Chevalier understood the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in a broad sense. He lived this Devotion as a spirituality that comprised all aspects of faith, religion and daily life - social life as well as personal life. Nevertheless, we can clearly observe a development during his life, more specifically concerning his vision of Jesus Christ, in relation to the Father in heaven, and humankind. In order to understand his charism, it is important to keep in mind that Chevalier's vision of Jesus Christ has always been a developing vision, a vision-under-construction, we might say.

Jesus in the Gospels

In his early years, Chevalier's main attention went out to Jesus as he met him in the Gospels: the Good Shepherd, teaching, healing, embracing all who came to him, and showing the love of his human heart. In a series of conferences entitled "*Fighting Egoism and Indifference through charity*

and love of the Sacred Heart", given during Advent and Lent of 1857¹, he used as a guiding principle that, knowledge of Jesus will evoke love for Jesus; love for Jesus will lead to a change of heart, while a change of heart will bring about renewal in society. Knowledge of Jesus starts by looking at Jesus in the Gospels.

Chevalier was convinced that *"Jesus Christ is not sufficiently loved, because he is not sufficiently known."*² When people get to know Jesus as he really is, they will love Him, and when loving Jesus they will overcome their egoism in relation to their neighbours and their indifference to God and religion. According to Chevalier, the best way of getting to know Jesus is through the Devotion to the Sacred Heart that leads people towards Jesus in the Gospels. By presenting Gospel stories, he showed how Jesus cares for the sick and the poor. With excitement, he spoke about Jesus' concern for a sinful woman, and for the woman who had been caught in adultery; his concern for Jairus, a synagogue official, whose daughter had died, and for the widow of Naïm, on her way to bury her only son.

However, Chevalier found the most revealing sign of Jesus' love for humankind in the Incarnation. Urged by the love of his heart, the Son of God became a human being, eager to live among us and with us. He embraced the human condition with all its implications³. In relation to the passion and death of Jesus, Chevalier wrote: *"The great sign, the great revelation of a good heart is found in total dedication, in self-forgetfulness, in suffering and dying for those whom one loves."*⁴ Thus, he regarded Jesus' suffering as *"The last great gift that flows out from the Sacred Heart of Jesus and that will be able to expel indifference"*⁵.

Charity and Religion

Two other gifts show Jesus' immense love for humankind: charity and religion. Chevalier even spoke about "the omnipotence of charity", found both in the Sacred Heart and in every human heart. Summarizing an earlier conference, he said: "*We have talked about the omnipotence of charity, first in the Sacred Heart of Jesus who has pacified heaven and earth, ... who has given himself totally to his creation and who after having given everything, offered himself for humanity on Calvary. Afterwards we have talked about charity in the human heart...⁶.*"

Another great gift of the Sacred Heart is religion. For Chevalier, that meant the religion of the Catholic Church. "*From the top of Calvary, Jesus Christ let religion descend upon the world⁷,*" he exclaimed. The great gifts of religion include the Church and its commandments, Holy Scripture, and the Sacraments, but also the marvellous deeds of missionaries in far away countries, and of religious and lay people visiting the poor, in Issoudun. Religion was for him "*the light of our spirit, the consolation of our heart, the source of our happiness⁸.*" Religion changes the hearts of human beings forever, and is capable of healing people's hearts from religious indifference, he said.

Jesus and his Heavenly Father

However, in his early writings, Chevalier still created an opposition between the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of the Father. In his sermons and conferences, he used the 'theory of satisfaction and reparation', which was the traditional theology of his time. He presented this theory with great

rhetorical dramatization⁹. He described how in Gethsemane and upon the cross, Jesus is involved in a battle with his Father. Jesus lets his compassionate heart speak against the Father, who, in rage, wants to destroy humanity. The Father wants a final judgment, while Jesus pleads for forgiveness. Finally the Father hears the supplications of his Son, and accepts his sacrifice as satisfaction and reparation. It is clear that such a cruel theory – a Father who demands the death of his own Son - creates an abyss between the heart of Jesus and the heart of his Father.

Not unlike the God-image of his contemporaries, Chevalier's image of God as the offended Supreme Majesty, whose anger had to be appeased by Jesus his Son, was clearly influenced by the customs of the Royal Court, where it was the main task of the courtesans to honour and serve the King. Those who honoured the King would be graciously rewarded, while those who insulted the King would be severely punished, if they could not find an influential intercessor willing to speak on their behalf. Similar to an earthly king, who feels offended by the hurtful offences of his subjects, the Father's honour is injured by humankind's sins. If humankind does not make amends, the Father will take revenge. Jesus, however, offers himself on the cross to appease the Father's anger, and to vindicate the Father's claim to be honoured and adored. During his entire life, Chevalier wrestles with this misleading theory.

In the Rules of 1855, more precisely in his instructions for parish-missions, he recommended the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, "*to speak much about God's mercy*"¹⁰. He added, however, that they should also eloquently remind their audience of the devils, who in the horrible abyss of hell, carry out the "*divine vengeance*", while describing graphically

the terrible pain suffered by souls, for all eternity punished in hell¹¹. But, he adds, they should not only speak about a God ready to punish, but also about a God willing to forgive; not so much speak about hell, but even more about heaven; and, above all, speak about the treasures of pity and tenderness contained in the Heart of Jesus¹².

Towards a new image of God

Later on, in 1900, in a special chapter of “Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus”, he tried to explain the theory of reparation in another way, more in conformity with his renewed image of God¹³. He spoke about a loving God whose love is not accepted, about “unloved love.”¹⁴ Reparation should be given to God who is saddened by humanity’s lack of gratitude. Only in passing, he still referred to the sacrifice of Jesus as appeasement of God’s anger¹⁵; and instead of descriptions of Hell and its punishments, he spent six chapters (more than a hundred pages) to describe Heaven and its blessings¹⁶.

However, in 1904, in a little booklet entitled “Retraite de Huit Jours selon Le Methode Saint Ignace”, he still wrote that the fire of hell “is started and maintained by a vengeful God, to punish the sinners who have scorned and offended God during their lives¹⁷.” Apparently, till the end of his life, Chevalier continued to struggle with the question, how to integrate God’s demand for justice with God’s unconditional love¹⁸. He would have felt greatly relieved by a statement of Pope John Paul II who declared that eternal damnation should not be attributed to God’s initiative “because in his merciful love he can only desire the salvation of the beings he created. In reality, it is the creature that closes himself to his love¹⁹.”

God's powerful love

Continuing on the above reflections, we notice a growing transition in Chevalier's image of God. The first sentence of his book *"Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus"* of 1900, reads: "God is love, *Deus Caritas est*, or, if you prefer, God is totally love, God is love itself, love in essence²⁰." Accordingly, he wrote, "God looks with immense love on the smallest, the least of the beings created by Him. He takes in the whole magnificent scene with a look of absolutely indescribable love²¹." It is true, the traditional God-image is still there: God, who governs humankind from above, as a King, enthroned in his palace. But, now it is the God of unconditional love who looks down on the earth and on every creature.

Another God-image is also emerging, not the 'God-from-above', but the God, who lovingly embraces the human race and every human being. Chevalier writes, "It is good to think of the network of love with which God at every moment surrounds each soul he created on earth... Each one's biography is a marvelous history of God's goodness²²," while in a footnote he names God, "the ocean that embraces everything²³." Moreover, Chevalier was also aware of still another image of God, the 'God-from-within'. In the spirit of St. Augustine, he wrote, "God does not create from a distance, sending existence to us like the sun its rays. He is in us, in our most intimate depths, more present to us than we are to ourselves²⁴."

However, for Chevalier, the Heart of Jesus was not only a manifestation of God's love and mercy, but also of God's power and strength. "Two attributes seem to dominate in God, he writes: mercy and strength... The Heart of Jesus possesses them to an eminent degree... They are the distinctive mark of his mission²⁵." The Sacred Heart, the revelation of

God's creative power and love in the cosmos and in humanity, is both a furnace of love, and the driving force behind the movement of creation towards the Creator. Also at the time, Jesus showed himself as the Good Shepherd, "mercy went with him everywhere, and strength never abandoned him"²⁶", especially, Chevalier noted, when Jesus had to battle against the powers of hell²⁷. In general, Chevalier spoke about 'love' not only as affection, but as a powerful strength. Already in his early years, he gave a conference entitled "Charity: its power"²⁸.

The many manifestations of the Sacred Heart

By contemplating the Heart of Christ, Chevalier also deepened and enlarged his understanding of the role of Jesus Christ in God's plan of creation and salvation. Chevalier regards the Sacred Heart as the center of creation, humanity, and the Church, as well of the new world to come. Consequently, he said, it is the aim of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart to venerate the Sacred Heart in a variety of "manifestations"²⁹; and all these "manifestations", he wanted to study.

... Creation and Incarnation

The central manifestation of God's divine love is the Incarnation. In "Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus" of 1900, Chevalier writes, using the theological language of his time: "God sends to the earth his Word... This uncreated Word has taken on the mantle of our flesh, which he will not take off anymore, in order to show us how far God's love for us can go"³⁰.

Chevalier was deeply impressed by the mystery of the In-

carnation, and saw it as the center of God's plan of creation and salvation³¹. He describes how from the very beginning, when creating the universe, God looked at Jesus, the Word Incarnate, as a model: *"Already in matter, there is a sort of knowledge, a beginning of love. In the atmosphere and in the water, these thousands of varieties of animals know one another, love one another: a first draft, a first outline, perfect in itself, wonderful, entrancing, but only a distant sketch, a long way unfortunately from its model³²,"* Jesus Christ.

By creating the human race and the heart of each human person, the Father prepared the Incarnation of his Son³³. Chevalier quotes Tertulian, saying that at the moment of the creation of the first human being, *"Jesus Christ was present and served as a model, a prototype after which the human body has been formed³⁴."* And the same Jesus Christ, who appeared to Margaret Mary with the words, *"this is the Heart that has loved humankind so much", "existed from all eternity in the thought of God... He fills all ages with his presence; shines on all races, tribes and peoples, like a mild sun, (and) hovers over the universe³⁵."*

... Adoration and Thanksgiving

"Everything in Jesus is adoration³⁶," Chevalier writes, and afterwards he adds, *"Jesus is Man-God. He reunites the whole of creation: 'I am the life', he tells us, all created life and uncreated life, plant, animal or material life, spiritual and rational life... The Heart is the central point of his divine humanity. There, on that sacred altar, he offers to God, his Father, constant adoration worthy of his infinite goodness. Thus this divine Heart is the supreme worshipper of the divine majesty...³⁷."*

Chevalier called Jesus “the universal Eucharist³⁸,” because “through him ... humanity gives itself to God, devotes itself to God ... and renders the actions of thanksgiving that God deserves³⁹.” On behalf of the entire creation, Jesus gives thanks to the Creator, by praising and worshiping the Father, Creator of heaven and earth. “Jesus is thanksgiving. In offering to the Creator a thanksgiving worthy of him... Jesus satisfies fully for the thanksgiving due from creatures. Here again, is not his Heart the organ for the thanksgiving of the universe?⁴⁰”

... Presence

With his whole Heart, Jesus is continuously present in the living community of the Church: “The Heart of Jesus is not only the Heart of his holy humanity; it is also the Heart of the Church, his Mystical Body⁴¹,” while the Eucharist is the most eminent manifestation of Jesus’ presence among us. In his love for us, Jesus’ deepest desire is to stay with us: “Impelled by his Heart, burning with love for us, (Jesus) will institute a sacrament, in which he will be really, substantially present until the end of the ages, to converse familiarly with us, to give himself to us without reserve⁴².” “The Holy Eucharist is the masterpiece and the ultimate limit of the love of the Heart of Jesus for us. It comes from his Heart like a river from its source⁴³.”

... The pierced Heart

This Heart of love, the driving force behind all that exists, is finally revealed as a pierced heart, and exactly this pierced heart becomes the birthplace of a new creation: “From the

Heart of the Incarnate Word, pierced on Calvary, I see a new world emerging, the world of those he has chosen. And this creation, so fertile, full of grandeur and inspired by love and mercy, is the Church, the mystical body of Christ, which makes this new creation present on earth until the end of time⁴⁴.” This vision of the new creation, originating not just from Jesus’ charity in general, but from his pierced heart, his broken heart - a heart wounded by rejection and violence - shows Chevalier’s belief in Jesus as “the One who will restore all things⁴⁵,” including a broken world⁴⁶.

The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of God

For Chevalier, it had been a long journey in order to be able to leave behind a vision in which the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of God oppose one another. Finally, a beautiful and broad perspective had been opened up before him: “God is love itself. This infinite love... has enclosed itself in a human heart, the Heart of Jesus... his living sacrament⁴⁷.” “The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of God, the centre of divine love⁴⁸,” “the image of the Heart of God⁴⁹.” “It is through the Heart of Christ that the love of God, God himself, pours himself out on the world and on the human race⁵⁰.” Through continuous reflection on the mystery of the Incarnation, Chevalier had begun to grasp the many implications of Jesus’ words in the Gospel of John, “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30).

Deepening our knowledge

Chevalier made his research and published his writings not as an academic scholar, but as a missionary. His dedication to study, in addition to his regular ministries as Supe-

rior General and parish priest, shows us his concept of the vocation of a Missionary of the Sacred Heart. He expected the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to search for a more comprehensive understanding of this Devotion, not unlike he himself did.

We should notice that for Chevalier, acquiring a deeper knowledge of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart directly arises from the purpose of the Society. In the Constitutions of 1877, he stated that the general purpose of the Society stems from the fact that devotion to the Sacred Heart is revealed by Jesus himself as *“an efficient remedy for curing the ills of a world growing cold by indifference and consumed by a dreadful corruption⁵¹.”* How might this ‘general purpose’ be achieved? *“Everything can be hoped for”,* Chevalier answered, if *“the true friends of Jesus Christ... gaze more attentively into the depths of the Heart of Christ, remember more affectionately its love and benefits, put on ever more its sentiments, strengthen ever more among themselves the bond of its charity, and devote themselves more perfectly in spirit and truth to this Divine Heart⁵².”*

Already many of the faithful practice this Devotion, he continued, but in order to increase its impact, it seems to be useful to set up a Society which makes the practice of this Devotion and its spreading, the special reason for its existence⁵³. This practice firstly includes the development of a personal love towards Jesus Christ, also expressed through adoration and reparation, particularly in the Eucharist. Secondly, it means, taking the Heart of Jesus as a model in forming the quality of one’s own heart. Thirdly, it calls people to perform their mission, while giving witness to the treasures of the Heart of Jesus, especially among diocesan priests and the faithful⁵⁴. Then, Chevalier stated, in

order to achieve this purpose more effectively, the missionaries should pay special attention to obtaining knowledge and understanding of the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus⁵⁵. In an article under the heading "*the knowledge and science of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*⁵⁶," he underlines this once again, by emphasizing that "*we should certainly know what we are required to teach*⁵⁷."

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (3)

By constantly deepening and enlarging his growing vision of the role of Jesus' Heart in God's plan, Chevalier has shown us the direction in which we might develop our own vision of Jesus, in the context of today's world and culture. Chevalier's vision of Jesus, as the Supreme Adorer of the Father on behalf of the entire creation; and as '*the universal Eucharist*', invites us to consider ourselves to be representatives of all creatures. "*Man ... is an animal who prays, who adores, and who gives thanks. In us, matter becomes religious*⁵⁸," writes Chevalier. We are called to give thanks for the great things the Spirit is carrying out, not only in our personal lives, but also in the bigger world, and even in the billion years' long evolution of the universe. Adoration is the expression of a grateful heart, and inspires us to lift up our hearts, in order to see the bigger picture that allows us to face the future with hope.

Dennis Murphy MSC, in an article entitled "*Father Chevalier's cosmic view of the Heart of Christ*⁵⁹," states that the cosmic aspect of Chevalier's charism has been "*largely neglected*". A Spirituality of the Heart as developed by Chevalier, he says, is "*a creation-oriented spirituality with practical applications in the whole area of ecology, of respect for the*

material universe in which we live... Attention to the Sacred Heart should develop in us a sense of the sacredness of all things.”

One way of continuing along the lines marked by Chevalier’s reflections on the Mystery of the Incarnation could be, becoming more sensitive to the many manifestations of God’s powerful love in today’s world. Through Jesus Christ, in whom “*were created all things in heaven and on earth*” (Col. 1:16), and through his Holy Spirit, God is actively present and at work in the Church, its words and sacraments, certainly, but also in the evolution of creation; in the beauty of nature, in the complexity of history, in the variety of religions, and in secular society struggling to become more and more united into one family. Through Jesus Christ, who has a great heart for humankind, and the Spirit, who empowers people with love, God is at work in so many men and women, who by their daily practice of charity and justice, sacrifice themselves, trying to change a broken world into a new world. ***

¹ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 48-189. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 48-189.

² Manuscrits SCJ, Sur Notre Amour pour Jésus Christ, p. 145. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 145.

³ E.g. Manuscrits SCJ, p. 121, 125, 144ff. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 121, 125, 144ff.

⁴ Manuscrits SCJ, Sur Notre Amour pour Jésus Christ, p. 149. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 149.

⁵ Manuscrits SCJ, Sur la Passion de N.S. Jésus Christ, p. 174. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 174.

⁶ Manuscrits SCJ, Sur la Charité : ses avantages, p. 92. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 92.

⁷ Manuscrits SCJ, Sur la Confession, ses Bienfaits, p. 157. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 157.

⁸ Manuscrits SCJ, Sur la Religion, p. 151. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p.

151.

⁹Manuscrits SCJ. In different conferences, we meet Chevalier's description of satisfaction and reparation: *Sur le Sacre-Cœur de Jesus*, (p. 35). *Sur la Passion de N.S.J.C.* (p. 183). *Sur les Richesses du Cœur de Jesus*, (p. 212). *Sur la Reparation* (p.198). *Sur l'Amour du Cœur de Jésus pour l'Homme*, p. 237. See also *Ses Ecrits*, Manusc-SC, the same page numbers. Also in *Méditations I*, p. 438; 463

¹⁰Règles 1855, *Œuvre Normative I*, p. 82.

¹¹Règles 1855, *Œuvre Normative I*, p. 110.

¹²Règles 1855, *Œuvre Normative I*, p. 112.

¹³SCJ, Livre III, Ch. II La Réparation. For a special study on the theory of 'reparation', see Bour 2007. See also : Gasser, ch. 3 La Réparation, on Chevalier's understanding of "reparation" in "Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus"; and Murphy, *The Heart* 2003, p. 120-134.

¹⁴SCJ, 1900, p. 216f.

¹⁵SCJ, 1900, p. 201, 225, 233.

¹⁶SCJ, 1900,, p. 277 – 381.

¹⁷Retraite 1904, p. 46

¹⁸E.g. *L'Apocalypse* 1907, p. 177

¹⁹John Paul II, General Audience Wednesday 28 July 1999

²⁰SCJ, 1900, p. 3.

²¹SCJ, 1900, p. 66 (translation by Dennis Murphy MSC)..

²²SCJ, 1900, p. 299, quoting Frédéric-William Faber, an English Oratorian (1814-1863), whose writings (in French translation) were very popular in France. (See DR November 1).

²³SCJ, 1900, p. 330 footnote 4.

²⁴SCJ, 1900, p. 281 (DR. August 6). A vision clearly inspired by St. Augustine.

²⁵SCJ, 1900, p.200 (DR July 13). See also p. 70; p. 142; p. 182

²⁶SCJ, 1900, p.200 (DR July 13).

²⁷SCJ, 1900, p. 200 (partially in DR July 13). See for a meditation on Chevalier's image of the Good Shepherd, Mayor 2002, chapter 7.

²⁸Manuscrits SCJ, « Sur la Charité: sa puissance », p. 86 – 92. *Ses Ecrits*, Manusc-SC p 86-92.

²⁹SCJ, 1900, p. 148

³⁰SCJ, 1900, p. 3.

³¹More extensively in Gasser, Ch. 2.

³²SCJ, 1900, p. 62 (transl. Dennis Murphy). See also p. 64-65

³³SCJ, 1900, p. 139-140 and 148. See also Murphy, *The Heart* 2003, ch. 5: *The Heart of the Universe*

³⁴SCJ, 1900, p. 4.

³⁵ SCJ, 1900, p. 4, quoting Mgr. Bertaud (translation Murphy, *The Heart*, p. 50). Already in 1865, in an article in "Le Messager du Sacré Cœur de Jésus", t. VII, June 1865, p. 529. Chevalier had written: "Though composed of different members, the human race forms one body and blood... The heart that gives life to all the members of this great body is the Heart of Jesus... This divine Heart is the center around which all hearts gravitate." (DR, February 8).

³⁶ SCJ, 1900, p. 69. See Murphy, *The Heart*, 2003, p. 105.

³⁷ SCJ, 1900, p. 74-75.

³⁸ SCJ, 1900, p. 72.

³⁹ SCJ, 1900, p. 72.-73.

⁴⁰ SCJ, 1900, p. 76 (transl. Dennis Murphy).

⁴¹ SCJ, 1900, p. 81. See also p. 146.

⁴² SCJ, 1900, p. 74-76

⁴³ SCJ, 1900, p. 213-214. (DR July 18-19). See also Murphy, *The Heart* 2003, p. 104-109.

⁴⁴ SCJ, 1900, p. 145 (DR July 6)

⁴⁵ SCJ, 1900, p. 287, referring to Eph. 1:9-10.

⁴⁶ See also Murphy, *The Heart* 2003, ch. 8: The Pierced Heart.

⁴⁷ SCJ, 1900, p. 147. See also 277. (DR. August 2).

⁴⁸ SCJ, 1900, p. 277. (DR. August 1 and 2.)

⁴⁹ SCJ, 1900, p. 146f (DR. July 7).

⁵⁰ SCJ, 1900, p. 277.

⁵¹ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, no.1. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 392. Chevalier relates this 'revelation' to the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary Alacoque.

⁵² MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, no.2. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 392

⁵³ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, no. 3 and 4. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 392.

⁵⁴ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, no. 5, 6 and 7. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 394.

⁵⁵ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, no. 10. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 394.

⁵⁶ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, Article 1. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 396.

⁵⁷ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch.II, Article 1, no 1. *Œuvre Normative II*, p. 396.

⁵⁸ SCJ 1900, p. 64 (translation Dennis Murphy MSC).

⁵⁹ Murphy, *Cosmic View*. See also Murphy, *The Heart*, ch. 5: "The Heart of the Universe".

A MISSION OF THE HEART

We return to Jules' spiritual experience during his years in the Major Seminary at Bourges. Apparently, the lectures of professor Pellisier at the end of 1848, in combination with the reading of the Life of Margaret Mary by Bishop Languet and a retreat in 1850, touched Chevalier's heart so deeply that he went through a conversion of heart and a change of attitude. This experience belongs to the moments that gave birth to Chevalier's charism.

A conversion of heart

Piperon, who himself witnessed the transformation in Jules's behaviour, describes Jules' attitude before his 'conversion' as follows: *"During the first three years (in Bourges), Jules gave an impression of severity which kept away from him a certain number of his companions. He spoke little, was often even silent at recreation, unless they were speaking of religious matters. He let it be too evident that he was making continuous efforts of his will to be united with God and live in*

habitual recollection. This negative attitude was harmful to the good influence, which he could have had on a large number of his companions. Some even accused him of rigorism and openly blamed him¹.”

However, a retreat in April 1850, in preparation of Jules' ordination to the sub-diaconate, brought forward a sudden conversion. Piperon still wonders: “The very day of his ordination he appeared quite changed. Without any transition whatever, the seminarian, stiff and taciturn in his relationships, was entirely renewed and became a sub-deacon, gentle, affable, and always smiling... Jules had understood that to do good, he must present himself under a more attractive form – that of kindness, accompanied by pleasant conversation. Once his resolution was made, he put it into practice without flinching. From that moment his influence grew. Those who before had avoided him were now attracted by his joyous and friendly conversations. Still today, after more than fifty years, we find him always kind, compassionate and friendly towards all who approach him. He has made himself all for all, to gain all for Christ².”

What kind of conversion was this?

Remarkably, Chevalier himself considered another retreat to be his moment of conversion. That was the one he had made in October 1846, at the beginning of his first year in Bourges. During this retreat, he had made the resolution to become, in his own words, “an exemplary seminarian³.” In his Personal Notes, he writes: “The retreat at the beginning of the year was preached by a Sulpician, Fr. Mollevaut. His words, simple, yet ardent, and full of faith, made a deep impression on me; I came away converted and anxious to be

an exemplary seminarian. Three principal virtues had been recommended to us: fidelity to the rule, mortification and humility. I did all I could to practice them during the five years in the major seminary. Yet with what slackness and imperfection!⁴"

Chevalier's efforts to practice "*fidelity to the rule, mortification and humility*" as strictly as possible, may confirm the observation made by Yves Krumenacker in his study on the French School of Spirituality⁵, stating that at the time of Chevalier, the formation of Seminarians conducted by the Sulpicians, was mainly based on ascetics, that is to say, on the practice of self-denial and self-mortification.

In his Personal Notes, Chevalier does not once mention the retreat of 1850. In fact, according to Piperon, it was this last retreat that brought about such a radical transformation in Jules' life. From a perfect seminarian, mainly concentrating on living in the presence of God, and being obedient to the laws of God and the Church, as well as the Seminary rules, he had changed into an amiable person, pleasantly interacting with others, with an understanding heart; and so, Piperon remarks, he remained till the end of his life.

His natural disposition

Apparently, during his first years in Bourges, Jules had forced himself to practice a spiritual life that did not correspond to his natural disposition. His behaviour was in contrast with his open and cheerful character. By nature, Jules was "lively" and "hot-headed", as he describes himself in his Personal Notes⁶. From his mother he had also inherited "*a keen sense of humor*", Vermin states⁷. That will also become clear, when later as Superior of the MSC community

of Issoudun, he likes to play practical jokes, and compose humorous verses on the occasion of special celebrations of his confreres⁸. Most likely during his first years in Bourges, Jules felt himself totally ill at ease with himself, but must have felt obliged to behave in that way, assuming that it was the way a perfect seminarian should behave.

The encounter, through the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, with the merciful Heart of Jesus, must have occurred to him as liberation. He began to realise that what the Lord expected from him was just the opposite of what he had been practising until then. It might have given him a feeling of great relief. Cuskelly makes a comment that strikes home when he states that, "*Chevalier's character was suddenly possessed by (his) charism*⁹."

Embodiment of his charism

It is true, Chevalier's way of acting was totally transformed by *his emerging charism*. In the history of the Church, most conversions occur from an unruly, disorderly behavior to a saintly and devout way of life. In Chevalier's case, we witness a transformation from an austere and ascetic way of life to a human, compassionate and kind way of interacting with other people. Chevalier learned to love with a human heart. It is true, as Vermin remarks, with himself he was just as strict as ever before, but in relation to others, he became more relaxed and flexible¹⁰.

We notice here the embodiment of Chevalier's charism in ordinary human relationships. More than by words or teachings, Chevalier showed by his behavior how he understood the meaning of the incarnation of God's love in real life as lived by Jesus himself. Through the transformation

of his behavior, he made it clear that the quintessence of a Devotion to the Sacred Heart lies in the conformity of our hearts to the Heart of Jesus.

Charity

His own conversion of heart in Bourges might have convinced Chevalier of the important role played by the human heart. The human heart can either become a source of evil, or a source of charity. In a conference during his early years as an MSC, he confronts his audience with both dimensions of the human heart. Rhetorically, he asks: *"From where comes all the criminality that inundates the earth, disturbs families and turns kingdoms upside down? Isn't it from the human heart? Isn't it in the human heart that people plan, prepare and nurture the crimes that are committed everyday?"*¹¹

On the other hand, based on his own experience, he is also convinced that the human heart is able to perform miracles of charity. Summarizing one of his earlier conferences, he says, *"We have talked about charity in the human heart. This is the charity that is able to destroy hate, while bringing to an end and preventing from happening, crimes created by poverty. It is charity that converts the souls, touches the hearts and brings them back to God. It is charity that puts an end to the fury of despair, holds back blasphemy against Providence, and stops the murmurs, the curses. It is charity that wipes away the tears, soothes the pain, relieves the suffering and gives bread to those who are short of it. It is charity that spreads trust and joy in hearts embittered by distress, and that creates hope for a better life in the hearts of people who have lost every hope"*¹².

In order to practice charity to the poor, he continues,

there is no need to be rich, *“it is enough to have a heart that is able to love, to sympathize, and to be compassionate.... God has given you a good, kind and sensitive heart...The human heart is the most powerful means for doing good¹³.”* Chevalier makes an appeal to his audience to use the great power of their hearts in serving the poor. He speaks about the necessity of going to visit the poor personally, *“to put aside our own ease, to sit at the bedside of the poor, to breathe the air that they breathe. That is the way we show that we love them and that we consider them our brothers and sisters.”* By doing so, we are doing what Jesus has done in his incarnation. He came to visit us, *“by leaving his abode, by putting beside his ease and happiness¹⁴.”*

In community and ministry

Belief in the “mission of the heart” has been a constant element in Chevalier’s charism. This mission begins with establishing good relationships among the missionaries themselves. Similar to the way he had let his own heart be transformed by the Heart of Jesus, in the rules of 1855, he recommended the members of his Congregation, *“to practice the virtues of the Heart of Jesus: his gentleness, his humility”* and to *“have much respect for one another, and (to) speak with kindness and cordiality¹⁵.”* In the same rules, Chevalier stipulated that *“if the Missionary of the Sacred Heart wants to make his work and words effective, he must imitate his divine model who began by doing..., then by teaching¹⁶.”*

During parish-missions, the missionary should always approach the people *“very kindly, and with neither a sad nor a severe facial expression... When meeting people on the streets of the parish, in which he preaches the parish-mis-*

sion, he will be the first to greet¹⁷.” Moreover, “the missionary should imitate the Good Shepherd, who goes searching for the lost sheep.... He should leave his confessional behind, while going to look for those unfortunates, whose hearts are still hardened. Such a step almost always bears fruit, sometimes even astonishing fruits¹⁸.”

The Heart of Jesus as a model

Twenty years later, in the MSC Constitutions of 1877, he recommends the members to nurture Christ-like attitudes, saying that “Being imitators of the Heart of Jesus, they are to radiate only mutual affection and true charity, while acting with consideration and kindness, irrespective of character, language or birthplace¹⁹.” In the same Constitutions, he defines the formation of the human heart as the second aim of the Congregation: the members should set “the Heart of Jesus before them as a model²⁰,” and develop in their own hearts the virtues of Jesus’ Heart.

What they practice in the community among themselves, they should also put in practice in their ministry to the people: by “always following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, they will entice his sheep by kindness and will draw them with the bonds of love²¹.” Also members, associated with the Society of Missionaries, the diocesan priests and the members of the Third Order, are encouraged to practice the virtues so dear to Jesus’ Heart, such as, “kindness, humility and charity²².” They should consider themselves to be one family, and “love one another cordially²³.”

The human heart

In the second part of his book “Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus” of 1900, Chevalier writes several paragraphs in exploring the many functions of the human heart. This, he does, in order to better understand the human heart of Jesus. It shows the way he takes the mystery of the Incarnation seriously. So, he looks at the human heart from the viewpoint of philosophy and biology, as well as morality (today, we would say, psychology). He speaks of the human heart as the seat of passions, emotions and virtues, more specifically the virtue of love - love as an affection and as a force²⁴.

He concludes, “*le coeur est le tout de l’homme*”²⁵: the heart is the whole human person; and “*it is an impenetrable abyss. Only God knows its secrets. Only God owns the key to its mysteries*”²⁶. This is in conformity with Chevalier’s vision that the Father designed the human heart in the likeness of his own heart and the heart of his Son. Chevalier writes: “*God created in us needs in harmony with His desires. By doing so, He reveals the aspirations of His Heart through the aspirations of our hearts. What do we desire in the innermost depth of our hearts? ... We desire to ... meet God, to live his life, to identify ourselves with Him, and to plunge forever into the source of goodness that takes its rise from his Heart... Our heart is made for His Heart*”²⁷. Such a profound belief in the dignity of the human heart makes it understandable that Chevalier considers our hearts to be great vehicles to spread a mission of love.

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (4)

After the Second Vatican Council, an important develop-

ment took place in the Chevalier Family. Fr. Cuskelly MSC and his General Council took the initiative in promoting a transition from a Devotion to the Sacred Heart to a Spirituality of the Heart. They rightly claimed that the expression *Spirituality of the Heart* more adequately expresses the comprehensive vision of Chevalier than the term 'Devotion to the Sacred Heart'. At the present time, Devotion to the Sacred Heart usually refers to carrying out certain devotional practices, while a Spirituality of the Heart is practiced by *a whole way of life*. The latter was Chevalier's intention.

In his description of a Spirituality of the Heart in different steps, Cuskelly presents the journey into our own hearts as the first step of a Spirituality of the Heart. He writes, "*We have to go down to the depths of our own soul in a realization of our profound personal needs of life, of love and of meaning*²⁸." By doing so, he actually proposes a starting point that completes the vision of Chevalier. Chevalier began his spiritual journey by looking at the Heart of Jesus, while trying to form his own heart in conformity with the Heart of Christ. Cuskelly, on the other hand, invites us to let our spiritual journey begin by making ourselves aware of the real condition of our hearts: our deepest desires and aspirations, as well as our inner wounds and doubts. And then, in awareness of who we really are, we turn to Jesus, who knows us personally and loves us as we are. Thanks to a personal relationship with Jesus, we will discover Jesus as the healer of our inner wounds, the one who relieves the hunger of our hearts, fulfills our deepest desires, and who shows us the way, when searching for meaning in life.

That also explains why Cuskelly does not use the term "*Spirituality of the Heart of Jesus*", but the expression "*Spirituality of the Heart*", in which "the Heart" refers both to the

Heart of Jesus, and to our own hearts. Actually, the term “Spirituality of the Heart” as understood by Cuskelly, indicates more clearly that for Chevalier the “conversion of heart” was an integral element of his charism. For people who want to live a Spirituality of the Heart, a conversion of the heart is not less necessary than it was for Chevalier. However, for most of us, such a conversion will not happen just in a moment, or in a short period of time, but through a longer lasting personal relationship with Jesus Christ as described in the Gospels, as well as a well-planned and executed continuous formation. Chevalier was aware of the importance of education and formation, and strongly emphasized it, both for the spiritual growth of his followers, and as a way of introducing other people into the Devotion to the Sacred Heart²⁹.

The same Spirit, who has formed the Heart of Jesus, is also at work in our hearts, in order to bring forth in it the qualities of Jesus’ Heart. The guidance of the Spirit is also actively present in sound formation of the heart, completed by honest self-reflection. The final purpose of such a formation of the heart is to develop, what Pope Benedict XVI calls, “a heart which sees”. It is “the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus”, he says. This heart, the Pope continues, sees where love is needed and acts accordingly, combining the spontaneity of individuals with planning, foresight and cooperation with others³⁰.

In several regions of the world, such as in the USA, Australia, England, Slovakia, Papua New-Guinea and also in Is-soudun, members of the Chevalier Family present a program called, in English, “Life’s Healing Journey” (LHJ). The purpose of the program is, as it is said on the website of the American LHJ edition, “to change hearts and lives” so

that people can have “*peace, love and joy*”. It is a spiritual journey, the website declares, based on belief in the Compassionate Love of God that empowers and teaches people how to forgive. This is just one example - and an excellent one - of how members of the Chevalier Family perform a “Mission of the Heart” in today’s society and in different cultures. ***

¹ Piperon, p. 130

² Piperon, p. 131.

³ Personal Notes, p. 12.

⁴ Personal Notes, p. 12

⁵ Yves Krumenacker, L'école Française de Spiritualité. Des mystiques, des fondateurs, des courants et leurs interprètes, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris 1998. For a different view on the influence of the so called “French School of Spirituality” upon Chevalier, see Murphy, *The Heart*, more specifically the paragraph on “Berullian Spirituality”, p. 52 – 57; and also p. 32; 51-52; 63-65; 92-94; 146-148.

⁶ Personal Notes, p. 2.

⁷ Vermin 1957, p. 9.

⁸ See Cuskelly, 1975 p. 288-289, and the testimony of Fr. Hériault in *Témoignages* 71. See also E.J. Cuskelly MSC, 1978, p. 95-97.

⁹ Cuskelly 1975, p. 121.

¹⁰ Vermin 1957, p. 74

¹¹ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 164. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 164

¹² Manuscrits SCJ, p. 92. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 92.

¹³ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 92. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 113.

¹⁴ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 116. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 116

¹⁵ Règles 1855, Œuvre Normative I, p.16f, 27 (DR December 22). See also Règles 1857, Œuvre Normative I, p. 206.

¹⁶ Règles 1855, Œuvre Normative I, p. 119. (DR January 8).

¹⁷ Règles 1857, Œuvre Normative I, p. 258.

¹⁸ Règles 1857, Œuvre Normative I, p. 300.

¹⁹ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch. IX, no. 1, Œuvre Normative II, p. 426.

²⁰ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch. II, 6, Œuvre Normative II, p. 394 (DR January 6).

²¹ MSC Constitutions 1877, Ch. III, 3, Œuvre Normative II, p.402

²² Règlement des Agrégés, 1864, Œuvre Normative II, p. 568

²³ Manuel des Prêtres Séculiers, 1892, Œuvre Normative II, p. 696

²⁴ SCJ, 1900, p. 87 – 123. .

²⁵ SCJ, 1900, p. 103.

²⁶ SCJ, 1900, p. 107.

²⁷ SCJ 1900, p. 77.

²⁸ Cuskelly, 1975, p.128.

²⁹ See Chapter 7, and Kwakman, 2011 (2).

³⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter “Deus Caritas Est” no 31b.

A SOCIAL MISSION

In a manuscript of 1856, Chevalier remembers how, while still at the Major Seminary of Bourges, he was reflecting *“on the disorders consuming society”*. He writes, *“I thought, or rather God inspired me with the thought, of founding a community of missionary priests who would work to put them right².”* This sentence certainly shows the self-confidence, characteristic of the young Chevalier, but also relates a fundamental aspect of his charism, namely the social dimension of his passion for the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, and of the social mission that his Society should perform. From the time of his renewed introduction to this Devotion, till the end of his life, Chevalier always lived and promoted this Devotion as a remedy for the ills of a wounded society.

The disheartening condition of contemporary French society was a constant worry for him. Chevalier shared the conviction of many of his contemporaries that in the aftermath of the French Revolution, European society had become critically ill, both religiously and socially, and was des-

perately in need of a strong remedy. However, where would he find such a medicine and how would he respond to these big challenges? Chevalier discovered the remedy in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But in what sense?

Egoism and Indifference

In his early years, with many others, he saw more specifically *egoism* and *indifference* as the deeper roots of the evils of his times. According to Jules' own notes, M. Pellisier, the professor at Bourges, introducing his students to a deeper understanding of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, told them that "*it is useful and salutary to honour the divine Heart in a special manner, particularly in these days of religious indifference*³."

At the time Jules studied at the Major Seminary of Bourges, it was already quite common to consider the Devotion to the Sacred Heart to be a remedy for the evils of society. In 1834, the bishop of Bourges, Mgr. de Villèle, wrote an Episcopal letter in which he referred to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as "*a powerful and salutary remedy to heal the evils of society, an antidote to the poison of false doctrines and immoral customs of the age*⁴." Jan Kaandorp MSC discovered that in 1837 a book was published entitled "*La foi, l'espérance et la charité, opposées à l'indifférence, à l'égoïsme, comme seul remède aux maux qui rongent la société*" (1837): faith, hope and charity, as opposed to indifference and egoism, are the sole remedies of the ills that are gnawing at society⁵.

In the "*Annals of the Little Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*", written after 1869, Chevalier tells us about the beginning of the Congregation of the Mis-

sionaries of the Sacred Heart: "The first two priests of that congregation (Father Maugenest and Father Chevalier) spent some years together in the Major Seminary of Bourges. They had a very special love for the Heart of Jesus. Our Lord had given them to understand that in the Devotion to His Divine Heart there would be found the remedy for the evils of society. In this way, they began to form a plan once they had become priests, to join together a number of people under the patronage of the Heart of Jesus and to consecrate themselves to his worship⁶."

Issoudun

In 1854, Chevalier and Maugenest met again as coworkers in the parish of St. Cyr in Issoudun. Later on, Chevalier reports how a month after his arrival in Issoudun, and before beginning the Novena in preparation of December 8, 1854, he had said to Maugenest: "Two evils are destroying our unhappy world – indifferentism and egoism; an effective remedy is needed and such remedy lies in the Sacred Heart of Jesus which is all love and charity. Besides, this adorable Heart which is so faithful to us, is not loved enough in return; the world is unaware of its treasures, and priests are needed to work at making it known; they will be called Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus⁷."

The choice of Issoudun was also inspired by their conviction that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart should become a cure for the socially and religiously deplorable condition of that town. Chevalier notes, "Issoudun, a central point of France, a well populated town, deprived for a long time of religious ministry, regarded as the most evil town of Berry, appeared to them the place for the cradle of this work of the

Sacred Heart. *"Where evil was great, grace was even greater"* (Rom 5:20)⁸."

The remedy

At a certain time in Issoudun, between 1857 and 1861, in a barn converted into a chapel, Chevalier gave four Advent Conferences entitled *"Egoism and Indifference"*, followed by 19 Lenten-conferences entitled *"Fighting Egoism and Indifference through charity and love of the Sacred Heart."* In these conferences, he describes an "egoist" as someone who is *"attached to the earth as to an anchor; someone who turns his eyes away from heaven and its richness, and fixes his eyes on perishable goods that absorb him totally and that make him forget that the only reason why he is placed in this world is to save his soul"*⁹. "Indifferent" are those people who, in theory, accept the teachings of the Church about God and Jesus, but who, in practice, don't care about their eternal salvation. They just want to enjoy life now, and whatever will happen in the afterlife, they say, they will see later¹⁰. Rhetorically, Chevalier exclaims: *"Where to find the remedy against such great evils? In the Heart of Jesus who is only Charity, who is totally love. Therefore, against egoism I put forward his boundless Charity; against indifference his infinite Love"*¹¹."

Several evils of Chevalier's times

The Rules of 1857 indicate as one of the aims of the MSC Congregation *"to combat egoism and indifference that are an outrage against the Sacred Heart"*¹²." In later years, Chevalier published documents, either in preparation of the offi-

cial Constitutions of his Society, or in order to invite secular priests and lay people to join the Society as priest-associates or lay members of a Third Order. All these documents begin with a description of the evils of the time and describe the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as “*the star that shines during the night*” of religious darkness, and as “*the rainbow which appears to reassure us in the midst of social storms*”¹³.

A concept of the General Rules for lay members of the so called “Third Order”, written in 1865, put the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the context of the social challenges which at that time, lay people had to face in France¹⁴. A first edition of a Manual, entitled “*The Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*”, written in 1872, gives an ample description of what Chevalier sees as “the ills of our time” or “the evils of modern society”. He writes “the ills of our time could not be more serious; they are worsening day by day; we cannot probe deeply into them without being shocked.” He describes Protestantism, Jansenism¹⁵, and Rationalism as the origin of these ills; later on he adds Liberalism¹⁶.

Cuskelly notes that, “in our ecumenical days, we would find it hard to classify Protestantism as one of the “ills of the modern world”” Not unlike most of the priests of his time, Chevalier was not quite well informed about the facts of Church history, and did not have an accurate understanding of the background of the Reformation and its causes; while concerning the term ‘Liberalism’, at the time of Chevalier, this term did not refer to a political party, but to a spiritual climate that had also become popular among some intellectuals in the Catholic Church¹⁸. For example, the Catholic liberals placed emphasis on freedom of the human person, freedom of conscience and of religion – values that since the Second Vatican Council are generally accepted by the Catho-

lic Church as genuine human rights. However, in Chevalier's days, the hierarchy of the Church classified Catholic liberalism as a threat that could harm the unity of the Church.

All rooted in the human heart

Chevalier totally agreed with the opinion of the hierarchy, and blamed the people who promoted these systems, for disobeying the Pope, and tearing apart the unity of the Church and Europe. However, the root causes of these systems, he found in the human heart, afflicted by disobedience to the teachings of the Catholic Church, indifference towards religious practices, and ignorance of the revealed truth¹⁹.

The MSC Constitutions of 1877 do not only provide rules but also present a summary of Chevalier's concerns and intentions. This document begins by stating that, "*the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus ... is an efficient remedy for curing the ills of a world growing cold by indifference and consumed by a dreadful corruption*²⁰," and continues by giving a vivid description of the evils of the time. The remedy is again found in "*the protection and imitation of the humble and loving Heart*", in which we find "*a powerful dam to stop the two streams of sensualism and pride*²¹." The same Constitutions state that the MSC should root out from their hearts the spirit of Jansenism – "*a spirit of fear and severity*²²," and combat liberalism in the Catholic Church²³.

A cry for unity

Also in his book "*Le Sacré Coeur de Jésus*" of 1900, Chevalier emphasizes the social dimension of the Devotion to

the Sacred Heart, by writing: "The remedy in which gentleness mingles with effectiveness... contains the quintessence of all that can quickly bring back to social life, nations that no longer have it. The remedy is Devotion to the Sacred Heart²⁴." This book includes a chapter entitled, "The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Remedy of the Evils of Society²⁵" which gives an example of how Chevalier thinks to cure "the ills of society". In this chapter, he speaks about Catholic liberalism as the root of all contemporary evils. He reproaches the Catholic liberals for being arrogant, slavish to the State, and moved by a spirit of division. In opposition to these vices of the heart, he puts the virtues of the Sacred Heart: humility, obedience, firmness and a commitment to unity²⁶.

The Catholic liberals, he states, have separated themselves from their centre, which is God. Through his Incarnation, Jesus, the Sacred Heart, "unites them again with their centre²⁷." Jesus achieves this through the Church, the Sacraments, and above all through the Eucharist, which "joins people together in unity²⁸" and "solders and fuses us together with the Word Incarnate itself²⁹." These words are followed by a "cri de coeur", a heartfelt cry, presented as a "testament of love" from the Heart of Jesus, but not less emerging from his own heart: "Do you hear the cry that comes to us across eighteen centuries? It is his testament of love: "I want all to be one in love, united in heart and soul, while forming one and the same family... From where comes this cry and this program of love? From the Heart of Jesus. He calls for unity. To break unity is to wound him cruelly.³⁰"

A political dimension

Jansenism and Catholic liberalism were movements within the Church, which, according to Chevalier, eroded the unity of the Church from *within*, not unlike Protestantism had done before. However, the most notorious enemy that attacked the Church from *outside* was clearly for him the Freemasonry. Chevalier often came into collision with the Freemasons who were at times strongly represented in the national government of France as well as in the local government of Issoudun. Freemasonry was from its origin, a philanthropic association promoting the unity of the human family through freedom of religion, tolerance and charity. Forbidden by the Church, because of its 'liberal' principles, Freemasonry turned into an anti-clerical and anti-Church movement, more particularly in traditionally Catholic countries such as France.

Already from the time of Margaret Mary Alacoque, the devotion to the Sacred Heart had obtained a political dimension, when she wrote about having received from the Sacred Heart the mission to send a message to the King of France, to consecrate himself and his court to the Sacred Heart, and to engrave the Sacred Heart emblem on his standard and arms. In return for this consecration, he was promised victory over his enemies³¹. It is uncertain if King Louis XIV ever received this message, but afterwards it became common practice of several cities and dioceses in France and elsewhere to consecrate its population to the Sacred Heart, as a forceful prayer for protection against epidemic disasters and the attacks of enemies. Standing in this tradition, Chevalier and his confreres collected three million signatures in support of a request made to Pope Pius IX to

consecrate the whole human family to the Sacred Heart,— a request finally followed up by Pope Leo XIII³².

Chevalier's attempts over many years to found an association called « *les Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur* » or "Knights of the Sacred Heart" should also be seen as a political application of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart³³. This association was actually a brainchild of Pope Pius IX, who invented the name. This Pope foresaw that the Church would be attacked by many enemies, including the Freemasons. While remembering the promises of the Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary, he was convinced that the Sacred Heart would protect the Church against all enemies, and provide a remedy for the ills of contemporary society. Therefore, he wanted to establish a unit of lay-men, which, under the standard of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, would be prepared to defend the Church. At first, a French general had offered himself to the Pope to lead this papal association. However, due to the fact that the general was occupied in defending the Papal States against military attacks, the project never got off the ground.

Receiving Chevalier in 1860 in a private audience, the Pope remembered the project, and while making an allusion to Chevalier's family name, he said: "*How much do we today need the "Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur", who would battle against all evil, by defending the rights of the Church, of families and society - rights unrecognized and trampled underfoot.*" For Chevalier, these words became a sudden inspiration, and immediately he began to carry out this plan. It was his strong conviction that such a militant association was exactly what the Church needed. It should consist of Catholic men of irreproachable reputation, from all levels of society, more especially of the nobility or occupying an

important position, who, married or not, practiced their religion faithfully, and who, in the midst of society, were willing to dedicate their lives to defend the rights of Jesus Christ, the Church and Christian families, “even by using arms³⁴”, and if necessary, by “shedding their blood³⁵.” By placing themselves under the standard of the Sacred Heart, they would be sure of the victory, particularly over the Freemasons, whose main purpose was to destroy the Church. Not unlike the French Royalists in their battles against the Republicans, they also were to use the symbol of the Sacred Heart as a badge on their uniforms. For many years, from 1860 until 1887, Chevalier tried to obtain the support of the Pope, bishops and influential lay people in the Church for such an association, but finally Pope Leo XIII declared the plan as being not opportune.

A last effort of love

Finally, in a commentary on the Book of the Apocalypse, of which a third enlarged edition was published in 1907, a couple of months before his death, Chevalier paints an extremely pessimistic view of the contemporary world. Humankind, he assumed, is in a terminal state of illness, and its last days are numbered. Even so, Chevalier remained convinced that a cure is still possible, when people turn to the Sacred Heart - and again he quoted Jesus' words to Margaret Mary Alacoque: “See here the Heart that has loved humankind so much... It contains all grace necessary to draw it back from the abyss of perdition towards which it is hurrying... It is a last effort of my love, the last hope that I offer...³⁶.”

The fact that till the end of his life Chevalier remained deeply concerned about the ills and evils of society, which

he discovered in different forms, shows that for him the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was never an escape-route from the hardships of real life. On the contrary, precisely the suffering and struggles of society made him place his hope in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, while it was this same Heart that brought him back to society, in order to participate in Jesus' mission, "*by all means available*³⁷", including political means, if necessary.

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (5)

Chevalier's concern for humanity and his preoccupation with the "mal moderne" remain an integral element of his charism. It was not the devotion as such which he considered to be a remedy. This Devotion was a way to encounter Jesus, to imitate his virtues and to participate in his mission. He considered Jesus to be even more concerned about the illnesses of society than we could be. Therefore, the only way to perform our social mission is by engaging ourselves in Jesus' mission. Jesus himself, the Lord of history, is sent by the Father to bring healing to a deeply wounded world, and we are called to take part in his mission. "*Then when the time is right, God will do all that he has planned, and Christ will bring together everything in heaven and on earth*³⁸" (Eph 1:10).

Chevalier's Constitutions of 1877 were thoroughly revised by the MSC General Chapter of 1905 and the Constitutions of 1907. The practice and spreading of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart was mentioned as an end and a work of the Congregation. However, nothing was said concerning its social relevance. Consequently, during the following years, until after the Second Vatican Council, a central element of

Chevalier's charism disappeared from the MSC charism, resulting in creating uncertainty about the identity of the MSC Congregation. In an assessment of the MSC Constitutions of 1907, Dennis Murphy states: "The most obvious break with tradition is the failure to mention the *"evils of the time"*. The Founder has constantly seen Devotion to the Sacred Heart as a response to the evils of the time, that is, as a means for transforming society. It would seem to me that in neglecting this point, the 1907 Constitutions were failing to present one of the essential aspects of our charism³⁹."

Fortunately, the MSC Constitutions of 1985 have returned to Chevalier's original charism. Both his great love for the Heart of Jesus and the reason for the existence of the Congregation are again placed in their original historical and social context: "*Father Jules Chevalier was deeply moved by the evils that afflicted the people of his time. As he contemplated the Heart of Christ, in whom is revealed the compassionate love of the Father, he discovered there the remedy for the ills of the world. Inspired by that love, and guided by the Holy Spirit, he founded ... the Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*" (no. 3). Also the present Constitutions of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the MSC Sisters go back to Chevalier's original charism. For example, the chapter about Mission of the Constitutions of the MSC sisters, states explicitly: our Mission "*demands that we be aware of the evils of our times (J.Chevalier) and seek to identify their causes*" (no. 8)⁴⁰.

As members of the Chevalier Family, we all have "a social mission". That means that a Spirituality of the Heart should be lived and promoted in a way relevant to the changing ills of our times. A Spirituality of the Heart may become a spiritual force in support of people committed to the renewal of

society. The current involvement of members of the Chevalier Family in issues of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, by social and political action, as well as publications and formation programs, are excellent examples of practicing a Spirituality of the Heart in accordance with Chevalier's charism, who considered dedication to the restoration of society to be an integral part of a Devotion to the Sacred Heart. For the Chevalier Family, Spirituality of the Heart and involvement in a social mission are inseparable.

Members of the Chevalier Family believe in the power of love, as Chevalier did. Cuskelly showed himself to be faithful to the Gospel and Chevalier's charism, when writing about spirituality, he said, "*ours needs to be a 'consistent vision of love', which 'sees everything that God does in and through Jesus as totally motivated by love'*⁴¹." While applying this vision to the field of social justice, he quotes John Paul II, who wrote: "*Justice alone is not enough... it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions*⁴²." Without love, Cuskelly adds, there can be no true human justice⁴³. Chevalier would totally agree. ***

¹ Personal Notes, p. 106.

² Personal Notes, p. 106, with Bertolini's introduction on pg. 101-103.

³ Manuscrits SCJ, La thèse de M. Pellisier, p. 15 ; Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 15.

⁴ Quoted by Vermin 1957, p. 77.

⁵ C.M. Le Guillou, 1837. See Kaandorp, 2008, (1)

⁶ Annals of the Little Society, p.1.

⁷ Personal Notes, Appendix, p. 107.

⁸ Annals of the Little Society, p. 1. See Kaandorp, 2008 (2). Later

on, in his Personal Notes p 17, Chevalier remembered how in 1853 at Aubigny-sur-Nère, after the death of the parish priest, he “*was still thinking of the plan, conceived as a seminarian.*” He writes: “Because of its spiritual deprivation and consequent lack of piety, Issoudun, a town of 15.000 inhabitants, with only one parish and three priests, has always seemed to me the necessary choice as birthplace of any eventual foundation of Missionaries.” Fr. Jean Bertolini MSC adds a footnote stating that in fact the official census of 1856 gave the population of Issoudun as 13.320 (Personal Notes, p. 57).

⁹ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 77. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 77

¹⁰ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 77. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 77

¹¹ Manuscrits SCJ, p. 74; 79. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC, p. 74 ; 79.

¹² Règles 1857, Œuvre Normative I, p. 140.

¹³ Plan de la Société, 1864, Œuvre Normative II, p. 464.

¹⁴ Tiers Ordre, 1865, Œuvre Normative II, p. 580. .

¹⁵ For Chevalier’s opinion about Protestantism and Jansenism, see Kaandorp , 2008 (1).

¹⁶ For an extensive explanation of “Liberalism” at the time of Chevalier, see Kaandorp, 2009

¹⁷ Cuskelly 1975, p. 114

¹⁸ See Kaandorp 2009.

¹⁹ La Société, 1872, Œuvre Normative II, p. 7f, also in : Manuel des Prêtres Séculiers, Œuvre Normative II, p. 636 (DR February 18).

²⁰ MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. II, n. 1. Œuvre Normative II, p. 392

²¹ MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. II, n. 2. Œuvre Normative II, p. 392

²² MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. III, n.3, Œuvre Normative II, p 402 (DR January 17).

²³ MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. IV, n.7. Œuvre Normative II, p 406.

²⁴ SCJ, 1900, p. 280, see also p. 225.

²⁵ SCJ, 1900, Livre III, Chapitre III.

²⁶ SCJ, 1900, p. 238-242.

²⁷ SCJ, 1900, p. 241

²⁸ SCJ, 1900, p. 241

²⁹ SCJ, 1900, p. 241

³⁰ SCJ, 1900, p. 241 (DR July 31).

³¹ See Mgr J-J Languet, La Vie de la Vénérable Mère Marguerite-Marie, Nouvelle édition, Paris 1890, p. 576-578.

³² SCJ 1900, p. 245ff.

³³ See “Projet des Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur” of 1884 (Ses Ecrits, B 18841122), where he describes this association as a counter-movement against the Freemasons, with its own “Grand-Maitre” or

“Grand Master”. See also « Pieuse Union des Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur » (Ses Ecrits, B 18841130), and his letter of 1876 “A monsieur N. de l’association des Croisés du Sacré-Cœur.” (Ses Ecrits, B 18760608) in which he uses the word “milice” (=“militia”). See also letters to Victor Jouët msc, in Rome, of 1884 (Ses Ecrits, L 18841113), 1887 (Ses Ecrits, L 18870409a) and to Jean Vaudon msc, in Toulouse of 1887 (Ses Ecrits, L 18870520).

³⁴ In a letter of 1876: “Au Général de Charrette”, (Ses Ecrits, B 18760826) in which Chevalier invited the General to visit Issoudun during a pilgrimage, in order to discuss the formation of this association.

³⁵ “Projet de la Chevalerie du Sacré-Cœur” of 1884 (Ses Ecrits, B 18841130) includes the document « Pieuse Union des Chevaliers du Sacré-Cœur », which uses the words “jusqu’à l’effusion de mon sang, si c’est nécessaire ».

³⁶ L’Apocalypse, 1907. p. 105 : « une dernière planche de salut ».

³⁷ MSC Constitutions 1877, ch. 1, n.4. Œuvre Normative II, p. 358

³⁸ See also Mayor, 2002, p. 99

³⁹ Murphy, The Purpose, p.15. For the reasons why changes in the MSC Constitutions of 1907 were considered to be necessary, see Murphy, Eclipse.

⁴⁰ See also MSC Constitutions edition 2000, n. 21; FDNSC Constitutions 1983, n.1; 3; 4; 80.

⁴¹ Cuskelly, 1999, p. 17. Even if not explicitly mentioned, this little book is clearly inspired by a Spirituality of the Heart.

⁴² John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, n. 12.

⁴³ Cuskelly, 1999, p. 26.

A SHARED MISSION

The MSC Congregation, founded in 1854, did not develop as expected during its first years. After 10 years, the congregation numbered only 5 members. This fact makes some people assume that it was only because of the slow growth of the Congregation that Chevalier began to think of forming associations of diocesan priests and lay people¹.

“Affiliation or Third Order”

However, already in a first draft of the Rules of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, written in 1855, Chevalier included a paragraph entitled “*Affiliation or Third Order.*” In that paragraph, he formulated some basic requirements for diocesan priests, who would like to join the “*Association of Diocesan Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*”, while he did not yet elaborate the role of the lay people. However, by using the term “Third Order”, he certainly thought of lay people too. He himself had been a member of the Third Or-

der of the Dominicans, so he was certainly familiar with the original meaning of the term "Third Order" as a society "of men and women, both lay and clerical, who live according to the charism of the religious order on which their rule is based, but who do not leave their secular state of life²."

In 1862, Chevalier started an animated correspondence with some Jesuits in Paris. At that time, he was in search of a structure for the Society that would include both the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart as a core group, and "associates", consisting of diocesan priests and lay people who want to live from the same charism and spirituality. The Jesuits supported Chevalier's plans, because they saw them as a new form of a religious institute, responding to the needs of contemporary Church and society. Finally, they could only help Chevalier with a general sketch of Constitutions, leaving it to the Founder of this new institute to work out the details.

Three branches

Chevalier took up the challenge, and in 1864, came up with his "*Plan of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*", in which he stated: "*In order to fulfill its mission the Society must spread as much as possible, but it will spread only so far as it answers the various aspirations of the people*³." In this Society, as he envisaged it, there should be a place for a variety of people. Firstly, "the religious", consisting of priests and brothers, with vows of poverty, obedience and chastity; these "religious" were named "Missionaries of the Sacred Heart"⁴ and lived either together in religious communities or by themselves, usually in a presbytery. Secondly, diocesan priests, who wanted to practice the vir-

tues of poverty, obedience and chastity, while only binding themselves by promises, and remaining in their parishes under the authority of their bishops; they were called “associates” of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thirdly, lay-people, men and women, who belonged to the *Third Order* of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and who lived either in small groups or by themselves, in secular society; they were called “the Tertiaries” of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and took part in the charism and spirituality of the Society.

A shared mission

When speaking about ‘a shared mission’, we certainly think first of the close collaboration between the religious men and women in the Chevalier Family. Chevalier described how from the beginning of their mission work abroad, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, founded by Chevalier in 1874, worked together⁵. Also the first Statutes of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded in 1900 by Fr. Hubert Linckens MSC, with the spiritual support of Fr. Chevalier, emphasized that the MSC Sisters will involve themselves in Mission work, more specifically in those countries where the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart are performing their work of evangelization⁶.

Many founders before and after him founded congregations both for men and for women. However, it belongs to Chevalier’s charism that he wanted the special Mission he had received, to be carried out not only with religious men and women, but also with Diocesan Priests and lay people, as many as possible. Therefore, he wrote several documents for the Priest-Associates and the members of the Third Or-

der. Besides the *“Plan of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart”*, already mentioned, he also published the *“Rules of the Association of Priests”*, *“a General Concept of the Third Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus”*⁸, and a *“Manual for Diocesan Priests”*⁹. All these documents opened with a description of the ills of the time, and of its remedy that could be found in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This fact clearly shows Chevalier’s intention that each of the three *“branches”*¹⁰ should share the same mission, that is, living the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in such a way that its presence and activities would be socially relevant.

Mission of the Laity

Chevalier invested much time and energy in inviting diocesan priests, both individuals and already existing groups, to join the Society he had in mind. Nevertheless, for reasons that might be clear, in the following paragraphs, I focus more specifically on Chevalier’s attempts to share his vision and mission with lay people, and to found a Third Order. The aim and nature of this *“Third Order”*, he envisaged as follows: *“The sort of life to which members of the Third Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus devote themselves is this: to remain in their families, to carry out the duties of their state of life, to retain freedom of activity in the world, and nevertheless, to aim at perfection, to put no limit on their devotion to Our Lord, and to carry out in society an apostolate which is all the more useful in that it does not give rise to mistrust”*¹¹.

“Aiming at perfection” means in Chevalier’s spirituality, imitating the virtues of the Heart of Jesus, such as *“love, gentleness, compassion, patience, mercy; ... courage, strength, constancy and generosity”*¹². Therefore, he reminded the

members, especially those with leadership functions, that *“the Third Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is an Association based on humility and bound together by love. It keeps as far from itself as possible any suggestions of haughty command or ambitious intrigue. There is no place in it for inequality of rank¹³.”*

Remarkable also is Chevalier's addition that the apostolate of the laity would be *“all the more useful in that it does not give rise to mistrust.”* Anti-clericalism was widespread in France at that time. Priests and religious, wearing their cassocks or religious habits, were not allowed to appear in certain places, while the laity could mix with the crowds in an unobtrusive way and be present everywhere. Consequently, Chevalier strongly recommended that the members of the Third Order should remain in their families, keep their regular positions in secular society, and not wear a uniform¹⁴. Moreover, he said, if those who were single would like to form communities, they should avoid *“anything that gives the appearance of a religious house ..., as being against our aim and harmful to the sort of good that this work is called to do¹⁵.”* Concerning common spiritual exercises, they should preferably do, what in this regard normally is done in Catholic families¹⁶.

Integral parts

On March 8, 1869, the Vatican approved the *“Formula Instituti”¹⁷*, and officially acknowledged the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart as a pontifical, religious congregation, including the integration of the Association of the Diocesan Priests and the Third Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus into the Society. When in 1877, the first MSC Constitutions were

approved for a period of 10 years, the two associations were also formally accepted by the Vatican as *integral parts* of the Society.

Particularly relevant to our subject is the fact that in these two fundamental documents, the "Formula Instituti" and the MSC Constitutions of 1877, the Association of the Laity¹⁸ is included in the opening chapters, entitled: "Concerning the opportunity of the Society¹⁹," and "The Aim of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart²⁰." That means that Chevalier - I use the words of Dennis Murphy - "wanted to incorporate laity into the specific life and mission of the Society²¹." Murphy continues by saying that Chevalier considered the Third Order "not so much a work of the Society as an extension of it into the laity²²." He wanted the laity to carry out the core mission of the Society, by practicing "Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the comprehensive way our Founder understood that word, and in this way actively counteract the evils of society and help transform it²³." In other words, Chevalier wanted the religious members of the Chevalier Family not only to work for the laity, but also together with the laity, to share the same Mission in the midst of secular society.

Apprehension

Preceding the process of approbation of the "Formula Instituti" of 1869, first by the Archbishop of Bourges and afterwards by the Vatican, there existed some apprehension among the MSC, whether the Archbishop and the Vatican would approve the integration of the Association of Diocesan Priests, and the Third Order into the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. Rumours went around

that the Vatican was not in favour of such a construction. Interesting is the comment made by Fr. Ramière SJ, a friend and often a supporter of Chevalier's work, in a letter of August 19, 1868 to members of the Third Order of the Sacred Heart in Montluçon: *"The few words Fr. Chevalier has written on the subject, make me believe that the examiners (who examined the text prepared by Chevalier for approbation, HK), tend to make of the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart a work similar to one hundred and one other associations of Missionaries established in several dioceses. They dismiss the plan of the Third Order as too complicated; the association of priests as prone to evoke difficulties with the Bishops. If they take away from the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart the only two great means of action which make this Society different from other Societies established until now, what will still remain of its distinctive character?"*²⁴

Apparently, Fr. Ramière grasped the intentions of Fr. Chevalier very well. He understood that Chevalier tried to establish a new kind of Society, in which religious, diocesan priests and lay people would share in the same mission, guided by the same spirituality and the same objectives. As far as religious Congregations were concerned, this was a project unique in those days. Had the Archbishop or the Vatican not approved such integration, the Society of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, as designed by Chevalier, would have lost its characteristic identity.

Not well understood

Unfortunately, Chevalier's own confreres did not always understand the importance of the Third-Order for the Mis-

sion of the whole Society. Chevalier wrote: *"My confreres did not always follow me in this engagement and collaboration of the laity in our works. They did not understand the importance of the Third Order²⁵."* In a letter of 1900 to the Superior of the Province of the North, who had complained about a certain confrere who did not support the Third Order in the Netherlands, Chevalier expressed his amazement by writing: *"I wish that in our provinces and in our houses, everyone supports the Third-Order of the Sacred Heart... It would be more than strange that Missionaries of the Sacred Heart would refuse their collaboration and dedication to our works of the Sacred Heart²⁶."*

In January 1878, Fr. Chevalier had written: *"Today, (the Third Order) numbers about three hundred members spread through ... France, and also in Italy, in Belgium, England, Austria and Canada: every day new people join up²⁷."* Later, in 1904, Fr. Lanctin MSC, the new General Superior, could report to the Vatican that the Third Order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus numbered *"nearly two thousand members spread throughout most of the Catholic countries of Europe²⁸."*

However, the MSC General Chapters of 1905 and 1907, when rewriting the Constitutions of 1877²⁹, also apparently did not understand the importance of Chevalier's vision concerning the Third Order. These new Constitutions gave the impression that the MSC Society, founded by Chevalier, only consisted of religious priests and brothers. By doing so, the initial intentions of Chevalier were changed, and his specific contribution to the life of the Church, disregarded. Consequently, for many years afterwards, the possibility that laity could become fellow members sharing the same mission and practicing the same spirituality was not taken into consideration any more. The idea of a shared Mission

of the Chevalier Family, as envisaged by Chevalier, was lost. This not only changed the specific character of the Mission of the MSC Society, but also weakened the sense of identity among the MSC themselves.

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (6)

The MSC Constitutions and Statutes of 2000 returned to the original inspiration of Chevalier, by declaring: “Our Founder wanted the fullness of mission to be realized in a global project with religious men and women, diocesan priests and lay people. He especially wished to have an association of lay people closely united with the professed members in their spirituality and mission (Constitutions of 1877)³⁰.” This article of the Statutes announces the rebirth of the Chevalier Family. However, the MSC Constitutions and Statutes continue, while using the term “Association of Lay MSC”³¹, which does not exactly express Chevalier’s original intention. In the Society, he had in mind, the lay-members would not be associated to one of the three Congregations related to Chevalier, either the MSC men, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart or the MSC Sisters, but would form another branch, united with the professed members of the three Congregations “in their spirituality and mission”.

Chevalier wanted the Mission of his Society to be a participation in Christ’s universal Mission, carried out everywhere; not only everywhere in the world, geographically, but also everywhere in society, sociologically. That would be impossible without the participation of groups of laity, specially equipped to perform such a Mission in their family lives and in their social as well as professional environment. Dennis Murphy states, that in order to carry out Christ’s mission

everywhere, the role of the laity was for Chevalier at least equally as essential as the role of the religious members of his Society, “and at times even more essential”³². Moreover, close collaboration in spreading a spirituality and performing a mission, by priests, religious and lay people together, might become an effective remedy for clericalism and a powerful testimony to the coming of God’s Kingdom. ***

¹ For this present chapter, I am much indebted to Dennis Murphy MSC, see Murphy, Laity. See also Cuskelly, 1975, ch. VI “A Spirit Shared”.

² Keith Barron OCS, Third Orders, in: The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality, editor: Michael Downey, The Liturgical Press, 1993, p. 960.

³ Plan de la Société, 1864, Œuvre Normative II, p. 474

⁴ This plan was written in 1864. Chevalier was already thinking about founding a Congregation for women, but was not yet able to realize his plans.

⁵ Histoire, 1899, p. 358. p. 359-363.

⁶ First Statutes of the MSC Sisters, 1900, quoted by Frings, 2000, p. 57-58.

⁷ Règlement des Agrégés, 1864. Œuvre Normative II, p. 542-572. For the date see Œuvre Normative I, Introduction, p. 102ff.

⁸ Tiers Ordre, 1865. Œuvre Normative II p. 578-616 While writing this document, in collaboration with Fr. Ramière SJ (1821-1884), Fr. Chevalier had in mind the lay-order of women founded in Montluçon by Blessed Louise Therese de Montaignac. At the advice of Fr. Ramière, this group of lay-women had joined the Third Order of Issoudun, with Fr. Guyot msc as director. Other writings of Chevalier make it clear that the Third Order was open for men and women.

⁹ Manuel des Prêtres Séculars, 1892. Œuvre Normative II, p. 626 -728

¹⁰ Here, Chevalier does not yet use the term “branches”. In a Document of 1872 entitled “La Société des Missionnaires du Sacré Coeur”, he calls the Diocesan Priests of the Sacred Heart, living in secular

society, “a second branch” (Œuvre Normative II, p. 522), while the Third Order is mentioned under the paragraph entitled “the works that each member should propagate.” (Œuvre Normative II, p. 530-532). Later, in “Le Sacré Cœur de Jésus” of 1900, p. 398, Chevalier speaks about the “Third Order” as “the third branch” of Religious Orders in general. He is aware of the fact that for his own Society, the term “Third Order” is not used in the proper sense, because a Religious Congregation is not an “Order” in the strict sense.

¹¹ Tiers Ordre, 1865, Ch. I, Article II, no. 1, Œuvre Normative, p. 582 (transl. by Dennis Murphy MSC).

¹² SCJ, 1900, p. 182. (DR July 10).

¹³ Tiers Ordre, 1865. Ch. II. Article II, § 1. Œuvre Normative II, p. 590 (Translation by Dennis Murphy MSC).

¹⁴ More specifically concerning the leadership of the Third Order, Chevalier stipulated that the General Superior of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart had to be the General Director of the Third Order; but he could also choose one of his confreres to become General Director. In each diocese there had to be a diocesan Director and when required, also local Directors. These directors were not members but moderators, cooperating with its leadership team. The leadership of the Third Order consisted of a Superior General with her Council, and eventually of Diocesan and Local Superiors. The Superiors should perform their tasks not as “commanders” but as “animators”, Chevalier stipulates. Their main responsibility would be to guarantee the unity of direction of all the communities and members of the Third Order. (Tiers Ordre, 1865. Ch. II about the Organisation of the Third Order. Œuvre Normative, p. 586ff).

¹⁵ Tiers Ordre, 1865. Œuvre Normative II, p. 584 (Translation by Dennis Murphy MSC).

¹⁶ Tiers Ordre, 1865. Œuvre Normative II, p. 584.

¹⁷ « Formula Instituti » is a first proof of religious Constitutions, required by the Vatican in the process of acquiring an official approval of a Religious Institute.

¹⁸ In these Documents, Fr. Chevalier did not use the terms « Third Order » or « third branch ». In preparation of the General Chapter of 1891, Chevalier prepared an enlarged edition of the Constitutions of 1877, to be used “ad experimentum”, in which the name “Third Order” appears as one of the possible names (Ch. II, n. 11). However, the Chapter decided to keep the Constitutions of 1877. (See Oeuvre Normative, I, Introduction, p. 122 and Cuskelly, 1975, p. 186).

¹⁹ Formula Instituti, 1869. Œuvre Normative II, p. 344.

²⁰ MSC Constitutions of 1877, ch. II, n. 8 and 9, see also Art. 3, n. 2. Œuvre Normative II, p. 394 and 400.

²¹ Murphy, Laity, p.26.

²² Murphy, Laity, p. 26.

²³ Murphy, Laity, p. 26-27.

²⁴ Vermin, 1975, p. 351. Fr. Ramière uses the words « les deux grands moyens d'action » : the two great means of action, and “que lui restera-t-il en propre?”: what will still remain of its distinctive character?

²⁵ « Je n'ai pas toujours été suivi par mes confrères dans cet engagement et cette coopération des laïcs à nos œuvres. Ils ne comprenaient pas l'importance du Tiers-Ordre » (Source unknown).

²⁶ Note of Fr. Chevalier attached to a letter to Fr. Offermans MSC, Superior of the Province of the Nord, February 21, 1900 (Ses Ecrits, L 19000221)

²⁷ Quoted by Cuskelly 1975, p. 157.

²⁸ In 1901, the Vatican issued new official norms that did not allow Religious Congregations to use the names “Second” or a “Third Order”. The MSC were obliged to change the name in “Sodalitium Cultorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu” – “Sodality of the Devotees of the Sacred Heart”. (See: Cuskelly 1975, p. 158).

²⁹ See Murphy, Eclipse.

³⁰ Constitutions and Statutes of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart 1985, edition 2000, n. 61.

³¹ No. 61 of the same Constitutions (edition 2000) continues by stipulating, “For this reason the Provincial Superior will promote this Association of Lay MSC. He will also encourage the members of the Province to collaborate in this work. He will appoint a coordinator to help in the development of this Association in relation to us, while respecting its lay character.”

³² Murphy, Laity, p. 21.

CHAPTER 7

MISSION EVERYWHERE

During his years at the Seminary in Bourges, Jules showed a keen interest in the missions and felt a strong longing to become a missionary. In his Personal Notes, he reports: *“Reading the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith awakened in me the desire for the missions. I felt drawn to make any sacrifice to carry the light of the Gospel to pagans¹.”* In October 1848, he spoke about it with his Superior, who was also his Spiritual Director. The good man opposed the idea, insisting on the diocesan need of priests. Chevalier concludes this episode by writing: *“I yielded to his decision, setting aside my plan until Providence gave me an opening”*.

Actually, the seed of this desire had already been implanted in his soul when as still a boy at elementary school he attended a parish-mission, preached by a Vincentian Father. Chevalier notes, *“I was particularly struck by one of his sermons. As I listened I felt deep within me: ‘What a beautiful vocation is that of a missionary. I’d be so happy if God gave me this grace one day².’”* However, as Dennis Murphy notes, it is

not clear whether Jules was attracted to the kind of missionary work done by the "Congregation of the Missions" (CM) surnamed the "Vincentians", who were very much involved in parish-missions in France, or whether he felt attracted to the foreign missions among unbelievers. "The word 'missionary' at the time could apply to either³," writes Murphy.

"Missionary' in a double sense.

This double meaning of the word 'missionary' played a role during the beginning years of the MSC congregation. The anonymous benefactor, who on December 8, 1854 promised to make available the donation of 20.000 francs for a good work in Issoudun - *"preferably a house of missionaries"*, as Chevalier reports - understood the word 'missionaries' as related to missions in the region of Berry in France⁴. Later on, this benefactor turned out to be the Sulpician Fr. Ferdinand de Champgrand. In a letter of April 20, 1856 to his friend and confrere Fr. Pierre Gasnier, he speaks about: *"the necessity of a community of missionaries to evangelize above all the poor country people, who in much of our region of Berry are quite ignorant in matters of religion⁵."* Also Fr. Crozat, the parish priest of Issoudun, at the time Chevalier and Maugenest became his assistant parish-priests, totally agreed to the establishment of *"a house of missionaries"* in Issoudun. However, as it later became clear, he was actually thinking about founding a second parish in Issoudun that could be entrusted to the ministry of this *"house of missionaries⁶."*

The double meaning of the title "missionary" also appears in the "Contract," which Chevalier and Maugenest in February 1855 concluded with the Virgin Mary. The meaning

of the word ‘missionaries’ with a local outreach, is used in the first paragraph that reads: “*The priests commissioned to continue the work of St. Ursin, first apostle of Berry, will take the name ‘Missionaries of the Sacred Heart’.*” The broader meaning turns up in the second article that says: “*They will dedicate themselves with a very special love to the adorable Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and will devote all their energies to making these two hearts everywhere loved⁷.*”

Missionaries: Apostles of the Sacred Heart

For Chevalier, the term ‘missionary’ was identical with the word ‘apostle’⁹. His followers were called ‘missionaries’ because of being sent by Jesus Christ, and wherever they would work as missionaries, in their own country or in foreign missions, they should be apostles of the Sacred Heart⁹. Both mission work in France, and if possible in the future, mission abroad, were part of Chevalier’s dream to spread the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, everywhere.

The first “*Rules of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*”, both the provisional edition of 1855 and the improved edition of 1857, include special instructions for the missionaries engaged in ‘parish-missions’. The edition of 1855 is even completed with an appendix, entitled “*Rules of Priests of the Sacred Heart during their missions*”¹⁰.” In composing these ‘Rules’, Chevalier certainly used directories of other congregations, also involved in parish-missions in France. Therefore, it is interesting to read his personal additions that instruct the missionaries to perform these missions in accordance with the charism and spirituality of the MSC. For example, he emphasized that the missionary, both in

sermons and in the confessional, should speak much about the treasures of mercy, enclosed in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; and visit *“the poor sinners”* at home or at their workplaces. He urges the missionary to implant in the hearts of the audience trust in God’s mercy, rather than fear for his punishments, for example by using the parables of the prodigal son, the lost coin and the Good Shepherd. He should speak more about heaven than about hell; and even if he finds it necessary to refer to the punishments of hell, he should always at the end of his sermon, speak about God’s mercy¹¹.

Mission among the non-Christians

The ‘Formula Instituti’ of 1869, and afterwards the Constitutions of 1877, indicate that the MSC Society is able to undertake ministries of any kind whatsoever, even *“among the pagans; this latter with permission of the Holy See”*¹². Concerning the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, founded in 1874, Chevalier notes that *“their Constitutions are similar to those of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, with some adjustments to their special needs”*¹³. The Constitutions of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart show the same broad scope of ministries, including the missions among *“the pagans”* (using Chevalier’s words). Also the first Statutes of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus state that the MSC Sisters consider Mission work, *“mainly in the countries of the pagans”*, to be their main task¹⁴.

That does not mean that Chevalier only in a later stage of his life began to think about “foreign missions” for his Congregations. Fr. Piperon writes that *“from the beginning*

the very Reverend Fr. Chevalier ardently desired to establish missions in countries where the Gospel had not yet been preached”¹⁵; and he reports how in the early days of the MSC community at Issoudun, often “the missions to pagan lands became the subject of (their) conversations”. “Each time, the Rev. Father... expressed in burning words his ardent desire to see his confreres in charge of one of these dangerous and distant missions. And he expressed his hope of being one day sent there himself and of ending his life there”¹⁶.

Significant also is the picture that in 1855, Chevalier and Maugenest put up above the high altar of the first chapel of the MSC community in Issoudun. The picture shows the Sacred Heart of Jesus shining in glory, together with the Virgin Mary, surrounded by angels and saints, while in the lower section the five continents of the earth are represented by native inhabitants in distinctive costumes. Fr. Bertolini notes that this picture had been very dear to Chevalier, and when in January 1907 expelled from his presbytery in Issoudun, he strongly recommended it to be salvaged¹⁷.

Foreign Missions

In 1875, the MSC opened their first house outside Europe, in Watertown, North America, near the Canadian border, where they accepted the responsibility for the French speaking Canadians¹⁸. As noted by Piperon, for Chevalier, this was “a first step nearer the missions”¹⁹. However, the first foreign Mission offered by the Vatican to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was in a totally different part of the world. In February 1879, the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (‘Propaganda Fide’) in Rome²⁰ proposed the MSC to take responsibility

for what was called, “the Mission of Auckland in New Zealand”. Chevalier and some confreres, including members of his council, were inclined to accept, but others were held back by what they saw as a lack of suitable candidates to be sent to this mission²¹.

Two years later, in March 1881, the “Propaganda Fide” in Rome proposed to the MSC Congregation the mission of Melanesia and Micronesia²². This time, Chevalier was even more eager than before to accept the offer, in spite of the opposition of some of his councilors. Already on August 30, 1881, the first missionaries were ready to leave Barcelona on their way to Oceania to bring, as Chevalier writes in a farewell-letter, “*the knowledge and love of the Sacred Heart and of Our Lady*”²³.

Priorities

“*Knowledge and love*”: a combination of words, very dear to Chevalier. It is certainly true that the Constitutions of 1887 strongly emphasize the ability of “*our Society ... to undertake ministries of any kind whatsoever*”²⁴ and the readiness of the missionaries, “*according to the measure of (their) strength, to carry out any sort of mission anywhere in the world*”²⁵, and “*to undertake any kind of apostolic ministry*”²⁶. Nevertheless, Chevalier was well aware that in order to be able to minister ‘everywhere’ in society, in ‘any kind of ministry’, ‘anywhere in the world’, the missionaries needed constantly to deepen and enlarge their knowledge of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Only then, would their presence become fruitful, because spreading the Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the comprehensive way as understood by Chevalier, was the main purpose of the Society and its

mission work.

In addition, as has been said before, to realize his dream that the Sacred Heart of Jesus would be loved everywhere, Chevalier made great efforts to obtain participation of diocesan priests in their parishes, as well as laity, living in the midst of the society. Therefore, Chevalier insists that *“above all²⁷, (our Society) will help secular clergy to enter into the sentiments and virtues of the Heart of Christ... It will do the same with laity by stirring up their piety through sodalities ... and by associating them with (the Society) by a common rule²⁸.”* It is clear that Chevalier wanted the missionaries to give priority to the formation of people, who showed a special interest in the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. These people should be instructed in such a way that they would be able to participate actively in the mission of spreading the Devotion of the Sacred Heart.

Remarkably, in this text the formation of lay people receives as much emphasis as the formation of candidates for the priesthood or religious life, mentioned in the article that follows. On the other hand, the text states that only *“at times”* and with special *“permission of the Holy See”*, the Society *“will be able to accept the care of parishes”*. As is well known, in 1872, Chevalier himself had accepted the full responsibility of the parish of St. Cyr in Issoudun, and continued remaining in office, only because of being forced by circumstances.

Formation

Forming and educating lay people, diocesan priests and religious, including his own confreres, concerning the beauty and the real meaning of the Devotions to the Sacred

Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, certainly belonged to Chevalier's charism²⁹. The unflagging energy, with which, till the end of his life, he continued to study and to publish articles and books concerning these two Devotions shows the great dedication of a missionary to meditation, study, research and teaching about the mystery of God's love revealed in the Heart of Christ. It became his way of making the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be loved, everywhere. He wrote: "*Love without knowledge is impossible; knowledge without love is a disorder*³⁰."

Chevalier himself certainly lived up to this principle. Besides the several editions of his large volumes about the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Chevalier also wrote many instructions about the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially for lay people. As examples, I mention three longer publications, presented with introductory notes by Bovenmars msc in his collection of Chevalier's manuscripts about the Sacred Heart of Jesus³¹: a Novena, or nine instructions, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, given around 1865³²; a Catechism of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, written between 1866 and 1868³³; and Six Instructions on the Sacred Heart, written between 1869 and 1873³⁴. Later on, also more specifically for lay people, Chevalier wrote a book entitled "*School of the Sacred Heart or Lessons in Perfection*³⁵," written in 1891, that already by 1892 reached a sixth edition. In this book, Chevalier presents the Sacred Heart as the Teacher, and a lay person as a disciple. These are all examples of the way Chevalier assisted people in deepening their knowledge of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Apparently, Chevalier's motto "*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved*" did not only mean that his spiri-

tual sons and daughters should be ready to go *anywhere* in the world. More than that, he wanted to see his spiritual family to be so thoroughly formed that they would be able to bring the Devotion to the Sacred Heart *everywhere* in the world, on all levels of society, not only as a devotional practice, but as a comprehensive way of living. In his view, ‘the ministry of formation’ should be performed, both by those members responsible for the education of candidates for religious life and priesthood, and by every member, who believed in the importance of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart for the restoration of Church and society. Such ‘a mission of formation’ could only be carried out by people, who were deeply grounded in the meaning of this ‘way of life’, and who themselves practiced what they taught others to do.

Elements of a Charism of the Chevalier Family (7)

The MSC Constitutions of 1907 recommended the MSC to deepen their knowledge concerning Jesus Christ and his Sacred Heart through prayer and study, and to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They also recommended the ministry of preaching parish-missions and retreats, while instructing ignorant people and the youth in Christian doctrine³⁶. Unfortunately, by omitting Chevalier’s insistence on the formation of special groups, interested in becoming partakers in the Mission of the Society, “*great means of action*” (Ramière SJ) were taken away. We might say that great resources of Mission were overlooked.

In the preceding chapter, I indicated how the MSC Constitutions and Statutes of 2000 made a new start by mentioning the “Association of lay people” in the

chapter about “membership” of the Society. By doing so, the preceding chapters of the Constitutions, concerning the Spirit and Mission of the Society, apply also to the lay members of the Chevalier Family. Moreover, the MSC Constitutions recommend the Provincial Superior to promote this Association and to encourage the members of the Provinces to collaborate in this work, and to help in the development of this Association, while – and this is an important addition – “respecting its lay character”³⁷.

In 2009, the Tri-Generalate, together with the Coordinator of the Laity of the Chevalier Family, issued a “Joint Communiqué”. In this document “*the religious are encouraged to continue to devote time and energy to the formation of the laity.*” The same document expresses the hope “*that more and more laity themselves will become formators for lay members of the Chevalier Family.*” Totally in line with Chevalier’s charism, special emphasis is put on “*formation in our common spirituality*”³⁸.

Now, we may be familiar with Chevalier’s comprehensive and holistic understanding of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. As we have seen before, for Chevalier, this Devotion embraced everything; it was the answer to everything³⁹. For him, it was “*the summary of the whole of religion*”⁴⁰. Along the lines set out by Chevalier, we, members of the Chevalier Family, should also make ourselves familiar with, and introduce other people to, a similar comprehensive understanding and practice of a Spirituality of the Heart.

In the preceding pages, we have already met several components of a Spirituality of the Heart, which, taken together, underscore such a holistic approach. Inspired by Chevalier’s insistence upon Jesus, the Word Incarnate; the human heart not only as a symbol of love and mercy, but also of strength

and courage; the personal dimension of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart together with its cosmological outlook; its aspect of adoration, besides its social relevance; the missionary spirit combined with moments of personal reflection - all these elements could become building blocks of a Spirituality of the Heart, understood and lived in a comprehensive way. A Spirituality of the Heart, which embraces everything, and can be practiced everywhere, in all circumstances and challenges of life - that is the great gift that emerges from Chevalier's charism, as a river from its source. ***

¹ Personal Notes, p. 13.

² Personal Notes p. 2-7

³ Murphy, Our Spirituality, p.21.

⁴ Personal Notes p.21.

⁵ At the time, Superior of the Major Seminary of Bourges, and "a valuable instrument of Providence in the realization of the project in Issoudun." See the annotations of Fr. Bertolini msc in "Personal Notes", note 31, p. 61; and in Appendix III, p. 122ff.

⁶ Personal Notes, Appendix III.

⁷ Personal Notes, Appendix I, with annotation 10 on p. 113. Underlining by HK.

⁸ E.g. Plan de la Société, 1864, Œuvre Normative II, p. 466.

⁹ See for the meaning of the word 'missionary', Murphy, Our Spirituality, p. 4-5.

¹⁰ Œuvre Normative I, p. 66 - 136

¹¹ Règles 1855, Œuvre Normative I, p. 112; Règles 1857, Œuvre Normative I, p. 290. See also Règles 1855, Œuvre Normative I, p. 82 + 84. (DR February 14 and 15).

¹² MSC Constitutions 1877, ch. II, n.10; Œuvre Normative II, p. 394 (DR January 9).

¹³ Histoire, 1899, p. 358.

¹⁴ First Statutes of the MSC Sisters, 1900, quoted by Frings, 2000,

p. 57-58.

¹⁵ Piperon, p. 83

¹⁶ Piperon, p. 151.

¹⁷ SCJ, 1900, p. 58-60 and « Mission ad Gentes 1881 » p. 10.

¹⁸ Mission ad Gentes 1881, p. 18.

¹⁹ Piperon, p. 83.

²⁰ 'The Congregation of 'Propaganda Fide' is an institute of the Vatican which promotes the spreading of the Catholic Faith in the world.

²¹ See « Mission ad Gentes 1881 », p. 23 – 44: "The First Mission offered to the Society – 1879: Dossier Auckland."

²² See letter to His Eminence Cardinal Simeone, Issoudun 16 April 1881 (DR April 16). See also Chevalier's letter to Fr. Guyot, one of his councilors, Issoudun, 1 April 1881 (DR April 1),

²³ Letter to Fr. Jouët MSC regarding the departure of the first missionaries, 1 Sept. 1881 (DR Sept.1).

²⁴ MSC Constitutions, 1877, ch II, n. 10. Œuvre Normative II, p. 394 (DR January 9).

²⁵ MSC Constitutions, 1877, ch II, art 2, n.2. Œuvre Normative II, p. 392 (DR January 12).

²⁶ MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. III, n. 2. Œuvre Normative II, p. 402, (DR January 16).

²⁷ « Above all »: Chevalier uses the word « surtout » !

²⁸ MSC Constitutions, 1877, Ch. II, 10. Œuvre Normative II, p. 394.

²⁹ See Kwakman 2011 (2).

³⁰ SCJ p. 330 (DR November.9).

³¹ Manuscrits SCJ.

³² Neuvaïne d'Instructions sur le Sacré Cœur de Jésus, in : Manuscrits SCJ, p. 200-242. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 200-242.

³³ Catéchisme de la dévotion au Sacré Cœur, in : Manuscrits SCJ, p. 243-290. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 243-249.

³⁴ Sur le Sacré Cœur (6 Instructions), in : Manuscrits SCJ, p. 296-313. Ses Ecrits, Manusc-SC p. 296-313.

³⁵ Ecole, 1891.

³⁶ MSC Constitutions, 1907, n. 4.

³⁷ MSC Constitutions and Statutes 2000, n. 61.

³⁸ "Joint Communiqué" of the Tri-Generalate and the Coordinator of the Laity of the Chevalier Family, Rome December 15, 2009.

³⁹ Letter to Fr. Ramière SJ, 9 December 1862 (DR August 16).

⁴⁰ SCJ, 1900, p.148. (DR July 8).

CHAPTER 8

A MISSION TOGETHER WITH OUR LADY OF THE SACRED HEART

The history of the Chevalier Family is closely interwoven with devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, particularly the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Since the Basilica of Issoudun became a center of this Devotion, especially after the coronation of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart's statue on behalf of the Pope in 1869, it was natural that Chevalier named the congregation of sisters that he founded in 1874 in Issoudun, "Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart". Later on, straight from the beginning of their foundation in Hilstrup in 1900, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus also placed themselves under the special protection of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart¹. Moreover, a flourishing work of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, mainly among lay people, was "The Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart", an association founded by Chevalier in 1864. According to Chevalier's own report in 1874, "*after ten years' existence (this) Association.., has spread everywhere, and everywhere it is expanding and growing*²."

“This cause is yours...”

When Fathers Chevalier and Maugenest planned to found the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, they spontaneously had recourse to Our Lady. Chevalier describes how the two men together started a novena to Our Lady to find out if the foundation of the projected society was in accordance with God's will. When Cardinal Dupont, the Archbishop of Bourges, made serious objections against the project, again the two priests turned to Mary, saying, *“This cause is yours, it is up to you to make it succeed. Take things in your hands and prove that you are truly the Foundress of this work³.”* They started a second novena, and even entered into a contract with the Blessed Virgin, whom they promised to *“make loved in a special way⁴.”*

In September 1855, on the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary - the day the Missionaries were officially installed by the Archbishop of Bourges under the name “Missionaries of the Sacred Heart” - Chevalier, according to his own testimony, began to consider the title “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart”⁵. Only some years later did he make it public.

“She has done everything...”

Regarding the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Chevalier used to say, *“Our Lady of the Sacred Heart has done everything in the little Congregation⁶.”* Piperon underscores Chevalier's statement, by pointing to the important role played by the Devotion and the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. He notes that at the beginning, *“the Congregation developed slowly.; it was only after the erection of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady*

of the Sacred Heart in 1864, that is to say, ten years after its first seed, that the community saw its members increase... Father Chevalier ... was sure that God wanted the Congregation; his confidence was not shaken by the trial. Could (Our Lady of the Sacred Heart), this very good Mother, who up till then "had done all" in the Congregation, abandon him? ... In fact, what was the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, when the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart was confided to it? It was more or less a frail and worthless plant whose roots could not yet absorb the moisture necessary for its growth. What was the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for the Congregation? The Archconfraternity produced on it the effects that a vigorous, fruitful graft produces when it is implanted in the tree. It infused a more intense life and soon the tree began to bear abundant and rich fruits⁷."

Bovenmars makes the comment, "If the Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart brought the (MSC) Congregation to life, that means that the Congregation owes its development to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and to the laity, for the Confraternity is mainly an organization of lay people⁸."

Chevalier's intentions

What was the main intention of Chevalier in promoting the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart? In different publications of the first MSC, we find several intentions. They wanted to fulfill the promise of making Mary loved in a special way⁹ and to express the "deep gratitude that the new society owed to Mary¹⁰"; gratitude also to God for having chosen Mary to form the Sacred Heart in her womb. They wanted also to honor the relationship of love and motherly

power between Mary and Jesus, and to ask Mary to lead us to Jesus' Heart as to the source of life¹¹.

However, we may say that Chevalier saw the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart certainly also as a powerful means to bring people to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. As has been said before, he wanted to promote the Devotion to the Sacred Heart everywhere, as the remedy for the evils of our time, by all means available. With that purpose in mind, he founded the Society of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, including associated Diocesan Priests and a Third Order, and later on two congregations for women. With the same purpose, he began to promote the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart¹².

Mary's wonderful cooperation

In 1884, in a letter to the Archbishop of Bourges, prefacing the first edition of his book about Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Chevalier wrote: *"Having received from Rome the mission to spread the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have done all in our power to attain this end. Despite our efforts, we saw with sorrow that this salutary devotion, given by our Lord himself to modern societies as a last hope, was not spreading as we would have wished. Knowing that all is done through Mary, we decided to associate her in the diffusion of knowledge of the Heart of her divine Son. But we needed a new title which would indicate her cooperation in this work of regeneration and it was then that we had the idea of calling her Our Lady of the Sacred Heart¹³."*

As it turned out, Chevalier was not disappointed in his expectations: *"Our hope was not misplaced – fifteen million people eagerly placed themselves under her protection and*

became with her, the zealous propagators of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart”¹⁴. In gratitude, Chevalier praised Mary because of her “wonderful cooperation in the establishment and spreading of Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which is to contribute so forcibly to the salvation of humankind”¹⁵.”

An integral part of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart

Obviously, only one devotion was central in Chevalier’s mind: the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. However, for him the Virgin Mary was inseparably related to the Sacred Heart of her Son. All blessings, including the blessing of spreading the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, were received from the Sacred Heart through Our Lady. For Chevalier, Our Lady was the first Missionary of the love of the Sacred Heart¹⁶, and the Missionary of the Sacred Heart “*par excellence*”¹⁷. She associates herself completely with the Mission of her Son to realize a renewal of humanity; or, using Chevalier’s words, Mary engaged herself totally in “the second redemption” of humankind. In that way, the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart became an integral part of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart; and living and spreading this Devotion a vital element of his charism.

In 1880, invited by Chevalier, Cardinal Pie, the bishop of Poitiers in France, gave a sermon in the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Rome, in which he describes the relationship of the two Devotions: “The cult of the adorable Heart of Jesus is the quintessence of Christianity; it is the summary of all forms of religion. Christianity is a work of love, in its origin, its progress and in its fulfillment; Christianity finds its total history in this sublime word: God so much loved the world... Christianity finds its total morality in this word:

You shall love. Give love in return for love. The devotion, established authentically in Rome in this ancient Church of St. James; the invocation of Mary with the title "Notre Dame du Sacré Coeur" is nothing else than a deduction and an appendix to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus¹⁸."

For Chevalier, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart were inseparable; they belonged together. The three statues that represent Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, clearly express this: Jesus at the age of twelve, standing in front of Mary, his mother; the child Jesus on Mary's arm, and Jesus on the cross accompanied by his mother. In Chevalier's vision, Jesus and Mary should not be separated. This is a strong element in his charism.

A preoccupation with power

However, that does not mean that we should present and explain this intimate relationship between Jesus and his Mother, between the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in the same way as done by Chevalier. Chevalier's presentation of this relationship is strongly influenced by medieval theology, and relies on a medieval image of God's relationship with the cosmos and humanity. Concerning his vision of the role of Jesus and the Sacred Heart, we discovered a clear development in Chevalier's thinking; however, the same cannot be said concerning his vision of the role of Mary.

Both Gigon msc and Bovenmars msc point to Chevalier's preoccupation with Mary's power of intercession. Gigon writes: "*One may say that this preoccupation is dominant in all (Chevalier's) writings. His study concerning the multiple rela-*

tionships between Mary and the loving Christ is almost always guided by the concern to highlight more strikingly the truth proclaiming Mary as “Mediatrice of all graces” from which the Sacred Heart is the unique source¹⁹.” Bovenmars observes that “Fr. Chevalier’s attention goes primarily to Mary’s power over the Heart of her Son in a way that truly amazes us...²⁰.”

Briefly, we may say that Chevalier explained the meaning of the title “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart” by using expressions that emphasize Mary’s authority, not only over us, as being Our Lady, but also over the Heart of Jesus, by calling Mary: “the Sovereign Mistress and Queen of the Heart of Jesus²¹.” He used such expressions not only in a first publication of 1863, but also in his great work about the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of 1895²².

In this book of 1895, Chevalier treats many aspects of the relations between Our Lady and the Sacred Heart²³. He has chapters about Mary’s motherhood, the mystery of the Visitation, the mysteries of Bethlehem, the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Mary as mother of humanity and as mother of all the living. In other chapters, he refers to Mary’s role in Nazareth, in Cana and under the Cross. However, as Bovenmars notices, “he studies all these aspects of the relationship between Mary and her Son to explain Mary’s great power of intercession²⁴.”

The Vatican

Already in 1869, the Vatican issued a warning not to “exaggerate the idea of the power of the Blessed Virgin,” and stated that, “by calling her Queen of the Sacred Heart”, Chevalier tended to place Our Lady “above Jesus her Son”, while ascribing “too much power to Mary”. Chevalier defended

himself by saying that he did not even go as far as “the Holy Doctors of the Church as regards the praises and privileges ascribed to the Blessed Virgin”. He also brought forward that all the faithful understood very well “that Mary’s power over the Heart of her Son is only a power of intercession²⁵.”

Afterwards, following the instructions of the Vatican, Chevalier laid greater emphasis on the meaning of the title “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart” as indicating that “Mary is our Queen, our Mother and consequently our Lady²⁶.” He continued to repeat that Our Lady’s intercession and supplications are so powerful, only because of divine grace, due to her motherhood²⁷. He underlined the fundamental truth that Jesus Christ is the only true Mediator between God and humanity, and that Mary receives all power from Him²⁸. Chevalier attributed to Jesus Christ “the absolute omnipotence of God”, and to Mary “the omnipotence of intercession²⁹”. He states, “This matchless privilege conceded to Mary in no way detracts from the greatness of God but rather exalts it still more³⁰.”

Cultural Background

However, we may ask, why Chevalier was so preoccupied with the issue of power in the relationship of Mary with Jesus, her Son. An answer might be found, both in the European culture of the time, and in Chevalier’s concern for the suffering of people. Up until the 20th century in Europe, all relationships were seen and lived in the context of authority and dependence. Today, we are used to the idea that (at least in theory) all human beings are equal, but before the revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, and still long afterwards, people’s dignity was measured by their

position on the hierarchical ladder³¹. Everyone was seen as the subordinate of someone else and people looked at one another as either superior or inferior to themselves. Also family-relationships were primarily seen as relationships of dependence: the wife was looked upon as depending on her husband, the children on their parents, and the younger siblings upon the older ones. Everyone had to know his or her place and to behave accordingly. So, it is not surprising that Chevalier regards the relationship between Mary and her Son Jesus primarily from the perspective of authority and submissiveness, maternal rights and filial obedience; not only as long as they lived together in Nazareth, but also during Jesus' public life, and even in heaven.

For example, Chevalier describes how, in her womb, Mary provides the Child Jesus with a heart, blood and organs, and in a way also with compassion, sensitivity and tenderness³². Today, we would value this as an expression of intimacy between mother and child, but Chevalier sees this as a confirmation of the law of nature that a child should submit to his mother, and that a mother has a right to the submission of her child³³.

Pastoral background

Another reason for his preoccupation with the all-powerfulness of Mary's intercession may be found in Chevalier's sincere concern with the trials and misery of so many people. Suffering abounded everywhere. More particularly, the region of Berry was often hit by failures of harvest. It was notorious for a high infant mortality rate, together with a lack of sanitation and adequate medical care, as well as a life expectation of not much more than 30 years. Moreover,

at that time, neither medical insurance, nor labor laws existed³⁴. People, visiting the shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Issoudun, needed someone powerful enough to offer relief in their sorrows. It was not Chevalier's intention to present people a cheap escape from their suffering, but as Bovenmars states, to tell "the many thousands who came to Issoudun to pray to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, to put their troubles before her, and to express their confidence in her maternal care. When he says that Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is the hope of the hopeless, he speaks from experience." He wanted to convince these people "that their hope and confidence are justified³⁵."

Chevalier himself expressed it in this way: "Actually, for whom is this marvelous power of intercession that Jesus has given to Mary over his divine Heart...? Only for men and women, whose Mother she is. Yes, she has received this power for us. It is to save us from uncountable perils that make the world similar to a turbulent ocean, abounding in shipwrecks. Therefore, Mary should reign as Sovereign over this ocean in order to calm down the waves, and to lessen the storms, and to draw us out of the abyss, when we were so unlucky to fall down³⁶." Up to the present, the countless memorial plaques of thanksgiving in the Basilica of Issoudun are the silent witnesses of as many prayers heard through Our Lady's intercession.

That does not mean that Chevalier was only concerned about the many troubled *individuals* coming to Issoudun, throwing themselves on Mary's mercy. He was also intensely worried about society as a whole that, according to his view, was rushing to its ruins. "Indifferent to religion, people move away from God. Error and falsehood are rife, corruption abounds³⁷," he writes. For him, Our Lady of the Sacred

Heart was the hope, not only of men and women, who are beyond hope, but also of the society of his time. Chevalier never tired of repeating the words of Pius IX: *"The only hope for the Church and society is the Heart of Jesus. It is He who will heal all our ills"*. In addition, he asks rhetorically: *"And who will come to open this Divine Heart, through her always efficient supplications? It is Mary! She has the key to open this treasury"*³⁸.

Elements of a Spirituality of the Chevalier Family (8)

How can we integrate the role of the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, lived and developed by Chevalier in the 19th century, into a Spirituality of the Heart, lived and practiced in the 21st century? As a possible answer to this question³⁹, I quote a proposal made by Merle I. Salazar, a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart from the Philippines, given during a Seminar in Issoudun, in the year 2009, celebrating the anniversary of the birth of the title *"Our Lady of the Sacred Heart"*⁴⁰.

She said, *"For us today, I propose to regard Our Lady of the Sacred Heart primarily as Mother-Disciple rather than as intercessor-dispenser of graces. Such a view, I believe, will help move us from devotion to spirituality, from simply praying our devotions to actually living out our spirituality, the spirituality of the heart. The object of our spirituality is still the indissoluble bond of love between Jesus and Mary, the love that finds full expression in the Heart of the Word Incarnate, the love that has been shared with us, the love that we are called to incarnate here and now."*

Seeing Our Lady primarily as intercessor and dispenser may not push us to active participation in the building of

God's kingdom of compassion. Given various situations of suffering and injustice, we, as members of the Chevalier family, may see what is happening, and we ask Mary, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, to intercede and then wait for her to dispense the graces needed to save the victims. The burden is on Mary, not on us. I believe this is not enough....

If we see Our Lady primarily as mother-disciple, we cannot just wait for her to give out the graces. We will not be satisfied with just asking for her intercession. We will do that of course, we will pray to her and ask for her intercession, but we will do more than that. As mother, we see her in the many suffering mothers today mourning the loss of their children. As disciple, we see her in the many, who are working for justice and "doing what he tells them." We see the victims and we hear her say "they have no wine, no food, no drinking water, no homes, no families ... you do something about it."... This proposal is made with the belief that if Fr. Jules were alive today, he would see the evils of the present time (as he did during his time) and that he will continue developing the devotion that he introduced so that it will remain relevant in this time and age. He is not personally alive to do this today but we, the members of the Chevalier family are." ***

¹ First Statutes of the MSC Sisters, 1900, no. 2, quoted by Bernhard Frings *Mit Ganzem Herzen, Hundert Jahre Missionsschwestern von Heiligsten Herzen Jesus von Hilstrup, Dülmen*, 2000, p. 58.

² *Annales of Notre Dame du Sacré Cœur* 1874, p. 131f. (DR January 30). The same Annals of 1891 mention more than 18 million members

(Bovenmars 1996, p. 34).

³ Annals of the Little Society, p. 4.

⁴ Annals of the Little Society, p. 4. Another version of this contract, supposedly the older one, is found in a document written by Chevalier in 1855 or 1856, only one year after the pact with Our Lady was completed. It is published by J. Bertolini msc as Appendix I in Jules Chevalier, Personal Notes, pp. 106-110. See Bovenmars 1996, p.5, footnote 7.

⁵ Personal Notes p. 26 (DR September 12). Bovenmars, 1996, p. 5.

⁶ Quoted by Piperon, p. 294.

⁷ Piperon, p. 250.

⁸ Bovenmars, 1996, p. xxxix

⁹ See contract between Mary and Fathers Chevalier and Maugest, January 18, 1955 in Annals of the Little Society, p. 4 (DR December 12). See also MSC Constitutions, 1877, Chap. 1, n.1 (Oeuvre Normative, II, p. 390 (DR January 3).

¹⁰ NDSC 1895, p.6 (DR April 27). See also Annales de ND du SC 1874, p. 131f (DR January 30).

¹¹ Bovenmars, 1996, p. 20-21.

¹² See also Bovenmars, 1996, p. 236 – 237.

¹³ “Letter regarding the first edition” dated August 24, 1884, in NDSC 1895, p. V, quoted also by Salazar 2008, p. 34. (Translation Sheila Larkin fdnsc)

¹⁴ NDSC 1895, p. V. See also note 2 above.

¹⁵ NDSC 1895, p. 5. Translation Bovenmars, 1996, p. 233. (DR April 28).

¹⁶ NDSC, 1895, p. 108

¹⁷ NDSC, 1895, p. 218; see also L’Apocalypse, 1907, p. 110.

¹⁸ Annales Notre Dame du SC, 1880, p. 130-131, quoted by Gigon 1957.

¹⁹ Gigon 1957, p. 46.

²⁰ Bovenmars 1996, p. 231.

²¹ In a pamphlet written by Chevalier in 1862, entitled “Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur” and in 1863 published in “Le Messager du Cœur de Jésus ». See for an English translation of this article, Bovenmars, 1996, p. 369-377; the words quoted, see p. 370. See also Bovenmars 1996, p. 19.

²² For example NDSC p. 88 ; 95 ; 239-240

²³ For a more extensive discussion of Chevalier’s vision on the Devotion to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and its theological and cultural context, see Kwakman 2009.

²⁴ Bovenmars, 1996, p. 236.

²⁵ See Chevalier's letter of defense to the Holy Office, quoted by Bovenmars, 1996, p. 71-73. (Underlining HK).

²⁶ NDSC, 1895, p. 197-198 (DR May 20).

²⁷ NDSC, 1895, p 73.

²⁸ NDSC, 1895, p. 169-182.

²⁹ NDSC, 1895, p. 172 (DR May 15).

³⁰ NDSC, 1895, p. 171-172.

³¹ Yves Krumenacker, *L'Ecole Française de Spiritualité*, Paris 1998, p. 195.

³² NDSC, 1895, p. 93.

³³ NDSC, 1895, p. 93.

³⁴ About the social life in Issoudun and the Berry at the time of Chevalier, see Vermin, 1957, ch. 76, p 92 – 100; and Kaandorp, 2008 (2).

³⁵ Bovenmars, 1996, p. 238.

³⁶ NDSC, 1895, p. 240.

³⁷ NDSC, 1895, p. 246.

³⁸ NDSC, 1895, p.245-246.

³⁹ See for other possible answers, Mac Cartaigh 2009, Mayor, 2002, p. 103-110; Murphy, *The Heart*, p. 136-142; Pongantung, 2009; Strayer, 2010.

⁴⁰ Salazar, 2009. Quotation taken from the third paper.

TO END WITH...

The main purpose of this book was to show that a clear understanding of Chevalier's charism may make us more aware of our identity as the Chevalier Family. What would be our answer, if asked to introduce ourselves more broadly? What, if we would present ourselves by saying, "I am a member of the Chevalier Family", instead of, as we usually do, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, a Daughter of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart, or a lay member of one of these Congregations.

The Identity of the Chevalier Family

Certainly people would ask: "Who is or was Chevalier?" In answer, we could say something like this. Chevalier was a man, who in the nineteenth century was appalled by the bad condition of contemporary society. He had a strong conviction that the illness of society could only be healed through the transforming power of love. Such love, he discovered in the Heart of Jesus, who showed him the way of compassion, by strengthening the weak and the poor, and

bridging the gaps dividing society. Chevalier felt passionately attracted to Jesus, and engaged himself wholeheartedly in following the way of the Heart of Jesus.

Chevalier also became increasingly convinced that the compassionate love of Jesus' Heart finds its origin in the Heart of God. For him, God's creative love forms the all-encompassing energy that moves the universe, while being powerfully present in the simplest creature, as well as in the human heart. The mighty force of God's love in his heart enabled Jesus to be faithful to his mission till the end. The same love is also at work in our hearts. So, we are able to follow Jesus in his way of compassion. This belief in the powerful love of God as revealed in the Heart of Jesus and present in our hearts, Chevalier wanted to be spread everywhere, even to the most remote places on earth.

Mary, he honored with the special title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. He saw her as the missionary of the Sacred Heart *par excellence*, while no one understood the designs of Jesus' Heart as well as she, his mother. In her, he also saw the mother, close to her Son in heaven, who in the same way as she stood near by the cross of her Son, she now stands close to the countless crosses of so many people, who have recourse to her.

While continuing to introduce ourselves, we may add that actually Chevalier did not just intend to found religious congregations, but to start a missionary movement supported by priests, religious and lay people together. Because on all levels of Church and society, people should bear witness to the fact that through the power of love, inner wounds can be healed, and walls which separate people from one another, can be pulled down.

That is the reason why, today, we form groups of priests,

religious and lay, who enkindled by the charism of Chevalier, embrace the mission of practicing a Spirituality of the Heart. That means we try to follow the way of the Heart, guided by the Spirit. Wherever we are in the world, we want to give flesh and blood to love that is present at the heart of the world, as well as in our own hearts. We try to embody this transforming love in the messiness of ordinary life, in the complexity of social relationships, and in the struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. That, we see as our mission!

It is probable that people might ask, if we are convinced that all problems in the world could be overcome by love. We might answer that the renewal of society certainly needs scientific, technical, economic and political solutions. However, we are convinced that only those scientists, technicians, economists and politicians will contribute to the realization of a civilization of love, justice and peace, who are motivated by a true love for humankind. It is only when they really care about the well-being of every human person and all of creation, and are committed to solving conflicts through dialogue instead of verbal or physical violence, that a better world may emerge.

It could be that people will then ask us about our own source of inspiration. In that case, we could say that a Spirituality of the Heart is rooted in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a relationship that we celebrate in the Eucharist. According to Chevalier, especially in the Eucharist, Jesus is present as the great Adorer, who on behalf of the whole of creation gives thanks to the Father, while communion with him also creates communion among all people as members of the human family.

This might be one way of presenting ourselves as mem-

bers of the Chevalier Family, certainly by choosing words adapted to our audience, but faithful to the charisma of Chevalier.

Continuing along the way of the heart...

From the preceding pages, it may have become clear that for Chevalier, living and describing a Devotion to the Sacred Heart was not a once and for all fixed idea, unchanged during his lifetime. Due to his lifelong dedication to deepening his understanding, it became a dynamic reality that increasingly broadened his heart and mind. Through continuous meditation and study, he succeeded in transforming the traditional Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, into a *holistic Spirituality of the Heart of Jesus*. That means, he offered an inclusive, comprehensive, all-encompassing vision of Christianity, rooted in a Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

As noted in the chapter entitled “a Mission of the Heart,” Cuskelly further developed and clarified Chevalier’s holistic vision¹. Some of the points he made, deserve a more extensive elaboration. For example, his vision of Jesus’ Heart, as the revelation not only of God’s compassionate Heart, but also of the qualities poured out in every human heart with its gifts and talents for love. Also his insistence on journeying into the depths of our own heart, as an indispensable element of a Spirituality of the Heart, opens up a wide field of continuing research and practice.

The exhortation to go down into the depths of our hearts includes a program of formation and accompaniment. Our hearts are formed by our life’s experiences. Only when we revise our life story and let our hearts be purified, will the Spirit be able to enkindle in us the passion that also inflamed

Chevalier's heart. Formation, personal reflection, journaling and accompaniment might make us aware of "the story of our hearts". Through such a process of growing awareness, supported by prayer, the Spirit might be able to heal our inner wounds, while empowering us to take part in the mission of embodying God's love in family or community life, in Church or society, no longer hindered by inner obstacles, but wholeheartedly.

...guided by the Spirit

Chevalier's holistic understanding of the Devotion to the Heart may also be enriched by further reflection on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, as being the greatest gift of the Heart of Jesus to humankind. Chevalier was certainly aware of the important role played by the Holy Spirit. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, he states, we would not be able to grasp the harmony of the mysteries of our faith². However, due to the theology of his time, Chevalier lacked a more integral vision of the role of the Holy Spirit in the heart of creation and in God's work of redemption and regeneration.

Granted, without explicitly referring to the Holy Spirit, he also arrives at a broad vision of God's universal and unconditional love, by describing a plurality of manifestations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. However, a Spirituality of the Heart only becomes a real *spirituality*, in the full sense of the word, when explicitly paying tribute to the Holy Spirit as its primary source. While properly practicing a Spirituality of the Heart as "a way of the Heart", we should consciously rely on the indispensable guidance of the Holy Spirit along this way.

Today's theology enables us to deepen our understanding of the central role played by the Holy Spirit in the work of creation and restoration. A Spirituality of the Heart fosters the awareness that the Holy Spirit is powerfully at work as the life-giving force in the heart of the cosmos, in the heart of the human family and its history, in the heart of every religion and secular movement, and in every human heart, believer or non-believer. Wherever at work, the Spirit always aims at the restoration and unification of all things in Christ, according to the plan, "*which God will complete when the time is right, to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head*" (Eph. 1:10).

Several insights of Chevalier gain a stronger theological foundation when explicitly founded on St. John's theological vision of the pierced Heart of Jesus as a source of the gift of the Spirit to the world. The Calvary scene of blood and water, coming out of the pierced side of Jesus, is John's symbolic way of indicating a relationship between the sacrificial death of Jesus (the blood) and the gift of the Holy Spirit (the water)³. A similar vision can be found in the apparition scene on Easter Sunday: Jesus showing his risen body with the wounds of his suffering still visible in his hands and side, while breathing on his disciples and saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit* (John 20:20-22)." What meaning did John intend to convey through this scene?

Towards a civilization of love

A theology of the Holy Spirit also reinforces Chevalier's vision of a new world, emerging from the Heart of the Incarnate Word, pierced on Calvary⁴. His conviction that our belief in the love of Jesus' Heart, when embodied in our behav-

ior, is an effective remedy for the ills of society, only makes sense when connected to the work of God's Spirit who is in the process of renewing the face of the earth.

Also the traditional meaning of "the work of reparation"⁵ that according to Chevalier is one of the main purposes of Devotion to the Sacred Heart⁶, can be better understood by realizing that it is "the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love" (Rom 5:5). For Chevalier, "reparation" was not merely a form of prayer, but a way of life. He uses the expression "walking a path"⁷. It involves, he said, deepening our knowledge of, and love towards, the Heart of Jesus, as well as adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication, together with the practice of carrying out our mission in union with Jesus⁸. Dennis Murphy describes reparation as a way of living "a life transformed by love, a life participating in Christ's own redeeming love, a life of service instead of selfishness."⁹ He quotes Pope John-Paul II who underlined that, "the civilization of love, the reign of the Heart of Christ, will be able to be built on the ruins accumulated by hate and violence. This, in reality, is the reparation asked for by the Heart of the Savior"¹⁰.

Some further perspectives

A Spirituality of the Heart makes us aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, actively stimulating our growth in moments of gladness and of pain, in moments of success and of failure. By performing our normal occupations or services in daily life, we actually carry out tasks entrusted to us by the Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12); and by being compassionate to one another, we embody the gifts of the Spirit, because it is "God's Spirit (who) makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient,

kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled (Gal 5:22)." That means that in the practice of daily life, we take part in the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the whole of creation. Our services and ministries, as being a participation in the work of the Spirit, who is in the process of recreating the world, are not only beneficial to the limited circle of people we care about, but also to all of humanity.

Through her presence in our hearts, the Spirit unifies us with one another, wherever we live. The Spirit unites us also with the people who have gone before us. It is the Spirit, who prays in the depth of our hearts (Rom 8: 26-27). Our sincere prayers connect us with the Spirit who lives both in our own hearts, and in the hearts of the persons for whom we are praying. Due to our unity in the Spirit, we strengthen one another through our prayers.

Wherever carrying out our mission of witnessing to God's love in Christ, the Spirit is already present to prepare the hearts of the people we approach, and to fill with life and strength our words and deeds. Due also to the creativity of God's Spirit, who joins our spirit in performing our mission, Chevalier's motto "*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved*" – a motto that keeps inspiring us as members of the Chevalier Family - will finally become true. As Cuskelly says it, "*In God's good time the omnipotent love of God will have its way*".

The fire within

In the preceding chapters, I have been seeking to identify the charism of Chevalier, the gift of the Spirit, the fire that kept burning in his heart during all his life. I found it in his passion for Jesus Christ, whose Heart reveals the Heart of

our Father; in his developing vision of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and in his broad understanding of mission as a mission of the heart, a social mission, a shared mission, a mission everywhere, and a mission carried out together with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The fire in the heart of Chevalier never went out until the end of his life, when in the words of Fr. Piperon, *"like the flickering out of a flame, he fell peacefully asleep in the Lord"*¹². It is our task to keep the fire aflame in our hearts, and to nurture the same passion that burned in the heart of Chevalier. That is actually the fire of the Spirit within. Chevalier was fully aware of this healing and enlightening presence of the Spirit in our hearts. He wrote, *"... the Holy Spirit is really like a burning fire that cleanses the soul of all defilement; a bright fire that enlightens the mind and dispels darkness; like a healing fire that moves gently into the heart, penetrates it, warms it and inflames it. Let us ask the Spirit to come into us and to produce there these same blessed results... O Spirit of God, come and inflame us with the fire of your love"*¹³. ***

Cor Novum, Issoudun, Pentecost 2011

¹ Cuskelly 1975, p. 127-129.

² Méditations I, 1892, p. 576. See also Murphy, The Heart, p. 56-57.

³ See John 7:37-39. See Lescrauwaet, 1975, First Panel: "The Piercing on the Cross".

⁴ SCJ, 1900, p. 145 (DR. July 6).

⁵ SCJ, 1900, p. 217 (DR July 20).

⁶ E.g. SCJ 1900, p. 222 (DR July 26).

⁷ SCJ, 1900, p. 222 (DR July 26).

⁸ See SCJ, 1900, p. 222 (DR July 26). See also Bour 2007, particularly part III, "Reparation according to Fr. Chevalier."

⁹ Murphy, *The Heart*, p. 127.

¹⁰ Murphy, *the Heart*, p. 127. Quotation taken from a letter of Pope John-Paul II to Fr. Peter Hans Kolvenbach sj, a former Superior General of the Society of Jesus.

¹¹ Cuskelly 1975, p. 128-129.

¹² Piperon, p. 318 (DR October 21).

¹³ *Méditations I*, p. 646 f (DR June 21).

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The present book is an attempt to enter more deeply into Jules Chevalier's special charism as a Founder. The idea behind this book is that a good understanding of Chevalier's charism is of utmost importance in strengthening a sense of identity and mission as members of the Chevalier Family in the Church and in society.

This book will be helpful to everyone interested in the charism and identity of the Chevalier Family, more specifically to formators and members in formation, as well as the growing number of lay members of the Chevalier Family.

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