

SACRED HEART

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When you pray go to your room (Mt 6:6)

BECKONING US to enter through the door of silence, beyond the literal into symbolic mystery, these words of Jesus, 'when you pray go to your room' draw us to enter the room within the depths of our selves that is sacred and of God. We call this room the heart. Beyond the confines of the physiological heart, this 'room where we pray' identifies the soul-place within. It has no differentiation between body and soul. This heart is where eternal, divine love creatively touches us and holds us in being. It is the inner chamber of the core of our being, where we are absolutely one with God. If we gather all our thoughts together and bring the gaze of our spirit to enter into the inner room of our heart, become sensitive to the language of the heart, and are present with contemplative awareness, we discover that we participate in Trinitarian love. We encounter the heart of God. The heart is the place where we enjoy that ultimately we are one with God.

A Spirituality of the Heart

In celebration of the anniversary of the death of Jules Chevalier, the Founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Co-Founder of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, I wish to show in this article how a spirituality of a heart is foundational for what it means to be human. Through drawing on examples of mystical literature and iconography of the sacred heart from both the Christian East and West, I will explore prayer 'of' the heart and 'in' the heart. I will focus on essential elements of heart spirituality: the yearning of the heart, entering the heart, dwelling in the heart and living from the heart. We will see how the discovery of God's presence within the depths of our heart is intimately linked to the discovery of infinite divine presence in each human being and in all creation.

The Heart of God

A foundational portrayal of the heart of God occurs in the Jewish lyric love poems of the *Song of Songs*. The *Song* presents a passionate dialogue between two lovers, interpreted to be God and the soul. God says to the soul: 'You have wounded my heart my sister, my bride, you have wounded my heart with one glance of your eye.' (Sg 4:9). The poet presents an image of a relational God, who is so life giving, so generous, so infinite in compassion that a single glance with the eye of love from a human being wounds God's heart. The wounded heart, the poet portrays is open, vulnerable, seeking union with human nature. The dialogue between the lovers discloses how looking, gazing, contemplating with the love of our heart takes us into the heart of God.

This imagery of the divine heart wounded evolves in the gospel of John, with the focus on Jesus. Eternally with God, Jesus is the word of God who becomes flesh and dwells among us (Jn 1:14). Poignantly, at the beginning of the gospel, John identifies Jesus as the one *close* to the heart of God (Jn 1:18). To be close is to be intimate with, to be in constant contact, to be enclosed in a way that fosters transforming union. Jesus is so close to God that he makes the heart of God known. In the middle of the gospel, Jesus invites his followers to make a home in his heart, (Jn 15:4) and to be one in him, as he is one in his Father (Jn 17:21). At the end of the gospel this one who reveals and makes us one in the heart of God is pierced in the side with a lance. Immediately there flows out blood and water (Jn 19:34). With mysterious paradox, the piercing marks a moment of cosmic and eternal significance. It tears through time and space. It creates a wound, a channel of infinite love that when entered and lived into draws us into the heart of Jesus. John's portrayal of a wounded Jesus shows how the way into the heart of God is through the wound in Christ. When we look on the one whom they have pierced (Jn 19:37) with intense intention, we see divine love. We see the heart of Jesus, the sacred heart inviting our whole being, body, soul and spirit to come home to this ground of infinite self-giving love. Meditating on the heart of Jesus leads us to discover that his heart holds our own human heart.

From the Divine Heart to the Human Heart

From the earliest days of Christianity, followers of Jesus prayed with these scriptural icons, entering the text in a heart-felt way. Through meditating on the word, they entered the room of their heart. They experienced at the core of their being, a transformation from 'a heart of stone to a heart of flesh' (Ezek 36:26-27). The interior movement from reading or listening to the source of the word of God from outside the body, to internalizing the word and being drawn into their hearts, transformed their whole understanding of what it meant to be human. Literal details of the visual evolved into the allegorical. Allegory then faded, as the slow pondering of the texts transformed the meaning from head-knowing to heart-loving. Once the path from head to heart flowed freely, their only desire was to linger for long periods in the presence of God, ever receptive, in a heart-to-heart encounter. Through this way of prayer that became known as *lectio divina*, scriptural scenes that were originally strikingly visual (*lectio*), when pondered over (*meditatio*), and taken into the heart (*oratio*) faded in an illuminating darkness that drew the love of the one praying into the heart of God (*contemplatio*). Meditation transformed into contemplation.

Mystical Literature and Iconography of the Sacred Heart The Tradition of the East: Prayer of the Heart

Powerful expressions of heart spirituality occurred in the East, particularly in the writings of the desert fathers and mothers of the fourth and fifth century. These men and women desired to live as one in Christ by cultivating a heart engaged in intense listening for the beloved's voice. They sought to nurture a wise and compassionate heart able to yield to the ebbs and flows of the movement of Christ in their hearts. They yearned to cultivate inner freedom so they could listen to the delicate intersection between the human heart, with its desires and dreams, and the vast and silent mystery that is God.¹ These founding lovers of God created a life style that would enable them to 'Pray without ceasing' (Thess 1:7). With an intentional desire to mature in a pure love of Christ, and be true to the beatitude 'Happy are the pure in heart, they shall see God' (Mt 5:8), they fostered a way of entering the room of the heart through the practice of 'prayer of the heart'.

'Prayer of the heart' creates a habitual level of awareness and presence to God by concentrating all our attention on reciting a version of the simple mantra: 'Lord Jesus, mercy'. The repetition of this plea of the blind man (Lk18:39), quietens the mind so that awareness may descend into the heart. Reciting the mantra frees the one praying of preoccupations and distractions that are stumbling blocks to centering on the presence of God in the heart. The simple repetition stills our wandering thoughts as it expands our consciousness of divine love, who is not only the one in whom we live and move and have

our being (Acts 17:28), but is also friend and lover (Sg 5:10). The prayer creates deep silence and stillness, as in the *Song of Songs*: ‘I sleep, but my heart is awake’ (Sg 5:2).

Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894) in translating the *Philokalia*, the great classic of Eastern prayer describes how this prayer transforms the one who prays:

Into the heart he descends into his natural heart first, and from there into the ‘deep’ heart-into the ‘inner closet’ of the heart which is no longer flesh. Here in the depths of the heart, he discovers first the ‘godlike spirit’ which the Holy Trinity planted in man at creation, and with this spirit he comes to know the spirit of God...(*The Art of Prayer*, 1966, 20).

Theophan continues to describe how anyone who wants to enter this inner closet of the heart must “return to himself” finding the kingdom of God that is within, and so passing across the mysterious frontier between created and uncreated.’(*The Art of Prayer*, 21)² In this prayer of the heart, our consciousness becomes so deeply immersed in God that all we can do is contemplate God in loving awareness that is beyond all cognitive knowing. Prayer of the heart creates *hesychia*, deep, silent, still presence. It reveals irrevocably how God is present in the heart. It fosters *theosis* or deification, freeing us to acclaim ‘I no longer live but Christ lives in me’ (Gal 2:20). The prayer draws us to rest in union with God, to abide tranquil in the still point, where all is one.

Iconography of the Heart

“Come’, my heart says, ‘Seek God’s face!’”(Ps 27:8-9), the Psalmist cries, yearning for the presence of the living God. This desire to come home to the heart, to see the face of God is also nurtured by the beauty of painted icons. The splendour of the icon, whose faces shine with the transfiguring uncreated light of grace, creates a focus for prayer. Icons impart how Jesus is ‘the icon of God’ (Col 1:15), and yet at the same time ‘no one can see God’s face and live’ (Ex 17:13-23). An icon creates a meeting point between the divine and human heart. In the East, icons of the sacred heart of Jesus were subtle, alluding to the underlying reality of infinite love, rather than visibly depicting a physical heart.

The most frequent example of heart iconography, *Christ Pantokrator*, emphasises how the human face of Jesus opens us to the vision of the face of God. Gloriously, the icon imparts how, in Jesus, God really shares our human condition. Christ opens for us the possibility of seeing God with the eyes of love. Traditionally, *Christ Pantokrator*, is dressed in a regal cloak, holding his right hand over his heart. He blesses and draws our attention to his heart. He has a pensive face, slender features and wide open eyes. With transcendent dignity Christ caresses an open book with the words exposed for meditation: ‘Come to me all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls...’ (Mt11:28-30).³ The beholder is drawn to rest in the heart of God. The face of Jesus oozes with compassion. He draws us into his mercy. The open receptivity of his penetrating eyes pierces into the depths of our hearts and draws us into divine embrace. The icon becomes the window to the sacred closing the gap between the human and divine heart. Our hearts become one.

The Tradition of the West: Prayer in the Heart

A more flamboyant expression of heart spirituality occurred in the West. Influenced by Augustine of Hippo’s (354-430) seminal prayer: ‘our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee’(*The Confessions of St Augustine*, 1949, 1:I), and his passionate longing for God to open to us ‘the sea of the sacred heart’ and of the divine ‘eternal delights’ (*Soliloquies of St Augustine*, 1912, XXIII,106), and fill a heart consumed by thirst (*Soliloquie*, XXXV, 169), the journey into the room of the heart was nurtured through more explicitly imaginative heart-felt prayer. Awareness of God’s relational presence in the heart was fostered by sensitizing the spiritual or mystical senses of the heart that express deep within the heart how ‘in the inmost self we dearly love God’ (Rom 7:22), because ‘God has made a home in us’ (Rom 8:9).⁴

These spiritual senses are found where the deepest roots of our interiority lie. They describe an awareness that occurs when we enter into our heart and the light of consciousness emerges out of the thick darkness of insensibility. Helping us give expression to insights beyond body soul dualism, the spiritual senses are soul language discovered in the prayer of *oratio*. More than mere metaphor, these senses that are felt in our spirit, flow from the heart. They draw us into a deeper awareness that we can feel, listen, see, taste, touch the meeting point between God and us. They describe how we can respond to the presence of divine love that is ever present in our heart. The spiritual senses provide a language that describes the experience of entering in loving awareness to traverse the hidden terrain of the heart, and dwell at home in the heart.

Powerful expressions of the language that has its source in the heart occurred in the Medieval period, particularly in the writings of Cistercians such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) and the women mystics Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1302), and Julian of Norwich (1346-c.1420). Mechthild of Magdeburg (c1208-1282) a *beguine* author from the low country of middle Europe gives a representative example in *The Flowing Light of the Godhead* of how a more expressively visual image of the sacred heart evolved in personal prayer. Composed in Middle Low German, this text is a dialogue between Mechthild and Jesus. Mechthild shares her experience only because Jesus asks her. ‘Truly...in this book [my] heart’s blood is written’ (V 34) he says.⁵ He tells her that this book is ‘a flowing light of the Godhead into all hearts...’ (Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, 1998, I:1). This flowing light from the divine heart is so munificent that if ‘a small spark alights on the cold soul, she receives so much that her heart will begin to glow, her soul to melt, and her eyes flow...’ (VI:13). Mechthild describes how the divine heart longs to make the human heart glow with the light of divine love. She meticulously describes how, when we enter into the room of the heart, we discover a meeting place with the divine heart.

In a poignant passage that is consistent with the imagery of the wounded lover in the *Song of Songs* and the wounded Jesus in John’s Gospel, Mechthild records her conversation with Jesus. With a comfortable familiarity she acclaims:

Lord you are constantly lovesick for me.
That you have clearly shown personally.
‘You have written me into the book of the Godhead;
You have painted me in your humanity;
You have buried me in your side in your hands and your feet
Ah allow me, my dear one, to pour balm upon you.’ (III:2)

This exchange is not something that happens external to Mechthild, but rather takes place in the inner room of her heart. The language is intimate. It is love language, the idiom of the mystical senses experienced beyond body-soul dualism. With an amazing confidence, Mechthild displays no reserve in acknowledging and receiving the gift that Jesus is ‘lovesick for her’. She accepts the truth of his desire, because she knows that she is written into the book of the Godhead and is painted in his humanity. This evocative way of describing humanity originating from and participating in the Trinity as like being written into the book of the Godhead, identifies how human beings belong in the Godhead, just as a word becomes part of the page on which it is scribed. Furthermore, the alluring portrayal of human nature painted in the humanity of Jesus affirms how human beings can become an icon of Christ. To be human is holy.

As the flowing light of the Godhead penetrates into Mechthild’s heart, she reflects the desire of Jesus for her and longs to bring him comforting balsam. Jesus responds playfully: ‘O One dear to my heart, where shall you find the balsam?’ Mechthild responds fiercely: ‘O Lord, I was going to tear the heart of my soul in two and intend to put you in it,’ (III: 2). Jesus delights in her heart-wrenching response saying: ‘You could never give me a more soothing balsam than to let me unceasingly lie weightlessly in your soul.’ Mechthild continues: ‘Lord if you would take me home with you I would be your physician forever.’ (III: 2) The vigorous dialogue that is an expression of *oratio*, prayer in the heart, points to an

intimacy that is beyond words. It is so real that it is consuming and transforming. Yet, as in the less sensual 'prayer of the heart', the mutual indwelling of Jesus lying weightlessly in her soul, and Mechthild at home in Jesus evolves into silent still presence to one another. A 'blissful abiding' (II: 6) Mechthild calls it. Ultimately, all activity in the prayer ceases and the silent stillness of union teaches her to respond: 'Lord, heavenly Father, you are my heart. Lord Jesus Christ, you are my body, Lord Holy Spirit you are my breath. Lord Holy Trinity you are my only refuge and my eternal rest!' (V: 7).

Iconography of the Heart

At the same time as people felt freer to express their personal experience of the beauty of the heart of Jesus sharing love in a way that unites humanity with divinity, artists began to be more expressive in portraying the pathos of the divine heart. The transcendence of *Christ Pantokrator* evolved into the immanent compassion of the *Man of Sorrows*⁶ who visibly expresses emotion and suffers. Frequently, in these renditions of a very human Jesus, his head lies to the side, his eyes are lowered, his skin is deathlike and contagious, grief seeps into the surrounding atmosphere. Sensitively, he holds his wounded hands crossed over his heart, drawing the eye of the beholder to penetrate beyond the confines of the canvas into his heart. Soaked in compassion, his deathlike, bare fleshy body exposes the wound into his heart from the lance thrust into his side. The sombre tones of these icons encourage the viewer to enter into the emotion of the picture, to long to share in Christ's experience of suffering to such an extent that the eye of the beholder enters into the wound and lives the experience from within the heart of Jesus. Like Mechthild the beholder is led to place balsam on the body of this suffering man. Yet, the icon discloses how pain taken into the heart of God loses its bitter quality and becomes transformed in healing divine love.

Missionary of the Sacred Heart

In a culture comfortable with visual imagery and expressive affectivity as a way of expressing the compassionate nature of the heart of Jesus, a French priest, Jules Chevalier (1824-1907) gathered around him people of the heart who would be Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. A man of the heart, who had a profound sense of the centrality of a way of the heart for all who seek God, Chevalier inspired a renewed appreciation of the rich symbolic nature of the heart of God experienced in Jesus. Ordained a diocesan priest, he saw reflected in the face of those around him, the scars of Jansenism that instilled fear, and distorted the holiness of physical nature of humanity. With a desire to respond to fractured human hearts, he chose to draw around himself people of the heart, whose spirits were close to the heart of Jesus, to tend to the heart of those in their care. 'The heart of Jesus is the love of God, God himself incarnate. God is love', he wrote in 1887 (*Constitutions and Statutes of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*, 2000, xiv). He encouraged his followers to go to the room of their heart and to gaze at icons of the sacred heart envisaging how 'in devotion to the sacred heart would be found the remedy of all the evils of society' (*The Annals of the Little Society*, vol.1:1). This spirituality of the heart, that he fostered, is a way of coming home to the heart by way of the heart. It is a spirituality that is profoundly graceful and human. It is graceful because, relying radically on God's desire for human divine intimacy it seeks to be present to the presence of grace in the heart and to respond in love to that presence. It is human because it requires the response of our whole heart, perceiving, feeling and loving in a way that engages the total person.

Chevalier delighted, praised and wondered at the myriad of natural ways in which God reveals God's self to us through this heart. He encouraged his followers to make the heart of Jesus the centre of their lives. 'The heart of the divine master is the centre, it embraces everything,' he said (*Constitutions*, 10). Be attentive as it 'pours out the secrets of love' (*Annals*, 1, 8). Uncompromisingly, he fostered the expression of intense desire to participate in the heart of Jesus, always living from this centre. 'Develop an intense devotion to the sacred heart,' he said. To be devoted intensely is to be intent on creating a relational presence that nurtures transforming union.

Encouraged by his experience on a pilgrimage to the tomb of Margaret Mary Alacoque (1673-1675),

Chevalier recalled Margaret Mary's encounter with the heart of Jesus where she held his heart in her hand as Jesus said: 'behold the heart that has so loved the world' (*Annals* 1, 8). This way of holding and be-holding imparts an image of a vulnerable God who can be touched in divine fleshiness. This is a heart that can be held in a human hand, that touches human experience and hears the cries of the poor. Jesus is close. Jesus is tender. Jesus seeks union with human beings. Chevalier's *Instructions on the Sacred Heart* affirms this desire for union.

He even seeks us running over mountains and
over hills saying to his friend and to the angels:
'Have you not seen this soul whom I love?'...
Because I come to you in love, not just with a father's love but with a
mother's love. That is enough: I come with the invincible love of God.
(Neuvaine d'Instructions sur le Sacre-Coeur de Jesus, 219 translation
from *Father Chevalier: Some New Texts*, 1).

With the love of a father and mother seeking out a beloved child, Jesus seeks union with our soul until his heart is the centre of our vision, of our loving and of our being. This way of prayer draws us beyond the visual into the mystical, into infinite mystery, where the human and divine are one.

In a ground breaking book, *A Man with a Mission: Jules Chevalier*, E.J. Cuskelly elaborated in 1975 on what this devotion to the sacred heart means: 'We have to go down to the depths of our own soul in realization of our profound personal needs of life, of love and of meaning,' he says and urges us to delve deeply and find 'the answer to our questions in the heart of Christ in the depth of his personality'. It is only when our yearning for God and the heart of God meet, and we malleably allow ourselves to be 'fashioned by these forces' that our own heart will be 'an understanding heart, open to, feeling for, and giving to our brothers and sisters in Christ.' (Cuskelly, *Man with a Mission*, 128). To go down to the depths of our soul is to go into the room of the heart, deeper and deeper into its centre. It is only from this palace of union that we can be the heart of God on earth.

Iconography of the Heart

Congruent with the evocatively visual imagery of the heart of Jesus, in Chevalier's day, iconography of the sacred heart became more explicit, with a stylized heart superimposed over his body. The fleshy heart is red and flaming. Encircled in thorns it bleeds. Like all iconography these images of the sacred heart invite the viewer to enter into sacred mystery, to behold the compassionate love of God expressed in Jesus. The images emphasise the goodness of matter. They express how God's grace comes to human beings in the flesh of Jesus bridging the gulf between infinity and invisibility and finitude and the visible. Unfortunately, a lack of appreciation of visual imagery, the scourge of literalism and the denigration of soul language has led to a superficial understanding of these icons of the heart, and the spirituality of the sacred heart. The rediscovery of the gift of contemplative prayer is now revealing how the journey to the heart, by way of the heart is foundational for all prayer. Jules Chevalier recognized this more than a century ago. We will never find true rest and peace until we come home to our own heart that is one in the heart of Jesus, in the heart of God.

When You Pray, Go To Your Heart

'Heart' then, is what Karl Rahner identifies as a primordial word. Primordial words are essential to our understanding of the God-human mystery, because they express what is primal, sacramental and non negotiable. The 'heart' expresses what is infinite, carrying us into the very union with divine love we are seeking. The word is always, Rahner says:

...as though filled with the soft music of infinity. No matter what it is [heart]

speaks of, [it] always whispers something about everything. If one tries to pace out [its] boundaries, one always becomes lost in the infinite....[It] possesses something of the luminous darkness of the Father.
(Lehmann and Raffelt, *The Content of Faith* 1993, 161).

Heart is a sacred word. It names the place in us that is of the divine. When we speak the word heart, and whisper the language of the heart, it softly plays the tune of infinity. It transports us into the illuminating darkness that is the dwelling place of Love. ‘Heart’ evokes the mystery of which it speaks. Even when our heart feels barren, dry, tuneless, loveless, Mechthild reminds us: ‘The impotence of the heart rings in song so beautifully before God that God loves the notes that sing deep in the heart. Then God’s sweet gift shall flow into their hearts’ (VII: 36). Even when love feels impotent, God knows there is an unsung song deep within. The gift of love is there waiting for us to surrender to be filled with the divine sweetness that is eternally ours. The only way to discover this gift is by going to our own room, and our God who waits there in secret will be with us.

Although each of us will have a preferential way of going to the heart the ‘prayer of the heart’ of the desert seekers and the prayer in the heart of Mechthild, give classic examples of ways of prayer that take us to the heart. Prayer *of* the heart gives an example of how the simplicity of meditative prayer pierces through to the centre of the heart. This practice is what the tradition describes as the *apophatic* or the ‘negative way’, prayer that closes the mind and senses and brings them to rest in a unitive darkness.

The example of prayer *in* the heart that Mechthild encapsulates, illustrates a way of prayer that engages our affections and draws us towards the centre of the heart by engaging the imagination and spiritual senses of the heart. This style of prayer known as *kataphatic* or the ‘affirmative way’ draws on imagery from the creative world that is familiar and inspirational, to express what is felt at the edge of consciousness in our heart. Both ways of prayer are beautiful and help us express what is most important to us. They should never be compared in a way that distinguishes one with a hierarchic preference to the other. Ultimately each way of prayer takes us into the room of the heart to rest in the heart of God.

In the interest of becoming more aware of how we can support the journey of the heart, to the heart today, I will highlight a fourfold unfolding that is integral to both these ways of prayer: the yearning of the heart, entering the heart, dwelling in the heart and living from the heart.

The Yearning of the Heart

Attending to the yearning of our heart, reaching out to God in love, being responsive to our longing, is the beginning of contemplative prayer. It is the desert wanderer’s desire to ‘pray without ceasing’ that motivates them to seek God in their heart. They long to sink into their heart, to become rid of distracting thoughts, to bring their mind into the heart and rest their attention there. They seek to listen intently, to become the prayer. They are prepared to go to any lengths to have this insatiable longing satisfied. For Mechthild, it was her desire to tend Jesus, to share in his experience, to be one with him that motivated her. And as we get to know her we see how this desire is but a faint reflection of the desire and longing Jesus has for her. Being attentive to our yearning for God, our innate desire to be true to our origins and come home to our source of infinite love, incites the desire to enter the room of our heart.

Entering the Heart

Ultimately, the freedom and ability to seek God by going to our room and closing the door, by entering our heart and staying attentive to the presence of God within is the gift of grace God gives us. But there are ways in which we can prepare ourselves to be responsively present to the touch of the Spirit’s

leading and surrender to this prompting. The desert dwellers begin the discipline of reciting the mantra, which becomes a continuous act of surrender. Mechthild does not practice a prayer method as such, but makes her prayer time a rendezvous. She becomes present to Jesus through conversation, feels her feelings, reverencing what she experiences and allowing her feelings to lead her to Christ. She forgets about everything but him. Grounded in attentive listening, the conversation becomes a real encounter of heart to heart. Finding what gives natural expression to our desire for God and is conducive to our personality and life style is essential. Pray as you can and not as you can't is the traditional saying. But, committing ourselves to faithful practice, whether we feel drawn to prayer, or are restless, is at the heart of contemplative prayer.

Dwelling in the Heart

Once we enter the heart we cease to relate to God as outside ourselves. We discern the graced emergence of a contemplative way of knowing and dwelling in God who is an indwelling presence. We realize that God is the deepest subject of our experiencing, inseparately identified with our centre, or the point of our deepest self that is the image of God in us. In this ground of the heart that is our centre, we see through God's eyes and love with God's own love. We come to know that we can trust this heart place. It is the only source that brings true rest and peace. The desert pilgrims call this experience of union in the heart '*hesichia*', the experience of silent still presence. Mechthild calls it 'blissful abiding'. Ultimately all our ways of prayer are at the service of enabling us to dwell with our God, to abide, to stay centered in this all-embracing heart, one in the heart of Jesus, in the heart of God.

Living from the Heart

This way of the heart is indeed 'the pearl of great price' (Mt 13:45-46). It enlivens us, calling us to live truly, always singing from the song of silence whose tune comes from the heart of God. The inner journey to the centre of the heart leads us to return to the world, not scattered and fractured and self-centered, but in an abundant outpouring of creativity, service and mission from the source of the centre of love. This is the love that each era in the Church has sought to be and live. It is the love that Chevalier knew. God loves the notes that sing deep in the heart, and gives us the grace to sing them out loud. In the words of the Australian mystic, Noel Davis:

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| | <p>The silence that wakes in the heart is a sensuous lover</p> | |
| For at heart | <p>graceful seduction for union with the beloved.⁷</p> | is not life a |

NOTES

- 1 Wendy Wright, '*Desert Listening*', Weavings 9:3 (May-June), 1994, 10.
- 2 *The Art of Prayer*, 21.
- 3 See for example Gregory Collins OSB *The Glenstal Book of Icons: Praying with the Glenstal Icons*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002, 42.
- 4 Although the spiritual senses were first developed by Origin's (185-254) exposition of the *Song of Songs* imagery, in the East, they were also integrated into Western thought through Augustine.
- 5 Mechthild's confessor and spiritual advisor, a Dominican, Heinrich of Halle encouraged her to write and edited the first six books before he died. Books I-IV were translated into Latin, probably by Dominicans
- 6 See for example *The Image of Christ: The Catalogue of the Exhibition Seeing Salvation*. London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2000.

