

these is that our spirit is admirably suited to help us through the transition time that the Church is living. It is centred on the new heart and the Spirit which the prophets saw as the source of life for a new covenant”.

Ever since we undertook the journey of responding to the invitation of the Vatican Council II, there is a phrase of the Scriptures that has shed its light on us: *We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love towards ourselves. God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him*” (1 Jn 4,16-17).

Our idea of God, the way we live it in our spirituality of the heart, our union with God by means of prayer and the experience of the covenant, help us to truly believe in the personal, kind, unconditional and eternal love that God has for each one of us. This is a faith based on the living experience of the initiative of God and the human response manifested in personal surrender to Christ, which in turn challenges us to accept the very mission of Christ in favour of the human race. Without this experience we run the risk of being merely *a gong booming or a cymbal clashing* (1 Cor 13,1).

FOR YOUR REFLECTION

Are you a man of covenant or contract? Is your apostolic life a joyful manifestation of the covenant that you live? In your apostolate, do you help others to make a covenant with God or to carry out norms and laws? Do others find you to be a witness or a functionary?

Chapter 5

A MAN CONSECRATED FOR MISSION

If charism is the particular vision of God revealed in Christ and spirituality is the way of living this vision, mission is the way of manifesting both of these. Charism and spirituality are the action of the Holy Spirit anointing us with a share in the life of Christ, the anointed one. With the anointing, the Spirit also gives us share in Christ's mission. The words of the prophet are familiar too us: *The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor; to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh* (Is 61, 1-2).

Jules Chevalier, who was open to the action of the Holy Spirit, lived this whole process with integrity, fidelity and coherence. When a person has realized an authentic personal option for Christ, and tries to live a spirituality that constantly intensifies his union with the Lord Jesus, it follows that he will speak about him and make Christ's objectives his own. Chevalier, who loved Christ and lived for him, became a man with a mission.

First sentence on page 29 – this is confusing .. think of it this way ... spirituality is who you are, we all have a spirituality regardless of our religious beliefs. Charism is how we express our spirituality. It is a “particular vision” and it is a way of “living this vision”. Spirituality is the general and charism is the specific vision. Mission then will reflect both of these.

1. What mission?

Chevalier was conscious of being one who was sent (a missionary). The statement of Jesus, *As the Father sent me, so I send you*, had a special force for him. If he was sent as Jesus was, he had the same mission as Christ and, as a consequence, the same mission as the Church, that is to say, to hand on the good news, to evangelize. Evangelization is the great mission entrusted to us by God through the anointing with God's Spirit. Paul VI defined it in this way: "For the Church, evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs" (Evangelii Nuntiandi 18).

2. A mission of heart

Jules Chevalier was preoccupied by the 'evils of his time' and found the answer for these evils in his idea of God and in the lived experience of a spirituality of the heart. His life was changed into one of mission, into being an instrument of the salvific, liberating and transforming power of the love of Christ manifested in his Heart.

And since our idea of God is centred on the Heart of Christ and spirituality becomes for us a spirituality of the heart, we can speak of a mission of heart.

If to evangelize is "to bring the good news into all the strata of humanity", we have to do it from the perspective of our particular vision of God. Chevalier stated that "we have no other goal but to make known his love everywhere".

"To transform humanity from within and make it new" means to reach the heart of the human person, the source of life, so that conscious of God's love for him, he may give an new orientation to his existence and so become an artisan of a new world. Chevalier wrote: "The end of this little Society of the Sacred Heart is to make known to all peoples the love and mercy of the Heart of Jesus and to invite them to give him their love".

"Solely through the divine power of the message", that is, with awareness of instrumentality and mediation, knowing that the one who converts, saves and acts in human beings is God, whose love is revealed in Christ. It is God who gratuitously acts and gives the increase, the one who constantly searches for the human being. Our Founder used to say: "to be a Missionary of the Sacred Heart means to be an apostle of the love of Jesus". It is the love of Christ that changes, commits and saves.

We have heard many Missionaries of the Sacred Heart say that we have to be the Heart of God in the world. This is true, but we also have to be the heart of the world before God. Jules Chevalier wrote: "Isn't it in the Heart of Jesus that two loves meet: the love of God descending to the whole of creation, and the love of the whole of creation rising to God?" We have to be the bridges that enable this encounter to take place. Does not our motto, May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere, which for our Founder was "the end towards which our energies and lives are entirely dedicated", help us to understand this? Love always implies reciprocity, otherwise it is not authentic.

If we confess that "we have known and put our faith in God's love towards ourselves", we affirm at the same time that this love is meant for all human beings, whom God wants to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Fr. Cuskelly wrote: "We have believed in the love of God for all people, a love which would give their lives meaning and purpose, if they would accept

it. Because we believe that this love will work through those who consecrate their lives to him, we are confident that, if we work with courage and perseverance, God will give the increase. Here is the source of all missionary and apostolic effort”.

3. Some aspects of the mission of heart

1. Our mission needs to manifest through our attitudes, in a clear, comprehensible and significant way, our idea of God and our spirituality of the heart. It is through our lives that we have to evangelize. It is through our coherence between being and doing that we make known what we experience, what we live, contemplate, hear and touch (Cfr. 1 Jn 1,1-4), because we believe in the good news that, to our faith, has a proper name, Jesus Christ. As a consequence, the explicit announcement of the Lord Jesus needs to be present in our mission. It would be humanly incomprehensible to speak of love and not mention the one whom we love.

It is interesting to note that various documents of the Holy See remind us that “the normal way for religious to evangelize is through their own life”.

Our life, if we live it with coherence, is of necessity going to cause astonishment in some people, admiration in others and annoyance in many others. When they ask us why we live in such a different way, we can explicitly mention the name of the one who is the centre and motive of our living, Jesus Christ, God, who is Love, made man.

2. We have to carry out our mission through a personal contact that is tinged with the characteristics of our spirituality of the heart. These characteristics are profoundly human and can reach the heart of other people. This is our particular way of announcing the good news in which we believe.

3. We cannot forget that we have to give a valid answer to the signs of the times in which we live. These are different from those we experienced some decades ago and they oblige us to look for new ways for bringing evangelization within the reach of people.

4. Our mission of heart has to be, like our spirituality, incarnated, inculturated and liberating. These are three indispensable requirements for its efficacy.

5. The methodology imposed by our mission of heart is to accompany the process of each person, respecting the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit in each one. This process of accompaniment in personal dialogue needs to have the qualities of kindness, clarity, prudence, trust, truth and hope.

6. Our mission of heart leads us to be with others in a real commitment to history, as we try to be the consciousness of the Love of God in history.

7. Finally, the mission of heart inclines us to work for the most weak, poor and needy, the pierced ones of our society, taking up the approach of Jules Chevalier, his preoccupation for those who suffer the evils of the times: “Following the example of Jesus, let us draw near to the poor, unfortunate people, and do everything in our power to comfort them”. “The poor are the privileged friends of the Heart of Jesus. Could we remain insensitive to their material and spiritual poverty? We should see in them the living image of Jesus Christ”.

All of this is the normal way of acting and the logical consequence of the person who gives expression to love. For Cheva-

lier, the Pauline phrase, *Not that I do boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it!* (1 Cor 9,16), was a dynamic force underlying his existence. From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The mission of Chevalier was not a function, but the expression of his love for God and of his feeling loved by God. It was his response to that universal love, which is meant for everyone and for each one in particular.

4. Our mission of heart today

In the days of Jules Chevalier, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the most poor in the material and spiritual sense were the peoples outside ("ad extra") of the christianized societies of that era. So it is no surprise that the missions "ad extra" were one of the works most loved, most encouraged and most supported by our Founder. In 1904 he wrote with satisfaction: "Our missions abroad and among unbelievers are of great importance. They are the purest glory of our Institute. Superiors will take care to send there only well-chosen men, men of devout faith, of good judgement and regular observance, of unflinching dedication, and unshakeably attached to the Society".

During part of the twentieth century, the missions 'ad extra' continued to be a vital aspect of the history of our Society. Around the middle of the last century, changes in society and new theological, anthropological and psychological visions, along with the reflections of Vatican Council II, introduced many questions regarding the way of carrying out mission today.

These questionings have grown apace with the new signs of the times. How do we carry out the mission of heart today? The characteristic attitudes of our mission of heart need to continue, because they are part of our being, and we cannot renounce them

if we want to be faithful to the anointing of the Spirit. But the concrete way of carrying out the mission, all that has to do with pastoral action and plans, works, concrete services, dialogue... must enter into a process of serious discernment in face of the signs of the new era that is coming to birth.

Globalization, massive secularism, institutionalized or social violence, the psychological problems that affect society, the tendency to place the human being at the centre of the universe, thereby stimulating egoism and hedonism, and creating great divisions in society, neo-liberalism, political unions, the predominance of the economic factor, which creates massive poverty among the great majority of the people... are realities that demand new ways of action from the followers of Christ.

The disappearance of Christianity, the supremacy of the immanent over the transcendent, the rejection of the institution, the appearance of neo-paganism, the tendency to choose a religion that is to one's taste and with a god measured to one's own interests, the non-acceptance of the Church as teacher of values and sacrament of salvation, the loss of the influence and power that were typical of other eras, the subtle and constant persecution against the Church, the loss of the idea of sin, the affirmation that one can live a spirituality without God... are other realities that lead us to a serious questioning.

These signs of the time, along with other positive and negative signs that we doubtless know, invite us to carry out a great endeavour. "The Holy Spirit calls consecrated men and women to present new answers to the new problems of today's world. These are divine pleas which only souls accustomed to following God's will in everything can assimilate faithfully and then translate courageously into choices which are consistent with the original charism and which correspond to the demands of the concrete historical situation" (Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* 73).

Jules Chevalier wrote to Fr. Jouet on 21 June 1887: "Now that modern societies are entering a new phase, it is necessary that we find new ways of struggling and fighting, corresponding to its needs". The style is of another time, the message for today.

FOR YOUR REFLECTION

Are you aware of the fact that the Holy Spirit consecrated you for mission? How do you live in practical terms your mission of heart? What does evangelization mean for you, a function or an existential necessity? What force does the mission 'ad extra' hold for you? How should the mission 'ad extra' be manifested today in our Society? Do you accept the challenge of discerning the signs of the times, so as to seek new ways of mission? Are you disposed to change ways of apostolate in order to be an apostle of the love of Christ today?