

## At the Crossroads      Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

The title “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart” in honor of our Blessed Mother, Virgin Mary, is unique. It is a name that defines Mary’s relationship to Jesus and is a fruit of prayer and meditation on the experiences of Fr. Jules Chevalier, MSC, founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It is different from the other titles of Mary, that were derived either from her apparitions (e.g. Our Lady of Lourdes) or from her personal attributes (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Sorrows, etc). Rather, it is in the same line as the Marian titles like Mother of God. 2009 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the title Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Her feast is celebrated every last Saturday of May.

At the center of the devotion to Mary as Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is Jesus Himself, God’s Love made flesh. Fr. Jules Chevalier said: *“The love of the heart of Jesus is the center where everything meets, the pivot on which Catholicism revolves, the quintessence of Christianity. It is the way that I understand devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: it embraces everything, it answers everything.”* (Chevalier, Letter to Fr. Ramiere, SJ., 1862). For *“It is through the heart of Christ that the love of God, God Himself, pours Himself out on the world and on the human race”* (Chevalier, Le Sacre’ Coeur, p. 277). It is the bridge that unites heaven and earth.

And then he asked: *“If the angel called Mary full of grace before she became the Mother of God, what expression would be used in greeting her at the end of her life?”* (Chevalier, Meditations II, p. 668-ff.).

In his prayer and meditation, Fr. Chevalier found this: *“In the mystery of the Visitation, Mary is the first apostle of the Word Incarnate, the first Missionary of the Sacred Heart.”* (Chevalier, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, p. 172). *“On Calvary, at the foot of the Cross, Mary sees the pierced Heart of Christ whose love she fully understands. (Our Lady, p. 121). And there, “Mary freely associated herself with the work of our redemption by the total union of her will with the will of Jesus.” (Our Lady, p. 154). And “as Jesus was lifted up on the Cross, He gave Mary to us as our Mother and placed in her heart an immense love for us.”* (Chevalier, Meditations II, p. 671-ff).

The name, Our Lady, is intentional. Chevalier chose it, instead of “Our Mother”, to depict the knight’s total commitment to his lady: Jesus’ total dedication to his mother, the Woman of the New Time. He suffered and died for her. He continues to give her everything she asks for.

He’d never disappoint nor sadden his lady-mother. And so *“let us call on Mary with the greatest confidence in all our needs and the love of the Heart of Jesus will shower many blessings upon us”* (Chevalier, Meditations I, p. 182. – Fr. Ben