

Section 13

A SOCIAL MISSION

There is a clear distinction between Margaret Mary Alacoque, (who as a Visitation sister, living from 1647 until 1690, in Paray-le-Monial, France, received apparitions of the Sacred Heart), and Fr Chevalier regarding their relationship with Jesus. Margaret Mary was a contemplative nun and a mystic, while Fr. Chevalier was a parish priest and a missionary. Accordingly, Margaret Mary lived in a continuous *mystical* relationship with Jesus, while Fr. Chevalier lived in a *missionary* relationship with Jesus. Consequently, there is also a difference between a Devotion to the Sacred Heart as promulgated by Margaret Mary and the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as promoted by Fr. Chevalier.

Certainly, Fr. Chevalier incorporated the devotional practices inherited from the tradition of Paray le Monial into his missionary spirituality. However, for him, the Devotion to the Sacred Heart included not only prayers of adoration and reparation, but also ways of obtaining a deeper knowledge of Jesus, and participation in Jesus' social mission. By reading the Gospels, Fr. Chevalier discovered Jesus, who through the practice of compassionate love, wanted to change society, including family life. Chevalier invited every person to participate in the same mission. He wanted as many people as possible to follow the way of Jesus, namely, the way of compassion, while leaving behind a way of life characterized by social egoism and religious indifference.

When Chevalier refers to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as a remedy for the ills of society, he does not see the Devotion *as such* as a remedy. For him, this Devotion is a way of entering into a personal relationship with Jesus. Chevalier is convinced that Jesus himself is even more concerned about the deplorable situation in which our society finds itself. Therefore, by participating in Jesus' mission of the heart, we ourselves will be able to practice compassion, and to become healers of a wounded society, beginning in our own environment.

Chevalier found the root-causes of all ills of society in the human heart afflicted by social egoism, religious indifferentism, ignorance of the revealed truth, and disobedience to the teachings of the Catholic Church. All these vices and evils arise from a heart not yet formed in conformity with the Heart of Jesus. For Chevalier, the healing of the ills of society starts by a conversion of the heart. The main purpose of spreading the Devotion of the Heart is exactly this: to bring about a change of heart, which will result in a transformation of life of as many people as possible: This transformation of life of many people, will in turn, bring about a transformation and restoration of society.

A reflective moment

*“The experience of the past and of our own time
demonstrates that justice alone is not enough,
that 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.”*

(Pope John Paul II “Dives in Misericordia”, Rich in Mercy n. 12)