



# ENCOUNTER OF HEARTS

A Newsletter of Reports and Activities from lay members of the Chevalier Family across the world.



Spirituality of the Heart:  
A way to open our hearts and participate in the healing  
of the world.



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## EDITORIAL

### A Spirituality of the Heart: A Spirituality of Justice and Mercy

In 1972, the MSC General Superior at that time, Fr. E.J. Cuskelly and his Council responded to a call of the Second Vatican Council. The Council had called on religious orders and congregations to return to the original inspiration of their Founders and to the Gospels, in order to live out their own spirituality more clearly. In the *Analecta* (the MSC Bulletin) of 1972, Fr. Cuskelly declared that, inspired by the "*spirit of the Founder,*" our Spirituality" is "*a Spirituality of the Heart in the biblical sense of the word, with reference to God and to humanity*".

In the same letter, Fr. Cuskelly described his vision of a Spirituality of the Heart. This vision has become the guiding principle for the life and mission of the entire Chevalier Family: the MSC Fathers and Brothers, the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the MSC Sisters and the lay members of the Chevalier Family. Almost 50 years ago, Fr. Cuskelly formulated his vision, first in the *Analecta* and later on in his book 'Jules Chevalier, Man with a Mission', in four steps. Since then, our understanding of a Spirituality of the Heart has been broadened and deepened. I'll repeat here Cuskelly's four steps, while slightly adjusting his wording, and adding some remarks about the broadening of his vision that occurred during the last 50 years.

1. "*We have to go down in the depths of our hearts, in order to become aware of our profound personal needs of life, love and meaning.*"

A Spirituality of the Heart is a movement of the heart, set in motion by the Spirit, poured out in our hearts. Deep in our hearts we long for justice, peace, the wholeness of creation, and a meaningful life, while personally also longing to receive and to give love and mercy as well. Our founder, Fr. Jules Chevalier, was convinced that these desires have been put in our hearts by God himself and that God will finally fulfil them.

2. "*Through faith and reflection, we will find the answer to our longing in the Heart of Christ, in the depths of his personality,*" as revealed in the Gospels.

Behind his words and deeds, described in the Gospels, we meet the movements of Jesus' heart.

In fact, Jesus testifies of himself: *“Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves”* (Matthew 11: 28-29).

3. *“Shaped by these inner forces, we will have an “understanding heart,” open to, feeling for and giving to our brothers and sisters in Christ.”*

With these words Fr. Cuskelly related to the relationships in his own congregation. However, in his encyclical ‘Fratelli Tutti’, Pope Francis underlines his conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters of each other. For that reason, he says, we are called to have *“a heart open to the whole world”* (FT 291), especially to the poor and the people in need of justice and mercy. All our brothers and sisters we need to approach with an *“understanding heart”*.

4. *“Finally, we are not down-hearted and discouraged because of difficulties, but have a missionary courage and confidence.”*

These words apply not only to missionaries, sent out to other countries, but to every baptized member of God's People. After all, Pope Francis declares that it is the mission of each of us *“to be with others and for others”* (Evangelii Gaudium 273). In this context, the Pope mentions nurses, teachers and politicians, who carry out their mission with all their hearts.

The same applies to labourers, parents or whoever, who accomplish their service wholeheartedly.

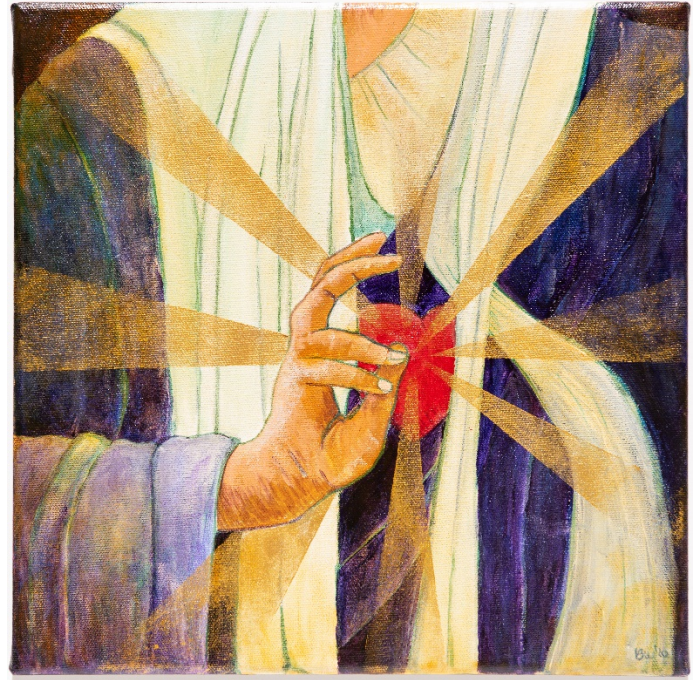


Image: Bruce Woods

The reason *“why I am here in this world,”* states the Pope, is to be *“a mission on this earth.”* *“We have to regard ourselves as sealed by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing”* (EG 273). So, all the injustice and violence in the world or the attacks of the corona pandemic that seem to have no end, we face with *“missionary courage and confidence,”* being convinced that the Spirit enriches our hearts with many missionary gifts, including the gift of being able to practise justice and mercy.

*Hans Kwakman msc  
Spiritual Companion International Lay Council*



Image: Gemma Farrugia

# REFLECTIONS ON THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART

## HEART-BONDED

### Greetings to you all

I write this letter to you on behalf of Doris, Rita and Fr Hans, as we approach our great celebration of identity; the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

As you would know, our dear spiritual companion, Fr Hans, has been very ill with Multiple Myeloma. Fr Hans is undergoing treatment, which, while debilitating, is assisting with his recovery and the doctors are pleased with his progress. He is suffering badly from back pain and we ask that you continue to hold Fr Hans in your prayer over the next few months of treatment.

I was recently asked by a member of our Chevalier Family if heart-bonded was a word in English. It is not commonly used – but as soon as I heard the word, I knew it was the word to use to title my letter.

At the time of writing this letter the world continues to be ravaged by the Pandemic which has impacted every part of the planet. We especially remember, at this time, our brothers and sisters in India, where the virus is out of control and many people are dying. On behalf of the Council and the wider Chevalier Family, I sent a message to Thomas Saviour assuring him of the prayer and support of the laity across the world. We also remember all people in every country who are still suffering badly from the virus and we pray for them. We pray also for vaccine justice, that countries with the capacity to obtain the vaccine, including my own, Australia, will accept their responsibility to share freely with those who are less able to purchase the vaccine.

As I write this, fighting has broken out between Palestine and Israel. I am sure you feel the great sadness I feel, that in the land where Jesus came from there is still no long-lasting peace and justice.

With these, and many other heart-breaking international events as a background, I have been pondering what to say to you in this edition of Encounter of Hearts, which has the theme –

### **Spirituality of the Heart: a way to open our hearts and participate in the healing of the world.**

Our world is changing so quickly – not just through international events such as the pandemic but in so many ways that affect our daily lives for good and for ill. Some that come to mind are:

we immediately know when something happens in one part of the world through the wonders of technology so much so we can become overwhelmed and apathetic to the suffering of others;

technological and scientific advances offer great hope for many in the world but not for everybody, and the advances often bring with them ethical dilemmas regarding their use;

our societies and cultures are changing before our eyes – what we once commonly accepted as right or wrong is now contested and argued about, and seen from many different viewpoints, even within the Catholic and Chevalier Family.

So, how do we open our hearts and know how to respond in difficult situations?

For me these words from the MSC Constitutions are helpful:

*Fr Jules Chevalier was deeply moved by the evils that afflicted the people of his time. As he contemplated the Heart of Jesus, in whom is revealed the compassionate love of the Father, he discovered there the remedy for the ills of the world. #3-4*

The beginning point is to be deeply moved – we could say we are ‘heart-bonded’ to the people who are suffering in our families or communities and beyond. We are called to feel the pain of the world. Our starting point and our focus is on people, not ideology or doctrine but on the pain of the world. Our spirituality calls us to have one foot firmly planted in the reality of the world in which we live.

For me, this can be a very uncomfortable and challenging place to be.

Chevalier points us to our response to the pain and suffering of the world – we are called to contemplate the Heart of Jesus. In English, contemplate is a beautiful word, it means to consider deeply over a long period of time and from many perspectives. Heart is another beautiful word. It draws us to the essence or spirit at the centre of a person – the place where we personally encounter the presence of our God of love, and where we ourselves are changed by that love. By allowing ourselves to contemplate the Heart of Jesus; to focus deeply on the spirit that animated Jesus, we can be drawn together to become like him; ‘two hearts beating as one’ – our hearts become bonded. In my experience, this can only happen for us if we give significant time each day to sit silently in the presence of the risen Jesus and to allow his presence into our lives, in other words – we are called to contemplate the Heart of Jesus. Prayer must come before response. We see this in the life of Jesus – he constantly went off to a lonely place to pray. And when he was not praying, Jesus was very often in the company of the bad people of his time – the six times divorced, the tax cheats, the undocumented immigrants ...



*Image: Bruce Woods*

Perhaps this reminds us that to contemplate the ills of the world is not just an academic exercise, but it is a way of being that will lead us to spend time with the people the world rejects. Our hearts are bonded with the rejected. In my experience, this is a very uncomfortable place to be – especially, sadly, in our church, which can reject and judge those who Jesus tells us to love. Our Christian brothers and sisters can judge us more harshly than others outside the family.

But, that is where Jesus points ... and it is the way to participate in healing the world. It is our calling and the challenge of our spirituality.

What did Fr Chevalier encounter when he contemplated the Heart of Jesus? He found there the compassionate love of the Father. Compassion is another beautiful word. In English it means to be able to see and experience the world through the eyes of another. That is a very challenging statement – especially when bonded to the previous sentence. We mix with those who are outside the church and we have compassion for them – we see the world through their eyes – as God does. How hard is that? I don't know about you – but for me that is often impossible. My fear of the other, my judgement of people who do things I disapprove of, my need for acceptance from my church family can make it almost impossible for me to be as God is and to open my heart to participate in the healing of the world.

And then, what Fr Hans says is the important difference between us and other Sacred Heart groups – we believe, with Chevalier and Jesus that an experience of the compassionate love of God, revealed in the way of Jesus is the remedy for the ills of the world.

And so, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 2021, let us pray for each other that in our own small way we can be heart-bonded and thus, be God's Heart on Earth.

With love and blessings to you all

Alison McKenzie

# News from the International Council of the Laity of the Chevalier Family

*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere*

## Zoom Meetings of the International Council 2020/2021

**9th May 2020**

Scheduled International Council meeting

**2nd August 2020**

Additional meeting to discuss the responsibility of the International Council to the COVID Pandemic. The statement is included below.

**26th September 2020**

Scheduled International Council meeting. Minutes of the scheduled meetings are sent out following the meetings.

## Meetings of the International Council and the Organising Committee for the Philippines Gathering

with Sr Merle, Deborah Mellijor (International Affairs), National Council, CFLA, Maria Lourdes Culima (Treasurer), National Council, CFLA.

**29th January 2021**

**15th May 2021**

**24th July 2021**

with the Tri-generalate representatives, the International Council and the Philippines Organising Committee.

## Statement from the International Council in response to the Pandemic:

The role of the International Council is not to act directly in any crisis that occurs in a member country, but rather, to support and encourage the National Council in that country to reach out to their own people. We encourage National Councils to be ever-mindful of the needs in their own countries and in other places in the world and to respond with generosity and compassion.

*Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation*

[www.facebook.com/FDNSCJusticeandPeace](http://www.facebook.com/FDNSCJusticeandPeace)

*Each First Friday for the Chevalier Family  
a day of prayer and action.*

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A SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART  
ACCORDING TO THE CHARISM OF FR. JULES CHEVALIER

An on-line programme for members of the Chevalier Family  
and for everyone interested in a Spirituality of the Heart

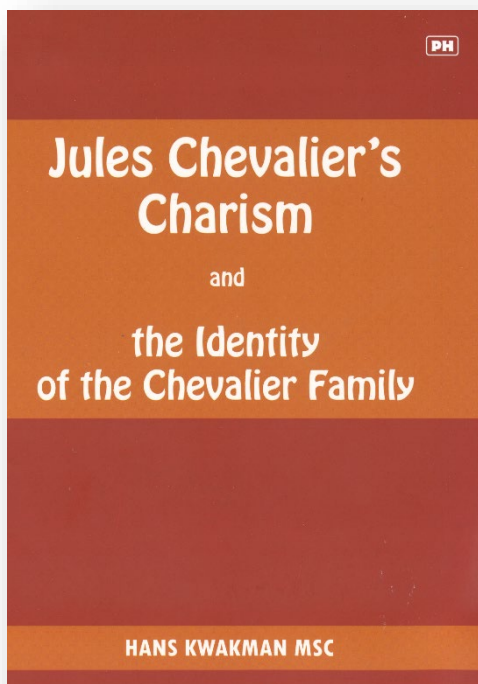
Fr Hans Kwakman's online formation programme is available for use from:

<https://www.olshgen.com/chevalier-family/spirituality-of-the-heart-an-online-course/>

**Part 1**, section 1-3: Introduction: In Search of a Spirituality.

**Part 2**, section 4-16: The Charism of Fr. Chevalier.

**Part 3**, section 17-29: Living a Spirituality of the Heart and our Mission according to Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter 'EVANGELII GAUDIUM' (The Joy of the Gospel).



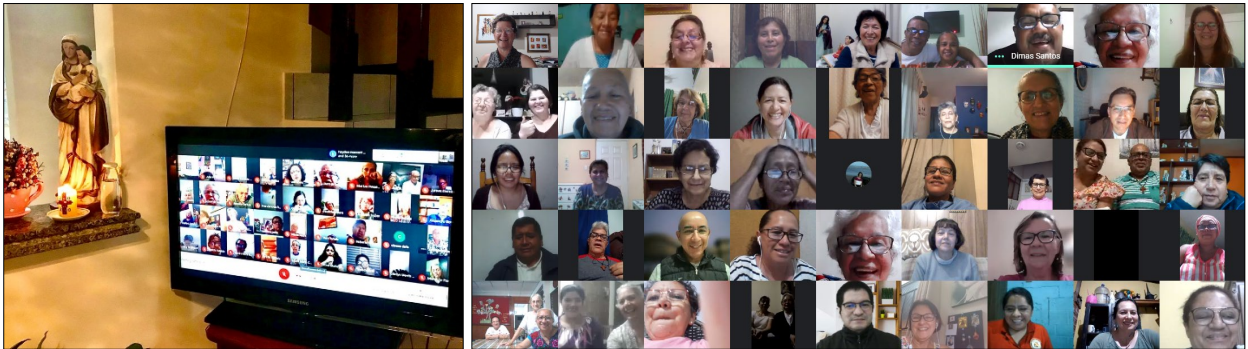
**Part 4**, section 30-50: Living a Spirituality of the Heart in Daily Life. according to Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter: 'AMORIS LAETITIA' (The Joy of Love).

**Part 5**, section 51: Living a Spirituality of the Heart and care for our common home, God's creation, according to Pope Francis' Encyclical 'LAUDATO SI' (Praise be to you, my Lord).

# STAYING IN TOUCH

Each member of the International Council has kept in touch with members in their regions by Zoom or face-to-face meetings. These images show some of the meetings.

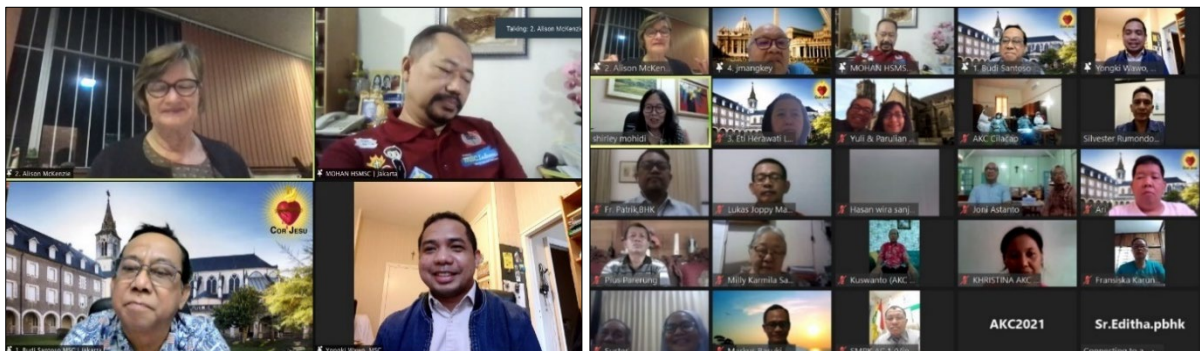
## Weekly Rosary for life: in Ecuador, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and El Salvador.



## Meeting with the Korean Laity



## Meeting with the Indonesian Laity





## Australian National Council Meeting



## Zoom Meetings in Belgium – Silent Walk



### Movements in a Silent, Zoom walk

#### 1. Letting Go

What things from the past do you find difficult to let go of?

#### 2. Joy makes you renew

If you could start all over again, what would you do first?

#### 3. Being a Christian

Do you call yourself a Christian? If so, what does that mean to you?

#### 4. Hang on and keep on believing

Who could or would you encourage with these words? Connect with this person during the remainder of the walk.

#### 5. Be alone and connect with God

How do you find peace and quiet? And do you talk with God? Trust God with a little conversation.

#### 6. A day for the Lord

Is Sunday still a Sunday for you? How do you make Sunday a special day?

# BREAKING NEWS

Due to the uncertainty of the international situation, the International Gathering scheduled for 2023 has been postponed until January, 2024. Planning is continuing however, and the following countries are invited to send two representatives to the Gathering.

We are asking those countries who have the capacity, to begin to raise funds to subsidise people from countries with less financial capacity.

Our hope is to have participants from every country where there are laity.

Angola	Spain	Kiribati
Burkina Faso	The Netherlands	Marshall Islands
Cameroon	Canada	Dominican Republic
D.R. of Congo	United States of America	El Salvador
Namibia	Indonesia	Guatemala
Senegal	Papua/New Guinea	Mexico
South Africa	Philippines	Brazil
Belgium	Vietnam	Ecuador
England/Ireland	West Papua	El Salvador
France/Switzerland	Australia	Paraguay
Germany	India	Peru
Italy	Fiji	
Slovakia		



*Holy Family Retreat House  
Cebu, Philippines*



*Debbie Mellijor  
International Affairs, National  
Council, CFLA*

# BECOME A LAY MEMBER OF THE CHEVALIER FAMILY

The Laity of the Chevalier Family are a very large group of men and women from every walk of life, living in many countries and cultures spread around the globe. At its most basic level, to be a member of the Laity of the Chevalier Family requires a commitment to live a life of love, as best we can, wherever we find ourselves in our family, professional and community lives.

To deepen and live more fully that life of love, we draw on a particular focus on Jesus we call Spirituality of the Heart. We believe, and have experienced for ourselves, that Jesus' compassionate heart reveals God's unconditional love for every human being, especially those who are poor, excluded or treated unjustly. This love extends to all of creation. We know that it is this love that has made a difference in our own lives, adding deeper meaning and purpose, and can potentially make a difference to the pain and suffering of the rest of the world.



*Sacred Heart – St Alban and Stephen Church*

And so, we live our lives undertaking our obligations, while at the same time, looking for every opportunity to go beyond those commitments to be a source of kindness, understanding, compassion, forgiveness, gentleness, humility and simplicity to those we encounter. In other words, the mark of our lives is to try to live our whole life in a spirit of family.

These are very lofty ideas to which we can only aspire. But, we do believe that the healing of the world and hope for a better future can begin to come from the commitment of thousands of people who do their best to follow the way of Jesus and be God's Heart on Earth.

From the very beginning, Jules Chevalier had a vision of professed members and lay people working together to undertake our shared mission of offering the Sacred Heart of Jesus to others. The Chevalier Family is comprised of professed members of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Daughters of our Lady of the Sacred Heart and the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and many thousands of lay people. Together we form one family and as such we are interdependent.

The Laity of the Chevalier Family are developing a system of national and international structures to support local groups and to create an international network of people who have learned to believe in God's love for them and have allowed that love to transform their lives and we invite those who are interested to join us.



# STATEMENT – SPIRITUALITY OF THE HEART

Spirituality of the Heart is grounded in a profound belief in God's love for us – that the heart of Jesus reveals a God who is love and who loves us and all of creation intimately and unreservedly.

Spirituality of the Heart invites us to journey into our own heart and into the heart of the human condition to be aware of God's transforming love inviting and empowering us to be like Jesus, the gift of this love for others. This way of living opens up enormous possibilities for life and love and offers a challenge to grow ever more deeply in kindness, compassion, humility, forgiveness, understanding, simplicity and a sense of humour.

We are called to be God's Heart on earth and to offer ourselves to be used as a source of healing for the wounds of the world. We believe, as did Jules Chevalier that this love is the remedy for the ills of the world. We are all called, religious, diocesan priests and above all laity, to share this mission to be the vehicle of love everywhere, in every culture and at every level of society.

Spirituality of the Heart is lived together with Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, who formed and carried the heart of Jesus and who points to his heart.

*A Spirituality of the Heart is a way of living – a way of being in the world...a journey to be travelled (with others)... an energy that sustains and moves us, a dance in which we are all participating... a way of being in the world in relationship to self, others and God; a way of coming to rest within ourselves at our deepest centre.*

*J Maher msc*

St. Augustine put Spirituality of the Heart in very practical

terms: *Once for all then, a*

*short precept is given unto you: **Love God and do what you will:** whether you hold your peace, through love hold your peace; whether you cry out, through love cry out; whether you correct, through love correct; whether you spare, through love do you spare. In all things, let the root of love be within, for of this root can nothing spring but what is good.*



*Crypt – Issoudun*

*Image: OLSH Provincial Council*

## Jérôme and Octavie – Congo

### **Our country has become the laughing-stock of the world**

The Democratic Republic of Congo (R.D.C) our country is potentially very rich: it is full of various mineral riches, oil and gas, huge forests, many lakes, a large river and huge rivers of unparalleled dimensions, full of fish... But the population is hungry. Everything is exploited for the benefit of a few individuals and their Western masters who pretend to love us. A love-profit.

It is disheartening for those who continue to open their hearts to others and to Christ. At the restricted level, in our families, in our parishes, in our spiritual movements, in our communities there is still a little mutual sharing, a bit of legendary African community spirit.

This behaviour should help those who do not believe in realizing that God is present in us. What has been said in Isaiah 65 can be applied here: we must work each in our country to seek that peace that only God can bring.

Nehemiah: 2:1-8: Nehemiah asks and obtains because he is not begging and his years of loyal service have earned him sympathy and esteem. His discretion, initiative and fervent words are evident in encouraging the sceptics he manages to convince.

Was it necessary to build the ramparts of Jerusalem? In fact, more than restoration, the Bible emphasizes how it is realized: by asking for everyone's cooperation, Nehemiah reconstructs the community of Jerusalem.

Luke: 9:57-62: There are no disciples who are not missionaries. Jesus trains them not only by instructing them, but by giving them a task. It is likely that he sends the seventy-two shortly after calling them, and even today, the most

enthusiastic missionaries are often the new converts. Like the first missionaries; MSC OLSH and MSC Sisters, that left for New Guinea or Africa, without fear of death.



*Jérôme and Octavie*

The same Spirit that inhabited them more than 160 years ago continues to act in our hearts, for a mission that must begin with us. Through small actions put together, can we help rebuild our coveted country? The answer to this question is "love." Love the job well done.

Let us not be distracted by conspiracy videos about vaccines while our country is at the heart of many issues. Let us love our country and love our work, whatever it is.

*"Do what you love. Otherwise, learn to love what you do, to do it well, to the satisfaction of others."*

Some actions of love in being the Heart of God are: helping for the meal, to dress, for medical care, for studies, for the burial of a family member. These are basic needs that have become inaccessible to a good part of our people.

*Jérôme and Octavie Pongi Nzita*

## Maria-Olimpia - Germany

### **A personal point of view**

The Catholic Church in Germany is going through a most difficult time. It is in a deep crisis.

Large numbers of Catholics continue to leave the Church, there is a disturbing sexual abuse scandal, and an outrageous cover-up of this reality. Too often, there is no obvious regret shown for the suffering inflicted, or any deeply felt compassion for the victims. This has led to a great distrust of the Church and many of its representatives. Added to this is society's lack of understanding of the special privilege the church claims for itself. The faithful too, feel that statements about personal lifestyles are increasingly presumptuous. The Catholic Church in Germany is run in a largely undemocratic manner, and many in the Church would like to see a "constitution" that guarantees democratic co-determination, separation of powers and control of power.

The debate about the priesthood of women is also strong in our country. Germany is the country of the Reformation and there are almost as many Protestants as Catholics here. The Protestant Church has ordained women as pastors since 1958. This is now a matter of course. The exclusion of women from all Catholic Church offices is no longer accepted by Christian women and no longer corresponds to the reality of the 21st century.

The news of the ban on blessing homosexual couples by the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has caused great indignation in the churches of the Western world. Isn't it God who gives the blessing?

How can the Church presume to censor God and deliberately exclude people? In Germany, this has

given rise to another great wave of resignations.

What will happen to our Church? Everything is very complex and seemingly deadlocked.

At the moment, I'm specifically moved by the question of how I, personally can continue to live in this Church with "aching limbs" in the body of Christ?

To my great happiness and blessing, I have been part of the Chevalier Family for eight years.

In our group in Duisburg, we are all fundamentally interested in the spiritual deepening of our lives. We experience a great acceptance of each woman (we are currently only women) gathering together to share our joy and our suffering. This has a most strengthening effect on each individual. This attitude of acceptance testifies to an inner spiritual breadth that the MSC Sisters, exemplified by the founding of the group, and into which we have grown. The contemplative orientation of our group through the input and exercises of Sr. Stephani has led us through the inner movement of our hearts to the core of Spirituality of the Heart and a deep experience of God's love for myself and each person. Thus grows the conviction that in Jesus God loves us with a human heart and without condition. As lay members of the Chevalier Family, we want to be companions to one another and to be a visible sign of God's love for all people. Our Heart Spirituality is a holistic path that opens us all to the reality and presence of God in ourselves, in our neighbor and in the world.

And this is where the worldwide connectedness of the International Chevalier Family and the lay movement has been very important for me! Meanwhile, I have been able to participate in many different international meetings. There were Pentecost meetings in Kleve with Dutch and Belgian groups, with whom we are closely connected, a formation course of 1 and a 1/2 years with some members also from the Netherlands and Belgium. There was the very inspiring Lay World Meeting in Sao Paulo in 2017, where our hearts were led into a great expanse and the theme of the meeting *"A Spirituality without Boundaries"* was lived by all. I was able to meet many wonderful people from all over the world on this journey of our hearts. All of them are living powerfully and authentically as committed Christians who are active in the world in the most diverse ways.



Another experience of *"God's Kingdom in our midst"* that I was able to draw from was the last International Lay Committee Meeting in Rome in December 2019 at the Generalate of the MSC Fathers (me as translator). In the hospitality in

which we were able to spend the days together, I experienced true fraternity.

All together, with the MSC, the FDNSC and the MSC Sisters we celebrated an early Christmas with much laughter and joy of heart! My heart was lifted because I experienced that "obedience" and "service" with a view to the heart of Jesus, have nothing to do with power-grabbing and submission.

Over the years, I have become more confident in my faith and as a person. I have a growing awareness of the responsibility of my spirituality to focus on the heart of Jesus, where we may see, and must courageously name the grievances of injustice, violence, hatred, harshness, greed, fear and envy in the world, also in the Church.

So how can I continue to live in and with this Church? The encouragement, inspiration, fulfillment and also commissioning that I encounter on the path of the heart gives me hope and helps me grow. It is the experience of Church as community in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is the hope that is revealed to us as Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 1:18), *"May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of your heart, so that you may understand the hope to which you have been called through him."*



*Maria-Olimpia Klose*

*I was born in Barcelona in 1965 (Spain) and grew up in Berlin (Germany). I've been living in Bochum (Germany) since 1993. I am married and have three adult children. I work at day care in a primary school.*

## Olguita - Peru

### 1. How does the Spirituality of the Heart open our hearts?

The Spirituality of the Sacred Heart opens our hearts, first to the immense love that the Messiah has for us, because we recognize how so much our Father loves the world that He sent his Son to save us from sin. And with that great love for his Sacred Heart, He taught us to love our neighbour.



Father Jules Chevalier felt that Great Love in his heart and wanted to create a community, that they would live day to day keeping in mind at all times that openness in our hearts is participating in the mission of Christ.

A mission to bear witness of His Love through the practice of charity in all its forms, having a sincere and deep concern for humanity.

For this reason we always remember: *May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere!*

### 2. What must we do so that our Spirituality opens us more fully to the presence of God?

The last words of Jesus on the cross were the summary of the trajectory of his life in obedience to the will of God. *"Father, in your hands I put my spirit"* (Luke 23:46).

It was the expression of absolute trust in the goodness of his Father, who was the reason for his mission on earth. The passion of the heart of Jesus was to fulfil his mission to reveal the unconditional love of God, as origin and fullness, as the way to the happiness of every human being. Likewise, we must assume the dimension of obedience in our Christian life, building it on an experiential, loving relationship with God, seeking to deepen in prayer, in our personal experiences of God, to know in this way his design, his will, having the certainty that He always seeks our good, but that many times his will implies resignation, courage, audacity, and above all, trust and love.

We must, through the biblical readings, interpret the signs of the times, events and circumstances of concrete reality, always trying, according to our mission, to announce the good news of salvation.

We must pray with an open heart, contemplating God from the fragility of our being, always trusting that He sustains our existence. We also need to open ourselves towards our neighbour with more generosity.

### 3. In situations where politics are polarizing and have the potential to divide, how can we open our hearts to the reconciling voice of God's love while still challenging what is wrong?

We need in these difficult times in which we live with COVID 19, to allow the Sacred Heart to dwell in each of our hearts and that we kindly feel that communication, like that voice of the Spirit that softly and quietly whispers and speaks to our minds and hearts.

Let us be aware that the Lord draws near to us, knowing that God's love has no limits, does not exclude anyone and that we are capable as lay people of the Chevalier Family not only being receivers or spectators without assuming a serious participation, but also heralds of good news, proclaiming the good, but also denouncing the evil that can occur in our societies. We share the same grace and at the same time the same responsibility. To respond to the demands of the new Church, we need to be more autonomous and adult in faith. To achieve this, we must be trained, thoroughly convinced of the horizons of the Gospel and from there learn to do theology from life.

*"We must offer a life that is lived as a vocation and that imprints the presence of the Spirit in everything that is done."* (Vélez, 2004 unpublished)



The current reality calls us with more urgency, to take up our commitment as Christians, seeking new ways of "evangelizing", from whatever field we find ourselves, which supposes an attitude of humility, of respect for all beliefs, of human approach to others, let us feel the living and painful face of each person, of each destitute and marginalized human being, with their sorrows and joys, with their frustrations, with their anguish and their hope for a better future, so that they can experience the deep longing of the Heart of Christ, that all people can know the true God and approach him with confidence and that He be loved everywhere.

As Fr. Jules Chevalier used to say *"Let us see in all the trials that a sign of God's love and mercy comes to us"* (Letter to Father Meyer MSC 1906).

As a layperson, in addition to being united within the same Church, let us seek to be in solidarity with people who seek the same goals of justice and liberation, overcoming borders and breaking down limits that separate us as Christians.

The Spirituality of the laity must also be nuanced by them being evangelizers, that is, the message of Christ, proclaimed with the testimony of the life and the Word of each one of us, carried out from the life of each one.

Father Chevalier spoke to us about the signs of the times, then it is now that he must be present in each age and in each human situation, to understand what God's challenges are at each moment, expressed in needs, fears, hopes and joys of humanity; this is how he invites us to reinvent ourselves in our daily work as a lay person of the Chevalier Family.

The pandemic has strengthened these living testimonies of faith in Christ thanks to the signs of solidarity, of fraternity, breaking down barriers of religious prejudice in selfless service to suffering humanity.

There is still a lot to do. If we achieve visibility as an evangelizer in socio-cultural structures, we show his way of acting, his discernment when facing problems and his testimony in the face of reality. Let us feel invited to read life from this perspective, in recognition of diversity.

Likewise, it challenges us to a task of greater integration of its elements: with the reality of the life of faith, with the daily reality, with the socio-political and liberating commitment.

#### 4. What is our global responsibility to our brothers and sisters in need?

*"Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing; whoever prefers not to see it, he will get curses."* (Proverbs 28:27)

The disposition of our heart should always be to help. It does not matter our condition but the attitude we have to do it. Let's look at the situation of others and how we can help them.

God is looking for those who can share the burden and provide for the needy. We need to be a channel of blessing and do God's will. In the midst of the financial crisis, God always raises a Joseph who is going to bless us; and as the crisis continues, the provision will multiply to help for as long as it takes.

May the same feeling of Jesus Christ to help those in need be born in our hearts today, and let us extend ourselves a little more, sharing with them all that He gives us.



Olguita Garcia – National Coordinator

# REFLECTIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## Chantal - Senegal

### **The spirituality of Father Jules Chevalier inspires me to live God's love in the midst of a complex world**

My name is Chantal BIAGUI, member of the Fraternity Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Dakar. I am the secretary general of the Fraternity Office. I am single without children; I work in the Senegalese administration as a veterinarian.

My knowledge of the Chevalier family was possible following a meeting with MSC applicants at a monks' retreat in Keur Moussa in 2001. I confess that this was God's plan because I was living in a situation of distress that had pushed me to rejuvenate myself more in God. God doing things right, at the end of the retreat, I had taken the same bus as the applicants; they told me about their congregation, the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. You can imagine what's next; I was invited to the next meeting of the Brotherhood. I admit that I enjoyed it a lot and since then I participate in all the activities.

Father Chevalier's conviction was that each of these three "branches" should take part in the same mission, so that their presence and action are conducive to a renewal of society. Father Chevalier found it unthinkable, even unrealistic, to consider changing the world and its values without involving the laity who were most intimately immersed.

Father Jules Chevalier calls us to be on earth the Heart of God. What does this really mean? How can I live as God's ambassador in today's world? First, I must focus my gaze on Jesus and his earthly life. Jesus Christ is the meaning of all love; he is the model; the heart; the source and motivation of the love of the disciples. From the crib to the cross, gentleness and strength appear in Jesus Christ with incomparable brilliance.

On a practical level, Father Chevalier was filled with compassion for everyone. It is in this vein that the Fraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart introduced a charity in its program of activities last year. The latter was done to Nianing's nursery; it was a Lenten effort for every member of the Brotherhood.

Like Christ, Father Jules Chevalier challenges us with his kindness, his gentleness, his forgiveness, his zeal, his charity for all.

Our testimony of love and forgiveness in our society is as follows:

In my neighbourhood, a neighbour who had just bought a vehicle and did not have good reversing skills, broke the tiles in our storefront every time she drove. One morning, I introduced myself to her and asked her to be careful. She was my surprise? She took the opportunity to unpack everything she had in her heart. I noticed her reaction and I did not add any words. Once at home, I informed my family; their reaction: 'why didn't you react?'. My answer: 'I don't know her and I don't know what she's suffering from or what she's blaming me for'.

A second time was a Sunday; the same lady comes back with another problem. She was bold and self-confident. She was trying to accuse us of a hygiene problem that had an impact on the circulation of waste from the septic tank. I'm showing the same reaction. I'm not reacting.

In conclusion, I realized that her problem was elsewhere and I had to show her a lot of love. Now the relationship is back to normal. Her family refused to greet me, but I tried to do so. Now, for showing a lot of love and mercy to her and her family, everything is back to normal. What a joy to show love to those who use strength to bring them to an end.

At the professional level I admit that it is not easy. There is lots of rivalry and sabotage. Among colleagues from other religions (Muslim religion), rejections and accusations are commonplace.

My faith and my life of prayer fill me with strength and love to be in their midst. I always ask the Lord to give me the opportunity to give them more in the face of certain critical situations; a little gesture of love costs me nothing. I have an obligation to bless and pray for all those who persecute me.

Through our testimonies, we remember that we must have a life of constant prayer through worship; devotion to the Sacred Heart; attendance at the various sacraments (the Eucharist, Confession); reading God's word to tap into the source of God's love.

*Chantal Biagui*



**Photo taken during a pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Ndiaffate (Kaolack-Senegal) in 2019**

**From left to right:** Ms. Emilienne TAVAREZ; Couple GASIGWA (Beatrice and Pierre); Mrs. Therese NDOUR; Mrs. Bertilde; Ms. Chantal BIAGUI; BIAMOU couple (Flower and Bertin); Ms. Hélène NDOUR and Sr. Juliette EKEMELA, Daughter of NDSC.

## Phuong - Vietnam

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am Phuong Chu Van. I am 20 years old. I am a student of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. At the moment, I am a member of the Young Lay MSC and I also have joined the MSC Aspirancy Group.

In this article, I would like to share with all of you about my little experience of my heart's encounter. Last Sunday, the Young Lay MSC had a gathering and sharing on the topic "DÁM YÊU! LIỆU CÓ LIỆU?" (DARE TO LOVE! TAKE A RISK?). During that sharing, I was seemingly caught by "an old acquaintance of mine" and a very fundamental question: "what is love?".

Does Love mean to create human beings and give them everything? Did Love mean to deny His throne, to receive the human condition, to suffer and to die on the Cross for the love of the lovers? Or, is Love a connection between God and humankind? In my own reflection, Love can be all of those things. God - the Father loves the world, creates this world and entrusts everything to human beings. God - the Son gives His life for the salvation of the world. God - the Spirit is the loving presence between the Father and the Son. That is love of God which we cannot fully understand. God loves us because God is Love.



*Phuong*

However, how does humankind show their love? We were very excited to discuss this question. There was a sharing in the group from one who told us that in the age of his kindergarten, he fell in love with a very cute little girl by glancing his eyes on her. And he loved her from that moment. But now, he is a Religious brother.

Another story from a young girl in our group who shared that sitting on the bus travelling between Da Lat - Phi Lieng on Christmas day, she fell in love with the sunset. Love is really simple. They love at the first sight. I sometimes jokingly quote from Xuan Dieu famous poem that: "Yêu là chết trong lòng một ít" (love is dying inside a little). Nevertheless, Xuan Dieu did not think that: when we are in love we are dying for so many things, not just a little. That Religious brother could be dying for the love of the cute little girl in the kindergarten. That young girl could be dying by spending a lot of money to travel back and forth to encounter that sunset again. Or in the love of the family, coming back from work, the husband is still dying of his time and his tiredness to assist his wife in cooking. Parents love their children by dying; giving them their favourite chicken drumsticks. Children love their parents by dying, giving their break time to help them with housework. Discussing about love, it will be a lack if we forget to mention about couples in love. Literally saying that when I love you, I am willing to go "up to the forest and down to the sea" for you. Passing by the milk-tea shop, I order your favourite milk-tea flavour, I bring them to you and offer you my sweet kiss. The girl says to her lover that I love you. I am willing to sacrifice my life for you, to be your supporter. So, love is dying for someone. Jesus died on the Cross for loving us. We are willing to die for those whom we love. Therefore, love is a willingness to sacrifice, to do our best for the happiness of our loved ones. Do you dare to love, dare to be at risk?

At the end, there is another question: while loving, do we need to sacrifice for someone? Does that prove our love? In this particular question, the Young Lay Group and myself have not found the answer. I hope that in our next gathering, we are able to continue sharing our thoughts on this question. This is also my invitation for those who have read my little encounter of love to give some thoughts on this!

*Phuong Chu Van*

Sara - UK

## **Spirituality of the Heart, in terms of content and in practice – St Albans**

The loving heart of Jesus sustains us and encourages our faith; it is the personification of Christ's love. Recognising that the Heart is the symbol of Jesus loving each individual in a unique way is both fortifying and a stimulus for our own prayer lives. This ethos encourages us to be with others as God is with us. We all see the need to live out the Spirituality of the Heart in terms of loving and supporting our neighbour. How we do it very much depends on our current circumstance, what stage we are in in our lives, and what we physically and mentally can accomplish.

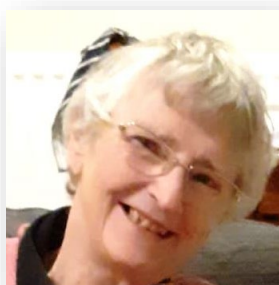
In terms of formation, we have been greatly encouraged by the European Lay Associates who regularly disseminate Newsletters from all around the world, send us information about members and projects as well as Fr Hans Kwakman's continuing on-line course.

Practically, the actions of our groups in St Albans, like many others, have been severely restricted over the past year, by the Coronavirus pandemic. However, we have also discovered new ways to show love and support for our neighbour. Taking the time to phone someone who is housebound – there are so many lonely and isolated parishioners who do not access the internet – praying with them and maybe taking them a newsletter, have been greatly appreciated; a simple conversation can make all the difference. Where possible, several of our group have helped keep our church open for services by acting as stewards, facilitating, sanitising the pews after use as well as marshalling

social distancing. Individually, our Associates continue to demonstrate their love of neighbour by supporting charities through donations and actions: for example, supporting CAFOD by selling Traidcraft goods online, undertaking a sponsored walk in aid of its clean water campaign and by helping at a shelter for the homeless during severe winter weather.

Just before the first Lockdown in March 2020, we had just begun to collect food and essential items for distribution from a local food bank to those in need in the local community. When that had to stop, we then encouraged members of the parish to donate money to help the charity. We hope in the future to continue to coordinate similar collections to benefit the less fortunate in our society. It is thought that this could be better achieved working in conjunction with City-wide actions rather than doing so in isolation; the first stage will be liaising with local agencies to find a suitable project to support. We would also like to support other projects, including conversation classes for those whose first language is not English, and local charities that outreach to the homeless.

All our aims and objectives are based on the prayer that we too may follow Fr Jules Chevalier's ethos of being on earth the Heart of God; that our understanding of God's love will continue to influence the way in which we live and adapt to different situations.



*Sara Nash has been a parishioner for nearly 40 years at St Albans & St Stephen church in St Albans which for 120 years until 2019 was served by Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. She has been married to Ian for 45 years and they are both members of the Lay Chevalier group which has been active in the parish for the past 11 years. Until she retired in 2016, Sara worked in scientific publishing; she now enjoys more time to travel, help out in the church and spoil the grandchildren.*

## Simone - Curitiba

### A look at isolation

Times when the heart is wounded and bruised. There is so much sad news, so many loves that have gone, so many that suffer the consequences of the authorities' lack of planning, of poorly applied public policies. Today my heart mourns the departure of Sister María de la Luz FDNCS, a sweet person full of God's love. One of her songs didn't get out of my head all day, perhaps because she says a lot about her life and the moment in which we meet. So I asked for permission to share here an excerpt of the lyrics and at the end the link where you can listen to it.

*'I search in your heart, Jesus, what I need to live, Lord. Come and support me, come my Saviour, I need peace, I need your light.*

*I see the birth of your heart, open, wounded, lifted from the earth. A new world, without hatred or war. A new world of peace, of forgiveness. Make me an instrument in your mission. Make me a visible sign of your heart.*

*The men of the world only make us suffer. War, violence, difficulties and oppression. I want to help, to bring compassion. Your love will win one day.'*

Certainly, Sister María de la Luz has become a visible sign of the Heart of God in the world. For her testimony, her prayer life, her confidence, her sweet gaze and her melodious voice. We trust that she is close to the Father of Love and that she would help us go through it all. Meanwhile, remembering her moments with her, I began to think about the topic that was proposed for this article.

I have received many messages from friends who know me and know that I belong to the group of "rezadores" (something that is not common today among young people), asking me to pray for a relative, a friend, wanting to hear a word of comfort and the certainty that God takes care of

everything. People in need of affection, welcome, conversation, the hug that is not possible, the smile that hides under the mask that wants to protect our lives. People who need food, work, hope. People who need emotional support, mental health, a light at the end of the tunnel. The heart is cut when knowing and experiencing the suffering of humanity.



Simone

However, this very suffering becomes an opportunity when we put ourselves in God's hands. When we trust in his infinite mercy and allow ourselves to rest in the lap of his Father, between one day and another of sad news. This very difficult moment becomes an opportunity because we can give a word of comfort to so many people who suffer or participate in so many movements and campaigns that seek to help those who suffer the most from the consequences of all that we live.

"I seek in your heart, oh Jesus, what I need to live, Lord." If we don't seek the loving and compassionate God at a time like this, where will we go? Feeding the Spirituality of the Heart through prayer has been the way to strengthen the soul in the days of trial. Prayer is one of the few moments when the heart calms down. There are moments like the Rosary for Life, in which we meet from different countries, different languages, but the same suffering and the same love unite us and move us. Family moments, in the daily Mass transmitted by social networks; celebrating the great feasts of the Church - where previously we would never have thought of not going to church - today are prayed more deeply inside the home because we realize how much we miss celebrating in community.

Every day the news shows the number of people dead, hospitalized, waiting for a vacancy; but they also speak of the recovered people, of the food collection campaigns that spread everywhere, of the surveys that show that 49% of Brazilians have begun to donate more in this period and that, of them, 63% are among the poorest. Those who have little know what they need and that is why they are more supportive. Mercy makes the heart feel compassionate and leads the body to act. The donation is carried out and those with the least are served. Justice begins to be present and the most suffering are taken care of in some way. The public power many times does not assist the needy, but this opens the way for people concerned about their neighbour to take attitudes that lead to healing of those who donate and of those who receive affection in the form of donation. *"I want to help, to bring compassion. Your love will win one day."*

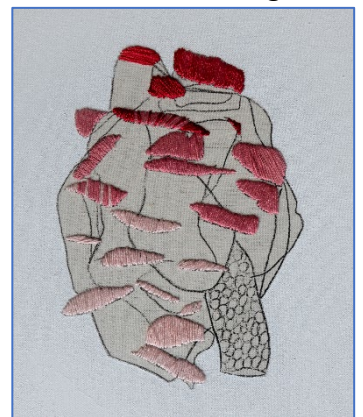
Accusing voices resound in social networks: the fault is yours, or whoever ruled, or who now governs. It is difficult to remain calm in the face of so much false news and nonsense propagated by those who discredit science and want to maintain the death toll as long as the economy survives.

It is difficult to understand when life became worth less than money.

As a lay woman of the Chevalier Family, I have not remained silent. Because by baptism I became a priest, prophet, and king, and as a prophet I also have the mission to announce the good news of God who is merciful and will take us beyond this suffering, but also to denounce injustices, abuses and everything that is contrary to the installation of the Kingdom of God.

As brothers and sisters in Christ we are responsible for one another. This responsibility ranges from following the basic rules that prevent the proliferation of the virus that oppresses us, such as the use of a mask and social distancing, to more effective actions by collecting food, helping those most in need, listening to those who suffer. or giving a word of support or prayer to those who no longer believe.

There is no way to be positive 100% of the time. We are human and that is why we can mourn the death of a loved one, or rebel against a situation that does not allow everyone to survive because someone needs to benefit more than the other. But in these moments we need to know that God has the true answers we need, that his time is different from ours and that everything in history is cyclical, and we will come out of this experience better, strengthened in faith and hope, more in solidarity, valuing what little we have, the little things, the hugs, the encounters, the smiles, because we are loved by God and sent to love everyone. And we will love again up close and with smiles appearing on our faces. I trust and hope that God gives us that grace.



*Mended Heart - Rachael Rowe*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYUbpw-wL70>

Link to the song Mundo Novo (Sister Maria da Luz, FDNCS)

*Simone Cristina Incote is the Coordinator of the Laity of the Chevalier Family of the Province of Curitiba*

# REFLECTIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## Therese - Australia

### **An Easter reflection on Spirituality of the Heart**

We have just celebrated Easter and the victory of Love over death. What was so amazing and unique about the person of Jesus that 2000 years after His death, billions of people around the world still celebrate His dying and rising? What is it that touches our hearts and restores our sense of meaning and purpose and direction during this Easter time? Following the season of Lent, as we entered Holy Week, we walked the journey of Jesus' last days. We see Him, entering Jerusalem, hailed as King on Palm Sunday, sharing a meal of remembrance with His friends on Holy Thursday, only to be betrayed by these very friends hours later. We see Him agonising with mental torture in the Garden of Gethsemane, begging His Father to let this cup of suffering pass Him by, yet still being open to His Father's will. We see Him publicly humiliated in front of the very crowds that welcomed Him into Jerusalem a few days before; we see Him crowned with thorns, carrying a heavy cross and crucified. We see before us the full gamut of human suffering: the betrayal of friends, the suffering of feeling completely alone and abandoned, especially by His Father, and the utter sense of failure in His mission to bring the healing Love of God to the world. The reason why 2000 years after this event we still celebrate, is because Jesus reflects to us our human condition and how to respond in times of trouble. He shows us a way through our suffering through His humanity, His humility and His faithfulness. Jesus continued to believe, to hope and to trust in the Love of His Father and He surrendered with His whole heart to this Love at the core of His being. Indeed at Easter we celebrate the victory of Love over death. This Love not only transforms how we see the future

but the present moment, where we find ourselves now; it gives us hope.

We are living in divided and unsure times, with suffering affecting so many countries, especially through the Covid virus, and the increasing havoc climate change is causing in our world. How are we to make sense of our lives and our responsibility to those who are suffering. The situation can look overwhelming, especially when we look at the global picture. We see polarising politics that are divisive and disabling especially to the poor and sick in our world. We can feel powerless to respond to the needs we see. They can overwhelm us. What can we do?



*Image: Steven Hackett*

Jesus gives us the answer, by His example. He lived His life with an ever-deepening and growing awareness of the love communion between Himself and His Father. It was His prayer that enabled this love communion to grow. This love was the source of His life and gave Him the courage and strength and capacity to live a life of Love for others. Jesus showed us what Love looks like when given fully, without the need or desire for recognition or praise or reward. We can ask ourselves . . . . How can I live this Love?



The saints and mystics of all ages tell us, in different ways, that to come to a real freedom of heart and spirit, we need to choose to surrender, and to trust, to be fully open to the love freedom that only God can give. This is Heart Spirituality. Yet we hesitate; we fear the demand that to give all we might lose our identity, our sense of self. And this is where Heart Spirituality comes in. Heart Spirituality invites us, indeed calls us to the recognition that God is at the heart of our world, at the heart of the events and circumstances of our lives, calling us to move beyond self and enter into the very heart of God . . . Love. We cannot do this alone; we need one another to walk this journey of love, supporting one another through care and compassion, reflecting to each other something of the love of God. In our complex world, the problems can seem overwhelming and we can feel our contribution is insignificant. What can we do to bring Heart Spirituality into the situations where we live? We can begin at home, in what Pope Francis calls the domestic church.

Ronald Rolheiser, OMI in his paper entitled “The Major Imperatives within Mature Discipleship” (March 10, 2013), gives us ten major demands that reside inside both human and Christian maturity, and gives us the encouragement and response we need to live fully and freely in these times of challenge:

1. Be willing to carry more and more of life’s complexities with empathy: Few things in life, including our own hearts and motives, are black and white, either-or, simply good or simply bad. Maturity invites us to see, understand and accept this complexity with empathy so that like Jesus, we cry tears of understanding over our troubled cities and our own complex hearts.
2. Transform jealousy, anger, bitterness and hatred rather than give it back in kind: Any pain that we do not transform we will retransmit. In the face of jealousy, anger, bitterness and hatred we must be like water purifiers, holding the poisons and toxins inside us and giving back just pure water.
3. Let suffering soften rather than harden our souls: Suffering and humiliation find us all, in full measure, but how we respond to them, with forgiveness or bitterness will determine the level of our maturity and the colour of our person.
4. Forgive: Perhaps the greatest struggle we have in the second half of our lives is to forgive: forgive those who have hurt us, forgive ourselves for our own short comings, and forgive God for seemingly hanging us out unfairly to dry in this world. The greatest moral imperative of all is not to die with a bitter unforgiving heart.
5. Live in gratitude: To be a saint is to be fuelled by gratitude, nothing more and nothing less. Let no one deceive you with the notion that a passion for truth, for church, or even God can trump or bracket the non-negotiable imperative to be gracious always. Holiness is gratitude. Outside of gratitude we find ourselves doing many of the right things for the wrong reasons.
6. Bless more and curse less: We are mature when we define ourselves by what we are for rather than by what we are against and especially when, like Jesus, we are looking out at others and seeing them as blessed (“Blessed are you!”) rather than cursed (“Who do you think you are?”). The capacity to praise more than to criticize defines maturity.
7. Live in an ever-greater transparency and honesty: We are as sick as our sickest secret, but we are also as healthy as we are honest.

8. Pray both affectively and liturgically: The fuel we need to resource ourselves for gratitude and forgiveness does not lie in the strength of our own willpower, but in grace and community. We access that through prayer. We are mature to the degree that we are open to our own helplessness and invite in God's strength and to the degree that we pray with others that the whole world will do the same thing.



*Image: Michelle Vass, St Mary's Towers, MSC Retreat Centre*

9. Become even wider in your embrace: We grow in maturity to the degree that we define family (Who is my brother or sister?) in a way that is ever-more ecumenical, interfaith, post-ideological, and non-discriminatory. We are mature only when we are as compassionate as God is compassionate, when our sun too shines on those we like and those we don't like. There comes a time when it is time to turn in our cherished moral postcards for a basin and towel.

10. Stand where you stand and let God protect you: In the end, we are all vulnerable, contingent, and helpless both to protect ourselves and our loved ones. We cannot guarantee life, safety, salvation or forgiveness for ourselves and those we love. Maturity depends on accepting this with trust rather than anxiety. We can only do our best, whatever our place in life, wherever we stand, whatever our limits, whatever our shortcomings, and trust that this is enough, that if we die at our post, honest, doing our duty, God will do the rest.

In these unsure times in our history, let us embrace these words of wisdom, be gentle with each other and may we bring the healing Love of our God to others.



*Therese Compton is the mother of seven now adult children and married to Paul. Before retiring she worked as a palliative care nurse at The Sacred Heart Hospice at St. Vincent's Hospital Sydney. She has trained as a spiritual director and been involved in retreat work related to living with a life-limiting illness.*

# REFLECTIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

## Vicente, Mirian and Carlos - Ecuador

Ecuador shares for the edition of Encounter of Hearts: Spirituality of the Heart, a way to open our hearts and participate in the healing of the world.

### Introduction:

As lay missionaries of the Sacred Heart of the Chevalier Family we collaborate with the priests in some activities of their annual planning; Thus, Myriam Cuarán and Rodrigo Flores, a married couple, were designated to collaborate with Father Marcelo Campoverde in the Vocational Pastoral commission, together with the vocations from Ecuador and Brazil.



As every activity requires planning, we started doing it in a meeting. The planning consisted of: Dates: from October to June. Places: in the parishes of Buen Pastor in Santo Tomás southeast of Quito and San José de Chilibulo southwest of Quito. In the parishes of Tixán, Palmira and Chumchi canton, in the province of Chimborazo. (Two meetings in each place) Topics: a topic for each meeting. (Vocation and call) Participants: At least four people were assigned to lead each meeting. Each year we had approximately eight hundred young teenagers aged twelve and over. With the grace of God, my husband and I participated in this mission from April 2016 to December 2019.

### Testimony:

Participating in this mission was a great experience that personally helped us to experience in ourselves the Spirituality of the Heart of Christ, to open our hearts to each reality; young people, men

and women of different cultures, with different customs, with different expectations and with the problems that young people of these times suffer from.



Our mission was to reach them not only thinking of looking for a vocation, but also to touch their hearts so that they have an encounter with Jesus. As Father Marcelo said, “if they do not accept to follow the religious life, at least they will be good Christians or later on they can become the next laity of our congregation”.

When we had the meeting in the province of Chimborazo we traveled six hours by bus the day before the meeting, since the activity began at eight in the morning, but we had to be an hour early to set-up.



It could be said that this was complex, but no, working with groups of almost two hundred young people, getting them to pay attention, to participate in the dynamics, and especially to get the message to be internalized in the hearts of young people, I think that was the most difficult, but not impossible. We have the firm conviction that what each one of the young people experienced will be kept in their hearts and in those difficult moments of their lives they will know that they are not alone and they will turn to the Lord.

With Father Marcelo and the Fathers of each community we learned to leave everything in the hands of the Lord. Personally, each meeting was a life-giving experience, “I learned that feeling loved by the Lord, one can look at others with love, that to give our time to others is a reason for joy and great satisfaction, and even more so when that seed has borne fruit, because now there are two young people who have entered the formation house, one from the Buen Pastor parish of Santo Tomás Quito and another from the Chunchi canton, Chimborazo province. This is cause for great joy. We pray and ask to pray always for Priestly Vocations.

with thanks to:



*Vicente*



*Mirian*



*Carlos*

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