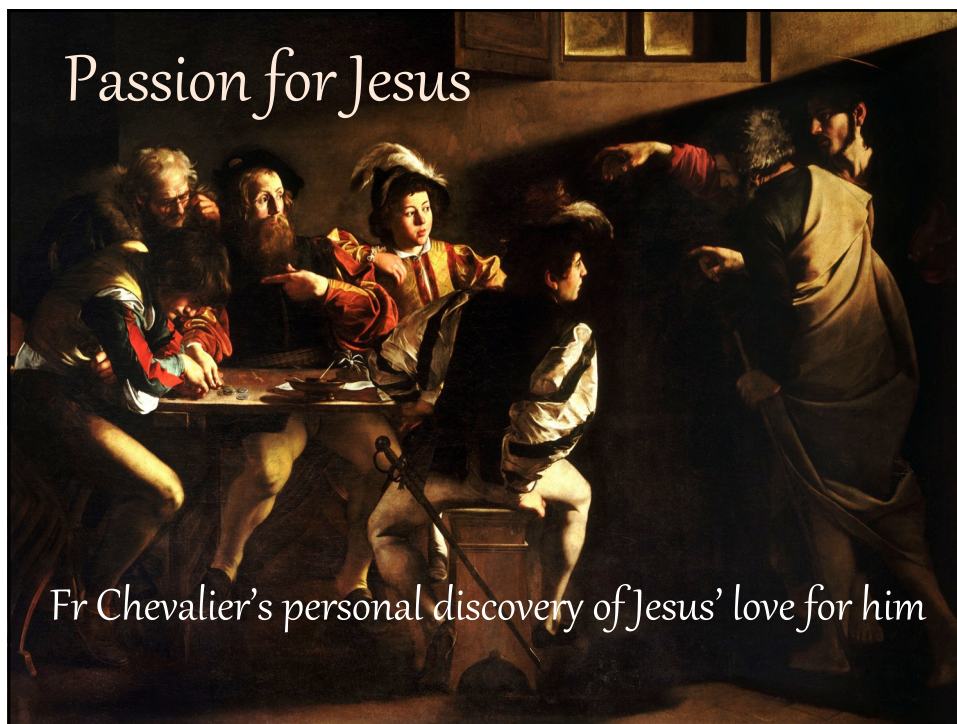




2



3

## Chevalier Found and Touched

“To the treatise on the Incarnation, our professor added a thesis on Devotion to the Sacred Heart; his development was both spiritual and learned and I wrote it down in every detail. My heart was touched and the more deeply I penetrated this doctrine, the more attractive it became.”

*Personal Notes, p.13*

“Neither the study of philosophy nor theology gave Jules any spiritual inspiration or emotional satisfaction. Therefore the discovery of Jesus, loving with a human heart, as brought forward by the Devotion to the Sacred Heart, came down upon him as a refreshing rainfall after a long dry season. It was like a spark of the Holy Spirit that set the dry wood of his heart afire.”

*Kwakman, p.27*

4

## Chevalier Transformed

“In his effort to live the spiritual life he had become severe, serious, stiff as a poker in his relations with others, taciturn. Then he did his retreat for ordination to the subdiaconate and a minor miracle was wrought before the eyes of his fellow seminarians. “On the day of his ordination,” wrote a still wondering Piperon, “he appeared completely different... a man entirely renewed, a subdeacon kind, affable and always smiling. We wondered at this sudden change, brought about by a few days of retreat and the grace of Holy Orders. The Abbé Chevalier had realised that in order to do good he had to act in the most attractive way, the way of kindness accompanied by a holy joy and pleasant conversation.””

*Cuskelly, Man with a Mission, p.121*

5

## Chevalier Transformed

“Even after fifty years, the wonder of this transformation and its unfailing continuance, had not passed from Piperon’s mind: “And still today,” he wrote, “after fifty years we find him always good, compassionate, amiable towards all who approach him. He has become all things to all men in order to gain all to Jesus Christ. This is the great secret which draws souls to him from every country; nobody takes leave of him without taking away a kind and consoling word and an encouragement to do good”.”

*Cuskelly, Man with a Mission, p.121*

6

## Chevalier Loved

God says to me, I have loved you with an everlasting love!  
Me! It is specifically me whom God has so loved,  
ungrateful me, sinful me.

God of surpassing majesty, God of supreme beauty and  
limitless perfection, God has loved me.

God! ... Me!... What distance! The Infinite! ... and  
nothing! And God has loved this nothing!

Loved! O God of love, make me understand this word:  
Loved!

He who has always existed has always loved me, and it is  
through love that he decreed my creation from all  
eternity.

*Chevalier, 1904*

7

## Found, Touched, Transformed

Consecrated life is a call to incarnate the Good News, to *follow Christ*, the crucified and risen one, to take on Jesus's way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brothers and sisters. In practical terms, it is a call to take up his way of life, to adopt his interior attitude, to allow oneself to be invaded by his Spirit, to absorb his surprising logic and his scale of values, to share in his risks and his hopes. Be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been *found, touched and transformed* by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed.

Remaining in Christ allows us to grasp the presence of the Mystery which lives in us and expands our hearts to the measure of his Son's heart. Those who remain in his love, like the branch attached to the vine (cf. *Jn 15:1-8*), enter into intimacy with Christ and bear fruit.

"Remain in Jesus! This means remaining attached to him, in him, with him, talking to him".

*Rejoice: A Letter to Consecrated Men and Women, CICLESAL, 2014, 5.*

8

## Our Constitutions

Jesus is the perfect model of our consecrated life; his love is our inspiration and driving force. *MSC CS 11*

From His open side we receive His Spirit, empowering us to live and proclaim God's redemptive love and to make visible the new life to which all are called through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *MSC Sisters CS, 5*

We are called in the Church to share the faith vision of our Founder. Like him, we come to know in the pierced Heart of Jesus the infinite tenderness and compassionate love of God for all people. *FDNSC CS, 3*

Contemplating with Mary his opened side, we enter into the mystery of the Heart of Jesus and receive the gift of his Spirit. We experience in faith the forgiving, healing and transforming power of his love. We are impelled to live and proclaim this love, leading others to know that in Jesus, God loves them with a human heart and is the answer to their hopes, their questionings and their every need." *FDNSC CS, 5*

9



## A moment for personal reflection

- Think about your experience of the charism, this gift of the spirit.....
- How have you experienced yourself being found, touched and transformed by Jesus, becoming possessed by this charism?

10



11

## Chevalier's developing vision

### Begin with Jesus in the Gospels

- From his earliest days, his “main attention went out to Jesus as he met him in the Gospels: the Good Shepherd teaching, healing, embracing all who came to him, and showing the love of his human heart” (Kwakman p.37).
- knowledge of Jesus will evoke love for Jesus; love for Jesus will lead to a change of heart; while a change of heart will bring about renewal in society.

12

## Chevalier's developing vision

### Look at the world around him

- He looked at the world with a pastor's heart rather than a theologian's intellect.
- Results of the French Revolution – egoism and indifference.
- He was curious about the deep causes – in the human heart
- “In order to save society, ... we should begin to let all the virtues reign in the human heart. But who will be able to take hold of it? Who will be able to enter its depths to purify it?”
- “Where to find the remedy against such great evils? In the heart of Jesus, who is only Charity, who is totally love. Therefore, against egoism I put forward his boundless Charity; against indifference his infinite love.”

13

## Chevalier's developing vision

### A new pastoral approach

- Instead of fire and brimstone, and Jansenistic preaching, Chevalier always spoke of the **mercy of God** and commended his growing group of MSC to do the same.
- Ministry to men in Issoudun
- Pastoral engagement and letter-writing
- Faith to life, life to faith – developing his vision

14

## A double dynamic in Chevalier

- By beginning with the Jesus that he found in the Gospels, Chevalier recognises the virtues of the heart of the Good Shepherd. In deepening his love for Christ, it also deepened his love for people and his desire to “put on” the virtues of the heart of Christ.
- But also, and at the same time, by being immersed in the lives of people, in Issoudun (parishioners, the men, etc.), in his awareness of the social and political realities in France, in his every-growing daily correspondence, in his daily dealings with his MSC confreres throughout the world and their joys, their struggles, their hopes and their pains, his heart for people leads him deeper into the heart of Christ.

15

## Cuskelly's double-dynamic

**First:** Faith Experience - "We ourselves have come to know and believe in God's love towards ourselves" (1 Jn 4:16)

1. We have believed in God's love for us personally – a living, personal, intimate faith experience which has provoked the gift of our own hearts to Christ.
2. As we contemplate our own experience of God's love we have believed in the love of God for all people. This is a love which alone can give meaning and purpose to life – if only people can accept it. This is the beginning of mission.
3. Because we believe in this love of God for all, and we believe that this love can work through those who consecrate their lives to him, we can have confidence that, if we work with courage and perseverance, God will give the increase.
4. And if we are a group (family) that has come together because its members have "believed in this love", a real fraternal love will reign among us.

16

## Cuskelly's double-dynamic

**Second:** Personal Experience - Return to your own heart and find Him. Ponder these things in your heart.

1. We need to return to our own hearts, the story of my life, its complexity, my experiences, my joy and pain, successes and failures, my inconsistencies and vulnerabilities, and rediscover God dwelling there, healing me, purifying me, loving me.
2. We need to listen deeply to the needs and cries of our hearts, our deepest desires.
3. We also need to hear the needs and cries of every human heart – the deepest desires and longings of our brothers and sisters on this planet – their questions, their anxieties, their desperate need for meaning, for a love that is real, ennobling and uplifting. We need to understand how darkness and doubt can lie heavy on the human heart.
4. When we have learned to believe in the love of God manifested in the heart of Jesus, we are then able to express the conviction that this love alone is able to give meaning and purpose to all human life; that it can answer humanity's deep questioning and quiet the restless heart.

17



## Living a spirituality of the heart

- We constantly return to the depths of our own heart in a realisation of our own profound personal needs for life, for love, for meaning. We are constantly in touch with our deepest desires.
- We find though faith, prayer and reflection the answer to our own questioning in the Heart of Christ – in the depths of his personality where humanity's yearning and God's graciousness meet in redemptive incarnation. We find that Jesus is not only the revelation of God's own compassionate heart, but also of the qualities poured out in every human heart with its gifts and talents for love, kindness, compassion, understanding, mercy, gentleness, justice.
- Then, fashioned by these forces, our own heart will be an understanding heart, open to, feeling for, and giving to our sisters and brothers (the virtues of the heart of Christ).
- We will not be disheartened in the face of difficulties. We follow Christ, who loved with a human heart. That is the only way we can love – from the depths of our own humanity. Jesus shared our human limitations precisely that we might know that over us is the everlasting love of the Father. In God's good time the omnipotent love of God will have its way. It is this love that we have learned to believe in!

18

## Encouragement from Pope Francis

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. These unilateral and incomplete proposals only reach a few groups and prove incapable of radiating beyond them because they curtail the Gospel. What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out. *E.G., 262*

19

## Encouragement from Pope Francis

How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! What then happens is that “we speak of what we have seen and heard” (1 Jn 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others. *E.G., 264*

20

## Encouragement from Pope Francis

When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. *E.G., 272*

21

## A personal moment and for sharing

How do I experience my sense of spirituality of the heart growing, being nourished and being stretched and purified through my encounters with others, with my own story (my heart), and with God?

22



23

## Chevalier's double conversion

- 1848. First year in seminary. During a retreat he made a resolution to become an exemplary seminarian: "Three principal virtues had been recommended to us: fidelity to the rule, mortification and humility. I did all I could to practice them during the five years in the major seminary."
- 1850. During retreat in preparation for sub-diaconate he was transformed. From being the "perfect seminarian", mainly concentrated on living in the presence of God and being obedient to the rules of God, the Church and the seminary, he changed into an amiable person, easily interacting with others, with a kind, understanding heart.

24

## Possessed by his charism

- "The encounter, through devotion to the Sacred Heart, with the merciful Heart of Jesus, must have occurred to him as a liberation. He began to realise that what the Lord expected of him was just the opposite of what he had been practising until then". *Kwakman, p.55*
- As Cuskelly concluded: "Chevalier's character was suddenly possessed by his charism".
- From his own deep personal experience, this "conversion of heart" became an integral part of his charism.
- The same spirit, who has formed the Heart of Jesus, is also at work in our hearts, in order to bring forth the qualities of Jesus's Heart.

25

## A mission of the Heart

- Chevalier's conversion was not typical – from sinful to holy life. Rather from austere to kind and compassionate.
- He learned to be himself, to love with a human heart, to model his heart on that of Christ.
- "He understood that to do good, he must present himself under a more attractive form – that of kindness, accompanied by pleasant conversation." *Piperon, Witness, p.130*
- His deepest intuition, from these earliest years, was that mission begins as a mission of the heart!
- In order to practice charity to the poor, there is no need to be rich, Chevalier writes, "it is enough to have a heart that is able to love, to sympathise, and to be compassionate... God has given you a good, kind and sensitive heart... The human heart is the most powerful means for doing good."

26

## A mission of the Heart

- He urges his missionaries to go and visit the poor personally: "to put aside our own ease, to sit at the bedside of the poor, to breathe the air that they breathe. That is the way we show that we love them and that we consider them our brothers and sisters."
- In the rules of 1855 he recommended the members of the Congregation "to practice the virtues of the Heart of Jesus: his gentleness, his humility, to have much respect for one another and to speak with kindness and cordiality." "If the missionary of the Sacred Heart wants to make his work and words effective, he must imitate his divine model who began by doing, then by teaching."

27

## A mission of the Heart

- Giving advice for parish missions he says that the missionary should always approach the people, very kindly and with neither a sad nor a severe facial expression..." "The missionary should imitate the Good Shepherd who goes searching for the lost sheep.... He should leave his confessional behind, while going to look for those unfortunates, whose hearts are still hardened. Such a step almost always bears fruit, sometimes even astonishing fruits." (e.g. the men in Issoudun!)

28

## A mission to society

- Chevalier was convinced that Devotion to the Sacred Heart was a remedy for the ills of a wounded society, especially those of egoism and indifference. This was not because he thought that "Devotions" as pious practices would bring about change, but that a deep encounter with the Human Heart of Jesus would!
- Jesus was more concerned about the illnesses of society than we could ever be. Therefore the only way for us to engage in a social mission is by engaging ourselves in Jesus' mission. Today we say, to be his heart on earth!

29



## Mission from... and Mission to...

- Mission is first and foremost about the one who sends and the relationship I have with Him. For Chevalier, the term “missionary” was identical with the word “apostle”. His followers were called “missionaries” not because of the type of apostolate they were to undertake, or the foreign places they might be sent, but because of being sent **by Jesus Christ**.
- Often we can get more caught up in consideration of those to whom we are sent.
- But if we forget who sends us, and why we are sent (participating in the mission of Christ, to be His Heart on Earth), we lose the deepest sense of our own identity as missionaries of the Heart of Christ! And we lose the freedom that being his missionary brings.

30

## Missionary Disciples

Equally Chevalier was convinced that it is impossible to be a missionary without being a disciple, one who is constantly rooted in Christ, in intimacy and prayer.

- “One should pray continually and never lose heart – these words of Our Lord apply above all to the missionary. People should see in the missionary a great spirit of prayer and good example. He will gain more fruit in this way than will all the knowledge and eloquence he might be able to use. Meditation will draw into him an abundance of graces and give unction to all he says; his good example will dispose minds to welcome what he communicates to them after he himself has received it from God.” *Chevalier, 1855*
- “Following the example of the saints, they (*the novices*) will learn far more at the foot of the cross than in books.” *Chevalier, 1857*
- “My conviction is that in the plans of divine Providence our Society is destined for great things and that it has a great future, but on condition that it is not half-religious but completely so without reserve.” *Chevalier, 1887*

31

## Mission Ubique terrarum

- Ambiguous meaning of “missionary” – preacher of parish missions, or mission to “pagan lands”.
- Piperon insists that, “from the beginning the very Reverend Fr Chevalier ardently desired to establish missions in countries where the Gospel had not yet been preached”.  
*Piperon, p.83*
- Recalling the frequent conversations about the foreign missions in the community at Issoudun, he continues, “Each time the Rev. Father expressed in burning words his ardent desire to see his confreres in charge of one of these dangerous and distant missions. And he expressed his hope of being one day sent there himself and of ending his life there.” The irony, of course was that, because of history and politics, he would spend his whole life in Issoudun!  
*Piperon, p.151*

32

## Ubique

- Chevalier was intentional in choosing the name *Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*. Not so much about “where” (Issoudun or foreign lands) but “who”: being sent to those in need to bring them “the treasures of the heart of Christ” *Chevalier, 1855*.
- Right from the earliest days, (Constitutions 1877) great store and emphasis was placed upon the willingness, indeed imperative, to carry out **any sort of apostolic ministry, anywhere**, and indeed **everywhere**, according to need.
- The essence of this mission was to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart **ubique terrarum** – in other words to bring people anywhere and everywhere into a knowledge and love of the Heart of Christ.
- This was not just a geographic “everywhere” but at all levels of society and social strata. Using a psychological language not available to Chevalier we would today add, to all aspects of a person’s life, personality and experience – especially to their woundedness and brokenness.
- Finally, as a footnote - and very interestingly, the 1877 text states that only “at times”, and with special “permission of the Holy See” will the Society “be able to accept the care of parishes”!

33

## Chevalier's challenge to us

- Are we people possessed by our charism as a result of our own experience of being found, touched and transformed by the love of Christ?
- Is ours, primarily, a mission of the heart? That our mission is expressed first and foremost in who we are, and how we are, rather than what we do!
- Are we as concerned about the illnesses of our society as Jesus is? And are we as deeply involved? How do we continue to read the signs of the times?
- Are we conscious first and foremost of our missionary identity as ones sent by Christ, sent to be his Heart on earth?
- What is the quality of our missionary discipleship, remaining rooted in Christ?
- How do we experience the call to mission "ubique terrarum" today? And how are we responding, personally and collectively?

34

## For reflection and sharing

- What has struck me today?
- What fresh insight have I had?
- What has brought me joy, excitement or hope?
- What do I need to stay with and reflect on further?

35