



MISSIONARI
DEL
SACRO CUORE

*Letter on the occasion of the
Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Rome, 24 June 2022*

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SACRED HEART FEAST DAY 2022

The time is now - Call for Ecosystemic Conversion - From I to WE

*"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?"
Rabbi Hillel*

Dear Confrères,

Heartfelt greetings from the General Leadership Team to all Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Chevalier Family members on the occasion of the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

Given the current context and the many challenges we face in our mission, the Feast of the Sacred Heart is inviting us to think of *ecological conversion* in the broader context of *ecosystemic conversion*. This is a conversion that leads us to create synodal attitudes, actions, and conversations, both within our communities and apostolates, and beyond congregational and ecclesial boundaries, with humanity. Mission emerges as a fruit of the conversion or transformation of our hearts to be more synodal – relational, inclusive, participatory, supportive, holistic. In this regard, we recall this quote from our brother Denis Murphy MSC [+ 2/06/2014],

God draws things into one ... The word 'heart' brings the multiplicity in a human being to a unifying centre. The word 'unifying' is important, because a centre cannot exist in isolation; it is always the centre of something. Thus the 'heart' as the centre of a human being unites body and soul; intellect and emotions; sense perception and rational judgment; passion and will. It was this combination of matter and 'energy' including spiritual energy, that attracted Teilhard de Chardin to the symbol of the heart. At this centre, we find the dynamism that moves and unites everything else - we find love. And Jules Chevalier following St Augustine claims 'that we are what we love.' (The Heart of the Word Incarnate, Pag. 25)

We perceive that a means of witnessing this conversion is by creating, prioritising, and valuing *synodal conversations* at the level of local communities, MSC Entities, and our places of apostolic mission. The quality and depth of our conversations show the authenticity and quality of religious life we witness today.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart reminds and invites us to value differences both within our communities and outside of it as opportunities. We should not see ourselves as competitors but as a means for the evangelical quest. Living a Spirituality of the Heart implies a less rigid fraternal life that is less bureaucratic, less individualistic, and more communal like the early Christian communities. We need to update our language and the value of symbols, particularly those related to the imagery of the Sacred Heart because words and symbols create realities.

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Dear friends, synodality requires us to foster a lifestyle of greater simplicity, closeness, togetherness, and transparency (Cf. CS 12-13). This is increasingly urgent given the tendency to make decisions without adequate listening or consultation. Synodality requires us as Missionaries of the Sacred Heart to listen to all voices, especially those we seldom listen to in our communities and MSC Entities.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart this year takes place within the context of challenging times in the world. In addition to today's pandemic, the war in Ukraine has unmasked the horrors of all wars currently being fought worldwide. All war is unjust and always affects the most vulnerable people. This context shows the vacuum of dialogical leadership in the world. Within all geopolitical conflicts, ambition for power and profit is endemic, and there is a lack of dialogue to build peace. Political and Media handling of all wars and the pandemic shows that victims are not the priority. How far away we are from the sentiments of the Heart of Christ.

On the occasion of this Feast Day, I suggest we reflect upon four points that Prof. Jeffrey Sachs¹ proposed during a recent presentation on *Laudato Si*. They are four ways in which we can strive to transform the world by putting *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti* into practice. These four action points are very concrete ways to live our charism and spirituality of the heart today.

1. Stop the war in Ukraine through negotiations and dialogue, not by waiting for victories.

Let us emphasize the necessity of dialogue and roundtable negotiations. If this is valid at the macro-political level, it is just as valid in our MSC Communities. We can start practicing such dialogue ourselves. There is no alternative if we wish to build genuine peace.

2. Stop the Pandemic because it continues to endanger the world's most vulnerable.

We are aware that we face many other 'pandemics' across our different missionary territories. There is a danger of falling into *indifference* because it becomes too familiar, and this makes 'pandemics' more dangerous. It reminds us that Fr. Jules Chevalier spoke of indifference as one of the *mal moderne* of his own time. Sadly, health remains a commercial interest and, for many, is a luxury.

3. Sustainable development, global cooperation, and the awareness that we are all interdependent (*Laudato Si* - *Fratelli Tutti*). Struggling for the *common home* should be an essential element in this Feast of the Sacred Heart because pierced heart of Christ is found in the "wounds and hemorrhages" of our *common home*.

4. Urgently address Climate Change/Global Warming. We are at one of the most dangerous times ever. Humanity, and all creation, are already suffering the consequences of global warming, especially the poorest and most excluded. And it is getting worse. Within our MSC communities, we should change and use more renewable energies, and promote healthier and more environmentally friendly living habits. An authentic Spirituality of the Heart would lead us to be prophetic in our rebuke of, and fight against, deforestation, land-grabbing, and all kinds of abuse and destruction of life. We must propose more communal, fair, and sustainable alternatives regarding the utilization of the earth and its resources. Our financial investments and projects, must be made according to Gospel values.

¹ Jeffrey David Sachs is an American economist, academic, public policy analyst, and former director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University. He is known as an expert on sustainable development, economic development, and the fight against poverty.

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Our prophetic call as religious must be shown through our living witness and fearless speech so that we urge religious, civil, and political leaders to listen to, dialogue, cooperate and negotiate more. In short – stop the war! We all face this crisis. Therefore, we MSC are called to engage in this global struggle.

The destruction of human beings continues to cry out. We have an opportunity to update the meaning of *reparation* as a way of living. Discovering the pierced Heart of Jesus in the broken relationships and the cracked and wounded world by selfish and destructive interests. We are aware that you are trying to give witness to this, and we encourage you all to continue to do your best in accompanying the most vulnerable *everywhere*.

We pray that this Feast of the Sacred Heart strengthens our awareness that we are all interdependent. May we appreciate the *walking together – synodality*. Let us make *congregationally* a lived reality.

As we continue to pray for peace, may we celebrate this Feast of the Sacred Heart with joy and hope.

In Corde Jesu,



Mario Abzalón Alvarado Tovar [Writ.]

André Claessens

Paulus Pitoy

Chris Chaplin

Humberto Enrique Da Silva



MSC GENERAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

P.S.

Dear Confreres, to honor the Sacred Heart Feast, we sense the invitation to question ourselves both in our personal and communal discernment:

What 'nuclear weapons' are we called to destroy within our communities?

Could it be that sometimes the community climate is suffering from global warming (metaphorically speaking) so that sometimes we burn each other out?

What conflicts would we have to stop, within ourselves and within our communities, to be prophets and peacemakers in today's world?

How may we build a safer world, where differences and diversities are genuine gifts and God-given means to assume at last that we all breathe the same air and face the same challenges for our world's future?