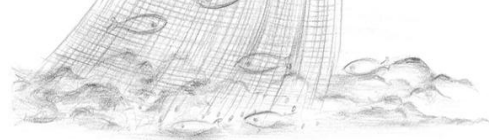




# Journey of Enrichment

2011 - Year of Shared Spirituality

"Put out into deep water,  
and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5,4



## Heart of Jesus and Mary - Contemplation and Compassion

On February 8<sup>th</sup> we will have the annual celebration of the Feast of the Heart of Mary in the Congregations of the Eudist Family; a feast instituted at John Eudes' request in 1648. For this reason we have chosen the theme of the "Heart of Jesus and Mary" for our monthly reflection as part of the "Journey of Enrichment".

### Heart of Jesus and Mary

In St. Mary Euphrasia's Conference No 12, she reminds us that "Our Institute was really the first to offer public worship to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our venerable founder wished us to wear a silver heart as a distinctive mark of our consecration to these loving hearts".

Though the wearing of the silver heart has generally been replaced by smaller modern symbols in Our Lady of Charity and Good Shepherd, the place of the "Heart of Jesus and Mary" remains an essential element of our spiritual heritage.

When we speak of the heart we do so in the spirit of SJE and SME, who saw the heart not just representing the interior of a person, but seeing it "principally as the symbol of love".<sup>1</sup>

They are also very clear that we cannot honour Mary in isolation. We need to see her in relation to Jesus. "Don't you know that Mary is nothing, has nothing and can do nothing except from Jesus, through him and in him? Don't you know that it is Jesus who is everything in her, can and does everything in her?"<sup>2</sup>

Jesus and Mary are inextricably linked together. "So closely are Jesus and Mary bound up with each other that whoever beholds Jesus sees Mary; whoever loves Jesus loves Mary."<sup>3</sup> The eternal Father gave Mary the power to conceive his Son, first in her Heart, before conceiving him in her virginal womb. Mary is completely open to the divine influence of Christ. The heart of Christ and the heart of Mary, once so physically close are even closer by grace. "Jesus is the source of life in his holy mother. He is the heart of her heart, the soul of her soul, so that we can truly say that there is one divine heart."<sup>4</sup>

### Contemplation

At the Annunciation, both Mary and the Angel enter into a deep silence to reflect on the announcement made by the Angel. In fact we can say that the whole of Mary's life is spent passing into an ever-deepening silence; what Berulle refers to as moving "from the silence of adoration to the silence of transformation."<sup>5</sup> Mary pondered all these things in her heart". (Lk 2,19 and 51) Mary's assent to God's request and her cooperation with God's desire are an integral part of the renewal of all creation. "Although God created humanity without

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<sup>1</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 52

<sup>2</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 52

<sup>3</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 50

<sup>4</sup> John Eudes, *Oeuvres (La devotion au T.S. Coeur de Marie)*, vol. 6, p.102

<sup>5</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 65

its consent, in renewing humanity, God wished to associate the Virgin Mary in this work and to obtain her consent."<sup>6</sup>

Mary's response at the Annunciation signals her active acceptance and cooperation in all that the Incarnation involves and her wish to be completely identified with the dispositions of Christ. "Let it be done to me"... she expresses her wish for the Incarnation not only here on the earth but also within herself, the state of "divine maternity."<sup>7</sup>

### **Compassion**

We can say that Mary's cooperation flows from the gift of zeal communicated to her by Christ and through her this gift is given to the Church. Having received and allowed Christ to be formed in her, she is the first to announce him, when she moves in compassion towards her cousin Elizabeth. Hers is an experience of interiority that opens out to others. It is in this movement of the Visitation that we find a model for our compassionate living.

It was a similar movement for John Eudes and Mary Euphrasia. It was the contemplation of the immense merciful love of the Heart of Christ that impelled them to respond to the needs of others; and reciprocally it was others' pain and misery which brought them to a deeper understanding of the love of Christ. Their lives can be summed up in this movement between contemplation and adoration of the Heart of God and their relationships with people. In short their spirituality is a spirituality of the "heart" and apostolic mission.

Just as Mary carried her Son Jesus in her Heart and will continue to carry him eternally, she carries and will continue to carry us.<sup>8</sup> We need help to "carry others in our hearts". Mary Euphrasia again commends John Eudes "for urging us to implore the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary for the light we need in dealing with people, and to ask them for prudence and gentleness."<sup>9</sup>

### **Walking in the Footsteps of Mary**

Fr. Ron Rolheiser in his Christmas homily puts it very beautifully when he says: "God has to continue to be gestated into the world in the same way as Mary did all those years ago"<sup>10</sup>. This seems to echo what St. John Eudes insisted over four centuries earlier: "You have in a way but one and the same vocation as the Mother of God."<sup>11</sup> In looking at the process of how Mary gave birth to Christ: the impregnation by the Holy Spirit; gestation of God within one's body; the stretching and agony of giving life; and the nurturing of life; we are given a blueprint for our own lives. What she did, each of us is called to do: to give God flesh in the world.

### **For Reflection and Sharing (on one or more of the following)**

- What are you "pondering" in your heart these days?
- Can you share some experience which is drawing you into a new understanding of what it means to live with a contemplative and compassionate heart?
- How do you deepen your sense of being called like Mary to give God flesh; to let God touch others through you in community and ministry?
- What place does Mary have in your life?
- Take your Congregational symbol in your hand; look at it reverently. What feelings and reflections does it evoke in you?

### **Prayerful Recitation of "Ave Cor" together.**

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<sup>6</sup> Bérulle, *Oeuvres (Oeuvres de Piété)*, vol.1, p.936

<sup>7</sup> Bérulle, *Oeuvres (Vie de Jésus)*, vol. 1, p. 481

<sup>8</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 52

<sup>9</sup> SME Conferences Chapter 59 and Book of Customs

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Ron Rolheiser, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Homily Jan 1, 2012 (Internet site : [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com))

<sup>11</sup> Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary 1989, no 26