



Society of the Sacred Heart

Generalate

Ref. N°: 25/106

June 27, 2025

Letter for the Feast of the Sacred Heart

« Ainsi parle le Seigneur Dieu :

Voici que moi-même, je m'occuperai de mes brebis, et je veillerai sur elles. » Ez 34,11



Dear Sisters and Friends,

Today's Feast of the Sacred Heart revives us with hope and joy when current world events can cause us to look away, helplessly, from global, societal and ecological upheavals, from conflicts and wars that claim countless civilian lives, especially children, through death, famine, lack of education, displacement... So many situations, near and far, increase our sense of powerlessness in this fragile, anxious, incomprehensible, unpredictable and complex world... It is a powerlessness we feel also, on a smaller scale, when 'our little Society' experiences its fragility, when the mission must continue without our presence in certain places, when relationships are more difficult, when we lose sight of the "common good," when we are absorbed or distracted by what we are doing, when we allow fear to paralyze us, when we distance ourselves from the Source...

However, the news also includes the reception of 'Dilexit Nos' as the last "painting" in the triptych by our beloved late brother Pope Francis, as well as the enthusiasm aroused in so many people and places around the world by the opportunity to remember Madeleine Sophie and give thanks for the gift received on the anniversary of her canonization.

The Holy Year also calls us to hope and to await 'something that has already been given to us: salvation in the eternal and infinite love of God. This love, this salvation, gives meaning to our lives and is the hinge on which the world stands...'¹

The invitation of the Feast is to welcome the gift that God offers us today and to savor the wonder of being loved, sought after and desired by a God who has not shut himself up in his heavens.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: PS 23 (6)

*At that time Jesus spoke this parable to the Pharisees and scribes:
"If one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does he not leave the other ninety-nine in the desert and go out to look for the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he takes it on his shoulders, all joyful, and on his return home he gathers his friends and neighbors to say to them: 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep, the one that was lost!'
I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who is converted than over 99 righteous people who do not need to be converted."*²

There are Pharisees and scribes. Jesus is with them, speaking to them in a parable. We are listening to Him today, on this day when we celebrate the feast of His Heart and renew the promises of our baptism, our vows and our commitments.

There is the Shepherd, the lost sheep and the rest of the flock. But in the end, the only one who acts is the Shepherd; he is the protagonist of the scene. Everything depends on him, as in the first reading from the prophet Ezekiel for today's liturgy.

"If one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does he not leave the other 99 in the desert to go and find the one that is lost until he finds it?"³

Is it really wise to abandon the ninety-nine sheep for just one? And what's more, sheep that are not at all safe in a sheepfold, but in the desert, a place of every danger? And tell me, in the meantime, what can ninety-nine defenseless sheep, also in the desert, do?

And two verses later, this Shepherd, once he has found the sheep, "takes it joyfully on his shoulders and, on returning home, gathers his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me'"⁴ as if he had forgotten to pick up the rest of the flock left in the desert!

Ah, I can hear my inner Pharisaical whisper, the whisper of jealousy, self-importance or pride. That of the management controller who makes the cost-benefit balance: 99 to 1!

¹ Pope Francis - Hope is a light in the night - preface

² Luke, 15:3-7

³ v 4

⁴ Verse 6



Society of the Sacred Heart

Generalate

But in reality, in our deepest heart, where our experience of "being saved" has been inscribed, this experience offered over and over again when I've drifted away, lost, at the bottom of the pit, tells us that this is not so.

By looking at Jesus the Shepherd, and entering by grace into the "feelings and preferences of His heart"⁵, by entering into His joy of "bringing her home", I hear rather that no sheep should be lost.

God is a father who does not like to lose. With the joy and the vulnerability of love, He seeks out those who have gone astray, often stirring up "the music of whispering hypocrisy"⁶ of the self-righteous.

For this reason, so as not to lose even the smallest, He goes out of Himself and goes forth in tireless search. He cannot bring Himself to accept that even one person could be lost.

His desire is an irrepressible desire: not even ninety-nine sheep can stop the Shepherd and keep Him locked up, warm and safe in the sheepfold. We should know this because He chose to become incarnate, to embrace our humanity completely. We should know this because the Shepherd is also the Door, the Way and the Life.

He doesn't reason, He doesn't calculate. He goes in search of this one, because each one is very important to Him and this one needs more, she is the most abandoned, the most neglected; and He goes in search of her.

We have all been warned: mercy towards each and every one of us is God's way of being and acting, His very Heart, and He is absolutely faithful: nothing and no one will be able to divert Him from His will of salvation. God loves everyone, He seeks everyone: one by one, one by one!

What does it mean for me today to let myself be found? What experiences, words, or the Word am I invited to return to?

To what place in my heart am I invited to return without fear, knowing that I am loved, sought after, and awaited?

Then, following in His footsteps, and in tune with His "inner dispositions"⁷, we can embrace His perspective, that of a life given to the service of those He passionately loves.

We are called to become shepherds and shepherdesses, men and women "for others", attentive, and light of sleep, knowing how to risk our lives and not be afraid : called to live the vocation of loving and desiring that others have life in abundance. And may we have so much vitality that we become capable of "overflowing" and irrigating the world around us by celebrating everyday life and small gestures...

In this way, from being cared-for sheep, with His grace, we become shepherds and shepherdesses taking care like Him, of those who most need our care, through closeness and attention, community and tenderness, kindness and gentleness.

⁵ RSCJ Constitutions §18

⁶ Pope Francis- General Audience- November 7, 2013

⁷ Constitutions §17

As for the Lord's flock, it is always on the move: it does not possess the Lord. The Shepherd will be found wherever the lost sheep is. So we must look for Him where He wants to meet us, not where we pretend to find Him! Mary can tell us all about this. "While He is looking for the lost sheep, He invites the other ninety-nine to take part in the reunification of the flock. Then not only the sheep on His shoulders, but the whole flock, will follow the Shepherd home to celebrate with *"friends and neighbors"*.⁸

And what about us if we were also to join in the joy today?

Happy Feast of the Sacred Heart to all of you !

Love and prayers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire Castaing, rsj". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claire Castaing
Superior general

⁸ Pope Francis - General Audience - May 4, 2016