

Cahiers of Spirituality - no 27



Re-reading of

***Dilexit nos***

from an

**SSCC**

perspective

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Congregation of the Sacred Hearts



**RE-READING OF *DILEXIT NOS*  
FROM AN SSCC PERSPECTIVE**

**Cahiers of Spirituality - n° 27  
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## INTRODUCTION

We offer a new Cahier which is undoubtedly exciting for us, because it offers us, in the year in which the Congregation celebrates 225 years of its existence, the opportunity to deepen our spirituality, taking as our main reading the Encyclical *Dilexit nos*, but through it, being able to look at the inheritance received and our source of life, in an updated and renewed way.

Following the publication of the encyclical *Dilexit nos* (24 October 2024) of Pope Francis, who is fondly remembered, the Spiritual and Historical Patrimony Commission wanted to look in depth at different perspectives of it, through the collaboration of several SSCC brothers and sisters. In this booklet we will focus on the following dimensions:

- Fraternity.
- Reparation.
- A pastoral re-reading of *Dilexit nos*.
- Young people and initial formation.
- The social and community perspective.
- Remaining in his Heart: walking with the poor.
- Education from the Heart.
- Love of the Sacred Hearts and *Dilexit nos*: The same fire in different times.

We hope that this work will help to renew our Consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. May it support what we do with so much passion and allow us to bring to every corner of the world the desire to enter as children and friends into this Heart of Jesus, which is always open and waiting for us.

"Everything is unified in the heart, which can be the seat of love with all its spiritual, emotional and even physical components. In short, if love reigns in it, the person realises his or her identity in a full and luminous way, because every human being is created above all to love, is made in the depths of his or her being to love and to be loved" (DN, 21).

## THE FRATERNITY IN *DILEXIT NOS*

*Patricia Villarroel ssc (Superior General)*

### **To begin**

We cannot be surprised that a text that speaks of LOVE has deep resonances in FRATERNITY. And even if it is starting at the end, I would like to point out that Pope Francis himself, in the conclusion of the encyclical, makes a link between it and *Fratelli Tutti*, which refers directly to Fraternity and invites us to be sisters and brothers to others.

He says, in number 217: "What is expressed in this document allows us to discover that what is written in the social encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti* is not unrelated to our encounter with the love of Jesus Christ, since by drinking from that love we become capable of weaving fraternal bonds, of recognising the dignity of every human being and of caring together for our common home".

Francis affirms that what enables us to develop bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood and to discover the dignity of others is to have encountered the love of Jesus. Theology has taught us that we are brothers and sisters "in the Son" because of his incarnation. We confess ourselves brothers and sisters because we recognise a common Father. Have we ever met people who

do not recognise God as Father and who have nowhere to found universal brotherhood and sisterhood? Have we heard people who easily deny equal rights, even equal dignity, with words (or attitudes), because they do not admit the brotherhood and sisterhood of the human race?

In the long process of revelation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is revealing new faces, through the message of the prophets; faces that come closer to the God of Jesus, the *ABBA*, the God of our Father, the Father/Mother God who gives equal dignity to all men and women and makes us all brothers and sisters to each other.

In our experience of religious life, we live this reality by calling each other sisters and brothers, those of us who have received the same call. And the very necessary root is gratuitousness. Because we know that we are loved gratuitously, without our own merits, without virtues or special qualities, we can recognise in others the same personal call that makes us brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis highlights this gratuitousness in a sad allusion to the petty, individualistic and consumerist world, saying: "Christ's love is outside this perverse mechanism and only he can free us from this fever where there is no longer room for gratuitous love. He is capable of giving heart to this earth and reinventing love where we think that the capacity to love has definitively died" (DN, 218).

Francis sharply criticises the present situation of the world, which has subjected us to a "perverse mechanism" from which only the gratuitous love of the Lord can free us. Because where we lose the sense of gratuitousness, where everything is bought and sold (or stolen and taken without permission), it is difficult to establish a fraternity with those who are not of my family, my social class, my country, my colour, my region....

The Pope is convinced of the effectiveness of Christ's love for a profound renewal of humanity. And he warns us of certain risks. The risk of "replacing the love of Christ with outdated structures, obsessions of other times, adoration of one's own mentality, fanaticisms of all kinds which end up taking the place of that gratuitous love of God which liberates, enlivens, gladdens the heart and nourishes communities" (DN, 219).

Where we can recognise certain exaggerated moralisms or certain fundamentalisms, which exist in all times. "From the wound in Christ's side", he continues, "there continues to flow that river which never runs out, which does not pass away, which offers itself again and again to those who want to love. Only his love will make a new humanity possible" (DN, 219). Fraternity is built from the heart, like things that are free and priceless. Francis knows the difficulties of fraternal life. He has often spoken to us about it. But he believes, and he invites us to believe, that we can take steps and improve fraternal relationships, if we choose the right direction in our personal endeavours, processes and work.

That is why the encyclical ends by asking the Lord: "that from his holy Heart may flow for all of us those rivers of living water that heal the wounds we inflict on ourselves, that strengthen our capacity to love and serve, that impel us to learn to walk together towards a just, united and fraternal world. That is until we happily celebrate together the banquet of the heavenly Kingdom. There the Risen Christ will be there, harmonising all our differences with the light that flows unceasingly from his open Heart" (DN, 220).

### **Recovering the importance of the Heart**

Francis' reflection in the encyclical begins with the symbolism of the heart. He begins by saying:

"The symbol of the heart is often used to express the love of Jesus Christ. Some wonder whether it has a valid meaning today. But when we are tempted to sail on the surface, to live on the run without finally knowing what for, to become insatiable consumerists, enslaved by the gears of a market that is not interested in the meaning of our existence, we need to recover the importance of the heart" (DN, 2).

This issue anticipates quite clearly what is to come. The love of Jesus, expressed in his heart, is the antidote to certain characteristics of today's world, such as superficiality, aimless careers, consumerism, and the slavery of a market that does not point in any way to the meaning of life.

In his first paragraphs, before speaking of the Heart of Christ, Francis insists several times on the need to "recover the importance of the heart". I don't think it is necessary to say that the Heart of Jesus is not the bloody viscera that was painted in the past (and which, moreover, is forbidden as an object of worship, separated from the person of Jesus). Today we have more stylised, delicate and subtle images, more appropriate to this time.

Christian culture has gone through times of excessive rationalism, with a certain contempt for feelings. Little by little we have been learning to listen more to our own heart, perhaps influenced by philosophy or by the development of psychology, we have been learning to better integrate affections, feelings and emotions. Although, as with everything in life, a little bit right and a little bit wrong, there will always be those who are overly sentimental, and those who are overly rational. But the fact is that today we attach more importance to the balance between emotions, reason and will.

The Pope's thought is illuminated by Habakkuk: "the Word of God is living alive and active [...] it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). And Francis continues: "In this way (the word of God) speaks to us of a nucleus, the heart, which is behind all appearances, even behind superficial thoughts that confuse us" (DN, 4).

This issue of appearances is very important in human relationships and particularly in fraternal life. Few things hinder closeness and affection more than appearances, showing oneself as one is not for fear of showing what one is; pretending attitudes and behaviour to others, without taking into account that the best version of oneself is what one really is, with one's virtues and also with one's limitations and shortcomings. How could we fail to think of St. Paul who wanted to remove his thorn! He wanted to suppress a certain weakness, which is what we normally find difficult to accept, to show, to integrate into life, and which is what leads us to pretend. But the Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:7-10). It is often difficult for us to accept some weaknesses we have, and to truly believe that this is where the Lord works best.

"The heart, (says Pope Francis), is the place of sincerity, where there is no room for deceit or dissimulation. It usually indicates one's true intentions, what one really thinks, believes and wants, the 'secrets' that one tells no one and, in short, one's own naked truth. It is what is not an appearance or a lie, but what is authentic, real, entirely "one's own" (DN, 5). The heart is that core, the centre that reveals one's truth, one's deepest feelings and desires, beyond what one shows consciously or unconsciously.

We cannot doubt that genuine fraternal life is built on that truth. Human relationships are healthy, serene, and grow when

they are authentic and true, when we lose the fear of being before others what we really are, with our imperfections and difficulties. When we are able to show our vulnerability, knowing that it is there that the Lord can enter into our lives.

Let us think of that phrase of St. Augustine that relates love to knowledge: "no one loves what he does not know". If we live by appearances, we are hardly lovable, lovable, because no one really knows us. If, on the other hand, we are simple and humble and show ourselves, just as we are, with our deepest truth, then we are appreciated, liked and loved. An important key to fraternity is the deep knowledge of each sister or brother. In the time we spend in dialogue with our brothers and sisters, in deep sharing with them, we are certainly increasing the fraternity.

"Mere appearance, dissimulation and deceit damage and pervert the heart - says the Pope, - in the heart everything is at stake, there it does not count what one shows on the outside and the things we conceal, there we are ourselves. And that is the basis of any solid project for our life, because nothing worthwhile can be built without the heart. Appearances and lies only offer emptiness" (DN, 6).

Francis tells the metaphor of his grandmother's biscuits (very light biscuits that puff up in the oil but are empty when eaten, and which in his dialect are called "lies"), and then turns to those fundamental questions that take us to the heart and which are the decisive questions of life: "who I really am, what I am looking

for, what meaning I want my life, my choices or my actions to have; why and for what purpose I am in this world, how I will want to value my existence when it comes to an end, what meaning I would like everything I live to have, who I want to be in front of others, who I am in front of God" (DN, 8). These are all questions that go to the heart that touch us deeply, in truth?

We must take this recovery of the importance of the heart very seriously when we speak of Fraternity. Francis devotes the whole of the first chapter to it, and in each of the numbers we can recognise the need for the world, and for us in it, to "*return to the heart*", to recover the intimate, unifying, integrating centre of our whole being, which is lost among the various superficial offers that today's society makes to us. "In this liquid world, it is necessary to speak once again of the heart," he says. But we move in societies of serial consumers who live by the day and are dominated by the rhythms and noises of technology, without much patience for the processes that interiority requires" (DN, 9).

The Pope is not shy to say that the world lacks a heart, "that contemporary man is often disturbed, divided, almost deprived of an inner principle that generates unity and harmony in his being and in his actions" (DN, 9). And he reflects on the difficulties of entering into oneself. He is somewhat critical of ancient and modern philosophy, which has not provided elements of analysis for this, has not given enough space to the heart, in circumstances where there are "answers that intelligence alone cannot give" (DN, 11), and we miss the deep relationship with others, since

"it is the heart that creates the possibilities of encounter" (DN, 12), it gives us the capacity for true, deep bonds, which take us out of our individualism.

The heart, according to Pope Francis, is so important that "one could say that, ultimately, I am my heart, because it is what distinguishes me, shapes me in my spiritual identity and puts me in communion with other people" (DN, 14). It is what determines and characterises personal relationships.

### **The Heart of Christ**

We know the heart of Jesus by his gestures, by his words and attitudes that we read in the Gospels. Francis reminds us: "We contemplate him when he stops to converse with the Samaritan woman... when he shamelessly allows himself to have his feet washed by a prostitute... when he says to the adulterous woman in her eyes: I do not condemn you... and to the blind man on the road he says with affection: what do you want me to do for you?" (DN, 35) There we can discover the feelings of his heart, his closeness when he touches the sick, his gaze that sees one and all in their pain, his words that invite us to trust, ... The evangelists did not keep silent about his feelings. Neither his compassion for the weary crowd, nor his weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, his friend, nor his anguish at his own death, ... What "finds its highest expression in Christ nailed to a cross ... the most eloquent word of love" (DN, 46), from which springs the devotion to his heart.

From the meaning of the heart as a symbol "it is understandable that the Church has chosen the image of the heart to represent the human and divine love of Jesus Christ and the innermost core of his person" (DN, 53). Devotion to the Heart of Jesus leads to a communication of friendship and adoration with Christ himself, with his human and divine person, with "the same one who is risen and lives gloriously in our midst" (DN, 51). Contemplating him is a practice present in the history of spirituality, which responds to different moments of its development, through many men and women who have nourished the faith of the faithful in accordance with their times.

Pope Francis traces the history of devotion to the Heart of Christ, pointing out the most relevant milestones and proposing its updating. He acknowledges that the symbol of the Sacred Heart "is not the only resource that the Holy Spirit gives us to encounter the love of Christ". (DN, 82) He affirms that no one is obliged to believe in certain mystical manifestations linked to it, but he makes an invitation to renew this devotion which may well "be attractive also to today's sensibility" (DN, 87). He points out some realities that are often lived today, without much awareness or desire for change, "a Christianity that has forgotten the tenderness of faith, the joy of dedication to service, the fervour of the mission person to person mission, the captivating beauty of Christ, the thrilling gratitude for the friendship he offers and for the ultimate meaning he gives to one's life" (DN, 88), realities that have moved him to "propose to the whole Church a new development on the love of Christ represented in his holy

heart" (DN, 89). And, faithful to his constant concern for the situation of today's world, he highlights as fundamental aspects of a renewed deepening of devotion to the Sacred Heart "the personal spiritual experience and the community and missionary commitment" (DN, 91) which it should foster.

He reminds many who have found, in contemplating the Heart of Christ, the source, the impetus, the strength for holy and heroic lives, for evangelisation and mission in ancient and modern times, for dedication, service and apostolate, because "the best response to the love of his Heart is love for one's brothers and sisters" (DN, 167).

Pope Francis is again enlightened by the Word of God: "what you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me" ... "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" ... "How can you love God whom you do not see, yet do not love your brother whom you do see he who does not love his brother whom he sees ..." (cf. DN, 167) and recalls "that in the Roman Empire many poor people, strangers and so many others who were discarded found in Christians respect, affection and care" (DN, 169). Christian life from its beginnings has promoted service to the needy, concern for others, fraternity, community spirit... because "looking to the Lord, who "took our infirmities and laid our infirmities upon himself" (Mt 8:17), helps us to pay more attention to the suffering and needs of others, makes us strong enough to participate in

his work of liberation, as instruments for the spread of his love<sup>1</sup> ..." (DN, 171). Contemplation of the crucified one, meditation on his passion, necessarily leads us to the brother, especially the one who is living his own passion in his personal life. Proof of this is that the history of spirituality has many testimonies of the "union between devotion to the Heart of Jesus and commitment to the brothers" (DN, 172). Francis recalls some of them: Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, ... I mention here three that especially enlighten us to live fraternity.

St. Bernard invited believers to union with the Heart of Christ and urged them to change their lives through the influence of love. "He believed that a transformation of affectivity was possible ... in response to the sweetness of Christ's love" (DN, 177).

St. Francis de Sales, enlightened by the words of Jesus: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart", held that, just as the Lord bears with our weaknesses and imperfections, we must do the same with our brothers and sisters, and never tire of bearing with them (cf. DN, 178).

St. Charles de Foucauld had such a desire to act like Jesus, to imitate him and to be like him, that he ardently desired that the evangelising work of his fraternities should be an irradiation of the love of Jesus. And "this desire gradually made him a universal

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Letter to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical *Haurietis aquas* (15 May 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 461.

brother because, allowing himself to be moulded by the Heart of Christ, he wanted to embrace the whole of suffering humanity in his fraternal heart" (DN, 179).

### **Make, Lord, my heart like Yours**

These testimonies speak to us of very important aspects which point to fraternity and which appear to be linked to devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Our affections, our feelings, can be transformed by the heart of Christ. He teaches us to love more and better, to accept more easily the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters and to welcome them as he accepts, loves and bears us. Community life can thus become an irradiation of the love of Jesus.

Constant prayer, meditation, assiduous contemplation of his heart, directs us to truly love, and is the only thing that can awaken in us a daily conversion, which is what our heart needs to love others with the love of Jesus and thus to live community life fraternally with all its diversity.

As Pope Francis says towards the end of the encyclical, "acts of love for our brothers and sisters in community can be the best or sometimes the only possible way of expressing to others the love of Jesus Christ" (DN, 212), and thus of proclaiming the love of God, revealed in his Son Jesus.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE CRUCIFIED.  
*DILEXIT NOS*  
AND REPARATION**

*Alberto Toutin ssc (Superior General)*

*"I, when I see this man dying,  
mother, I feel pain.  
In the pity that does not give way to rancour,  
mother, I have learnt love"*  
(Fabrizio de André, *The Testament of Titus*)

The last document of Pope Francis' magisterium is his Encyclical *Dilexit nos*, on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus. It is not only his spiritual testament but also a key to reading the whole of Francis' magisterium, deployed in documents, gestures, journeys, celebrations and meetings.

We receive this Encyclical as a gift of renewal for our Congregation. From the heart of Jesus and Mary we connect with the sources of inspiration of our vocation and mission. It also reminds us that the fundamental horizon of our Congregation is the unfathomable love of God manifested in the heart of Jesus, in his gestures, words, attitudes. Grafted into him, and relying on his Spirit, we make it possible for the Lord to continue loving and repairing through our lives and our Congregation.

I therefore propose a re-reading of the Encyclical in the light of the reparatory mission we have received as a Congregation.

### **Some biblical milestones**

God's action is part of the current of biblical revelation, of the God who makes a covenant and who acts as its guarantor. In the covenant, he accepts that his people be free interlocutors who turn their hearts to God and accept him as their God and become his People. This relationship goes through ups and downs, through faithfulness and unfaithfulness, memory and forgetfulness. God appears tenaciously and lovingly re-establishing the covenant when it has been broken. He settles in the rupture, in the breach, and from there, he becomes the tireless repairer of the relationship. God is the repairer of breaches. Moreover, he wants to associate his people with his task of repair, he makes of them builders on the ruins of the covenant, of the temple, of the institutions that mediate salvation (Is 58,9-12).

*If you remove oppression from you,  
the accusing finger and the perverse words,  
if you share your food with those who are hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will shine like the dawn.*

*Your shadows will be like the noonday light.*

*The Lord will guide you continually,  
he will satisfy your needs  
when you are in a parched land,  
and strengthen your bones.*

*You shall be like a garden,  
like a spring of water that never dries up.*

*You will rebuild the ancient ruins.*

*You will build on ancient foundations.*

*You will be called "repairer of broken walls" and  
"restorer of inhabited streets".*

The mediators whom God raises up among his people and who remind them of their vocation to be the People of the Covenant and a blessing for all nations, also share in the reparative spirit of God's love. In grateful remembrance of God's faithfulness, the people of Israel remember Moses as their mediator and intercessor before God (Psalm 106, 19-23).

*They made a calf in Horeb,  
And worshipped a molten image.*

*They exchanged their glory  
For the image of an ox that eats grass.*

*They forgot God their Saviour,  
Who had done great things in Egypt,  
Wonders in the land of Ham,  
And wondrous things in the Red Sea.*

*He said He would have destroyed them,*

*Had not Moses, His chosen, stood in the gap before Him,  
To turn away His wrath from destroying them.*

Moses takes on in his own flesh both Israel's forgetfulness and remoteness from God and God's relentless pursuit of His people. The place from which Moses bears witness of God to his people is the breach. He himself becomes the living sign of the love of God who loves, repairing the ruptures and calling his people again and again to welcome him as a covenant partner.

The author of the letter to the Ephesians, meditating on the ministry of Jesus, presents him to us not only as one of the blessed who strive for peace, but also as being himself peace. In his flesh is verified the gift of peace that God offers and the high price he has taken on for us so that it is possible for all Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2,14-16).

"But now in Christ Jesus you who were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Christ is our peace. He has made both peoples one; he has broken down the wall of hatred that separated them; he has put an end in his own body to the Mosaic law, with its precepts and its rules, and has created in his own person with the two peoples a new humanity, establishing peace. He has reconciled the two peoples to God through the cross, united them into one body and thus destroyed their enmity".

The restorative work of Jesus is to break down walls of separation, and to overcome hatred and enmity. Jesus takes on

in his own flesh the hard work of unifying separated peoples. With his humble power he overcomes hatred and disarms the violence that separated them. Blood and cross are the high price Jesus pays to make the gift of the longed-for peace possible. This is symbolically expressed in his pierced heart to which we must constantly turn our gaze in order to be like him with a meek and humble heart to invent the ways of peace step by step.

### **The reparation of the irreparable**

In the light of God's work of reparation, manifested in the pierced heart of Jesus, Pope Francis deepens the urgency of collaborating with this work in the world. This often involves ruptures and losses that are irreparable. These are tremendous events that confront us with the enigma of the evil that arises from the heart of human beings, and which translates into the history of violence and suffering that is imposed on so many as an inescapable destiny. The irreparable as facts that often "can neither be punished nor forgiven" (Hanna Arendt).

We think of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip who are returning to their land, after the precarious ceasefire, where not only their homes and villages have been destroyed, but also entire families have been annihilated. Or think of Nord Kivu and the millions of forgotten dead and migrants living for years in refugee camps, threatened by mercenaries. Think also of the consequences of abuses in the Church on the survivors: who

repairs lives devastated by abuses silenced, disbelieved, covered up?

Reparative action, which is grafted onto God's reparative action, is an action of truth - which acknowledges the harm and loss - and humble - for it knows that it cannot pretend the harm did not exist - or the situation was as it was before the harm. And it is also hopeful, because it bets, with everyone's help, that relationships will not be confined to the harm, nor that people will be defined by their status as victims, but as resilient and hopeful survivors. This hope is based on a loving decision to rebuild the relationship and re-establish the damaged bond, to open the relationship to a new beginning, to a future to come.

We need to turn our gaze to the paschal event, realised once and for all in Jesus, dead and risen. He is the radical expression of the pro-existence of "man for others" (Bonhoeffer) and of the "pro-affection of God" (Pierangelo Sequeri). His love is for the other to be: "No one takes my life from me, but I give it freely. I have the right to give it and to receive it back. This is what my Father has commanded me" (Jn 10,18).

We also know that this event must take place in the time and existence of each individual. It is the way in which God continues his work of reparation and to which he wishes to associate humanity, including the whole of creation, which groans as if in labour pains awaiting its liberation. Francis articulates this dynamic of paschal love that is realised in the time between

the already and the not yet, through the idea of a kind of self-limitation of God, of the glory of the resurrection:

"We can say that he himself has agreed to limit the expansive glory of his resurrection, to contain the spread of his immense and burning love in order to make room for our free cooperation with his Heart. This is so real that our refusal stops him in that giving impulse, just as our trust and offering of ourselves opens a space, offers an unobstructed channel to the outpouring of his love. Our refusal or our indifference limits the effects of his power and the fruitfulness of his love in us. If he does not find in me trust and openness, his love is deprived - because he himself has willed it - of its prolongation in my life which is unique and unrepeatable, and in the world where he calls me to make it present. This does not come from his fragility but from his infinite freedom, his paradoxical power and the perfection of his love for each one of us. When God's omnipotence shows itself in this weakness of our freedom, "only faith can discover it" (DN, 193).

This self-limitation of the expansive glory of the resurrection, or the containment of the spread of his immense and burning love, has to do with the way in which God seeks to draw us into his freedom and love. His love for us, always offered, is addressed to a you who is capable of welcoming it or rejecting it, of prolonging it in his own love or hindering it. In order to make known to us his freedom and his omnipotence, God's love is a love offered and even linked to the adventure of our freedom, making

itself vulnerable to our human condition, and to our human freedom, often unprecedented in its actions, both for the most sublime and for the most abject.

### **Entering together into Jesus' restorative action**

Just as God associates Himself with the adventures of the People of Israel and Jesus unifies the divided peoples in His Body, so we are associated by the Lord with His restorative action in the world, "as pilgrims together with all God's people" (*Constitutions* 153,2).

We do so as repairers, repaired by the Lord. This presupposes that we allow him to enter into the darkness of our hearts, where the seeds of violence and hatred nestle. We also accept that he breaks down the walls that we too put up, even with our own brothers and sisters: old wounds that weigh us down, prejudices that distance us from brothers and sisters who do not think like us, have a different sensitivity or simply come from a culture and church different from our own. And also, many times, when illness, failure, vocational or ministerial burnout, or our own sin forces us to cling to the commitments we have made in community, or to the promises of the Lord. Ultimately, it is deciding to let the Lord come into our heart, convert it and make it available for Him to love and make reparation through us.

At the root of this path of reparation is a decision and an attitude of the human heart, which is not only that abyss whose motives and decisions are often unknown to us, but which is capable of making a gesture of love, settling in the damaged relationship, in the ruptures caused by our violence. It is a heart capable of feeling the pain of having committed a sin or caused harm or of feeling the pain of others as one's own and being willing to help them cope with it. In short, it is to settle in the ruptures that pierce our hearts, our relationships, our longing for peace and justice, and from there to be associated with Jesus' self-giving in love on the cross and, like him, to love our brothers and sisters by helping them to take up their cross every day (cf. Lk 9:23).

"A heart capable of compassion can grow in fraternity and solidarity, because" he who does not weep grows old inside, while he who achieves a simpler and more intimate prayer, made of adoration and emotion before God, matures. He becomes less attached to himself and more attached to Christ and becomes poor in spirit. In this way he feels closer to the poor, God's favourites" (DN, 202). Consequently, an authentic spirit of reparation arises, for "he who is compassionate of heart feels more like a brother to all the sinners of the world, feels more like a brother without a hint of superiority or harshness of judgement, but always with the desire to love and to make reparation". This solidarity that generates compunction at the same time makes reconciliation possible. The person who is capable of compunction, "instead of being angry or scandalised

by the evil committed by his brothers, weeps for their sins. He is not scandalised. A kind of reversal then takes place, where the natural tendency to be indulgent towards oneself and inflexible towards others is reversed and, by the grace of God, one becomes severe towards oneself and merciful towards others" (DN, 190).

From this decision of the heart that allows itself to be repaired by the Lord, we can be more deeply united with those who are suffering without meaning, with those who are facing irreparable losses. Moreover, it puts us at the centre of Christian life, which is not "my" vocation or "my" mission, but the Lord who calls us and makes us one in his body to carry out his mission of reparation with him. Only then can religious and pastoral communities be a space of healing, of reparation. Only within such a movement will our witness to God's patient merciful love become credible and convert our relationships, processes and links that will make our Church "more loving and more lovable" (Madeleine Delbr el).

**LOVE FOR THE SACRED HEARTS**  
**AND *DILEXIT NOS*:**  
**THE SAME FIRE IN DIFFERENT TIMES**

*Maru Cornejo ssc (Spain)*

The history of our Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, founded by the Good Father (Pierre Coudrin) and the Good Mother (Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie) is deeply marked by the mystery of God's love revealed in the Heart of Christ.

The spiritual flame that was lit amidst the darkness of the French Revolution finds contemporary resonance in Pope Francis's 2024 encyclical *Dilexit nos*, which invites us to rediscover the heart of Jesus as a source of humanity, reparation, and hope in a wounded world.

Despite being separated by more than two centuries, our Founders and Pope Francis share the same conviction: that only the love of Christ can heal the human heart and renew history.

## **The Founders: A Spirituality Born of Love and Pain**

The Congregation was born during the French Revolution, a period of severe persecution of the Church when the Christian faith appeared to be dying out under the weight of reason and violence. Amidst this chaos, the Good Father, a young priest in hiding in a barn in *La Motte d'Usseau*, had an inner vision of a world redeemed by the love of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. At the same time, in her prison the Good Mother, a woman of deep faith who had been imprisoned for sheltering persecuted priests, discovered the tender love that never abandons, even in darkness. The convergence of these two experiences at the foundation of the Congregation would give shape and meaning to the initial intuition experienced in the barn at *La Motte*. This unfolded alongside a risky and passionate apostolic activity.

Drawing on their different yet complementary experiences, they realised that the essence of the Gospel is God's merciful love made visible in Christ. It was this love that inspired them to found our religious family, whose mission is to make God's saving love present in the world through adoration, reparation and evangelisation.

“I cannot explain everything that the Good Lord has revealed to me about devotion to His Divine Heart. All I can tell you is that He revealed this devotion through the Visitation Sisters at a time when religion was suffering greatly due to heresies and widespread disorder. People did not respond to this first favour, so now He has chosen you again to

establish a new order dedicated to spreading devotion to the sufferings of His Heart and re-establishing the kingdom of God in hearts. The order will also adore and heal, as far as possible, the outrages He has received through a life of immolation and sacrifice. Despite the persecutions we will suffer, this Order will be established: it is in God's plan. It is the last grace He will give to humanity before the end of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Constitutions, Art. 2:

*‘The Consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary is the foundation of our Institute’ BP.*

*From this derives our mission: to contemplate, live and proclaim to the world the Love of God incarnate in Jesus. Mary has been associated in a unique way with this mystery of God made man and with his saving work: this is expressed in the union of the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary.*

*Our consecration calls us to live the dynamism of saving Love and leads us to zeal for our mission.*

We summarise the spirituality of the Sacred Hearts as follows: 'To contemplate, to live and to proclaim the love of God', which is grounded on three pillars:

1. To contemplate the love of God in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, the source of tenderness, compassion, and fidelity.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of the Bonne Mère, 7 January 1805, ArchSSCC/S; LEBM. 98.

2. To heal the wounds caused by sin, indifference and rejection of divine love by uniting ourselves with Christ's redemptive suffering.
3. To proclaim this love to all of humanity, especially the poorest and most marginalised, and to live a mission of consolation, justice and hope.

On rereading our history, we can see that both the interior and apostolic life of the Congregation stem from the same source: the pierced Heart of Jesus, from which forgiveness and new life flow.

### ***Dilexit nos*: the Heart of Christ for today's world**

In his encyclical *Dilexit nos* ('He loved us'), published on 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, Pope Francis revisits and updates devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the contemporary world. In a culture characterised by individualism, indifference, technocracy, and a loss of human sensitivity, the Pope issues an urgent invitation to rediscover the heart.

According to him, the Heart of Jesus is a living symbol of God's divine and human love. It is not an outdated image, but a living reality that reveals how God loves: with tenderness, compassion, and closeness. "He loved us first" (1 Jn 4:19), Francis reminds us, and it is from this love that all Christian life stems.

The Pope emphasises that this devotion must not be reduced to sentimentality or become a closed cult. Contemplating the Heart of Christ means allowing oneself to be transformed by Him and embracing His way of loving. Loving with the heart of Jesus means overcoming evil with good, forgiving others, serving others, fostering unity, and practising genuine mercy.

*Dilexit nos* also has a strong social and missionary dimension. Francis invites us to view the world's wounds — poverty, violence, rejection, loneliness, and the ecological and digital crises — as piercing the Heart of Christ itself. In this sense, reparation is not limited to private spiritual practice but also involves healing the wounds of our neighbours and the planet and being instruments of reconciliation and justice.

Furthermore, the encyclical reminds us that the heart of Jesus beats in the Eucharist, where Christ continues to offer himself completely out of love. According to the Pope, Eucharistic adoration teaches us to see with the eyes of Jesus and to feel with his heart. Through the Eucharist, we learn the logic of giving and self-sacrifice, the language of divine love.

Ultimately, Francis portrays Mary as a woman with an open heart — the epitome of love and compassion. Her heart reflects the tenderness of her son's. She teaches us to love unconditionally and to maintain hope, even in the darkest of times, at the foot of the cross.

## **Profound similarities: one heart**

Although separated by two centuries, our founders and Pope Francis are united by the same spirit: contemplating the love of Christ and bringing it to life in a wounded world.

Some documents from the Good Mother shed light on the historical features of this devotion and the Congregation's commitment to it.

“The Good Lord revealed to me that He had appeared in person to Sister Mary Alacoque so that she could promote devotion to His Sacred Heart. He granted this grace to the Visitation Sisters because, although their Rule demands much interior spirit, it is gentle and adapted to all. He bestowed a special affection upon them to inspire them to love and spread this devotion. Now that devotion to His Sacred Heart has been adopted, He wants an Order dedicated to adoring His Heart, repairing the outrages it receives, penetrating the interior pain of this Heart and reproducing the four ages of His life. He wants the Rule to be somewhat austere in order to imitate His crucified life, but He also wants it to focus particularly on the interior crucifixion of His Heart. For all these reasons, He communicates only interiorly and suffers so much.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Letter of the Good Mother 03.02.1802, ArchSSCC/S; LEBM.I.33; HL. 29-GB. 17.

We can draw several parallels between the two realities:

<b>DIMENSION</b>	<b>SSCC FOUNDERS</b>	<b><i>DILEXIT NOS</i></b>
<b>Historical context</b>	French revolution: persecution, pain, rupture.	XXI <sup>st</sup> Century: dehumanisation, indifference, crisis of meaning.
<b>Founding experience</b>	Experiencing Christ's merciful love during times of persecution.	An invitation to rediscover Christ's love in a wounded world.
<b>The main focus</b>	The reparative and missionary love of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.	The compassionate and transforming love of the Heart of Christ.
<b>Spirituality</b>	Contemplation, reparation, adoration, mission (apostolic zeal).	Contemplation, conversion, reparation and social commitment.
<b>Eucharist</b>	A source of communion and mission. A sacrament of God's closeness.	A centre of love that gives itself and transforms.
<b>Mary</b>	A heart united with that of her Son.	The model of a heart that loves and gives of itself fully.

Both messages agree that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is not an isolated practice, but an integral form of spirituality that unites faith, affection, and action. Contemplating the Heart of Jesus leads to a commitment to life, to one's neighbour.

The Good Father and the Good Mother practised their devotion during a period of persecution; today, Pope Francis encourages us to do the same in the face of modern forms of spiritual enslavement: selfishness, coldness and indifference. In both

cases, it is a spirituality of an open heart that is capable of healing and humanising the world.

"The Good Lord has once again opened His heart to me. He has placed an inconceivable pain and love in my heart. I remained in that state for a while, realising that I always needed to receive Communion, despite my sorrow. I knew that it was Him, even if I could not feel His presence, and that He was sustaining my soul in its despondency and wanted me to be crucified.

In one of his earliest preserved sermons (1791), the Good Father says, '... I will throw myself into the arms of Jesus Christ... I will press my heart against His Heart.' Here, we see his unconditional and unshakeable trust in God expressed. A trust that he would share with Henrietta and that the first Community would live out. For the Good Father, the 'Heart of Jesus' is the 'heart of the Good God', the God who is close to him and takes him by the hand. This God became man in Jesus Christ to manifest his love for humankind."

### **A Spirituality for our time**

Relating the story of our founders to the encyclical *Dilexit nos* is not only a theological exercise, but also an invitation to experience the same love in the present day.

The Pope's words enlighten our spirituality of the Sacred Hearts and call us to adopt three specific attitudes today:

1. To return to the heart: recover your inner self and your capacity to feel. In a world dominated by noise and speed, we need to take time to contemplate in order to discover the love that sustains us.
2. To allow ourselves to be loved and healed by Christ and let his heart transform our wounds into compassion. Only those who have been loved can truly love.
3. To love actively by making service, justice and tenderness a way of life. Reparation is achieved through prayer, solidarity and building communion.

Therefore, devotion to the Heart of Jesus is no longer just a tradition of the past; it is a living, incarnate and prophetic spirituality that can respond to the issues facing the modern world.

### **Conclusion: the same love, yesterday and today**

“He loved us first” (*Dilexit nos*).

These words encapsulate both Pope Francis’s encyclical and the deepest intuition of our Founders. It is God’s love that comes first, not our efforts. This love reaches us, heals us, and sends us forth.

Like Pope Francis, Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer understood that the Heart of Christ is the school of true love, where one learns to live with tenderness, compassion, and selflessness. In different eras, these two messages complement each other: our founders embodied that spirituality, and Francis reinterprets it for our time.

They both proclaim that, despite historical changes, it is only the love of the Heart of Jesus that can give human beings meaning, hope and fulfilment.

## A PASTORAL RE-READING OF DILEXIT NOS

*Raúl Pariamachi ssc (Andine)*

*And in this cold hour, in which the earth  
transcends to human dust and is so sad,  
I would like to knock on all the doors,  
and beg for forgiveness from I don't know who,  
and make him little pieces of fresh bread  
there, in the oven of my heart...!*

*(César Vallejo, Our bread)*

In the last work of his trilogy, Yuval Noah Harari says that "the coming decades could be characterised by great spiritual quests and by the formulation of new social and political models." <sup>1</sup>In this respect, I think that the Christian tradition still has much to offer in the perspective of a spiritual model and a political model, which respond to a full human life. Along these lines, I share my pastoral re-reading of the encyclical letter *Dilexit nos* (hereafter DN) of Pope Francis, based on my experience in a parish in a popular sector of the capital of Peru.

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<sup>1</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Debate, 2018), 35.

## Promoting interiority in the pastoral care of the Church

In his encyclical letter, Pope Francis reiterates that we have lost the heart, that we have to recover it (cf. DN 2, 22 and 31): "In this liquid world it is necessary to speak again of the heart, to point to the place where each person, of every class and condition, makes his or her synthesis" (DN, 9).

Francis points to the current context of this loss of the heart, agreeing with scholars of the global crisis:<sup>2</sup> a superficial culture, the relativization of values, the acceleration of life, insatiable consumerism, the anti-human use of technology, socio-economic imbalances, new wars on the planet and power struggles. In reality, any one of us could describe how this loss of heart manifests itself in the places where we live.

Therefore, I affirm that a first application of the *Dilexit nos* to the pastoral field is related to the recovery of the heart as a value in itself, but also as the human presupposition of an authentic spirituality. In short, Francis speaks of the heart to indicate the personal centre, the inner core or inner principle that unifies, integrates or harmonises the human being, that makes possible both identity and otherness: "We thus see how in the heart of each one there is this paradoxical connection between the valuing of self and openness to others, between the

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<sup>2</sup> See Zygmunt Baumann, *Modernidad líquida* (FCE, 2002), Byung-Chul Han, *La sociedad del cansancio* (Herder, 2012) or Hartmut Rosa, *Alienación y aceleración* (Katz, 2016).

very personal encounter with oneself and the gift of oneself to others" (DN, 18). In short, we need to re-establish the conditions for attending to interiority in pastoral ministry.<sup>3</sup>

The challenge then is how to foster a return to the heart in pastoral care, in terms of the processes of human interiority. Indeed, if spirituality is the human capacity and tendency to discover and construct meaning, significance or purpose about one's own existence, in transcendence towards others, nature and the sacred,<sup>4</sup> then interiority is a condition for a spirituality that transcends. Authentic spirituality is built on human interiority.<sup>5</sup> I believe that we should make creative use of the pedagogy of interiority in the pastoral instances: celebrations, catechesis and commitment<sup>6</sup>. As a well-known author reminds us, "*to educate interiority is to teach how to look inwards.*"<sup>7</sup>

By way of synthesis of this first application, I would like to clarify that "recovering the heart" does not refer to a pastoral option that uncritically appeals to the emotional dimension, but

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<sup>3</sup> The Council teaches that the human being returns to his interiority when he enters into his heart, where he decides his own destiny, under the gaze of God (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 14).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ramón María Nogués, *Neurociencias, espiritualidades y religiones* (Sal Terrae, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Josep Otón Catalán, *Interioridad y espiritualidad* (Sal Terrae, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> In the field of organisations, there is currently talk of inner development objectives (the ODI toolbox can be downloaded at [www.idgcolombia.org](http://www.idgcolombia.org)).

<sup>7</sup> Ana Alonso Sánchez, *Pedagogy of interiority. Aprender a "ser" desde uno mismo* (Narcea, 2000), 59.

to a pastoral strategy that favours the processes of human interiority, which implies cultivating the understanding of oneself; the search for meaning, significance or purpose in life; the capacity for silence, attention and wonder; the appreciation of goodness and beauty; respect for all forms of life; the exercise of imagination and creativity; the practice of empathy and tolerance; openness to the sacred; etc.

### **Offering an incarnated spirituality from the heart of Jesus**

Pope Francis offers a model of incarnational spirituality from the heart of Jesus: a spirituality that has at its centre the human and divine love of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son (cf. DN, 48); that is rooted in the human flesh of the Son of God, who loved us (cf. Rom 8:37): "Before the Heart of Christ it is possible to return to the incarnate synthesis of the Gospel" (DN, 90). Once again, Francis points to the present context in which many people seek "their" salvation, well-being or security (cf. DN, 46).

He confronts the risk of intimism, religious sentimentalism and spiritual entertainment, warning also that various forms of religiosity are multiplying in society, which are new manifestations of a "spirituality without flesh" (DN, 87).

In this sense, I argue that a second application of the *Dilexit nos* to pastoral care could be to offer an incarnated spirituality from the heart of Jesus. There is no doubt that we live in "a society in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is only

one human possibility among others"<sup>8</sup>; at the same time, however, we are witnessing a revaluation of spirituality in a society overwhelmed by overactivity, (anti)politics and hypertechnology.<sup>9</sup> Without detracting from the values of other spiritualities, we would do well to recognise, reread and recreate spirituality in the tradition of the Church, from the principle of the integrality of the whole Jesus Christ (cf. DN, 48): the whole Gospel, as an antidote to old and new dualisms (cf. DN, 82-91).

In this case, the challenge is to promote in pastoral ministry a form of spirituality which, on the basis of the whole Gospel, is in tune with the searches of so many people in today's world. It is a question here of the desirable passage from human interiority to the spiritual experience that places one before the doors of the mystery of God. For example, Pope Francis insisted on a kerygmatic and mystagogical catechesis. Among the various options, I would like to mention the action paths of the pastoralist Estrella Moreno based on four key categories: experience, resonance, transparency and vulnerability, which are in line with the model of the encyclical letter.<sup>10</sup> The implementation of a

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor, *La era secular*, Vol. I (Gedisa, 2014), 23.

<sup>9</sup> See Jordi Pigem, *Angels or Robots. La interioridad humana en la sociedad hipertecnológica* (Fragmenta, 2018), Natalia Millán Acevedo, *Política, emociones y espiritualidad* (Catarata, 2023) or Byung-Chul Han, *Vida contemplativa. Elogio de la inactividad* (Taurus, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Estrella Moreno, *Identidades líquidas y conversión cristiana. La propuesta del Evangelio a la generación "millennial"* (Sal Terrae, 2025), 183-240.

spiritual proposal in pastoral care requires a specific evaluation and an explicit programme.

I would like to add that Pope Francis does not endorse a nostalgic regression to outdated spiritual models in the Church, even if they are presented as postmodern devotions in their forms, but points to a spirituality that presupposes a re-reading in the light of the Gospel and the spiritual tradition of the Church; in fact, the *Dilexit nos* is punctuated by implicit and explicit warnings in this regard (cf. DN, III).

### **Collaborating in the construction of the civilisation of love**

As is well known, Pope Francis develops the classic question of the practice of reparation from the perspective of the social dimension of devotion to the Heart of Jesus. Starting from the principle that the best response to the love of the Heart of Jesus is love for one's brothers and sisters (cf. DN, 167), he reiterates that authentic reparation is oriented towards the fact that "together with Christ, on the ruins that we have left in this world by our sin, we are called to build a new civilisation of love" (DN, 182). While Francis refers to the need for reparation of wounded hearts, he also says that evangelical reparation has a strong social sense, to the point that - following John Paul II - he speaks of repairing structures damaged by social sins (cf. DN, 183).

So, I see a third application of the *Dilexit nos* to pastoral care as the intimate relationship between Christian mysticism and political love (not charity limited to social assistance). The social

dimension of evangelisation has been greatly weakened in the Church in recent decades. I am referring not only to social welfare, but above all to social commitment. As the renowned philosopher Massimo Borghesi has said, "in fact, the Church, since the end of the 1980s, has shown signs of closing in on itself and of becoming disinterested both in its mission and in the social and political common good."<sup>11</sup> We see that the social magisterium of Pope Francis, especially in *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, has not been sufficiently applied in the pastoral care of the Church.

In this regard, I find the category of "political love" that Francis takes up in his social encyclicals<sup>12</sup> enlightening. Indeed, in *Laudato si'* he writes that "love, full of small gestures of mutual care, is also civil and political, and manifests itself in all actions that seek to build a better world" (LS, 231); in *Fratelli tutti* he says that "love is expressed not only in intimate and close relationships, but also in macro-relationships, such as social, economic and political relationships" (FT, 181), quoting Pope Benedict XVI. While solidarity is often activated through food, health and housing aid, "the effort to organise and structure

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<sup>11</sup> Massimo Borghesi, *The Francis Challenge. From neoconservatism to the "field hospital"* (Encuentro, 2022), 52.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Pius XI referred to political love in his *Address to the Italian Catholic University Federation* in 1927: "The political field embraces the interests of the whole of society; and in this sense, it is the field of the vastest charity, of political charity".

society in such a way that our neighbour does not have to suffer misery" <sup>13</sup> is rather weak.

Finally, in the conclusion of his encyclical letter *Dilexit nos*, Pope Francis says something that sums up excellently the interrelation between Christian spirituality and social commitment as a valuable legacy of his pontificate (magisterium and leadership):

"What is expressed in this document allows us to discover that what is written in *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti* is not unrelated to our encounter with the love of Jesus Christ, for by drinking from that love we become capable of weaving fraternal bonds, of recognising the dignity of every human being and of caring together for our common home" (DN, 217).

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<sup>13</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004), 208.

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND INITIAL FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF *DILEXIT NOS*

*Arockia Vanathiyan ssc (India)*

## **A WORLD LOSING ITS HEART, A GENERATION SEEKING MEANING**

When Pope Francis published *Dilexit nos* in October 2024, he spoke directly to a world he described as “losing its heart.”<sup>1</sup> Wars, polarization, growing inequality, the “mad pursuit of money,”<sup>2</sup> and the technological overload of social media and artificial intelligence threaten to dehumanize our societies. Behind these challenges lies a deeper wound: a humanity increasingly disconnected from its own heart—its capacity to love and to be loved.

Yet, in the midst of this fragmentation, the encyclical lifts our gaze to the Heart of Jesus, the place where divine and human love meet and redeem. The Sacred Heart is not merely a devotional image to be admired but a living wellspring of renewal. It is, in

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, *Dilexit nos* (DN), 1.

<sup>2</sup> DN, 3.

Pope Francis' words, "the beating heart of salvation history,"<sup>3</sup> reminding us that Christianity is not an idea or an ethic, but a love story.

For young people, this message is especially urgent. They live in paradox: digitally connected yet emotionally isolated, creative yet anxious, full of ideals yet uncertain of the future. They hunger for authenticity, belonging, and purpose. *Dilexit nos* points them to the Sacred Heart not as an outdated devotion but as a living encounter: a heart that feels, suffers, forgives, and loves unconditionally.

Pope Francis also develops the threefold love of Christ's Heart—divine, human/spiritual, and sensible.<sup>4</sup> This theological insight has direct implications for initial formation. Young people are not called to suppress their humanity but to integrate it. Their affectivity, passions, and desires are not obstacles but pathways through which the divine can be encountered and transformed.

Initial formation, then, must become a "school of the heart," where candidates learn to read their own lives in the light of Christ's pierced Heart, and discover that vocation is not an escape from the world but immersion in God's love for it.

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<sup>3</sup> DN, 12.

<sup>4</sup> DN, 15–17.

## INITIAL FORMATION: A JOURNEY OF THE HEART

### Encounter before Instruction

*Dilexit nos* makes it clear: Christianity begins with encounter, not obligation.<sup>5</sup> The first step in formation is not to fill young minds with concepts but to open their hearts to the transforming love of Christ. This requires spaces where encounter can truly happen—prayer before the Eucharist, silence and adoration, retreats rooted in the Heart of Jesus. Before being shaped into ministers, candidates must be touched by the tenderness of the Heart of Christ. Only an encounter with love can sustain a lifetime of consecration.

### Authenticity and Purification of Motives

Young people enter formation with mixed motivations: desire to serve, curiosity, attraction to community, or even social pressure. Pope Francis warns against superficial religiosity or utilitarian motives.<sup>6</sup> *Dilexit nos* calls formators to help purify these motives by returning to the foundation: “He loved us first.”<sup>7</sup>

Formation must guide candidates in discerning whether their choice is a free, loving response to being loved by Christ,

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<sup>5</sup> DN, 19; cf. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), 7.

<sup>6</sup> DN, 18.

<sup>7</sup> DN, 18; cf. 1 Jn 4:19.

or a search for security and recognition. This purification ensures that vocation remains rooted in grace, not ego.

### **Formation of Affective Maturity**

Because *Dilexit nos* highlights the sensible love of Jesus—the real, human affections expressed in His Heart—formation must include affective and relational maturity.<sup>8</sup> Intellectual study or external discipline is insufficient. Candidates need guidance in self-knowledge, responsible relationships, and integration of sexuality and affectivity into consecrated life.<sup>9</sup> To love as Christ loves requires hearts trained in compassion, humility, and fidelity. This means fostering accompaniment, openness to vulnerability, and human formation programs that prepare candidates for healthy, integrated lives of service.

### **From Devotion to Mission**

Pope Francis insists that devotion to the Sacred Heart is not inward-looking: “The best response to the love of Christ’s Heart is to love our brothers and sisters.”<sup>10</sup>

Formation must therefore orient youth outward. Encounters with the poor, the sick, and the marginalized are not optional but central. These experiences reveal that the Sacred Heart is always

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<sup>8</sup> DN, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), 44–45.

<sup>10</sup> DN, 27.

missionary, always reaching outward, always beating for “the least of these.” Without this missionary dimension, formation risks producing functionaries rather than disciples.

## **FORMING REPAIRERS OF A BROKEN WORLD**

### **Healing and Reparation**

The Sacred Heart is pierced, wounded, yet overflowing with life. For Pope Francis, this image speaks to a Church called to heal and repair.<sup>11</sup> Young people in initial formation must come to see their vocation as participation in this mystery: being repairers of brokenness in the Church and the world. Formation should cultivate empathy, listening, and the courage to engage with wounds—their own and those of others. In this sense, every formator becomes a “wounded healer,”<sup>12</sup> showing by example that Christ transforms suffering into love.

### **Community and Belonging**

Pope Francis emphasizes that love creates communion.<sup>13</sup> For youth, who often struggle with loneliness and individualism, the experience of healthy community is transformative. Initial formation must provide environments of trust, dialogue, and

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<sup>11</sup> DN, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (1979).

<sup>13</sup> DN, 24; cf. *Christus Vivit* (CV), 164.

fraternal correction. Consecrated life is not solitary heroism but shared discipleship. When candidates experience authentic fraternity, they discover that belonging to Christ always means belonging to others.

### **Missionary Zeal and Hope**

Finally, *Dilexit nos* offers hope: in a world losing its heart, Christ offers His own. Formation must instill not only theological knowledge but a burning sense of missionary urgency—zeal born from intimacy with the Heart of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Youth who discover that their vocation is not a burden but a joyful response to being loved become credible witnesses of hope. They show the world that faith is not repression, but freedom, not nostalgia, but prophecy of love.

### **A PERSONAL REFLECTION AS A FORMATOR**

Reading *Dilexit nos*, I feel personally addressed. The encyclical rekindles in me both my missionary zeal and my vocation as a formator. It reminds me: **Formation is relational:** Programs and rules are secondary; presence, listening, and trust matter most.<sup>15</sup> **I, too, must be continually formed:** I cannot guide unless I also allow the Heart of Christ to shape me daily. My credibility comes not from knowledge but from authenticity. **The Spirit is**

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<sup>14</sup> DN, 31.

<sup>15</sup> CV, 246.

**the protagonist:** Even in the fragility of youth or my own limits, God is at work. My task is to accompany, not control.<sup>16</sup> **Mission is central:** Formation is not about maintaining institutions but sending forth disciples with burning hearts, like the disciples of Emmaus.<sup>17</sup>

These insights rekindle my joy and responsibility. They remind me that initial formation is a pilgrimage shared by formator and candidate alike: we are both learners at the school of Christ's Heart.

## PRACTICAL ORIENTATIONS FOR FORMATION TODAY

From the light of *Dilexit nos*, I identify several concrete practices for my ministry as a formator:

- **Prioritize encounter over information:** design formation around prayer, dialogue, and shared life.
- **Create a culture of listening:** encourage questions, doubts, and desires without judgment.
- **Model vulnerability:** show that faith grows through struggle and mercy, not perfection.

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<sup>16</sup> EG, 280.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lk 24:32.

- **Integrate spirituality with reality:** link prayer with social awareness, care for creation, and service to the poor. <sup>18</sup>
- **Foster fraternity:** help candidates experience community as a family of forgiveness and diversity.
- **Encourage discernment:** provide tools like spiritual direction, retreats, and examen. <sup>19</sup>
- **Remain hopeful:** trust that even slow growth will bear fruit in God's time.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### ***Living Formation as a Shared Pilgrimage***

In *Dilexit nos*, Pope Francis calls the Church to return to the Heart of Jesus as the fountain of renewal. For young people, this means discovering life as mission and love. For formators, it means rekindling our vocation, remembering that we are not only teachers but companions on the Emmaus Road.

Initial formation, then, is not simply the transmission of ideas but the nurturing of hearts—hearts that encounter Jesus, discern His voice, and embrace a life of mission. As I accompany

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<sup>18</sup> EG, 1; CV, 168.

<sup>19</sup> CV, 278–282.

the young, I too am evangelized, formed, and renewed by the Heart that “loved us first.”<sup>20</sup>

In a world losing its heart, *Dilexit nos* is a gift: it teaches us again to trust the Heart of Christ—the Heart that continues to beat with mercy, hope, and love for every young seeker and every weary formator.

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<sup>20</sup> DN, 18.

## THE POWER OF COMMUNION AS REPARATION

*John Francis Sawchenko ssc (E.U.)*

Near the end of *Dilexit nos*, Pope Francis asks: “What kind of worship would we give to Christ if we were to rest content with an individual relationship with him and show no interest in relieving the sufferings of others or helping them to live a better life?” (DN, 205). Perhaps such worship would not be Christian worship at all as our worship always includes the mandate of ‘going forth’ into the world. Through love, Jesus’ heart is so intrinsically connected to all people; we cannot privately experience his heart’s delights without also serving our neighbors in society. Francis’ vision of making reparation to the Sacred Heart has a social and communal dimension. When we reach out to any person with love, we repair and console Jesus’ heart. Just as our own tradition calls us to adore daily the Blessed Sacrament in reparation, so we go beyond our prayer time into our wounded societies: “Repairing the harm done to this world calls for a desire to mend wounded hearts” (DN, 185).

Pope Francis writes of an ‘evangelical reparation’ which has a “vital social dimension.’ He repeats Saint John Paul II’s conviction that we must, as a society, turn to Christ and “build the civilization of love” (DN, 184). We need a restoration of

love in the world because many societies have become socially alienated, which prevents individuals from developing, blossoming and offering the gift of themselves to the world (DN, 183). People have become alienated or isolated from a group to which they should belong: their own society. And this encyclical suggests that the central method to remedy this alienation is found in love, specifically uncreated love found in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The same year I began my ministry as a priest (in 2023), the Surgeon General of the United States announced that 1 out of every 2 adults are lonely and socially isolated. This modern epidemic of loneliness and alienation is a kind of hidden leprosy in which individuals suffer privately and struggle to get close to other members of society. They cannot find inclusion or loving welcome, so they suffer in the privacy of their own hearts and wounded minds. I have found this to be reality in my ministry in the United States, and in my life as an American. The challenge to find satisfaction in one's job, the struggle to connect relationally, and ultimately the difficulty of finding deeper meaning in one's life. People are so focused on their technology, their phones, AI, streaming services, video games, and even pornography: all things that end up making them feel by the end of the day: alienated and isolated. Even something as rampant as social media is reported by many human beings to leave them feeling down and disconnected.

Thus, there is this social dimension to people's pain. We seem to need to find our own space to fit in, and when we cannot find that space, we suffer. One of the things societies often fail to offer people is a space to intentionally be together. Not a crowd or concert or a crowded shopping mall, but space for community and communion, space where people can show up to interact and build friendship and healthily and lovingly connect.

In Catholic ministry I have noticed and discovered something essential is to create situations of community which I would also call communion. Extending from the Eucharistic reality of the church, to allow people the space to simply and intentionally be together and experience communion as an extension of the Mass, Adoration, or Benediction. Many receive the Eucharist at Mass but are unable to find the chance in their life to manifest communion. How can Jesus really resonate in our hearts if we have no outlet for his love?

We can help people by creating a space for the Eucharist and intentional human interaction and love. Pope Francis writes that we need "a mystique of soul", "a meaning that grants them strength...They need the life, the fire and the light that radiate from the heart of Christ" (DN, 184). We find this mystique or mysticism in the Eucharist and further in the mystery of living the Eucharist.

I have found great meaning in my participation in ministries at our parishes that connect Eucharistic Adoration and gathering

afterwards to intentionally interact in some way. For one ministry, members of the parish pray a Holy Hour followed by a sharing a potluck meal. So, we not only offer the parish Eucharistic Adoration by itself, but we connect it to intentionally sharing a meal for about the same time as the prayer. It changes the way we gather around the Blessed Sacrament when we commit ourselves to gather around a table to eat after, and likewise, it changes the way we eat together, when we have spent an hour adoring the Lord just before.

Another ministry we offer is a healing ministry for those struggling with burdens in life. We begin by praying *Lectio Divina* before the Blessed Sacrament and then gather to share our life and faith experiences as a small community. We move from Adoration to communion with one another. When I experience the Church gathering for these ministries, I experience a simple but certain dynamism of the Lord's heart. To allow the church to be church; to allow the Eucharistic People of God to minister to each other.

The simple communion of shared presence does what individuals can never do themselves. It does seem to me to be a kind of reparation. To build communion is a way of reparation. For the Lord experienced alienation and isolation upon his cross, and he continues to lament the alienation which his beloved humanity experiences on earth. And how else to console Him than to intentionally create spaces for communion between his people.

We often want to instruct people, impart knowledge to them, enlighten them, and transform them ourselves. But there is also the grace of letting people simply be present as they are to one another, intentionally, and in Him who so loves them. I have sensed in certain moments of ministry a mysterious power in giving people that space.

## **ABIDING IN HIS HEART: WALKING WITH THE POOR, GUIDED BY CHRIST'S LOVE**

*Sujata Jena ssc (India)*

Reflecting on *Dilexit nos*, the Holy Father's encyclical on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus, feels like recalling God's tender love at work in my own life. Its message is both renewing and inviting — calling me to pause, to contemplate God's love for me, for every brother and sister, and for all creation. In reading it, I felt as though it spoke directly to my heart, awakening a forgotten tenderness and reminding me of my truest identity as a beloved child of the Abba Father. It is a call to return each day to the heart — to love — while witnessing daily suffering in a world that so often seems to have lost its own.

I was deeply touched by the theme *Love for Love* in the encyclical. I have experienced the unconditional and abundant love of God in my life. As the document reminds us, "The knowledge that we are loved, and our complete confidence in that love, in no way lessens our desire to respond generously, despite our frailty and our many shortcomings" (DN, 164). This

love calls me to live each day with gratitude and to share that same tenderness with those I encounter in my ministry.

Among the many painful realities, I have witnessed while working among the poor and migrants, one incident continues to haunt me deeply. A 19-year-old Christian migrant worker from Odisha, the region where we live, died while digging a borewell in Maharashtra, about 1,200 kilometers away. When his body was brought home, the villagers refused burial in the common graveyard because of his faith. His grieving parents laid him to rest on their own land with legal permission, only to discover the next day that his body had been exhumed and thrown in the forest by those who saw his Christianity as a crime. Such cruelty pierces the heart — a reminder that even in death, the poor and the faithful are denied dignity.

Around me, similar wounds are repeated in different forms: priests are attacked, girls are beaten, nuns are humiliated; migrant workers die at their workplaces, the poor die of starvation, farmers take their own lives under the burden of debt, youth sink into depression due to unemployment, and families are exiled for their faith — and so on.

As Pope Francis reminds us in *Dilexit nos* (44-45), Jesus reveals a heart that is both human and divine — a heart that feels deeply and loves tenderly. Jesus was passionate and compassionate, grieved and agitated, and even moved to tears. He felt sorrow for the hungry crowd, saying, “I have compassion

for these people... they have nothing to eat” (Mk 8:2–3); he wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41); he cried at the tomb of his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:33–35); and in Gethsemane, he trembled in anguish, saying, “I am deeply grieved, even to death” (Mk 14:34). In these moments, Jesus’ emotions were not signs of weakness but expressions of divine love — the God who feels with us, suffers with us, and reveals through every tear the depth of a heart that loves without limit.

Let me make a humble attempt to reflect on the missionary dimension of our love for the Heart of Christ through four aspects: **bringing love to the world, repairing the broken, sowing hope, and loving the Lord by walking with the poor.**

### **Bringing Love to the World**

Bringing love to the world begins with living the fullness of the Christian message. As the Holy Father reminds us, the Gospel is most attractive when lived and expressed in its totality — not as a refuge for private piety or impressive ceremonies, but as a call to relieve suffering and help others live with dignity (DN, 205-209). True devotion to the Heart of Christ moves me beyond personal consolation; it challenges me to pour love into human hearts, to build up the Body of Christ, and to foster a society of justice, peace, and fraternity.

In this spirit, I, with my limitations and anxiety, accompany poor and vulnerable interstate migrants from rural Odisha who

travel to South Indian states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka in search of survival. Many are Dalits, Tribals, or from other marginalized communities — groups historically oppressed and denied dignity. While some find decent work, many face exploitation, denial of rights, confinement, or abuse. Women are often treated like slaves. In the past year alone, I painfully intervened in 32 tragic cases of migrant deaths — caused by occupational illnesses, suicides, workplace accidents, or company negligence. All were under 35 years old.

These are not numbers but real brothers and sisters leaving behind families, dreams, and hope. Witnessing their suffering moves me deeply and draws me to see the face of the suffering Christ in their lives. It compels me to step out of my comfort zone — to go to factories, stations, hospitals, and villages — to meet them with care, listen to their stories, and stand with them in their struggles.

As Pope Francis reminds us, Jesus “came to his own” (Jn 1:11), bridging all distances and becoming “God-with-us” in the ordinary realities of life (DN, 34, 36, 40). He touched the sick, healed the broken, and drew near to the forgotten, revealing the tender compassion of God. Inspired by his example, I attempt to take “action that reflects the Heart” — to be close, to touch with love, and to bring hope where life has wounded most deeply.

## Repairing the Broken

As *Dilexit nos* (182–185) reminds us, true reparation is not merely an external action but a participation in the love of Christ that restores goodness and dignity amid the ruins left by sin and indifference. Each dialogue I enter, each petition I raise, becomes an act of faith — a way of healing both wounded systems and wounded hearts. In walking with the oppressed and engaging those in power, I experience reparation as both a spiritual and social calling: allowing the Heart of Jesus to heal through our collective struggle for justice, dignity, and love.

Beyond migration, the challenges faced by social and religious minorities in our country disturb me deeply. We face relentless persecution and violence, often rooted in prejudice. We are attacked, detained, lynched, mocked, and threatened — merely for praying peacefully, eating certain foods, or marrying across faiths. We are tortured simply for existing as equals in society.

Personally, I have reached out to police stations where nuns and tribal girls were unjustly detained and have negotiated for their release. I strive to connect people with resources and organizations that can support them, believing in the power of networking — for we can achieve far more together than we ever could alone. Through journalism, I seek to highlight both the injustices and the stories of resilience that inspire hope and contribute to building a just and humane society.

At the heart of this ministry lies collaboration — with Church institutions, civil society groups, and all who share the dream of justice and peace. In these shared efforts, I experience that repairing the broken is not about my strength but about allowing the compassionate Heart of Jesus to work through my weakness.

## **Sowing Hope**

As *Dilexit nos* (186) reminds us, “A spirit of reparation leads us to hope that every wound can be healed, however deep it may be.” Even when complete reparation seems impossible — when loss feels irreparable or situations appear beyond remedy — the sincere desire to make amends opens the way to reconciliation and peace of heart.

Although the Scriptures preserve Jesus’ words, ever alive and timely, there are moments when He speaks inwardly, calling us and leading us to a better place — His Heart. There, He invites us to find renewed strength and peace: “Come to me, all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28; *Dilexit nos*, 43). In this sense, He also says to His disciples, “Abide in me” (Jn 15:4). It is in this abiding, through prayer and reflection, that I find guidance and courage to accompany those who are broken, oppressed, and marginalized.

Hope is not mere optimism; it is faith in action — believing that God is still at work even when everything seems lost. Sowing hope means planting seeds of goodness and trusting

that someone else will water them. At times, I feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of suffering, yet I hold on to the truth that our mission is God's work, not ours. We are only instruments, co-workers in His vineyard. My task is to sow — even if I never see the harvest.

### **Loving the Lord by Walking with the Poor**

Mission among the poor and marginalized is fulfilling, yet never easy. The poor, migrants, and minorities live in fragile realities — vulnerable to hunger, homelessness, and humiliation. To reach out to them with love, generosity, kindness, compassion, and humility demands time, patience, sacrifice, and deep commitment. They live without the security of food, shelter, or fair employment; they endure inhuman working conditions and face constant discrimination — for the caste they are born into, the poverty they did not choose, the faith they profess, the food they eat, the language they speak, or even the simplicity and innocence of their hearts. Ministering among them calls for entering into their world — standing in their shoes, understanding their struggles, respecting their time, listening with empathy, and helping them feel seen, heard, and at home through our compassionate presence.

For more than fifteen years as a Sister of the Congregation, my ministry has been closely woven with the lives of the poor, migrants, minorities, youth, women, and the socially excluded.

In recent years, this journey has become even more intense and personal.

I feel profoundly grateful to the Congregation for entrusting me with this mission — and for the support, both visible and unseen, that sustains it. Yet, this path is not without challenges. There are moments when I am misunderstood — for staying long among the people, for taking time away from the community, or for standing in public protests and street demonstrations alongside those whose voices are silenced. At times, I struggle to raise funds for the needs of the ministry, and this helplessness becomes part of my daily cross. In such moments, I unite my small sufferings with the suffering of Christ, believing that every pain offered with love is illuminated and transfigured in the paschal light of His own.

As *Dilexit nos* reminds us, “If we are concerned with helping others, this in no way means that we are turning away from Jesus. Rather, we are encountering Him in another way” (DN, 214). Whenever we care for another person, Jesus is at our side. He continues to work with us, just as He did with the first disciples: “The Lord worked with them” (Mk 16:20). In a mysterious way, His love becomes tangible through our service; He speaks through our actions — often in a language that needs no words.

This love, Pope Francis says, “then becomes service within the community” (DN, 213). Jesus tells us plainly: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

To meet Him in the poor, the despised, and the abandoned is to experience a most sacred encounter — one that challenges, purifies, and transforms us. In serving them, we do not merely perform acts of charity; we participate in the very love of God, who first loved us. Thus, our mission among the poor becomes the most authentic expression of *Dilexit nos*: “He loved us first”.

## **Conclusion**

*Dilexit nos* is more than a papal exhortation; it is a living call to our Congregation — to love as Jesus loved and to make His Heart visible where love is most wounded. As Pope Francis reminds us, the image of the Sacred Heart “is an especially privileged way of encountering the love of Christ,” yet it must be “enriched, deepened, and renewed through meditation, the Gospel, and spiritual maturity” (DN, 82).

For us, members of the Congregation, the Heart of Jesus is not merely an image to venerate but a life to embody — a “synthesis of the Gospel” (83). In that Heart, we discover that “our fulfilment as human beings is found in love” (DN, 23). Each day, we are invited to ask ourselves: Do I have a heart — a heart that feels, forgives, and reaches out?

It is this Love — He who loved us first — that sustains us and sends us forth again and again to the peripheries, where the Heart of Jesus continues to beat in silence, waiting to be revealed through our compassion, courage, and faithful presence.

# EDUCATION IN *DILEXIT NOS*

*Sarah Ngunda ssc (D. R. Congo)*

Pope Francis is inspired by Christ's love for us. Despite our limitations and faults, Christ has shown himself to be the guarantor of his love for us. In the same way, through this encyclical, the Pope calls us to love one another.

In this text, we would like to talk about the love that comes from the human heart through education.

## **The human heart and education**

### *a. Human heart*

By definition, the human heart is the source of the feelings, passions and motivations that a person experiences.

### *b. Education*

Education in itself aims at the integral development of the human person. It is the act of guiding someone out of ignorance and into knowledge.

In these lines, we explain how the encyclical *Dilexit nos* sheds light on the work of the human heart in education. We will follow the main lines of the document. These are:

1. The importance of the heart.
2. Gestures and words of love.
3. Here is the heart that loved so much.
4. The love that gives drink.
5. Love for love.

Pope Francis invites us to imitate Christ in his way of living, acting and loving.

### ***1. The importance of the heart***

This first part gives us the meaning of the heart as the basis of human life. It is from there that all feelings and motivations for living arise and remain. It is said that a man without a heart is a man without life. The encyclical *Dilexit nos* urges us to make our hearts places of love. Love for oneself, love for others and love for God.

Thus, the work of the human heart in education requires love. We must know that education can only be achieved with a great deal of love. For education today is no longer a question of transmitting a great deal of knowledge, but rather of having integral knowledge, that is to say, know-how, social skills, the ability to speak, the ability to act and the ability to love. Today's

youth need not only a *well-trained mind* but also a *heart filled with love*.

## ***2. Gestures and words of love***

Twenty-first-century society in general, and young people in particular, are attracted to superficiality, lack of depth, lack of authenticity, lack of truth. As Pope Francis said this to young people during his visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo from 31 January to 3 February 2023.

Everyone wants to put on a mask so that reality disappears. There are fewer words and gestures of love in our daily lives. The kindness or smile that comes from the face sometimes does not come from the heart. We want to appear good, without actually being so.

Instead of education transforming young people by teaching them human, Christian and moral values, we see that the places where education takes place, such as the family, school, etc., are becoming places of violence (parents no longer show love for each other or for their children). Schools, for their part, are becoming places of vagrancy where corruption, delinquency, alcoholism, etc. reign.

Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Dilexit nos*, warns us against this desire within us to satisfy and feed the superficial. He asks us to show our young people the values that build character through our words and actions.

### ***3. Here is the heart that loved so much***

Christ as a human being loves everyone: he eats with tax collectors, visits his friends, and talks with sinners. Christ the divine looks at the crowd and has compassion. He performs miracles. He raises the dead and heals the sick.

In his merciful heart, Christ does not look at our limitations, much less our sins. He holds our hand to lift us up.

Our sins break Christ's heart. But he never stops welcoming us.

We must teach young people to ask for forgiveness and to know how to be reconciled. Let us teach young people to say "forgive me" to others. This attitude shows humility, simplicity of heart and love for others. As the Good Mother said, *the best way to go to God is to love one's neighbour.*

### ***4. The love that gives drink***

*Dilexit nos* shows us that education should be the place that facilitates young people's encounter with Christ, who is our inexhaustible source. In John 7:37-38, Christ tells us: "Come to me, all you who are thirsty, and drink!" Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within him."

Jesus calls on those who thirst for truth, love, justice and peace to come to Him.

*Dilexit nos* shows us that the education of young people must be based on a thirst for relationship and communion with God. A thirst for a presence and a love that fill broken hearts.

### ***5. Love for love***

For Pope Francis, education is central to the development of humanity. This education must be carried out with love, commitment and fraternity.

One cannot educate without love; the educator must love with patience and encouragement. It is only through love that certain tasks will be accomplished and well understood by young people.

In her letters, the Good Mother recommends this:

“In the education of a child, what matters most is to make them happy, free and spontaneous, to allow them to be themselves. They must be spoiled because it is good for their physical and moral well-being. They should be disturbed as little as possible, otherwise they become automatons. That is why the good woman, forgive everything when it is just childish mischief without malice. Scold them, give them penance, but never allow them to be beaten... Rarely threaten them.”

In conclusion, the encyclical *Dilexit nos* wishes that the education of young people be based on love for oneself, love for others and love for God.

Sometimes young people feel less appreciated by those around them. Often, we make no effort to help these young people who seem desperate, rejected, etc. However, we forget that a child's or young person's living environment, particularly their family, school and church, influences their life and plays a major role in their education.

Knowing that if these young people could feel loved, appreciated and encouraged despite their weaknesses, and if their educators, parents and church were involved in identifying what is preventing them from succeeding in their education, they would make a great effort to improve their behaviour and way of life.