

LOVE SERVES

The
Spirituality
of

The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

A perusal of its Constituents

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Preface

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary was founded in Paris in 1866 and received as its patrimony

- a) the charism of Father Victor Braun
- b) Devotion to the Sacred Heart
- c) the Rule of St. Augustine
- d) the spirit of St. Francis de Sales.

This is a rich spiritual heritage.

I propose to examine each of these four elements and to show that together they present a spirituality that is relevant for and needed by to-day's world. In this spirituality the Gospel of John is unfolded, 'God is Love' (1 Jn. 4:16). 'God so loved the world that he gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life.' (Jn. 3:16) 'And the WORD was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.' (Jn. 1:14). The chief characteristics of this spirituality are then, love and service.

The double commandment, 'Before all things, let God be loved and then our neighbours' is usually placed as a short introduction to the Rule of St. Augustine. Augustine, in his search for the truth, was catapulted into belief in the Incarnation. I intend to show how the humility and love of the Incarnation permeate Augustine's Rule.

St. Francis de Sales, a profound student of St. Augustine, gave to the Order of the Visitation which he founded, the Rule of St. Augustine. In *The Treatise on Divine Love*, a classic work on spiritual development, Francis expresses his insight into the mystery of the Incarnation - Redemption. He holds the view that the Incarnation of the Word of God is willed in order that God may be infinitely glorified through Christ's Love. I mean to examine the relation of this insight to the theology of the Sacred Heart.

Karl Rahner has described devotion to the Sacred Heart as 'the shattering consequence of a knowledge of the history of salvation'. The devotion established in Scripture and Tradition and on the 'private devotions' of Paray-le-Monial was growing apace during the lifetime of Father Victor Braun. France was recovering from the Revolution while the Church was consecrating the whole world to the Sacred Heart and extending the feast world-wide. Father Victor Braun was a child of his times. For him only two things mattered: Jesus Christ and the Poor. He rose to the challenge. To alleviate the distress of the poor he gathered around him a community of women:

'To give glory to God by loving the divine Heart of Jesus
and making him loved till their last breath'

and

'To participate in the redemption of the world
by working for the salvation
of all those whom providence entrusted to their care'

In conclusion, I propose to establish that the charism received by the Founder, Father Victor Braun, is firm in its foundation while flexible in its expression and that it is a lasting gift to the Church.

Sister Mary Simeon

Chapter One

A Brief History of The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

In the spring of 1996 'The Chigwell Nuns' will celebrate a centenary - the purchase of Chigwell Manor House, now their mother-house, Chigwell Convent. In 1903 the Chigwell Nuns (as locally and affectionately known) without any disowning of their parent origin, The Servants of the Sacred Heart, Versailles, were granted, with full sanction from Rome, autonomy as a new institute, entitled The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. A brief historical sketch of the Institute may be helpful in appraising its spirituality and mission in the Church today.

On the feast of St. Margaret Mary, 1866, a little group of women knelt before a statue of the Sacred Heart, in a barely furnished room in the Rue Humboldt, Paris and dedicated their lives to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They were penitents of the young, delicate, zealous priest from Lorraine, Fr. Peter Victor Braun, who had called them to assist him in his rescue work among the German and Alsatian working girls, at risk in the big capital city. Just two years previously Fr. Braun had received a special grace for his own sanctification and for his apostolate. At a German Catholic Congress at Wurzburg a conference 'On Devotion to the Sacred Heart' impressed him deeply. It was a revelation. The full significance of the devotion was made clear to him. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the response of love to God who is love. It is the rendering of homage and thanksgiving to Our Creator who has revealed Himself to us and redeemed us in and through the Word Incarnate - His Son, Jesus Christ. Full of courage and joy Fr. Braun returned to Paris resolved to embrace the devotion and to spread it. This dedication of his co-workers has always been considered the foundation day of the

Institute of the Servants of the Sacred Heart. Only seven years later on the 5th September, 1873, Fr. Braun consecrated the whole Congregation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Paray-le-Monial where he was accompanied by three Sisters, representing France, England and Austria, the three Provinces of the youthful vigorous community. He deposited its Rule and Constitutions in the room in which St. Margaret Mary had died.

'The Congregation has been founded upon the Heart of Jesus, supported by the promises which our Divine Saviour has made to our Patroness St. Margaret Mary, whom we have chosen to be the patroness of the novitiate.'

'The Congregation has been founded for the simple purpose to glorify the Heart of Jesus ...

'Do not forget the purpose for which you are assembled in this Congregation. From the day when you were to forget it, your Congregation would no longer have any right to exist and it would have to be dissolved.'

From such humble beginnings the Institute grew rapidly.

A man and a war strike the reader of the annals as the two chief instruments chosen by God for the birth and spread of the new Congregation. The man was Fr. Victor Braun. In a homily given at Chigwell on October, 16th, 1982, Cardinal Hume remarked:

"A cursory glance at the life and work of Fr. Braun makes me think that your religious life only continued in being because the Lord must have wanted the Servants of the Sacred Heart to survive! For as far as you and I can see, any number of things at the beginning of it were calculated to destroy it. Most of them outside; the Franco-Prussian War of 1870! And from the inside; because it seemed very hit and miss; and lots of miss! No proper novitiate for the early ones, difficulties inside the community 2 and yet through all that difficulty, the Servants of the Sacred Heart not only survived, but were clearly blessed by God, and in a very short space of time, you spread, and spread to this country."

On the translation of Fr. Braun's remains from the cemetery at Argenteuil to the vault at the French mother house at Versailles on 19th September, 1925, Msgr. Gibier, Bishop of Versailles, said of him:

"He was a man of God. All his confidence was placed in the Divine Providence This was his characteristic virtue It reveals to us his great sanctity How ardent was his devotion to The Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Our Lady! Above all, what devotion to the Cross, the keystone of all Christian virtue! He was a man of souls - of consecrated souls! But he devoted himself also to the alleviation of suffering, troubled souls Pere Braun, was a priest after God's own heart." 3

To Fr. Devas, Fr. Braun's life reveals him

"as a man of restless energy and compelling personality, undaunted by obstacles, full of unbounded confidence in God and intense zeal for souls, yet inclined to forget practical aspects of human character, and somewhat oblivious to the demands of ordinary human prudence. Such mingled characteristics often enough reduced his work to the verge of destruction, and one may perhaps think of him as one whom God looked upon as an utterly sincere, but rather wayward instrument of Providence." 4

For a Chigwell Sister, "The founder has a good sense of humour, but he is naive at first about feminine psychology; he is warm, understanding, demanding; he is a man of prayer and discernment in the spiritual life." Fr. Victor Braun grew up in the peaceful rural setting of St. Avold, Lorraine, in an ideal Christian family, celebrating all the liturgical feasts. From his grandmother, he imbibed a tender love for Our Lady which he preserved throughout his life. He desired to become a missionary, like his elder Jesuit brother, Anthony, but nervous tension undermined his health, allowing him, nonetheless, to reach the priesthood, to join the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul and eventually to do what God wanted - establish a community of Sisters dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. His first assignments after ordination were teaching posts at Metz, an active apostolate amongst the poor and labouring classes in Nancy and then, Paris, where he spent long hours in the confessionals at Notre Dame des Victoires and at Notre Dame de Nazareth.

For Fr. Braun, to discover a need, was to seek a remedy for it. In Paris, under the auspices of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, he established the German Mission of Our Lady at Grenelle. It was in and through this German community that his special vocation, the great work of his life, was gradually revealed to him, and as already indicated, initiated on the Feast of Sister Margaret Mary, 1866. Rue Humboldt became "The Sacred Heart Home for Working Girls" and welcomed so many poor girls, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, and so many orphans, that larger premises had to be found. Eventually, without any endowment or assured means of support and with ecclesiastical authorities unwilling to give approval, Fr. Braun decided to move some of the Sisters and orphans to Sevres. There his great friend, Canon Codant, influenced the Bishop of Versailles to give the little company diocesan approval. In the Dominican Chapel at Sevres, Fr. Braun's first "Sisters" were clothed in a black habit and given a purple cord to remind them of the patron chosen for them, St. Francis de Sales. Fr. Braun intended the Servants of the Sacred Heart to transplant the spirit of St. Francis de Sales from behind the grille into the world and to bring into effect the original design of the Founder of the Visitation Order.

Fr. Braun believed firmly that though he passed in men's eyes as the founder of the Servants of the Sacred Heart, the real founder was the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How right he was, was strikingly demonstrated during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870! As soon as the hostilities began in July 1870, Fr. Braun returned to his home in St. Avoird to minister to the troops at the huge fortress at Metz. His flight to Lorraine seemed like an abandonment of his young congregation which, by then, was beginning to enjoy some stability and which had four establishments: (1) Grenelle - a hostel for working girls; (2) St. Cloud - the novitiate and the care of the sick in their homes; (3) Argenteuil - an orphanage; (4) Vaugirard - the domestic management of an orphanage run by the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul. (The Sevres foundation had succumbed to new disappointments and difficulties in finance

and communications). At the end of the war only Argenteuil remained, but new mission-fields had been opened in England and Austria. It was from England that resources of personnel and finance were forthcoming to rebuild the French foundation.

The war gave the Sisters a new experience - to be refugees! In the absence of the founder, exacerbated by the complete breakdown in postal communication, the Sisters had to use their own initiative to meet the exigencies of wartime. The German Sisters, on leaving France, went to Cologne, where they nursed the wounded, captive French soldiers, while the French Sisters at the invitation of Msgr. Mabile, Bishop of Versailles, worked at the International Red Cross Camp there, tending the wounded German soldiers. True charity! In this service of love, seeds were sown and they bore fruit when the Congregation was transplanted to both Austria and England. As the war ended, Fr. Braun installed some Sisters in Darmstadt at the request of the Protestant Princess Alice, for their services in her hospital. The following year, after prayerful discernment about the conditions of employment, he sent Sisters to the great Rudolph Hospital in Vienna on the request of the Chief Surgeon who had been impressed by the Sisters' services at the Versailles Ambulance Camp. This decision required the Austrian State to reverse its practice and re-instate religious in their hospitals alongside lay-nurses. Barriers of prejudice, religious, national and social, were collapsing, faced with genuine loving service. From this beginning in Vienna, the Austrian Province developed and in 1893 became a separate, autonomous, diocesan institute on the advice of the Archbishop of Vienna.

In the meantime a "prophetic" wish of Fr. Braun had been realised. The Sisters had "penetrated into England, into that country which formerly gave so many saints to the church." A brave Irish girl, postulant Sr. Josephine, holding a secret desire to reach Fr. Braun in Lorraine, offered to travel to London to seek

help from the International Red Cross at its headquarters. Wearing the armlet of the Red Cross and accompanied by three Sisters she left Paris on 26th August, 1870 and the following day was warmly welcomed by His Eminence, Cardinal Manning, Archbishop of Westminster whose paternal protection she sought. Grateful for the contribution made by the French Revolution refugees to the life of the Church in England, the Cardinal gave her a crucifix for Fr. Braun as an assurance that he and his little flock of refugees would be received with open arms. At once Sr. Josephine returned to France to M. Le Prevost, superior of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul with the good news. She was back in London again on 3rd September with the Sisters from Vaugirard who were received by the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Nazareth at Bermondsey and Hammersmith. Then accompanied by one Sister she set out for Lorraine and on September 9th reached St. Avold exhausted from the hazardous journey. Fr. Braun was speechless at the sight of the two Sisters. He had just penned a letter to Paris ending it, 'If you seek me, if you sigh after my return, you shall find me in the wound of the Heart of Jesus. It is there that I dwell and that you can meet me.' He blessed God's Providence for the authorisation given him to establish works in London. To reward Sister Josephine, and without regard for ecclesiastical protocol, he admitted her as a novice to the Congregation and named her Sr. Mary of Jesus.

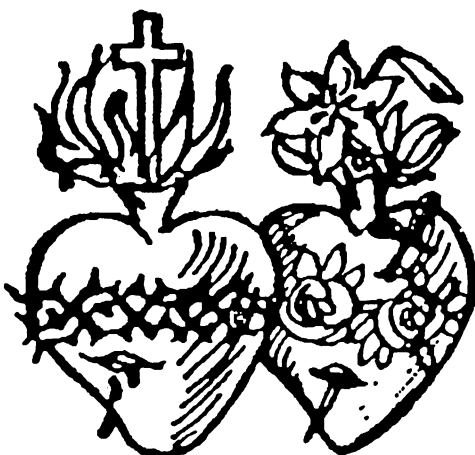
After a day or two they set out for London. As he approached the dowry of Mary Fr. Braun's devotion to our Lady reached a crescendo. Arriving at Ostende on 19th September, 1870, the feast of Our Lady of La Salette, he found there a Church dedicated to Mary under that title so familiar and precious to him as a Brother of St. Vincent de Paul. Arriving at Stratford next day, Fr. Braun rented No. 2 Eden Villas, The Grove and named it 'House of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart,' a most significant title. The Servants of the Sacred Heart adapted quickly to their service of the Church in England. To their familiar work of relieving distress, soon new apostolates were added - primary school teaching - special education -

mother and baby care. The work was furthered by great benefactors, the Marquis of Bute and the Kelly Family amongst them. By the end of the century the Sisters had reached Aberdare and Sudbury, Liverpool and Glasgow, Brighton and South Uist, Homerton and Chigwell.

The most memorable day in the annals of the whole congregation is the feast of St. Francis de Sales, 29th January, 1872. It was a day of joy when the first profession ceremony in the Congregation took place in the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Stratford. To honour the Sacred Heart of Jesus through love and service of the poor, nine Sisters professed their vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and total consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Soon thereafter Fr. Braun handed over the government of the Congregation to the Sisters, naming Sister Gertrude as the first superior general. On Ascension Day 18th May, 1882, admonishing the Sisters to love one another, he went to his reward. He had bequeathed to the Servants of the Sacred Heart a rich patrimony - devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, love of Mary, the Rule of St. Augustine, the Spirit of St. Francis de Sales - all succinctly summed up in his phrase 'Jesus Christ and the Poor.' By the turn of the century problems in communication and of finance beset the Congregation and the three provinces became distinct Institutes. Since Vatican II cordial relations have been restored and celebratory occasions shared.

Since its inception the English branch of Fr. Braun's Community has been led by valiant Sisters, women of faith and courage;- Sisters Francis de Sales, Winefride, Sylvester, Laurence, Antonia, Bernadette, Etheldreda and Oliver. Throughout its history they have safeguarded and brought to life its charism. Events have been both heartrending and joyous. The pain of separation from France, guided and wisely counselled by Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster, and the even more painful closure of the Australian Mission (1909-1925) founded from Homerton, together with the World Wars, the de-

christianisation of the West and the depletion of labourers in the Lord's vineyard, have all elicited loving-reparation. 6 The definite approval and confirmation of the Institute of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by Pope Pius XI on 7th January, 1936, was the occasion of deepest joy, calling forth from the Sisters the glory and praise of God in thanksgiving. The development of new missions, including California (1953) and Zambia (1956), the life-giving renewal Chapters following Vatican II, the centennial celebrations of foundation (1966), of first profession (1972) and of Fr. Braun's resurrection in Christ (1982) have all been times to sing, the Lord has done marvels for the Congregation! The present call to the Congregation under Sister John Vincent, to refocus its mission to serve the poor with compassion, is a challenge to the Sisters to meet the demands of their charism in to-day's circumstances, acknowledging their own individual and community poverty, helplessness, weakness and inability as did the Founder. It is a call to renew confidence in Divine Providence.



*May the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary
be everywhere loved*

Chapter Two

In Quest of God

"You have entered this community in order to sanctify, to surrender yourselves, to sacrifice yourselves. He whom you have chosen to be your bridegroom regards you from the heights of Heaven. May He be present in your hearts everywhere. He will support you Be encouraged by this magnificent promise of our Divine Redeemer: 'Take my yoke upon yourselves, for my yoke is sweet and my burden is light and you will find peace for your soul.' This is already a reward down here, and how beautiful will be the reward up yonder."

It is in the holiness of his creature that God finds his greatest glory. Jesus, Son of God, reflection and envoy of the Father, our Saviour and brother, is alone able to render truly to the Father all honour and glory. (cf. Jn. 10:17) Every human being has a vocation of adoration and praise and through Christ, with Him and in Him, is called to give to the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory, for ever and ever. (cf. Eph. 1:14) All who are in grace participate already in the glory of the Incarnate Word. (cf. Jn. 17:22).

Men and women, who have experienced the call to follow Christ as religious, have always believed that they have the power, out of the riches given in baptism, to lead others to the Father. They give a witness in the world to the transcendence of God and the permanent values of eternity. Accepting clearly, humbly and lovingly their human limitations, in patient effort taking up the Cross daily, their poverty strengthened and aided by the Easter Resurrection, with confidence they strive to realise the words of St. Paul: "I live in the faith of the Son of God who has loved me and given himself for me." (Gal. 2:20). "For to me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21). In permitting the Father to become in them, religious men and women sing His glory all through life, by growing in His image and likeness, in and through their consecration and apostolate.

"Charity alone makes us perfect," says St. Francis de Sales, "but the vows are the three great ways to acquire it." To sing throughout life a song that ceases not, the religious consecrates herself to God by vows. The vows are an aspiration, a constant tending to perfect charity, to union with God through charity. This celebrate virginal love, a gift only for those to whom it is given, gives itself to all, and finds in Christ the possibility always to renew, welcome and to love again. Love is the essence of religious life; love wills the obligation; it is a consuming fire, a blazing emblem. This mystical life Fr. Peter Victor Braun strove to inculcate in his daughters, the Servants of the Sacred Heart, who passed it on to the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He wished to realise in himself and in those who followed him, this ideal: to rekindle in human hearts by the service of love, the love of God.

Fr. Braun saw his Sisters as 'contemplatives in action'. In one of his frequent letters to them he wrote:

"You are not a contemplative order, although obliged to contemplate daily, above all the sorrows of the Heart of Jesus, occasioned by the sins of men: nor are you a penitential order, although obliged each day to do penance for your own sins and those of others: You are a legion of devoted virgins who, after having sanctified yourselves, ought to go into the world, to shed abroad everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ and bring souls back to him by way of kindness and gentleness, making them love the good God and piety in your own persons. That is the only sermon which most of the people in the world understand." 2

In this brief statement all the essential elements of his own and his foundation's charisms, spirituality and spirit are integrated. Elusive indefinable though these may be, they are real and they communicate a unique insight into the Gospel - the love of God epitomized in the Heart of Jesus, inviting consecration and reparation, requiring community and mission, flowing out in simplicity and devotion.

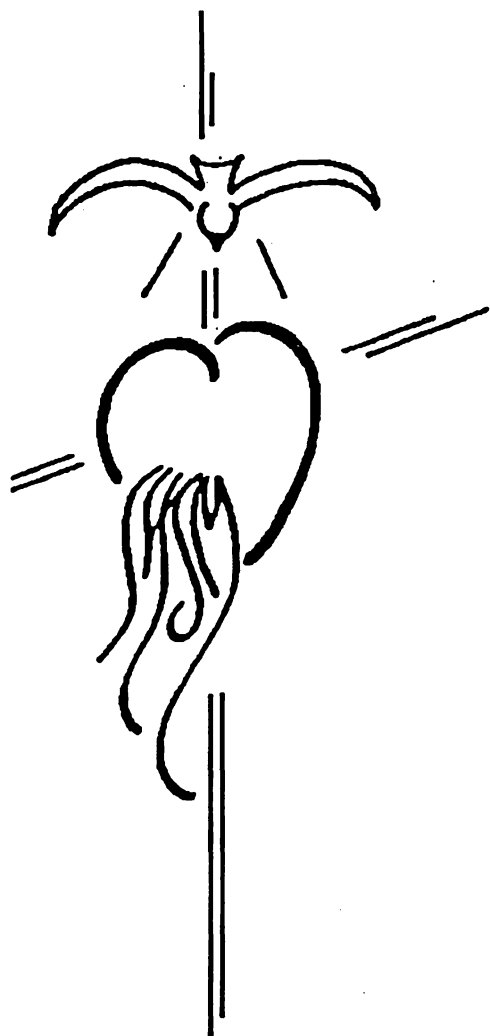
By his letters, conferences and especially in his original normative constitutions Fr. Braun interprets the gift given to him for his congregation and he indicates the contribution it is to make to the Church in the world.

In the first chapter of his constitutions he states clearly that charity is both the end and supreme law for the Sisters. This truth, the primacy of charity, was the substance of his own 'conversion' at Wurtzburg. Finding it central to the teaching and spirituality of St. Augustine and St. Francis de Sales, Fr. Braun chose the Rule of the former and the spirit of the latter as sure pedagogy for devotion to the Sacred Heart. In 1876 the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, he addressed a letter "to all the Superiors and Sisters, present and to come" reminding each Sister that she is called, not for herself, but for Him whom she serves. With Christ she gives herself to the Father: "Behold I come to do thy will." Therein lies obedience, the special virtue of the Congregation, the response of love to love in faith, the surrender in full liberty to the Father, with Christ, for the Church, in the Holy Spirit. Since this call is to many, not to one alone, it realises in this world, the best form of fraternal community - a union of all wills in a dependence freely given under the sign of faith. According to Adolar Zumkeller, O.S.A., and Tarcisius van Bavel, O.S.A., this unitive love of God is the uniquely distinctive characteristic of the Rule of St. Augustine. Fr. Braun perceived that Augustine's Rule accorded with his own intuition for love, consecration, reparation, community and mission and with the Spirit of Francis de Sales who had elucidated this central concept in his *Treatise on the Love of God*. St. Francis closed this classic work on mystical spirituality with a grateful reference to St. Augustine's Sermon 350 on Charity, "that this charity may find in you the fruit of holy works, not the leaves of praise." Fr. Braun closed his constitutions with a slightly reworded, germane quote from Augustine's Rule: "One heart and one soul in the Heart of Jesus."

"Without this inner recollection, this love for prayer I cannot imagine any religious, any apostolic mind." 6 Thus gracefully, from St. Avold in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War, Fr. Braun related and emphasised the two modalities of spirituality, the interior and the exterior. The 1876 Letter for posterity carried a reminder to the Sisters "increase His glory by your apostolate." With the foundation in England, Fr. Braun noted "the Most Reverend Bishop Manning, Bishop of Westminster, guided us back in our work to the first idea of our institution, namely, to find the poor in their dwellings and to proclaim to them the Gospel." 7 Born out of popular needs, the apostolate adapted itself to the needs of time and place. "Our own purpose in our works is to do that which is not done by others." 8 "... serve the poor, teach them, help them." 9 "Love the poor! ... There are only two things in the world, Jesus Christ and the poor." 10 The poor are the friends of Jesus Christ. They are his limbs. They are He Himself." 11

Fr. Braun's apostolate and attitude to the poor and the sick was greatly influenced, as might be expected of a Brother of St. Vincent de Paul, by that great Saint to whom Fr. Braun makes constant reference in his letters and conferences. It is however, St. Francis de Sales whom he followed both in theory and practice. Fr. Braun's scattered exhortations on poverty, and his apostolic endeavours, are informed by *The Introduction to The Devout Life* and *the Spirit of the Order of the Visitation of St. Mary*, works of St. Francis de Sales that express, respectively, moderation and compassion, the fruits of his love for God and for his neighbour. To read St. Jane de Chantal's testimony on her co-founder saint, and to read Possidius' biography of St. Augustine, is to be impressed by the similarity of both Saints. In their personal life-styles Augustine and Francis were frugal and mortified but without extreme; for guests, whoever they might be, they practised a welcoming hospitality at all times; to the poor, each was a real father, a generous pastor. Fr. Braun followed their example. In the apostolate "penury of resources and personnel never kept him from accepting every opening that offered." 12

"His great charity caused him to be loved by everybody ... the poor always found in him a ready listener ... with regard to himself he ... never thought of his bodily wants and comforts." This is the testimony of a Sister who knew him. 13 This heritage of true poverty of spirit, of total dependence on Divine Providence inspires the present day contemplative, apostolic spirituality of the Sisters.



Out of
His
HEART
shall flow
STREAMS
of
LIVING
WATER
Jn. 7:38

Chapter Three

Magnificat

Originally Fr. Braun wished his congregation to be known as Poor Servants of the Sacred Heart. He met with ecclesiastical opposition from Canon Codant. Fr. Braun held firm though he agreed to drop the word 'poor' as a sheer concession to his friend and benefactor. The change had the happy effect of throwing into greater relief the particular goal of the charism. The Sisters, the servants of the poor as the Founder often addressed them, had a mission to bring the world back to the worship of God who is love. When the English Province became an independent institute it received a new name, The Institute of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In the Dowry of Mary Fr. Braun's devotion to Our Lady was highlighted.

The Congregation's first convent in England was dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to whom all France was consecrated by the Archbishop of Bourges on 17th October, 1872 at Hermont. Fr. Braun, in Stratford at the time, asked the Sisters to renew their own dedication on that day and he encouraged all who could to participate in the pilgrimage to Hermont. Fr. Chevalier, founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and aware of the union of Jesus and Mary in Sacred Scripture, in the teaching of the Church and in the devotion of the faithful, initiated devotion to Mary, under the title Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in 1857. Since Vatican II, Fr. Andre Tostain, M.S.C., has published privately a scriptural and doctrinal synthesis of devotion to Mary under the title, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It is a little goldmine for those who wish to appreciate more fully Mary's role in our redemption, as portrayed in the Gospels, especially St. John's, in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Apocalypse and in the teaching of the Church.

On the eve of his first arrival in England with Sr. Josephine (Mary of Jesus), on the 19th September, 1870, feast of Our Lady of La Salette, Fr. Braun celebrated

Mass at Ostende in a chapel dedicated to Our Lady under that same title. 3 It was a moving event for him. The Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, of whom Fr. Braun was one, had chosen Our Lady of La Salette as their special patron since their foundation day, the 19th September, 1846 coincided with her apparition in the French Alps. Her message, the reconciliation of sinners to the God of love, dovetailed with devotion to the Sacred Heart. In an hour of distress, during the very early days of the Servants of the Sacred Heart, Fr Braun had had recourse to Our Lady of La Salette in the Brother's chapel at Vaugirard. From that time, until the appointment of Sr. Mary Gertrude in 1875, Mary, Queen of La Salette, was considered 'Mother General' of the young foundation! 4

Ejaculatory prayer was much encouraged by Fr. Braun. The aspiration 'Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us' is a much used intercession amongst the Sisters and was introduced by the Founder himself. Because of his association with Notre Dame des Victoires, Fr. Braun was in touch with the many Marian devotions springing up in the nineteenth century and establishing confraternities at the Paris Cathedral. Amongst them was devotion to the Heart of Mary about which St. Anthony Mary Claret, founder of the Claretian Missionary Fathers, began to write in 1847. It was customary at that time to refer to pictures of the Heart of Mary as 'Mother of Divine Love'. The devotion was a cultus to Mary's love which had a clearly apostolic dimension: Charity as the origin of zeal. 'The Heart of Mary,' wrote Claret, 'is the fount and quarry of the humanity of Christ.' The devotion was also inward. Anthony Claret understood the heart as the temple of the Trinity. Mary was daughter, mother and spouse of God Himself. Her faith and charity, made possible the Incarnation of the Word.

The liturgical cultus of the Heart of Mary had to wait until 1944 for Pope Pius XII to extend the feast to the universal Church, but the historical date which marks the beginning of the public cultus of the Heart of Mary is 8th February,

1648, when a solemn celebration of Mass and Office, using texts composed by St John Eudes, took place in the Cathedral of Autun. For St John Eudes the 'heart was a notion that summed up everything, a centre, a climate, in which converged all that was most expressive and deep in order to manifest the mystery of Christ and of his most holy Mother Mary.' St. John Eudes, (1601-1680), a contemporary of St. Margaret Mary (1647-1690), campaigned with enthusiasm for feasts in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sacred Heart of Mary. By 1765 the scriptural and theological bases of the cultus of the Heart of Jesus were clarified and the Bishops of Poland were issued a decree granting celebration of the special feast of the Heart of Jesus. In 1805 the faculty for celebrating the liturgical feast of the Heart of Mary followed, based on the twofold principle: The inseparable union between Jesus and Mary established by the Holy Spirit, and the immense love of Jesus for Mary, His chosen Mother. In accordance with Vatican II principles of reform, the new Roman calendar has assigned the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as an optional memorial, to the Saturday following the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. s

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) had experienced Mary's tender love for him in his youth when his dark trial of depression, almost of despair, was lifted from him as he prayed St. Bernard's Memorare before the picture of the black Madonna at St. Etienne-des-Pres in Paris. On January 10th, 1611 St. Francis de Sales sent a note to St. Jane Frances de Chantal. 'Our small congregation is a work of the Heart of Jesus and Mary' On 26th January, 1869 Fr. Braun wrote, 'Is it not true, my dear daughters, that we could say the same of our lowly community?' On 18th September, 1872 he wrote to the Sisters from London,

'The mystery of the Visitation is quite particularly the mystery which the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus should be contemplating, who, following the example of Mary, visit and care for those who suffer. This is what our patron Saint, St. Francis de Sales wished
.....' 6

In many such simple ways Fr. Braun directed the Sisters to St. Francis' devotion to Mary, so scriptural, so doctrinal and so warmly expressed in the dedication and in Book 7 of the *Treatise on the Love of God*. Mary's life, her 'fiat', most perfectly expressed love seeking union. She 'put on Christ' embracing His active union with God's will: "for that Mother's Heart was fastened, joined and united to her Son in so perfect a union that nothing could wound the one without inflicting the keenest torture upon the other" . For Fr. Braun the mystery of the pierced Heart of Jesus was crucial to his charism, the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus rendered in love, reparation and thanksgiving. With the return to the original inspiration of the Congregation in the renewal required by Vatican II, the Sisters have given a new prominence to the role of Mary, especially in the mystery of her Visitation. :

In the early 1920's devotion to Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel, was introduced into the Congregation by an Augustinian priest preaching a retreat in Chigwell. This devotion flourished for some time and public prayer 'for the good establishment of the Congregation' was addressed to Our Lady under that title. In 1937 Sister Laurence, then Superior General, accompanied by her assistant and her secretary, Sisters Antonia and Rosalie, visited Genazzano, home of the fifteenth century fresco depicting Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel. Sister Laurence brought home with her a copy of the picture which hung thereafter in her office. In the renewal of prayer-life which trimmed down common vocal prayer this particular devotion to Our Lady appeared to die. But a precious Augustinian seed had been sown and is blossoming in a new way, in a more contemplative approach to prayer, enriched for many Sisters by a visit to Genazzano when they participate in international courses on Augustinian spirituality. This focuses attention on St. Augustine's teaching on Mary.

In 1967, in his letter to the Augustinian Family for the quinqucentennial celebration of the discovery of the picture of Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel, Pope Paul VI wrote,

"The Saviour of the World, the Son of the supremely merciful and provident God in the words of St. Augustine, 'created her whom he wished to single out, and singled her out from whom he wished to be born.' We refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary who is always and everywhere exalted with praise. 'She who received with a submissive mind and heart the eternal plan of God and the mystery of his Incarnate Word, became the Mother of God and deserved to be called the Mother of Good Counsel'." 9

On the same occasion the Prior General, Fr. Agostino Trape, addressed a letter to the entire Augustinian Order. It is a very brief condensation of St. Augustine's teaching on Mary from which he abstracts thus:

'It is well known that Augustine, considering the times in which he lived, has much to say about the Blessed Virgin. With great devotion he defined her freedom from all sin, extolled her perpetual virginity and her spiritual maternity of all the faithful and proposed her privileges and manner of life as the type and model of the universal Church, which like her, is both mother and virgin. Mary is praised for her faith - Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it - her openness to the Holy Spirit.' 10

Augustine died in 430 A.D. a year before the Council of Ephesus at which Mary was declared Theotokos, Mother of God. Mary is not merely the Mother of the man Jesus, of a man united to the Son of God, but the mother of God Himself; God truly became man through her. This basic Mariological dogma is in fact a Christological dogma. It is central for the correct understanding of the person Jesus Christ Himself and for the significance of the Mother of God in the divine plan of salvation and in the order of grace. This Mariology has been brought to a seasoned climax by the Second Vatican Council in chapter eight of '**Lumen Gentium**', by the restored solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God and Queen of Peace (Jan 1st) and by the apostolic constitution of Pope Paul VI, **Marialis Cultus** (To honour Mary.)

St. Augustine, Father of Western Monasticism saw a special relationship between the virginity of Mary and the consecration of religious to God. Fr. Trape selected a few quotes: 'Virginal dignity takes its origin from the Mother of God'. 'Do not consider yourselves sterile because you remain virgins: a holy integrity of the body affects the fruitfulness of the mind. Do what the Apostle says and concern yourself about things of God and how you may please Him in all things, so that you may have a soul productive of virtue ... Rejoice, O Virgins of Christ: the Mother of God is your sister'. ¹¹ These few nuggets of wisdom on self-knowledge, apostolate and attitude, indicate the potential influence of St. Augustine on the spirituality of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The Rosary as a devotional practice has had a permanent place in the prayer life of the Congregation since its foundation. It received impetus from the influence on Fr. Braun of Canon Codant, a devotee of this pious practice. ¹² For Sisters with an Irish family background the practice had meaning for it was the Rosary, devotion to the Mother of God, that kept the faith alive in Penal Days when the Mass was banned. In 'Marialis Cultus' Pope Paul VI referred to the Rosary as the 'compendium of the entire Gospel and once again 'recognised its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer - prayer of both praise and petition - and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment' ¹³ Because of its Gospel and Christological foundation, he noted: 'By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries unfold'. ¹⁴ Growth in the mysteries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Love - Incarnation, Crucifixion - Redemption, Hope-fulfilled - Resurrection, is the fruit of the Rosary well prayed. Pope Paul recognised the Rosary, after the Liturgy of the Hours, 'as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the

Christian family is invited to recite'.¹⁵ In presenting the practice, he safeguarded the freedom and uniqueness of each individual's spirituality. 'The Rosary is an excellent prayer but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard. They should be drawn to its calm recitation by its intrinsic appeal'.¹⁶ The spirit of this counsel preserves genuine tradition, while it releases from the remaining vestiges of juridical rigorism, that controlling and stifling response to Jansenism and Liberalism. Fr. Braun a man of his own times, charged with the direction of a new Congregation of Sisters, as time went on, defended the faith and the Church (in his letters and conferences to the Sisters) with a zealous ultramontane spirit, while at the same time, at the personal level, he grew in joy and kindness and true love. Lourdes, Guadalupe, Walsingham, Aylesford, La Salette, Knock! These Marian Shrines with their pilgrimages and devotions nourish and express the Sisters' apostolates to the sick, the marginalised, fellow Christians, the penitent, the devout. Some Sisters have begun to explore the link between the Knock apparition and the charism of the Congregation - the victorious Lamb of God, with Mary and St. John the Evangelist, recipients of the Church from the Pierced Heart of Jesus and St. Joseph.¹⁷ Fr. Braun writing to the Sisters from the Rudolph Hospital, Vienna in 1878 proposed that the Sisters honour with a special love, St. Joseph, who

"placed himself in the school of the Sacred Heart, on the very day when that Divine Heart submitted itself to his paternal authority. Long before the lips of that Divine Master had been opened to say; 'Learn of me for I am meek and humble of Heart.' (Mt. 11:29) St. Joseph had heard uttered by His (Jesus) Heart, in the abasement of His Incarnation and Nativity, that simple lesson and he had understood that therein were summed up the teachings of his Divine Foster Son."¹⁸

Chapter Four

Like the Deer that Yearns for Running Streams

On 15th September, 1873 Fr. Braun dispatched the Rule of St. Augustine and his own Constitutions to the Communities of the Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To read Fr. Braun's letters and conferences is to discover that he had an unbounded admiration for Francis de Sales. Practically every page of the collection carries one reference or more to the Saint of Geneva. But Fr. Braun, seems to stand back from Augustine, to be in awe of him. References to Augustine are few and always linked with the Rule. Speaking to the Sisters one day of true devotion which is "a clear undertaking to love God with one's whole heart and with a special love, and to love the neighbour for love of God," he added, "You know also that St. Francis de Sales loved St. Augustine very much and that he found nothing better than to give the writings of St. Augustine as the Rule for his daughters." 1 Fr. Braun had grasped the unity of Augustinian-Salesian spirituality. Love was the central theme of spirituality for Augustine and for Francis. It was Fr. Braun's own leitmotif too.

Augustine, "Servant of the Servants of Christ," as he styled himself, "was founder of an order, bishop, rector of a seminary, pastor of a large urban church all at the same time." 2 Francis was bishop, founder of an order, spiritual director of numerous souls, all at the same time. "Augustine had a Gothic character. He was always great; at all times too preoccupied with important things to play the great man. Easy-going in his workaday relationships he had a certain magic and brilliance, for he was fundamentally an artist, essentially an artist in sympathy. He never failed to charm. He most humbly fulfilled the precepts he laid on others." 3 All of this too, was the courteous, gentle Francis. Friendship was important to both men as was a humble love of the Church. Each had to control anger and each evidenced the irresistible power of meekness. It is not to a man's advantage to

triumph over another but very much to his advantage to triumph over himself. In controversy with Pelagianism, Donatism or Calvinism each became the very essence of himself and wrote masterpieces on God and his relation with fallen man. Both healed, while they cut and stabbed at heresy. Each in his well endowed bishopric lived more truly poor than the poor of Hippo or Annecy. Poverty was no disgrace. It was a fact to be remedied by love. For Augustine it began with his concern to ennoble the existing relationship between slave and master, the background to mutual charity in his Rule.

Fr. Tarcisius van Bavel, O.S.A. an authoritative exponent to-day of St. Augustine's thought and writings, has come to the conclusion that spirituality is a window on the Gospel, a gift of the Holy Spirit. His abstract definition of spirituality is as follows:

"Spirituality is a permanent inner attitude of the human mind, the human heart, the human spirit obtained through a process of personal assimilation of values in dialogue with the world of the individual and of mankind as a whole, originating from a choice which is made concrete in a special centre of emphasis and attention." 4

In referring to spirituality to-day, the Roman authorities speak of the proper charism of an Order or Congregation of religious men or women. Charism means the same as spirituality and is a gift of grace. Even in a group, personal spirituality must be maintained. In Christianity there are great group spiritualities - Benedictine, Cistercian, Franciscan, Ignatian, Mother Theresa's, Charles de Foucauld's, Augustinian. Each interprets the Gospel from a particular aspect, though all spiritualities are related to each other. To-day spirituality and theology are distinct, though related, disciplines. In ancient times there was no separation and that was and would be a good thing.

In a short article on Augustinian spirituality Fr. Van Bavel gives a few insights, not a complete statement! ; Augustine's thought is too vast, too rich! Briefly he sums up Augustine's spirituality in four points: (1) Love is the centre of

Christian existence; (2) Love of God is love for man; (3) Love serves - the Parable of the Last Judgement; (4) Love unites - Christian Community as friendship. Augustine's spirituality is characterised by the fact that the light in which he views the whole Gospel is love. First, then, according to Augustine everything can be reduced to love. The History of man is fundamentally the history written by love. All forms of wrong-doing are reduced to self-love, the opposite of which is 'agape' the love that justifiably enjoys what is really enjoyable, namely, God and man. These 'two loves' underline two communities, the community of evil and the community of good. Augustine regards all virtues as forms of this one love. Temperance is love that knows how to keep its integrity and be dedicated. Fortitude is love that endures. Justice is love that is not possessive but shares the good things of life equally with others. Wisdom is love that can distinguish between what leads to God and what does not. The simple things of life, happiness, peace, patience, benevolence, loyalty, gentleness, honesty, eventually find their roots in love. This love needs right ordering. In maturity, Augustine became convinced of the unity between the love of God and love of people. Then he held that authentic love for a human being is at the same time love of God. He expresses it pithily in the closing sentence of the first chapter of his Rule: 'and honour God in each other.' We worship God when we meet Him in a human being: 'bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of God' (Gal. 6:2). Love of people teaches us whether our love of God is real and not self-deception. The conclusion to be drawn is that love is indivisible. Love is God! The Parable of the Last Judgement (Mt. 25:31-46) is one of Augustine's favourite texts and he understands that passage as love of neighbour, the sole norm according to which we will be judged. Consequently, the building-up of community among people becomes the most important motif in Augustine's spirituality, and Rule. We become free by mutual participation in one another's lives. Real freedom is love. This, Jesus Christ taught, real freedom consists in solidarity in truly loving community.

Religious community is the natural extension of the focus of Christian Life in general, love of neighbour, but with this difference. Religious voluntarily choose to live together on their way to God, hold all things in common, renounce married life and obediently listen to each other. In Augustine's vision, poverty, holding goods in common, is a first realisation of love and community. It is not limited to the sharing of material goods, but extends also to the level of spiritual goods. It is related to the theme of humility and openness. Celibacy, Augustine regards as a partial realisation of the eschatological task of the Church as a whole; to be totally available for the Other. In obedience or willingness to listen, the influence of the communitarian ideal becomes much more concrete. Both authority and willingness to listen are acts of love! Authority is not power, but the serving of a group. Authority is a burden and listening is in fact an act of compassion, of having mercy on the one who bears responsibility for the common ideal in the name of all.

The communitarian ideal culminates in friendship which is, after love of neighbour, the highest form of human relationship. The difference between them is that, love of neighbour does not ask for a response, whereas friendship precisely consists in mutual love, - loving and being loved. The theology of friendship Augustine expresses in a magnificent short sentence: "Without a human being who is a friend, nothing in the world appears friendly to us." Fr. Braun exhorts the Sisters similarly in an instruction on visiting the poor: "what casts them down more is that they cannot hold a friend's hand, that they know of no heart which will open up for them." Fr. Van Bavel suggests that Augustine's Rule is a summons to the evangelical equality of all people and it contains a certain dimension of social criticism by representing an alternative way of loving in community.

The foundation of love as the means of achieving perfection in the service of God gave the Rule of St. Augustine its appeal for St. Francis de Sales. In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, his *Treatise on the Love of God* and in the

Constitutions for the Visitation Order, Francis pointed out the way in which Augustine's basic Rule of life ought to be used by laity and religious alike. The spirituality of Francis placed special stress on 'the claims of necessity (duty of one's state), charity (the needs of the neighbour) and obedience: 7 Under the claims of obedience, Francis includes all the demands of the double commandment, "Before all things let God be loved and then our neighbour", 8 and the commands of any legitimate authority, religious or civil. He writes simply: "If you receive a command you should believe that this is the will of God." 9 To assure a certain objectivity in discerning the divine will in each person's unique spiritual journey, Francis advised having a spiritual director towards whom one is to show great docility and at the same time, liberty of spirit. He insists that "this is the most important of all words of advice." 10 The present moment - to-day - is of crucial importance in Salesian spirituality. His classic statement of his "theology of the present moment" his Christian existentialism, is the following:

"Never worry about what will happen tomorrow, because the same eternal Father who cares for you to-day will care for you to-morrow and always. He will either not allow trouble to touch you at all, or if he does, he will give you invincible courage to support it." 11

To seize the present moment is as important as to accept one's state in life and its challenges. Both reflect the emphasis St. Francis de Sales places in his spirituality on realism and pragmatism. His spirit is one of "humility, simplicity and devotion, founded on prayer and the interior life, To obtain this spirit ... meditate diligently on the example of Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served." 12 This is a loving service spirituality. Salesian asceticism is practised in the form of death to one's self so as to come alive in a new way in Christ to the service of God and neighbour. "Go along with confidence in Divine Providence," in joy, peace and freedom of spirit, recognising the truth about oneself, accepting that truth frankly and with it the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit for conversion. This obedience, docility to the Spirit, is simplicity. This simplicity "when it reaches the point of

perfection where it makes us earnestly, frequently and readily do good, is devotion." ¹³

Augustinian spirituality is a conversion spirituality. Delivered from materialism, Augustine became a mystic, realising that the mystery of being lay within. "I desire to know God and the soul. I desire nothing else." ¹⁴ The theologian in him joined the man who felt the working of the grace, to praise the mercy of God and glorify Him. After conversion Augustine's belief never wavered: Christ is at once God and man, there is no Christianity without the Incarnate God. But he asked a critical question: Am I redeemed because Christ is the divine Truth itself, or because he became my human brother? Is redemption a deliverance from error through the Word of God, or a deliverance from sin through the Servant of God? In his later mature period Augustine favoured the second solution. Truth was no longer the highest and ultimate thing, but charity. Rather, genuine truth is based on charity and passes into charity. "Love is the deepest reality of all, for God is love." ¹⁵ Only when Augustine had attained this new outlook could he succeed in getting to the heart of the Christian doctrine of redemption and expounding it fully. Augustine no longer considers the Incarnate Word alone. Christianity is simply the good tidings of the new man, free from sin, united with God, yet one of ourselves by the bonds of common blood and common life and of our incorporation in him. This essential union is established in baptism and it has a dynamic character. It is not the mere individual who prays and loves, but Christ in him through his Holy Spirit, the Head in his members. In "De Trinitate", Augustine pours out his own devotion and love for God and gives his conversion - redemption - Christological spirituality its full Trinitarian dimension.

In his Christology St. Francis de Sales went beyond the reality of Augustine's doctrinal theology into the speculative realm with Duns Scotus (d.1308) and asked what was the final motive of the Incarnation. Holding that since God

wills and accomplishes everything on account of love, then the Incarnation of the Word of God is willed in order that God may be infinitely glorified through Christ's love. In his analysis of this doctrine Fr. Eric Doyle, OFM, made the following points. ¹⁶ Sin is not a necessary cause of the coming of the Head and King of all the elect, angels and men ... It is God's glory ad extra through love, and Jesus Christ is par excellence the Gift of God through the love of his Sacred Heart ... The reason of the Incarnation is God's free decision from all eternity to share the object of his love, His Son, Jesus Christ, with the free and responsible creature that man is ... The homage of the Incarnate Word contains the most perfect love and bears within itself radically the love of all rational creatures ... The final reason of all God's activity outside himself is the Sacred Heart of Jesus in whom the Creator and creature are united forever ... The doctrine of the Absolute Primacy of Christ is the doctrine of the absolute primacy of love and union ... The doctrine of Duns Scotus forms the basis of an integral and authentic Christian humanism ... it speaks of human grandeur but also of human humility. The value and dignity of human existence, matter, work, time and history have their unconditional and intrinsic affirmation in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ absolutely predestined in the love of God ... In the humble acceptance of that love is revealed the true meaning of being human". ¹⁷

In the light of the Primacy of Christ in God's loving act of Creation - Redemption, the teachings of St. Augustine and St. Francis de Sales, both great theologians, humanists and psychologists, possess particular relevance for mankind and the world at the end of the second millenium.

The new Constitutions (1987) of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary depict fidelity to the founding charism of Fr. Braun. They are permeated by Augustinian - Salesian spirituality though direct references to either saint are very few indeed. The act of love and the freedom of choice that are requisite to

belonging to the Congregation are clearly stated in norms 156 and 157. ¹⁸ The joy of being 'one heart and one soul in God' radiates from norm 53 dealing with community life. The reminders, to be signs and messengers of God's love for man, are frequent, occurring for example in norms 3, 7, 18, 25, 54, 56. ¹⁹ There intrudes, however, a note of tension between the charism of love and the concept of obedience. For Augustine and Francis obedience is an act of love but the Constitutions refer to obedience of faith, norm 48. ²⁰ Fr. Braun, educated by the Jesuits and having tried his own vocation with them, had a liking for St. Ignatius Loyola. On 1st May, 1874 he circulated to the whole Congregation St. Ignatius' letter on obedience. The Ignatian concept of obedience, a mystical one, had a decisive influence on Fr. Braun's formation of the Sisters. (cf. Letters and Conferences). Following Ignatius, he made unquestioning obedience and the fulness of hierarchial authority interdependent. The components of Ignatian obedience are:

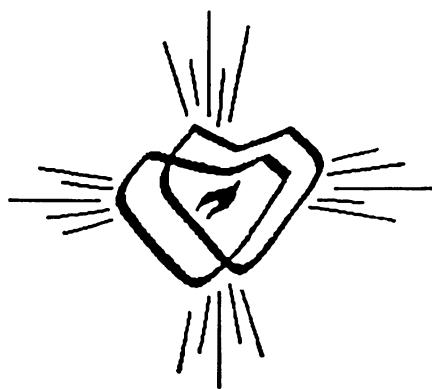
- (1) seeing Christ in the Superior and trusting Christ to lead one to Him through the Superior.
- (2) defending rather than criticising the Superior as long as truth is not violated.
- (3) understanding that the order emanates from God's representative and must, therefore, express the will of God. ²¹

Obedience of love is subjection to another human will as an act of love. Its object is to give the Beloved what he desires and to bring one's own will into harmony with that of the Beloved. It is the truest mark of real love. The decisive factors in obedience of love are: (1) it is given without any external necessity, not merely or only because it is the essential means of doing the right thing in special circumstances: (2) it begins with an offer of obedience, not with an authoritative claim: (3) it is given in personal and minor questions: (4) it is regarded as a privilege, not a duty. In obedience of love, the law is not so much the principal end, but God, who is perfect truth and highest good and who is the absolute

standard of our actions and the absolute good of our love to which we can attain by grace. ²² The tension between the charism of love and obedience of faith challenges the Sisters to discern a process of reconciliation, healing and growth, a need stemming from their origins.

St. Francis de Sales who had also been a student with the Jesuits found the process of discernment in Ignatian spirituality useful, but for his concept of obedience he followed Augustine. For Augustine, obedience for religious arises out of the obligation they have to their community. Peace, mutual esteem, authority as a service of love and obedience as an expression of compassion ensure a harmonious relationship between the community and the individual person. Augustine ends his Rule with a heartfelt prayer:

"The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity, as lovers of spiritual beauty (the uncreated beauty of God himself) and spread abroad the sweet odour of Christ by a good life, not as slaves living under the law but as men and women living in freedom under grace." ²³



Chapter Five

With Joy You Will Draw Water

from the Wells of Salvation Is. 12:3

In fostering devotion to the Heart of Jesus Fr. Braun recommended the reading of the lives of the saints whose union with God was nurtured by it. Some he mentions: St. Gertrude, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Magdalen de Pazzi, St. Rose of Lima, St. Bernard, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis de Sales and St. Margaret Mary. A careful reading of his **Letters and Conferences** reveal that his own spiritual life, his own devotion, rested on Scripture, on the writings of St. Paul and St. John in particular. To each he refers frequently, not to expound them, but simply to share his faith. Therein unselfconsciously, he teaches by example. In 1869 he expressed his own understanding of devotion to the Heart of Jesus as follows:

"The Heart of our Divine Master is the centre where everything of the Old and New Testament meets, the column which supports everything, the sun of the Church, the soul of our souls and the love of our love, the cradle of our sacred religion, the source of our mysteries, the origin of our sacraments, the pledge of our atonement, the salvation of the world, the remedy for all evil and the refuge of Christians." 1

This is biblical, ecclesial, redemptive, loving. A little over a year later he wrote to the Sisters from St. Avold:

"The Passion concerns you, for you in particular has our divine Redeemer permitted the lance to strike Him such a broad and deep wound ... the foundations of your Society have been laid upon the death of our divine Redeemer, when He permitted that after His death, his heart should be pierced. Therefore, death to everything! ... In order to understand these words you must have read deep in the Saviour's breast; the knowledge of the mystery of His love must already be revealed in order that this admonition be understood." 2

Fr. Braun had truly absorbed the full significance of the Heart of Christ in the economy of salvation and in the revelations to St. Margaret Mary during which Christ said to her:

"Behold this heart which has so loved mankind that it has spared itself nothing, even to being spent and consumed to prove its love. And yet it has received in return from the majority of mankind only ingratitude and coldness and the neglect of me in the sacrament of my love. What is even more painful to me is that it is hearts consecrated to me which use me thus." ³

According to the traditional doctrine of the Church, the Holy Spirit imparts special graces to the faithful, fitting them through those graces to take on works or offices "useful for renewing and further expanding the Church." ⁴ Among these charisms is that given to St. Margaret Mary in regard to devotion to the Heart of Christ. The divine communications to her have been explicitly, repeatedly and solemnly approved by the Popes. Before the canonisation of St. Margaret Mary in 1920 Leo XIII had issued his encyclical, *Annum Sacrum* (1899) dwelling on consecration. *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pope Pius XI's encyclical followed in 1928 and dealt with reparation. In 1956 Pope Pius XII issued *Haurietas Aquas* which unites the elements of consecration and reparation in a synthesis of loving response to Love. Paul VI considered the union between devotion to the Heart of Jesus and participation in the Eucharist to be an excellent and well tried form of authentic post-conciliar piety. ^{5,6} Pope John Paul II has taken the biblical meaning of heart and urged its application to Christ's Heart and our own interior renewal. In 1979 he gave his first homily on the Sacred Heart. Choosing the Johannine text on the piercing of Christ's side, (19:31-34) he said, "The heart is not just an organ that conditions the vitality of a person. The heart is a symbol. It speaks of the whole inner life of a person." In the form of devotion proposed by Pope John Paul II, we are invited not only to honour Christ's human and divine love, but also to honour and more seriously to imitate His inner life. Such devotion must lead to becoming Christ like: thinking like Christ, speaking like Christ, acting like Christ. Gradually

one is led by the Spirit to a spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, a wholehearted living, with all hearts united in love; His, our own, others. It is not an impossible task - just a lifelong one! 7

Love, consecration, reparation, Eucharist! This is devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Love is the foundation, consecration and reparation are its chief expressions and the Eucharist is at once the sign and source of the Community having "but one heart and one soul in God." 8 Fr. Braun who had understood this well said to his daughters on 2nd June 1876:

"Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has for its aim to render love to God, to thank Him for His blessings and to repair the outrages He constantly receives. Then my daughters, Love, Glory, Thanksgiving, Reparation to the Heart of Jesus! These four words sum up all that you must become as Sister Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If you should ever forget this four-fold end, you would have no more reason to exist, for other Communities, a great number of them, do the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that you do for the poor and working class, with a great zeal and a great devotion." 9

This exhortation of the Founder reproduced the themes of the Last Supper Discourse in St. John's Gospel. "The world must know that I love the Father" (Jn. 14:31) said Jesus, just before going out to His hour of glory, for which he had been consecrated in His Incarnation, in which as Incarnate Word He would reveal the Father's love and mercy reconciling us to the Father, of which He left us a memorial, the gift of the Eucharist.

Fr. Braun's appreciation of consecration as a personal commitment both in the interior and exterior realm is evidenced in the original Constitutions. To give interior depth and external expression to the consecration of the Sisters, Fr. Braun added to the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, a fourth vow, Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the light of the signs of those times, Fr. Braun proposed this vow, of total dedication as a fitting act of homage to the Sacred Heart. The first Decree of Praise from Rome, May 1899, for the

Congregation, required this vow to be dropped, it being implicit in the vow of obedience, as indeed Fr. Braun had already recognised. " ... by the vow of obedience you give everything, for you give yourselves; you sacrifice your will. You cannot give more for there is no greater sacrifice." ¹⁰ The original constitutions also stipulated the public renewal of consecration on three occasions in the year - the feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of St. Francis de Sales and of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, 21st November. ¹¹ The feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, 2nd February, expresses more clearly Mary's role in our redemption - She would be pierced to the heart - and our adherence to Christ in his entire devotion to the Father, led by the Holy Spirit. Pope Paul VI, in his address to religious on that feast in 1974 said:

"Christ, advancing in his Father's Temple, carried in Mary's arms, - welcomed by the divine love, moved by the Holy Spirit, of great and humble souls such as old Simeon and Anna the Prophetess - is the model, the type, the inspirer of every consecration. He draws you powerfully and sweetly to conform to the constant oblation that your vocation requires; He sustains you, He comforts you, He stimulates you, He reproves you if necessary." ¹²

Fr. Braun's great joy in the First Profession of Vows in his Congregation, 29th January, 1872, discloses his conception of consecration. It is a call to holiness, to a special relationship with God, to union with Him. It is a becoming aware of the meaning of baptism and of God's love for sinners. It is an oblation of oneself, a total self-giving in love to God. It is a following of Christ Jesus, "who though he was in the form of God emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. (Ph. 2:6-7). Consecration entails an ever-more profound interior life that finds expression in renewed commitment.

In Chigwell, Profession of Vows (the ritual act of consecration) first took place on the feast of St. Augustine, 28th August 1903. From 1908 until recently Profession ceremonies were held on 2nd February as well as on 28th August. Each

Sister devotionally renews her consecration annually on the feast of the Sacred Heart.

The vow of penitence is another name given by Fr. Braun to the vow of consecration. Under this title he focussed on the element of reparation in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In a conference to the Sisters he said: "By taking the vow of obedience, we are at the same time promising to make reparation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus," and "If your community had fallen very low devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus would be sufficient to guide you back to the true spirit of repentance, the actual purpose of our community." ¹³ As early as 1869 Fr. Braun, in gratitude for the resolution of the difficulties of the Sevres foundation, had introduced into the Congregation the 'Amende Honorable' the act of reparation of St. Margaret Mary. He associated it with interior devotion and the Eucharist in expiation for the insults offered daily by the sinners of the entire world to Jesus. As well as this daily devotional practice Fr. Braun also enjoined on the Sisters the acts of reparation requested by Our Lord from St. Margaret Mary during the third great apparition in 1674, the First Friday Communion and the Holy Hour of consolation on Thursday, practices in exact opposition to the teaching of the Jansenists. Fr. Braun was himself a gentle spiritual director in particular cases, but, as time went on he tended to enjoin the ideal on all and to equate unity with uniformity. He was a man of his own times, greatly influenced by ultramontaniam, by the Syllabus of Errors of Pope Pius IX (1864) and by the First Vatican Council (1870).

The conditions which Fr. Braun specified for the Sisters' vocation of reparation were: a great purity of heart, the spirit of devotion, the interior spirit. ¹⁴ Reparation is faith in God's repeated covenant from Genesis 3:15 to Easter Sunday. Only the love of the Incarnate Word could repair the damage of sin and reconcile man with God. Reparation is a call to conversion whether in a flash like Paul or a

lingering out like Augustine. It entails reconciliation, obedience and suffering for God respects the freedom and dignity of His creature by seeking our co-operation in our redemption. Reparation is a faith and trust response to Jesus Christ who loved us sinners with a human heart. ¹⁵ It unfolds in peace and joy. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Is. 12:3). "One of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water." (Jn. 19:34) Baptism (Consecration) and Eucharist (Reparation)! St. Augustine captures the whole meaning in a short Eucharistic instruction:

"Be what you see." (Jesus really present)

"Receive what you are." (The Body of Christ through baptism.)

Devotion to the Heart of Christ is portrayed in a variety of evocative symbols; the Lamb, the Good Shepherd; the Crucifix being the earlier ones and the Sacred Heart emblems dating from the Paray-le-Monial revelations being more recent. Images of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus "all have a representation of Jesus instituting the Eucharist, with a chalice before Him and a piece of bread in His hand, with him at the same time showing His Heart, shining like a sun, crowned with thorns and surmounted by a cross. Above the Lord's head hovers a dove of the Paraclete Spirit. ¹⁶ In the rich symbolism of the Eucharistic Heart the threefold love of Christ, human, infused and divine, ¹⁷ is portrayed as the food and drink of mankind. God's love gladdens the heart. "We are filled with joyful trust in God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation;" (Rm. 5:11). (Nothing) "can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus Our Lord." (Rm. 8:39). Throughout, *Service of Love*, the 1987 Constitutions of the Chigwell Sisters, expresses fidelity to "Jesus Christ and the Poor" through an interior life of grateful reparative love and an apostolate to the glory of God.

Chapter Six

Remain in my Love (Jn. 14:15)

The entire Church is in a state of mission. All the baptised are involved, but the religious must understand herself to be specially sent to attend more definitely to the affairs of the Father and to live a more dedicated life. Religious profession is a profound missionary engagement in the Church. Struck by the forgottenness of Christ in the world, Fr. Braun wished to realise in himself and in those who followed him, the desire which haunted his life - to become a missionary! A missionary he became and remains in the service of love given by the Congregations he founded in the Church. To open oneself to the redeeming love of God is to open oneself to his love infinitely and universally. The Sister of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in her contemplative love, in her constant 'fiat' knows herself to be on mission. In the measure in which she has permitted the Father to give her His Spirit, she is for His people, His witness. "You are my witnesses," said Christ. Answerable to the Word whom she has heard, studied, assimilated, she knows herself to be a prophet of the Father with Christ and the Church. Set aside for the Lord she lives her consecration in community life. The community unites her to the community of the whole Church, side by side with other communities, progressing together, searching for Christ together, finding Him together, giving Him together.

In the 1990's new ways of sharing this community life of the Sisters are being explored and developed. Volunteers are welcomed to share their gifts in the vineyard. Auxiliaries are drawn to the contemplative aspect of the Congregation's life. Affiliates share the apostolic work. Associate members commit themselves for a specified time to live as 'contemplatives in action' with the Sisters. Aspirants begin their pilgrimage of response to God's call to full religious consecration by profession.

Mingled in the world by the exigencies of an active apostolate, steeped in God by a solidly based contemplative life, the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, have a religious vocation essentially bound up with real humanity. Their religious life is a presence, a presence of Christ to the modern world. To this world which does not believe in divine Love, the Sisters bear witness by their own lives totally given to love. "You are destined to represent the goodness of God in respect of the poor." said Fr. Braun, the Founder. 2 This spirit animates and unites the multiple activities of the Sisters in the fields of evangelisation, ecumenism (following St. Augustine, St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Braun), healing ministry, retreat work and spiritual direction, family counselling, parish visiting, social work, nursing and teaching. The Sisters live their consecration inserted in small or large communities, in various neighbourhoods, so as to bring the Church closer to those who do not go to her. Each Sister is a presence. She reveals SOMEONE and she poses to the world a question. "My people what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me." 3 The missionary spirit is an exigency of baptism and confirmation. It is the resonance in the depth of the Christian heart of that desire of Christ "to cast fire upon the earth." The new missions to the victims of Aids especially in Zambia and to the poor marginalised people of El Salvador are an opportunity and a challenge for the Sisters to respond generously and courageously to the Lord's call and gifts to them now. Prayer and offering dwell at the base of all evangelisation. 4 It is necessary to be lowly before those whom one wishes to evangelise, to go to them with a poor heart, a heart that listens and welcomes all the human values of their civilisation. " ... it is from the pierced Heart of Christ that the civilisation of love flows." 5 Apostolic Work is a community work. The Sisters who are not directly involved in the active apostolate participate in it very effectively taking the Virgin Mary living at Nazareth as their model. Through her, the first and only perfect servant of love, the Holy Spirit is fruitful and powerful, sustaining the Congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the Church.

Laus Deo, Beatae Mariae (Enar. Ps. 42, St. Aug.)

Chapter One

Notes

1. LC p.24
2. Sr. Odile, an ex-Franciscan Sister, whom Fr. Braun had accepted into the Community, was appointed the first superioress. A difference of approach and a serious misunderstanding soon arose between them. Sr. Odile was dismissed from the community. Later, she became foundress of the Sisters of St. Mary of the Third Order of St. Francis, at St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.
3. Chigwell, Fr Devas, 1928, p.79
4. Ibid. p.3.
5. For some unfathomable reason Fr. Braun did not at first recognise teaching as an aspect of the Charism given to the Congregation. In 1870 when the Sisters first came to England teaching was regarded as the primary pastoral need by the hierarchy. Sr. Francis de Sales accepted calls to teach in primary schools and was reproached by the Founder. The Servants of the Sacred Heart at their renewal chapter in Versailles (1967) examined this problem, having already six years previously amalgamated with the Sisters of Christian Union of Mende who at the end of the 17th century had been founded to educate poor children and who from the beginning had accepted non-Catholic young girls, poor in a knowledge of the Gospel. The Chapter, accepting that both congregations shared a common spirituality - the love of the Sacred Heart - concluded that teaching belongs to the charism in the same manner as parochial activities and social services.
6. Reparation is the debt owed to God by all mankind because of sin and forgetfulness of His love. It depends on Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It is a duty of justice, to expiate sin and of love, to suffer with Christ and offer Him some little solace. cf. Miserentissimus Redemptor, Pope Pius XI, 1928.

Chapter Two

Notes

1. LC p.9
2. Frodl, p.56
3. ONC 4:3 p.21
4. cf. esp. Book 8:3
5. Rule: Ch. 1:1
6. LC p.18
7. Ibid. p.33
8. Ibid. p.20
9. Ibid. p.26
10. Ibid. p.9
11. Ibid. p.110
12. Devas, p.49
13. Brief account by a contemporary Sister - Chigwell Archives.

Chapter Three

Notes

1. LC p.38
2. Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Andre Tostain, M.S.C. and some notes from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, private circulation.
3. Histoire de la Congregation des Soeurs Servantes du Sacre Coeur de Jesus et du Reverend Pere Victor Braun son Fondateur, Chigwell Archives.
4. Since 1928 the Sisters have been associated with the Missionaries of La Salette in parish work at Rainham and Dagenham. The two Congregations share a spirituality of love and reparation-reconciliation.
5. A Short History of the Liturgical Cultus of the Heart of Mary, Matias Auge, C.M.F. 1979, private circulation. In Loughton and in Hillingdon the Sisters have worked closely with the Claretian Missionary Fathers.
6. LC p.32
7. T. Bk. 7:13
8. New Constitutions and Directory, 1987, N.3, D.22.
9. Living in Freedom Under Grace: Genazzano, Paul VI
10. Ibid. Mary's Role in the Order, A. Trape
11. Ibid.
12. LC p.90
13. Marialis Cultus, Paul VI, N.42
14. Ibid. N.47
15. Ibid. N.54
16. Ibid. N.55
17. Celtic Roots and Ancient Character Revealed in symbols, (Our Lady of Knock), Fr. Michael Ledwith, Desmond M. Kyne, 1979
18. CB p.21

Chapter Four

Notes

1. LC p.60
2. Augustine the Bishop, F. van der Meer. When the notes were made some years ago the page number was not recorded.
3. Ibid.
4. "Augustinian Spirituality", Fr. van Bavel. Quote taken from his own preparatory notes for a talk on that topic.
5. Ibid.
- 5a. cf Civitas Dei (The City of God), St. Augustine
6. LC p.34
7. Selected Letters of St. Francis de Sales, Elizabeth Stopp p.74 "Review for Religious", July/August, '87, "Key Aspects of Salesian Spirituality," L.S. Fiorelli, OSFS
8. Rule of St. Augustine, Introduction
9. Op. Cit. p.74
10. IDL Part 1:4
11. RfR, July/Aug. '87 p.499
12. Constitutions 1936, 1:4
13. RfR, July/Aug. '87 pp.491-500
14. Soliloquy 1:2, St. Augustine
15. Epistola LV,10 St. Augustine
16. "John Duns Scotus and the Primacy of Christ," Eric Doyle, OFM, Clergy Review, Sept. Oct. Nov. 1972
17. John Duns Scotus' theology of the Incarnation culminated in the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854.
18. See Appendix
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Obedience in the Church, A Muller, S.J.
22. Ibid.
23. Augustine's Rule, Adolar Zumkeller, OSA, p.120 ff

Chapter Five

Notes

1. LC p.12
2. LC p.19
3. Dwan, p.8
4. LG, N.12
5. Many more Church documents are concerned with Devotion to the Sacred Heart:
1765, Clement XIII approved liturgical celebration of the feast
1856, Pius IX, extended feast to universal Church.
1965, Paul VI, *Investigabilis Divitias* Christ
6. There is a long well established devotion to the Heart of Christ in the Anglican tradition. cf especially The Heart of Christ in Heaven towards Sinners on Earth, Thomas Goodwin. This author was chaplain to Oliver Cromwell and is known as "the Protestant St. John Eudes." cf an article recent but undated, "An Anglican Priest Looks at Devotion to the Sacred Heart", Rev. James E. Lord.
7. RfR, May-June 1987, p.455
8. Rule 1:1
9. CB p.4; LC p.24
10. LC pp.75, 78
11. ONC 8:2:1
12. L'Osservatore Romano, ?Feb. 1974
13. LC p.64
14. CB p.9
15. AP. Jan.'71, p.10
16. De Margerie, p.14
17. HA n.26-28

Chapter Six

Notes

1. cf Jn. 15:27
2. Exact quote not traced. cf LC p.111
3. Good Friday Liturgy.
4. cf Acts of the Apostles 3
5. Pope John Paul II, Sardinia, 1985

Abbreviations

AP	The Apostleship of Prayer - Directors' Service
CB	Centenary Booklet
C	Constitutions 1987
D	Directory 1984
HA	Haurietis Aquas
IDL	Introduction to the Devout Life
LC	Letters and Conferences of Fr. Victor Braun
ONC	Original Normative Constitutions 1873
RfR	Review for Religious
Rule	Rule of St. Augustine
T	Treatise on the Love of God

Appendix

Norms from the Constitutions 1987

3. In forgetfulness of self, Mary hastened to share with Elizabeth the good news of the coming of the Redeemer. May we, too, be joyful bearers of the Word made flesh, and, like Mary, remain faithful even under the shadow of the Cross.

7. We respond to this call by placing our whole lives at the service of God and his people, especially those who are poor and needy.

18. Jesus was poor and in all things dependent on his Father. In imitation of him, who although 'he was rich, became poor for our sake' (2 Cor. 8:9), we choose a life that is poor and dependent on a generous God.

25. We have chosen to live simply. Continual evaluation of our lifestyle is called for, bearing in mind St. Augustine's counsel that 'it is better to want less than to have more' (Rule Ch.5).

53. 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Is. 12:3). It is in our communal celebration of the Eucharist that we are most fully united in the Heart of Christ and with each other, and are strengthened for our apostolic commitments. In each of our communities we make provision for a chapel or an oratory.

54. For our Founder, only two things mattered: 'Jesus Christ and the poor' (Letters p.9). Our mission is to bring the love and mercy of Christ to those among whom we live and work. We seek to remain faithful to Fr. Braun's founding vision by:

- ministering to the poor and needy;
- nursing the sick and the elderly;
- christian education
- missionary apostolates.

56. We reverence the dignity of every person of whatever race, creed, nationality or status. We strive to oppose the wilful destruction of human life, and whatever violates human dignity, because such practices are a supreme dishonour to the Creator.

156. Of themselves these constitutions do not bind under pain of sin apart from the norms that refer to the Commandments of God or of the Church or those which affect the vows. Their binding force is primarily an act of love because the spirit in which they are lived is the heritage of the congregation and as such is zealously preserved by each sister.

157. They are an obligation which every professed sister has freely chosen to observe. Each sister, therefore, should be convinced that generous fidelity to the spirit of the constitutions will open the way to shared vision as Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and to full growth in Christ.

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