



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE
MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 16 September 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers,

I offer you a warm welcome on the occasion of your General Chapter, and I thank the Superior General for his kind words. You have met to reflect on the life of your Congregation, and to pray and to discern together the paths that the Lord is pointing out to you. In this way you will be able to give renewed fruitfulness and effective expression to the charism that the Holy Spirit bestowed on the Church through your founder, Father Jean Jules Chevalier.

The motto you chose to guide the entire Institute in preparing for this Chapter is particularly significant: “You have kept the good wine until now” (*Jn 2:10*). You have looked back with gratitude on the cherished legacy of projects and apostolic works that your charism has brought forth in the Institute’s life in these past one hundred and fifty years, thanks to the fidelity of your confreres who preceded you. At the same time, you are fully aware of its continuing potential to benefit the Church and the world. By listening to what the Spirit says to the Church today, and by your openness to the questions and concerns of our fellow men and women, you will be able to discover in your authentic charism the wellspring of renewed strength, courageous decisions and creative expressions of the mission you have received. The changed situation of our world with respect to the past, and the new challenges it presents to the Church’s mission of evangelization, demand and give rise to new ways of offering the “good wine” of the Gospel to many people as a source of joy and hope.

The original inspiration of your founder was that of spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Today you strive to foster this devotion and to make it bear fruit through a variety of works and activities that witness to *the tender and merciful love of Jesus for all*, especially those in

greatest need. For this reason, I encourage you, as I do so often with consecrated persons – “to return to your first and only love”. Keep your gaze fixed on Jesus Christ and learn from him how to love with a truly human heart, to care for the lost and hurting members of his flock, to work for justice and show solidarity with the weak and the poor. Learn from him to give hope and dignity to the destitute, and to go forth to all those places where people are in need of acceptance and assistance. This is the first Gospel that the Church entrusts to you by sending you out as missionaries to the world: to show by your lives and by your works the passionate and tender love of God for the little ones, the underprivileged, the vulnerable and those whom our world has discarded.

Although your Institute, like many others, has seen a decrease in numbers in these past decades, the growth of vocations in South America, Oceania and Asia has proved comforting and offers hope for the present and the future. So too the Christian formation of young people, yet another expression of your charism, will be ensured and increased by the works of the Institute. How urgent it is today to educate and assist new generations to appropriate authentic human values and to cultivate an evangelical vision of life and history! Many people consider this a true “educational emergency”; surely, it is one of the frontiers of the Church’s mission of evangelization, towards which the entire Christian community is invited to set out. In continuity with the achievements and undertakings of those who have gone before you, I encourage you to undertake new initiatives also in this specific area of your apostolate.

The Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart continues to count among its many members a good number of religious brothers. In a Congregation religious brothers are a grace from the Lord. I ask you not to yield to the temptation of clericalism that, as I have often remarked, alienates people, especially the young, from the Church. May your common life be marked by true fraternity, which welcomes diversity and values the gifts of all. Do not hesitate to continue and expand your communion with the laypersons who participate in your apostolate. Let them share in your ideals and projects, and in the rich spirituality arising from your Institute’s charism. With them, and with the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, you will form an ever greater and stronger “charismatic family”, one that will better demonstrate the vitality and relevance of your founder’s charism.

May the Virgin Mary, whom you invoke under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, keep you ever close to her Son, ready to do whatever he tells you, and may she protect you with her maternal intercession. I accompany you, and all your communities with my blessing, and I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.
