

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart is a title which originated with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart founded by Fr. Jules Chevalier at Issoudun (France). This religious congregation was founded to revive and regenerate the Christian faith, thanks to a special devotion to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady. Jules Chevalier (1824 - 1907). Born in Richelieu, France, he was initially apprenticed as a shoemaker at age 12 after he was told his parents could not afford to send him to the seminary. He was later able to join the seminary, after his father's boss sponsored him and at the age of 30 was sent to the parish of Issoudun. In 1854 he founded the religious institute of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and in 1874 the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

The spirituality of this group is based on a strong faith in the love of God the Father which revealed itself in the Heart of Jesus. This Christocentric orientation is linked with a lively devotion to Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It is said in the Rule of Life of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart: "Since Mary was so intimately related to the mystery of her Son's heart, we pray to her as did Fr. Chevalier, and we invoke her under the title of Our Lady of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. She knew of the inexhaustible riches of Christ; she was totally filled with his love. She leads us to him and directs us to his heart, which is the source of love, accepting all and everybody, and the source from which a new world will arise."

The Missionary Sisters of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus (Hiltrup), founded in 1900, share a similar spirituality and also use the title of Our Lady of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. These missionary congregations promoted the title of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, and were instrumental for its worldwide dissemination. Maybe even more important for the rapid and worldwide expansion of this title was the 1864 founded arch-confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Established first in the diocese of Bourges, the arch-confraternity was successively erected in Rome (1873 for the whole church), New York (Watertown, 1877), Holland (Sittard, 1873), Belgium (Averbode, 1885), Colombia (Bogota, 1912), and Canada (Quebec, 1912).

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary belongs to the more generic veneration given to the heart of Mary which originated in the ninth century and culminated with St. John Eudes (1601-1680), and Catherine Labouré (Miraculous Medal, 1830), and more recently with the Fatima message regarding the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

