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# **The Vision of the Gospel that filled the mind and heart of Brother Charles**



**by Ian Latham,  
Little Brother of  
Jesus**

## **1. The faith of Charles de Foucauld**

**Taken from talks given by Brother Ian to  
a group of priests of the Jesus Caritas  
Fraternity of Priests, in the summer of 1990.**



## **Food for Thought from the spiritual family of Charles de Foucauld**

**Further information and copies may be  
obtained from:**

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## How does Charles de Foucauld see his own life?

Let us join him in Nazareth at the age of forty (in 1898). He is recalling, first, his childhood faith, then the total loss of this faith in adolescence, then the events leading up to his conversion, and finally, in brief, what followed from that key moment up to the present time in 1898. I think it is good to



follow him on his life's journey, his 'pilgrimage of faith'...

*'Son of a holy mother, as soon as I could utter a word, I learnt from her to know and love You, and to pray to You'* Charles,

born in Strasbourg in 1858, of an old aristocratic family, was brought up in an atmosphere of traditional but authentic piety. *'I can see myself going to church with my father (so long ago), then with my grandfather... I can see my grandmother and cousins going to daily Mass...'*

Charles recollects three things about his childhood: the deep family **piety**, the atmosphere of **affection**, and his own **happiness** in this context of piety and affection. True, he was marked by the sorrow of the death of both his parents when only five, and later by the flight from Strasbourg in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 when twelve, and these sad events affected his character with a tendency to turn back on himself, but, in spite of the opinion of several biographers, it is the real and positive values of his childhood experience that provide the human foundation of his faith conversion.

The words '**pious**' and '**piety**' recur frequently in Charles' childhood memories, and these words well describe the specific acts which he recalls: visiting wayside calvaries, offering flowers to the statue of Mary, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, even the 'pious' preparation for first Holy Communion. Certainly, his mother, grandfather, and cousin Marie were persons of deep and genuine faith, personal faith, but Charles' own 'faith' as a child was embedded in the shared, communal piety of his family. It had not yet, I would think, sprouted, but remained a seed. For piety is essentially a social attitude, linked to family and country, to religious practice and culture. It contains a respect for God and his benefits, but refracted through the given milieu. Faith is something far more: a personal response to the personal God, freely given, freely accepted, fully 'mine'.

Of course, piety and faith are normally associated: piety is the normal **seedbed** for the growth of faith and for its visible expression. But in our secular age the two are divorced and so faith has to be born in a religious desert, like a cactus rooted in the bare sand. Charles was more fortunate... but when his childhood piety was undermined in adolescence, the hidden seed of faith was swept away with it.

### **Loss of faith**

How did this come about? Charles, now more withdrawn, was an avid reader. From the age of twelve he read and absorbed the intellectual sceptics then in vogue: Voltaire, Montaigne, Littré... *'The equal faith*



*with which different religions were held'*, he wrote, *'appeared as the condemnation of them all'* (letter to H de C 1902). Again *'Nothing about God can be proved'*, and *'Truth cannot be found'*... In other words, Charles rejected the **truth** of the Christian religion and hence faith in God's self-revelation. Later he will say, *'I despaired of truth'*, and it was truth that he yearned for and searched after.



It was only afterwards, on losing truth, that he began, as he says, **'doing evil'**: No longer looking towards the God of goodness, he let his natural energies have free rein. He wasted himself and his fortune – a waste of what is good, rather than a committing of positive evil, but a waste that left a *'profound inner emptiness'* in the midst of outward plenty and merry socializing.

### **Led to faith**

It was, then, from nothingness that Charles was led to living faith. Can we trace, without overschematizing, the steps of this process? It lasted some seven years. Dismissed from the army, his chosen career, for 'notorious misconduct', Charles requests re-admission, as a simple soldier if need be, on hearing that his regiment is being summoned to fight 'insurgents' in Algeria. To the surprise of his men and fellow officers, he shows courage in danger, companionship with others, and an attraction for the austerity of the desert. Circumstances challenge him, and **he begins to find himself**.

Leaving the army again, this time of his own accord, when the action is over, he searches con-



sciously for a new challenge: to explore Morocco, at that time closed to Europeans. This involves serious study of language and cartography, and, once begun, an extended experience of poverty of means and of racial rejection (due to his disguise as a Rabbi accompanying a genuine Rabbi). Forced to be poor, he becomes more 'open'. Two things strike him - the ritual acts of adoration by the Muslim men, and the hospitality of his hosts even at the risk of their own safety. A new sense of something Great 'above' humanity and a new awareness of human relations as 'fraternal' begins, almost imperceptibly, to grow upon him.

His journey accomplished, Charles returns to Paris and sets about writing up his explorations. This task required exactitude and patience, and brought Charles in contact again with his family, as well as with geographical experts. Fully occupied and at ease in himself and with those around, Charles finds a natural attraction for chastity; and this in turn, as he later remarks, opens the door towards the search for truth. Is there any ultimate truth? Charles is haunted by this question. It is, of course, for him an existential question: he wants a truth to live by, but it must be recognised by him as purely and simply true. *'My God, if you exist, make me know it'* (notes) or ...*'make me know You'* (letter). It is a search 'without belief' as yet, but 'a search for truth'.

## Two helpers

These three stages led up to the final act: his own act, but first and foremost, the act of God. How? God had, he says, ‘two helpers’, each in their way ‘instruments’ of His action – Abbé Huvelin and his cousin, Marie de Bondy. His cousin, Marie, drew him by her ‘**presence**’, by her ‘silence’ without reprimand or persuasion, and by her radiant ‘goodness and holiness’. Her role was that of Mary carrying Christ, and so, by that, radiating Christ; radiating Him through the ‘influence’ of her ordinary actions for others. This, obviously, was a gradual process.

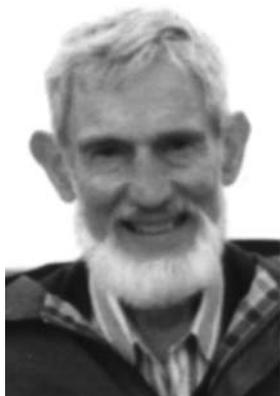


The Abbé Huvelin’s role was more punctual and precise. Charles heard of him as being ‘learned’ and ready to discuss, and went to consult him for this reason. But the unexpected happened: *‘I asked for lessons in religion: he made me kneel and confess, and sent me on the spot to receive communion’*. Unexpected for Charles, unexpected of the Abbé.

For he was not at all the man to force anyone, or even to hurry a movement; rather he was noted for his extreme delicacy and tact. It seems, then, to have been an ‘**inspiration**’ on his part for this person at this moment. Indeed, Charles speaks of it as God’s moment: *‘What a day of blessing. You gave me all that is good’...*

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**by Ian Latham,  
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## **2. Jesus as 'PRESENCE'**

**Taken from talks given by Brother Ian to  
a group of priests of the Jesus Caritas  
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## **Presence: the answer to isolation**

For Brother Charles, Jesus is **the One who is present**: this, I think, is something that strikes us immediately. It's something we feel in Charles, himself, and which, in his company, influences our own approach to Jesus.

Presence is the answer to isolation. Two people, each one separate and alone, are walking through a park. One, tired, sits on a bench. Later, the other feels inclined to do the same, and finds a space on the bench. After a while, they swap a few routine phrases ('What a summer!' - 'Yes, isn't it?...'). Then one confides 'I'm feeling so sad: my wife, you know ... died last month!..' And the other replies 'I'm so sorry, I know what you are feeling....' And the next day they meet again... Physical proximity opens out into personal presence. In fact, there is no real presence except that of persons; and this presence of persons to one another is only realised through a recognition of the other and a giving of oneself to that other, leading to the shared recognition and self-giving of friendship, provided that the movement is brought to fulfilment.

## **God's presence**

Of course God's presence is something quite unique: an apparent absence that is really total presence. For with God, simply being and being present are one and the same. And so He's closer to us than we are to ourselves, as Augustine says. But, paradoxically, we aren't, and in the main can't be, aware of this, at least directly. The marvelous signs and the prophetic word, coupled with the sages' reflections, are a first move towards closing this gap. But it's only, I think, with the Incarnation

that God becomes present for us. And it's only through the gift of the Spirit that we can recognise this presence of God-with-us and respond to it, so that the all-present God becomes effectively present **to us**. For an unrecognised presence is not properly a presence: there needs to be mutuality. John's gospel, in particular, reveals this **presence** in the full sense, and the wonders of it.

### **Presence of the Beloved**

Charles, it is I think clear, was struck by this 'presence' of the Beloved. In fact, he was seized by it, and it becomes the dominant note of his spiritual path. At first he finds this presence above all in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus is 'there', in front of him; and so he can 'talk' with Jesus - speaking, listening, resting in silence... So he feels the urge to spend long moments simply 'there', present to 'the presence', present with love to the presence of Love.

### **A developing relationship**

For Charles this is the expression of an intensely **personal relationship**. And because personal it develops. If Jesus is present in the Sacrament, he's also present in the word of the Gospels: there, and there alone, we can see him acting, hear his words, follow his journey... and so are stimulated to join him and walk with him. Most of his meditations are gospel meditations; and some of his texts, such as '*Le modele unique*' are nothing but strings of gospel quotes, largely of Jesus' words. For, as he says, to love is to imitate...

This personal relationship with Jesus' presence in word and sacrament grows, at Beni-Abbes in

particular, into the recognition of Jesus' presence in the person who comes, whoever that may be, and especially in 'the least'. In fact the **Eucharistic presence** and the **Neighbour presence** are explicitly connected: *'the one who said 'this is my body' said 'whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to Me' - no word of the gospel has more impressed me'...*

### **A decision at Tamanrasset**

Later, when in Tamanrasset, Charles is faced with the question: should he stay with the people, with the few local Touareg families, without the possibility of celebrating or reserving the Eucharist; or, on the contrary, should he return to Beni-Abbes, or somewhere further north, to have again the opportunity of the Mass with a server as then required, but leaving, perhaps permanently, the Touareg people whose lives he had come to share and which he alone could do? *'It's hard to spend Christmas without Mass'* (1907).

How does he reason? *'Formerly I tended to see on one side the Infinite, the holy Sacrifice, and on the other the finite, everything apart from God, and was always ready to sacrifice, anything to celebrate. Holy Mass. But there must have been a mistake in my reasoning here, for from the time of the apostles, the greatest saints have sometimes sacrificed the possibility of celebrating to works of spiritual charity, to make journeys and so on... It is good to live alone in the land [the Hoggar]; one can do things there, even though they are of no great importance, for one becomes 'at home' there - easily available to people and quite 'ordinary'. (July 1907 to Mgr Guerin).*

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## **3 Being a brother or sister to one and all**

**Taken from talks given by Brother Ian to  
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## **Being a brother or sister to one and all**

***'You have one Father and you are all  
brothers and sisters.'***

Charles quotes this text time and time again, and tries constantly to conform his actions to it. We can say, I think, that for Charles 'brotherhood' derives from Jesus and extends to every person, covering all their needs at every level. Let us then look at this more closely.

### **With Charles, all begins, always, with Jesus**

Jesus is ***'our beloved Brother and Lord'***. The one who loves us and whom we love is - astonishingly - our Brother: astonishingly, for Charles first discovered him as God-with-us and as the Lord who gives and asks all. Our Brother because he is 'one of us' and because he 'shares our human condition' (cf Hebrews chapters 2 and 5 and GAUDIUM ET SPES 22). As we know, Charles is particularly struck by the fact that Jesus shares our Nazareth situation: our simple ordinariness, with its daily routine of work, monotony and anonymity, as also the poverty and abjection of so many.

And it is as our Brother that Jesus is 'obedient' to the Father, and 'journeys' towards the Father. An obedience in trust, a journey through suffering... that he calls us to 'follow'. 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father' (John 20:17): this movement covers the whole of Jesus' life, from his boyhood to his death and glorification (cf Luke 1:50, 9:51, 23:46). And it is precisely as our Brother that Jesus, 'the firstborn among many brothers' (Rm 8:30), draws us along with him, to share his life in our here-and-now and, in the end, his destiny. It is,



that is, as our Brother that he shares our life, in all its humanness, and, by so doing, invites us to share his life of sonship with the Father, so that we are with him 'sons in the Son' (St Augustine).

For Charles, Jesus as **our** Brother, applies not only to Christians, but also - and equally - **to every person**, whatever their religion or lack of it. Charles sees Jesus primarily in his Nazareth situation: he is among us as our brother. A brother first to those who are of his family, to those who recognise and accept him; but a brother equally to all those around, to each and every person in the 'village' and, risen from the dead, to each and every one, everywhere, in each and every generation. A brother, moreover, who is **present**, walking with each person in their life journey. This truth, that Charles instinctively came to see, is, I think, a new discovery of our time. In fact, to my mind, it only comes to clear expression in the first encyclical of John Paul, his programme/encyclical *REDEMPTOR HOMINIS*. Commenting on *GAUDIUM ET SPES* 22, he declares:

'with man - with each man without any exception whatever - Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it';

and again,

'each one of the four thousand million human beings living in our planet has become

a sharer in Jesus from the moment he is conceived’.

### **Let’s analyse ‘being a brother or sister’**

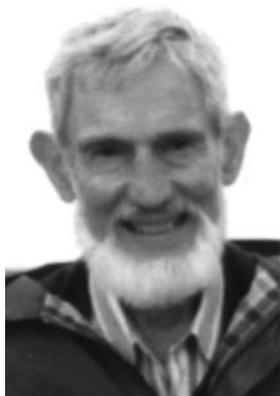
It is, surely, based on a recognition of equality: of being equally human, of being of equal worth and so of having an equal dignity. This leads to an attitude of respect and to its practical corollary, an attitude of concern. The whole of Charles’ experience in the Hoggar is a witness to his growth in this recognition of others, so different in appearance, in culture and in religion, as being **his equals**, and hence as being **worthy of respect**. *‘We are all brothers and sisters, and we hope one day to share the same heaven’* (1904). Notice the two levels of being brothers and sisters: as humans, and as having the same destiny. Charles’ approach is always to begin with the practical and obvious human needs, and to work ‘upwards’ to the cultural and the religious.

A young Touareg girl, as she then was, recalled long after, how she would enjoy visiting the Marabout, **‘He always smiled, and he never kept us waiting’**. A simple enough remark, but full of meaning. For Charles was working long hours on his Touareg dictionary, and he was a man of intense concentration and strict routine, never willing to waste a minute. Yet he was able



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## **4 Praying as RELATIONSHIP with God**

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## Praying as relationship with God

Simplicity, absolute simplicity - that is what marks Charles' way of praying. As breathing for the body, so is praying for the soul. In fact, he makes this comparison himself: breathing in is like receiving God, breathing out like giving back what he has given.

His basic approach can be summed up in the 'formula': **loving attention to Jesus**. We could add... to Jesus **present**, and supposing always, Jesus as **Love** incarnate. This, surely, is in the pure gospel tradition: 'This is my Son, my Beloved, listen to Him', 'Remain in me.. in my Word... in my Love' (John 15 and the whole of 1 John). It is also in line with the way of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, whom Charles constantly read and recommended. Of course, Charles personalises this gospel and Carmelite way of praying in his own fashion. It follows that we may wish to express it differently, in a manner personal to each of us. Charles explicitly allows for this (remember he was always expecting others to arrive and join him), saying '*let each be guided by the Spirit*'. But contact with Charles, through his writings, may well give us a new insight into the real meaning of praying. Each time I reread him, I feel this renewal in myself.

### Simple means

As Charles' approach to prayer is simple, so are the means that he employs. Firstly the **gospel**: '*Find the time to read a few lines of the holy gospel each day.. for a certain time (it should not be too long).. meditate for a few moments on what you find.. You should try to soak yourself in the spirit of Jesus by reading and rereading, meditating and remeditat-*

*ing the words and examples of Jesus. It should be like the drop of water falling steadily on the same, stone in the same place..'* (to Massignon, 1914).

Secondly the **Eucharist**: *'The Eucharist is Jesus'*,



Jesus present, Jesus our food, Jesus our sacrifice. An outward 'bodily' sign which Charles found to be *'an extreme delight, a great support and strength'*... (to Marie de Bondy 1914), but which he was ready to give up, if need be, in favour of the **reality** signified, Jesus himself as always present (he had just received permission to reserve the Sacrament after a long interval).

Thirdly, **daily life and events**: *'Be sure that God will give you what is best for his glory, best for your soul, best for the souls of others...* (to Massignon 1916 1st December). Events, and especially people, are occasions for receiving the coming of Jesus, and for responding in living faith and the Spirit's love.

These great 'means' or 'moments' are basically unchanging and always valid. But the **little methods** of praying are, for Charles, purely relative, and vary as needed, to suit the variety of situations and the changing spiritual psychology. Always simple, they become as Charles goes forward, simpler still. Always, too, there is a combination of vocal prayers - psalms, rosary, exclamations - with med-

itation, mainly on the gospel, and with contemplation - simple loving attention to Jesus present. This last, contemplation, is for Charles, prayer in the full sense, the 'end' to which we are aiming. But he readily acknowledges that vocal prayer and gospel meditation are the normal supports of contemplation, and the preparation for it. This approach is at once practical, starting from where we are, and goes to the heart of real prayer in all its depths.

### **Guided by the Holy Spirit**

*'We should let ourselves be **guided by the Holy Spirit**'* (on John 14, 28-33; see OS 159). How to pray? How to act? In both cases the Holy Spirit is our one guide (on Mark 13,2; see OS 155-157). Not only does he 'inspire' our praying, giving it life and aim, but he guides us to pray in this or that way, at this or that moment of our lives. Charles is convinced of this, and constantly returns to this theme. *'To hear well the voice of the divine Spirit, **the help of a wise director is good**'*.

Notice the role attributed to the 'director': simply to help a person listen better to the Spirit's voice. For as Charles adds, *'It is for God himself to form for each our interior life, and not for us nor for other creatures: Father into your hands I commend my spirit'*. This understanding makes Charles totally free: free in adapting and changing his own concrete way of praying, free also in envisaging whatever form of praying is most appropriate to this or that person at this or that moment. Free finally to have or not to have the help of a director according to availability. Charles had the 'good fortune' to have the Abbé Henri Huvelin as his spiritual guide, a priest supremely conscious of the unique 'work' of the Holy Spirit.

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# **The Vision of the Gospel that filled the mind and heart of Brother Charles**



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## **5 Going to the DESERT**

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## Going to the Desert

Charles never felt the call to be a hermit in the desert, as he is often presented. On the contrary, he wished to be with people, as Jesus at Nazareth, and to found a group of brothers, and also of sisters, a fraternity. *'My vocation is Nazareth', 'I must do all I can for the fraternity'*. This is what he continually repeats. He went to the Sahara to be with *'the most abandoned'*, those whom he saw as socially deprived and far from the true faith. But, there is no doubt, he did feel a strong attachment to the desert, to its austere beauty and to its religious symbolism.



The beauty of the desert is, obviously, not that of a garden, with its mass of colours and well-ordered shapes. **Its beauty lies, rather, in what it lacks:** its absence of living things, its colourless colours, its disorder. And its positive qualities are those that mark, for us at least, a rupture: extremes of temperature, violent sand-storms, rare but sudden bursts of drenching rain that endanger life. Perhaps by reaction to his past life of over-indulgence, Charles has a natural attraction to the bareness of the desert. Its austerity healed his

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spirit. There was, too, the challenge of conquest, each journey a victory over odds.

But even before his conversion, Charles had felt 'the pull' towards something 'more' that passes through the desert, and that his fellow soldiers experienced, whether believing or not. Of course, God is omnipresent, but we are not always present to God! The desert can, and often does, remove many obstacles. Distractions are removed, attention is concentrated, and so an emptiness is created, which can, grace aiding, become an expectant and welcoming emptiness, **a space for God**. This vague feeling which Charles, like others, experienced became, when he returned to the Sahara filled with Jesus, a positive desire to enter more into the depths of God. The physical deprivation and solitude of the desert were welcomed as **both symbol and means** for loving union with his God.

As always, Charles referred to **the example of Jesus**. Had he not spent 'forty days' in the desert, as the Israelites, as Moses, as Elijah did? And did he not go off apart, to pray in desert places, alone with his Father? Charles is clear that the desert-life was not that of Jesus, as it was for John the Baptist, or, we could add, for the Qumran community. But, as Charles loves to insist, Jesus did regularly and frequently retire to desert-like places, as though to renew and prolong the intimacy and strength of his original 'forty days'.

A closer examination of Charles' meditations on the meaning and value of the desert show, I think, that, if we analyse, we can find three elements. The physical desert is the symbol of, and the sum-

mons to the 'desert' of solitude; and the 'desert' of solitude in turn is the symbol of, and summons to the 'desert' of the heart with God. More simply, the concrete experience of living and travelling in the 'real' desert of stone and sand tends, of itself, to free the heart from false and multifarious attachments, and so the heart, thus freed, and as it were 'alone', is open to respond to the calling of **God who 'speaks' to the heart that is 'pure'**, that is, free and given over to His presence. God thus uses nature and grace to lead the soul of His bride back to Himself, by the 'bonds' of tender-love, healing, enlightening, uniting.

Does such a desert experience remove us from people and their problems? No, **it rids us of prejudice**, and opens new ways.



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## **6 The MISSION of Brother Charles**

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## **The Mission of Brother Charles**

Charles' early life is, clearly, that of a person searching for, and finding faith. And his life continues to be, up till the end, a journey in faith (cf LUMEN GENTIUM 56: Mary, precisely as model of the Church and her members, '*advanced in her pilgrimage of faith*'..). Having found the Truth in the person of the one Lover, to become his 'Beloved', he continues to search for the way ahead, but now in the light of faith, a 'light' that for him – as for us – often appears as 'darkness' (cf the 'dark nights' of faith's journey according to John of the Cross, whom Charles constantly read, and advised others to read).

'Does Jesus love me?.. I feel nothing.. I have to grip hard to pure faith.'

### **Vocation: not chosen but found**

Converted at the age of 28, Charles, in willing acceptance of the Abbé Huvelin's 'direction' (so 'gentle and firm', so open to the Spirit), spends three full – and to him long – years in search of his personal vocation. As he later says, a vocation is 'not chosen but found', and 'once found to be embraced wholeheartedly.

And his vocation-search is in line with his faith-discovery: total. He wants, and needs to give his 'all' for the 'All' that he has received:

'As soon as I knew that God existed, I knew that I could only live for Him'

(we can recognise, again, his affinity with the 'all and nothing' of John of the Cross).

### **Who is this God that Charles comes to know**

...and wishes to live for? It is not the all-powerful Creator and just Judge (the popular image of God at the time), but the God who is Presence, the God who is Love: the God whom Charles encountered in his conversion experience, whom he later

names as *'Jesus-Caritas'*, and whose mercies he sings in his 'retreat of Nazareth' of 1897. Charles is far from denying the total Transcendence (he had found a pointer to this among the Muslims), but this transcendent God meets him and embraces him in the heart of human experience.

'By his incarnation, the Son of God has... united himself with each and every human person' (GAUDIUM ET SPES).

It's these words of the Council that are spelt out in Pope John Paul's first, programmatic, encyclical, and are continued in all the others: Jesus' redemption, God the Father's mercy, the Spirit's uplifting and healing power are present at the root of all human experience, be it personal history, family life, work, social relations and institutions. We only need faith (of which we have so little) – faith like that of Mary – to become aware of this 'presence' and to correspond to it in our actions.

## **Where is God present?**

In Nazareth... This is Charles' great discovery. Visiting the Holy Land (at Huvelin's suggestion), Charles is attracted irresistibly by Jesus' life in Nazareth, but he will only discover little by little all its meaning for himself and his followers. He chooses to enter a Trappist monastery precisely because it is, for him, a 'Nazareth': a place of poverty and manual work in 'imitation of Jesus', a place of 'sacrifice' for Jesus.

As we know, Charles left the monastery. While clearly expressing what he felt God's will to be for himself at this critical moment, he entrusted the decision totally – as was his way – into the hands of the Abbot General and his Council.

## **A mistaken vocation?**

Was Charles' seven-year stay with the Trappists a case of mistaken vocation? No it was not a mistake; but it was incomplete, though only the experience itself made Charles and his community aware of this. For Charles learnt much as a Trappist:

self-discipline, community life, the ways of prayer... But he failed to find the ‘abjection of Jesus’: hadn’t Jesus chosen ‘the last place’ (as he had heard the Abbe Huvelin say)?

## **God the worker of Nazareth**

Charles had seen something of this ‘last place’ when asked to visit a sick man, a poor Armenian, who lived with his family in the hills near the monastery of Akbés. It was this that drew him to go and live in Nazareth itself and to be a ‘workman’.

For wasn’t Jesus ‘God the worker of Nazareth’? In fact, Charles lived and worked as a handyman for the local convent of Poor Clares, and while doing odd jobs for the community (his manual skills, as it turned out, were limited!), he spent the greater part of his time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in meditation on the Gospels, and in writing copy-book after copy-book of gospel-based reflections (the majority of his writings are from this three-year period). It was like a long retreat (his contact with the village people was limited), in which he explored the meaning of Nazareth: the meaning for Jesus, for himself, and for the future ‘fraternity’ of Nazarene ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’.

From the first Charles, surprisingly, envisaged founding communities. Surprisingly, for he felt called to the ‘hiddenness’ of Jesus’ Nazareth life; and he had absolutely no means of realising his desires. But it was only after an internal struggle that he accepted an invitation from the Mother Abbess of the Poor Clares at Jerusalem, to ask for priestly ordination, once assured that it was compatible with the ‘humility’ of Jesus.

## **For the salvation of all**

Ordination, at the age of 42, is for Charles a turning point. Before, he had put all his energies into his personal relationship with Jesus. Now he thinks in terms of being Jesus for others: as his ordination notes affirm, he now wishes to ‘join Jesus in his immolation for the salvation of all’, and in particular to