

## LEARNING HEART: Weekly Reflections

January 2011

Week 1 – A Whole and Holy Heart

Most of us are searching for our true selves. Very often we are afraid of what we may find. The search has to do with our anxiety concerning how unloved or unlovable we may be. We hope to establish some kind of self-value or self-worth with which to identify. Many psychologists hold that during our childhood years we may have been exposed to what is called 'conditional love'. This is an affection that is 'earned' through conformity with the expectations of those who try to shape our lives.

During those impressionable years we can mistakenly come to believe that certain experiences, feelings and parts of ourselves are unacceptable and even very bad. And thus the great destruction of childhood qualities begins; and continues. The first conscious fears of losing favour are generated and the seeds of anxiety about being devalued and being rejected by those we love are sown. This is the time, also, when the first psychological defences are set up.

The distrust that is thus engendered stays with us for a long time, and sometimes, forever. We distrust ourselves, we distrust others and therefore we distrust God. Our fragile, frightened hearts then begin to grow, not out of love and truth, but out of shape and out of reach . . .

Our quest is for the whole and holy heart, the healthy and human one that still beats to its original rhythm. This quest involves a recovery of the lost trust already referred to. We begin to dismantle our deep defences by regenerating a faith in the goodness of God's creation all around us and within us. We will then make some headway in discovering the unspoiled face of our heart in all its pristine wonder, made, as it is, in the image of Love - of God's own self. (*Year of the Heart: 1990*)