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SPIRITUALITY CORNER REFLECTION

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“THE LOVE OF CHRIST IMPELS US” 2Cor. 5:14



The Love of Christ impels us to love others as Christ has loved us (Jn 15:12). Surely many of us will legitimately be skeptical to imagine we can actually love others as ourselves. However, when we place Christ at the center and focus of our lives (Gal. 2:20), nothing is impossible. When we look at the life and transformation of the second greatest SVD, Joseph Freinademetz, we can take confidence that with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

St. Joseph Freinademetz was born, raised, and educated within the confines of the Tyrol Basin. “His life, habits, worldview and ideas had been formed by the small, intensely Catholic world in which he grew up.” Therefore, it was natural for him, before he had ever traveled to China, to see the Chinese as those who belonged to the “unfortunate lands and people”. After arriving in Hong Kong, Joseph continued with the same mindset, that the Chinese were inferior people and their customs and beliefs were inferior to his. He once wrote: “The Creator did not endow the Chinese with the same qualities as the Europeans.”

After two years in China, Joseph began the ‘outer’ transformation: he acted and dressed like a Chinese. Not much later, he came to the knowledge that “Chinese clothing did not turn him into a new man,” however, “the main work still remains: transformation of the inner person.” For Joseph, inner transformation “was not about committing himself to an idea, and not just for the Kingdom of God in general, but for a specific people with whom he dealt day in, day out; not in some kind of supernatural sense but for themselves.”

Joseph’s motto: “The language that all people understand is that of love”, speaks about his complete and final transformation. He is no longer a Tyrolean, a European, or a Chinese. Through his faithfulness and perseverance, God had transformed this Tyrolean, with his once narrow worldview, into a universal man—a man who actually loved others as Christ has loved him (John 15:12).

Joseph was not born beyond his time, nor was he given special gifts. He was an earthly person like you and I. However, Joseph was able to rise above the deep-seated prejudices and unjust beliefs and systems of his day. He resolved to focus and listen only to the voice and guidance of the Spirit within the deepest part of his soul—the love of God that is inclusive and universal and surpasses human knowledge.



For the love of Christ impelled Joseph to live no longer for selfish reasons or even for the Church’s temporal agenda, but for Christ who lives in all people of the human family. Our Arnoldus spirituality of interculturality is a call and invitation to the great realization of self in becoming like Joseph Freinademetz, Arnold Janssen, Maria Helena Stollenwerk, and Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns. It is a call to share the very love, which God has for us with others, and see others with every dignity and right, which God has bestowed upon us all.