



# **THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE SACRED HEART**

**FR. MATEO'S VISION AND MISSION**

*A teaching by  
Fr. Columbian Crotty, SS.CC.*

# Fr. Mateo's Mission

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In 1915, Pope Benedict XV, in a letter to Fr. Mateo concerning the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home, wrote: "nothing is more suitable to the needs of the present day than your enterprise." (*ref. Jesus King of Love, Fr. Mateo Crawley-Boevey, SS. CC., pg. 312*) this remarkable statement of the Holy Father evokes three questions to me, namely:

1. Who was this man, Fr. Mateo, to whom Pope Benedict XV wrote?
2. What was his "enterprise" which was so important for that time? And
3. Is that "enterprise" relevant to the needs of our day?

I would like to reflect on these three questions and attempt to present some answers.

1. Who was this man?

Edward Crawley-Boevey was born of a Peruvian mother and an English father on November 18, 1875 near the city of Arequipa in Peru. His family on his mother's side was devoutly Catholic and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary was very much a part of the family spirituality. When Edward was nine years old, his family moved to Valparaiso in Chile and when he was ready for high

School, he was enrolled in a school conducted by the congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

At the youthful age of 15 he entered the novitiate of the same congregation and took the name Joseph Stanislaus. This was later changed to Matthew and for the remainder of his life he was known by the Spanish form of this name - "Mateo".

In his new religious community Mateo's knowledge and devotion to the Sacred Hearts grew and developed. His novice master had a profound knowledge of the holy scripture and we can probably trace Fr. Mateo's love and appreciation of the Gospels to this time of his life.

At that time in Chile, money and power were in the hands of a small minority. The working class was impoverished and lived in slums and ghettos for the most part. After ordination when Fr. Mateo became involved in teaching, he soon became aware that a majority of the working people were outside the influence of the church.

To remedy the situation, he began to establish night classes, employment offices and conferences of St. Vincent de Paul. All these works were closely connected with Fr. Mateo's work with the exterior association of the Sacred Hearts, a kind of third order of his congregation. Mass, communion, reparative adoration, devotion to the Heart of Jesus and to the heart of Mary were basic elements of the association. Fr.

Mateo's goal was to develop leaders, lay apostles whose words were backed up by prayer and the witness of their Christian life. These leaders assisted him in bringing about the renewal of society by the Christian renewal of families through commitment to the Sacred Heart.

Fr Mateo was very much convinced of the importance of a good education for the future lay leaders in the church. "It is up to us," he said, "to take over the Intellectual formation of students by teaching the principles of law founded on the laws of God and the obligations of a Christian conscience" (*ref Marcel, Bocquet, SS. CC. The Firebrand, translation by Francis Larkin, SS. CC., Corday Press, D.C. 1966 p. 44*) in 1906, he established a law school in Valparaiso, but it was destroyed by an earthquake six months later. Even this serious setback did not dampen Fr. Mateo's zeal for the spread of God's kingdom.

Fr. Mateo's health was never robust and after the earthquake, it suffered further deterioration so that his doctors ordered a year of rest. His superiors allowed him to visit Europe at this time to study the organization of higher Catholic education and the various social apostolates founded for youth.

However, Fr. Mateo wished to make use of this occasion to explain his apostolate to his Superior General in Belgium. He also hoped to obtain the Holy Father's approval and blessing for his apostolate and to make a pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial to pray at the shrine where the Sacred Heart appeared to St. Margaret Mary.

All these prayers were answered. His Superior General approved of his work, Pope St. Pius X granted him an audience and said, "To save the family is to save society. The work you are undertaking is a work of social salvation. Consecrate your life to it." (*ref. Firebrand, pg. 52*) At Paray-le-Monial he received special blessings. He saw clearly the whole plan of his apostolate. Its goal was to promote the social reign of the Sacred Heart. The means to be used were to win families one by one by enthroning the

Sacred Heart of Jesus in the home and to teach each of these families to live a life of union with Christ. He understood that the scope of this apostolate would not be confined to Chile but would embrace the whole world. Fr. Mateo experienced a bodily cure at Paray and this gave him the certainty that the message he received was from Jesus Himself.

After Paray-le-Monial, Fr. Mateo was privileged to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and this visit intensified his personal faith and his desire to take the inspiration for his preaching from the Gospels. From now on, his apostolate would be a crusade destined to associate all Christian families in the avowed goal of establishing the rule of Christ over the entire world. (*ref: Firebrand, pg. 55*)

On his return to Chile, Fr. Mateo continued his apostolate with renewed zeal. He enlisted the members of the exterior association of the Sacred Hearts to promote the work. This was the first Secretariat or cell to promote the enthronement. The members of the Secretariat promoted the apostolate, explained it and prepared the homes for the ceremony.

From that time on, the spread of the enthronement could only be called phenomenal, and Fr. Mateo became its worldwide apostle. From 1907 to 1914 he preached in Chile, Peru, Uruguay and Argentina. From 1914 to 1935 his apostolate was mainly in the countries of Europe. From 1935 to 1940 he was in the Far East and preached in China, Japan, Manchuria, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Vietnam. From 1940 to 1944 he preached in the United States after which he moved north to Canada, where he continued his preaching until he fell ill and entered a hospital in Montreal. In 1956, he returned to Chile where he died on May 4, 1960.

One of the extraordinary qualities of Fr Mateo was his single-minded commitment to the apostolate to which he was certain the Lord had called him. He experienced

great blessings and gifts from the Heart of Christ, but he also experienced seemingly insurmountable obstacles and disappointments. But neither obstacles, nor opposition, nor constant travel could dim the ardor of his zeal until he had accomplished all that he could do to spread the reign of the Sacred Heart around the world.

2. What was his "enterprise" which was so important for that time?

For Fr. Mateo the theological virtues of faith, hope and love were basic to Christian family life. For him faith was the foundation of all spiritual and apostolic life. Only the person who drew near to Jesus to be taught and enlightened would learn to know Him. Prayer was the indispensable means of drawing near to Jesus, so that our hearts could become like His. Hope he described as loving confidence in God. Jesus showed His love for sinners, the outcasts and the rejected in so many ways in His earthly life that no one could fear Him because of unworthiness. There are many, wrote Fr. Mateo, who think it is very difficult to be saved. He, on the contrary, believed that it is difficult to be lost, to do so, we must break loose from the Savior's arms and the Citadel of Redemption which is His Heart (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pg. 135*)

For Fr. Mateo, love was truly the greatest gift; through love God dwells in us and we in Him. "God is love and whoever lives in love lives in God and God lives in him" (*1 John 4:5*). The love of God is "the source of the incarnation and of Christ's salvific work. The Incarnation is, as it were, a 'humanization' of the love of God. The love of God has taken on the form of human love in the person of Jesus. For Jesus, this love of God is the "Heart of Jesus, the center of all His actions and His attitudes which he expresses in the Gospel." (*reference; Patrick Bradley, SS. CC. Our SS. CC. Vocation and Mission, Rome, 1992, pg. 32*). Speaking of God's love and our response, Fr. Mateo wrote: "there is no doubt that the first

and most adorable of His rights is that of being loved; and at the same time, as a great longing for our love..." (*re: Jesus King of Love, pg. 109*)

"In order that Christ's Kingdom may come" throughout the whole of human society, Fr. Mateo saw the necessity to re-fashion the society of his day from its very basis, which was the family. For society to be transformed and saved, it was necessary for families to be transformed and experience the risen Lord present among them (*ref. Enthronement of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Larkin, pg. 4*)

The way to bring about the transformation of the family was the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home. The enthronement is the official and social recognition of the kingship of the Heart of Jesus in a Christian family. A family filled with a spirit of faith, love and confidence publicly acknowledges that Jesus is Lord and God of the household. This acknowledgement or public recognition is shown by giving a statue or picture of the Sacred Heart the place of honor in the home. The members of the family then renew their commitment to Christ by an act of consecration. The family in turn is sanctified by this act of public recognition and strengthened in its resolve to be an instrument of transformation for society.

Fr. Mateo sought to make the home a truly "domestic church". "The moments we devote to God in our parish church," he said, are few yet most of our religion is limited to those rare moments, and when we return home we do not find the Lord there for us. "We live, struggle, suffer and most likely die in our own homes, it is there that we ought to live in close fellowship with Jesus." (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pg. 14,15*)

Through the Enthronement, families come to recognize the Lord who is already present there and through this recognition he becomes a part of the family and guides it in its daily life and direction. The Enthronement ceremony itself is a one-time event, but the commitment it signifies is for

a lifetime.

Incorporated into the church through the living waters of baptism, sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony and nourished by the frequent reception of the Eucharist, the members of the enthronement family, individually and collectively, make a public commitment to strive for the sanctification of the family and the transformation of society.

3. Is the Enthronement relevant to the needs of the church and the world today?

The sanctification of the family is an indispensable means of promoting the reign of God on earth. I believe that the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home can powerfully contribute to the sanctification of the family. Therefore, the enthronement is certainly relevant today. However, we need to keep in mind some of the essentials that Fr. Mateo stressed. Here I have time only to mention a few:

Adequate preparation – "If the Enthronement is to produce marvelous fruits," said the founder, "the ceremony must, as a rule, be well prepared for." (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pg. 35 - 38*)

He urged his fellow workers to prepare carefully for each Enthronement, and not to judge success by the number of houses enthroned. He suggested that it might be necessary to return to some homes "ten times or more."

Gospel based spirituality – Fr. Mateo often deplored that Catholics frequently do not really know Jesus. The Lord can still say to many of us today the words he addressed to Philip: "Have I been so long a time with you and you do not know Me?" (*John 14:9*) Apostles of the Enthronement need to read and meditate on the Gospels and encourage families to make this a regular part of their spiritual lives. (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pg. 43*)

The social reign of the Sacred Heart – there are many people in the society today who

want to privatize religion. They say religion should have nothing to say about public life, politics, economics, etc. Fr. Mateo's Apostolate of the Enthronement is strongly opposed to this view - "we always oppose those who try to banish Jesus from the life of the family, society and the nations." "Christ's dominion," he said, "must extend to parliaments and legislation" (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pgs. 47-50*). Enthronement families today need to be the leaven of our society so that all of society might be transformed.

Role of the laity – I believe Fr. Mateo was ahead of his time in stressing the role of the laity in the Church: "the Catholic laity are no longer to be considered as benevolent spectators, or beneficiaries of sacerdotal actions, they often occupy the dangerous outposts on the battlefield." (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pgs. 221, 227*)

The Enthronement stresses the importance of the family in society and the Church and encourages the laity to become more actively involved in the apostolate of the Christian community.

Apostolate of the family – the words of the Lord's Prayer where we pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" is truly the prayer of the Enthronement apostolate which is a relevant apostolate in today's world. However, the earth on which we work today and on which we pray that God's will be done is a very different earth from the one Fr. Mateo lived on. We are all aware that there have been and continue to be profound changes in our world, in our church and in the family itself.

The apostolate of the family has always demanded deep faith, profound courage and self-denial. However, in Fr. Mateo's time, it seems to me, it was a relatively simple ministry, compared to what is demanded today.

Contemporary apostles committed to Christian renewal of families through the

Heart of Jesus must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of our society, as well as the safeguards of Christian marriage and the family and the problems that threaten to tear them apart. They need to study and discuss what the Holy Father and the bishops of the United States have written about the family (*ref: Pope John Paul II- The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, St. Paul Books & Media, 1981 and The Christian Family as Domestic Church, 1992*)

They must be steeped in the conviction that the sacrament of Baptism calls and empowers us to follow Christ in His mission as priest, prophet and king (*reference: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, nos. 60-64*).

They must be aware of the gift that the sacrament of Matrimony is to the family and that their spirituality must be deeply rooted in the Eucharist. I say this not to overwhelm you or discourage you, but rather to challenge you to develop your many gifts and blessings even farther. "Many make their whole devotion consist in reciting vocal prayers." (*ref: Jesus King of Love, pgs. 26, 27*) Fr. Mateo commented. That was not sufficient in Fr. Mateo's day and it is not sufficient today. Our times call not only for a faith-filled, deeply committed laity, but a laity thoroughly educated in the faith seeking to read the signs of the times. If we are committed to this, then we will continue to make the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home relevant today and tomorrow.

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