

# GRICIGLIANO

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Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest



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Dear Friends,

*“Behold this Heart, Which has loved men so much, that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to show them Its love.”*

It was with these words, spoken to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque at the convent of Paray-le-Monial in June 1675, that Our Lord himself described his heart.

Is this just a mawkish form of devotion overemphasizing God’s love? That is at least how many Jansenists chose to understand it, but nothing could be further from the truth. *Nos ergo diligamus Deum, quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos* (I Jn. IV, 19). Let us therefore love God because God first hath loved us. To return love for love: this is the key to understanding devotion to the Sacred Heart.

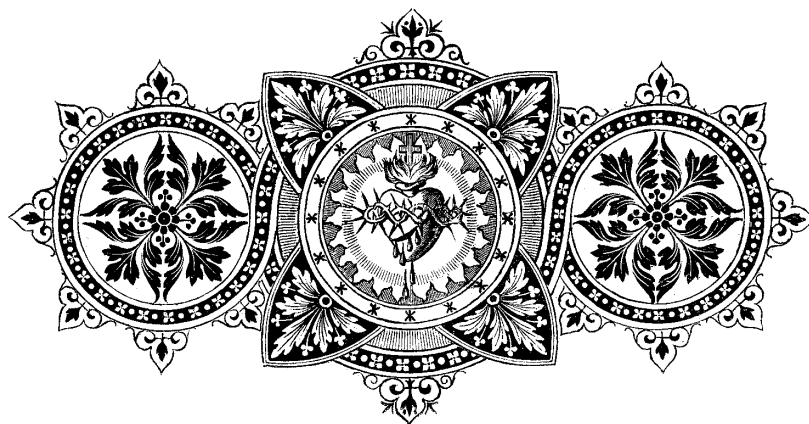
This beautiful devotion, as Father Jean Croiset put it, *“is essentially an exercise of love: love is its object, and its principal motive; and it is love which must be its principal end”* (*La dévotion au Sacré-Cœur de N. S. Jésus-Christ*, Jean Croiset, SJ, Notre-Dame des Prés, Montreuil-sur-Mer, 1895, p. 3-4).

We offer our warmest thanks to his Eminence Cardinal Burke who very kindly agreed to contribute to this issue.

These pages are intended simply to help the reader come to a better knowledge of this devotion, so necessary for our times. For all those souls whose charity has grown cold, there is an urgent need to manifest the burning furnace of charity, *fornax ardens caritatis*, that is the Sacred Heart. In this way the Sacred Heart will be able to reign more completely in our own hearts, over our families, and over our nations; and this will be true principally thanks to the beautiful practice of commemorating the Nine First Fridays. May Our Lord bless this modest work, undertaken for his honour, and may he pour out his graces on all who read it.

I wish you a fruitful and happy reading, God bless you.

Canon Philippe Mora  
Rector of the Seminary



Cover: *Mosaic of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Cathedral of Saint Louis, Missouri, United States.

Right: *St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and the Infant Jesus*, Chatigny, 1884, Visitation of Paray-le-Monial (from *À tout cœur*, an album by the Museum of the Visitation, Moulins).

Last Page: *Statue of the Royal Heart of Our Lord*, venerated in the House of the Royal Heart, Mother House of the Sisters Adorers, Gricigliano.

Back Cover: *Saint Francis de Sales contemplating the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary*, in the Gesù, the Institute’s church in Nice, France. © Olivier Anrigo.

# The Sacred Heart of Jesus

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# The Theology of Devotion to the Sacred Heart

**T**HE DIFFERENT DEVOTIONS to the mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ are addressed to the entirety of his person, but nevertheless each one considers him in a particular moment or aspect of his life. For example, at Christmas we honour Jesus' birth, at Passiontide, Jesus' suffering, at Easter his resurrection, etc.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a direct consequence of the Incarnation and is not associated to any particular mystery or moment of our Lord's life. It focuses on his Heart in its love, in its deepest sentiments, and in its virtues.

And so devotion to the Sacred Heart comprises two elements: a sensible element, or the heart of flesh; and a spiritual element, or what the heart of flesh represents. It is important to bear in mind that in reality these two elements are one, in the same way that a sign and what it signifies can be one and the same reality.

*Devotion to the Sacred Heart comprises two elements: a sensible element, or the heart of flesh; and a spiritual element, or what the heart of flesh represents.*

Theologians explain that there are two objects in this devotion: a principal devotion, Love; and a secondary devotion, the Heart. But these two objects are not really distinct; one necessarily implies the other.

Despite the opinion of many Jansenists who held

Excerpts from *Auctorem fidei* (1794), the papal bull condemning the errors of the Synod of Pistoia:

*“Likewise in the fact that it reproves the worshippers of the Heart of Jesus, for the reason that they do not consider that it is not possible to worship with the cult of latria the most holy Flesh of Christ, or any portion of it, or even his Humanity as a whole, separated or severed from the Divinity. As if the faithful when they adore the Heart of Jesus, separated it or severed from the divinity. When they worship the Heart of Jesus, they worship the Heart of the Person of the Word, to whom it has been inseparably united. In the same way the bloodless Body of Christ during its triduum of death was neither separated nor severed from the divinity, but remained worthy of adoration in the tomb.”*

that Divine Love should be the exclusive object of this devotion, the Heart itself is honoured as well, precisely because the Heart is the emblem of Divine Love.

We know from our experience that our heart reacts physiologically to our mental states. This reaction is part of human nature; and, far from being a temperamental weakness, it participates in our nature's dignity.

During his earthly life, Jesus' Heart was the heart of a perfect man, and so it also experienced these reactions. In particular we can suppose that Our Lord's Heart reacted to that sentiment of love which he showed on several occasions during his



*Disputation of the Blessed Sacrament, Raphael, 1509*

public ministry (Jn. XIII, 1; Mk. X, 21; Jn. XIII, 25; the allusions to the disciple whom Jesus loved, etc.)

Everything about Our Lord's sacred humanity is worthy of adoration, but the Church does not usually separate one aspect of the whole divine Person as the object of a special cult, but the nobility, dignity and importance of this vital organ justify an exception being made. Father Croiset describes this devotion with a beautiful comparison: *"The Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ is at least as closely associated with that divine love, for which this devotion is meant to inspire our gratitude, as his sacred wounds are with his sufferings, and the Church intends to inspire feelings of gratitude and love for his suffering by a devotion to his wounds."*

What is the characteristic act of devotion to the

***There was nothing dearer to Jesus' heart than to enkindle in the hearts of men the same flame of love that was burning in his own.***

Sacred Heart? It must certainly be an act of love, as indeed we learn from the revelations made to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. In beatifying her, Pope Pius XI wrote that, *"There was nothing dearer to Jesus' heart than to enkindle in the hearts of men the same flame of love that was burning in his own. Better to achieve this end he desired that the devotion to his Most Sacred Heart be established and diffused in the Church."*

And so the wonderful promises that Our Lord made to Saint Margaret Mary in favour of those who practice devotion to his Sacred Heart should come as no surprise.

What can we expect from such a love? And of what will a soul not be capable, once it has acquired this devotion which returns love for love?

# The Sacred Heart in the Holy Scriptures

“**T**HE SOLDIERS therefore came; and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water” (Jn. XIX, 32-34).

The Bible is a profound mystery of unity. The Old and New Testaments are essentially united: if we do not take their mutual influence into account, our understanding of what we read will sooner or later be diminished. In the Old Testament, Christ is foretold; in the New Testament, he is made manifest. Saint Augustine goes so far as to say that, “*The New Testament was hidden in the Old, but now the Old Testament reveals itself in the New*” *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latebat; Vetus nunc in Novo patet* (P. L., l. 34, col. 623).

God chose a human heart as its sanctuary, and so it seems fitting that the mystery of Jesus Christ be announced by various deeds and prophecies that all evoke the same image: the sign of a Heart both human and divine; a Heart that loves and suffers; a Heart that offers up every last fibre of its being. “*It is of course beyond doubt,*” affirms Venerable Pius XII, “*that the Sacred Books never make express mention of a special worship of veneration and love made to the physical Heart of the Incarnate Word as the symbol of his burning love. But if this must certainly be admitted, it cannot cause us surprise nor in any way lead us to doubt the divine love for us which is the principal object of this devotion; since that love is proclaimed and insisted upon in the Old and in the New Testament by the kind of images which strongly arouse our emotions. Since these images were presented in the Sacred Writings foretelling the coming*

*of the Son of God made man, they can be considered as a token of the noblest symbol and witness of that divine love, that is, of the most Sacred and Adorable Heart of the divine Redeemer*” (Encyclical Letter *Haurietis Aquas*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1956, n°23).

Thus, by examining the images that foretell the devotion to the Sacred Heart, we can in a sense

Crucifixion, Pietro Perugino, 1483



relieve the gradual spiritual awakening that took place historically under the mysterious dispositions of the Old Law. In so doing we learn what dispositions our soul needs to cultivate in order to achieve a better understanding and deeper love of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## God Opens Adam's Side

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WE MUST FIRST GO BACK to the opening chapters of Genesis and there consider in Adam the first type of our Saviour: *"Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man"* (Gen. II, 21-23).

Eve, the mother of the living, was thus drawn from Adam while he slept. God moulded a new creature after opening the side of the first man. Behind the ribs, under a fragile envelope of flesh is the heart, the noblest organ of the human body. From the love of man, woman was born. She was flesh of his flesh, bone of his bones.

On the cross, Jesus Christ, the New Adam, submitted to death so that we might live in him. At that fateful hour of human history, the hour that was to mark the first day of a radical restoration, the Incarnate Son of God made good on his word. He brought the entirety of creation back to his eternal Father. He reconciled the wounded universe with its offended Creator. Asleep upon the cross, he wanted his side to be pierced so that from his Heart the sacraments of the New Testament, the water of baptism and the most precious Blood of the Eucharistic sacrifice, might flow forth from his Heart. The gifts of blood and water that in death the Saviour gave to the world, signify the plenitude of his divine love. They mark, moreover, a new phase in our union with Christ. It is in Our Lord's Heart that we are regenerated. Saint Athanasius tells us that, *"He was pierced in no other part but his side, whence flowed*

*blood and water; that just as deception had come through the woman formed from the side of Adam, so from the side of the second Adam might come the redemption and cleansing of the first—redemption by blood, and cleansing by water"* (*De Cruce et Passione*, XXV: P. G. 28, 227).

## Noah's Ark Saved from the Flood

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A FEW CHAPTERS LATER, Genesis offers us another symbol of the Heart of Jesus Christ: Noah's Ark. Because he was just and faithful, Noah was chosen by God to save two of every species of animal from the flood. At the end of this cataclysmic event, the ark opened, like the pierced side of Christ, and out of it sprang the new life promised to a new earth. For

the past two thousand years, the ark where men find salvation and peace is the Church, the mystical body of Christ. The Church has the extraordinary power to communicate to us the very

life of God by the sacraments which flow from the pierced Heart of Jesus Christ. Saint Augustine commented at length on this mystery: *"A suggestive word was made use of by the evangelist, in not saying pierced, or wounded his side, or anything else, but opened; that thereby, in a sense, the gate of life might be thrown open, from whence have flowed forth the sacraments of the Church, without which there is no entrance to the life which is the true life... This was announced beforehand, when Noah was commanded to make a door in the side of the ark, whereby the animals might enter which were not destined to perish in the flood, and by which the Church was prefigured... This second Adam bowed his head and fell asleep on the cross, that a spouse might be formed for him from that which flowed from the sleeper's side"* (Tr. John Gibb.

*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 7. Ed. Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888).

## Moses Brings Water out of the Rock

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IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS we find another deeply evocative image of the mystery contained in the

*...so from the side of the second Adam might come the redemption.*

Sacred Heart of Jesus. Shortly after the Hebrews had left Egypt, when the first euphoria of their escape had dissipated, they were confronted by the reality of the dry and barren desert that separated them from the Promised Land. Worn out by the many trials marking their journey towards Palestine, thirsting for water and, at the same time, for spiritual consolations, they began to recriminate with God. Bitterly they reproached Divine Providence for leading them into such hostile terrain; and they thought of how in Egypt they had lacked neither food nor drink. But God calmed the anger of his children: *“And the Lord said to Moses: Go before the people, and take with thee of the ancients of Israel: and take in thy hand the rod wherewith thou didst strike the river, and go. Behold I will stand there before thee, upon the rock Horeb: and thou shalt strike the rock, and water shall come out of it that the people may drink”* (Ex. XVII, 5-6).

In his encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*, Venerable Pius XII identifies this episode as the most luminous oracle given to the Jews of the Old Testament concer-

*Drink of Christ,  
for he is the rock  
flowing with water.*

ning the divine Heart of Jesus. *“The rock was Christ”*, explains Saint Paul (1 Cor. X, 4). Solid, firm, stable, constant, the Saviour of the world comes to inundate our changing and unruly hearts with the refreshing flow of his doctrine. The love of God does not falter at the sight of our doubts and our ingratitude. Instead, he responds to the abundance of our iniquities with a superabundance of grace and blessings. *“Where sin abounded,”* Saint Paul teaches, *“grace did more abound”* (Rm. V, 20). This is the defining characteristic of the Sacred Heart, this most holy and plentiful sanctuary, that so desires

to give itself, to pour itself out into our souls, that in order to purify us, he burns up our miseries and our ingratitude in the burning furnace of his merciful love. Only, he will not force us. Our hardness of heart can keep God’s plans in check: how sad to think of a soul taking no interest in his eternal destiny! *“Drink of Christ,”* writes saint Ambrose, *“for he is the rock flowing with water”* (*Explications on the Psalms*, I, 33). Christ even describes himself as an unfailing source of grace: *“If any man thirst, let him come to me, and*

*Moses Brings forth Water from the Rock*, Bernardino Luini (1481-1532), Milan





*drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”*

(Jn. VII, 37).

Saint Bernard, who had a great devotion towards Our Lord’s wounded side, left us beautiful commentaries on this subject in his sermons: *“They dug his Hands and Feet and opened his Side with a lance. And through these clefts I am permitted to ‘suck honey out of the Rock, and oil out of the hardest stone.’ That is to say, I am enabled to ‘taste and see that the Lord is sweet.’ The iron pierced his soul and his Heart hath drawn near to us in order that he may no longer be as one who cannot have compassion on our infirmities. The secret of his Heart is revealed to us through the clefts of his Body; the great mystery of godliness is revealed to us; and revealed also are the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us”* (Sermon 61 on the Canticle of Canticles).

## The Canticle of Canticles

THE THOUGHT OF SAINT BERNARD is captured beautifully in a sermon of one of his disciples, Gilbert of Hoyland, the abbot of Swineshead, in England, who continued Saint Bernard’s cycle of sermons on the Canticles of Canticles after the latter’s death:

*“Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes’* (Canticle of Canticles IV, 9). *Oh hard-hearted man, what lamentable hardness of heart, that words such as these cannot wound! How utterly lacking in sentiment must be the heart that does not understand the*

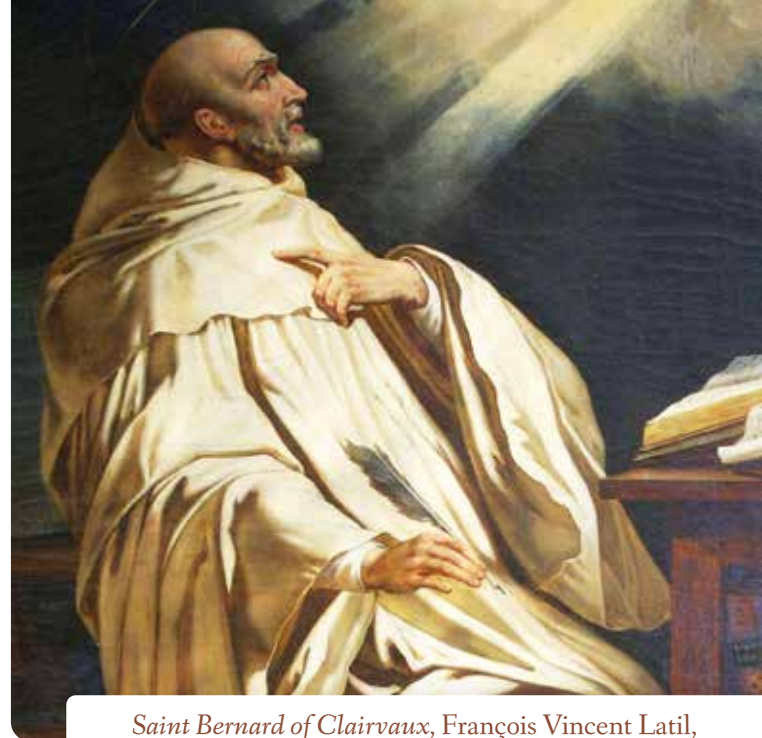
Excerpts from the Psalms used for the Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart

*“The thoughts of his Heart are from generation to generation: to save their souls from death, and to feed them in famine.”*

Introit: Psalm 32: 11, 19.

*“My Heart hath expected reproach and misery; and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.”*

Offertory: Psalm 68: 21.



Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, François Vincent Latil, Church of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, Paris, 17<sup>th</sup> cent.

*force of these words; that is not rapt with admiration at the sight of such extraordinary esteem! But why do I say esteem? This is more than esteem! A wounded heart bespeaks a violent love. Yea it is he who ‘first hath loved us’* (I Jn. IV, 16). *What a miracle this is, my brethren! Is the soul not happy that can pierce and traverse, by its pious affections of love, the very Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Oh how it is great and powerful, the strength of Charity; she reaches even unto the Love of God, and, like an arrow, she pierces his Heart. And the Lord himself suffers from this wound with a violent love. Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, he says, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thy eyes, and with one hair of thy neck. Cease not, O Spouse, to wound thy beloved by such blows as these. Turn piously thine eyes towards him, and may thy glance be a sharpened arrow. Happy thou art if the arrow strike him! How much more freely doth grace flow forth when his heart is wounded, and not merely grazed? But to be struck by arrows such as these is his joy, for he returns the same in kind! He looked on Peter, and he struck his heart with darts of penitence. Ill health indeed that knows no languor when wounded by a tender glance of Christ. One glance provokes another, so seek to wound that Heart with a glance of your eye. Yea, may your eyes be ever turned towards the Lord, and may he be wounded by your glances of love”* (Sermon 30, on the Canticle of Canticles).

# Devotion to the Sacred Heart during the Middle Ages

**D**URING THE MIDDLE AGES, devotion to the Sacred Heart as we know it today did not exist, but this did not keep great saints and mystics from leaning, like Saint John, on the breast of our Saviour to listen to the beating of his heart, or from receiving the graces that flow from his pierced side.

It was principally Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and his close friends (William of Saint-Thierry, Gueric of Igny *et al.*), who, in meditating on the pierced side of Our Lord, brought the Church's attention to this wound of love. Later on, certain writings of Saint Bonaventure seem to develop this line of thinking.

## The Mystical Vine

ALSO KNOWN AS *A treatise on the Passion of Our Lord*, for centuries the *Mystical Vine* (*Vitis Mystica*) was attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, even in the readings of Matins for the feast of the Sacred Heart. Most likely written by Saint Bonaventure (at

*You know the response already, you who tell those who draw near that 'their names are writ in heaven'.*

least the excerpt quoted below), this work is highly characteristic of medieval devotion to the Sacred Heart.

*"Since we have now come all the way to the sweetest Heart of Jesus, and since it is good for us to be here, let us not leave it too readily; let us not*

## The School of Helfta

The Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn (~1230-1291) left no writings of her own, but her many years as abbess (1251-1291) seem to have been desired by Divine Providence so that the Sacred Heart could come to be better known.

Mechtilde of Madgeburg (1210-1282) was a Beguine and perhaps also a Dominican tertiary (at the time of Saint Albert the Great). She was favoured with revelations from a young age, and she seems to have had a vision of the Sacred Heart in 1250. Her outspoken opposition to vice, including to the vices of some members of the clergy, earned her many enemies, and she was forced to withdraw to Helfta. Saint Melchilde of Hackeborn described her death in the odour of sanctity, and it is certain that her writings and her example had an important influence on Saint Mechtilde and on Saint Gertrude the Great.

Saint Mechtilde of Hackeborn (1241-1298), sister of Abbess Gertrude, also had visions of the Sacred Heart and left us *The Book of Special Grace*.

Saint Gertrude the Great (1256-1302), from the time she was five years old, was educated at the monastery of Helfta under the care of Saint Mechtilde of Hackeborn. It was Saint Gertrude who left us *The Herald of Divine Love*, with its description of the apparition of the Sacred Heart which was so important in preparing the apparitions seen by Saint Margaret Mary.

part too readily from him of whom it is written that, 'they who depart from thee, shall be written in the earth' (Jer. XVII, 13). And what is reserved for those who approach him? You know the response already, you who tell those who draw near that 'their names are writ in heaven' (Lk. XII, 20). So let us draw near to him, and we will be glad, and we will rejoice in him as we remember his Heart. Oh how good it is, and sweet, to dwell in this Heart! O merciful Jesus, your Heart is a precious treasure! An incomparable pearl found hidden in this Body, as if buried in a field! Who would want to reject this pearl? Rather, I will give everything, I will exchange all the thoughts and affections of my soul to buy it; I will fix all my desires

*The Sacred Heart was a sure refuge, a sacred sanctuary open to souls upon their departure from this life, where they were to dwell among ineffable delights.*

*in the Heart of my Lord Jesus; and, without a doubt, he will nourish me with his love"*

*"O how good and pleasant a thing it is to dwell in thy heart.*

*"Having discovered, dearest Jesu, your heart and mine to be thus united, I will pray to thee, my God. Let my prayers enter the sanctuary of thy hearing; yes, draw me wholly unto thy heart.*

*"Thy heart was wounded, that being delivered from all outward distress, we might abide in the Vine. But it was also wounded that we might perceive behind the visible wound the invisible wound of love... Could there be any better way of displaying the ardour of his love than by his allowing, not his body only, but his very heart to be wounded by a spear? In this way the physical wound reveals the spiritual wound...*

*"Who would not love a heart so wounded? Who could forbear to respond to a heart so loving? Who would not embrace a heart so chaste?... So we who are yet carnal must give back as much love as we can to our Lover. We will embrace our wounded Bridegroom... Let us pray that our hearts, still so hard*

*and impenitent, may be found worthy to be bound by the chain of his love, and be wounded by his spear"* (The Mystical Vine, trans. a Friar of S.S.F. A.R. Mowbray and Co. Limited, London, 1955).

## The School of Helfta

IN THE 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY Divine Providence chose a fervent religious community to receive the great honour of several private revelations concerning the Sacred Heart of Jesus, four centuries before those made at the Visitation Convent of Paray-le-Monial.

In 1258, nuns connected to the reform of Citeaux arrived in Helfta, Saxony—their original monastery had been founded in 1229 in Rodersdorf. Among them were two sisters, Gertrude and Mechtilde of Hackeborn. Gertrude was abbess from 1251 until her death in 1291, while her sister Mechtilde, twelve years younger, was charged with teaching chant and overseeing the *Alumnat*, or program for the education of young girls, mostly of noble birth, entrusted to the monastery. It was in this way that, starting in 1261, Mechtilde of Hackeborn (Saint Mechtilde) came into close contact with Gertrude of Helfta (Saint Gertrude the Great— orphaned at five years of age),

Detail of the high altar, Augustinian Convent, Ribeauvillé, Alsace, France, 19<sup>th</sup> cent.

*Saint Juliana of Liège, Saint Catherine of Alexandria with a sword, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque carrying a reliquary containing a burning Heart, crowned with thorns, Saint Gertrude with a lily*





*Saint Gertrude Receiving Holy Communion from Christ,*  
Giovanni Battista Gaulli, Louvre Museum, Paris

and then with Mechtilde of Magdeburg, who retired to the monastery in 1271 when she was sixty-four.

It was above all Saints Mechtilde of Hackeborn (1241-1298) and Saint Gertrude the Great (1256-1302) who, in this favourable environment, served Divine Providence as instruments for furthering devotion to the Sacred Heart.

At this time, devotion to the Sacred Heart remained somewhat theoretical. Saint Mechtilde bequeathed us *The Book of Special Grace* (*Liber Specialis Gratiae*), and Saint Gertrude *The Herald of Divine Love* (*Legatus Divinae Pietatis*). A deep bond was formed between these privileged souls and the Sacred Heart. Saint Mechtilde went so far as to make the following avowal: “Were I obliged to write all the benefits that I have received from the all-loving Heart of God, the book needed would be larger than the book of Matins.”

Saint Mechtilde, like Saint Gertrude, had in

mind the Heart of Flesh, visible through the open wound of Christ’s side. She saw this ever glorious Heart as a spring of profound happiness and of joyful love. Her writings contain no mention of the great sufferings that love costs the Sacred Heart, a theme that is prevalent, as we will see, in Saint Margaret Mary’s revelations.

As a 19<sup>th</sup>-century editor of the works of these two saints explained, for them the Sacred Heart “*was a sure refuge, a sacred sanctuary open to souls upon their departure from this life, where they were to dwell among ineffable delights for all eternity.*”

Like Saint Margaret Mary after her, Saint Gertrude had an important vision of the Sacred Heart on the Feast of Saint John. The revelations made to Saint Mechtilde and to Saint Gertrude were undeniably a preparation for the visions of Saint Margaret Mary, though they did not evoke the sorrow of the Sacred Heart which was to be the principal theme of Paray-le-Monial.

*I waited until these latter times to speak of the ineffable delights that filled me when I rested my head on the breast of Jesus Christ.*

This brief sketch would be incomplete without some mention of the great generosity that these two souls, so privileged by Our Lord, always showed in response. Their severe practices of penance united with their great charity in fulfilling the duties of their state in life prepared these elite souls for total consecration, without the slightest voluntary reservation, to the Sacred Heart. And of course these two saints never lacked exterior trials—the monastery was even sacked during their lifetime!

But Divine Providence, as always, rewarded them a hundredfold with immense graces: “*Centuplum accipietis et vitam æternam possidebitis.*” (Mt. XIX, 29)

## Saint Gertrude's Vision of the Sacred Heart

**B**ECAUSE Saint Gertrude had carefully recommended in prayer several of the sisters in her charge, Saint John told her, with great kindness, that he had heard her prayers, and that, in imitation of his Lord, he always returned the love of those who loved him. *What grace and what advantage, she asked, can I hope to receive, miserable as I am, on this your dear feast day?—Come, he responded at once, come with me, for you are the chosen one of my God, let us rest on the sweet and loving breast of Jesus, wherein are hidden all the treasures of beatitude.* And then, taking her in spirit, he led her before Jesus Christ. He placed her on his right side so that she could rest there, and he placed himself on Our Lord's left side to do the same, then said, *Behold the Holy of Holies, which draws to itself all that is good in heaven and on earth.* She asked Saint John why he had taken the left side and left Our Lord's right-hand side for her. He responded: *It is because having come to the end of all things, and being now one spirit with God, I can reach places where the flesh cannot enter; and as I know that you are not yet able to reach into in such obscure regions as these, I have placed you at the open wound on the sacred side of Jesus, that there you may draw long drafts and drink abundantly of the sweetness of divine consolation, for from this wound flows such a rush and abundance that it can fill, unceasingly and with profusion, all who desire it.*

As her soul was filled with consolation and delight in the transport of joy that she experienced in this state, she had the curiosity to ask Saint John if he did not feel similar movements in his soul when he had the happiness of resting on the sacred breast of Jesus on the day of the Last Supper. Yes, he said, *I felt them, and with such great fullness that the sweetest drink does not soak the tender bread that we*

Detail of the *Last Supper*, Giotto, 1305



*eat more fully than the sweetness of that delight penetrated my soul. My spirit was so enkindled that water boiling over an ardent fire is no hotter. And why, she asked, did you not, for the good of the Church, write anything about it? Because my task, he responded, was to teach the new-born Church about the Uncreated Word, so that these truths could be passed down to the centuries to come, in the measure that they are able to be understood, for no one can understand them fully. I waited until these latter times to speak of the ineffable delights that filled me when I rested my head on the breast of Jesus Christ, so that an aging Church might shake off her languor and be enlivened by hearing tell of these incomparable delights.*

*Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, article sur le Cœur sacré de Jésus, L. IV, c. IV, t. II, pp. 26-28.*

# The Apparitions at Paray-le-Monial

**S**AINTE MARGARET MARY was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1647, to Claude and Philiberte Alacoque. After the death of her father, her childhood and adolescence were marked by a series of trials caused by ill-health and by her family's poverty. Margaret Mary was possessed of a profound piety from childhood—even then she practiced severe penance. On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1671, at the age of twenty-four, she entered the Visitation Convent of Paray-le-Monial. She remained there until her death on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1690.

Until she received the revelations destined to make her an apostle of the Sacred Heart, nothing seems to indicate that Margaret Mary had a particular devotion to the Sacred Heart, though she would

Detail of an Embroidered Chasuble, Sister Marie-Pia Desfossés, 1918, Visitation Convent of Nantes, France  
(from *À tout cœur*, an album by the Museum of the Visitation, Moulins)



have been able to discover it by reading the works of Saint Gertrude, of Saint John Eudes (who was already well known as early as 1648), or of Saint Francis de Sales, the founder of the Visitation.

## The Earliest Revelations

THE FIRST APPARITION, like Saint Gertrude's, took place on the Feast of Saint John the Apostle (27<sup>th</sup> December, probably of 1673). Saint Margaret Mary left us a description of the event: "*He made me repose for a long time upon his sacred breast, where he disclosed to me the marvels of his love and the inexplicable secrets of his Sacred Heart, which until then he had concealed from me.*"

Jesus took Margaret Mary's heart and "*placed it in his adorable breast*". He then took it back out "*like an ardent flame in the form of a heart*" and returned it to its place, saying, "*if before, you only took the name of my slave, I now give you that of the beloved disciple of my Sacred Heart.*"

*He disclosed to me the marvels of his love and the inexplicable secrets of his Sacred Heart, which until then he had concealed from me.*

During another vision, probably in 1674, Saint Margaret Mary saw the Sacred Heart seated on a throne of flames, brighter than the sun, surrounded by a crown of thorns, and surmounted by a cross. She understood that in order to share in the divine treasures of the Heart of God, she needed to honour

him in his Heart of flesh. She then received the promise of manifold graces and blessings.

In 1674, during adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lord appeared to her once again, “*all resplendent with glory, his Five Wounds shining like so many suns.*” Our Lord then showed her his Heart, and “*the ineffable marvels of his pure love and how excessively he loved men.*” But Our Lord added that “*the sole return they make for all My eagerness to do them good is to reject Me and treat Me with coldness. Do you at least console Me by supplying for their ingratitude, as far as you are able.*”

During this apparition Our Lord asked Saint Margaret Mary specifically to receive communion

***Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, to testify its love.***

on the First Friday of every month and “*as often as obedience permits you to.*” She was also asked to pray for one hour on the eve of every First Friday.

## The Decisive Apparition

THE GREATEST OF THESE APPARITIONS took place during the octave of Corpus Christi, probably on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1675. During adoration Saint Margaret Mary heard the following words:

“*Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, to testify its love; and in return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for me in this Sacrament of Love. But what I feel most keenly is that it is hearts which are consecrated to Me, that treat Me thus. Therefore, I ask of you that the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be set apart for a special Feast to honour My Heart, by receiving communion on that day, and making reparation to it by a solemn act, in order to make amends for the injuries which it has received during the time it has been exposed on altars. I promise you that my Heart*

## Timeline — Saint Margaret Mary

22 <sup>nd</sup> July	1647	<b>Birth</b>
	1652	<b>Vow of Virginity</b>
	1656	<b>First Communion</b>
	1669	<b>Confirmation</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> June	1671	<b>Entry into the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial</b>
6 <sup>th</sup> November	1672	<b>Religious Profession</b>
27 <sup>th</sup> December	1673	<b>First Major Apparition</b>
	1674	<b>Apparition Concerning First Fridays and Holy Hours</b>
June	1675	<b>The Decisive Apparition</b>
Autumn	1684	<b>Mystical Marriage</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> December	1684	<b>She becomes Novice Mistress</b>
	1685	<b>Father Rolin asks her to write her auto-biography</b>
31 <sup>st</sup> October	1686	<b>Vow of “Perfection”</b>
		<b>Construction in the convent garden of a chapel consecrated to the Sacred Heart</b>
7 <sup>th</sup> September	1688	
17 <sup>th</sup> October	1690	<b>Death at the age of 43</b>
	1691	<b>Father Croiset’s book on the devotion to Sacred Heart is published</b>
18 <sup>th</sup> September	1864	<b>Beatification by Pope Blessed Pius IX</b>
13 <sup>th</sup> May	1920	<b>Canonisation of Saint Margaret Mary by Pope Benedict XV</b>



*Saint Claude de la Colombière*

*shall expand itself to shed in abundance the influence of its Divine Love upon those who shall thus honour it, and cause it to be honoured."*

Saint Margaret Mary was frightened by her own smallness when she compared it with the magnitude of her mission, but Our Lord told her that she should go to Father de la Colombière, the superior of the Jesuits in Paray-le-Monial. This was the beginning of a new phase for the devotion, a phase which would bring it to public attention.

## The Devotion Spreads

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FATHER DE LA COLOMBIÈRE was not satisfied by simply supporting the visionary; as of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1675, on the octave of Corpus Christi, he consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart. From then on he spread the devotion among his spiritual children, including the Duchess of York, Mary of Modena (the wife of the future James II, and thus the future queen of England), whom he followed to London in 1676. In 1697 it was Mary of Modena who, from her exile in France, intervened with Pope Innocent XII on behalf of devotion to the Sacred Heart, through the

mediation of Cardinal de Forbin Janson, Louis XIV's ambassador to the Holy See.

Within the sole span of his lifetime, Father de la Colombière achieved a great deal in developing devotion towards the Sacred Heart. In 1677, he wrote instructions for a spiritual retreat that quote Saint Margaret Mary's writings extensively but without naming her explicitly. Father de la Colombière died in 1682 after once again having had the chance to visit Saint Margaret Mary who, on this occasion, predicted his imminent death. When the text of his retreat was published posthumously, it became an instant success. It was even read aloud in the convent refectory of Paray-le-Monial, much to the distress of Saint Margaret Mary whose role was immediately guessed by all of her sisters. Afterwards, she warmly endorsed the book; it was destined, along with the work of her second spiritual director, Father Croiset, to become an essential source for devotion to the Sacred Heart. And so the devotion spread: first to other Visitation Convents, then throughout the Society of Jesus, and from there it was preached publicly to the faithful.

Our Lord warned Saint Margaret Mary of the difficulties that would mark the devotion's growth, and his warnings were of course fully justified. Rome was slow to grant approval, not only because of the great prudence habitually shown by ecclesiastical authorities, but also because of the powerful influence of the

*Our Lord warned Saint Margaret Mary of the difficulties that would mark the devotion's growth.*

Jansenists. Father Croiset's book was even placed on the Index for a time because of several slight errors which he hastened to correct. Our Lord's request that France be consecrated to the Sacred Heart went unheeded. It is not clear whether this request in fact reached Louis XIV, but Our Lady of Fatima's words to Sister Lucia seem to imply that it did. Despite all these difficulties, diocesan bishops allowed many confraternities to be founded in honour of the Sacred Heart throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



In 1856, Blessed Pius IX, in response to the request made by the bishops of France on the birth of Napoleon III's son, extended the feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church. Eight years later, Margaret Mary Alacoque was beatified. Pius IX also encouraged consecration to the Sacred Heart in the universal Church on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1875. Leo XIII, in his magnificent encyclical *Annum Sacrum*, of 25<sup>th</sup> May 1899, announced the consecration of the entire world to the Sacred Heart. In 1920, when Benedict XV canonized Margaret Mary, he included in the bull of canonization the promise concerning the First Friday devotion, thereby endowing it with a form of approval.

## The Twelve Promises

OUT OF OBEDIENCE to the requests of her confessors and superiors, Saint Margaret Mary wrote many letters in the wake of Our Lord's revelations, in order to spread, especially within the Order of the Visitation, the message of Our Saviour as well as devotion to his Sacred Heart.

The classic wording of these promises is based directly on the writings of Saint Margaret Mary. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a modest

The first image venerated by the noviciate of the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial, 1685.



Catholic businessman from the United States helped spread the twelve promises by printing them on images of the Sacred Heart and sending millions of them around the world in countless languages.

### 1 I shall give them all the graces necessary for their state in life.

“He will assist and protect those who are in need.”  
— *Letter XXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, Dijon, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1685, *Vie et Œuvres de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Paris, Poussielgue, 1876, t. II, pp. 101-104.

### 2 I shall give peace in their families.

“In this way, he would reunite divided families and assist and protect those who are in need.” — *Letter XXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, *ibid.*

### 3 I shall console them in all their troubles.

“He would spread the sweet unction of his ardent charity in all the religious communities where this divine image would be honoured.” — *Letter XXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, *ibid.*

### 4 They shall find in My Heart an assured refuge during life and especially at the hour of death.

“He promised to all those who would dedicate themselves and devote themselves to him in order to please him in this way (returning to him and procuring for him all the love, honour and glory that they can, according to the means he grants them), that he would never let them perish, that he would be an assured refuge against all the pitfalls of their enemies, especially at the hour of death.” — *Letter C*, to Father Croiset, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1689, *ibid.*, t. II, pp. 241-254.

### 5 I shall pour abundant blessings on all their undertakings.

“He enriches all those who would like to return to him and obtain for him all the love, honour and glory that is in their power, with an abundance and profusion of these divine treasures which have their source in the Heart of God.” — *Letter to Father Croiset*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1689, A. Hamon, *Vie de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1914, pp. 156 sq.

6 **Sinners shall find in my Heart a source and infinite ocean of mercy.**

“He will divert the blows of God’s righteous wrath from them, by restoring them to his grace, when by sin they have fallen from it.” — *Letter XXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, Dijon, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1685, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 101-104.

7 **Tepid souls shall become fervent.**

“Most wicked souls will be led, by this means, to do penance unto salvation.” — *Letter C*, to Father Croiset, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1689, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 241-254.

8 **Fervent souls shall speedily rise to great perfection.**

“He would receive them lovingly in his Divine Heart, assuring their salvation, taking care to sanctify them and magnify them before his Eternal Father.” — *Letter C*, to Father Croiset, *ibid.*

9 **I shall bless the homes in which the image of my Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honoured.**

“He will spread his graces and blessings wherever this holy image is displayed and honoured.” — *Letter to Father Croiset*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1689, A. Hamon, *Vie de la Bienheureuse Marguerite-Marie, op. cit.*, pp. 156 sq.

“Seeing as he is the source of all blessings, he will spread them abundantly in all the places where the image of this lovable Heart is found, to be loved and honoured.” — *Letter XXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, Dijon, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1685, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 101-104.

10 **I shall give priests the power to touch the hardest of hearts.**

“For this Divine Heart will spread the sweet anointing of its charity so much on their words that they will penetrate like a double-edged sword the most hardened hearts, to make them vulnerable to the love of this Divine Heart, and most wicked souls will be led, by this means, to penance unto salvation.” — *Letter C*, to Father Croiset, 10<sup>th</sup> August 1689, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 241-254.

11 **Those who propagate this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, and they shall never be effaced.**

“It seems to me that he showed me that several names were written there, because of the desire they had for it to be honoured and that, for this reason, He will not allow them to be erased.” — *Letter XXXV*, to Mother Greyfié, Semur, January 1686, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 106-108.

12 **I promise thee...**

... in the excess of my Heart’s mercy, that its all-powerful love will grant to all those who shall receive communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months the grace of final repentance; they shall not die under my displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments; my Heart shall be their assured refuge at that last hour.” — *Letter LXXXIII*, to Mother de Saumaise, Dijon, May 1688, *Vie et Œuvres, op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 194-198.

## Other Formulations of the Promises

◆ **The promise to those who labour for the salvation of souls:**

“My divine Saviour has made me understand that those who labour for the salvation of souls will possess the art of touching the most hardened hearts and will work wonders if they are filled with a tender devotion to his Divine Heart.” — *Vie et Œuvres de sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque*, Paris, Poussielgue, 1920, t. I, p. 275, t. II, p. 627...

◆ **The promise to religious Communities:**

“He promised me that he will spread the sweet unction of his ardent charity on all the communities which honour him and put themselves under his special protection. He will divert all the blows of the Divine Justice from them and will restore them to his grace when they fall.” — *ibid.*, t. II, p. 300.

◆ **The promise to lay people:**

“For the laity, by means of this sweet devotion, they will find all the help necessary for their state in life, i.e. peace in their families, relief from their labours, the blessings of heaven in all their endeavours, and



Apparition of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary, Emmanuel Costa, Church of the *Gesù*, Nice, France

consolation in their miseries, and it is specifically in his Sacred Heart that they will find a place of refuge all throughout their lives, and above all at the hour of death.” — *ibid.*, t. I, p. 275, t. II, p. 627.

◆ **The promise to homes where the image of the Sacred Heart is displayed and honoured:**

“Reassuring me that he took a very special pleasure in being honoured under the image of this Heart of flesh, whose image he wanted to have displayed in public in order, he added, to touch the indifferent hearts of men; promising me that he would abundantly spread all the gifts which overflow in him in the hearts of all those who honour him; and that, wherever this image is displayed for the purpose of being venerated in a special way, it would bring down all kinds of blessings.” — *ibid.*, t. II, pp. 296, 572.

◆ **The promises of grace to those who practice this devotion:**

“I feel as if completely plunged into this Divine Heart; if I am not mistaken, I am there as in a bot-

tomless abyss where he makes me discover treasures of love and grace for those who dedicate and sacrifice themselves to his Heart in order to render and to obtain all the honour and love and glory that they can.” — *ibid.*, t. II, p. 396.

◆ **The promise of salvation for all who dedicate and consecrate themselves to this Heart:**

“He confirmed to me that the delight he takes in being loved, known and honoured by his creatures is so great that, if I am not mistaken, he promised me that everyone devoted and consecrated to him will never perish.” — *ibid.*, t. II, pp. 296, 300, 328, 344.

◆ **The promise of the grace of a holy death to all those who receive Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months:**

“One Friday, during Holy Communion, he said these words to his unworthy slave, if she is not mistaken: ‘I promise you, in the excessive mercy of my Heart, that its all-powerful love will grant the grace of final penitence to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months, as well as the grace not to die in my disfavour and without receiving the sacraments. My Divine Heart will be their assured refuge in their last moments.’” — *ibid.*, t. I, p. 261, t. II, p. 397.

◆ **The promise of the reign of the Sacred Heart:**

“Fear not, I will reign in spite of my enemies and anyone else who wants to oppose it.” — *ibid.*, t. II, p. 105.

“He will reign, this endearing Heart, despite Satan. Oh how I am overjoyed at this!”

“In the end, his Divine Heart will reign, despite all those who oppose it. Satan will be left confounded with all his cohorts.” — *ibid.*, t. II, pp. 436, 489.

# The Nine First Fridays Devotion

**T**HE PRACTICE of offering Holy Communion in reparation to the Sacred Heart on First Fridays originated with Our Lord's promise to Saint Margaret Mary in 1688. After showing her his Sacred Heart, he spoke the following words: *"I promise you, in the excessive mercy of My Heart, that its all-powerful love will grant the grace of final penitence to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months, as well as the grace not to die in my disfavour and without receiving the sacraments. My Divine Heart will be their assured refuge in their last moments."*

On several occasions Holy Mother Church has encouraged this practice. Pope Benedict XV included the full text of Our Lord's promise in the bull canonizing Saint Margaret Mary (13<sup>th</sup> May

1920), and in an encyclical Pope Pius XI speaks of *"the custom of receiving Holy Communion on the first Friday of every month"* as being *"the desire of Christ Jesus"* (*Miserentissimus Redemptor*, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1928, on the duty of making reparation to the Sacred Heart).

*The First Friday of every month is set aside in particular for the honour of the Sacred Heart.*

Father Jean Croiset of the Society of Jesus became Saint Margaret Mary's spiritual director after Saint Claude de la Colombière's death. In his opus, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, he explains the motives for honouring the Sacred Heart, and the means best suited for that purpose.

*"The First Friday of every month,"* writes Father Croiset, *"is set aside in particular for the honour of the Sacred Heart."* This day owes its importance to the practice of receiving communion in reparation during nine consecutive months, but it is also generally consecrated to the Sacred Heart and to the reparation of offenses against him; particularly for those offenses against him truly present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Croiset suggests several means of living in a real spirit of reparation and of the love of God on First Fridays. These means are also excellent for obtaining those pious dispositions that allow a fruitful reception of the graces promised by Our Lord in Paray-le-Monial.

He advises preparing the evening before by a pious reading on the Sacred Heart, on his merciful love for men and on his passion, or on the offences that Our Lord suffers in the Blessed Sacrament. *"The*

*Vision of Saint Margaret Mary, Armand Cambon, Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Montauban, France*





Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Gricigliano

*next morning, upon rising, offer all of the coming day's actions to Jesus Christ, and consecrate them to the honour of his Sacred Heart." There is however no need to abandon "one's occupations or necessary duties"; the important thing is to do them, even more so than usual, for the love of the Heart of Jesus, and to try to make reparation, by an ever-increasing fervour, for the indifference that he usually encounters, "praying that our loving Saviour will open to us his Sacred Heart and give us the grace of spending the rest of our days therein."*

Father Croiset reminds us that while making a Communion of reparation it is important to regret one's own past negligence and indifference towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We should remember *"the negligence with which we received him and visited him."* And finally, whenever it is possible, he

recommends making visits to the Blessed Sacrament *"more often, and with more respect and devotion than usual,"* and to say, for example, *"the rosary or the Litany of the Sacred Heart."*

In short, on First Fridays we should not be

*Devotion consists in a high degree of real love and makes us ready, active and diligent in following all God's commands.*

satisfied by a merely exterior, nor by some vague, superficial intention. Instead, the whole of our lives as Christians should be nourished by our love for the Heart of Jesus—and this above all on First Fridays. According to Saint Francis de Sales, *"devotion consists in a high degree of real love... and makes us ready, active and diligent in following all God's commands..."* (*Introduction to the Devout Life*). A spirit of prayer and recollection, good works, mortification, patience in trials: these are the preconditions but also the fruits of an authentic devotion to Our Lord's Sacred Heart.

## How to Obtain the Promised Favour?

In order to obtain the grace of final penitence promised by Our Lord, one must:

1. Receive Holy Communion in the state of grace on the First Fridays of nine consecutive months without interruption.
2. Have the intention of honouring the Sacred Heart and of obtaining the grace of final penitence.
3. Offer each of these Communions in reparation for offenses committed against the Blessed Sacrament.

# The Immaculate Heart of Mary

**T**HE DEVOTION TO THE HEART OF MARY must be looked at from the same point of view as the devotion to the Heart of Jesus: we wish to honour the symbol and the organ of their love, and, in so doing, honour their love itself.

## Saint John Eudes

SAINT JOHN EUDES spoke with such eloquence and spread so well the devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, that he was proclaimed, “the author of the liturgical cult of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary” by Pope Leo XIII. Following in the footsteps of his predecessor, Saint Pius X declared that Saint John Eudes ought to be considered “the father of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts” for, from the very beginning of the foundation of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, he enjoined on his priests to celebrate feasts in their honour. To make these holy Hearts known and to exalt them was, in his own words, the mission entrusted to him by Jesus and Mary.

Saint John Eudes, the first great propagator of the cult of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, tells us, “In honouring the Heart of Mary, we wish to honour not some mystery, action or quality, or even only the most worthy person of the Virgin, but the source and origin of the dignity and holiness of all this—that is to say, her love and charity. To come to the Heart of Mary is to come to the source; it is to come to Jesus” (Lectionnaire de la Congrégation de Jésus et Marie).

He saw these two Hearts as so united that he spoke of them as one: “Jesus and Mary have given me their august Heart, for from its charity proceed both my life and my work” (Magnificat of Saint John Eudes).

To come to the Heart of Mary is to come to the very source of charity, it is to come to Jesus; his continual preoccupation was therefore to turn souls into true imitators of the Heart of Mary: “This admirable Heart is the example and model of our hearts,

and perfection consists in turning them into living images of the most holy Heart of Mary” (Lectionnaire de la Congrégation de Jésus et Marie).

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1641, Saint John Eudes opened the first house of refuge, which was to be the origin of the Order of Our Lady of Charity. He wrote in the constitutions that, in conceiving this institute, he desired “to consecrate it to the honour of the noble Heart of his most honoured Mother, since it is one and the same Heart as the divine Heart of her Son.”

Thirty years later he wrote, in a circular letter addressed to the six houses of the institute that he had founded, “It is an inexplicable grace that our most loving Saviour gave to our Congregation the admirable Heart of his most holy Mother; but his bountiful goodness does not stop there, it has gone

Saint John Eudes



further by giving us his Heart, to be, with the Heart of his glorious Mother, the founder and superior, the beginning and the end, the heart and the life of this Congregation” (*Circulaire aux instituts*).

## The rue du Bac and Fatima

IN 1830, during the apparitions at the Rue du Bac in Paris, Our Lady commanded Saint Catherine Labouré to have a medal struck bearing her image; she asked that on the back there be an image of the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, united and burning with love for us. Our Lady assured her that, “*Those who wear it will enjoy the special protection of the Mother of God.*”

Thus began the diffusion of the Miraculous Medal throughout the whole world. It was to be a channel of innumerable graces.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June 1917, during the second apparition at Fatima, Our Lady told the three little shepherds, “*Jesus wishes to use you in order to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world. I promise salvation to those who embrace it; and these souls will be beloved of God like flowers arranged by me to adorn his throne.*” For Lucia she added, “*Do not be dismayed. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart shall be your refuge and the road that shall lead you to God.*”

A few years later, on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1925, when Jacinta and Francisco were already united to the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary for all eternity, Our Lady appeared to sister Lucia at Pontevedra in Spain, telling her, “*Behold, my daughter, my Heart surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it unceasingly with their blasphemies and ingratitude. You, at least, try to console me and announce that for all those who, for five consecutive First Saturdays, confess, receive Holy Communion, pray the Holy Rosary and accompany me for fifteen minutes by meditating on the mysteries of the Holy Rosary with the intention to do reparation, I promise to assist them at the hour of death with the graces*

*My Immaculate Heart  
shall be your refuge.*



*Second Apparition of Our Lady to Saint Catherine Labouré,  
Chapel of the Daughters of Charity, rue du Bac, Paris*

*needed for salvation.*”

Our Lady showed Lucia her Heart surrounded by thorns, the symbols of our sins that pierce it. In order to remove these thorns she asked that we make acts of reparation by means of the devotion of the five First Saturdays of the month. As a reward, she promised to obtain for us “*all the graces necessary for our salvation*”.

Within two years of this apparition, Jesus appeared twice to Sister Lucia (15<sup>th</sup> February 1926 and 17<sup>th</sup> December 1927) and insisted that she spread the devotion to the Heart of his most holy Mother, especially through the practice of the devotion of the First Saturdays. Sister Lucia wrote, “*Whether there is war or peace in the world depends on the practice of the devotion of First Saturdays combined with the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.*”

Although the apparitions of Our Lady in Fatima and Our Lord in Paray-le-Monial occurred over two hundred years apart, they had striking similarities. In both cases Heaven calls on us to make reparation for our sins, asks for a personal and universal consecration, and ultimately expresses the desire for a renewal of devotion within the Church for the greater glory of God and for the conversion of poor sinners.

# Saint Francis de Sales' Devotion to the Sacred Heart

“**O**UR DYING SAVIOUR gave birth to us by the wound in his Sacred Heart,” wrote Saint Francis de Sales to Saint Jane de Chantal on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1611. It is no surprise that the Doctor of Divine Love had a special devotion to the Heart of the Saviour, symbol par excellence of his love for men. In his works explicit reference is made to the Heart of Jesus on numerous occasions.

Saint Francis de Sales and the Sacred Heart



## In Praise of the Sacred Heart

CONCERNING THIS he wrote to Sister de Blonay, novice mistress of the Visitation Convent of Lyon, “You must not examine whether your heart pleases him but whether his Heart pleases you; and looking at his Heart is the same as rejoicing in it, for his Heart is so gentle, so sweet, so gracious, so much in love with his poor, feeble creatures, and provided they acknowledge that they need him, so good to the needy and the penitent! And who could fail to love this Royal Heart which mothers us in such a fatherly way?” The holy bishop of Geneva thus invites us to a great love for the Sacred Heart, a simple love that is not lost amid vain worries: “You have no cause to doubt that he looks upon you with love,” he points out to the same sister. The holy doctor also shows her that the love of the Heart of Jesus for souls is so great that he does not reject a single one, not even the “most horrible sinners in the world, even if they have very little real desire for conversion.” Saint Francis de Sales also recommends that we seek to attain that “perfect charity that casteth out fear”

*Divine Love is seated upon our Saviour's Heart as upon its royal throne.*

(1 Jn. IV, 18), by trusting in the love of our Beloved and by accomplishing the Divine Will as perfectly as possible.

In his masterpiece, the *Treatise of the Love of God*, the holy doctor presents the Sacred Heart as the





*Saint Francis de Sales Giving the Rules of the Order of the Visitation to Saint Jane de Chantal, Noël Hallé, Church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, Paris*

throne of the Love of God for the world: *“Truly, Divine Love is seated upon our Saviour’s Heart as upon its royal throne”* (V, 11). This Divine Love *“beholds by the cleft of his pierced side all the hearts of the sons of men.”* Yet, according to the bishop of Geneva, it is only in Heaven that we shall comprehend how great is the love that gushes forth from this Heart. *“We do not see him, we only half-see him. For, O God!, if we could see him as he is we should die of love for him.”*

Saint Francis de Sales thus presents the Pierced Heart of the Saviour to his readers as the perfect symbol of the infinite Love of God for men, in order to inspire them to gratitude and love, confidence in God, and the courage to do good.

## In Imitation of the Heart of Jesus

IT IS TO BE NOTED that the holy doctor was not content simply to teach others to entrust themselves to the Heart of Jesus. The life of Saint Francis de Sales was an unceasing prayer, and the Sacred Heart was most often the object of his contemplation: *“Henceforth we no longer remain within ourselves, we forever abide in the pierced side of the Saviour,”*

he wrote to Saint Jane de Chantal on the occasion of the foundation of the Order of the Visitation. Later on, he confided the following to the Visitation sisters: *“The other day while in prayer, considering the open side of Our Lord, and seeing his Heart, it seemed to me that our hearts were all there around him, paying him homage as the Sovereign King of hearts.”* In the school of Saint Francis de Sales, no prayer life is conceivable without frequently considering the Love of God for his creatures, represented so well by the Sacred Heart of Jesus, immolated on the Cross for

*Our neighbour is truly there  
in the bosom of the Saviour,  
and there he is so loved, and  
so loveable.*

the redemption of the world.

For this great saint, contemplating the Sacred Heart was also the source of great zeal for the practice of virtue, and particularly the virtues dearest to the Heart of Jesus: meekness and humility. Francis de Sales was perhaps the saint who best put into practice these words of Jesus: *“Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart”* (Mt. XI, 29). Vigorously mortifying his lively and spirited nature, he came to imitate the meekness of the Saviour so well that he could rightly be called the patron saint of meekness. This is true to such an extent that during his life it was said that to earn his special affection, it sufficed to do him some wrong, so constant was his patience. He practiced humility admirably up until the very end of his life. He even explained in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* how humility teaches us to love our own abjection, misery, and lowliness in the sense that, though we take no pleasure therein and do not abandon our efforts, we should accept our imperfections and weaknesses. This obliges us to have recourse to the Source of all holiness, and not to trust in our own strength. This holy bishop was thus both the adorer of the Sacred Heart and the faithful imitator of its virtues.

Finally Saint Francis de Sales drew his great love of neighbour from his contemplation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He wished always to see his

neighbour in the Heart of Jesus, as if through his sacred breast. *“Who would not love him? Who would not suffer his imperfections? Yes, my dearest child, our neighbour is truly there in the bosom and the breast of the Saviour, and there he is so loved, and so loveable that the lover dies of love for him.”*

## The Sacred Heart and the Order of the Visitation

IN 1610, with the help of Saint Jane de Chantal, Saint Francis de Sales founded the Order of the Visitation. This new order was destined to receive, in the person of Saint Margaret Mary, Our Lord’s revelation of the love of his Sacred Heart.

From the beginning of its foundation, the holy bishop of Geneva gave the Visitation a spirituality founded on the love and imitation of the Heart of Jesus.

*Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jane de Chantal Venerate the Heart of Jesus, Visitation of Nantes, France (from À tout cœur, an album by the Museum of the Visitation, Moulins)*



IN 1611, on the Friday of the octave of Corpus Christi, the same day Our Lord designated when he said to Saint Margaret Mary: *“I want there to be a solemn feast, throughout the whole Church, in honour of my Divine Heart,”* Saint Francis wrote to his holy co-foundress, Jane de Chantal: *“Truly our little congregation is the work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary;”* and *“Our dying Saviour has given birth to us by the wound in his Sacred Heart.”* Saint Francis considered the Heart of Jesus to be the true founder of the Visitation.

Saint Francis also believed the Sacred Heart to

*Our little congregation is the work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.*

be the surest foundation that the order could have, as he explained to another of the sisters:

*“My dearest daughter, are we not children, adorers, and servants of the loving and fatherly Heart of our Saviour? Is it not on this foundation that we have built our hopes? He is our Master, our King, our Father, our all. Let us but think of serving him well, and he will take care of rewarding us well.”*

For the sisters of the Visitation, fraternal charity and the spirit of obedience were to be founded on an intimate union with the Heart of Jesus Christ: *“Unite your heart by holy submission to the Heart of Jesus, which, grafted on to the Divinity, will be the root of the tree whose branches you will form.”*

The words of Saint Francis de Sales leave no doubt about the spirit which he intended to give to the young order. His words, pronounced more than sixty years before the apparitions at Paray-le-Monial, take on a prophetic tone:

*“The sisters of the Visitation who shall be so happy as to observe their Rule well may truly bear the name of ‘Evangelical Daughters’, established in these latter times to be the imitators of the Heart of Jesus in meekness and humility, the basis and foundation of their Order. It will give them the privilege and incomparable grace of bearing the title of Daughters of the Sacred Heart.”*

It was left to Saint Jane de Chantal, after his death, to give the full expression of his thought about the Visitation. She cherished all of Saint Francis de Sales' writings, and we can see their influence at work when she writes: *"Consider the gift and favour that he has made to our Order and to each of us in particular of his Heart, or rather of the virtues it contains, since he has founded our most lovely Institute on these two precepts: 'Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart' "* (*Méditations*, II, 8, *"De l'Amour que Jésus-Christ nous porte"*). Imitate the meekness and humility of Jesus Christ: this is the goal of life in a Visitation Convent.

But Saint Jane de Chantal went further. For her, in the spirit of its holy founder, imitating the virtues of the Sacred Heart is the Visitation's distinctive character: *"This is the portion that we have inherited from among all his treasures. As for other religious orders, he gave to one the eminence of prayer, to another solitude, to another austerity. To us, however, he left what he doubtless held most dear, since his precious Heart is its keeper."* And she concluded, in terms similar to those of Saint Francis de Sales: *"If we learn and practice well the lesson that his loving Saviour gives us, we will have the honour of bearing the title of*

**He has founded our most lovely Institute on these two precepts: "Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart."**

*Daughters of the Heart of Jesus."*

As an apostle of the Divine Heart of the Saviour, Saint Francis de Sales strove all his life to imitate its virtues and did not fail to transmit his love of the Heart of Jesus to the Visitation. The words and examples of this great saint are, for all Christian souls, an invitation to love the Sacred Heart. Along with Saint Francis de Sales, *"let us no longer live in ourselves, but let us dwell forever in the pierced side of the Saviour."*

## The Coat of Arms of the Visitation

The coat of arms chosen by Saint Francis de Sales for the Order of the Visitation pre-figured the revelations made at Paray-le-Monial in several ways. The following is from a letter that he wrote to Saint Jane de Chantal on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1611: *"Last night God inspired me with the thought that thanks to his grace our house of the Visitation is sufficiently noble and considerable to have its own coat of arms, escutcheon, motto and battle cry. I have thought, my dear Mother, if you agree, that we should take as our coat of arms a single heart pierced by two arrows, the whole enclosed in a crown of thorns, and with the poor heart serving to hold and support a cross which is to surmount it, and the heart is to be engraved with the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. My daughter, I have a thousand little thoughts to tell you on this subject at our next meeting, for indeed, our little congregation is the work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary."*

This heart crowned with thorns belongs in the first place to each sister of the Visitation who is meant to be intimately united to the Heart of Our Lord, and it prefigures the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary, for, as Saint Francis himself explains in the same letter, *"Our dying Saviour gave birth to us by the wound in his Sacred Heart."*



# The Sacred Heart and Family Life

**O**N 24<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1907, the Servant of God Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey, who was then suffering from an illness, arrived at the chapel of the apparitions in Paray-le-Monial. *“I prayed, and suddenly I felt within myself a strange shock. I was struck by a blow of grace, at the same time very strong, yet infinitely gentle. When I arose, I was completely cured. Then, kneeling in the sanctuary, absorbed in an act of thanksgiving, I understood what Our Lord wished of me. That very evening I conceived the plan to reconquer the world home by home, family by family for the love of the Heart of Jesus.”* In 1908, in Chile, Father Crawley enthroned the Sacred Heart in a family home for

*Jesus Christ promised to pour out his blessings on those homes where a picture of his Sacred Heart is exposed and venerated.*

the first time. The ceremony consists in placing an image of the Sacred Heart in the home in the presence of a priest and of the whole family. This pious practice spread rapidly throughout the world, and it was estimated that by 1911, about 120,000 families had enthroned the Sacred Heart in their homes.

On 27<sup>th</sup> April 1915, Pope Benedict XV sent a beautiful letter of encouragement to Father Crawley: *“We exhort you to continue zealously in the apostolate you have so successfully begun. At present nothing is timelier. The malicious efforts of the wicked are specially directed against the home and the family. Since the family contains the root and the elements of civil society, its enemies realize well that the hoped-for transformation or rather the hoped-for destruction of all human society cannot take place before the ruin of the family is accomplished. Every effort is being made to weaken the firmness and indissolubility of the marriage bond and to prevent our youth from coming under religious influence. Wickedness goes so far as to endanger the very propagation of the human race, and to defile the sanctity of matrimonial life by praising shameful practices for the gratification of lust which frustrate the rights of the laws of nature. You do well therefore, beloved son, to take in hand the welfare of society, to awaken and spread above all things a Christian spirit in the home so that the love of Jesus Christ may permeate families and reign over them as their Sovereign. By so doing you obey Jesus Christ himself who promised to pour out his blessings on those homes where a picture of his Sacred Heart is exposed and venerated.”* Here the Holy Father makes a direct allusion to one of the promises made by the

*First feast of the Heart of Jesus, oil painting, circa 1860, Visitation of Paray-le-Monial (from *À tout cœur*, an album by the Museum of the Visitation, Moulins)*



Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary: “*He promised me that... he would spread his blessings abundantly in all the places where the image of this lovable Heart is placed, to be loved and honoured, and that in this way he would reunite divided families and would aid and protect them in their necessities*” (*Lettre XXXV*, to Mother de Saumaise, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1685, *Vie et Œuvres*, t. II, p. 296).

The enthronement of the Sacred Heart is therefore a response to Our Lord’s request and to his promise. It is a source of grace for every family that consecrates itself in this way to the “*Burning Furnace of Charity*.” This practice is extremely pleasing to the Heart of Jesus and it is a way of consoling him for all the indifference that he usually encounters from so many Christians world-wide. Moreover, Our Lord wishes to reign in society. He is truly king—by right of birth as the almighty God and Creator; and by right of conquest as our Redeemer. His kingship extends to individual souls, of course, but also to all of human society. That is the meaning of Christ’s social royalty as described by Pope Pius XI in *Quas Primas* (1925). The family is the “*building-block of society*”; and so it is in the family that Our Lord

begins reigning concretely over mankind.

During the ceremony of enthronement, the family traditionally recites together the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart approved by Pope Saint Pius X. They will then renew their consecration daily by a short prayer to the Heart of the Savior.

Parents and children can prepare for the ceremony of enthronement by praying a novena together to the Sacred Heart. The statue or image is blessed by the priest and then set by the head of the family in a place of honour, so that from there the Sacred Heart of Jesus may reign visibly in their home. The family should decorate the site as best they can beforehand, in order to show the particular solemnity of the occasion. The priest and family recite the Credo together before the newly-enthroned image, and then the family recites the Act of Consecration. In so doing each member of the family complements the exterior act of enthronement with a personal and interior act of engagement. They offer their hearts to him who said, “*My yoke is sweet, and my burden is light*” (Mt. XI, 30).

## Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, who didst make known to Saint Margaret Mary Thine ardent desire to reign over Christian families, behold us assembled here today to proclaim Thine absolute dominion over our home.

Henceforth we purpose to lead a life like unto Thine, so that amongst us may flourish the virtues for which Thou didst promise peace on earth, and for this end we will banish from our midst the spirit of the world which Thou dost abhor so much. Thou wilt reign over our understanding by the simplicity of our faith. Thou wilt reign over our hearts by an ardent love for Thee; and may the flame of this love be ever kept burning in our hearts by the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist. Deign, O Divine Heart, to preside over our meetings, to bless our undertakings, both spiritual and temporal, to banish all worry and care, to sanctify our joys, and soothe our sorrows. If any of us should ever have the misfortune to grieve Thy Sacred Heart, remind him of Thy goodness and mercy towards the repentant sinner. Lastly, when the hour of separation will sound, and death will plunge our home into mourning, then shall we all, and every one of us, be resigned to Thy eternal decrees, and seek consolation in the thought that we shall one day be reunited in Heaven, where we shall sing the praises and blessings of Thy Sacred Heart for all eternity.

May the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the glorious Patriarch Saint Joseph, offer Thee this our Consecration, and remind us of the same all the days of our life. Glory to the Divine Heart of Jesus, our King and our Father. Amen.

Approved by Pope Saint Pius X, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1908.

# The Sacred Heart of Jesus and Divine Mercy

by His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

**O**NE OF THE DEVOTIONS to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by ancient Carthusian writers testifies to the revelation of the mystery of divine mercy in the piercing of the Heart of the

*Divine Mercy, Kazimirowski Eugeniusz, 1934*



Divine Savior after His death on the Cross. The devotion reads thus:

*“Hail, most good Jesus! With all Thy Saints and Elect, I offer Thee my salutation. Thou art full of graces: mercy is with Thee. Blessed be Thy most bitter Passion, Thy most afflicted soul, Thy most tender Heart, and blessed be the Blood of Thy Wounds! I adore, I praise, I bless Thee, most merciful Lord Jesus Christ, I thank Thee for all Thou has suffered for me, and for the infinite love that led Thee thus to suffer for my sake. Through Thy most merciful Heart, I beseech Thee to fill my heart with a most ardent, perfect unending love, in order that I know myself well, and that I may then have sufficient contempt for myself to love those who despise and hate me. Grant that I may love but Thee, delight only in Thee, think only of Thee, be attached to Thee alone, and always please Thee wholly and perfectly.*

*Most sweet Jesus, by all Thy Wounds, Thy scars and Thy pains, by Thy most bitter death, by the anguish of Thy Heart, by the separation of Thy most holy Soul from Thy Body, by the opening of Thy Side, by the Wound of Thy Heart, by the Water and the Blood that flowed from It, by the triumphant consummation of Thy obedience, by Thy victory over death, grant, I beseech Thee, that I may die to the world, with its lusts, its vices and all its unruly affections; that I may live for Thee, love but Thee, cleave only to Thee; that I may merit to be like Thee and to be everlastingly united to Thee alone.”<sup>1</sup>*

The ancient prayer reflects the richness of the mystery of divine mercy as it is contemplated in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, together with the entire

<sup>1</sup> Carthusian Monks of the XIV-XVII Centuries, *Ancient Devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1926), pp. 206-207. [*Ancient Devotions*].

Passion and Death of Our Lord, for the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus contains all of the sufferings and also the death of Our Lord.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in fact, contains the devotion to the Passion and Death of Our Lord, to His holy and glorious Wounds. Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical Letter *Miserentissimus Redemptor* on the common expiation owed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, refers to a text from Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical Letter *Annum Sacrum*: "*Here in [in the Sacred Heart of Jesus] must all hopes be set, from hence must the salvation of men be sought and expected.*"<sup>2</sup> He concludes:

*"And rightly indeed is that said, Venerable Brethren. For is not the sum of all religion and therefore the pattern of more perfect life, contained in that most auspicious sign and in the form of piety that follows from it inasmuch as it more readily leads the minds of men to an intimate knowledge of Christ Our Lord, and more efficaciously moves their hearts to love Him more vehemently and to imitate Him more closely."*<sup>3</sup>

The Blood and Water which flowed from the pierced Side of Jesus, from His pierced Heart, in fact, teach us that His glorious pierced Heart is indeed the fountain of all graces. As the devotion of the ancient Carthusians declares: "*Thou art full of graces; mercy is with Thee.*"<sup>4</sup>

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we contemplate the inseparable union of God's truth, justice and mercy. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches us:

*"Now as works of art are related to the art, so are*

2 *"In eo omnes collocandæ spes; ex eo hominum petenda atque exspectanda salus."* Pius PP. XI, *Litteræ Encyclicæ, Miserentissimus Redemptor*, 8 May 1928, *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*, 20 (1928), p. 167. [MR]. English translation: [ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P11MISER.HTM](http://ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/P11MISER.HTM), no. 2. [MREng].

3 *"Ac jure id quidem, Venerabiles Fratres; in illo enim auspiciatissimo signo atque in ea, quæ exinde consequitur, pietatis forma nonne totius religionis summa atque adeo perfectioris vitæ norma continetur, quippe quæ et ad Christum Dominum penitus cognoscendum mentes conducatur expeditius et ad eundem vehementius diligendum pressiusque imitandum animos inflectat efficacius?"* MR, p. 167. English translation: MREng, no. 3.

4 *Ancient Devotions*, p. 206.

*works of justice related to the law with which they accord. Therefore God's justice, which establishes things in the order conformable to the rule of His wisdom, which is the law of His justice, is suitably called truth. Thus we also in human affairs speak of the truth of justice."*<sup>5</sup>

The Angelic Doctor goes on to explain how God's mercy is always rooted in His justice. His mercy corresponds to the truth, to what is just, but always with the immeasurable goodness of His Being as Creator and Redeemer. Saint Thomas teaches us:

*"So in every work of God, viewed at its primary source, there appears mercy. In all that follows, the power of mercy remains, and works indeed with*

*even greater force; as the influence of the first cause is more intense than that of second causes. For this reason does God out of the abundance of His goodness bestow upon creatures what is due to them more bountifully than is proportionate to their deserts: since less*

*would suffice for preserving the order of justice than what the divine goodness confers; because between creatures and God's goodness there can be no proportion."*<sup>6</sup>

Divine mercy does not contradict divine justice, but, rather, fulfills its demands with immeasurable love. God's mercy does not give man the license to consider lightly the gravity of his offense of God by sin, but, rather, to repent constantly and to make constant reparation, trusting in God's mercy.

God acts mercifully not by contradicting His justice but by giving what is good, in accord with the truth of His Being, beyond the measure that justice requires. Indeed, God's justice always presupposes mercy and is founded upon it. As Saint Thomas

5 *"Sicut autem se habent artificata ad artem, ita se habent opera justa ad legem cui concordant. Justitia igitur Dei, quæ constituit ordinem in rebus conformem rationi sapientiæ suæ, quæ est lex ejus, convenienter veritas nominatur. Et sic etiam dicitur in nobis veritas justitiæ."* *Summa Theologiæ*, I, q. 21, a. 2. [ST]. English translation: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981). [STEng].

6 ST, I, q. 21, a. 4. English translation: STEng.

explains, mercy is at the source of God's every act, for God is "rich in mercy."<sup>7</sup> From the very beginning, it has been so, for the act of creation was not something owed to creatures out of justice; it was rather the fruit of God's loving will, and therefore a sort of mercy towards us. According to Saint Thomas, it is above all the forgiveness of sins that manifests God's mercy. In fact, Saint Thomas maintains that forgiving men is a greater work than the creation of the world because forgiveness is more immediately directed to eternal life.<sup>8</sup> In this way, without undermining God's justice, one can say that God's primary relation to His creation is that of mercy. Thus, in the Nicene Creed we profess that Christ died to save sinners, but that He will also come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we witness how God has fulfilled perfectly the demands of His justice, saving man from sin and eternal death by the Passion

*God's justice always presupposes mercy and is founded upon it.*

and Death of His Divine Son Whom He sent in our human nature. At the same time, we witness in the same Divine and Human Heart the immeasurable and unceasing mercy of God Who never ceases to save man from sin by the grace which flows from the glorious pierced Heart of His only-begotten Son into the hearts of those who repent of sin and place their hearts into the Son's most Sacred Heart to be purified of sin and inflamed with divine love.

Thus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus in no way inspires in man a carelessness and indifference which comes from callousness and presumption but rather profound sorrow before the repulsiveness of all sin, even venial sin, and the steadfast desire for the transformation of a callous and presumptuous heart into a heart informed by the truth which fulfills the demands of justice and goes far beyond those demands, according to God's never-failing fidelity to His covenant of love with us. Thus, the ancient

Carthusians, in their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, prayed:

*"Through Thy most merciful Heart, I beseech Thee to fill my heart with a most ardent, perfect unending love, in order that I know myself well, and that I may then have sufficient contempt for myself to love those who despise and hate me..."*

*Saint Dominic Adoring the Crucifixion, Fra Angelico, Convent of San Marco, Florence, Italy, 1442*



<sup>7</sup> Eph. II, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. ST, I-II, q. 113, a. 9.



[G]rant, I beseech Thee, that I may die to the world, with its lusts, its vices and all its unruly affections; that I may live for Thee, love but Thee, cleave only to Thee; that I may merit to be like Thee and to be everlastingly united to Thee alone.”<sup>9</sup>

The prayer is full of the sense both of God’s justice and of His mercy. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus instills trust in God’s mercy without, in any way, inspiring a laxity regarding what is just and right.

Pope Saint John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter,

**Only a lack of good will can limit the Divine Mercy, a lack of readiness to be converted and to repent.**

*Dives in Misericordia*, teaches us that, because God’s mercy is infinite, “[o]n the part of man only a lack of good will can limit it, a lack of readiness to be converted and to repent, in other words persistence in obstinacy, opposing grace and truth.”<sup>10</sup> He goes on to explain that this is why “[i]n no passage of the Gospel message does forgiveness, or mercy as its source, mean indulgence towards evil, towards scandals, towards injury or insult.”<sup>11</sup>

The essence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with its reflection of divine truth, justice and mercy, is also seen in the prayer of the Carthusian Lansperge:

“O sweet Jesus, thou hast, in thy generous bounty, rescued me from the gates of hell where already my sins had cast me down. And now I pray thee, by the

<sup>9</sup> *Ancient Devotions*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>10</sup> “In homine tamen circumscribere eam potest sola deficiens bona voluntas, nulla videlicet conversionis ac pœnitentiæ voluntas, id est perseverantia in obstinatione ac repugnantia tum gratiæ tum veritati.” Joannes Paulus PP. II, Litteræ Encyclicæ *Dives in Misericordia*, “De Divina Misericordia,” 30 Novembris 1980, *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* 72 (1980) 1220, n. 13. [DM]. English translation: Pope John Paul II, *Encyclicals* (Trivandrum, Kerala, India: Carmel International Publishing House, 2005), p. 1048, no. 13. [DMEng].

<sup>11</sup> “Nullo prorsus Evangelici nuntii loco venia – neque fons quidem ejus misericordia – significat indulgentiam in malum, in scandalum, in injuriam aut contumeliam inflictam.” DM, 1226-1227, n. 14. English translation: DMEng, p. 1054, no. 14.



The Sacred Heart, in the Institute’s house in Bayerisch Gmain, Germany

wound of thy Sacred Heart, and by thy infinite mercy, deliver me from all pride, malice and negligence, and never permit me again to offend thee deliberately, but grant that I may spend the rest of my life and all the strength of my soul and of my body in doing and accomplishing thy holy will, henceforth to act only to honour and glorify thee.”<sup>12</sup>

As the prayer of Lansperge expresses, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspires in us, first of all, justice, that is, conduct in accord with the truth, but, what is more, the mercy which imitates divine mercy, doing what is just with unconditional love.

In another prayer, Lansperge identifies clearly the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the font of divine mercy:

“O my God, my Father and my Saviour, I adore Thee and I praise Thee. I bless Thee for having opened the gate of thy mercy and of thy love for all who sigh

<sup>12</sup> Lansperge le Chartreux, *Le silence du cœur*, éd. Christophe Bagonneau (translation by the author) (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence, 2013), p. 100. [Lansperge].

*under the weight of their afflictions, whether corporal or spiritual, and who desire to come to Thee and to take refuge in thy Heart! Here, the penitent finds the infallible remedy which heals the wounds of his soul; the weak find strength; the afflicted, consolation; tempted souls, a refuge; the just their repose...*

*O dearest Jesus, in the name of thy infinitely perfect and unlimited love, open unto me, I pray, the gate of thy heart, the gate of life, the gate of mercy. Grant that I may approach this source of graces; do not separate me from thy heart, for thou hast chosen, inspired by thy sole love, to open a passage to it for all those who seek and desire thee. In it, I shall find myself as in an impregnable refuge. There shall I enjoy unchanging peace.”<sup>13</sup>*

The prayer expresses the reality of the opening of the Divine Heart through the piercing of the Heart, both divine and human, of God the Son Incarnate, to receive every human heart which repents of sin and seeks peace in the just order ordained by God, in the divine truth. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, as the prayer so wonderfully expresses, is the sole door to divine truth, justice and mercy.

A secular view of reality would tell us that mercy is also expressed in immoral practices, practices contrary to the truth and, therefore, to justice, which are somehow seen to be a ready answer to one or another form of suffering. For us, mercy and charity can never contradict the truth. What is morally evil can never serve the good of the one for whom we care, even if it may seem to offer some immediate help or remedy. God has taught us to pray, in the words of Psalm 50, popularly called the *Miserere*:

*“For behold thou has loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou has made manifest to me ...*

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me ...*

*The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;*

<sup>13</sup> Lansperge, pp. 86-87.

*a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise.”<sup>14</sup>*

God has also taught us to pray: *“Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed.”<sup>15</sup>* God’s justice makes us conscious of our sins and inspires in us sorrow for them and the firm purpose of amendment, and God’s mercy gives us confidence to confess our sins, to beg His forgiveness, and to begin again on the just way of obedience to God’s will in all things.

The revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque underline in a powerful way the unity of God’s truth, justice and mercy. Our Lord reveals His Heart to Saint Margaret Mary. His Heart is an expression of His immeasurable and unceasing love of man. Saint Margaret Mary records words spoken to her by Our Lord, when He revealed to her His Sacred Heart:

*“I have an ardent thirst to be honoured and loved by men in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and I find hardly anyone who endeavours according to My wish to quench this thirst by making Me some return of love.”<sup>16</sup>*

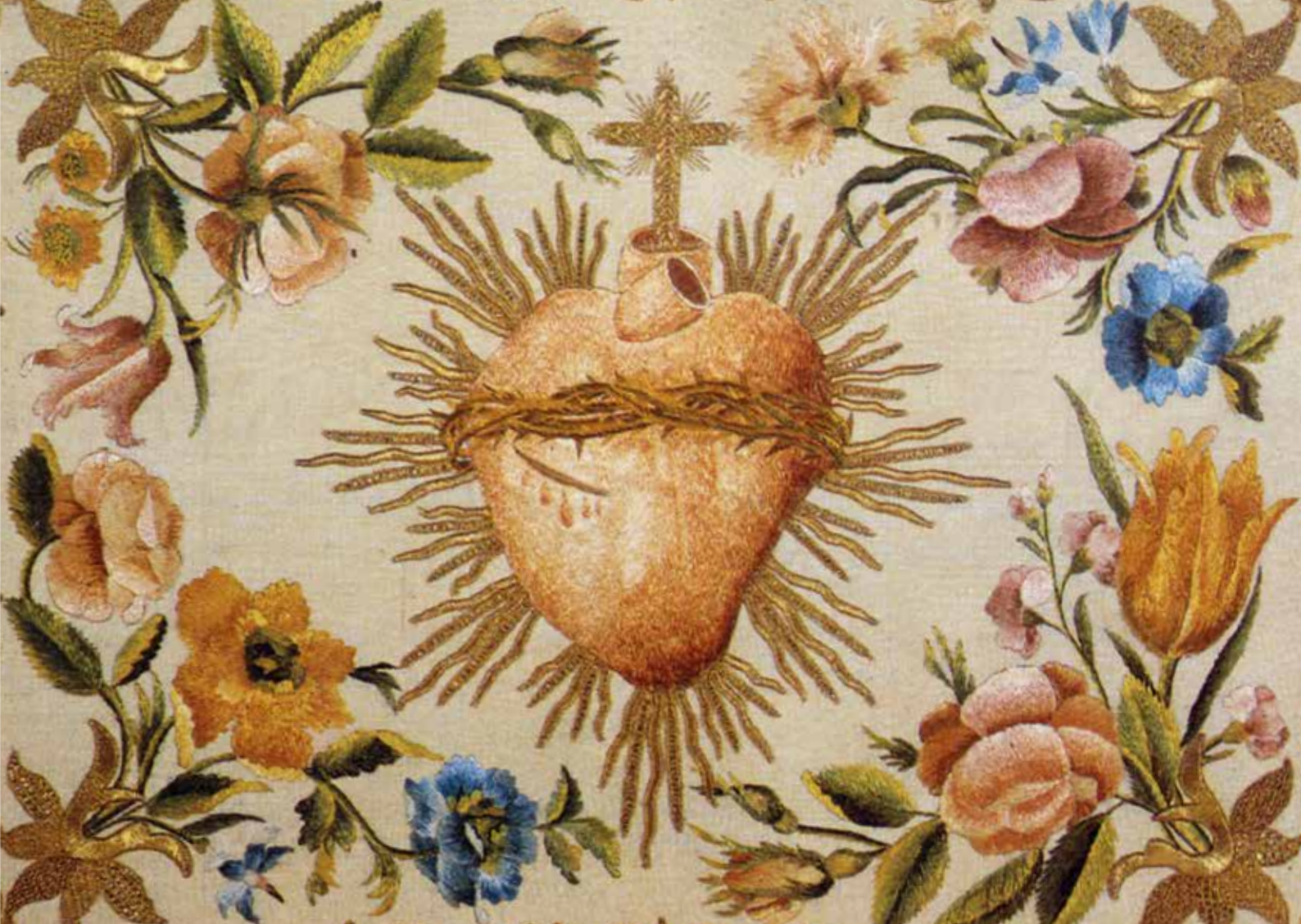
Our Lord’s words to Saint Margaret Mary remind us that the Sacred Heart of Jesus uncovers for us God’s truth, justice and mercy most perfectly in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in its incomparable fruit, Holy Communion. The Christian places his heart into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus most perfectly, when he unites Himself to Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice by which Christ makes sacramentally present His Sacrifice on Calvary: the fullest possible expression of divine justice and mercy.

At the heart of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as proposed through Saint Margaret Mary,

<sup>14</sup> Ps 51 [50], 8[6]. 12[10]. 19[17].

<sup>15</sup> Ps 85 [84], 11.

<sup>16</sup> John Croiset, *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., tr. Patrick O’Connell (St. Paul, MN: Radio Replies Press Society, 1959), p. 35. [Croiset].



is the Thursday of reparation before the First Friday. The faithful heart in the presence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is led, first of all, to keep vigil on the day before the First Friday, in order to acknowledge the sins of which God, in His justice, accuses him. At the same time, conscious of God's infinite mercy, the Christian offers reparation for his sins, in order to prepare to give his heart more completely to the Sacred Heart. The gift of his heart is, then, made by taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and receiving Holy Communion on the First Friday. The experience of the immeasurable and unceasing mercy of God in Holy Communion leads the Christian heart to many expressions of love of God in return for His gift of love.

Finally, it is the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary who leads us to the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son. Preserved from all stain of sin from the

very moment of her conception, the Virgin Mother of God is our greatest example and most powerful intercessor in striving to give our hearts ever more purely and totally to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After love of and devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, to the Passion and Death of Our Lord, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is essential to our growth in knowledge of God's justice and mercy. Father John Croiset, S.J., spiritual director of Saint Margaret

Mary Alacoque, writes:

*"There is no doubt that the Blessed Virgin is, of all creatures, the one who has loved Jesus Christ most, who has been most loved by Him and who desires more ardently that He be perfectly loved. She is the mother of perfect love, and it is to her that we should address ourselves in order to be inflamed with that love. The Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary are too conformable and too closely united to each other to*

*The Sacred Heart of Jesus  
is the sole door to divine  
truth, justice and mercy.*



*The Three Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph*

allow us entry into one without having the entry into the other; with this difference, that the Heart of Jesus suffers only souls extremely pure to enter into that Sanctuary, while the Heart of Mary purifies, by means of the graces she obtains, those souls that are not pure, and puts them in a state to be received into the Heart of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup>

In her song, the *Magnificat*, Mary “glorified that mercy shared in ‘from generation to generation’ by those who allow themselves to be guided by the fear of God.”<sup>18</sup> The Mother of God is also the mother of Mercy and the model for the Church. The Church “professes and proclaims mercy – the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer – when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser.”<sup>19</sup>

17 Croiset, p. 119.

18 “... illam celebraret misericordiam, cuius ‘in progenies et progenies’ fiunt ei participes, qui se Dei patiuntur dirigi timorem.” DM, 1210, n. 10. English translation: DMEng, p. 1039, no. 10.

19 “... misericordiam confitetur et divulgat – summe mirandam Creatoris Redemptorisque proprietatem –

This is seen especially in the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession.<sup>20</sup> In these Sacraments, believers encounter the Merciful Redeemer who judges us in accord with His justice and mercy. He offers us Himself: His grace which forgives and heals.

One of the invocations of the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is “*King and Center of All Hearts.*” Our hearts are healed of sin and inflamed with divine love by Christ alone. We can only find our healing and strength by resting our hearts in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Christ means giving our hearts to Him, as the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints teach us. For example, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who had consecrated her heart to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as she contemplated her death, declared: “*There is only one thing to do during the night, the one night of life which will come only once, and this is to love, to love Jesus with all the strength of our heart, and to save souls for Him so that He may be loved. Oh, make Jesus loved!*”<sup>21</sup>

In fact, the Poor Souls teach us the same truth, for the suffering which they endure in Purgatory is owed to the fact that some part of their heart had not

## ***We can only find our healing and strength by resting our hearts in the Sacred Heart.***

yet been given over completely to Christ. Their great desire for us is that we give our hearts completely to Him, so that, at death, we will not need to undergo the purification of Purgatory.

Participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the most perfect and efficacious means of the transformation of human hearts through union with the Heart of Christ, through submission to His Kingship of pure and selfless love.

Quoting Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical Letter *Miræ*

*necnon cum homines pertrahit ad fontes misericordiæ Servatoris, quam ipsa apud se custodit ac distribuit.*” DM, 1210, n. 13. English translation: DMEng, p. 1047, no. 13.

20 Cf. DM, 1219, n. 13.

21 Saint Theresse of Lisieux, *Letters: Volume I* (1877-1890), tr. John Clarke, O. C. D. (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1982), p. 588.

*Caritatis*, “On the Holy Eucharist,” Anthony Esolen underlines Christ’s perfect exercise of His Kingship in the Holy Eucharist:

“When a child sees, as I have seen, a man of the most powerful scientific intellect kneel in adoration before the Lord, present in the tabernacle, with the

**Participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the most perfect and efficacious means of the transformation of human hearts through union with the Heart of Christ.**

*flame in the red sanctuary lamp flickering, it is as Leo says, the mind finds its nourishment, the objections of rationalists are brought to naught, and abundant light is thrown on the supernatural order” (MC, 524). If earthly nature is all there is, then this world is a wilderness, and only greater cunning separates man from beast. But ‘the earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein’ (Psalm 24:1). He, the Lord of nature, in the miracle of the Eucharist, suspends the laws of that nature and has confirmed that miracle by ‘prodigies wrought in His honor, both in ancient times and in our own, of which in more than one place there exist public and notable records and memorials.’”<sup>22</sup>*

One thinks of the richness of Eucharistic miracles all along the Christian centuries, granted by Our Lord to confirm and to illuminate the Kingship of His glorious pierced Heart, the universal and unending reign of His truth, justice and mercy.

When we reflect upon the rebellion against the good order and peace which God inscribes upon every human heart, leading the world and even the Church into ever greater confusion, division, destruction of others and of self, we understand the importance of our worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the King and Center of All Hearts, under

His title of King of Heaven and Earth. Such worship is not a form of ideology. It is not the worship of an idea or an ideal. It is placing our hearts completely into His glorious pierced Heart. It is communion with Christ the King, especially through the Most Holy Eucharist, by which our own royal mission in Him is both understood, embraced, and lived. It is the reality in which we are called to live in justice, the reality of obedience to the Law of God written upon our hearts and into the very nature of all things. It is the reality to which our conscience unfailingly calls us to conform our being and according to which it also judges our thoughts, words and actions. It is the reality of our dignity in Christ and of the high mission inherent in that dignity.

Truly, the door to divine mercy is the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, to which we are led by Mary Immaculate and in which our souls are purified,

*The Eucharistic Heart*



22 Anthony Esolen, *Reclaiming Catholic Social Teaching: A Defense of the Church’s True Teachings on Marriage, Family, and the State* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2014), pp. 183-184.



His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

in accord with God's justice, and inflamed with His very love, in accord with His mercy. May our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary lead us to contemplate always the demands of divine justice and to trust that God, in His infinite mercy, gives us the grace so

to live the truth according to which He has created the world and called us into being, His only earthly creature created in His own image and likeness.<sup>23</sup>

*It is the reality in which we are called to live in justice, the reality of obedience to the Law of God written upon our hearts.*

I close with a prayer of Lansperge:

*"Blessed be the holy wound of thy Heart, O my God! Take, Lord Jesus, my heart and all the powers of my soul; detach them from earthly affections; may I lose even the memory of things here below. Cast my soul in the adorable wound of thy side, in the ocean of thy love, in the source of thy true Life. Unite my heart forever to thy tender heart so completely that it never more be even possible for me to want or desire anything that would not be conformed to your will for me, but may I rather in all things give up my own will. O Lord, my God and my Creator, make me attach myself to thee by faith, hope and charity. Amen."*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gn. I, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Lansperge, pp. 102-103.



## Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus



Most Sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before Thine altar. We are Thine, and Thine we wish to be; but to be more surely united to Thee, behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today to Thy Most Sacred Heart.

Many indeed have never known Thee; many too, despising Thy precepts, have rejected Thee. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to Thy Sacred Heart.

Be Thou King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken Thee, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned Thee; grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be Thou King of those who are deceived by the erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd.

Grant, O Lord, to Thy Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give peace and order to all nations, and make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry: Praise to the Divine Heart that wrought our salvation: *To It be glory and honour forever. Amen.*

A plenary indulgence is accorded to the faithful who, on the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ the King, recite this act of consecration publicly. On other occasions, the indulgence is partial.



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