



THE SACRED HEART AND THE EUCHARIST

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May is the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and June is the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As May leads to and introduces June, so Mary brings us to the love of her Son, the love symbolized by His Sacred Heart.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is a message of love. Saint John in his first epistle tells us, “The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love.” In his great encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*, “You Shall Draw Water,” (a quotation from Isaiah), Pope Pius XII wrote, “We do not hesitate to declare that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most effective school of the love of God; the love of God...which must be the foundation on which to build the Kingdom of God in the hearts of individuals, families, and nations” (no. 123). Pope Pius XI called it “the synthesis of our whole religion and the norm of a more perfect life.” Pope Paul VI in 1965 wrote, “It is *absolutely necessary* that the faithful venerate and honor the Sacred Heart in the expression of their private piety as well as in the services of public cult, because of His fullness we have all received.” In 1984, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, Pope John Paul II said, “In the Sacred Heart every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden. In that Divine Heart beats God’s infinite love for everyone, for each one of us individually.”

We adore the physical Heart of Jesus with that worship we give to God alone because the unique Person whose Heart it is is truly and completely both God and man. That physical Heart, said Pius XII, is a natural sign and symbol of Christ’s three-fold boundless love for the human race: human sensible and human spiritual love, and the divine love of the Incarnate Word. In the Old Testament, God is described in human terms, metaphorically; He sees, hears, speaks, is offended, angry, rejoices, etc: Now His own body, the God-man actually sees, hears, speaks, is offended, angry, rejoices, experiences every authentic human feeling. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, then, translates the divine nature into human terms for us so that no longer do our prayers seem to die away into infinite distance: Instead they reach readily the very human Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Love for the Eucharist

Christ’s heart of flaming love finds its truest and most profound expression in the Blessed Sacrament of His love, the Eucharist, God’s giving of Himself, whose feast, Corpus Christi, each year most often falls within the month of June. How appropriate this is, for devotion to the Eucharist and to the Sacred Heart are in fact one thing, inseparable--devotion to the mystery of Christ’s human and divine love. In the Sacred Host dwells the God-man, Jesus; in His Person pulses His Heart through which we are loved with the perfection of His humanity, the fullness of His Godhead, one Person who not only loves but is love. Thus St. Peter Julian Eymard instructs us, “Let us learn to honor the Sacred Heart in the Eucharist. Let us never separate them.”

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus infallibly leads souls to the Eucharist. Love for, and devotion to, the Eucharist infallibly leads souls to the mystery of God’s infinite love symbolized

for us by the Sacred Heart, a symbol necessary because love itself is immaterial and imperceptible: We need the sensible manifestation of the Divine Heart. So it is that the Sacred Heart, the Holy Eucharist, and Love itself, are one and the same thing; for in the Eucharist dwells Jesus, in Jesus His Heart, and in His Heart is infinite love. The Eucharist can be explained only by love; the love of Jesus is the love of His Heart, and so the Eucharist is explained only by the Sacred Heart. Drawn close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by cords of love, we receive into our own hearts the Eucharistic Lord in Holy Communion. It is not possible to carry fire in one's bosom and not become inflamed by it. Fire enkindles fire. Every sacrament is an effect of Christ's love, but as St. Bernard said, the Blessed Sacrament is the love of loves, the effect of Jesus giving us Himself who is love, and the most fertile source of that most tender and ardent love man should have for Jesus. St. Francis de Sales tells us our great intention in receiving the Eucharist should be to advance in the love of God, to become intimate with Him. You cannot love someone you do not know, and you do not know anyone you do not speak to or visit often and intimately. Thus frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, periods of prayer, adoration, are absolutely necessary.

Revelations to St. Margaret Mary

It was while she was kneeling in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament that Our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque displaying His Heart (I quote the saint), "represented as a throne of fire with flames radiating on every side. It appeared more brilliant than the sun and transparent like crystal. The wound received on the Cross appeared clearly: There was a crown of thorns around the Heart and it was surmounted by a cross."

Our Lord told the saintly nun it signified His immense love for us who are the cause of His sufferings that He, in His humanity, willed freely to undergo for our redemption, and especially the outrages He is exposed to in the Blessed Sacrament. He lamented that man largely ignored His great thirst to be loved in the Blessed Sacrament. He told the saint that in Gethsemane, immediately after the Last Supper, as He sweated blood, His great suffering was caused by the ingratitude of men, particularly toward the Blessed Sacrament.

And so He asked for Communions of reparation and consolation every First Friday and for a Holy Hour of Reparation every Thursday evening in memory of the agony in the garden and His desertion by the Apostles on the very night of the institution of the Eucharist. During His Passion, Our Lord must have seen down the centuries the millions who would pass Him by in the tabernacles of the world without giving Him a thought. He must have seen millions of indifferent or even sacrilegious Communions; He must have seen the cruelest of all, those of His intimate circle, His priests and religious, who by coldness, indifference, carelessness, selfishness, infidelity, at or around the altar, would betray His Heart of love.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart did not begin with the private revelations of Sr. Margaret Mary. It is rooted in Sacred Scripture and Tradition beginning with the early Fathers as Pius XII outlined in *Haurietis Aquas*. It was through the revelation to Sr. Margaret Mary that the true meaning of the devotion was established and distinguished from other forms of piety by the special qualities of love.

Christ's Priests

It was Christ's infinite love that instituted the Eucharist; and at the same moment came into being the priesthood, essentially and inseparably connected to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. To His priests, chosen by Himself, Jesus confided the task of spreading abroad the Gospel in every age and place. To them He has given a participation in His power--to offer sacrifice, to preach the Word, to absolve, to console. In His priests, Christ perpetuates Himself, living through them unceasingly His life of love for all mankind. To render them capable of this awesome mission, Jesus has opened to them the treasure of His unfailing love.

It is especially to priests already consecrated to God, and called to profound holiness thereby, that the Sacred Heart wishes to manifest His love so they can communicate it to the world. Through the Sacred Heart a priest should enter into intimate knowledge and love of Jesus, giving all of his poor self to Him. That Sacred Heart is like a door leading into the very soul of Christ, towards complete conformity to Him. Priests, more than others, are called to progressive identification with Christ and so to the giving of their all in the work of spreading Christ's kingdom, as *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, as Vatican II's document on the "Life and Ministry of Priests" puts it. Indeed, the only measure of love is to love without measure.

Gift of Entire Self

True devotion to the Sacred Heart is full of human and supernatural meaning. Do not confuse it with displays of useless and sugary piety devoid of doctrine. Sacred Scripture, the Liturgy, the writings of the Fathers and the saints, the teachings of the popes, are the basis of a true piety such as St. Paul presents to us in his letter to the Ephesians (3:14-19), a program of knowledge and love, prayer and life, all beginning with devotion to the Heart of Jesus, the root and foundation of all love. Sacred Scripture means by "heart," not a fleeting sentiment of joy and tears but the personality directing the whole being, soul and body, to its good. Jesus told us, "Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also."

When devotion to the Sacred Heart is recommended, what is being recommended to us is the gift of our entire self to Jesus, soul and body, thoughts, feelings, words, actions, joys, and sorrows. Jesus came to light a fire on earth. Fire purifies, gives light, communicates, unites. Such is the blaze of divine love devotion to the Sacred Heart enkindles in our hearts. The Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament feeds the flame of our love for the Lord, burning from us the dross of self. Thus afire, we thirst for souls as He does, becoming His dedicated emissaries among the men and women of our day, so many of whom neither know Him nor love Him.

Catholic Education Resource Center: Father Richard Neilson. "The Sacred Heart and the Eucharist." *Lay Witness* (June, 1988): <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/prayer/the-sacred-heart-and-the-eucharist.html>.