

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, FIRE OF LOVE

A Pastoral Letter on the Heart of Christ

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There is a deep longing in the human heart for enduring love, and because God is love (*cf. 1 Jn 4:8*), this deep longing is really a longing for God. God alone can ultimately fulfill this longing of the human heart because He Himself created us with this innermost desire for Him, although so often we do not consciously realize its true source.

No doubt, you and I have heard this truth expressed many times. But, in point of fact, do we really allow ourselves to be caught up into the wonder and power of this reality, which is not crafted by human imagination or ingenuity but which has been inserted into our innermost being by God Himself? Knowing how difficult it is for us to understand and to accept this amazing reality – almost too good to be true – God is relentless in the many ways by which He tangibly reveals this absolute truth, especially in ways which we can more easily grasp. One very tangible and humanly understandable way is the image of the Heart of Jesus, the symbol of God's ever-faithful love.

“Behold This Heart”

A few years ago, I was privileged to accompany a group of pilgrims to various shrines of France. Among these was Paray-le-Monial, a city in the southeastern part of France and known worldwide as the site of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to a cloistered Visitation nun, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. While there, I was able to visit and to pray in the Visitation convent, where Saint Margaret Mary lived; the Basilica of the Sacred Heart; and the chapel where Saint Claude La Colombière, S.J., Saint Margaret Mary's confessor who helped her promote devotion to the Sacred Heart, is buried.

The well-known appearances of the Lord Jesus in which He revealed His Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary began on the night of December 27, 1673. In this first appearance, the Lord spoke of the immensity of His love for all people and showed her His Heart, “like a sun, ablaze with a dazzling light,” as Saint Margaret Mary was later to record it (Emile Bougard, *The Life of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque*, p. 166). In this same appearance, Jesus mourned the world's ingratitude, indifference and coldness and asked Saint Margaret Mary for a Communion of reparation on the first Friday of each month.



*Sacred Heart of Jesus
(St. James Church, Falls Church)*

In 1674, although the exact date is uncertain, Jesus again appeared to Saint Margaret Mary. Later, she wrote down what she heard and saw: “The divine Heart was represented to me as upon a throne of fire and flames. It shed rays on every side brighter than the sun and transparent as crystal. The wound which he received on the cross appeared there visibly. A crown of thorns encircled the divine Heart, and it was surmounted by a cross” (Bougard, p. 229). Once more, Jesus spoke of His burning and pure love for humanity.

The third and most famous apparition took place in June 1675. As Saint Margaret Mary knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus exposed His Sacred Heart again and spoke these words to her: “Behold this Heart which has loved mankind so much that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love.” Christ then asked that the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be set apart as a special feast day in honor of His Sacred Heart – “a day on which to receive me in Holy Communion and make a solemn act of reparation for the indignities I have received in the Blessed Sacrament while exposed on the altars of the world.” The Lord then said, “I promise you, too, that I shall open my Heart to all who honor me in this way, and who get others to do the same; they will feel in all its fullness the power of my love” (Bougard, p. 176).

By the time of Saint Margaret Mary’s death on October 17, 1690, devotion to the Sacred Heart was well established in the Visitation community and the areas surrounding Paray-le-Monial. Over the succeeding centuries, thanks also to the efforts of Saint Claude La Colombière and the Society of Jesus, devotion to the Sacred Heart spread throughout the world, culminating in the consecration of the whole human race to the Sacred Heart by Pope Leo XIII in 1899.

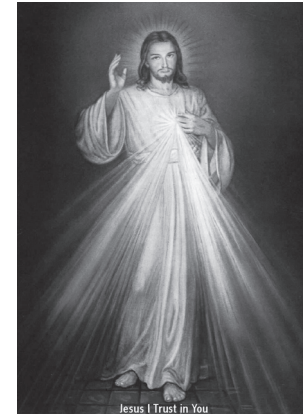
Reflecting upon the message and the meaning of the apparitions of Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary, we can see that through the symbol of His Heart, Jesus Christ desired (and still desires) to show us the depth of His divine love – a love that is faithful, a love that is redemptive, a love that is merciful; in short, a love that seeks out each one of us and calls us to a vital communion with Him. In his encyclical letter devoted to the Sacred Heart, entitled *Haurietis Aquas* (May 15, 1956), Pope Pius XII put it this way: “...Christ our Lord, exposing His Sacred Heart, wished in a quite extraordinary way to invite the minds of men to a contemplation of, and a devotion to, the mystery of God’s merciful love for the human race. In this special manifestation Christ pointed to His Heart, with definite and repeated words, as the symbol by which men should be attracted to a knowledge and recognition of His love; and at the same time He established it as a sign or pledge of mercy and grace for the needs of the Church of our times” (#97).

“There Flowed Out Blood and Water” (Jn. 19:34)

The image of the Heart of Christ as a “sign or pledge of mercy and grace” was vividly brought to the consciousness of the Church in the early part of the twentieth century. On February 22, 1931, Our Lord appeared to a young Polish nun, Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy. Saint Faustina tells us in her diary for that date: “In the evening, when I was in my cell, I became aware of the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand was raised in blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From the opening of the garment at the breast there came forth two large rays, one red and the other pale. In silence I gazed intently at the Lord; my soul was overwhelmed with fear, but also with great joy. After a while Jesus said to me, ‘Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the inscription: Jesus, I trust in You.’”

Some time later, Our Lord again spoke to her: “The pale ray stands for the Water which makes souls righteous; the red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls. These two rays issued forth from the depths of My most tender Mercy at that time when My agonizing Heart was opened by a lance on the Cross....Fortunate is the one who will dwell in their shelter, for the just hand of God shall not lay hold of him.” Not only did Saint Faustina see these rays of mercy from the area of the Heart of Jesus as depicted in the now-familiar image of the merciful Savior, but on a number of occasions she saw these same two rays emanating from the Eucharist (cf. *Diary*, 336, 344, 370, 420, 441, 657, 1046) and from His Sacred Heart (cf. *Diary*, 177, 414, 1559, 1565, 1796).

Saint Faustina died on October 5, 1938; yet, even before her death, devotion to the Divine Mercy had begun to spread. For a time, though, from 1959 until 1978, the devotion to the Divine Mercy was suppressed and Saint Faustina’s writings were placed on the Church’s *Index of Forbidden Books*. The *Index* itself was abolished in 1966, and in 1978, the suppression of the Divine Mercy devotion was lifted. From that time on, the message conveyed to Saint Faustina by the Lord Jesus has inspired countless souls to trust in Jesus and in His merciful love, symbolized once more by His pierced Heart, from which there flows out blood and water – the blood recalling the sacrifice of the Cross and the gift of the Eucharist; the water, according to the symbolism present in the Gospel of Saint John, representing not only Baptism but also the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn.* 3:5; 4:14; 7:37-39).



Jesus I Trust in You
Divine Mercy

Taken together, then, the revelations granted to Saint Margaret Mary and to Saint Faustina are a powerful reminder of how deeply and how intensely the Lord loves us. His Heart, burning with charity and overflowing with mercy, stands before us as both a sign and an invitation: a sign of the loving esteem which God has for us, and an invitation to remain in His love (*cf. Jn. 15:9*).

“But the Lord Looks on the Heart” (1 Sam. 16:7)

All of us, most likely, have heard (and maybe even used) expressions that refer to the heart: “She’s so kind-hearted”; “This comes from the heart”; “Take heart!” The image of the heart suggests something that is most intimate, most personal to an individual. Indeed, the term “heart” often stands for the whole person: thoughts, feelings, the core of one’s inner life and personality, the spiritual center of one’s entire being. The heart is the source of one’s deepest motivation, decisions, memories and desires. We use the word “heart” to signify, not just the physical organ, but a person’s disposition: the way one looks at other people, at life itself, and at everything that exists. For this reason, in the Sacred Scriptures we find the heart spoken of as the place where a person encounters God, the place in which God dwells and in which He works to bring about conversion (a “change of heart”), enlightenment and new life.

The human heart can know great happiness and thanksgiving, but it can also become hard and cold, closed off to others and to everything outside of itself. A person’s heart can be filled with a variety of conflicting emotions: love, joy, hatred, generosity, pride, anger, trust, sorrow, and so much more. Thus, the Book of Proverbs advises us, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (*Prov. 4:23*). In the Gospels, Jesus would later say, “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (*Mt. 6:21; Lk. 12:34*).

No one but God is able to look into a person’s heart, and it is in the heart that one’s relationship with God and with others is centered. If our hearts are set upon the Lord, if we are intent each day on walking in the ways of God and loving Him by keeping His commandments (*cf. Jn. 15:10*), then we will have the privilege and grace of being known as friends of Jesus Christ (*cf. Jn. 15:14*). On the other hand, if our hearts are far from the Lord, if we have allowed the love we ought to have for God and neighbor to die out in our hearts or become cold and distant, then we need to ask the Lord to change our hearts and make them like His own. According to the Scriptures, God alone can grant us the grace of conversion; God alone can write His will upon our hearts (*cf. Jer. 31:35*) and replace hardened hearts with hearts of flesh (*cf. Ezek. 36:26*). God can open our hearts to listen (*cf. Acts 16:14*) and strengthen our hearts in holiness (*cf. 1 Thess. 3:13*) through the power of His Spirit dwelling in them (*cf. 2 Cor. 1:22*).

“My Heart Is Moved with Pity” (Mt. 15:32)

If our human hearts can at times be changeable and vacillating, the heart of God – the core of His Trinitarian life and being – is always steadfast and faithful. Throughout the Scriptures, God reveals Himself as the One Whose love for His people never fails. Despite the tragedy of sin (beginning with the sin of our first parents and continuing throughout human history), God never rejects those He has chosen to be His own. This unconditional love of God for all humanity is manifested most clearly in the fact that He has sent His Son to be our Redeemer. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God’s love; He taught, healed, forgave and ultimately laid down His life in an act of loving obedience so that human beings might be set free from sin and death and receive the gift of eternal life. The infinite, divine love that filled the Heart of Jesus is poured out upon all humanity to show the universality of God’s love. It is this love that has been “poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (*Rom. 5:5*) in order that we can imitate the self-giving love of the Lord.

Throughout the Gospels, we encounter numerous examples of the compassion which Jesus, the Son of God, had for those who were sick, poor, sorrowful, hungry and thirsty, desperate and in need. In fact, Jesus identified Himself with those who were the weakest and most vulnerable in society (*cf. Mt. 25:31-46*). His divine Heart went out to all who sought the reassurance that God had not abandoned them, that He was still faithful to His covenantal love, that He would be their Good Shepherd (*cf. Jn. 10:14*) Who would lead His people to “green pastures” (*cf. Ps. 23:2*) – that is, to a place of refreshment, light and peace (*cf. Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer I [the Roman Canon]*).

One of the most striking and moving passages in the New Testament, which reveals the tender and compassionate love of God made visible in His Divine Son, comes from the Gospel of Saint Matthew: “At the sight of the crowd Jesus’ heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned” (*Mt. 9:36 a*).

The Sacred Heart of our Lord was moved with pity at the sight of the crowds that came to Him in first century Galilee. He had compassion at the sight of the burdens and wounds that the people carried. The word “troubled” in this passage from the Gospel is a translation of the original Greek word *eskulmenoí*, which is figurative language originating in a word that denotes skin lacerations or, more literally and graphically, refers to being skinned alive. This dramatic vocabulary does not indicate the physical condition of the people; rather it expresses the profound pain that afflicted them. Our Lord gazed with deep insight and love into each of their hearts as they came to Him. He saw their history of hurt, self-inflicted wounds, self-loathing, and relationships in family and life that caused

deep pain and alienation. He saw them helpless, “abandoned,” under the burden of these wounds, and this moved His Heart. Still today our Lord Jesus gazes upon each of us. He knows our every fiber and He sees our very darkest moments and wounds. Jesus sees all and looks upon us with deep loving compassion for our lacerated souls. For we too have the same interior wounds that burdened those people two thousand years ago.

Our Lord’s compassion of Heart for us is not just a sentiment, but an active loving response that heals. As often as Jesus gazes on the people with pity, He heals them (*cf. Mt. 14:2*). Healing is of the essence of redemption and salvation. Our Lord does not save us in an external way like someone would grab another person and boost them up to a higher place. He transforms interiorly. As part of this transformation, Jesus heals our wounds of failed and disordered loves with His own true intimate steadfast love. As we gaze upon His Sacred Heart, Jesus invites us to come to Him with our heavy burdens and wounds to receive rest and healing. In His wounded Heart, we experience ourselves as loved and our burdens shared. We see its wound and crown of thorns and we know that He has taken up and suffered our pain. We look upon the flames that pour from the top of His Heart with the Cross in their midst, and we recognize that He has conquered our pain and can truly heal us.

Ironically, as we noted earlier, because of our wounded hearts, we have a hard time approaching our Lord with such intimacy and confidence. We think deep down that we do not deserve it. We know what we have done and what people could think of us and we are convinced on a deep and sometimes pre-reflective level that this love for us cannot possibly be so. It is the very wounds that cry out for healing that paradoxically keep us from the One Who will heal. In response to this, we ask our Lord to break the deadening cycle of pain and inward retreat. We pray for the courage to risk abandoning and opening ourselves to Him. We approach our Lord’s Heart voicing our fears and reservations and asking Him to brush them aside so that we may be with Him and made whole. Part of the essence of the healing devotion to the Sacred Heart is believing in and accepting an intimate and amazing love that we could never earn or deserve, and living in the light and joy of that love. In this confidence we have the holy audacity to look at ourselves unflinchingly and bring all of our wounds and failures to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

It was on the Cross that the love contained in the Heart of the Savior was most fully displayed. In the midst of His sufferings, Jesus experienced what had been prophesied in the psalms: “My heart has become like wax, melting away within my breast” (*Ps. 22:15*), and, “Insult has broken my heart, and I am weak, I looked for sympathy, but there was none; for comforters, and I found none” (*Ps. 69:21*).

Do not these words – ancient in Israel’s history – recall for us the lament Jesus expressed to Saint Margaret Mary: that so many have grown indifferent to Jesus’ burning love for us?

In His Heart, Jesus always did the will of His Father (*cf. Jn. 6:38; Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 4:34*), and because of this loving obedience, the Father heard His cry from the Cross and raised Him from the dead (*cf. Heb. 5:7*). At the moment of His death (which was simultaneously the moment of His glory), the soldier’s lance pierced the Heart of the Lord, releasing the saving water and the redeeming blood that sprang from His deepest core. This was to be an everlasting sign, as Jesus revealed to Saint Faustina, that life-giving graces would pour out into the hearts of all who put their trust in Him. Do we not see, once again, in this sign, the constant and infinite love of Christ, expressed as His mercy for us and for all who are in need of it?

“The Lord Set His Heart on You” (Dt. 7:7)

The revelations of Christ’s Heart which He granted to Saint Margaret Mary and to Saint Faustina assure us of this great Scriptural truth: the Lord has indeed set His Heart on us (*cf. Dt. 7:7*), that is, He has chosen and called us to be His own, He has given us a share in His love and life, He has shown us His mercy time and time again. The Heart of the Lord, then, is a powerful image that expresses His love for us and invites our love for Him in return. By opening His Heart to us, Christ has revealed that divine love and mercy are, if we can put it this way, God’s first and last word to the world.

During His earthly life and mission, Jesus told His disciples, “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (*Mt. 11:29*). From Our Lord’s day down to our own, His followers have sought to imitate His virtues by remaining close to His Heart. We learn from Christ Jesus when we cultivate and put into practice such simple and unspectacular virtues like patience, kindness, gentleness, simplicity, humility, purity, gratitude and the like. We learn from Christ Jesus when we desire and work for justice and peace in our world, when we strive to promote and defend the dignity of every human person throughout all the stages of the life spectrum – from conception until natural death. We form our hearts to be like the Heart of Christ when we pray (both privately and publicly in the Church’s liturgy, particularly at Sunday Mass), when we receive His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance and then extend that forgiveness to others, and when we fulfill faithfully the responsibilities of our state in life. Truly, the Lord has set His Heart upon us, but He also wants us to set our hearts upon Him. As Saint Francis de Sales once beautifully wrote:

Belong totally to God. Think of him and he will think of you. He has drawn you to himself so that you may be his; he will take care of you. Do not be afraid...and let your weary, listless heart rest against the sacred, loving breast of this Savior who, by his providence is a father to his children, and by his gentle, tender love is a mother to them (*Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales*, 26: 350).

“Heart Speaks unto Heart”

In his homily for the beatification of John Henry Cardinal Newman, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI referred to Newman’s motto, *Cor ad cor loquitur* (“Heart speaks unto heart”), as providing “an insight into his understanding of the Christian life as a call to holiness, experienced as the profound desire of the human heart to enter into intimate communion with the Heart of God” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Mass of Beatification of Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman*, September 19, 2010). Blessed John Henry Newman’s motto expresses, with different words, the truth Saint Augustine set forth in his *Confessions*: “...you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 1, 1: PL 32, 659-661).

As we observed earlier, from the very beginning of our human existence, God does not cease to speak to our hearts, He does not cease drawing us to Himself. The Heart of Christ continues to beat with love for every one of us, and every one of us, in turn, seeks communion with His Heart. Whether we acknowledge it or not, nothing less than, nothing other than, God Himself will ever truly satisfy the longings of our hearts!

We must admit, though, that we can become distracted from seeking that “intimate communion with the Heart of God” of which Pope Benedict spoke. Human weakness, sin, illness, failure, pain – all these can turn our hearts inward and cause us to rely more on ourselves rather than upon the strength, grace, mercy and enduring love that comes from the Heart of Christ. At such times, I find it consoling to remember that whenever Jesus appeared after His resurrection – whether it was to His Apostles or to other chosen souls in the history of the Church – the risen Lord always bears with Him the wounds which He suffered during His Passion. Though Christ is raised and lives now in glory, He still retains His wounds. God does not take away suffering, pain or failure from our lives, but He does invite us to unite our hearts with His own. In that union, our sufferings can become redemptive, our failures can help us to grow and to offer help to others who struggle. Our pain can give us deeper compassion so that we can strive to heal rather than to wound.

When we unite our hearts to the Heart of Christ, we will know that our suffering is never wasted, that our pain is never meaningless, that our hurts can be transformed. The Heart of Christ bears the marks of the Passion in order that we might know that Jesus is not indifferent to our sufferings; instead, because His Heart and His Body keep the wounds of the Passion, we know that Christ Jesus lives in solidarity with us, He knows our human condition, and He becomes, for each of us, the source of hope that ultimately our lives will be transformed – so long as we open our hearts to His.

“That Christ May Dwell in Your Hearts” (Eph. 3:17)

Writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Saint Paul prayed that “Christ may dwell in your hearts” and in this way that they might come “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17, 19). Saint Paul’s desire for his readers was that they would recognize and respond to the profound depths of God’s love for them by uniting their hearts with that of Christ.

What Saint Paul sought for the Ephesians remains true for us today. The more we enter into the Heart of Christ, the more we discover the richness of His merciful love and the more His divine life fills our own. We might ask, though, how can we allow Christ to dwell in our hearts? How can we be devoted to the Heart of Christ in order to receive grace, mercy and life from Him? There are many answers that could be offered, but I would like to suggest a few practical ways by which to honor the Heart of Christ, both personally and communally.

First, we can offer our prayers, works, joys and sufferings of each day to the Heart of the Lord. Perhaps the best time to do so is in the morning, before our day begins, and then we can renew this offering during the course of the day with a short prayer, such as, “Heart of Jesus, help me to love you more and more” or, “Heart of Jesus, draw me closer to you.”

Second, we can honor the Heart of Christ by our attendance at daily Mass or at least whenever possible during the week. In the Mass, we recognize the Eucharist as the great gift of Jesus’ Heart, which He has left us as the sacrament of His Real Presence and the memorial of His redemptive sacrifice. We can also make visits to the Blessed Sacrament outside of the Mass in order to deepen our appreciation for Christ’s loving gift. We should try to make a special effort to participate in the Mass on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart (the first Friday after the Second Sunday after Pentecost).

Third, we can make a formal act of consecration to the Heart of Jesus. I intend to consecrate the whole diocese to the Heart of Christ on this year's Solemnity of Christ the King (November 20, 2011) at our Cathedral; I will be inviting each parish to join me in this act of consecration on the same day. Such an act of consecration is a communal acknowledgement that just as the Lord Jesus came to us and gave Himself for the salvation of each person, so we give ourselves back to Him, asking Him to rule in our hearts every day.

In addition to the consecration of the diocese, I invite families to make a family act of consecration, together with an enthronement of the Sacred Heart – that is, the placement of an image of the Sacred Heart in a prominent place in the home – as a reminder that Christ should be the center of the family, the domestic church. In addition, the Lord promised that where the image of His Heart is honored, He would bring peace to the home, unite families, bless them with all the graces necessary for their state in life and be a secure refuge in life and death.

Families might also choose to place an image of the Divine Mercy (the depiction of Himself that Jesus revealed to Saint Faustina) in their homes as a visible reminder of the merciful love of the Lord that flows from His Heart. Jesus also made a promise to Saint Faustina connected with this image: “I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over its enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. I myself will defend it as My own glory” (*Diary*, 48).

Still another way to honor the Heart of Christ is to cultivate a spirit of reparation through prayer and good works. Reparation is an act whereby we seek to make amends, to make up for our own sins and the sins of others. Directed to the Heart of Christ, reparation involves an offering of love we make to the Lord for offenses committed against Him. For example, praying for others, practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, accepting some unpleasant task, bearing our daily crosses with patience, going out of our way to say something kind and encouraging to someone we seldom bother to speak to – all of these can be acts of reparation if we offer them in love to the Heart of Jesus. We repent for how we have hurt others or excluded them from our love. We repent our greed, anger, desire for retaliation, dishonesty, indifference, and so on. We make amends for these lapses from grace, we ask forgiveness and resolve to change our way of living so that it aligns more perfectly with the Heart of Jesus. A particularly effective form of reparation is to attend Mass on the First Friday of each month for nine consecutive months and make a Communion of reparation, as Jesus requested of Saint Margaret Mary, in order to thank the Lord for the loving sacrifice of His life and render Him worship and praise in place of those who do not acknowledge what Christ Jesus has done for us. Praying the chaplet of Divine Mercy or contemplating the

Passion of the Lord at three o'clock in the afternoon, as Jesus revealed to Saint Faustina, can also be acts of reparation whereby we implore the Lord's mercy for others, as well as for ourselves.

All of these spiritual practices are, of course, only suggestions. Yet they are firmly rooted in Sacred Scripture and in the Tradition of the Church, and they have been recommended down through the centuries by Popes, saints and spiritual writers. Whatever we may do to express our devotion to the Heart of Christ will aid, nourish and sustain our growth in holiness, which is the fundamental vocation of every Christian (cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]*, nos. 11, 40).

Conclusion: “Heart of Jesus, our hope, our life and our salvation”

“In the Heart of Jesus, the center of Christianity is set before us. It expresses everything, all that is genuinely new and revolutionary in the New Covenant. This Heart calls to our heart. It invites us to step forth out of the futile attempt of self-preservation and, by joining in the task of love, by handing ourselves over to him and with him, to discover the fullness of love which alone is eternity and which alone sustains the world” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 1986, p. 69).

It is no wonder that we know the Heart of the Lord to be a fountain of life, a fire of love, strength against evil, an ocean of mercy. Yet there is a reality that is even more wonderful: in the depth of His Heart, God treasures us. He Who created us, Who redeemed us, and Who sanctifies us has opened His Heart so that from it we may “draw water in joy from the springs of salvation” (*Roman Missal*, Preface of the Sacred Heart). As Saint Francis de Sales once proclaimed:

We cannot imagine what it will mean to us, how we shall feel, as we gaze through the wound in His pierced side at the vision of our Master's Heart – the Heart that calls for love and adoration; the Heart on fire with love for us; the Heart in which we shall read our names – inscribed, all of them in letters of love...There it is, the ultimate consolation: our Lord loves us so dearly, we have an indelible place in His Heart... (Saint Francis de Sales, *Sermon on the Second Sunday in Lent*, February 20, 1622).

Yes, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we have an indelible place in the Heart of Christ! Let us pray that through our devotion to His Heart, we will respond to the love of Jesus Christ and share that love with all whom we meet.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto yours! Amen. (Arlington, Virginia, October 2011)

APPENDIX

Morning Offering

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer You my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of Your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

An Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart (by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque)

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Thee I consecrate and offer up my person and my life, my actions, trials, and sufferings, that my entire being may henceforth only be employed in loving, honoring and glorifying Thee. This is my irrevocable will, to belong entirely to Thee, and to do all for Thy love, renouncing with my whole heart all that can displease Thee. I take Thee, O Sacred Heart, for the sole object of my love, the protection of my life, the pledge of my salvation, the remedy of my frailty and inconstancy, the reparation for all the defects of my life, and my secure refuge at the hour of my death. Be Thou, O Most Merciful Heart, my justification before God Thy Father, and screen me from His anger which I have so justly merited. I fear all from my own weakness and malice, but placing my entire confidence in Thee, O Heart of Love, I hope all from Thine infinite Goodness. Annihilate in me all that can displease or resist Thee. Imprint Thy pure love so deeply in my heart that I may never forget Thee or be separated from Thee. I beseech Thee, through Thine infinite Goodness, grant that my name be engraved upon Thy Heart, for in this I place all my happiness and all my glory, to live and die as one of Thy devoted servants. Amen.

An Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart for Parishes

Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, we consecrate to you our persons and our lives. We give you our actions, our desires, our troubles, our joys and our sufferings. We give you our families, our friends, and our parish community. In the future we wish to live only to honor and love you and bring you glory. It will always be our heart's desire to love you more and more, and to make you known, loved and served by others. We know this, O Sacred Heart of Jesus! You are the faithful friend, the heart's intimate friend. You

never abandon us. We trust ourselves to you! Above all give us charity. Bind our hearts together in the faith community of [*Parish Name*]. May our names one day be written forever in the Book of the Living with the just who reign with you in the life of everlasting happiness. Amen.

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart – make our hearts like unto yours.

Litany of the Sacred Heart

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the World, have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the word of God, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, glowing furnace of charity, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, vessel of justice and love, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love, have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, King and center of all hearts, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in Whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, in Whom the Father is well pleased, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, of Whose fullness we have all received, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, patient and rich in mercy, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, rich unto all who call upon Thee, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, fount of life and holiness, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our offenses, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, overwhelmed with reproaches, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, crushed for our iniquities, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, obedient even unto death, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who hope in Thee, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in Thee, have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus, delight of all the Saints, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord,



*St. Margaret Mary Alacoque
Adoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus
(St. John the Baptist Church, Front Royal)*

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

V. Jesus, meek and humble of Heart.

R. Make our hearts like unto Thine.

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, look upon the Heart of Thy well-beloved Son and upon the praise and satisfaction which He offers unto Thee in the name of sinners; and do Thou, in Thy great goodness, grant pardon to them who seek Thy mercy, in the name of the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee, world without end. Amen.

Prayer Taken from the Spiritual Notes of Saint Claude La Colombière (London, 1678)

My Jesus, let me live in Thy Heart and pour all my bitterness into it where it will be utterly consumed. Sheltered in Thy Heart I shall not fear impatience. There I will practice silence, resignation to Thy will, and constancy. I will thank Thee daily for my crosses and ask Thy pardon for those who offend me. I will try to acquire patience. I know it is not the work of a day, but it is enough for me to be sure that it can be attained by effort. O my sweet Jesus, do Thou pray for me as Thou didst pray for Thy enemies; do not refuse me this for I long to love Thee and even to love my cross and my enemies for love of Thee. Amen.





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