

Devotion to the Sacred Heart

Meditation

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, as we know it, began about the year 1672. On repeated occasions, Jesus appeared to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun, in France, and during these apparitions He explained to her the devotion to His Sacred Heart as He wanted people to practice it. He asked to be honoured in the symbol of His Heart of flesh; he asked for acts of reparation, for frequent Communion, Communion on the First Friday of the month, and the keeping of the Holy Hour.

When the Catholic Church approved the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, she did not base her action only on the visions of Saint Margaret Mary. The Church approved the devotion on its own merits. There is only one Person in Jesus, and that Person was at the same time God and Man. His Heart, too, is Divine - it is the Heart of God.

There are two things that must always be found together in the devotion to the Sacred Heart: Christ's Heart of flesh and Christ's love for us. True devotion to the Sacred Heart means devotion to the Divine Heart of Christ insofar as His Heart represents and recalls His love for us.

In honouring the Heart of Christ, our homage lingers on the Person of Jesus in the fullness of His love. This love of Christ for us was the moving force of all he did and suffered for us: in Nazareth, on the Cross, in giving Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, in His teaching and healing, in His praying and working. When we speak of the Sacred Heart, we mean Jesus showing us His Heart, Jesus all love for us and all lovable.

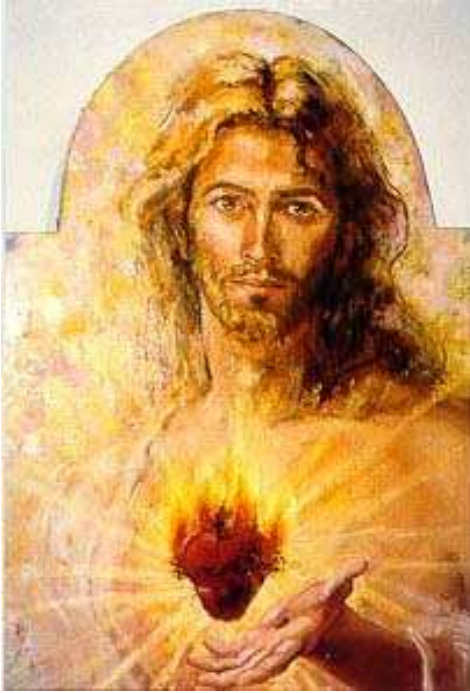
Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's infinite love. The human nature which the Son of God took upon Himself was filled with love and kindness that has never found an equal. He is the perfect model of love of God and neighbour.

Every day of His life was filled with repeated proofs of "Christ's love that surpasses all knowledge" (Eph 3:19). Jesus handed down for all time the fundamental feature of His character: "Take My yoke upon your shoulders and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of Heart" (Mt 11:29). He invited all, refusing none, surprising friends and rivals by His unconditional generosity.

The meaning of love in the life of Jesus was especially evident in His sufferings. Out of love for His Father He willed to undergo the death of the Cross. "The world must know that I love the Father and do just as the Father has commanded Me" (John 14:31).

The love that Jesus bore toward us also urged Him to undergo the death of the Cross. At the Last Supper, He said, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13)

The Heart of Jesus never ceases to love us in heaven. He sanctifies us through the Sacraments. These are inexhaustible fountains of grace and holiness which have their source in the boundless ocean of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



THE 12 PROMISES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS TO SAINT MARGARET MARY

Our Lord Jesus Christ made these twelve promises to those who honour His Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French nun, whom he called “the Beloved Disciple of the Sacred Heart” and the Heiress “of all Its treasures”, in the 1670’s. They show us how much he cherishes this devotion.

Considering that the blood that redeemed us at Calvary came from His Sacred Heart and that so much love and light still exude from it, we can easily understand why! These promises were revealed in one of many private revelations that Jesus gave St. Margaret Mary. Our Lord promised the following:

- 1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state in life.**
- 2. I will establish peace in their families.**
- 3. I will comfort them in their trials.**
- 4. I will be their secure refuge during life, and, above all, in death.**
- 5. I will shed abundant blessings on all their undertakings.**
- 6. Sinners will find in My Heart an infinite ocean of mercy.**
- 7. Lukewarm souls will become fervent.**
- 8. Fervent souls will rapidly grow in holiness and perfection.**
- 9. I will bless every place where an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured.**
- 10. I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.**
- 11. The names of those who promote this devotion will be written in My Heart, never to be blotted out.**
- 12. I promise thee, in the excessive mercy of My Heart, that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Friday of nine consecutive months, the grace of final penitence; they shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving their Sacraments; My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.**

As with all of God’s graces, these promises are contingent on our obeying His Will for us through prayer, the sacraments, reading and studying about our faith, and listening to His Holy Spirit. This is not as difficult as it may sound, however. What it involves, after all, is trying our best to live a good life pleasing to God, in obedience to Him, and sharing His love with others!

Think also of those parables in the Gospels in which Jesus spoke approvingly of the good and faithful servants who served their master diligently and thus were rewarded when he returned (Matt 24:45-47 and 25:14-30).

The ninth promise, incidentally can help with the seventh and eighth. Just as looking at a crucifix can remind you of the immense depth of God's love for us, so can looking at an image of our Lord and His Sacred Heart such as the one above further personalize that love for *each of us*, and for *you* in particular.

Seeing His Sacred Heart ablaze with love and light can be a source of great consolation after a hard day or during a trying time in this often loveless world! And remember, His love is not just for us sinners or for fallen humanity in the abstract, but for *you as well!*

These promises, like this devotion, remind us that God's love for us is such that he doesn't want to lose *any* of us. The Good Shepherd will search after His lost sheep, but, we must *want* to be found.

As St. Augustine, the 5th Century bishop of Hippo, one of our greatest theologians and a Doctor of the Church once said about God "He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent."



Take 15 minutes alone. Take a few minutes to ponder each of these points while reflecting on either, or both, of the images contained in these papers:

- Do I truly appreciate God's love for me and for my family? Could I make this appreciation more obvious in how I live my life?
- When there is a lack of 'peace' in my life, do I turn to the Lord for help first, or do I only seek his help when all else fails? How can I change this and move Jesus 'up' the list of "important people in my life"?
- Do I value the Lord's mercy in my life, and I am as merciful to others as the Lord is to me? Why is it that I am sometimes more harsh about how others live their lives than I am about how I live my life? What do I need to change?
- Finally, look more closely at the eyes of the Lord in the images. Do you feel the love that the Sacred Heart of Jesus has for you? Spend a moment truly feeling that love.

Take a moment to say quietly this Prayer of Trust.

Jesus, I believe in your personal love for one so sinful and weak as I am.
I believe that your love for me is for all eternity and that it is as tender as a mother's love.
I believe that you have lovingly and wisely planned everything that shall ever happen to me.
I will never that which is forbidden by you and will never lose heart in my efforts to be good.
I will accept the crosses of life as I accept its joys, with a grateful heart,
and I will always pray, "Your will be done in all things."
I will not be worried or anxious about anything, for I know you will take care of me.
However weak or sinful I may be, I will never doubt your mercy.
In all my temptations, in all my weakness, in all my sorrows,
in every discouragement, in all my undertakings, in life and in death, I trust you.
Heart of love, I put all my trust in you; for I fear all things from my own weakness,
but I hope for all things from your goodness.

Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

V. Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Spirit,
Holy Trinity, one God,

Have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,
Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mother's womb,
Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God.

Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty.

Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God.

Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High.

Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven.

Heart of Jesus, glowing furnace of charity.

Heart of Jesus, vessel of justice and love.

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love.

Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues.

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise.

Heart of Jesus, King and centre of all hearts.

Heart of Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.

Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father was well pleased.

Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received.

Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills.

Heart of Jesus, patient and rich in mercy.

Heart of Jesus, rich to all who call upon You.

Heart of Jesus, fount of life and holiness.

Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our offenses.

Heart of Jesus, overwhelmed with reproaches.

Heart of Jesus, bruised for our iniquities.

Heart of Jesus, obedient even unto death.

Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance.

Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation.

Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection.

Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation.

Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins.

Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who hope in You.

Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in You.

Heart of Jesus, delight of all saints.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,
Jesus, meek and humble of Heart,

Spare us, O Lord
Graciously hear us, O Lord
Have mercy on us
Make our hearts like yours

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, look upon the heart of your most beloved Son and upon the praises and satisfaction which he offers you in the name of sinners; and to those who implore your mercy, in your great goodness, grant forgiveness in the name of the same Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you forever and ever. Amen.

