



Ordo Praedicatorum
Dominican Fraternities
St. Martin de Porres Fraternity – Natick, MA

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

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24 July, 2011

On second Thursday after Corpus Christi we celebrate feast of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. This feast was established in order that the faithful might honor with more devotion and zeal, under the symbol of the Sacred Heart, the love of Jesus Christ which induced Him not only to suffer and die for the redemption of mankind, but also to institute the Sacrament of His Body and Blood in commemoration of His death.

The names of those who achieved special distinction in establishing and promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus are: St. Bonaventure, St. Albert the Great, St. Gertrude, St. Catherine of Siena, Blessed Henry Suso, St. Peter Canisius, St. Francis de Sales and St. John Eudes – author of the first liturgical office to be celebrated in honor of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Popes: Innocent XII, Benedict XIII, Clement XIII, Pius XII, wrote in their Encyclical Letters of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ; however it was Pope Leo XIII who by decree given on June 28, 1889 established the first class feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Revelations

Though the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a great antiquity in the Church, yet it was reserved to the Margaret Mary Alacouque, of the Order of Visitation, to make this devotion public. Inflamed with great zeal and with the aid of her spiritual director, Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, she succeeded in her efforts, to the great wonder of the faithful, to have this devotion, reach in spiritual blessings, established and clearly distinguished from other forms of Christian piety by the special nature of this acts of love and reparation. Consequently, as is obvious, the revelations made to Saint Margaret Mary added nothing new to the Catholic doctrine. The significance of these revelations lies in this, that Christ the Lord – showing His Sacred Heart – willed in an extraordinary and special way to call the minds of men to the contemplation and veneration of the mystery of God's most merciful love for the human race. And so in special manifestation, in repeated and clear words, Christ pointed to His heart as the

symbol by which men are drawn to recognize and acknowledge His love, and at the same time constituted it as the sign and pledge of His mercy and His grace for the needs of the Church in our time.

St. Margaret Mary received three revelations from our Lord, Jesus Christ. The first revelation took place on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27, 1673. She wrote in her autobiography: "... Once, being before the Blessed Sacrament and having a little more leisure than usual, I felt wholly filled with this Divine Presence, and so powerfully moved by it that I forgot myself and the place in which I was. I abandoned myself to this Divine Spirit, and yielded my heart to the power of His Love. He made me rest for a long time on His divine breast, where He discovered to me the wonders of His love and the inexplicable secrets of His sacred Heart. Jesus had then spoken; and "This" adds Margaret Mary, "as it seems to me, is what passed: The Lord said to me: **'My Divine Heart is so passionately in love with men that it can no longer contain within itself the flames of its ardent charity. It must pour them out by thy means, and manifest itself to them to enrich them with its precious treasures, which contain all the graces of which they have need to be saved from perdition. I have chosen thee as an abyss of unworthiness and ignorance to accomplish so great a design, so that all may be done by Me.'**"

Thus according to the conditions of this first revelation, the new devotion was going to be the grand effort of the Heart of Jesus, "passionately in love with men", and wishing at any cost to draw them from abyss of perdition.

Before disappearing our Lord asked Margaret Mary if she desired to give Him her heart. She wrote in her memoir: "...He demanded my heart, and I supplicated Him to take it. He did so, and put it into His Adorable Heart, in which He allowed me to see it as a little atom being consumed in that fiery furnace. Then, drawing it out like a burning flame in a form of the heart, He put it into the place whence He had taken it, saying: 'Behold, My beloved, a precious proof of My love. I enclose in thy heart a little spark of the most ardent flame of My love, to serve thee as a heart and to consume thee till thy last moment'. He added: 'Until now thou hast taken only the name of My slave; henceforth thou shalt be called the well-beloved disciple of My Sacred Heart'". For several days St. Margaret Mary was holly inflamed. "I was so out of myself" she wrote in her memoir, "that it was only by doing violence to myself I could utter a word. I was obliged to make so great an effort to eat and recreate that my strength was exhausted in my endeavor to endure my suffering."

The second revelation took place in 1674; the exact date is not known. It was more penetrating, more luminous than the first, it made a still deeper impression on St. Margaret Mary's soul. She fell ill from the violent emotion it caused; so ill that all thought she must die. Let us hear her own words: "...Once when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, my soul being absorbed in extraordinary recollection, Jesus Christ, my sweet Master, presented Himself to me. He was brilliant with glory; His five wounds shone like five suns. Flames darted forth from all parts of His sacred humanity, but especially from His adorable breast, which resembled a furnace, and which, opening, displayed to me His loving and amiable Heart, the living source of these flames." When Margaret was contemplating Jesus, "...He unfolded to me", she said, "the inexplicable wonders of His pure love, and to what an excess He had carried it for the love of

men, from whom He had received only ingratitude. **‘This is’,** He said, **‘much more painful to Me than all I suffered in My Passion. If men rendered Me some return of love, I should esteem little all I have done for them, and should wish, if such could be, to suffer it over again; but they meet My eager love with coldness and rebuffs. Do you at least,’** said He in conclusion, **‘console and rejoice Me, by supplying as much as you can for their ingratitude.’”**

After having shown in the first revelation the true principle of the new devotion, namely, a love whose flames He could no longer confine in His Heart, Jesus now revealed its character. This devotion would be expiation for all the crimes of the world, a consolation for His forsaken Heart. Margaret excused herself on the plea of incapacity. **“Fear not”** said Jesus; **“behold, here is wherewith to furnish all that is wanting to thee”**. **“And at that moment”** St. Margaret said, **“the Divine Heart being opened, there shot forth a flame so ardent that I thought I should be consumed by it.”** Thoroughly penetrated with this burning flame, and unable longer to endure the fire, Margaret implored our Savior to have pity on her weakness. **“Fear nothing,”** said He to her; **“I shall be thy strength. Listen only to what I desire of thee to prepare thee for the accomplishment of My designs.”** Then the Lord asked two things of her: the first – to communicate every first Friday of each month...the second, to rise between eleven o’clock and midnight on the night between Thursday and Friday of every week, and prostrate for an hour with her face to the ground, in expiation of the sins of men, and to console His Heart for that general desertion, to which weakness of the apostles in the Garden of Olives had been only a slight prelude.

It was on June 16th, 1675, that the last of the grand revelations relative to the Sacred Heart of Jesus took place. During the octave of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, Margaret Mary was on her knees before the choir-grate, her eyes fixed on the tabernacle. She had just received “some of the unmeasured graces of His love.” The Jesus Christ appeared on the altar and discovered to her His Heart. **“Behold”**, said Lord to her, **“this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love. 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. And what is most painful to Me,”** added the Saviour, in a tone that went to the sister’s heart, **“is that they are hearts consecrated to Me.”** Then He commanded her to have established in the Church a particular feast to honor His Sacred Heart. **“It is for this reason I ask thee that the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament be appropriated to a special feast, to honor My Heart by communicating on that day, and making reparation for the indignity that it has received. And I promise that My Heart shall dilate to pour out abundantly the influences of its love on all that will render it this honor or procure its being rendered.”** This was the last revelation, and the most celebrated of all.

Importance of devotion to the Sacred Heart

“Consequently, as is obvious, the revelations made to Saint Margaret Mary added nothing new to the Catholic doctrine”, Pope Pius XII said. The significance of these revelations lies in

this, that Christ the Lord – showing His Sacred Heart – willed in an extraordinary and special way to call the minds of men to the contemplation and veneration of the mystery of God’s most merciful love for human race. “...We understand that the heart of Jesus is the heart of a divine Person, that is, of Incarnate Word, and that by it all the love with which He loved, and even now continues to love us, is represented and, so to speak, placed before our very eyes”, Pope Pius XII said.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is so important that it may be considered, so far as practice is concerned, a perfect profession of the Christian religion. For this is the religion of Jesus, which rests entirely on a Mediator, who is man of God, so that no one can come to the heart of God except through heart of Christ, as He Himself says: “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.**” (Jn. 14:6)

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is essentially devotion to the love with which God loved us through Jesus and is at the same time an enlivening of our love for God and man. Or saying other way – this devotion is directed to God’s love for us in order to adore Him, to thank Him and to spend our lives imitating Him. Pope Pius XII in His *Haurietis Aquas* ask following questions:

In the face of so many evils which today more than ever deeply disturb individuals, homes, nations and the whole world, where is the remedy to be sought?

Is there devotion more excellent than that to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one which is more in accord with the real nature of the Catholic faith or which better meets the needs of the Church and the human race today? What act of religion is nobler, more suitable, sweeter and more conducive to salvation, since this devotion is wholly directed to the love of God Himself? And what can bring the faithful to live the law of the Gospel more effectively than the love of Christ, which devotion to the Sacred Heart daily increases and fosters?

If this law is rejected, is it possible to have genuine peace among men? As words of the Holy Spirit clearly teach, “The work of justice shall be peace.” (Is. 32:17)

Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us.

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