

**Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's  
The Church's Year**

**INSTRUCTION ON THE FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**



**ORIGIN OF THIS FESTIVAL**

After many devout souls had venerated the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with sincere devotion, in the solitude of quiet life, as is seen in the lives of SS..Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventura, Thomas of Aquin, Francis de Sales, Ignatius, Clara, Gertrude, Mechtild, Catharine of Sienna, Theresa, and others, our divine Saviour willed that His heart's infinite love should be recognized by all men, and be kindled in cold hearts by a new fire of love. For this end He made use of a feeble, obscure instrument, that all the world might know that the devotion to His loving heart; previously almost entirely unknown, was His own work. This instrument, disregarded by the world, was one who shone before God in all 'the radiance of the most sublime virtues; the nun Margaret Alacoque of the order of the Visitation of Mary, at Paray, in Burgundy. In the year 1675, whilst she was one day in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; our Lord appeared to her, and pointing to His heart which He showed to her, surrounded with flames, surmounted by the cross, encircled with a crown of thorns, and pierced with a gaping wound, He said to her: "Behold this heart, which has loved mankind so much, and which receives only ingratitude and coldness in return for its love. My desire is that you should make reparation to my heart for this ingratitude, and induce others also to make reparation." Our Lord then designated the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi as the special day for this duty. In several subsequent apparitions our divine Lord repeated this injunction, and made the most unbounded promises in favor' of all who would apply themselves to this office of reparation to His Sacred Heart. The following are some of His promises;

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will establish peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their pains and trials.

4. I will be their assured refuge in life, and especially in death.
5. I will shed abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my Heart an infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Lukewarm souls will be rendered fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall rise rapidly to greater perfection.
9. I will bless those houses where the image of my heart shall be exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of moving the hardest hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion, shall have their names inscribed on my heart, never to be effaced from it.

Margaret obeyed, but found everywhere the greatest opposition, actual sneers and persecution, even from her Sisters in religion, until finally, with the aid of her divine spouse, she succeeded as mistress of novices, in bringing her young charges to the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But this did not content her zeal; although opposition continued, she strove to fulfil the command of Jesus, who assisted her by at last changing the hardened hearts of the nuns and inflaming them with the same love of His Sacred Heart. This devotion soon spread from the convent throughout the adjoining dioceses, where confraternities in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus arose, and Pope Clement, XIII., after causing the strictest investigation to be made, commanded the Festival of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be observed throughout the Catholic Church on the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi.

## **ON DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

### **I. OBJECT OF THIS DEVOTION**

By the Sacred Heart of Jesus must be understood not the lifeless heart, separated from the body of Christ, but the tender, loving heart of the God-Man, the home of all His emotions, the fountain of all His virtues, and the most touching embodiment of His infinite love for man. The Catholic Church, in like manner, sets apart certain festivals with appropriate Mass and office, in honor of the cross, of our Lord's sacred blood and wounds that our devotion to the Redeemer may be rendered more fervent by the contemplation of these objects, for Jesus has shed His blood for us, has received wounds for us which He retained even after His resurrection, as eternal signs of His immense love for man, has taken them with Him to heaven, and will show them to us on the judgment Day. How much more should our Saviour's Sacred Heart be the object of our devotion, since all the thoughts, sentiments, and emotions of this most loving heart aim only at our salvation, and since it is always ready to receive truly penitent sinners to forgive them, again to turn His love to them, and make them sharers in eternal bliss.

Therefore the saints have from the first encouraged a tender devotion to this most Sacred Heart, as already mentioned. "Longinus," says St. Augustine, "opened the side of Jesus with His spear; in it I enter, and securely rest." "O how good," exclaims St. Bernard, "how lovely to take up my abode in this Heart! In this temple, in this sanctuary, before this ark of the covenant, I will adore and praise the name of the Lord, and say with the prophet: I have found in the heart of Jesus, my king, my brother, my friend." "Believe me, O blinded men," says St. Bonaventura, "if you knew how to enter by His sacred wounds into the interior of Jesus, you would there find not, only a wonderful sweetness for your soul, but even sweet repose for your body. And if even the body there finds rest, how great, think you, must be the sweetness which the spirit there enjoys, if through these wounds we become united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!" And St. Peter Damian says: "In this adorable heart we find the weapons with which to defend ourselves against our enemies, a cure for our ills, powerful help against temptations, the sweetest consolation is suffering, and the purest joy in this valley of tears."

St. Mechtild and St. Gertrude found themselves transported in an especial manner by the tenderness of this adorable heart, to adore it fervently, and Gertrude, enlightened by the Spirit of God, spoke these prophetic words: "The Lord retained until these late centuries the devotion to His Sacred Heart, as a last effort of His divine love." We have already seen how these words have been verified in the pious Margaret. O would that Jesus' great desire that all men, might know and love His Sacred Heart be accomplished!

## **II. EXCELLENCE OF THIS DEVOTION**

It is, says the venerable P. Simon Gourdan:

1. The most sacred devotion, for by it man venerates the holiest sentiments and emotions of the Heart of Jesus, by which He has sanctified the Church, glorified His Heavenly Father, and presented Himself to us as the perfect model of the most exalted sanctity.
2. The oldest devotion of the holy Church, which, instructed by the great St. Paul, has at all times recognized the munificence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
3. The most approved devotion, for the holy Scriptures everywhere exhort us to renew our heart by changing our lives, rendering them contrite by true penance, inflaming them with the fire of divine love, and adorning them by the exercise of all virtue. Therefore a new heart is promised on which to remodel our Heart. That Heart can be no other than the Heart of Jesus, which is given us as an example of all virtue, and which we must imitate if we wish to be saved.
4. The most perfect devotion, for it is the: source of all other devotions; the Heart of Jesus is that inexhaustible treasury from which the Mother of God and all the saints have drawn their graces, their life, their virtues, and all spiritual blessings. Filled from this treasury, other servants of God have instituted different devotions.

5. The most useful devotion, for in it we have the Fountain of Life itself before our eyes, from which we can draw directly, and increase in all virtue by adoring this divine Heart, meditating on its holy desires, and seeking to imitate it.
6. The devotion most pleasing to Christ, for by it we honor God, as Christ requires, in spirit and in truth, because we adore the interior power of God, seeking to please His heart.
7. Finally; the most necessary devotion, for its object is that we become intimately connected as members with Jesus, our Head, that we live by and according to His spirit, and have only one heart and soul with Christ.

Because this devotion is of such importance, we cannot sufficiently recommend it to all who are anxious for their soul's salvation. Every person may cherish this devotion, and venerate the Heart of Jesus by himself, but there is a greater blessing when pious souls make the devotion in a confraternity. In the year 1726 there existed more than three hundred such confraternities, and they are now spread throughout all Catholic countries. Do not delay then, O Christian soul, to practise this devotion, uniting with others . to honor the divine Heart of Jesus, because in this most Blessed Heart all men find their reconciliation, the pious their assurance, sinners their hope, the oppressed their comfort, the sick their relief, those who are fighting their strength, the dying their refuge and the elect their joy and bliss.

The Introit of this day's Mass reads: He will have mercy according to the multitude of his mercies: for he hath not willingly afflicted nor cast off the children of men: the Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him. Allel. allel. (Lament III. 32: 33. 25.) The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever: to generation and generation. (Ps. LXXXVIII, 1.). Glory &c.

*COLLECT* Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who, glorying in the most Sacred Heart of Thy beloved Son, celebrate the singular benefits of His love toward us, may rejoice equally in their operation and their fruit. Through the same &c.

*LESSON* (Isai. XII. 1?6.) I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, for thou wast angry with me; thy wrath is turned away, and, thou hast comforted me. Behold God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength and my raise, and he is become my salvation. You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains: and you shall say in that day: Praise ye the Lord, and call upon his name: make his works known among the people: remember that his name is high. Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath done great things: show this forth in all the earth. Rejoice, and praise, O thou habitation of Sion: for great is he that is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel.

*EXPLANATION* This lesson is a hymn of praise for the deliverance of the Jews from the hands of their enemies, and at the same time a prophecy of the coming redemption of mankind from sin and death through Christ. Man will then draw waters with joy, says the prophet, from the Saviour's fountains. These fountains are the graces, which Jesus has gained for us on the cross, but especially, as St: Augustine says, the holy Sacraments of Baptism and Communion. We should rejoice on account of these graces, particularly that the Holy One of Israel, Christ, the Son of God, dwells in the midst of Sion, that is, in the Catholic Church, in the Blessed Sacrament, to

remain there to the end of the world. - Oh! let us often approach this everflowing fountain of all grace, the holy Eucharist, and let us draw with confidences consolation, help, and strength from this fountain of love.

*GOSPEL* (John XIX. 31-35.) At that time, The Jews (because it was the parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day (for that was a great sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The 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. And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true.

*EXPLANATION* According to the Jewish law a criminal could not be put to death, nor could the body of one who had been executed, remain in the place of execution, on the Sabbath day; it was for this reason that the Jews asked Pilate, the governor, to have the Body of Christ and those of the two thieves buried. Before this could be done, the bones of the crucified, according to the Roman law, had to be broken with iron clubs. The soldiers did so to the two thieves, who were yet alive; when they came to Jesus and found Him dead, they did not break His bones, but one of them, Longinus, opened the Saviour's side with a spear, as was foretold by the prophet.

Jesus permitted His most Sacred Heart to be opened to atone for and efface those sins of men which originate in the heart, as Christ Himself says: (Matt. XV. 19.) From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts; false testimonies, blasphemies; also to show us the infinite love with which He has loved us from the beginning, so that He even shed the last drop of His heart's blood for our salvation; to make, as it were, a place of refuge in His heart for us, as St. Augustine says: "The Evangelist is very careful in his expression; he does not say, the soldiers pierced or wounded His side, but he opened it, as if to open for us the door of life, from which flow the Sacraments of the Church, without which there can be no access to the true life." As often, then, as a temptation arises, or trouble depresses us, let us take refuge in that abode, and dwell there, until the tempest is over; as says the prophet; (Is. II. 10.) Enter thou into the rock, and hide thee in the pit. Who is the rock but Christ, and what is the pit but His wound?

## **AN ACT OF RESIGNATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS**

O Jesus, most worthy of love! I gratefully offer  
Thee my heart in compensation for my great unfaithfulness,  
and consecrate myself wholly and forever to  
Thy service, purposing, with Thy grace, no more to  
offend Thee. Amen