

The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Ave Maria Catholic Church, June 24, 2022 - Fr. David M Vidal

Let us take a moment to imagine ourselves in the 17th Century in France. That was the time the Church suffered the heresy known as Jansenism. This heresy was named after the French Bishop Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638).

Jansenius taught the heresy of double-predestination, which holds that some people are predestined to heaven while others are predestined to hell. According to this teaching, man's condemnation is not due to his own free will but to the predestination of God, who refuses to give him the sufficient graces to be saved. This would mean that Christ did not die for all men and does not wish all men to be saved. Jansenism became a rigorist movement that limited the reception of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion because few people were worthy to receive them.

At one time, fifty dioceses in France were led by Jansenist bishops. However, the Catholic voice was also present. One of those voices was St. Francis de Sales, who fought against Jansenism. Bishop Francis de Sales thought, "*A bishop created the error, and his duty as a bishop was to correct this error by teaching the truth.*"

St. Francis de Sales wrote two masterpieces: *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God*. He also founded the *Order of the Visitation*, and one of the members of that Order was St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

That was God's providential plan! Christ revealed the mysteries of His Sacred Heart in the *Order of the Visitation*, whose founder was the outstanding defender of God's universal love for humanity.

It was in 1675, during the octave of Corpus Christi when St. Margaret Mary received the vision that came to be known as the "great apparition." Jesus asked that the Feast of the Sacred Heart be celebrated each year on the Friday following Corpus Christi in reparation for the ingratitude of men for the sacrifice that Christ had made for them.

What does the Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus teach us?

God chose St. Margaret Mary to provide us with a deeper understanding of God's love for us and the love we should have for Him. The Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart shows God's merciful love for humanity.

God created us out of love. He did not need to create anything or anyone. What's more, the Son of God became man out of love for the sinful human race. The Word of God became a mortal man to die and show how much He loves us. He assumed a human will that He might freely suffer.

Then, Christ, the Son of God who became the Son of Man, suffered and died not just for the predestined elect, but for the entire humanity. In this way, God gives everyone enough grace to be saved.

God wants all men to be saved but gave us a free will with which we can choose either to love Him or love ourselves even to the point of having contempt for God. This is St Augustine's teaching: "*God who created you without you, will not save you without you,*" (*Sermo* 169, 13. PL 38,923). We are asked to cooperate with God's grace.

This is what the Devotion of the Most Sacred Heart is about. We have a free will by which we can choose to love God. Love unites two wills: the will of God, by which He offers us His grace, and our will, by which we correspond with the graces we receive.

This is what the Heart of Jesus teaches us. In his agony in the Garden, when he was about to offer his life as a sacrifice for our salvation, Jesus said: "*My soul is sorrowful even to death,*" (Matthew 26:38). And his agony became so intense that "*His sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground,*" (Lk. 22:44). That was the passion of the Heart of Jesus which concluded with this most beautiful prayer: "*My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!*" (Matthew 26:42).

Jesus's human will is completely united with the will of God. That is what the loving Heart of Jesus teaches us! Your will be done! That is Jesus's joy, to fulfill the Father's will. And out of love for us, He gives up to the last drop of his blood for our eternal happiness!

The devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus became even more widespread after St. Margaret Mary's death in 1690. Later, in 1873, the devotion was formally approved by Pope Pius IX.

Jesus asked St. Margaret Mary to offer special prayers and practices to make amends (reparation). For those who did this faithfully, he made what St. Margaret Mary referred to as the "Great Promise":

This is Jesus's promise: "*For all those who receive communion on nine consecutive first Fridays of the month; they will not die in my disfavor [the grace of final repentance], or without having received the sacraments, since my divine Heart will be their sure refuge in the last moments of their life.*"

The Church, born from the pierced heart of Jesus, has a mission in the world to proclaim the redeeming love of God in Christ. This is our great mission.

The mission of the Church is to proclaim the love of Christ and his message of redemption and eternal life. The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is precisely the image that expresses our

mission. It is the image of the infinite and merciful love which the heavenly Father has poured out upon the world through his Son.

Let us accept this message and let us accept this mission. The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus can transform our hearts and make them faithful, joyful, pure, and beautiful. Today, we are celebrating the triumph of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the decision of the Supreme Court of overturning Roe vs Wade. This is a clear sign that the Heart of Jesus can transform hearts and make them truly beautiful!

By uniting our prayer with the prayer of the whole Church, let us say: *Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine. Amen*