

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII  
BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE POPE  
**ON THE SACRED HEART**

("HAURIETIS AQUAS")

TO OUR VENERABLE BRETHREN PATRIARCHS, PRIMATES, ARCHBISHOPS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER  
LOCAL ORDINARIES, IN PEACE AND COMMUNION WITH THE APOSTOLIC SEE  
HEALTH AND APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION:

YOU shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Is., 12, 3). These words, in which the Prophet Isaias symbolically foretold the manifold and rich gifts of God that Christianity was to reap, spontaneously come to Our mind as We recall the centenary of the proclamation in which Our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius XI, gladly granting the petition of the Catholic world, ordered the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart throughout the whole Church.

Those heavenly blessings which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus pours into the souls of the faithful, purifying them, refreshing them with heavenly consolation and urging them to acquire all virtues, cannot be counted. Mindful, therefore, of the wise words of the Apostle St. James—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights" (Jas. 1, 17)—We rightly see in this devotion, which everywhere grows more fervent, the inestimable gift which the Incarnate Word, our Divine Saviour, as the sole Mediator of grace and truth between the Heavenly Father and the human race, gave to the Church, His mystical bride, in recent times so that she could endure great trials and surmount difficulties. In virtue of this inestimable gift the Church is able to manifest her ardent love for her Divine Founder and in a fuller measure carry out the injunction given by Jesus Christ Himself, which St. John the Evangelist records: "Now on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me,' as the Scripture says, 'From within him there shall flow rivers of living water.' He said this, however, of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive." (Jn. 7, 37-39).

It was certainly not hard for those who heard Jesus speak these words, in which He promised that a fountain of "living water" would flow from within Him, to recall the words of the holy prophets Isaias, Ezechiel and Zachary, foretelling the messianic kingdom, and that rock from which water miraculously gushed forth when Moses struck it. (Cf. Is. 12, 3; Ez. 47, 1-12; Za. 13, 1; Ex. 17, 1-7; Nm. 20, 7-13; I Cor. 10, 4; Ap. 7, 17; 22, 1)

Divine love has its origin in the Holy Ghost, who is the Personified Love both of the Father and the Son in the bosom of the August Trinity. Most aptly, then, does the Apostle of the Gentiles, echoing the words of Jesus Christ, attribute the infusion of charity in the souls of the faithful to this Spirit of Love. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom. 5,5.)

This intimate bond which, according to Sacred Scripture, exists between the divine charity that must burn in the souls of the faithful and the Holy Ghost, clearly shows to all, venerable brothers, the real nature of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. For it is perfectly clear that this devotion, if we examine its proper nature, is the highest act of religion.

It demands the full and absolute determination of surrendering and consecrating oneself to the love of the Divine Redeemer. The wounded heart of the Saviour is the living sign and symbol of that love. It is likewise clear, even to a greater degree, that this devotion especially declares that we must repay divine love with our own love.

Indeed it flows from the very essence of love that the souls of men fully and completely submit to the rule of the Supreme Being, because the act of our love so depends upon the divine will that it forms, as it were, a certain oneness according to the words of Scripture, "He who cleaves to the Lord is one in Spirit with Him." (I Cor. 6, 17.)

## I

### **True Nature of this Devotion**

The Church has always held devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in such high regard and continues to esteem it so greatly that she strives to have this devotion flourish throughout the world and to promote it in every way. At the same time she is vigilant to safeguard it with all her strength against the errors of naturalism and so-called sentimentalism.

In spite of this vigilance, it is nevertheless a deplorable fact that in the past and in our own time this most noble devotion has not even been held in the honour it deserves by some Christians, and at times even by those who claim to be animated by zeal for the Catholic religion and the acquiring of sanctity.

"If thou didst know the gift of God," (Jn. 4, 10), venerable brothers, We, who by the hidden designs of God have been chosen as guardian and dispenser of that sacred treasure of faith and piety which the Divine Redeemer entrusted to His Church, make these words Our own. Through them, in keeping with the duty of Our office, We admonish all those of Our sons who are still led by preconceived opinions, and go so far at times as to consider devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (which triumphing, as it were, over the errors and neglect of men has spread over His whole Mystical Body) as less suited— not to say detrimental—to the more pressing spiritual needs of the Church and the human race in our times.

There are some who join the very essence of this devotion with other forms of piety which the Church approves and encourages but does not command. They put it on an equal footing with those other forms of piety. They look upon this devotion as some kind of additive which each one is free to use according to his own good pleasure.

There are others, again, who assert that this devotion is burdensome and of little or no use, particularly to those who are fighting in the kingdom of God motivated by the idea of defending, teaching, and spreading Catholic truth to the utmost of their strength, resources, and time and of inculcating Christian social teaching and who strive to promote those acts of religion and undertakings which they consider much more necessary today. Then, too, there are those who, far from considering this devotion a powerful help for correctly forming and restoring Christian morals both in the private life of individuals and in the family circle, consider it rather as a form of piety springing from emotions and not from reasoned convictions and more suited, therefore, for women, because they see in it something unbecoming educated men.

Others again, when they pause to think that this devotion especially demands penance, expiation and the rest of the virtues which they call passive and which have no external influence, do not consider it apt for arousing the spiritual fervour of our times.

Fervour today must aim rather at visible strenuous action, the triumph of the Catholic faith and a vigorous defense of Christian moral standards.

As everyone knows these norms are flippantly attacked by the captious objections of those who are indifferent to all religion, who tear down the distinction of true and false in thought and action and who are pitifully contaminated by the principles of atheistic materialism and laicism.

Venerable brothers, who does not see that such opinions are completely contrary to the teachings which Our predecessors publicly proclaimed from this chair of truth when they approved the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus ? Who would dare call useless and less suitable to our time that piety which Our predecessor of immortal memory, Leo XIII, declared the "most excellent form of religion" and in which he had no doubt there was to be found a powerful remedy to cure those very same evils which today, too,—beyond doubt in an even greater and more violent manner—afflict and vex individuals and society? "This devotion," he said, "which We recommend to all, will be profitable for all."

He added these admonitions and exhortations which also apply to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "Hence this force of evils, which so long weighs us down seriously, demands that the help of One be sought by whose power it can be driven off. Who is He, but the only begotten Son of God I For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. We must then flee to Him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life." (Enc. *Annum Sacrum*, May 25, 1899: *Acta Leonis*, Vol. 19, 1900, pp. 71, 77-78.)

Neither did our immediate predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, declare this devotion less approved and suited to foster Christian piety. In an encyclical letter he wrote: "Is not the epitome of religion, and consequently the norm of the more perfect life, contained in that form of piety which more readily leads souls to acknowledge Christ the Lord and which more effectively inclines hearts to love Him more ardently and imitate Him more closely?" (Enc. *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 20, 1928, p. 167.)

This truth is as evident and clear to Us as it was to Our predecessors. When we became Pope and saw with pleasure that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus had providentially increased among Christian peoples and was marching in

triumph, so to speak, We were filled with joy at the graces which flowed to the Church from this devotion. We were pleased to note this in Our very first encyclical. (Cfr. Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, October 20, 1939: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 31, 1939, p. 415.)

Through the years of Our pontificate, filled not only with cares and anxieties but also with ineffable consolations, these blessings have not been diminished either in number, power or splendour, but have rather been multiplied. Various movements have providentially started which are conducive to the adding of new fervour to this devotion and most aptly suited to the needs of our times. We mean organizations to promote religion and charity, published articles which explain the historical, the ascetical or the mystical aspects which have bearing on this topic, and pious works of expiation.

We mention especially the proofs of deepest piety given by the Apostleship of Prayer, under whose auspices and care homes, colleges, institutions and at times whole nations were consecrated to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Not infrequently by letter, public addresses, and even by radio We have extended Our paternal congratulations to these undertakings. (Cfr. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 32, 1940, p. 276; 35, 1943, p. 470; 37, 1945, pp. 263-264; 40, 1948, p. 501; 41, 1949, p. 331.)

Consequently, as We behold the rich abundance of salutary waters, that is, of heavenly gifts of divine love, flowing from the Sacred Heart of Our Redeemer and permeating countless children of the Catholic Church (under the inspiration and operation of the Holy Ghost), We cannot refrain, venerable brothers, from exhorting you paternally to join Us in giving glory and thanks to God, the Giver of all good gifts. We join Our sentiments with those of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Now, to him who is able to accomplish all things in a measure far beyond what we ask or conceive, in keeping with the power that is at work in us—to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus down through all the ages of time without end. Amen." (Eph. 3, 20-21.)

But after We have duly thanked the Eternal God, We wish through this encyclical to urge you, and all Our dearly beloved children of the Church, to study diligently the teachings of Scripture, the Fathers and theologians—the solid foundations on which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus rests.

For We are firmly convinced that we can rightly and fully appreciate the incomparable excellence and inexhaustible store of heavenly gifts of this devotion only when we study its nature in the light of divinely revealed truth. Only after piously meditating on the countless blessings flowing from this devotion can we worthily celebrate the first centenary of the feast of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

To give to the minds of the faithful a salutary teaching by virtue of which they can more easily and fully understand the true nature of this devotion and reap its abundant fruits, We shall explain those passages of the Old and New Testaments in which God's infinite love for mankind is revealed and set before us. We can, of course, never really study that love sufficiently. We shall then touch upon the chief points of the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

Finally We shall show in its true light the close connection that exists between the kind of devotion to be shown to the heart of the Divine Redeemer and the veneration due to His love and the love of the August Trinity for all men. For We think that if the principal reasons for this noblest form of piety and the foundation on which it rests are set forth in the light of Scripture and the teaching handed down in the Church, the faithful can more easily "draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Is. 12, 3.)

To draw this water means to consider more fully the special importance which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has in the liturgy of the Church and in her internal and external life and activity, and to have the power to gather those spiritual fruits through which individuals can renew their spiritual life, as the shepherds of the flock of Christ desire. That everyone may be able to understand more fully the doctrine which the passages to be cited from the Old and New Testament proclaim in regard to this devotion, they must above all clearly understand the reason why the Church adores the heart of the Divine Redeemer.

Now it is perfectly clear to you, venerable brothers, that there is a twofold reason. The first reason, which also applies to the rest of the most holy members of the body of Jesus Christ, rests on the teaching by which we know that His Heart, as the noblest part of human nature, is hypostatically united to the person of the Divine Word and must therefore be adored in the same way in which the Church adores the Person of the Incarnate Son of God. We deal here

with an article of Catholic faith since this point was already solemnly defined in the general Council of Ephesus and the second Council of Constantinople. (Council of Ephesus, Can. 8; cfr. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Ampliss. Collectio*, 4, 1083 C; Second Council of Constantinople, can. 9 cfr. *Ibid.* 9, 382 E.)

The second reason, which refers specifically to the Heart of the Divine Redeemer and in a special manner demands adoration, stems from the fact that His Heart, more than all the rest of the members of His body, is the natural sign and symbol of His boundless love for the human race. Our predecessor of immortal memory, Leo XIII, remarked: "In the Sacred Heart there is the symbol and the express image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ which moves us to love in return." (Cfr. *Encl. Annum Sacrum: Acta Leonis*, vol. 19, 1900, p. 76.)

There is no doubt that Scripture never makes express mention of special veneration paid to the physical heart of the Incarnate Word as the symbol of His most ardent love. If we must openly admit this, it cannot surprise Us nor in any way lead us to doubt the divine love for us which is the principal reason for this devotion. This love is proclaimed and inculcated both in the Old and New Testaments in such vivid images as to greatly stir our souls. At times these images were presented in the Scripture which announced the coming of the Son of God made man. They can therefore be considered as the beginning of the sign and symbol of that divine love, that is of the most Sacred and Adorable Heart of the Divine Redeemer.

For our present purpose we do not consider it necessary to cite many passages from the Old Testament, which contains truths revealed by God long ago. We deem it sufficient to recall the covenant made between God and the Jewish people which was ratified with peace offerings.

Moses wrote the laws of the covenant on two tables of stone and the prophets expounded them. (Cfr. Ex. 34, 27-28.) The covenant was sealed not only by the bonds of God's supreme dominion and the obedience which men owe Him, but was also strengthened and sustained by higher considerations of love.

For to the people of Israel the weightiest reason for obeying God was not the fear of divine vengeance, which the thunder and lightning flashing from the peak of Mt. Sinai struck into their souls, but rather love for God. "Hear, O Israel ! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone ! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today." (Dt. 6, 4-6.)

We are not surprised then if Moses and the prophets, whom the Angelic Doctor rightly calls the elders of the chosen people (*Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 2, a. 7: ed. Leon. tom. 8, 1895, p. 34), because they knew that the foundation of the entire law was placed on this precept of love, described the dealings between God and his people in terms of the mutual love of a father and his children or of a husband and his wife, rather than in stern terms of God's supreme dominion or of our own subjection in fear.

Therefore, to cite a few examples, Moses himself, when he sang his famous canticle because of the liberation of his people from the bondage of Egypt and wanted to declare that it had been accomplished by the power of God, used these touching expressions and comparisons: "As an eagle incites its nestlings forth by hovering over its brood, so he (God) spread his wings to receive them and bore them up on his pinions." (Dt. 32, 11.)

Of the prophets, perhaps none more than Osee expresses and explains so clearly and forcefully the love which God always showed his people. In the writings of this prophet, who is outstanding among the rest of the minor prophets for the austere grandeur of his diction, God manifests a holy and solicitous love for His chosen people, a love like that of a loving and merciful father or that of a husband whose honour is offended.

It is a question here of a love that is so far from diminishing or ceasing on account of the perfidy of traitors or enormous crimes, that it will rather justly punish offenses, not indeed to repudiate and dismiss the estranged and faithless wife and ungrateful children, but to make amends and purify and reunite them in renewed and strengthened bonds of love. "Because Israel was a child and I loved him; and I called my son out of Egypt . . . And I was like a foster father to Ephraim, I carried them in my arms; and they knew not that I healed them. I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love . . . I will heal their breaches, I will love them freely, for my wrath is turned away from them. I will be as the dew, Israel shall spring as the lily, and his root shall shoot forth as that of Libanus." (Os. 11, 1, 3-4; 14, 5-6.)

The prophet Isaias expresses similar sentiments when he represents God Himself and His chosen people expressing, as it were, opposite views in a conversation: "And Sion said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord

hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee." (Is. 49, 14-15.)

No less touching are the words which the author of the Canticle of Canticles uses when he graphically describes the bonds of mutual love which join God and His chosen people in terms of conjugal love. "As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among women . . . My lover belongs to me and I to him; he browses among the lilies . . . Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire." (Ct. 2, 2; 6, 3; 8, 6.)

Yet this most tender, indulgent and patient love of God, which indeed disclaimed the Jewish people as it added crime upon crime, yet never completely repudiated it, and which seems ardent indeed and sublime, was but a harbinger of the most ardent love which the promised Redeemer was to unfold for all from His Most Loving Heart. This love was to be the exemplar of our love, the foundation of the new covenant. However, only He who is the only Begotten of the Father and the Word-made-Flesh "full of grace and of truth" (Jn. 1, 14) when He came among men weighed down with countless sins and miseries could in His human nature, hypostatically united with the Divine Person, open for mankind "a fountain of living water" to irrigate the parched earth and transform it into blooming fruitful garden.

It seems that the prophet Jeremias in a way foretold this marvellous transformation to be accomplished through God's most merciful and eternal love in these words: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee . . . Behold the days shall come, saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Juda. . . This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. 31, 3; 31, 33-34.)

## II

### **Devotion to the Sacred Heart founded on teaching of the New Testament and the Fathers**

However, only from the Gospels do we get clear and full knowledge of the new covenant between God and man. The covenant which Moses made between the people of Israel and God was merely the symbol and token which the prophet Jeremias foretold. The real new covenant, We say, is that which was established and accomplished by the Incarnate Word and divine grace reconciling us with God. This covenant must therefore be considered incomparably nobler and more lasting because it was ratified, not by the blood of goats and heifers, as was the first, but by His Most Holy Blood, which the peace offerings—irrational animals—foreshadowed as "the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (Cf. Jn. 1, 29; Hebr. 9, 18-28; 10, 1-17.)

The Christian covenant, much more than the old covenant, clearly shows that it was not based on submission and fear, but ratified in terms of that friendship that must exist between a father and his sons and is sustained and strengthened by a more lavish participation in divine grace and truth, according to the words of St. John the Evangelist: "And of his fullness we have all received, grace for grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (Jn. 1, 16-17.)

Since we are led then to the very mystery of the infinite love of the Incarnate Word by the statement of that disciple "whom Jesus loved, the one who, at the supper, had leaned back upon his breast" (Jn. 21, 20), it seems meet and just, right and availing unto salvation, venerable brothers, to linger awhile in the sweetest contemplation of that mystery.

We pause in this consideration so that, enlightened by that light which shines from the Gospel and sheds light on this mystery, We too may conceive and express the desire recorded by the Apostle of the Gentiles: "To have Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts: so that, being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is its breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3, 17-19.)

The mystery of the divine Redemption is first and foremost a mystery of love, that is, of the true love of Christ for His Heavenly Father, to whom the sacrifice offered on the Cross in loving obedience renders most abundant and infinite satisfactions for the sins of mankind. "By suffering out of love and obedience, Christ gave more to God than was required to compensate for the offense of the whole human race." (Summa Theologica 3, q. 48, a. 2; ed. Leon.

tom. 11, 1903, p. 464). It is, moreover, a mystery of the merciful love of the August Trinity and the Divine Redeemer for all mankind.

Since men could in no way expiate their sins (Cfr. Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 20, 1928, p. 170) Christ through the incalculable riches of His merits which He acquired for us by shedding His precious Blood, was able to restore and perfect the bond of friendship between God and men which had been severed first in paradise by the pitiful fall of Adam, and later by the countless sins of the chosen people.

Therefore the Divine Redeemer, as our duly constituted and perfect Mediator, because He made perfect satisfaction to divine justice for all the debts and obligations of the human race out of His most ardent love for us, effected the marvellous reconciliation between divine justice and divine mercy which constitutes the impenetrable mystery of our salvation.

Concerning this mystery, the Angelic Doctor wisely says:

"That man should be delivered by Christ's Passion was in keeping with both. His mercy and His justice. With His justice, because by His passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ's justice: and with His mercy, for since man of himself could not satisfy for the sin of all human nature, God gave him His Son to satisfy for him.

"And this came of a more copious mercy than if He had forgiven sins without satisfaction. Hence St. Paul says: 'God, Who is rich in mercy, by reason of His very great love wherewith He has loved us even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ.'" (Eph. 2, 4; *Summa Theologicae* 3, q. 46, a. 1 ad 3; *Ad Leon.* tom. 11, 1903, p. 436.)

However, that we may be able so far as it is possible for mortal man "to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. 3, 18) of the fathomless love of the Incarnate Word for His Heavenly Father and for men defiled by sin, We must understand that His love was spiritual, as becomes God, because "God is Spirit." (Jn. 4-24). But it was not only spiritual. To be sure the love with which God loved our first parents and the Hebrew people was of a spiritual nature. The expressions of love, so human, intimate and paternal, which we read in the Psalms, in the writings of the prophets and in the *Canticle of Canticles*, are indications and manifestations of the truest but entirely spiritual love with which God loved the human race. On the contrary, the love spoken of in the Gospel, the letters of the apostles and the pages of the *Apocalypse*— all of which describe the love of the heart of Jesus Christ— express not only divine love but also human sentiments of love.

This point is quite clear to all who are Catholics. For the Word of God assumed not a fictitious and empty body, as some heretics already maintained in the first century of the Christian era and who were condemned by St. John the Apostle in most severe terms: "For many deceivers have gone forth into the world, who do not confess Jesus as the Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist." (2 Jn. 7). But the Word actually united to His divine person an individual, integral and perfect human nature which was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary. (Cfr. Lk., 1, 35). Nothing, therefore, was lacking in the human nature which the Word of God joined to Himself. Indeed He assumed a human nature in no way diminished or changed in its spiritual and bodily capacities, that is, a nature endowed with intelligence and free will and the rest of the internal and external faculties of perception, sense, appetites and all natural impulses.

The Catholic Church teaches all these doctrines as solemnly proclaimed and confirmed by the Roman Pontiffs and general councils. "Whole and entire in what is His own, whole and entire in what is ours" (St. Leo the Great, *Epist. Dogm.* "Lectis dilectionis tuae" ad Flavianum Const. Patr. 13 June, a. 449; cfr. P. L. 54, 763), "Perfect in His Godhead and likewise perfect in His humanity" (Council of Chalcedon, a. 451; cfr. Mansi. *Op. cit.* 115B), "Complete God is man, complete man is God," (Pope St. Gelasius, *Tract.* 3: "Necessarium" Of the Two Nature in Christ, cfr. A. Thiel, "Letters of the Roman Pontiffs from St. Hilary to Pelagius," II, p. 532).

Therefore, there can be no doubt that Jesus Christ took a human body having all the affections which are proper to it, among which love holds the first place. There can likewise be no doubt that He had a physical heart like ours, since without this most excellent organ human life, even as regards affections, is impossible. Wherefore, the heart of Jesus Christ, hypostatically united to the Divine Person of the Word, beyond doubt throbbed with love and the rest of the impulses of the affections which, however, were in perfect accord and harmony with His human will filled with divine

love and with the infinite love itself which the Son shares with the Father and the Holy Ghost. There never was anything contrary or conflicting in these three kinds of love. (Cfr. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* 3, q. 15, a. 4; q. 18, a. 6; ed. Leon, tom. 11, 1903, p. 189 and 237.)

Nevertheless, We say that the Word of God took upon Himself a "real" and perfect human nature and formed and fashioned for Himself a heart of flesh, which like ours could suffer and be pierced. We repeat that unless this teaching be considered not only in the light which is shed by the hypostatic and substantial union, but also in that of the redemption of mankind—its complement, as it were—this doctrine can be a stumbling block and foolishness to some, as Christ nailed to the Cross actually was to the Jews and Gentiles. (Cfr. I Cor. 1, 23.)

The authoritative teaching of the Catholic faith, since it is in complete agreement with Scripture, assures us that the only begotten Son of God assumed nature capable of suffering and dying precisely because he wished, by offering the bloody sacrifice on the Cross, to accomplish the task of man's redemption.

For the rest, the Apostle of the Gentiles teaches this doctrine in these words: "For both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all from one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, 'I will declare thy name to my brethren' . . . And again, 'Behold I and my children, whom God has given me.' Therefore, because children have blood and flesh in common, so he in like manner has shared in these. . . Wherefore it was right that he should in all things be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered and has been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." (Heb. 2, 11-14; 17-18.)

The Fathers of the Church, truthful witnesses of divinely revealed doctrine, understood most definitely what the Apostle Paul had quite clearly stated: that the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption were the beginning and culmination of divine love. Frequently, and in clear words, we read in their writings that Jesus Christ assumed perfect human nature, and our mortal and perishable body, to provide for our eternal salvation and to show us His infinite, even sensible, love.

Echoing the words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Justin writes "We adore and love the Word born of the unbegotten and ineffable God since He became Man for our sake, so that having become partaker of our sufferings He might provide a remedy for them" (Apol. 2, 13; P. G. 6, 465). St. Basil, the greatest of the three Cappadocian Fathers, teaches that the affections of the senses in Christ were at one and the same time real and holy. "It is clear that the Lord indeed did assume natural affections as a proof of His real and not imaginary Incarnation and that He rejected as unworthy of the God-head corrupt affections which defile the purity of our life" (Epist. 261, 3; P. G. 32, 972). In like manner the light of the church of Antioch, St. John Chrysostom, states that the affections of the senses to which the Divine Redeemer was susceptible prove beyond doubt that He assumed a complete human nature. "For if He had not shared our nature He would not have repeatedly been seized with grief." (In Joann. Homil. 63, 2; P. G. 50, 350.)

Of the Latin Fathers We select for mention those whom the Church today honours as the greatest. St. Ambrose testifies that the disturbances of the senses and the affections, from which the Incarnate Word was not free, are rooted in the hypostatic union as in a natural principle: "And therefore he assumed a soul and the passions of the soul; for God precisely because He is God could not have been disturbed nor could He have died." (De fide ad Gratianum, 2, 7, 56; P. L. 16, 594.)

From these affections St. Jerome draws his chief proof that Christ assumed human nature: "To prove that He really assumed human nature, he really became sorrowful." (Super Matth, 26, 37; P. L. 26, 205). St. Augustine in a special manner calls attention to the relations between the affections of the Incarnate Word and the purpose of the redemption of the human race. "These affections of human infirmity, just as the human body itself and death, the Lord Jesus assumed not out of necessity but freely out of compassion so that He might transform in Himself His body, which is the Church of which He deigned to be the Head, that is, His members who are among the faithful and the saints, so that if any of them in the trials of this life should be saddened and afflicted, they should not therefore think :that they are deprived of His grace; nor should they consider this sorrow a sin, but a sign of human weakness; like a choir singing in harmony with the note that has been sounded, so should his body learn from its Head." (Enarr, in Ps. 87, 3; P. L. 37, 1111.)

In less ornate but nevertheless forceful words, the following passages from St. John Damascene set forth the clear

teaching of the Church: "Complete God assumed complete man, and complete man is united to complete God so that He might bring salvation to complete man. For what was not assumed could not be healed" (De Fide Orth. 3, 6: P. G. 94, 1006). "He therefore assumed all that He might sanctify all." (Ibid. 3, 20: P. G. 94, 1081.)

We must, however, bear in mind that these quotations from Scripture and the Fathers and not a few similar ones which We did not cite, although they clearly attest that there were in Jesus Christ movements of the senses and affections and that He assumed human nature to accomplish our eternal salvation, they never refer to His physical heart in such a manner as to clearly indicate it as the symbol of His infinite love.

But if the evangelists and the rest of the sacred writers do not clearly describe the heart of our Redeemer as responding to feelings and emotions no less than ours and as throbbing and palpitating on account of the various movements and affections of His soul and of the most ardent love of His human and divine wills, they do frequently, however, clearly record His divine love and those movements of the emotions connected with them, namely desire, joy, sadness, fear and anger as they are reflected in His countenance, words and manner of acting.

The countenance of our adorable Saviour was an indication and perfect mirror of those affections which, in various ways, moved His soul, and of the reactions which reached and touched His Most Sacred Heart. The observation based on common experience which the Angelic Doctor made concerning human psychology and what follows from it is pertinent to this matter: "The disturbance of anger reaches to the outward members and chiefly to those members which reflect more distinctly the emotions of the heart, such as the eyes, face and tongue." (Summa Theologica 1-2, q. 48, a. 4; ed. Leon. tom. 6, 1891, p. 306.)

Wherefore the heart of the Incarnate Word is rightly considered the chief index and symbol of the threefold love with which the Divine Redeemer continuously loves the Eternal Father and the whole human race. It is the symbol of that divine love which He shares with the Father and the Holy Ghost, but which in Him alone, in the Word namely that was made Flesh, is it manifested to us through His mortal human body, since "in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2, 9.)

It is moreover the symbol of that most ardent love which, infused into His soul, sanctifies the human will of Christ and whose action is enlightened and directed by a twofold most perfect knowledge, namely the beatific and infused. (Cfr. Summa Theologica, 3, q. 9, a. 1-3: ed. Leon. tom. 11, 1903, p. 142.)

Finally, in a more direct and natural manner, it is a symbol also of sensible love, since the body of Jesus Christ, formed through the operation of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, has a most perfect capacity for feeling and perception, much more than the bodies of all other men. (Cfr. Ibid. 3, q. 33, a. 2, ad. 3m; q. 46, a. 6: ed. Leon. torn. 11, 1903, pp. 342, 433.)

Since Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Faith affirm that there is the highest possible harmony and agreement in the Most Holy Soul of Jesus Christ, and that he clearly directed His threefold love to accomplish our redemption, it is therefore obvious that we can most correctly consider and venerate the heart of the Divine Redeemer as signifying the image of His love, the proof of our redemption and the mystical ladder by which we climb to the embrace of "God our Saviour." (Tit. 3, 4.)

Wherefore His words, actions, teachings, miracles, and in particular those deeds which more clearly testify this love for us—the institution of the Holy Eucharist, His most bitter passion and death, His Most Holy Mother whom He lovingly gave to us, the founding of the Church and the sending of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and upon us—all these we must regard as proofs of His threefold love.

In like manner we must lovingly meditate on the pulsations of His most Sacred Heart by which, so to say, He Himself kept on measuring the time of his sojourn on earth up to the last moment when, as the evangelists testify, "crying out in a loud voice 'It is consummated,' and bowing his head, gave up his spirit." (Mt. 27, 50; Jn. 19, 30.)

Then the beating of His heart stopped, and His sensible love was interrupted until He arose from the tomb in triumph over death.

But after His glorified body was again united to the soul of the Divine Redeemer, the Conqueror of death, His Most Sacred Heart never ceased, and never will cease, to beat with imperturbable and calm pulsation. It will likewise never cease to signify His threefold love by which the Son of God is bound to His heavenly Father and the whole human race, of which He is by perfect right the mystical Head.

### III

#### The Sacred Heart and the Work of our Redemption

But now, venerable brethren, in order that we may gather rich and salutary fruits from these considerations, let us briefly meditate on and contemplate the manifold affections, human and divine, of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. These indeed His Heart manifested through the course of His mortal life.

These affections He now manifests and will continue to do so forever. Especially from the pages of the Gospel does light shine forth to us. Illumined and strengthened by this light, we can enter into the tabernacle of His Divine Heart. Together with the Apostle of the Gentiles we can wonder at "the riches of grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2, 7.)

The adorable Heart of Jesus Christ beats with human and divine love since the Virgin Mary pronounced that great-souled "Fiat" and the Word of God, as the Apostle observes, "coming into the world, he says, 'Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me: in holocausts and sin-offerings thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, "Behold, I come" ' . . . It is in this 'will' that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10, 5-7, 10.)

In the same way He moved by love in perfect accord with the affections of His human will and divine love when in the home at Nazareth He engaged in heavenly discourse with His most sweet Mother and with His foster-father, Joseph. He was obedient to him and He toiled with him in the carpenter's trade and, with the triple love of which We have spoken, He was driven on during the lengthy apostolic journeys which He undertook, in the innumerable miracles which He wrought and by which He recalled the dead from the tomb or bestowed health on those ill with every sort of disease. He was moved by this triple love during the labours He endured and in the sweat, hunger and thirst of the nocturnal vigils in which He most lovingly prayed to His Heavenly Father.

And finally He was moved by this triple love in the discourses He held and in the parables which He spoke and explained. This is especially true of the parables which treat of His mercy, such as those which tell of the lost drachma, the lost sheep, the prodigal son. In these parables, both by their subject matter and by words, the very Heart of God is expressly laid bare to us, as Gregory the Great observed: "Learn of the Heart of God in the words of God, so that you may more ardently long for eternal things." (Registr. epist. lib. IV ep. 31 ad Theodorum Medicum: P. L. LXXVII, 706.)

But the Heart of Christ was moved by an even greater charity when words full of love fell from His lips. Let Us cite some examples. When He saw the crowds tired and hungry, He exclaimed, "I have compassion on the crowd" (Mk. 8, 2). And when He gazed upon Jerusalem, his most beloved City, blinded by her sins and therefore destined for complete destruction, He said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! Thou who killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent to thee ! How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not !" (Mt. 23, 37.)

But, because of love for His Father and holy indignation, His Heart beat violently when He beheld the sacrilegious buying and selling in the temple, and He rebuked the profaners of the temple with these words: It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.' " (Mt. 21, 13.)

But His Heart was moved by a special love and fear when He saw that the hour of His most cruel sufferings was now at hand. He felt a natural repugnance for death and those sorrows which were rushing upon Him and cried out: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me" (Matt. 26, 39). But with love unconquered by the greatest grief when He received a kiss from the traitor, He addressed him with these words, which seem to be the last invitation of His Most Merciful Heart to a friend who was about to betray Him to His executioners with an impious, faithless and most hardened heart: "Friend, for what purpose hast thou come ? Does Thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss ?" (Mt. 26, 50. Lk. 22, 48.)

In truth, He spoke with exceedingly great love and pity when He said to the pious women weeping for Him as He was about to suffer the undeserved death of the Cross: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children . . . for if in the case of green wood they do these things, what is to happen in the case of the dry ?" (Lk. 23, 28, 31.)

And finally, our Divine Redeemer, hanging on the Cross felt His Heart on fire with varied and vehement

affections, affections of the most ardent love, of dismay, of mercy and of a most intense longing for serene calm, which affections are indeed most strikingly expressed by the following words: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23, 34). "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mt. 27, 46). "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23, 43). "I thirst" (Jn. 19, 28). "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (Lk. 23, 46.)

Who in truth could describe in a worthy manner those beatings of the Divine Heart, the indications of His infinite love, when He bestowed His greatest gifts on man, that is, Himself in the sacrament of the Eucharist, His Most Holy Mother and the priestly office communicated to us ?

Even before He ate the Last Supper with His disciples, when He knew that He was going to institute the sacrament of His Body and Blood by the shedding of which the new covenant was to be consecrated, He felt His Heart stirred by strong emotions, which He made known to the Apostles in these words: "I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22, 15). These same emotions were even stronger, without doubt, when "having taken bread, He gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them saying: 'This is My Body which is being given for you; do this is remembrance of me.' In like manner, he took also the cup after the supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you.'" (Lk. 22, 19-20.)

Rightly, therefore, one may affirm that the Divine Eucharist, both as a sacrament and as a sacrifice—the one He bestowed on men, the other He Himself continually offers "from the rising of the sun even to the going down" (Mal. 1, 11)—and the priesthood, are all really the gifts of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Indeed another most precious gift of His Most Sacred Heart is, as We have said, Mary, the sweet Mother of God and the most loving Mother of us all. For she was the Mother of Our Redeemer according to the flesh and His associate in recalling the children of Eve to the life of divine grace. And so she is rightly hailed as the spiritual Mother of Mankind. Wherefore St. Augustine, in writing of her says:

"Indeed she is the Mother of the members of the Saviour, which We are because she co-operated by love so that the faithful who are the members of that head might be born in the Church." (De Sancta Virginitate, VI, p. L. XL, 339.)

And to the unbloody gift of Himself, under the appearance of bread and wine, Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, wished, as a special proof of His intimate and infinite love, to add the bloody sacrifice of the Cross. Indeed, in His way of acting, He gave an example of that sublime charity which He set before His disciples as the highest measure of love: "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends." (Jn. 15, 13.)

Wherefore, the love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by the Sacrifice of Golgotha, clearly and richly proves the love of God himself: "In this we have come to know His love that He laid down His life for us and we likewise ought to lay down our life for the brethren." (Jn. 2, 16.)

And in fact Our Divine Redeemer was nailed to the Cross more by His love than by the force of the executioners. His voluntary holocaust is the supreme gift which He bestowed on each man according to the concise words of the Apostle: "Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." (Gal. 2, 20.)

Therefore, there can be no doubt that the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, since it is most intimately the sharer of the life of the Incarnate Word, and since it was assumed as an instrument of the Divinity, no less than the other members of His human nature in accomplishing the works of divine grace and omnipotence (Cfr. S. Thom. Summ. Theol. III, q. 19, a. 1: Ed. Leon. Tom, XI, 1903, p. 329), is the true symbol of the boundless love by which Our Saviour, through the shedding of His blood, contracted a mystical marriage with the Church. "Through charity He suffered for the Church who was to be united to Him as His spouse." (Sum. Theol. Suppl. q. 42, a. 1. ad. 3m: ed. Leon. tom. XII, 1906, p. 81.)

Therefore, from the wounded heart of Our Redeemer, the Church, the dispenser of the blood of the Redeemer, was born. From this wounded Heart the grace of the sacraments, from which the children of the Church draw supernatural life, flowed most profusely, as we read in the sacred liturgy: "From the pierced Heart, the Church, joined to Christ, is born . . . Who pourest forth grace from Thy Heart" (Hymn ad Vesp. Festi SSmi Cordis Iesu). By reason of this symbol, which was not, indeed, unknown even to the ancient Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical writers, the Common Doctor, as if re-echoing these same sentiments, writes: "Water flowed from Christ's side to wash us; blood to redeem us. Wherefore blood belongs to the sacrament of the Eucharist, while water belongs to the sacrament of Baptism. Yet this latter sacrament derives its cleansing virtue from the power of Christ's blood." (Sum. Theol. III, q. 66 a. 3, ad 3m:

ed. Leon. Tom. XII, 1906, p. 65.)

What is written here concerning the side of Christ, wounded and opened by a soldier, must likewise be said of His Heart, which the lance actually touched with its stroke, inasmuch as the soldier pierced it so that he might be clearly certain of the death of Jesus Christ fixed to the Cross.

Wherefore the wound of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which had now completed the course of this mortal life, is down through the ages the living image of that love freely bestowed by which God gave His only begotten Son for the redemption of man, and with which Christ loved us all so intensely that He offered Himself for us as a bloody victim on Calvary: "Christ also loved us and delivered Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odour." (Eph. 5, 2.)

After Our Saviour ascended into Heaven, with His body adorned with the splendour of eternal glory, and sat at the right hand of the Father, His Heart beat with the most ardent love and He did not cease to manifest His love for His spouse, the Church. Indeed in His hands and feet and side He bears in majesty the glowing marks of the wounds which represent the triple victory gained by Him over the devil, sin and death.

He likewise has in His Heart, placed, as it were, in a most precious shrine, that treasure of merit, the fruit of His triple triumph. These He bestows generously on redeemed mankind. This is a truth full of consolation, which the Apostle of the Gentiles stated in these words: "Ascending on high, He led away captives; he gave gifts to men. He who descended, He it is who ascended also above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." (Eph. 4, 8, 10.)

The gift of the Holy Spirit to His disciples is the first clear sign of His munificent charity after His triumphal ascent to the right hand of the Father. Indeed after ten days the Spirit, the Paraclete, given by the Heavenly Father, descended upon them gathered in the Cenaculum, as He had promised them at the Last Supper: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever." (Jn. 14, 16.)

This Spirit, the Paraclete, since He is the personified mutual love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father, is sent indeed by both. Assuming the appearance of tongues of fire, He poured the abundance of divine love and other heavenly gifts into their souls. The infusion of this divine love also sprang from the Heart of our Saviour "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2, 3.)

Indeed, this love is the gift of the Heart of Jesus and His Spirit, who is indeed the Spirit of the Father and the Son and from whom both the rise of the Church and its remarkable spread is unfolded for all the pagan nations which the worship of idols, hatred of brothers, and corruption of morals as well as violence had befouled.

This divine love is the most precious gift of the Heart of Christ and of His Spirit. This love gave the apostles and martyrs that fortitude with which they were strengthened to fight even to the point of death, which they met with heroic spirit, to preach the truth of the gospel and to testify to it with their blood. This love gave to the Doctors of the Church a most ardent desire to teach and defend the Catholic Faith.

It was this love which nourished the virtues of the confessors and urged them to accomplish eminently useful and marvellous deeds, profitable for the eternal and temporal welfare of others. This was the love which persuaded virgins to abstain, willingly and joyfully, from sensual pleasures, and to consecrate themselves entirely to the love of their heavenly Spouse. This love, pouring forth from the Heart of the Incarnate Word, is infused by the Holy Spirit into the souls of all the faithful.

It brought forth that hymn of victory from the Apostle of the Gentiles, who proclaimed the triumph of the members of the Mystical Body and of Jesus Christ, its Head, and the restoration of the divine kingdom of love among men, no matter how they might try to prevent it: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword ? But in all these things we overcome because of him who has loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8, 35, 37-39.)

There is nothing, then, which forbids us to adore the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, since it participates in and is the natural and most expressive symbol of that inexhaustible love with which Our Divine Redeemer still loves mankind. That Heart indeed, even if it is no longer liable to the disturbances of this mortal life, still lives and beats. It is now inseparably joined with the Person of the Divine Word, and in it and through it with His divine will.

Wherefore, since the Heart of Christ overflows with divine and human love, and since it is abundantly rich with treasures of all graces which Our Redeemer acquired by His life and His sufferings, it is truly the unfailing fountain of that love which His Spirit pours forth into all the members of His Mystical Body.

Therefore the Heart of Our Saviour certainly expresses the image of the Divine Person of the Word and His two-fold nature, human and divine. In it we can contemplate not only the symbol, but also, as it were, the sum of the whole mystery of our redemption.

When we adore the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, we adore in it and through it both the uncreated love of the Divine Word and His human love and all His other affections and virtues. This is so because both loves moved Our Redeemer to sacrifice Himself for us and for the whole Church, His Spouse. As the Apostle says: "Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, cleansing in the bath of water by means of the Word, in order that he might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5, 25-27.)

As Christ loved the Church with that triple love of which We have spoken, He still loves her most deeply. This love moves Him as Our Advocate (Cfr. 1 Jn. 2, 1) to gain grace and mercy for us from the Father, "since he lives always to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7, 25). The prayers which come forth from His inexhaustible love and which are directed to the Father are never interrupted. As "in the days of His earthly life" (Heb. 5, 7), so now triumphant in heaven He beseeches the Father with no less efficacy.

He shows His living Heart to Him who "so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son, that those who believe in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (Jn. 3, 16). His Heart is, as it were, wounded and burning with even greater love than when it was pierced at death by the lance of a Roman soldier. "Wherefore (Thy Heart) was wounded so that through the visible wound we might see the invisible wound of love." (St. Bonaventure, Opusc. X: Vites mystica, c. III, N. 5; Opera Omnia, Ad Claras Aquas (Quararchi) 1898, Tom. VIII, p. 164; cfr. St. Thom. Sum. Theol. III, 9. 54, a. 4: ed Leon Tom XI, 1903, p. 513.)

It is then absolutely certain that the Heavenly Father "who has not spared even his own Son, but has delivered him for us all" (Rom. 8, 32), when He has been asked by so powerful an Advocate and with such ardent love, will never, at any time, diminish the rich flow of divine graces to all men.

#### IV

#### **Origin and Development of Devotion to the Sacred Heart**

It has been Our wish, venerable brothers, to explain to you and to the faithful the real nature of devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the light of divine revelation, its chief source, and the graces which flow from it.

We think that Our statements, confirmed by the teaching of the Gospel, have made it clear that essentially this devotion is nothing else than devotion to the human and divine love of the Incarnate Word and to the love which the Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost have for sinful men.

For, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, the first cause of man's redemption is the love of the August Trinity. This love, pouring forth abundantly into the human will of Jesus Christ and His Adorable Heart, moved Him to shed His blood to redeem us from the captivity of sin (Cfr. Summa Theologica, 3, q. 48, a. 5: ed. Leon. Tom. 11, 1903, p. 467). "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how distressed I am until it is accomplished !" (Lk. 12, 50.)

We know, therefore, that the devotion whereby we pay homage to Jesus Christ's love for men through the august sign of the Wounded Heart of the Redeemer nailed to the Cross has never been entirely unknown to Christian piety. In more recent times, however, this devotion has become better known and wondrously spread throughout the Church, particularly after the Lord Himself privately revealed this divine mystery to some of His children, richly endowed with an abundance of heavenly graces, and chose them as the messengers and heralds of this devotion.

Indeed, there always have been souls especially dedicated to God, who, imitating the example of the holy Mother of God, the Apostles and the illustrious Fathers of the Church, have adored, thanked and loved Christ's most sacred human nature, especially the wounds inflicted on His body during His salutary Passion.

Furthermore, do not these very words, "My Lord and my God" (Jn. 20, 28), spoken by the Apostle Thomas signifying a person changed from an unbeliever into a faithful follower, contain a clear profession of faith, adoration

and love rising from the wounded humanity of the Lord to the majesty of the Divine Person ?

But if men were always strongly moved by the wounded heart of the Redeemer to venerate the infinite love with which He loves the human race, since the words of the Prophet Zacharias applied by St. John the Evangelist to Christ on the Cross, "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn. 19, 37; Za. 12, 10), were addressed to the faithful of all ages, we must nevertheless admit that only gradually and by degrees was the homage of special devotion paid to His Heart as the image of the human and divine love in the Incarnate Word.

If we wish to sketch the significant stages in the progress of this devotion through the years, there immediately comes to mind the names of some who have gained special renown in this respect and who are to be considered the standard-bearers of this devotion which gradually gained momentum privately in religious communities.

We mention, by way of example, the names of those who achieved special distinction in establishing and promoting devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus: 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 honour of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

With the approval of many bishops of France, this solemn feast was celebrated for the first time on October 20, 1672.

Among those who have promoted this most excellent devotion, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque occupies the chief place of honour. Inflamed with great zeal and with the aid of her spiritual director, Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, she succeeded in her efforts, not without the great admiration of the faithful, to have this devotion rich in spiritual blessings established and clearly distinguished from other forms of Christian piety by the special nature of its acts of love and reparation. (Cfr. Encyclical Letter, "Miserentissimus Redemptor": Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 20, 1928, pp. 167-168.)

A review of the history of the period in which this devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus began is enough to increase our clear understanding that its marvellous progress is due to the fact that this devotion is in perfect accord with the nature of the Christian religion, which is indeed a religion of love.

Therefore, we must not say that this devotion began because it was privately revealed by God or that it suddenly came into existence in the Church, but rather that it is the spontaneous flowering of a living and fervent faith by which men filled with supernatural grace were led to adore the Redeemer and His glorious wounds as symbols of His boundless love which stirred their souls to the very depths.

Consequently, as is obvious, the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary added nothing new to Catholic doctrine. The significance of these revelations lies in this, that Christ the Lord—showing His Most 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 this 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.

Moreover, the fact that this devotion stems from the principles of Christian doctrine is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Apostolic See approved the liturgical feast before it approved the writings of St. Margaret Mary. For, paying no specific attention to any private divine revelation, but graciously granting the petitions of the faithful, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in a decree of January 25, 1765, approved by Our predecessor, Clement XIII, on February 6 of the same year, granted the celebration of a liturgical feast to the Bishops of Poland and to the Roman Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart.

The Apostolic See granted this petition to extend an already existing and flourishing devotion, whose purpose was "symbolically to renew the memory of that divine love" (Cfr. A. Gardellini, "Decreta authentica" 1857, n. 4579, tom. 3, p. 174), by which Our Redeemer was impelled to offer Himself as a propitiatory victim for the sins of men.

This first approbation was granted in the form of a privilege and was restricted to definite regions. After almost a century, another approbation followed of far greater importance, and phrased in more solemn words. We are referring, as We previously mentioned, to the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, issued August 23, 1856. By it Our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius IX, acceding to the petitions of the Bishops of France and of almost the whole

Catholic world, ordered the feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to be extended to the entire Church and to be duly celebrated (Cfr. Decr. S.C. Rit. Apud N. Nilles "De rationibus festorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu et purissimi Cordis Mariae," 5th edition. Innsbruck, 1885, tom. 1, p. 167). The faithful should always remember this decree, for, as we read in the liturgy of this feast, "Since that time devotion to the Most Sacred Heart, gushing forth like a mighty stream, has spread throughout the world, washing away every obstruction in its course."

From the explanations which We have given, venerable brothers, it is perfectly clear that the faithful must trace devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus back to Sacred Scripture, tradition and the liturgy, if they wish to understand its real meaning and, through pious meditation, receive food to nourish and increase their religious fervour.

If this devotion is constantly practised with this knowledge and understanding, the souls of the faithful cannot but attain to the sweet knowledge of the love of Christ which is the acme of Christian life, as the Apostle, who knew this from personal experience, teaches: "For this reason I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that he may grant you from His glorious riches to be strengthened with power through his Spirit unto the progress of the inner man; and to have Christ dwelling through faith your hearts: so that, being rooted and grounded in love . . . you know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3, 14, 16-19.)

The heart of Christ is the clearest image of this fullness of God embracing all things. By this We mean the fullness of mercy, which is the special characteristic of the New Testament, in which "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared" (Ti. 3, 4). "For God did not send his Son into the world in order to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (Jn. 3, 17.)

From the very day on which she issued the first decree concerning devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Church, the teacher of mankind, has always been certain that the essential characteristic of this devotion—that is, acts of love and reparation by which God's infinite love for mankind is venerated—is in no way infected with the poison of materialism or superstition.

On the contrary, this devotion is a form of piety by which the soul clearly discharges religious obligations and a perfectly true worship which the Saviour Himself foretold in His conversation with the Samaritan woman: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeks such to worship him. God is spirit, and they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." (Jn. 4, 23-24.)

It is therefore wrong to say that contemplation of the physical heart of Jesus is a hindrance to attaining intimate love of God, and that it impedes the soul in its progress to the highest virtues.

The Church completely condemns this false mysticism, just as she did when she spoke through Our predecessor of happy memory, Innocent XI, who condemned the errors of those who idly maintained: "Nor must they (souls of the interior way) elicit acts of love for the Blessed Virgin, or the saints or the humanity of Christ, for, since these are sensible objects, love for them is of the same nature. No creature, neither the Blessed Virgin nor the saints, must have a place in our heart; because God wishes to occupy and possess it." (Innocent XI, Constit. Ap. "Coelestis Pastor," November 19, 1687; Bullarium Romanum, Rome, 1734, tom. 8, p. 443.)

It is evident that those who hold such opinions think that the image of the Heart of Christ represents nothing nobler than His sensible love and that this image is not of such a nature as to be a new basis for adoration, which is given only to that which is by its nature divine.

There is no one who does not see that this interpretation of sacred images is entirely false. It confines their meaning, which is much broader, within too narrow limits. Catholic theologians, among them St. Thomas, write: "The worship of religion is paid to images not as considered in themselves, nor as things, but as images leading us to God Incarnate. Now, movement to an image as image does not stop at the image, but goes on to the thing it represents. Hence, neither latria nor the virtue of religion is differentiated by the fact that religious worship is paid to the images of Christ." (Sum. Theol. II-II, q. 81 a. 3 ad 3m; ed. Leon. tom. 9, 1897, p. 180.)

The veneration paid to images, whose excellence must be determined by what is venerated, or to relics of the bitter sufferings which Our Saviour endured for us, or to the picture of the pierced heart of Christ hanging on the Cross, which surpasses everything in force and meaning, is paid to the very person of the Incarnate Word as its final object.

Therefore, from the physical thing which the heart of Christ is, and from its natural signification, we can and must, supported by Christian faith, rise not only to contemplate His love, which is perceived through the senses, but even to meditate on and adore the most sublime infused love and finally the divine love of the Incarnate Word.

By faith, through which we believe that the human and the divine nature were united in the Person of Christ, we can see the closest bonds between the sensible love of the physical heart of Jesus and the two-fold spiritual love, namely, human and divine.

We must not only say that these two loves were simultaneously present in the adorable Person of the Divine Redeemer, but also that they were joined by a natural bond so that the human and sensible loves are subject to the divine and bear its analogical resemblance. We do not, however, maintain that the Heart of Jesus is to be understood in such a way that in it we have and adore a formal image, as they say, or a perfect and absolute sign of His divine love since the essence of this love can in no way be adequately expressed by any created image whatsoever.

But the Christian, in honouring the Heart of Jesus together with the Church, adores the sign and manifestation of divine love which went so far as to love through the heart of the Incarnate Word the human race defiled with countless sins.

It is therefore necessary, at this central point of a teaching which is so important and profound, that everyone bear in mind that the truth of the natural symbol by which the physical heart of Jesus is referred to the Person of the Word, rests completely on the fundamental doctrine of the hypostatic union.

Whoever denies that this doctrine is true would renew false teachings, repeatedly condemned by the Church, which deny that there is one Person in Christ with two distinct and complete natures.

With this fundamental truth firmly established, we understand that the heart of Jesus is the heart of a Divine Person, that is, of the 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.

Therefore, devotion to the Most Sacred Heart is so important that it may be considered, so far as practice is concerned, the perfect profession of the Christian religion.

For this is the religion of Jesus which rests entirely on a Mediator who is man and God, so that no one can come to the heart of God except through the 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.)

Since this is true, we readily understand that devotion to the Most 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, to put it in other words, 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.

It seeks to lead us, in attaining this goal, to a strengthening of the bonds of love, with which we are bound to God and our fellow men, by daily observing more eagerly the new commandment which the Divine Master gave to His disciples as a sacred inheritance when He said: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: that as I have loved you, you also love one another. . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (Jn. 13, 34; 15, 12.)

This commandment is indeed new and Christ's very own. As St. Thomas says, "The difference between the Old and New Testament is told in a few words, for as Jeremias says, 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel' (Jer. 31, 31). However, because the commandment was in the Old Testament through fear and holy love, it related to the New Testament: hence this commandment was in the old law not as something that belonged to it but as a preparation for the new law." (Comment, in *Evang. S. Joann. c. 13, lect. 7, 3*, ed. Parmae, 1860, tom, 10, p. 541.)

## V

### **Directions and Exhortations**

We have presented for your consideration the real nature and excellence of this devotion—beautiful teachings filled with consolation. But before We close this letter, mindful of Our apostolic office, which was first entrusted to St. Peter after his three-fold protestation of love for Christ the Lord, We deem it fitting to exhort you again, venerable brothers, and through you all of Our dearly beloved children in Christ, to strive ever more earnestly to promote this most

gratifying devotion.

We are confident that in Our day, as in others, a great many blessings will flow from it.

Indeed, if the evidence on which devotion to the Wounded Heart of Jesus rests is rightly weighed, it is clear to all that we are dealing here, not with, an ordinary form of piety which anyone may at his discretion slight in favour of other devotions, or esteem lightly, but with a duty of religion most conducive to Christian perfection.

For if devotion, according to the common theological definition which the Angelic Doctor gives, "is apparently nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God" (Sum. Theol. II-II q. 82 a. 1), can there be a service to God more required and necessary—and at the same time nobler and more pleasant—than that which pays homage to His love ?

What is more pleasing and acceptable to God than that service which submits to divine love and is rendered for the sake of love ?

For every service freely rendered is in a sense a gift, and love "has the nature of a first gift in strength whereof all free gifts are given." (Sum. Theol. I q. 38 a. 2.)

That form of religion must be held in highest honour by which man honours and loves God more and more easily, and by which he more readily consecrates himself to divine love, which Our Redeemer Himself deigned to propose and recommend to Christianity and which the Sovereign Pontiffs have defended in their writings and extolled with highest praise.

Therefore, whoever considers of little value this outstanding gift of Jesus Christ to His Church, does a rash and harmful thing and offends God Himself.

There is, then, no doubt that the faithful, in honouring the Most Sacred Heart of the Redeemer, fulfil a most serious obligation by which they are bound to serve God and dedicate themselves and all they have, including their most secret thoughts and actions, to their Creator and Redeemer, and in this way obey the divine commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." (Mk. 12, 30, Mt. 22, 37.)

The faithful know with certainty that they are primarily led to worship God not for their own spiritual or physical, temporal or eternal advantage, but on account of the goodness of God, whom they seek to serve by loving Him in return, by adoring Him and thanking Him.

If this were not true, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus would not be in accord with the true nature of the Christian religion, since by such devotion divine love is not primarily venerated. And, so, those who incorrectly understand the nature of this devotion and practise it in the wrong way, are not unjustly, as sometimes happens, accused of excessive love and concern for themselves.

Let all therefore be firmly convinced that in showing devotion to the Most August Heart of Jesus, external acts of piety do not play the first and foremost role.

The reason for this devotion is not primarily to be sought in the blessings which Christ the Lord promised in private revelations. Rather it is that men should fulfil more fervently the principal duties of the Catholic faith, namely, the obligations of love and expiation, and so also contribute greatly to their own spiritual advancement.

We therefore urge all Our sons in Christ to eagerly cherish this devotion, both those who already are accustomed to draw salutary waters from the Heart of the Redeemer, and especially those who, in the idle manner of spectators, look on from a distance with misgivings.

Let them seriously consider that We speak of a devotion, as We have already said, which has long been in the Church and is firmly based on the Gospel and which tradition and the sacred liturgy openly encourage.

The Roman pontiffs themselves praised it most highly on numerous occasions, and were not content merely to institute a feast in honour of the Sacred Heart and extend it to the universal Church, but also solemnly consecrated and dedicated the whole human race to the Most Sacred Heart. (Cfr. Leo XIII Enc. *Annum Sacrum: Acta Leonis*, vol. 19, 1900, p. 71 sq.; Decr. S.C. *Rituum* June 28, 1899, in Decr. Auth. 3, x. 3712; Pius XI, Enc. "Miserentissimus Redemptor": *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 1928, p. 177 sq.; Decr. S.C. *Rit.* January 29, 1929: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 21, 1929, p. 77.)

Finally, We add the rich and most pleasing fruits of this devotion for the Church: the return of countless souls to

the religion of Christ, the reanimated faith of many people and the closer union of the faithful with our most loving Redeemer, all of which, especially in these past few decades, have happened before Our eyes in ever increasing and richer profusion.

As we look upon this marvellous spectacle of devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus so widely spread and so ardent among all classes of the faithful, we are filled with joyous sentiments of gratitude.

After rendering fitting thanks to Our Redeemer, who is the infinite treasure of goodness, We cannot refrain from extending Our paternal congratulations to all, both of the clergy and of the laity, who have actively contributed to the spreading of this devotion.

Although devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus has everywhere produced the salutary fruits of Christian living, everyone knows, venerable brothers, that the Church Militant here on earth, and especially civil society, have not yet achieved that full and complete measure of perfection which corresponds to the wishes and desires of Jesus Christ, the Mystical Spouse of the Church and the Redeemer of the human race.

Not a few of the Church's children mar the beauty of their mother's countenance, which they reflect in themselves with too many blemishes and wrinkles. Not all the faithful are resplendent with that sanctity of life to which they have been called by God.

All sinners have not returned to their Father's house, which they left through sin, there to put on once more the "best robe" (Lk. 15, 22) and to receive for their finger a ring, the sign of fidelity to the Spouse of their soul.

Not all of the pagans, not even a goodly number, have yet been joined to the Mystical Body of Christ. For if the languishing faith of the good, in whose souls, led astray by the deceptive desire for worldly possession, the fervour of charity grows cold and is gradually extinguished, causes Us bitter grief, the machinations of the wicked wrack Us with even greater pain.

As if goaded on by the infernal enemy, these men, especially now, are on fire with an implacable and open hatred for God, the Church, and especially for him who takes the place of the Divine Redeemer on earth and represents His love for men according to the memorable words of St. Ambrose: "For (Peter) is questioned in a matter about which he feels uncertain; but the Lord who put the question has no doubt. He asked, not to find out, but to point out before His ascension him whom He left us as the Vicar of His love." (Exposit. in Evang. sec. Lucam, 1, 10, n. 175; P.L. 15, 1942.)

Indeed, hatred of God and those who lawfully take His place is so great a sin that man, created in the image and likeness of God and destined to enjoy His friendship which is to last forever in heaven, can commit none greater.

By hatred of God, man is separated completely from the highest good and driven to cast from himself and his fellow men whatever comes from God, whatever joins us to God and whatever leads us to enjoy God, that is, to reject truth, virtue, peace and justice. (Cfr. St. Thomas Sum. Theol. II-II, q. 34, a. 2: ed. Leon. tom. 8, 1895, p. 274.)

Unfortunately, since it is possible to see increasing everywhere the number of those who glory in being enemies of God, the false tenets of materialism being propagated in practice and theory, unbridled freedom of lust everywhere extolled, what wonder if charity—the supreme law of the Christian religion, the surest foundation of true and perfect justice, the chief course of peace and chaste pleasure—grows cold in the souls of many? For, as Our Saviour warned, "because iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold." (Mt. 24, 12.)

Faced with so many evils which today more than ever deeply disturb individuals, homes, nations and the whole world, where, venerable brothers, is a remedy to be found?

Is there a devotion more excellent than that to the Most 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? (Cfr. Enc. "Misericordissimus Redemptor": Acta Apostolicae Sedis 20, 1928, p. 166.)

Finally, what is more powerful than the love of Christ, which devotion to the Most Sacred Heart daily increases and fosters?

This love can truly bring the faithful to live the law of the Gospel.

If this law is rejected, is it possible to have genuine peace among men? For as the words of the Holy Ghost clearly teach, "The work of justice shall be peace." (Isaias 32, 17.)

Therefore, following the example of Our immediate predecessor, We choose to address again all Our beloved sons in Christ in the words of admonition which Leo XIII of immortal memory spoke to all the faithful at the end of the last century.

We likewise address these words to all who have a genuine concern for their own salvation and that of civil society. "Behold another most auspicious and divine standard presented to our view today: the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus gleaming with dazzling light surrounded by flames. In it all hopes must be placed, in it man's salvation must be sought and looked for." (Enc. "Annum Sacrum": Acta Leonis, vol. 19, 1900, p. 79; "Misericordissimus Redemptor": Acta Apostolicae Sedis 20, 1928, p. 167.)

It is also Our most ardent desire that all who glory in the name of Christian and who zealously strive to establish the Kingdom of Christ on earth, consider devotion to the Heart of Jesus as the standard and the source of unity, salvation and peace.

Nevertheless, let no one think that this devotion detracts anything from other devotions with which Christian people, under the leadership of the Church, honour the Divine Redeemer.

On the contrary, ardent devotion to the Heart of Jesus will without doubt encourage and promote devotion to the Most Holy Cross and love for the Most August Sacrament of the Altar. For We can definitely state a fact which the revelations made by Jesus Christ to St. Gertrude and St. Margaret marvellously confirm: that no one ever fittingly loves Christ hanging on the Cross but he to whom the mystical secrets of His Sacred Heart have been unfolded.

Nor will it be easy to grasp the force of that love by which Christ was impelled to give us himself as our spiritual good except by fostering a special devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

The purpose of this devotion, to use the words of Our predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, is to recall to our minds "that supreme act of love by which Our Redeemer, pouring forth all the riches of His Heart, instituted the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist to remain in our midst to the end of time." (Litt. Apost. Quibus Archisodalitas a Corde Eucharistico Jesu ad S. Joachim de Urbe erigitur, February 17, 1903: Acta Leonis Vol. 22, 1903, p. 307 sq.; cfr. Enc. Mirae caritas, May 22, 1902: Acta Leonis vol. 22, 1903, p. 116.)

For "the Eucharist is not the smallest portion of His Heart which He gave us from the overflowing love of His heart." (St. Albert the Great, "De Eucharistia," dist. 6, tr. 1, c. 1: Opera Omnia ed. Borgnet, vol. 38, Paris, 1890, p. 358.)

Finally, greatly impelled by the desire to set up a firm defence against the wicked machinations of the enemies of God and His Church, and at the same time to lead back domestic and civil society to the love of God and neighbour, We do not hesitate to state emphatically that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most effective school of divine charity, on which the Kingdom of God to be established in the souls of individuals, in families and in nations must rest.

As our same predecessor of blessed memory most wisely teaches: "The kingdom of Jesus Christ draws its power and distinctive characteristic from divine love; its foundation and chief doctrine is to love holily and in proper order. From this it necessarily follows that we must fulfill obligations faithfully, not infringe on the rights of others, consider human matters inferior to divine and place love of God above everything else." (Enc. "Tametsi," Acta Leonis vol. 20, 1900 p. 303.)

That graces for the Christian family and for the whole human race may flow more abundantly from devotion to the Sacred Heart, let the faithful strive to join it closely with devotion to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God.

By the will of God, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably joined with Christ in accomplishing the work of man's redemption, so that our salvation flows from the love of Jesus Christ and His sufferings, intimately united with the love and sorrows of His mother.

It is, then, highly fitting that after due homage has been paid to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christian people who have obtained divine life from Christ through Mary, manifest similar piety and the love of their grateful souls for the most loving heart of our heavenly Mother.

They memorable act of consecration by which We Ourselves, in the most wise and loving dispositions of Divine Providence, solemnly dedicated the Church and the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is in perfect accord with devotion to the Sacred Heart. (Cfr. Acta Apostolicae Sedis 34, 1942, p. 345.)

Since in the course of the present year, as previously mentioned, We are joyfully completing the first century since Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius IX, ordered the celebration of the feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the entire Church, it is Our fervent desire, venerable brothers, that this centenary be solemnly celebrated by the faithful everywhere with public acts of adoration, thanksgiving and reparation to the Divine Heart of Jesus.

With all the faithful united in bonds of love and common prayer, these festivals of Christian joy and piety will be celebrated with special religious fervour in that country where by God's special providence St. Margaret Mary, the promoter and indefatigable herald of this devotion, was born.

In the meantime, strengthened with new hope and in spirit already gathering the spiritual fruits which We are certain will grow abundantly in the Church from devotion to the Sacred Heart, if correctly understood according to Our explanation and zealously practised, We humbly pray God to lovingly grant His grace for the fulfillment of Our most ardent desire.

With God's help may this year's celebration increase from day to day the love of the faithful for the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. And may His kingdom, "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace" (Roman Missal, Preface of Jesus Christ the King), be extended further to all in the whole world.

As a pledge of these heavenly graces, We most lovingly impart to each of you, venerable brothers, to the clergy and people entrusted to your care, and in particular to those who zealously encourage and promote devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our apostolic benediction.

*Given at Rome from St. Peter's, May 15, 1956, in the eighteenth year of Our pontificate.*

*Pius P.P. XII*