



CONSECRATION
TO THE
Sacred Heart of Jesus
AND THE
Immaculate Heart of Mary



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Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary: The Remedy for Everything

Being Sisters and teachers, we have the blessing of getting to know all kinds of people of all ages. Because the Catholic Schools in our diocese are tuition free, we have all kinds of children in our classrooms. Getting to know students, their siblings, parents and grandparents, my colleagues, and other people in the Wichita area and beyond has served to open my eyes to the mystery of the human person. We are each so unique, and yet, we have so much in common. The same could be said of our modern culture: we face unique challenges and evils, yet there is nothing new under the sun, and we hold so much in common with people of ages past.

In the past few years I've been listening with more intensity to the people Our Lord sends into my life. With each individual I want to learn: What makes you truly happy and what has caused you pain? Where do you feel unsatisfied and what do you most desire? I have learned a lot about the human person and about individuals.

What makes me deeply happy? A deep sense of being understood, accepted, loved, belonging, a feeling that I matter, that I am needed, important, a sense of a purpose in life, a sense of fruitfulness or a personal legacy.

What causes deep, lasting pain? Loneliness, isolation, feeling inadequate, that my best isn't good enough, loss, betrayal, abandonment, rejection, feeling misunderstood... Depression from past hurts: sins I have committed or sins committed against me that hurt me... Anxiety: fear of future hurt, confusion, fear of failure, fear of the unknown... Being trapped in patterns of sin or unhealthy behavior with little or no hope of breaking these destructive habits.

What do we desire? Freedom: from burdens, from failure, from destructive patterns in my life, from painful memories, from fear, from sin... Love: belonging, purpose and direction, to be loved and to love unconditionally... Hope: that things won't always be this way, that even someone like me can be deeply happy and satisfied, that sin won't always have the final say.

On a societal or global scale, we seek freedom from hatred, violence, injustice and social sin. We desire an up building of the human person. We want the tide to turn and reason to hope that violence will decrease, that the faith will be respected, that families will be supported, that children will be cared for and everyone will receive what they need. We long for a restoration of Christian moral principles and an end to the downward spiral of degradation we see in our culture.

Nothing I learned is new, but this personal knowledge has made the Gospel, our Faith and devotion to Our Lady take on a new and deeper meaning for me. This is precisely how Our Lady herself has guided us along the path of Marian devotion throughout the ages. When we experience the plight of sinful humanity, when we feel keenly the effects of sin and evil, Our Lady gives herself to us anew. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Throughout the ages, there have been so-called 'private' revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church... It is not their role to complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history" (CCC 67). Cardinal Ratzinger, when commenting on Fatima, said, "Such a message can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded" (Commentary on the Third

Secret of Fatima, 2000). The benefits of this new, deep and personal living out of Marian Devotion, particularly to her Immaculate Heart, is the subject of tonight's talk.

Our Lady of Guadalupe – a Mother's Heart

In the New World, America, in the 1500s, everything appeared spiritually dark. The pagan religions, which included human sacrifice, showed no sign of abating, and years of tireless effort on the part of missionaries appeared almost fruitless with very few conversions. When Our Lady appeared at Guadalupe, she appeared as a woman with child, as a Mother, and she spoke of her "ardent desire... that I can show and bestow my love, compassion, help and protection to all who inhabit this land and to those others who love me, that they might call upon and confide in me." Our Heavenly Mother is always with us, loving us, desiring to comfort us if we would let her.

A few days later she said, "Listen and understand, my humblest son. There is nothing to frighten and distress you. Do not let your heart be troubled, and let nothing upset you. Is it not I, your Mother, who is here? Are you not under my protection? Are you not, fortunately, in my care?"

We can find great comfort in these words coming from Our Mother's Heart. When in any kind of anguish or pain, we can know with confidence: I am not alone. My Mother is here. She sees everything. She is loving me.

The children of Mary who are devoted to her, "are certain that her maternal heart cannot remain indifferent to the material and spiritual distress of her children. By encouraging the confidence and spontaneity of the faithful, devotion to the Mother of God thus helps to brighten their spiritual life and enables them to make progress on the demanding path of the beatitudes" (John Paul II).

We have all been wounded by sin – the sins we have committed and the sins of others. When a child is hurt, he wants comfort from his mom. I'm sure we've all been in the position when our love was previously desired, but as soon as the child is hurt, we are not sufficient at all. Only mom will do. While a mother oftentimes cannot take the pain away, her love makes the pain bearable. She offers comfort and protection

while the wound heals. It was this revelation of her motherly Heart that won the conversion of over 9 million indigenous people in less than 10 years. In the darkest darkness, this woman standing on the moon, clothed with the stars and with sun's rays behind her, brought radiant Light.

France, 1830's, the Miraculous Medal and the Green Scapular

In France, decades of unrest followed the Revolution of 1789 and the Reign of Terror that followed. Listening to the words of Our Lady to St. Catherine Labouré, I'm sure we can hear how these are also applicable to our day and age. "The times are very evil... The whole world will be plunged into every kind of misery. (In saying this, the Blessed Virgin became very distressed.) But come to the foot of the altar. There graces will be shed upon all, great and small, who ask for them. Especially will graces be shed upon those who ask for them."

"There will be abundant sorrows, and the danger will be great. Yet, do not be afraid; tell them not to be afraid. The protection of God will be ever present in a special way... I shall be with you myself. I always have my eye upon you. I will grant you many graces. The moment will come when danger will be extreme. It will seem that all is lost. At that time, I will be with you. Have confidence."

"My child, the cross will be treated with contempt; they will hurl it to the ground. Blood will flow; they will open up again the side of Our Lord. The streets will run with blood... (Here the Blessed Virgin could no longer speak; her anguish was depicted on her face.) My child, the whole world will be in sadness."

It was during this time of darkness that Our Lady showed when sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. She gave us the Miraculous Medal. "The wonders it works are as ordinary or as extraordinary as the needs and ills of mankind. Conversions to the Faith, repentance of hardened sinners, recognition of the Will of God, peace in homes, recoveries from illness acute and Chronic, critical and minor – the catalogue is endless. Each wearer of the Medal has his own story to tell. Best of all, the Medal seems to have a special power for promoting and deepening personal devotion to the Mother of God. Thus it has not merely a passing or momentary effect on the soul it touches, but an effect which is so lasting as to be, in many cases, eternal.

Under this aspect, it has assumed a mighty role in the reconversion of the world, for it betters the individual soul, and the world's goodness is exactly equal to the sum of all good hearts."

How was the violence and darkness of France to be conquered? Through devotion to the Immaculate Heart. Our Lady said, "Grace will abound for those who wear it with confidence." Two Hearts, Sacred and Immaculate, appear on the back of the medal, along with an M beneath the Cross and 12 stars. When Fr. Aladel asked for some inscription on the back as there was on the front, Our Lady responded, "My child, the M and the two Hearts express enough."

Our Lady of Fatima

At Fatima, Our Lady acknowledged the suffering we would endure in this life, but do not despair, "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God."

A refuge, a safe place. Isn't that what we all long for? When guilt and shame threaten to overwhelm us, it is good to remember that Our Mother said her Heart is a refuge for sinners. I am a sinner, so her Heart is for me!

Refuge in Her Heart

How do I find refuge in her Heart? What does that look like? It can be as simple as acknowledging her presence and opening our hearts to receive her love. An image might be helpful to use in prayer.

Close your eyes and imagine Our Lady looking into your eyes with great, motherly love. Then she opens her arms and pulls you close. With your eyes shut, you feel her heart beating with love for you. All of your pain, all of your memories, all of your struggles melt away. Within her arms, there is nothing but love. You are nothing but a child who is loved. Her love shows us who we really are.

Pope Pius XII

In response to Our Lady of Fatima, Pope Pius XII consecrated the world to her Heart several times and wrote about her Immaculate Heart in many of his encyclicals. He also established the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and proclaimed a Marian Year of 1954 in her honor. He wrote that while there is great darkness

in our world from sin and oppression, “the remedy for such great evils is to be sought from a higher source” than world leaders and governments, “namely, a power that is greater than human must be called in as aid, which will illumine minds with heavenly light, which will touch souls and renew them with Divine grace and render them better by its inspiration. Then only can it be hoped that Christian morality will everywhere again flourish... justice and charity will be established... that finally hatred will be quelled.” Having voiced these desires, he asks for visits to Marian shrines in every diocese, that the faithful all over the world should “throng thither in great numbers and should offer to our Most Sweet Mother not only private but also public supplications with one voice and with one mind” (Pius XII, 28-32).

Immaculate

In Genesis 3:15 we read of a woman being at enmity with the devil. Enmity is a strong word. It means that the two cannot be together, that they repel each other like two magnets when like poles are lined up. Our Lady is at enmity with the devil. He cannot stand to be near her.

A common image of the Immaculate Conception is that of Our Lady crushing the head of the serpent, the devil. This is what we need her to do for us. Most of us, when we encounter a poisonous snake, will recoil in fear. Our Lady, with no fear, knowing her power and his weakness, simply and calmly crushes his head. We cannot do this. Our sins have weakened us, but Our Mother can do what we cannot.

A priest in training to become an exorcist has testified to the power Our Lady has over the devil. He said that the devil cannot touch anyone or anything that is consecrated to her. Consecration and devotion to Our Lady helps us not to fall for the devil’s lies. We all need her help as the devil is very tricky at tempting us as well as at accusing us after we fall and making us feel paralyzing shame after falling.

Purity regained

There is no such thing as “too late” when it comes to one’s purity. Our Lady maintained and grew in her purity throughout her whole life. Due to sin, none of us can say we have perfect purity maintained, but through grace and devotion to Our Lady we can regain purity. Our Lord can and desires to recreate us. This is

very real and possible for you. The feeling that it's "too late" for you or that you are damaged beyond repair is a lie from the devil that must be rejected.

The road of purity regained has been travelled by many: St. Mary Magdalene, St. Augustine and Alessandro Serenelli among others. Mary Magdalene lived in a dark world of impurity until Our Lord saved and purified her. From that point on, we see her in the Gospels as a close companion of Our Lord and Our Lady. There is no sense of lingering shame, only love. Her re-creation is complete.

Our Lord can work the same miracle in each one of us, if we allow it. It can be a long, arduous journey, but it is more than worth it! Our Lady's Most Pure Heart will mother us along the path, and the Saints accompany us while the Lord purifies and heals us.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, make my heart like thine!

The Perfect Woman

Our Heavenly Mother is altogether beautiful. St. Bernadette who saw Our Lady in Lourdes, France, said that Our Lady is so beautiful that if you had a glimpse of her you would eagerly die just for the chance to see her again! Mary is the most beautiful woman who ever lived. She has an inner and outer beauty that is higher than we could imagine.

Today's society has distorted the image of women. Women feel pressure to look, act and be a certain way. We easily feel inadequate or strive for the wrong type of recognition, and fail to see our true, God-given beauty. For those who have had their image of women tainted, Our Lady can restore this image of womanhood. She can help to heal what we have lost. Looking at her, we see the true beauty bestowed on every woman. She will help us to see this beauty in all women.

In Times of Personal and Societal Darkness

"Though attempts be made by men, no matter how powerful or impious, to extirpate the Christian religion and Christian virtue from the minds of the citizens, and though Satan himself may strive with every

means to foster this sacrilegious struggle... when Mary interposes her powerful protection, the gates of hell cannot prevail" (Pius XII).

"Oh, Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people of today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon our modern world and seems to block the paths towards the future!... Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world your infinite power of merciful Love. May it put a stop to evil. May it transform consciences. May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of Hope" (JP II, Consecration).

The point was... that the power of evil is restrained again and again, that again and again the power of God himself is shown in the Mother's power and keeps it alive.

"The Church is always called upon to do what God asked of Abraham, which is to see to it that there are enough righteous men to repress evil and destruction. I understood my words as a prayer that the energies of the good might regain their vigor. So you could say the triumphs of God, the triumphs of Mary, are quiet, but they are real nonetheless" (Benedict XVI, 166).

My Immaculate Heart Will Triumph

Let's revisit the fears, hopes and desires expressed at the beginning of this talk, looking through the lens of what we have just explored concerning Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. I believe we will find in her Heart the answer to all our longings.

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From Pope Benedict XVI: "I would like finally to mention another key expression of the 'secret' which has become justly famous: 'My Immaculate Heart will triumph.' What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The fiat of Mary, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Savior into the world – because, thanks to her Yes, God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The Evil One has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God. But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: 'In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world' (Jn 16:33). The message of Fatima invited us to trust in this promise" (Ratzinger).

As a conclusion to this theme, I want to end with a dialogue between Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee:

Frodo : I can't do this, Sam.

Sam : I know.

It's all wrong

By rights we shouldn't even be here.

But we are.

It's like in the great stories Mr. Frodo.

The ones that really mattered.

Full of darkness and danger they were, and sometimes you didn't want to know the end.

Because how could the end be happy.

How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad happened.

But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow.

Even darkness must pass.

A new day will come.

And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer.

Those were the stories that stayed with you.

That meant something.

Even if you were too small to understand why.

But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand.

I know now.

Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't.

Because they were holding on to something.

Frodo : What are we holding on to, Sam?

Sam : That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for.