



Mary in America

Friday, June 12, 2026

Consecration of the USA to the Sacred Heart



“Dear Heavenly Father, I beg you to send your Holy Spirit upon us and reveal to us the Heart of your only-begotten Son; show to us the designs His Heart has in store for us and for our country. Amen.”

In the Fall semester this past school year, I took a course on Children’s literature. As a part of the class, I read several children’s books in order to create a sort of reference catalogue for future classroom use. One of the books I chose to review was a picture book called, “The Heart and the Bottle” by Oliver Jeffers. In the story, the heroine suffers a great personal loss, the death of a loved one. As a consequence, rather than suffering the great pain that is grief, she decides to put her heart in a glass bottle. And there, she keeps it safe. But, as time passes, this girl soon realizes what CS Lewis spoke of in his work *The Four Loves*,

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. (169)

Yet, try as she may, this girl could not get her heart back out of the bottle.

What led this heroine, and even more so the author himself, to articulate a cultural climate that finds safety in keeping our hearts locked up? As we reflect today on this great solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I suggest that we first look to recognize that we have become heartless, or as CS Lewis would say, men without chests; then we can see the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the remedy for our deficiency before moving to integrate the life and love of the Sacred Heart into our own lives and the life of our country.

First, let’s start with a little growth in self-knowledge. I have spent a lot of my reflection for this talk considering the question of why now? Why consecrate the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus now? Yes, it is fitting to do so



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on such a monumental anniversary, but what can the Sacred heart of Jesus do for us now more than any time before in the last 250 years? The USCCB offered that by “this act of consecration, the bishops seek to renew devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to recognize the kingship of Christ, perfecting the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel” (Snow). With this in mind, I posit that the Sacred Heart is extended to us by our dear bishops as a means of renewing the temporal order within ourselves – returning to our lost, neglected hearts.

As we dwell in a culture lost in the abyss of social media, devoutly concerned about political agendas, and fearful in the face of any discomfort, we find our lives devoid of the things that nourish the heart – wonder, virtue, self-sacrifice, charity. Instead of honoring these heartily pursuits, we have traded them for efficiency, or even mocked them into disuse. As C.S. Lewis put it in his philosophical work, *The Abolition of Man*, “We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst” (9).

In his Encyclical Letter on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ, *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis remarked, “the men and women of our time often find themselves confused and torn apart, almost bereft of an inner principle that can create unity and harmony in their lives and actions” (9). He continues on by saying, “If we devalue the heart, we also devalue what it means to speak from the heart, to act with the heart, to cultivate and heal the heart” (11). The implications of that forgetfulness redound: as we neglect the messages that can only be communicated with the heart, as we miss out on the richness of friendships, and as we lose track of history and our own past.

Like the heroine in the children’s book, we have become a country terrified of commitment. It is easier to keep our hearts on lock down, safe not only from the daily difficulties of life, but even from the ultimate heartaches that can result only after entrusting our hearts to another: betrayal, grief, rejection. We have decided the risk is simply not worth the reward.

And yet our world demands simultaneously both indifference and integrity. Our country, our co-workers, even mere strangers expect us to be men of valor but reject the means of cultivating it. The Second Vatican Council Fathers reflected upon this in the Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, “the imbalances affecting the world today are in fact a symptom of a deeper imbalance rooted in the human heart” (10).

It is here, in the acknowledgement of our malnourished hearts, that we become properly disposed to look upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the solution. We can turn, as Pope Francis says, “to the Heart of Christ, that core of His being, which is a blazing furnace of divine and human love and the most sublime fulfillment which humanity can inspire” (*Dilexit Nos* 30).

The USCCB invites us to reach out to the Heart of Christ to find in Him the exemplar of justice, truth, and charity. I think it would be helpful to see the heart of

Christ personifying these virtues for us so that we can find in him, as Pope Benedict the XVI remarked, a center for our lives, “a source of truth and goodness to draw upon in the events, situations, and struggles of daily existence” (*Dilexit Nos* 81).

First, Justice, and because the Lord’s justice is inseparable from his mercy, I invite us to look at both in Luke 15 – the Parable of the Merciful Father. Here, we have the story of the prodigal son, demanding his portion of the inheritance from his father that would only actually come to him after his father’s death. The father accedes to the blatantly disrespectful request, and off the son goes to squander it. And yet, it is in focusing on the Father’s gaze, and allegorically on the gaze of God himself, that, we come to understand the Heart of Christ. On the son’s return home, while he was still far off, the Father saw him. And he *ran* to him (Lk 15:20). This passage reveals two things to us. The first is that the Father never stopped looking for the son, never stopped hoping he would come home to him again. The second is that the Father is willing to do anything for the son, even humiliate himself by running out to meet him. Yes, there will come a time for reparation and restitution, and rightly so, we must give God and neighbor their due, but the Heart of the Father, the Heart of our God is one of mercy.

The second virtue is truth. In the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John, Thomas asks Jesus to show the Apostles the way to the Father. Jesus replies to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). Just four chapters later, Jesus will stand before Pontius Pilate and be asked, “What is truth?” (Jn 18:38). The irony of this situation lies in the fact that Truth Himself stands mere paces away, begging to be recognized, yet silent before his executioner. Truth is not relative. It is not a matter of whatever truth is best for me is the truth I ascribe to at a given time – no – truth is a person. And as Edith Stein would go on to say centuries after Christ, “Whoever seeks truth seeks God, whether he knows it or not” (Boston Carmel).

The last virtue is charity. On the Cross in Chapter 19 of John’s Gospel, we read of the moments following Jesus’ death. After asking that the bodies be removed from the cross before the Sabbath, “the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out” (Jn 19:32-34). Jesus, the God-man, allowed his heart to be pierced on the Cross for us. Pope Francis invites us to contemplate Christ’s pierced heart, saying, “The pierced heart of Christ embodies all God’s declarations of love present in the Scriptures. That love is no mere matter of words; rather, the open side of his Son is a source of life for those whom he loves, the fount that quenches the thirst of his people” (101). The wounded Heart of Jesus is placed before us as a means of entry to deeper love, a literal opening into the Heart of the One who calls us to rest in Him.

Through these three passages and countless others, Christ shows devotion to his Sacred Heart as the synthesis of the gospel (*Dilexit Nos* 83). His heart is the meeting place, the embrace of our earthly existence with God’s human and divine love, a

place where justice, mercy, truth and charity are given a face – a face not simply of a friend, but a remedy, a Divine Physician. This Physician is a Heart Doctor, ready to replace our malnourished hearts with his own.

Now that we have come to see the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the answer for our own deficiency, we can turn to the Consecration of the United States (and ourselves) to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In praying with the act of consecration, I found two themes, or rather, two consequences of recourse to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: union with God and communion with others. It is likewise fitting that the USCCB promoted local diocese to perform 250 hours of adoration (union with God) and/or 250 works of mercy (communion with others) as a means of preparation for this solemn consecration. These two acts – adoration and works of mercy – should not remain merely preparatory, but should become our constant means of heart nourishment.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament leads us to discover ‘the merciful and ever-present love of the Heart of Christ [who] invites us to union with Him’ (*Dilexit Nos* 84). Eucharistic Adoration stands in stark relief to our modern sensibilities. Pope Francis commented that, “Amid the frenetic pace of today’s world and our obsession with free time, consumption and diversion, cell phones and social media, we forget to nourish our lives with the strength of the Eucharist” (84). It is here before our Lord substantially present in the Eucharistic species that we may come to meet the Heart we spoke about just moments before – one of justice, mercy, truth, and charity – and we can then come to trust Him with everything – because, ultimately, that is what is placed before us today as we complete this act of consecration. We have before us a “profoundly personal and challenging invitation to entrust our lives to the Lord” (164).

Works of mercy act as a compliment to adoration. As *Dilexit Nos* reminds us, even as the Heart of Christ leads us into deeper union with God, “it sends us forth to our brothers and Sisters” (163). The love of the Heart of Jesus for us demands a loving response in return – not only to God Himself, but to the lives of those whom he has entrusted to us. “There is no greater way for us to return love for love” (167). St. John the Beloved repeats this sentiment as he writes, “Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 Jn 4:20). Our hearts are transformed before Our Lord in Eucharistic Adoration and that transformation is deepened when we place ourselves at the service of others. It is here, in acts of generous service, both great and small, that selfishness is stripped, steadfastness is challenged, and sufferings are shared. Therein lies our call to action – to become missionaries of the love of the Heart. This mission demands that we ourselves are in love and desire nothing more than to share this love with others. Thus, does our understanding come full circle. In this sharing of hearts, the heartily pursuits we spoke of earlier are renewed. May our love of God inspire wonder, virtue, self-sacrifice, and charity in the hearts of others. May we be exemplars of the Heart after the Heart of Christ, just as our Lady is.

Saint Therese of Lisieux urges each of us to not become a Saint by halves. “Doing something half-hearted never works. Half-hearted soldiers don’t win battles. Half-hearted athletes don’t win games. Likewise, halfhearted devotion to God rumbles before the pressures of the world...Giving ourselves away in whole hearted love like Jesus – seeking to give, not to gain – makes for happiness” (Gray 588).

I know you are probably on the edge of your seat to how that little storybook I mentioned ends. It is in handing her bottled heart over to another, specifically into the hands of a child brimming with wonder, simplicity and joy, that the girl is once again able to place her heart back into her chest. So, too, we need the Heart of another, a Heart that came to us first as a little child in Bethlehem, to take our hearts out of the bottles and caskets and coffins we have placed them in, to teach us how to again love and be loved.

I invited you now to join me in closing with the Consecration of the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus:

You know the longings of our hearts, and you desire that we enjoy friendship with you.

From your pierced side, you have poured out the wellspring of life, for which we thirst.

Your heart burns with a love for all people to return to a right relationship with you.

We celebrate the abundant gifts you have given this nation, founded on the self-evident truths that our Creator has endowed all people with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

We make reparation for the offenses against you and against human dignity that have taken place in this nation.

May our hearts be united to yours, so that our families and communities enjoy peace and happiness; may broken relationships be reconciled, injustices repaired, and the wounds of our land be healed.

May your holy Catholic Church serve as a sign, pointing all people to your infinite love.

O Desire of Nations and Center of History, we ask you to bless these United States of America.

Who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us!

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! (USCCB)

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