

Saturday, June 28, 2014

Homily for the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

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Charles Dickens, one of my favorite novelists wrote many novels for which he is well known. One of them is entitled: Tale of Two Cities. How about we borrow some of that title for our feast today and call today the Tale of Two hearts. Yesterday's Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and today's feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Through these two hearts, God has drawn countless souls to himself. We pray that their hearts will reign and triumph over all for the salvation of our souls and the whole world

Since my own childhood, perhaps like many of you, I grew up with a strong devotion to both the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart. I recall often our parish priest inviting us to pray the litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, repeating with ever greater intensity, "heart of Jesus," "heart of Jesus," and the prayer of reparation and consecration. For some reason, I was most taken by the words: We are thine and thine we wish to be. When my parents built their home in 1970, they invited our parish priest to come and offer the mass in our home and to enshrine in our family room and living room respectively, the statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart have watched over us from their little ledges in those rooms for all these 44 years. How could I have ever imagined the part that devotion would play in my own vocation and in my own spiritual life?

The tale of two hearts is a tale of the illogical and incomprehensible love of God for us. We cannot explain why God loves us so much, we who are so corrupt and unlovable, so unworthy of that gift and yet the revelation of God even far back into the old covenant reminds us that God has set his heart upon us. The heart of Jesus and the immaculate heart of Mary then are shrines of this divine love. They both, to their own degree, one by the God man and one by the perfect vessel of grace, reflect and mirror for us this most central of all beliefs that God is love. Try as hard as we may, we simply cannot explain the reasons for this, for God should have given up on our humanity long ago, but he didn't. Perhaps, we will never know the reasons until we get to heaven. I recall the 17th century philosopher Blaise Pascal, who at the end of this life wrote this timeless truth: The heart has reasons of which reason knows nothing. No truer words have ever been spoken especially as they relate to the Tale of these two hearts.

With these simple thoughts then in mind, we come to the end of this special novena in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I wish to thank our very own Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters of Wichita for your beautiful witness among us to this great, intense and passionate love of Mary for Jesus and for us. Your presence in our diocese is a gift reminding us of God's inexplicable love for us and how that love is responded to best by seeking to have a pure heart like Mary. Mary inspires us through you, to keep our hearts free of sin and set on God, as God's heart is set on us. So many in our times have their hearts set on so many other things that leave them empty and unfulfilled. The lost souls of our times need a devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary to stir their hearts once again and to enflame them with divine grace. Let that be our common prayer and intention in this novena mass, to pray for all hearts here and throughout the world that are on fire with the love of God. Mary teaches us how to serve the Lord, how to love him and how to give ourselves to him. Mary's Immaculate Heart keeps these things, contemplates these mysteries for all eternity as Mother of the Redeemer and the Redeemed. Let us join her in this great contemplation, which draws us into the mystery of divine love.

With you, I pray that a renewal of love and devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary will happen here and transform our local church in a place where these two hearts will reign and triumph over us and in us.

May the Lord hear this, our humble prayer and help all of us when our hearts are tempted to seek another love, when our hearts are closed to God or grown cold to his love. May we be drawn ever closer then into the mystery of divine love and its most perfect human response which is the Tale of two Hearts. Amen.