

# *Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

*June 27, 2014*

## *Part I*

The Church in her Liturgical calendar has specifically placed the celebrations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary back to back. Knowing that Mother Church is always teaching her children, the placement of these two feasts contains lessons she wishes us to learn. But, before we look to our lesson and a practical application, let's trace the development of the devotion to the Sacred Heart with a sprint through history.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart is found in seed form throughout the Scriptures and in the writings of the Church Fathers. In the 1100s, St. Bernard of Clairvaux explicitly refers to the Heart of Jesus in his writings and sermons, giving impetus to the devotion. (O'Donnell 94).

St. Bernard's teachings lead to a marked development of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the 1200s. The first recorded apparition of Our Lord revealing his Sacred Heart as a symbol of his love for mankind came in 1246 to St. Lutgard (O'Donnell 97). The exterior wounds of the stigmata received by St. Francis of Assisi led to his meditation on the internal sufferings of the Heart of Christ. The Dominicans, particularly in the writings of St. Albert the Great, united the devotion with a great love of the Eucharist. In the late 1200s, three nuns at

the Cistercian monastery in Helfta, Sts. Mechthild of Madeburg, Mechthilde of Hackeborn and Gertrude the Great all had mystical experiences involving the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (O'Donnell 106)

In the 1500s, the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) fostered the devotion, particularly through the work of St. Peter Canasius and through the development of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century France, St. John Eudes developed and spread devotion to the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary. At the same time, St. Francis de Sales, imbued with the love of the Heart of Christ, influenced St. Jane Frances de Chantal, who established the Visitation Sisters. It is in this environment that Jesus in 1673-75 revealed to St. Margaret Mary, a Visitation nun, her mission to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart. But where's the Immaculate Heart? Just wait!

143 years after the death of St. Margaret Mary, with the devotion to the Sacred Heart firmly established, another nun in France was having visions – this time of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1830, Our Lady gave St. Catherine Laboure the revelation of the Miraculous Medal at the convent of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. This medal is

unique in that, on the back, the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is depicted **with** the image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

A later joint revelation of the unity of the two Hearts happened at Fatima. In 1916, the Angel of Peace appeared to the three children as a preparation for Our Lady's appearances. The Angel told the children, "The Hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplication." At another apparition he said, "The Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary have merciful designs for you." Finally the Angel dictates a prayer to the children which in part says: "And I draw upon the infinite merits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary that You might convert poor sinners." (Fatima.org)

This union of the Sacred and Immaculate Heart does not go unnoticed. In 1956, Pope Pius XII wrote an encyclical *On Devotion to the Sacred Heart (Haurietis aquas)*. Toward the end of the document he wrote: "In order that favors in greater abundance may flow on all Christians, nay on the whole human race, from the devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, let the faithful see to it that devotion the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God is closely joined. For by God's Will, in carrying out the work of human Redemption the Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably linked with Christ in such a manner that our salvation sprang from the love and the sufferings of Jesus Christ to which the love and sorrows of His Mother were intimately united." (Gilligan 159-160)

These two Hearts are "inseparably linked". You can see where Mother Church is leading us. She wants us to contemplate the union of these two Hearts. At this point some previous "lessons" may be coming to mind.

One lesson may be that of St. Louis de Montfort – that Mary is our road to get to the very Heart of Jesus. "Through her the Word came to us from the Father. The Word could have chosen a thousand other ways, or no way at all, for neither bridges nor intermediaries are necessary to the purposes of God. It was His explicit Will that, just as God was to come to men through Mary, so redeemed humanity should also go to God through her". (Crawley 259)

Another lesson could be that of the loving obedience of these two Hearts: the obedience Jesus and Mary to the Father's Will and the obedience Jesus showed his Mother on earth, and continues to show her in heaven, where she reigns as Queen Mother and intercedes for us. Or we could contemplate the Heart of Divine Mercy and how Mary is the Mother of Mercy.

However, in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (n 22) Pope St. John Paul II states: "... under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, this heart, the heart of both a virgin and a mother, has always followed the work of her Son and has gone out to all those whom Christ has embraced and continues to embrace with inexhaustible love." (O'Donnell 273)

Notice this simple phrase: “This heart... *has always followed the work of her Son*”; this is the lesson of accompaniment.

We all desire to have someone with whom we share our life. Joys, sorrows, victories, defeats – we want another to cheer or commiserate with us. We have a desire to accompany others and to be accompanied in our life’s pilgrimage. It’s not so much that the one who accompanies can effect a change on the situation, but that they are merely present to share the experience with the other. This is not so much an action of the intellect, but that of the heart. Love does not change according to situation, but shares, encourages, supports, and consoles

Mary, from the first moment of the Incarnation, had her Immaculate Heart fixed on her Son. Jesus is our perfect model of filial love for Mary. Their Hearts were intimately united during those 30 years before his public ministry. They would have shared many joys and sorrows with each other, especially the death of St. Joseph. As he went forth to His public ministry, Mary could not always be physically present, but no doubt her Heart followed him as she heard of his miracles and teachings. The love of the Sacred Heart of the God-Man would have always been attentive to her, no matter where he traveled. The Scriptures bear witness to the compassionate Hearts of Jesus and Mary during the Passion. On Good Friday He gave His heart to her to strengthen, sustain and comfort her, and she walked the Via

Dolorosa and stood at the foot of his cross, compassionating him with her Sorrowful Heart.

Even though it is not in Scripture, it is piously believed that on Easter morning, the first person to whom Jesus appeared was Mary, his Mother. She, who compassionated with him in his sufferings, should rightly share the joy of the Resurrection.

The lesson of accompaniment. Two Hearts that loved each other totally desired to “be present” to the other. How can we take this lesson into our own spiritual life? One way is through Eucharistic Adoration. St. John Vianney would regularly see a man simply sitting in the back of the parish church. One day the saint asked the man what he was doing there. The man answered, “I look at him and he looks at me.” He knew the lesson of “being present” to the Lord. Sr. Mary Margaret, in the second portion of this presentation, will take us back to the Visitation convents in France for another practical application of the lesson of accompaniment through the Sacred Heart Guard of Honor.

## Part II

Imagine a group of twenty five and six year olds coming to school on the morning of Valentine’s Day. What do they or their parents have in their hands? With smiles on their faces and excitement all over they hand me large bags of candy and trays of cupcakes that have colored frosting piled high! Some might even have

Spiderman Valentine cards to pass out later at the party. I endeavor to graciously smile back at them in return as I try to find *more* room on the back counter of my classroom for these party treats that will tantalize them all day long as they ask me every 15 minutes when the party begins!

Since Valentine candy and various holiday assortments come out the day after our Lord's birth at Christmas, one can only imagine what type of mental and emotional war I have to fight to get them to think of something other than the sweet smells floating around in my classroom. I usually pull out my loving 'weapon' of an enlarged drawing of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and explain to them that this was the very first and most important Valentine which was opened by the soldier at the foot of the Cross. I then go on to teach them the meaning of the symbolism of the Heart: the crown of thorns (a sign of our sins that continue to wound Our Lord), the flame of fire (an expression of His burning love for you and for me), the cross (from which was preached the greatest sermon of love) and the sacred wound (opened wide where Our Lord invites us to enter in.). This, of course, it what I want them to remember about St. Valentine's Day.

Today we celebrate the great feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; a day of celebration that Jesus Himself asked St. Margaret Mary to help promote and have established in the Universal Church. On June 16, 1675, while St. Margaret Mary was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, Our

Lord appeared to her and said, "*Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love. In return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this sacrament of love. And what is most painful to Me is that they are hearts consecrated to Me. It is for this reason I ask thee that the first Friday after Corpus Christi be made a special feast, to honor My Heart by receiving Holy Communion on that day, and making reparation for the indignity that it has received. And I promise that My Heart shall pour out abundantly the influences of its love on all who will render it this honor*"(Bougaud, p.176). It wasn't until 1856 that Pope Pius IX established this feast in the Church. Nevertheless, the very first time a picture of this Heart was publically venerated was the Friday after Corpus Christi in 1685 by St. Margaret Mary and her novices (Bougaud, 238). Three hundred and twenty nine years later we are still rightfully honoring this Heart. Today, I would like to share with you a simple way we can honor the Heart of Jesus not just once a year, but every day.

Our Lord did not choose just one Sister of the Visitation order to spread devotion to His Sacred Heart, but several of them. One of these was Blessed Sr. Marie (Bernaud) of the Sacred Heart who was born on October 25, 1825. I would like to share with you a part of her story that I found from an article on the internet

posted by one of the various Visitation Monasteries in the U. S. “Although her inclination for religious life was first made known at age 5, the family arranged for her betrothal at age 16. Widowed at age 20 after a difficult and childless marriage, her strong faith was fruitful in bringing to birth the conversion of her husband prior to his death.

Four years later as the Feast of the Sacred Heart approached, she confirmed her call to religious life during a retreat made at the Monastery of the Visitation at Bourg. On the First Friday of April 1851, she professed her religious vows.

This kind and simple soul poured forth her devotion to the Heart of Jesus into her community so much that in June 1862, the monastery was solemnly dedicated to the Sacred Heart. In December of that same year, the Monastery at Bourg received a letter from the Visitation Sisters in Annecy, containing this sentence: ‘Our Lord complained to a favored soul to whom He had revealed His Heart that we (Visitandines) do not employ enough zeal in spreading Its devotion.’ On hearing those words, the sisters looked towards Sr. Marie saying: ‘It’s up to you to find a new way to glorify the Heart of Jesus.

Shortly afterwards, Sr. Marie had a vision of the Sacred Heart surrounded by a dial with the words **Glory! Love! Reparation!** She felt compelled to reproduce this image and entitled it ‘Guard of Honor of the Sacred Heart’. Her superior,

on seeing the image, blessed and approved it allowing each sister to choose an hour of private prayer dedicated to the Heart of Jesus. Mother Marie-Julia inscribed the sisters’ names around the dial and on March 13, 1863, the fledgling Guard of Honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was founded.

Years earlier, Jesus had told St. Margaret Mary: **‘I want to encircle My Heart with a crown of twelve stars composed of my dearest and faithful servants.’** Each star on the dial corresponds with an hour where Jesus is receiving the consolation of an adorer. Sr. Marie chose 12 guardians – one for each hour: Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the Righteous of the Earth, and the Nine Choirs of Angels.

Later, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, June 13, 1863, Our Lord showed Sr. Marie, in another vision, the piercing of His Heart on Calvary. During adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, she heard these words: **‘When the side was pierced,’** these words were printed in her soul. The Honor Guard is the providential means of worship particular to the wound of the Heart of Jesus received by the soldier’s lance.

The deep and lasting impression made on the soul of Sr. Marie enabled her to understand the relationship between its mystery and the role of the Guard of Honor. Each member of the association, standing spiritually at the foot of the cross with Our Blessed Mother, St. John and St. Mary

*Magdalene, \“must be present to receive the blood and water”\ from the Pierced Heart of Christ. The blood and water, in an act of love and reparation, were then to be offered to the Father for the world. The members were to watch with these first three comforters of Jesus and continue to do so until the end of time – hour after hour, consoler after consoler – in a spirit of uninterrupted and perpetual adoration of Jesus on the Cross and Jesus in the Eucharist” (Angel, 2008).*

One does not have to look very far to see how much our Lord’s Heart is continually pierced in our society today. What Jesus asked of St. Margaret Mary and Blessed Sr. Marie was to invite all men to love Him by receiving His love and, in accepting it, console Him. Believe it or not, Jesus wants us to celebrate Valentine’s day, the day we celebrate ‘love’, everyday! His Heart is for all times, all places, and all people; for you and for me.

To become an associate of *The Guard of Honor* is quite easy (especially as I brought enrollment forms with me😊). You simply choose an hour of the day which you would like to dedicate to the Heart of Jesus each day without changing your regular activities. Then, during this hour, make a directed intention and offer the precious Blood and Water from the Heart of Jesus to the Father along with your gift of time. No candy or cupcakes are necessary to keep watch in company with Our Blessed Mother, St. John and Mary Magdalen in honoring this first Valentine.

Crawley-Boevey, Fr. Mateo, SS.CC., Jesus, King of Love, The National Center of the Enthronement, 1945.

Eudes, St. John, The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Trans Dom Richard Flower, OSB, Preserving Christian Publications, Inc., Albany, NY, 2000.

Gilligan, W. Doyle, Devotion to the Sacred heart of Jesus, Lumen Christi Press, Houston, TX, 1995.

O’Donnell, Timothy T., Heart of the Redeemer, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1989.

<http://www.fatima.org/essentials/whatuca/ndo/sac&immhrts/jesus.asp>

Velasco, Miguel Angel.2008. Review of *God is Heart. Maria of the Sacred Heart Bernaud.*

<http://visitationspirit.org/welcome/guard-of-honor-history/>. [accessed June 15, 2014].

Rt. Rev. Emile Bougaud, *The Life of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, INC., 1990), 176, 238

