

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
June 24, 2022

The Fullness of His Heart

In the 17th Century our Lord appeared to a Sisters of the Visitation nun St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. In his appearance the Lord appealed to her to foster a greater devotion to his sacred heart. These revelations appeared between 1673 and 1675. One of the key points the Lord stressed to St. Margaret was the following:

I promise thee that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love upon those who shall thus honour It, and cause It to be honoured

When we think of the Lord's Sacred Heart our readings for today invite us to consider three aspects of his heart.

- In the passage from Ezekiel we read of the **breadth** of the Lord's Sacred Heart.
- In Romans we are given insight into the **nature** of the Lord's Sacred Heart.
- And in the Gospel, in the form of a parable, we capture something of the **intensity** of the Lord's Sacred Heart.

I want to show you this morning that it is the breadth, nature and intensity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he promises to those who honour Him in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. What a profound promise. Now let's think about what it means beginning with

1. The Breadth of the Sacred Heart: Who

Another way of thinking about the breadth of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to ask, who does the Lord want to reach out to with his Sacred Heart? Listen to how the Lord speaks through Ezekiel

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice.

Did you hear who is mentioned? It is a picture of everyman. The lost, (that is those who have never known Christ), the strayed, (those who have wandered away from the Catholic Church), the crippled, (that is those who are disabled), the weak are those who cannot fend for themselves in the world, and that fat and strong. These are those who are strong in their faith and are leading good and productive lives. Jesus is concerned for them all. And all have a place within his sheepfold, the Catholic Church, and by extension here at St. Peter's. The breadth of Jesus' Sacred Heart is so encompassing that the Lord wants to reach out with his Sacred Heart to all

people. He wants everyone to come into the fold because of the second quality we are considering today, which is the nature of the Lord's Sacred Heart.

2. The Nature of the Lord's Sacred Heart: Why

If Ezekiel shows us that Jesus's Sacred Heart reaches out to everyone because he wants all people to be part of his flock, St. Paul then explains to us the reason why he does this. It is because of the nature of his heart. His is the heart of love; or as the Apostle Paul states it:

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

It is because of the love that is the essence of the Sacred Heart that the breadth of his heart is so all encompassing.

Please remember what sin and sins are: Sin is that state of separation from God that results in our committing sins.

Sins are words, deeds, or intentions by which we deliberately and voluntarily offend against the true order of things, as God's loving providence has arranged them.

To sin means more than to violate some rules about which men have agreed. Sin turns freely and deliberately against God's love and ignores him. Sin is ultimately "love of oneself even to contempt of God" (St. Augustine), and in the extreme case the sinful creature says, "I want to be like God" (see Gen 3:5). Just as sin burdens me with guilt, wounds me, and by its consequences ruins me, so too it poisons and damages the world in which I live. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is so full of love that while we are still sinners Christ died for us so that we could receive his love, turn from sin and so walk in newness of life.

3. The intensity of the Sacred Heart: How

The intensity of the Sacred Heart is so persistent in seeking out those who have strayed, are lost, crippled and weak that Jesus searches for them with the intensity of a faithful shepherd in looking for his sheep. And while it is so true Jesus has a concern for all people, even when he finds one sheep that is wayward, suffering and lost, he brings that one home amidst great rejoicing because he loves nothing more than for his human sheep to know the depth of the shepherd's love and to be secure in his sheep fold the Church.

So here is the application of this teaching. Remember again the Lord's promise to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the year 1675:

I promise thee that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love upon those who shall thus honour It, and cause It to be honoured

Jesus says on those who honour his heart he will shed his divine love so that we can love more fully with this sacred love. As priests of Jesus Christ, Fr Albert and I embody being Christ

among you in our veneration of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, Jesus will in turn give us a greater portion of His Sacred Heart. As you the people of God come to the Sacrament of the Body and Blood in reverence and true devotion, Jesus will in turn impart to you His Heart. As this happens the heart of St. Peter's Parish will come to more fully pulse with the breadth, nature and intensity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thus St. Peter's will increasingly be a spiritual cardiovascular system that is healthy because it is none other than the Heart of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such a healthy heart will show love to people who are caught up in a society that is often indifferent and careless towards the things of Jesus, and at times outright hostile. Such a healthy heart will find expression in St. Peter's becoming ever more a community where more and more we will find here the lost, the strayed, the crippled, the weak and the fat and the strong. Such a healthy heart will burn with the intensity of Jesus' Sacred Heart because we will share in the joy of heaven at the homecoming of wayward sheep, wayward sons and daughters.

Does not your heart yearn to be more like the Lord's Sacred Heart so that we can fully encounter the one who in Ezekiel says:

15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. Jesus wants to shepherd his sheep by giving us his Sacred Heart.

So let's take Jesus at His word when says:

I promise thee that My Heart shall expand Itself to shed in abundance the influence of Its divine love upon those who shall thus honour It and cause It to be honoured."