

Feast of the Sacred Heart¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Nemours, Thursday, June 7, 1866

In the Office today, we read that, as a memorial of the sufferings and burning love that Jesus showed us during his life, the **Church established the Feast of the Sacred Heart as a perpetual memorial of his passion and love. In fact, the essence of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the love that moved him. Love and heart are synonymous.** Describing someone we may say, she is a very loving person, highly dedicated. We are really honoring her heart. The heart is the noblest part of the body. It is vital, for blood passes through the heart by means of arteries, and maintains a steady temperature by its continual movement and activity. Arteries conduct blood to all veins and limbs. Coursing throughout the body, blood becomes weak. Returning to the heart, it is warmed again, then brings new life again to the rest of the body. When blood remains congealed in the heart, and no longer circulates, death sets in.

And so, my good Daughters, our physical heart is like that. As the source of life, our heart is more than just something physical; it is the center of joy and pain. People with little heart do not suffer much; great emotions are in the heart – sometimes our heart-pains even cause death. God allows some of these sorrows, divine or spiritual, to affect us, we seem to die. Such was the suffering of St. Theresa when a Seraph pierced her heart with a flaming dart. It seems that she suffered the pains of paradise and the intense suffering of death. The heart suffers more than it rejoices. The heart performs acts of goodness, and good deeds imply love of God. And what causes evil? It is the love [...] of creatures; that's what sin is. When evil stems from our heart, from our affections, it becomes more serious. The sins of the heart are the most displeasing to God. When the heart loves something more than God, then our Lord is evicted from the heart. Pay close attention to sins of the heart.

The life of the heart sums up everything! Notice what God says in the Scriptures, *My son, give me your heart* (Pr 23:26). The Good Lord loves only the heart, nothing else. Be very careful about this. In the service of God you have only one thing that can please him, your heart. By your chastity, you give your body to God. Your mind submits to obedience. Your imagination is given to your work. But your heart is given, and immediately taken back. We are always taking it back, because the heart always has new attractions. This explains a little about our heart.

Now, what is the sense of this feast of our Lord, this feast of his heart? My Sisters, this feast celebrates the sufferings that our Lord endured, the immense pain that he suffered, not only the three hours of agony on the Cross and the twelve hours that he suffered in Jerusalem, but the sufferings of his entire life. The heart of our Lord suffered throughout his life from the ingratitude of humans toward God. The heart of our Lord was always crucified. We will never fathom his love, since it is infinite. Notice also, that the intensity of suffering corresponds to the intensity of love. Our Lord loves us so tenderly, and suffers so much because he has an infinite love. Our Lord does not suffer out of constraint, but out of choice, because he wants to. He himself chose his own sufferings; that was why they were so beautiful for him, and so touching (striking) for us! As he himself said in the Gospel: *It is I who have chosen death out of love for humankind* (cf. Jn 10:17-18).

Our Lord suffered for the entire human race, but he also suffered for each one of us in particular. Remember this well, my good Daughters. If you want to stir up your love for our Lord, tell yourself, It is

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for me that our Lord suffered, for me that he was crucified. In saying this, you are speaking the truth. In his mercy, he wanted to include each human person and suffer for each one in particular, so that each one of us can recognize our own unique and personal redemption. It's like the sun: it would be the sun even if it brought light to only one person; but since it is so big and embraces the whole world, there is no obstacle to its being the sun for each of us.

We have all made our Lord suffer and weep. Now, what should we do? We should love the heart of our Lord with a love of suffering. From the moment that you became Christians, you were called to the Eucharistic vocation. Don't you see that our Lord's sufferings gave birth to his love in your heart? And by weeping over the sufferings of our Lord you celebrate his victory once again.

Let us pray for the entire world. Let us celebrate the victory of our Lord for those who do not think about it. Let us tell him, *You are worthy of all praise, of all power, because you have been slain* (cf. Rev 5:12). Let us pray to him for sinners, that he may enlighten their hearts. In this way you will celebrate the sufferings of our Lord, of his heart. Remember that, when our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, he appeared holding his heart in his hand, a heart encircled with thorns with two openings from which came the flames of love rising up to heaven. At the same moment our Lord told her, **Behold this heart that has so loved (humans) men**, etc. Pray, my good Daughters; make reparation and console this heart.

This divine heart, risen from the dead, is in heaven where it is honored by a sweet-smelling incense. My Sisters, you have him fully alive in the Sacrament of love. He is there glorified and risen, yes, but he has the same heart, with the same blood. Console him, therefore, for so many sinners who offend him. O yes, my poor Daughters, it is up to you to console him. Behold a heart that has loved so much and receives only indifference and ingratitude in return. It is for you to adore him, and to love him. Love him as much as ten persons, a hundred, a thousand, and you will celebrate his love. Love that suffers nothing is not really love. You cannot separate our Lord's love from his cross...! When you praise this love, remember that it is encircled with thorns, with sacrifices. You cannot keep them apart.

Behold our Lord with his heart! Oh, if only we could see his heart in the Sacrament of the altar! His heart suffers here more than in Jerusalem. The Jews did not know him, so their guilt was less than ours. Today, Catholics are the ones who offend him; both people and priests abandon him. Many surround him like mercenaries, no longer loving him. His real enemies are Catholics who no longer want to love. Oh, my good Daughters, **remember that the four ends of the Sacrifice are your dowry**: adoration, the sacrifice of our Lord, perpetual thanksgiving. But reparation and the crucifixion are your burden now. Our Lord is always new in his Eucharistic state. Keep in mind that when you make profession, we place a crown of thorns on your head, not a crown of roses. If you wear white, remember that the saints whitened their robes on Calvary. You must be bleached in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Ap 7:14), otherwise it would surely not be suitable.

My poor Daughters, I do not know if our Lord gave you the grace to keep your heart under control, ever pure. If you have kept your heart free from all evil and unruly affection, you have been given an immense grace, namely, to offer our Lord the most beautiful flower there is, the lily. Now, you must place this lily in the midst of thorns; this is the crucifixion. **Place your heart in the tabernacle, better still, place it in the ciborium, not for you to be adored, God forbid!, but to love.**

And do you know what beautiful carving I would like someone to make? It would be a ciborium full of sacred Hosts, and from this Sacred vessel flames would be leaping out. Picture it as you will. Then, there would be a small dove that would fly from Noah's ark towards the tabernacle or towards heaven, holding a Host in its beak. The dove would then place its own heart in the ciborium instead of the Host, and the

Host would replace its heart. It seems there was a saint, they say, whose heart our Lord replaced with his own, not just in ecstasy, but in reality. The exchange really took place.

Yes, my good Daughters, take your heart and encase it into the heart of our Lord, so that they will become one. Two hearts, united by love, become one. Give your heart willingly to our Lord. If you had the misfortune of allowing your heart to be attracted to others – and you know that the heart is like a vase full of the wine of love, from this vase, our Lord can come and drink, but if we tip it too quickly, it will spill out... you get the picture. If we had the misfortune of tipping our hearts towards others, how ignoble that could be!

Do you know what causes the most sorrow in the service of the Good Lord when we come to know him well? This would be to cast one's heart into the mire, so that it is overturned and can no longer hold anything. Let us beg pardon from the Good Lord. We need to acknowledge every day that we have not loved him well, but we want to make reparation. If possible, let one week have the value of two. Nothing is impossible for one who truly loves. In order to grant us paradise, divine justice requires only that we follow the law which consists of loving God sincerely and never offending him. So much for the law. However, God allows us to love him with greater purity, with the freedom of friendship. St. Paul (cf. Rm 7:6) tells us that this goes beyond the law. If you say: I will love God according to law and the counsel of love, then this is not the love that our Lord deserves. Let us give ourselves to him with a pure love that we may be at the pleasure of his love. [...]

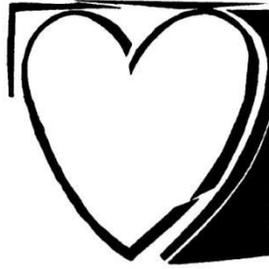
My good Daughters; do not complain. You have our Lord, and when we have our Lord, even if we are crucified on Calvary, we are at peace. The good thief was there [on calvary]. He desired only that our Lord would tell him, *You will be with me in paradise* (Lk 23:43). Then he suffered no more, he was already in paradise, although still on the cross. You are not on the cross, but on your kneeling bench, with our Lord. Even if you were crucified a bit, you still have our Lord! Always remember this: when the Good Lord wants to grant us some great grace, we must pay the price of suffering.

When our Lord wants to do something great for his Father, when he wants to surprise his Father, when he wants to re-live some mystery of his life in a particular person, our Lord has them gather some flowers² on earth. Our Lord says that he would like to glorify his Father, and so he says, Here is a good sister, one of my children, one of my spouses who belongs to me. Since I want to glorify my Father, I will let her suffer and have her gather the flowers of Calvary to offer to my Father. And so, when our Lord chooses a soul or a community in this way, we should be very happy. Of course, he must make you recline several hours on the cross so that the flowers that he loves so much may grow in you; the sun of God's love nurtures these flowers.

My good Daughters, always love our Lord, be joyful, and unite your heart to his. When we love someone, we can guess what he wants, be like that. I had a sculpture made of our Lord on a throne composed of hearts in the form of a crown. It is a crown composed of hearts which of course are for him. From every heart there comes a lily, or a sword, or some thorns. It is a symbol, but in yourselves you must make it real.

Have courage, my good Daughters. And pray for your mother. The Good Lord has really placed her on the cross. Pray. We will recite one *Our Father* for her, so that the will of the Good Lord [may be done]!

² St. Eymard uses this expression to express the need to offer sacrifice in our prayers.



Point for reflection:

This meditation is full of tenderness. Here, St. Peter Julian contemplates love at its purest source, and invites us to give love for love. What new aspect of devotion to the Sacred Heart strikes you in this text?