

THE SACRED HEART

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"Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation?

Or distress?

Or famine?

Or nakedness?

Or danger?

Or persecution?

Or the sword?

.. I am sure

That neither death nor life,

Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

Nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor might, nor height, nor depth,

Nor any other creature,

Shall be able to separate us

From the love of God

Which is in Christ Jesus

Our Lord." (Romans viii, 35 sqq.)

A man walked down the street. He spoke and people found themselves listening, almost in spite of themselves. No one ever spoke like this and they wanted to hear more. The man moved out of the town and they followed Him. Whole days passed, but nothing seemed to matter so long as they had Him. They forgot about sleep. They forgot about food. It was the man who remembered. He told them sit down and He would feed them. Thousands sat down, but there were no rations except five loaves and two fishes. These He took and blessed and they multiplied so that there was enough to go round, and plenty over.

The man was Jesus Christ. He might just as easily have created the food but His way is to make use of whatever we can supply ourselves.

Wine ran short at a marriage feast. He told the servants to fill six jars with water. It was all they had, and this He took and changed into wine.

What Have You?

With a piece of moistened clay He anointed the eye of a man born blind. He told him to go to the pool and wash it off. The man did, and at that instant he received the gift of sight. Ten lepers cried out to Him to have mercy on them. He ordered them to go and show themselves to the priests, and on the way the hideous scars fell from their bodies.

These instances, chosen at random, show that Our Lord wants to enter into partnership with us. He looks for our co-operation however insignificant it may be. "Do your own share," He seems to say, "and certainly I shall not fail to do Mine. Bring as much as you can and after that depend on Me to supply the rest."

Apostle of the Sacred Heart

This was His principle, too, in dealing with St. Margaret Mary. Margaret was a shy, timid little girl from the country, and it was she whom He chose to be the apostle of His Sacred Heart. Margaret's father had died when she was a child. Her poor mother and herself were forced by circumstances to go over and live with three dreadful female relatives, reminiscent of the three witches in Macbeth.

She had none of the innocent joys of childhood. She soon developed an inferiority complex. She dare not leave the

house except with the permission of each of the three dames, who ruled over it with a rod of iron. The unfortunate child would hide herself for whole days in a corner of a stable or garden where some sympathetic neighbours would bring her scraps of food. "When at last I came back," she tells us, "it was with such terror that I felt like a criminal going to receive the death sentence." The evil-minded women neeringly accused her of misconduct during these intervals with some lads of the village. The charge drew from her the most vehement protests. So great was her horror of anything which might tarnish her purity that she declared she would prefer to be torn into a thousand pieces than even to think of it.

This much must suffice to indicate the background of the girl of twenty-three who rang the bell one evening, at the Visitation Convent, in Paray, and asked to be accepted as a postulant. The door swung open and she was admitted. She was in an ecstasy of joy at the prospect. A violent temptation seized her, on the very threshold of the convent, to fly back to the mother she loved and have done with this crazy notion of a nunnery. But she went on. "I was, in fact, so transported with joy that I exclaimed: 'It is here that my God would have me to be.'"

Troubles Begin

But Paray would prove to be no paradise. Ancient biographers, fearful of shocking their pious readers, were careful to suppress in their accounts any details which seemed to smack of what was dis-edifying. Modern writers have reacted against the tendency. They favour a healthy frankness and realism. "It must needs be that scandals come," and the story of scandals can often yield undoubted advantages in the telling.

There were scandals at Paray. They were not of as deep a dye as might be found in other monasteries round about Margaret's time. (She was born in 1647.) But the little convent had its problems just the same. The fact was that some of the sisters did not have a vocation.

These grand ladies looked down the nose at the child of a mere notary from some backwater hamlet in Burgundy. They soon made poor Margaret keenly conscious of the inferiority of her position. She began to realise that she had been delivered from the claws of the three witches only to be, lashed by the tongues of scorn and ill-concealed contempt of her sisters in religion.

This, then, was the nun, who, in the inscrutable designs of Providence, was chosen to be the apostle of the Sacred Heart, entrusted by Our Lord Himself with the arduous mission to propagate this devotion. "The foremost place," writes Pope Pius XII, "amongst those who promoted this excellent devotion, must assuredly go to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. Inspired by her own burning zeal, and with the assistance of her spiritual director, Blessed Claude de la Colombiere, she richly embellished this devotion, and caused it to take clear and definite shape, much to the admiration of the faithful."

But, to tell the truth, the prospect scared Margaret. Our Lord appeared to her repeatedly, explaining different things He wanted her to do. Thus on one occasion she was ordered to tell Mother Superior that God was not pleased with the spirit of the community. The poor girl began to tremble and implored to be excused. But the Lord was inexorable and Margaret had to go. She prayed that day, she tells us, on the way to her Superior's room, that she might drop dead

More Troubles

Worse was to come. She was to undertake a big mission, none other than to spread all through the Church the devotion to His Sacred Heart. Again she expostulated and pleaded, and again her pleading was without effect. She pointed out that she was a nobody. With charming naivete she reminded Him that there were several other nuns in the convent more capable by far than herself. All she wanted to do was to hide herself and give herself to prayer and sacrifice. Why would He not permit this, and hand over His commission to someone else?

"It is precisely because you are an abyss of ignorance and of nothingness that I have chosen you. It will thus be clear to all men that the mission is Mine, not yours." As He took the water at Cana, as He took the five loaves and two fishes, so would He take Margaret, just as she was, devoid of any outstanding merit or talent, and, using whatever amount of co-operation was possible for her to give, He would Himself provide for what was lacking.

It is with reluctance that we leave the rest of the fascinating story of Margaret. In her distress, Our Lord promised to send into her life "a priest after His own Heart." This proved to be the young Jesuit, Father de la Colombiere. He

became her staunch friend and support, having first thoroughly tested her spirit. He was convinced she was led by the spirit of God, and told Mother Prioress so.

His verdict caused another flutter in the dovecot! So now she has succeeded in deceiving even the wily Jesuit! Margaret would have an interview with him lasting a whole hour or longer. The great ladies were graciously bowed out after being accorded a minute or a minute and a half! What the results were, we can leave you to surmise.

Pope Pius XII

This happened three hundred years ago. With what zest the message of the Sacred Heart has since been relayed can be judged from the following facts. They are found listed by Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical on this devotion. "Our predecessor, Clement XIII," he writes, "granted to the Bishops of Poland and to the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart at Rome, permission to celebrate the feast liturgically ... (so as) to renew through this symbol the memory of that divine love by which Our Saviour was driven to offer Himself as a victim to atone for the crimes Of mankind."

This was in 1765, eight years after Margaret's death. Ninety years later "Our predecessor Pius IX, acceding to the prayers of the bishops of France and of practically the entire Catholic world, commanded the feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus to be extended to the whole Church and celebrated in every part of it . . . From that time devotion to the Sacred Heart, like a river in full flood, sweeping away all obstacles, spread over the entire world."

On this occasion Pius IX invited all the faithful to consecrate themselves publicly to the Sacred Heart. But Leo XIII went further. In an Encyclical on this devotion he compared the Heart of Christ to the Cross which Constantine had seen ablaze in the sky, assuring him of victory. "In the same way do we place all our confidence in this Sacred Heart, asking from It and hoping and awaiting for, our eternal salvation." The great Pontiff then solemnly proclaimed that Christ is King of all men, and to His Sacred Heart he consecrated the whole world. This consecration he regarded as the "outstanding act of his pontificate."

Twenty-five years later Pius XI instituted the Feast of Christ the King and ordered the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart to be renewed yearly throughout the world. Pius XII quotes him as saying: "Does not this devotion—which causes an intimate knowledge of Christ Our Lord to grow in us, engenders in our hearts an intense love of Him, and leads us to model ourselves on Him completely—comprise the sum-total of our religion and therefore the rule of perfection itself?"

"Haurietis Aquas"

And now Pius XII enlarges upon his own consistent efforts to implement the work of the Popes who went before him. "At the beginning of Our Pontificate we noted with pleasure that the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus had made great advances and was continuing to make triumphant progress . . . Throughout the years of Our Pontificate—years full of trials and cares, but full, too, of sublime consolations—these blessings have not grown less; rather have they become more abundant, richer and more splendid than before.

"Various projects conducive to fostering this devotion and most suited to the needs of our times have happily arisen; associations for cultural development and for the promotion of religion and charitable works; published works treating of this devotion from the historical, mystical or ascetical viewpoints; pious works of atonement, and, in particular, the extremely fervent expressions of piety which are the fruit of the Sodality of the Apostleship of Prayer, under whose aegis, principally, families, colleges, institutions, and at times even whole nations, have been consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus."

The august writer, viewing this happy development, considered that the time was ripe for a new Encyclical which, while warmly encouraging the devotion, would at the same time clarify it and ward off possible misconceptions concerning it. With this in mind he wrote "Haurietis Aquas". The words are from Isaias: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the fountains of the Saviour." These fountains well up in the Sacred Heart, and the saintly Pope, who had drunk of them so deeply, is a sure guide to lead us to assuage our thirst at the same inexhaustible source.

The Heart of Christ, he points out, like every other member of Christ's Body, "is entitled to that same cult of adoration with which the Church venerates the Person of the Incarnate Son of God. But, moreover, in every language *Heart* and *love* are synonymous. The heart is of its very nature the symbol and sign of love. That is why it is particularly well

fitted to express the love of Jesus for us, and the love which moves us to love Him in return. Indeed, as He shows at great length, the kernel of the devotion consists precisely in an interchange of love. This was graphically illustrated in the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary.

A Digression

The remainder of this pamphlet will be, for the most part, an effort to comment on the teaching of the late Holy Father, as found in this letter. But first may we be permitted a digression? It is by way of illustrating in a specific instance, the zeal of a fervent Catholic in promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Father Aloysius Kemper is a wonderful priest in Chicago, who, well on in his eighties, is still tireless in his many works of apostolate. His father had always had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart. He never wearied of recommending people to say: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in Thee." He had done wonders to spread everywhere copies of the Twelve Promises made by Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary, on behalf of those devoted to His Sacred Heart. These he had translated into all sorts of languages—Arabic, Chinese, the different Indian dialects, etc. Father Kemper assured me that he circulated these literally by the million. Often on the eve of a First Friday, he would see his father going to the post office laden with parcels. These contained hundreds of thousands of copies of the Promises. They were being dispatched to the ends of the earth.

Pope Leo XIII heard of this man's zeal and wrote him a personal letter commending him for his fine work: Moreover, the Holy Father incorporated into his Encyclical on the Sacred Heart, some of Mr. Kemper's ideas on the devotion.

One Holy Thursday, this saintly man spent nearly the whole day before the Altar of Repose. He returned at evening, had his supper, and retired. He was found dead in bed on Good Friday, beside him the book he had been reading. It was open at the chapter entitled "Easter in Heaven."

A New Devotion

Pope Pius XII is concerned, in the first place, "to admonish all these Our children, who, in their prejudice, sometimes go so far as to consider this devotion unsuitable, not to say harmful, in face of the spiritual needs felt by the Church today . . . Some fail to distinguish between the devotion itself, in its essentials, and various special forms of piety which the Church commends and promotes but does not impose as of obligation . . . Others who devote the greater part of their time, energies, and resources to teaching and disseminating Catholic truth and inculcating Catholic social doctrine . . . assert that this devotion is burdensome and of little or no value ... Yet others look upon it as a sentimental form of piety . . . more fit for women than for men of culture, of whom they deem it in some way unworthy ... "

All these critics the Pope takes back to Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, showing forcibly how futile and superficial these objections are thus seen to be.

The Sacred Heart is worthy of love and adoration for two reasons. First, it is the Heart of a divine Person, the Incarnate Son of God; secondly, because it is the symbol most suited to express the love of God for us and our consequent obligation and privilege to love Him in return. The revelations made to St. Margaret Mary were new only in this—that they laid emphasis on what was always a devotion in the Church, namely on the love we owe to God in return for His love of us. This emphasis was necessary, Our Lord explained to His chosen servant, because "the charity of men had grown cold; because of the frightful sin and sacrilege and ingratitude of the vast majority of mankind."

Our Lord, therefore, came to her and gave her the mission to stir up His love once more in men's hearts and He showed her His own Heart as a symbol of the deep love He had for them. Hence devotion to the Sacred Heart has always been in the Church. It is the motive goading people to scale the heights of holiness. "It is the charity of Christ that drives us forward." It is senseless, therefore, bordering on blasphemy, to assert that it is a devotion devoid of solid foundation in Catholic dogma; to affirm that its appeal is only for the sentimental.

True, specific forms which the devotion takes may not, and need not, necessarily attract everyone. True also, that the revelations made to St. Margaret Mary did much to increase and popularize the devotion. But at the same time—

and this point needs to be stressed—these revelations do not constitute the devotion. They gave it impetus, but its foundations are to be sought for in the New and even in the Old Testament. This is true because devotion to the Sacred Heart is simply "the will to give oneself readily to the service of God." This is St. Thomas' definition of devotion, and, asks the Pope, "what more obligatory or necessary, what nobler or more attractive service of God, that that which is given to His love?"

"Let everyone fully understand, therefore, that in the worship of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus external acts do not hold the primary place; nor is the chief reason for that worship to be sought in the favours which Christ has promised in private revelations."

Ways and Means

There are Catholics who practise with commendable zeal the Holy Hour, the "Nine Fridays," the Apostleship of Prayer. There are Catholics who are attracted by promises made by Our Lord to those who are devoted to His Sacred Heart. St. Margaret Mary affirms, for instance, that through this devotion "tepid souls will become fervent." So a parent is drawn to the devotion in the hope that through it an erring son may be converted. The saint tells us that the Sacred Heart promises to restore peace in families which are disunited, if they practise this devotion. A sorely-tried husband or wife hears of this and resolves to follow the saint's recommendations, trusting that happiness may be given back to the members of the family.

"I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened sinners." This, the saint says, was told her by Our Lord, speaking of priests devoted to His Sacred Heart. A good priest, worried about sinners in his parish, may well be alerted by this assurance and undertake to spread and practise the devotion.

Then there is the "great promise"—that those who make the Nine First Fridays, as the saint explains Our Lord told her—"will not die without their sacraments, nor in My displeasure." Anyone meditating deeply and prayerfully on this promise might, very understandably, be led to receive Holy Communion on the days mentioned.

The Same Root

All such specific forms of devotion stem from the same root. They are expressions of our love of Our Lord, of our confidence, of our desire to prove that our protestations of love are genuine. As such they are excellent. As such the Church approves of them, commends them to the faithful, rejoices when she learns that they are spreading. But the Holy Father's point is that these do not constitute devotion to the Sacred Heart, though undoubtedly they may help to foster it, though in many cases they certainly do.

But an excellent Catholic may be deeply devoted to the Sacred Heart and never engage to do any of these things. The case might be exceptional but it can easily be envisaged. The reason is that devotion to the Sacred Heart is devotion to His love for us; a fervent purpose and desire to love Him in return; an ardent zeal to draw others to His love. Such devotion has always been in the Church, as the Holy Father goes on to show. Hence the charge made against some Catholics is to be admitted as just, which states that their "devotion" is based on a mere selfish interest, that they are actuated merely by a desire to gain personal advantages, that they completely misunderstood the essentials of the devotion and concentrate on what is only accidental and secondary.

"The purpose of the 'promises'," concludes Pope Pius XII, "was that men might more zealously discharge the duties of the Catholic religion, that is to say, duties of love and reparation, and thus serve their own spiritual interests in the best possible manner."

"We have not here an ordinary exercise of piety which a person may freely neglect for other forms of devotion, or esteem of little importance. Rather is there question of a practice intimately related to the achieving of Christian perfection."

"Behold This Heart"

Our Lord showed His Sacred Heart, to St. Margaret Mary. From every side of It flames of fire were issuing forth, which He explained symbolized the fire of love for us sinners which consumed Him. "Behold this Heart on fire with love...."

The lucid teaching of the Holy Father now echoes the Master's voice. His Vicar too exhorts us to behold this Heart. He takes us through the Old and New Testament, insisting on the expressions and proofs of God's love of us which crowd into every page. Holy Scripture, it is quite true, does not make explicit mention of the Heart. But this omission "cannot even faintly obscure the fact that the divine charity towards us, which is the principal reason for this devotion, is proclaimed and instilled, by means of the most moving images, both in the Old and New Testament."

As one instance of this love, symbolized by the Sacred Heart, the Pope refers us to the prophet Osee "who has given us the clearest and most powerful expression of the abiding love of God for His people . . . an anxious love, a holy love, a love that is consistent with the demands of justice, such as is felt by a compassionate loving father or by a husband whose honour has been slighted. Osee depicts our God as eager to heal the breach, to assure His ungrateful people that His love is not weakened or extinguished by their sin. Justice calls for punishment. .But, once the demands of justice have been met, let God's erring children draw nearer to Him than ever.

Then there is the wonderful story of divine love, traceable throughout the long journey, lasting forty years, of the Israelites across the desert to the Promised Land. Time and time again they fell into idolatry; time and time again they forgot their promises to love God and serve Him. Never did He reject them. Each time the promises were renewed the loving mercy of God prevailed. He forgave and restored them to His friendship.

All this was a foreshadowing of the supreme love of the Redeemer Who was to come. The Christian Covenant is "sustained by a far more bountiful outpouring of grace and truth" than was the Ancient Covenant. So we are invited to ponder prayerfully in our hearts the merciful love of the Blessed Trinity and of the divine Redeemer. The human race was absolutely powerless to atone for its sins. It must remain to this day and to the end of time and throughout eternity, estranged from God, banished from heaven, were it not for "the exceeding great love" which our Mediator showed us. He loved us even when we were dead in sin, quickening us again to a new life in union with Himself.

A Real Man

Since He was a real Man, like us in everything, sin alone excepted, it follows beyond all question that He had a Heart like ours, which beat with love and was affected by other human emotions. These, indeed, were in complete harmony with His human will. "The only begotten Son of God took on a human nature capable of suffering and dying, chiefly for this reason—that He desired to offer a bloody sacrifice on the Cross, so as to accomplish the work of human salvation." He would thus become, as St. Paul would describe Him, "like unto His brethren in all things, a merciful and faithful high priest before God, a propitiation for the sins of the people."

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And the Pope's argument is that devotion to the Sacred Heart is the will to give oneself to God, making a return of love for love.

This love existed before God laid the foundations of the world. Accommodating Himself to our modes of expression, God assures us by the prophet: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." He tells us, secondly, that His attitude towards us at this moment is one of love. "I have thee graven in My hands." People who are forgetful will take care not to allow some object they value leave their hand. They cannot forget it as long as they hold it. Now "the souls of the just are in the hand of God." Finally, that love which He has will never wain. "Can a mother forget her infant, so as not to remember the child of her womb? And, even if she should forget, I will not forget thee."

Stop and Listen

Hence we may say, concerning this love which God bears each of us that "it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be." Any words we can employ to express the stunning reality of this statement must always prove pitifully inadequate. Realisation will come only through the action of grace, generously granted to the soul that prays, and, like Our, Lady, ponders the whole marvellous story in the heart. The man who begins to come to grips with the truth will rise from his knees, transformed into a new person, like Saul on the Damascus Road.

"My divine Heart," He told St. Margaret Mary, "is so inflamed with love for men, and for you in particular, that, not being able any longer to restrain within Itself the flames of Its ardent charity, It must spread them everywhere through your means, and manifest Itself to men that they may be enriched with Its precious treasures." "He was brilliant with glory," she writes in another place. "His five wounds shone like five suns. Flames darted forth from all parts

of His sacred Humanity, but especially from His adorable breast. This resembled a furnace, and on opening, it displayed to me His loving and amiable Heart, the living source of those flames."

Such passages might be multiplied. The saint repeats herself. Her sentences are at times long and involved. She is diffident and fearful of being deceived. She longs for the coming of the priest promised to her, Our Lord's "faithful friend and perfect servant, who would teach her to know her Saviour and abandon herself completely to Him."

When Our Blessed Lady heard the angel's message she too was agitated—*turbata est*. The prospect of the place assigned to her in the divine scheme left her breathless with amazement and fear. A similar reaction is easy to discern in St. Margaret Mary. To her timidity and joy combined, must be attributed the fact that at times she is almost incoherent in her account. She is speaking under strong emotion.

Love for the Sinner

The emphasis on God's love for us sinners is thus the first portion of the message of the Sacred Heart. The Holy Father has shown us how deep are the foundations upon which this astonishing truth rests. He moves on now to underline another truth conveyed by Christ to His chosen servant. This was a complaint, wrung from Him by the sins and ingratitude of the vast bulk of mankind. "They have nothing but coldness and rebuffs," He told her, "for all My eagerness to do them good ... Behold this Heart which has so loved men, which has spared Itself in nothing, even to being exhausted and consumed, in order to testify to them Its love. And the greater number make Me no other return than ingratitude, by their coldness and forgetfulness of Me in this Sacrament of love. What is still more painful to Me is the fact that it is souls consecrated to Me who use Me thus."

"Many of the Church's children," writes Pius XII, "by their numerous sins and weaknesses, disfigure the beautiful countenance of their Mother, which is reflected in them . . . If it causes Us keen suffering to behold the weak faith of the good, in whose souls, deceived by the false desire for the things of this world, the flame of divine love burns low and is gradually being extinguished, We suffer much more intensely from the evil machinations of the wicked. Today more than ever, impious men, as if impelled by the infernal enemy, are consumed with implacable and undisguised hatred of God and of His Church. . . ."

So it is clear that the complaint wrung from the Heart of Christ three hundred years ago is still echoing throughout our world in the twentieth century.

Reparation

Christ stood on the balcony of Pilate's palace. He was crowned with thorns. His body was a mass of wounds. In His hand they had placed a reed in mockery of His royalty.

"Behold the Man," exclaimed Pilate, and the fearful answer was hurled back: "Away with Him. Crucify Him. His blood be upon us and upon our children." And today the same Christ stands before the modern world. "Behold this Heart," He cries, "on fire with love of men." And again the terrible rejection: "We will not have this Man to rule over us."

Once again realisation of all that this implies will begin to dawn upon our minds only through prayer and serious meditation. When we pray, when through the grace granted us, we are able to see and grasp the deep significance of what we have just read, we can never be the same again. "Christ needs YOU," cries out the Pope. "The Church needs YOU." And for what purpose? To make reparation to the Sacred Heart.

The Holy Father dilates on "the growing dominion over the hearts of men of a false materialist philosophy and way of life, while on all sides the free, unrestrained sway of the passions is proposed as an ideal. Little wonder if, in such circumstances many hearts lose the fervour of charity, which is the supreme law of the Christian religion...."

This state of things is a challenge more than a threat. From every analogy in history a period like ours should be prolific in saints. The very fact that so many are consumed with "undisguised hatred of God" proves to be a mighty incentive to the good to love Him more than ever. And their love seeks to express itself in the deeds of sacrifice.

St. Paul described the essential notion of reparation when he wrote: "I fill up in my flesh the things that are wanting to the sufferings of Christ, for His Body which is the Church." On every side opportunities occur. There is the long-drawn-out sickness, or the acute financial worry, or the constant anxiety about the wayward son or daughter. All such

more grievous trials can be made into material for reparation. By their means we fill up what is wanting to the Passion if we train ourselves to unite our sufferings with His on Calvary.

There are the petty annoyances too—a wrong number dialled on the phone and much consequent confusion; an importunate visitor who besieges us at a moment when we are particularly busy; the baby waking up at night; the heavy rain which comes to spoil our day's outing; the disappointing news we get in a letter this morning. "In all things seek God. This is sound advice of St. Ignatius. The art of super-naturalizing everything makes everything material for a life devoted to reparation.

Among the exquisite pieces of literature dealing with the devotion to the Sacred Heart pride of place must be given to the Mass and Office composed by order of Pope Pius XI. These, too, like Pius XII's Encyclical, open up "the fountains of the Saviour" to the thirsting soul, assuaging its longing for the living waters of true devotion. As a mere sample of the riches to be discovered in this mine we propose the Preface in that Mass.

Preface

This Preface refers, in the first place, to the Sacred Heart as "the treasure-house of the divine bounty." When men have anything valuable, they take very good care to keep it under lock and key. The last thing a sensible man of business will do, before leaving his store at evening time, is to make sure he has put that day's takings into the safe. He will slam the door and tug at it to test it -and make certain that no thief can possibly force it open.

The Heart of Christ is a treasure-house in which are contained the riches accumulated by Him at such a terrible cost—all the sufferings of His Passion. But at this treasure-house, the door stands wide open always, day and night. The Preface speaks of the Son of God Who was pierced by the lance as He hung on the Cross. The soldier's spear opened His Heart that day and never since has It been closed.

Hence we have the "apertum Cor," "the open Heart." Why? What is the reason for this seeming disregard for the treasure? Is the Owner not afraid of thieves breaking through and stealing? No. A man with the wealth of earth is fearful because, no matter how much he possesses, his supply is necessarily limited. But the wealth of the Sacred Heart is inexhaustible. No need for lock or key here. He ardently desires, as He explained to St. Margaret Mary, that the entire world would come and draw off from the treasures He is offering. They are endless. No matter how much will be taken from what is infinite, infinity must ever remain. The only limitation is the measure of each soul's capacity to take and receive.

The glorious words of the Preface now proceed to draw up a catalogue of what gifts are waiting in this treasure-house for the soul willing to search for them. There are "torrents of mercy and of grace." One thinks of the thousands and thousands of tons of water falling from Niagara. One remembers the mighty dams in Holland built to keep back the waters of the ocean which maintain all the time their terrific pressure against the resistance of these barriers. These illustrate, but only feebly, the "torrents" in the Heart of Christ, as they keep on ever pressing, ever eager, to break down the obstacles raised by our own miserable selfishness.

In this treasure-house, with the door wide open, the soul finds "mercy and grace." Mercy! Here is that gift which blesses Him Who gives and him who takes away. That it is a source of blessings to the recipient is obvious. Here is a line of thought to return to again and again in prayer: If ever I committed a mortal sin, even one single mortal sin I owe it only to the infinite mercy of the Sacred Heart that I am not in hell at this moment.

As for Him from Whom this gift of mercy comes to us: we remember how He described the joy there is before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.

Side by side with mercy, there is also to be given from out the treasures, the gift of grace. Our whole booklet might be employed in the effort to speak about the marvels of divine grace and we should still be far indeed from having finished. "If thou didst know the gift of God!" All we can say here is that grace makes us sons and daughters, in a real sense, of God; that it gives us a sharing in His own life; that it enriches in a marvellous manner our every action; that it ensures our eternal salvation. And of this gift the Sacred Heart is the source and fountain-head.

This Heart, the Preface continues, never ceased to burn with love for us. We have tried, in language which must always be halting and wide of the mark, to offer some ideas about this gift of divine love and its claims upon us. We merely add here that God not only permits us to love Him, but actually commands it! "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind."

This Heart is a harbour of peace and rest and tranquillity to those who are in love with Christ. "In peace, in the self-same, shall I sleep and take my rest, for Thou, O Lord, hast confirmed me in hope." A magnificent example of the peace communicated to the earnest soul is Blessed Claude de la Colombiere's Act of Confidence in God.

Finally the Heart of Christ is a secure place of sanctuary for the repentent. We know that there were places where a criminal could flee to, and, if once he reached one of these, he acquired the right of sanctuary. His enemies were forbidden to lay a hand on him as long as he remained in such a refuge. The Sacred Heart is just such an abode of safety where the sinner is immune from all serious danger to his soul.

Summary

In case you have not your missal handy, it may be worthwhile transcribing the pertinent portions of this Preface. "It is right and just that we should praise Thee, O God, Who didst will that Thy only-begotten Son, as He hung on the Cross, should be pierced by the lance of the soldier; that the open Heart, treasure-house of divine bounty, might pour forth upon us torrents of mercy, and of grace; and that that Heart which never ceased to burn with love for us, might become to the fervent a place of rest, and to the repentent might be opened out as a sanctuary and a refuge. . . ."

Behold this Heart! The key words to remember, as we meditate on this wonderful Preface, indicating the treasures to be looked for, are: OPEN Heart; TORRENTS of MERCY and of GRACE; LOVE; REST; a SANCTUARY and a REFUGE.

On the title-page of this pamphlet we printed St. Paul's rousing cry: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ?" In view of all we have seen, it does seem fair to suggest that that same cry, slightly adapted, might rise up too in the Heart of Christ and form itself on His lips. It is abundantly clear that, as far as He is concerned, nothing is "ever going to separate us from Him. He is determined to have us, at almost any cost.

"Who shall separate ME from the love of men's souls? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or famine? I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate Me, from the love of men, which wells up in My Sacred Heart, the Heart of Christ Jesus the Lord."

The Promises of The Sacred Heart

Made by Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary in favour of those who practise devotion to His Sacred Heart.

1. I will give them the graces necessary for their state.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will comfort them in all their trials and afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge in life and death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners will find My Heart an ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly towards perfection.
9. I will bless every dwelling in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured.
10. I will give priests a peculiar facility in converting the most hardened souls.
11. The, persons who spread this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced.
12. I promise thee, in the excessive mercy of My Heart, that Its all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on nine consecutive first Fridays of the month the grace of final repentance; they shall not die in My disfavour nor without receiving their Sacraments, for My Divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

Nihil Obstat :
BERNARD O'CONNOR,
Diocesan Censor.

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* DANIEL MANNIX;
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