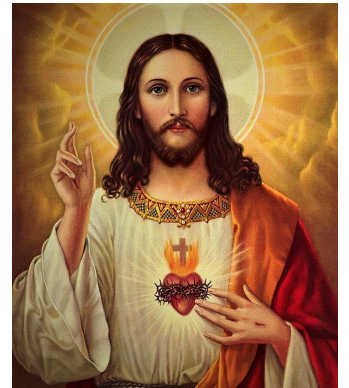


The Sacred Heart: Scripture, Mystics and the Modern World

September 18th, 2023

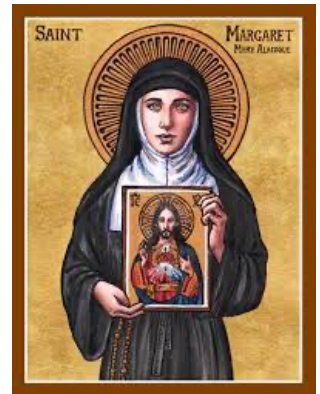
- I. Popular piety and a way to think about Christ
 - A. Popular piety in recent years
 - B. Doctrine and devotion
 - C. The threefold love of Christ
- II. Biblical origins of this devotion
 - A. Not a Biblical term *per se*, but the heart is key in the Scriptures
 - B. Old Testament
 1. Psalm 16:9 — “Therefore my heart is glad...”
 2. Psalm 69:21-22 — “Insult has broken my heart...” — a Christological interpretation
 3. Isaiah 49:14-15 — Stronger than a mother’s love...
 - C. New Testament — three key passages from John
 1. John 7:37-9 — “Rivers of living water...”
 2. John 13:21-26 — St. John at the Last Supper
 3. John 19: 33-34 — “... and immediately blood and water flowed out.”
- III. Theologians and mystics of the Middle Ages.
 - A. A development from the Patristic era — the first millennium of the Church.
 - B. St Albert the Great (1206-1280)
 1. “He showed his heart, which had already been wounded by his love for us before it was struck by the point of the lance.”
 2. Influenced by him, Bl. Henry Suso, Bl. John Tauler, OP
 - C. Mechtild of Magdeburg and St. Gertrude the Great,
 1. Benedictine nuns at Helfta.
 - a) Mechtild of Magdeburg (ca. 1210 to ca. 1285), a Beguine and Dominican tertiary
 - b) The first to have a vision of the Sacred Heart: “during a grave illness which troubled me, God revealed himself to my soul, and showed me his wounded heart, saying, ‘See what they have done to me!’”
 2. St. Gertrude is the more famous. (1256-1302) Conversion on the feast day of Saint John: “Oh, most loving Jesus, by the pierced heart, I pray thee wound my heart with that arrow of love, so that nothing of earth me abide in it more, but that it may be filled with the glowing love forever. Amen.”
 - D. St Catherine of Siena (1347 - 1380)
 1. Intense devotion to the passion of Christ,
 2. A mystical exchange of hearts with Christ in 1370: “Our Lord approached, opened anew her left side, and placed in it the heart which he bore.” - Bl Raymond of Capua
- IV. “Modern” Era — the visions of St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690)
 - A. She was a Visitation nun- Paray-le-Monial.
 - B. Her first vision concerning the Sacred Heart occurred on the feast of Saint John the apostle in 1673.
 1. “...God’s presence seemed to envelop me completely. I forgot all about myself, and where I was, it was so intense; I simply gave myself up to the spirit of God – my heart, a willing prey to the violence of his love. For a long time he kept me leaning on his breast, while he revealed wonders of his love, in mysterious



St. Catherine of Siena
Exchanging her Heart with Christ
Giovanni di Paolo, 1398-1492
Metropolitan Museum of Art

secrets of his Sacred Heart.”

- C. Second revelation in 1674- revealed the pain he felt to His heart at human indifference.
 - 1. Tells her to receive a communion on the first Friday. Insists she be obedient to her superiors.
 - 2. St Claude de la Columbière, a Jesuit, was sent to her as a director.
- D. The Great Revelation of June 1675:
 - 1. Establish the Feast Day of the Sacred Heart on the day after the octave day of Corpus Christi; and reparation for indifference to His love and sufferings.
 - 2. “I promise you, too, that I shall open my heart to all who honor me in this way, and who get others to do the same; they will feel, and all its fullness, the power of my love.”
- E. Aftermath
 - 1. Publication of Columbiere’s sermons in 1686 lit the fire of the devotion.
 - 2. According to Benedict XV, private revelation should be accepted “with an assent of human belief according to the rules of prudence, when these rules present them as probable and devoutly believable.”
- F. The Promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary.
 - 1. The famous twelfth promise: “I promise you in the excessive mercy of my Heart that my all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in my disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.”
- G. Fr. Karl Rahner’s (1904-1984) defense: ”Taken in their entirety, these promises affirm and offer no more than our Lord himself promised in the gospel to absolute faith...”
- V. Church devotions arising largely from St. Margaret Mary’s visions
 - A. Act of Consecration, Litany, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, First Fridays, Enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the home,
 - B. A private revelation.
- VI. Two Popes
 - A. Pope Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas* (1956) — the most recent encyclical
 - B. Pope Francis — Homily at a priests’ retreat on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart in 2015
 - a) “The Heart of Christ is the tenderness of God.”
- VII. Related devotions
 - A. Immaculate Heart of Mary
 - B. Divine Mercy
- VIII. Aspects of the Devotion that touch us today
 - A. A reminder of the love of God in Christ
 - B. A way to relate to Jesus — “Come to me.”
 - C. Reparation — a devout way to make up for the ugliness in the world.



Some sources

Heart of the Redeemer. Timothy T. O’Donnell. Trinity Publications. 1989

Haurietis Aquas. Ven. Pius XII. 1956.

Gertrude of Helfta: *The Herald of Divine Love* (Classics of Western Spirituality (Paperback). Translated by Margaret Winkworth

The Spiritual Direction of Saint Claude De la Colombiere. Ignatius Press. 2018.