

Meditations: Sacred Heart of Jesus

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer on the feast of the Most Sacred Heart of our Lord.

- Our worth is the blood of Christ
- A Heart that never ceases looking for us
- Taking up again the path back

“THE DESIGNS of his Heart are from age to age, to rescue their souls from death, and to keep them alive in time

of famine.”^[1] The Church offers us these words from the Psalmist to help us go deeper into the mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his love for us. They remind us that God’s heart harbors plans for the life of each man and woman: plans of freedom and life. “We are not the haphazard and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”^[2]

We can contemplate Jesus on the Cross, who allowed his Heart to be pierced to offer us yet another proof that He loves us unconditionally. Saint Ambrose says that “just as Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the Cross.”^[3] We can say, in a certain sense, that our origin is in the wounded Heart of Jesus. Our life as Christians arises from that

pierced side, which is a “fountain” we can return to again and again, to regain strength on our way.

“Jesus on the cross, with his heart pierced with love for us, is such an eloquent commentary on the value of people and things that words only get in the way. Our happiness and our life are so important that the very Son of God gave himself to redeem and cleanse and raise us up.”^[4] In celebrating the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of our Lord we come to realize that, transcending our suffering and setbacks, there is someone for whom we are irreplaceable. That is why in prayer, in heart-to-heart dialogue with Christ, we can always recover our joy and trust.

SOMETIMES our peace can be threatened when we discover the presence of sin in our lives. Perhaps this happens when we undergo temptation and get entangled in our own vices. Deep down we hate the sin that distances us from God, that harms both ourselves and others, but we can't seem to find the way to escape it. At such times, our will seems lethargic and we may even have the impression of being paralyzed in our spiritual life. Even when our heart seems reluctant to react, we can remember that the Heart of Jesus is always attentive.

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing (Lk 15:4-5). Christ is the good shepherd who continually seeks us, who opens a path to find us and to carry us again on his shoulders.

Knowing that his Heart never sleeps, even when it seems that ours is far from His, fills us with confidence to begin again in our daily struggle.

“The Heart of the Good Shepherd tells us that his love is limitless; it is never exhausted and it never gives up . . . The Heart of the Good Shepherd reaches out to us, above all to those who are most distant. There the needle of his compass inevitably points, there we see a particular ‘weakness’ of his love, which desires to embrace all and lose none.”^[5] Our sins are no longer a reason to become discouraged in our longing to be close to God. Our Lord allows us to experience our own weakness, which enables us to be humble. But He counts on our effort so that, spurred by his grace, we get up again when we fall. Sometimes “the history of salvation is worked out ‘in hope against hope’ (*Rom 4:18*), through our weaknesses. All too often, we think

that God works only through our better part, yet most of his plans are realized in and despite our frailty.”^[6]

ON THE CROSS, Jesus allows his side to be pierced by the lance, “so that, won over to the open heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.”^[7] Contemplating Christ in this way will encourage us to take up the path by which we return to God’s friendship. “Find shelter in the wounds in his hands, in his feet, in his side,” Saint Josemaría advised. “And your willingness to start again will revive, and you will take up your journey with greater determination and effectiveness.”^[8] If we want to escape from the trap of discouragement, the best remedy is to think less about our own limitations, and look calmly at

the Heart that has allowed itself to be pierced by the sins of all mankind.

“You continue to fall into mistakes and missteps,” the founder of Opus Dei said, “and they hurt you! At the same time, your life overflows with a joy you can’t contain. For that very reason your failings, because they hurt you, with the sorrow of love, no longer take away your peace.”^[9] God does not want our sins to fill us with sadness or to be a weight that burdens us. That is why he has left us confession, so that we can recover our joy as often as we need to. Contrition, sorrow for our own failings, is the sign of a heart in love. It doesn’t stem from the discouragement of not having lived up to what others – or we ourselves – expected. Rather it is the sorrow that stems from love for a God who has done everything possible for us.

Christ's heart is always waiting for us to return. All we need to do is to become small and enter there through humility. And if we ever find it hard to begin on our way back to Him, we can rely on Mary's help. With motherly concern, our Lady shows us the best path to enter the open side of her Son.

^[1] Roman Missal, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Entrance Antiphon (cf. Ps 32:11.19).

^[2] Benedict XVI, Homily, 24 April 2005.

^[3] Cf. Saint Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, 2, 85-89, in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 766.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 165.

^[5] Francis, Homily, 3 June 2016.

^[6] Francis, *Patris Corde*, no. 2.

^[7] Roman Missal, Preface for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, twelfth station, no. 2.

^[9] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 861.

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