

Over the Centuries

A Brief Summary of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart



2nd Half of the 8th Century, B.C. - The Old Testament – Isaiah

In 1956, Pius XII – Encyclical “Haurietis Aquas” on the theology of the Sacred Heart showed how the devotion to the Love of God has its roots all the way back in the Old Testament and mentions that this is one of the oldest devotions in the Catholic Faith.

33 A.D. - St. John the Apostle. Consider the scripture reading about St. John when he rested his head on the Sacred Chest of Jesus at the Last Supper – and heard the beating of that adorable Heart! This all took place on Holy Thursday with the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus. Can you imagine how awesome that had to be! Put yourself in his place for a moment.

13th Century - St. Gertrude the Great was a great mystic who became known as the “Patron of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.” Jesus appeared to her and asked her to give Him her heart. She rested on His Heart so intimately that her soul touched It! Jesus assured her His Divine Heart, His Love, would continue to the end of the ages. He shared with her His Mercy – His merciful love!

14th Century – St. Catherine of Siena, mystic, experienced the Lord removing her heart and giving her His Heart. St. Catherine started having mystical experiences when she was only six, seeing guardian angels as clearly as the people they protected. She became a Dominican tertiary when she was 16, and continued to have visions of Christ, Mary, and the saints. St. Catherine was one of the most brilliant theological minds of her day, although she never had any formal education. She persuaded the Pope to go back to Rome from Avignon, in 1377, and when she died she was endeavoring to heal the Great Western Schism. In 1375 Our Lord give her the Stigmata, which was visible only after her death.

17th Century - 1643 -- St. John Eudes (1601 – 1670) shared with St. Margaret Mary Alacoque the honor of initiating devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (he composed the Mass for the Sacred Heart in 1668) and the Holy Heart of Mary, popularizing the devotions with his "The Devotion to the Adorable Heart of Jesus" (1670) and "The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God", which he finished a month before his death.

17th Century - St. Margaret Mary (1647 – 1690). Best known of the Sacred Heart mystics, St. Margaret Mary was a religious sister with a deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and received visions of Jesus near the Tabernacle. In the Chapel of Paray-le-Monial, France, Jesus asked Margaret Mary to bring renewed devotion to His Sacred Heart. He revealed **His Twelve Great Promises** to those who practice this devotion – to those who would love Him. He promised especially to “*Bless the homes in which an image of [His] Heart is exposed and honored.*” This highlights the importance of the Enthronement in the homes and hearts of all. Jesus revealed His intense longing to be loved by us to St. Margaret Mary. “*Behold this Heart that has so much Love for people, but gets such apathy and coldness in return.*” With this revelation, Jesus shared with her His most intimate desire - to be loved by us – to be included in our lives. He revealed how profoundly His Sacred Heart of Love, Mercy, Grace, Sanctification and Salvation wait for those who love Him. Jesus promised to send her someone special to help her spread this devotion to His Sacred Heart who was to be St. Claude.

17th Century - St. Claude de La Columbiere (1641 – 1682) a Jesuit priest, confessor and spiritual advisor to St. Margaret Mary was indeed given the job of spreading the devotion worldwide. He was seen by many as the “Apostle of the Sacred Heart” and as “the Apostle John come back to earth to rekindle the love for the Heart of Jesus”.

20th Century – Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey (1875 – 1960). A priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary became known as the “Apostle of the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart”. Pope Saint Pius X directed Father Mateo to make this his life’s work to bring the “entire world, home by home, family by family, to the Sacred Heart.” He is the modern-day father of the enthronement ministry. In this way, the modern-day version of the devotion, whereby the Sacred Heart of Jesus is enthroned into homes, was spread to the United States.

Modern-day papal statements about the Sacred Heart:

Blessed Pope John XXIII said, “Jesus is still with us on this earth; His human and sentient form is concealed in the Eucharistic Sacrament wherein His Sacred Heart is also present!”

Pope John Paul II encouraged a renewal of the “old” devotions for the strengthening of Spiritual life. He said, “It is in the Heart of Jesus that the human heart discovers its true and unique meaning and destiny.” He urged us to, “Always keep [our] eye on the Sacred Heart of Jesus (for) from Him you will learn the great lesson of love...so necessary for every Christian family”.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said, “This Heart [of Jesus] calls to our heart. It invites us to step forth...to hand ourselves over to Him.”

Lastly, let’s look into a documentation of the real presence of the heart of Jesus in the Eucharist:

8th Century – Sacred Heart Eucharistic Miracle at Lanciano, Italy

A priest-monk of the order of St. Basil who was subject to doubts regarding the Real Presence, felt those doubts and, at the very moment of consecration, the Host, in his hand, became flesh and the wine became visible blood. This took place in the monastery named for St. Longinus, the Roman centurion who pierced the side of Christ with a lance bringing forth blood and water.

In 1970, more than 1200 years later, extensive medical research was conducted on the still remaining flesh and clots of blood. The flesh was found to be a perfect anatomical slice of the striated myocardium (heart muscle tissue), including the vagus nerve which innervates the heart muscle to beat. Also, the tissue was of the left ventricle of the heart, the part of the heart that pumps life-giving blood out to the body and was perfectly free of any preservative. It was found to be blood type AB, the same as the coagulated blood in the miracle chalice, which had all the elements and minerals as if it were a fresh sample of blood and not one that is a dozen centuries old! A little aside, AB is the same blood type found on the shroud of Turin!

This is truly a devotion that is alive and well, and still pouring out blessings with each beat of His Beloved Sacred Heart!

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