

Sacred Heart of Jesus

By Fr. David Altman, OCSO

Our main purpose for existing and being on earth is to grow in good will, in order to become like God, so that we will live with Him and He with us in time and eternity. To become like God, you have to know Him, and the more you know about God, the more you can love Him, because each new thing learned about God is a new reason for loving Him.

God spoke to ancient peoples in different ways than he speaks to us. God speaks in ways that people can understand. It is an old principle that we follow all the time: you have to know to whom you are talking. Different people respond in different ways to different words and actions. You must relate with everyone the way God does: He takes us where we are, in our lives of good will, and then makes His attempts to lift us up to His level of good will. That is the procedure for our hearts to be united to the Sacred Heart of Christ.

Taking people where they are, is the Divine acceptance of us, and it must be our acceptance of each other. With His infinite knowledge, God's Divine Son, Jesus, has a vision of potential that belongs to each of us, and we can adopt that vision with faith. We see only the present state of the people we live with and hear about, and that sight is very limited. How many of us would always agree with God that the person we most dislike has the invitation, the role, and the potential to be united with the Infinite God?

The love, the heart or will of God was so great that He died a horrible death for us on His cross. He made His life's statement to every one of us: I love you this much. Christ's statement to us is His invitation for us to love His children, our brothers and sisters, as he loved, without compromise, even to the point of self-sacrifice, on our crosses. In our turn, we are called to love, this much.

The opportunities for imitating the love of Christ's Heart show up every day. All the works we perform, are in some way completed for someone else's benefit. We can make these works so much more meaningful by making their value part of our intentions, part of our hearts. A short prayer breathed from time to time will raise our personal lives from where we are to where God is. "Lord, I want to do this for you." The most apparently insignificant actions are raised to great significance because they are supported by an increasing good will that is love.

Nobody lives without food, and this is true of the human spirit as well. Our spirits feed on love. That is the way we were created, and we have been given the responsibility to be sources of nourishment for all who touch our lives.

Because of our faith, our privilege is to be sources of Divine revelation, knowing and presenting God's plan to our brothers and sisters who always need more knowledge of God, and more

love. The ones with the greatest knowledge of God have the most knowledge to offer, and since knowledge of God leads to love of God, we have the most love to offer.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is not a philosophical or spiritual abstraction that exists only in theory. The Heart of Christ, lives within us by our baptisms and the acts of love that we perform. There are individuals in the world, and also some very close to us, toward whom we have difficulty practicing love. We can always love the God that they have within them. It is simply a matter of directing your intention, which you can do with your free will, your faculty of love. In this way we make our hearts one with the Heart of Christ within others, and within ourselves.

Throughout our life's experience in relating and adjusting to others, we grow in our knowledge of God and His will. By responding to others and their needs, we grow in our love of God in them, and help complete the mission of the Sacred Heart of Christ on earth, in our time, which is to win our love.

The works of love, accomplished by the Sacred Heart of Christ through us, are made with difficulty. The sufferings of life can be depressing, putting a damper on our desire to continue struggling for consistent good works. In fact, the experience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must be our experiences as well. Christ's Sacred Heart was torn. He suffered what is sometimes the only way into the human heart. It must be broken.

We experience hardness of heart in our false views of others and our refusal to see the presence of God's heart within them. Hard hearts are broken. Hard hearts are torn, so that the life-giving nourishing blood of Christ can enter, and life and healing from us can be poured out upon the world.

On this solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrate God's self-donation to all of us, for our salvation from attachment to this life and for our assurance of eternal life. God offers us His heart, as His request for us to offer Him our hearts, our love, so that He can complete His saving work in us.

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