

EUCCHARISTIC HEART OF JESUS:



*Fount of Love and Mercy
by Sr. Judith Marguerite
November 2009*

Dear friends of the Heart of Christ

It was quite remarkable and appropriate that Pope Benedict XVI chose *Deus Caritas Est* – God is Love – as the focus of his first Papal Encyclical. In it we are reminded of a foundational tenet of our faith: God is Love. God is Love. Love is not merely His attribute, but rather, His Essence. We understand in this statement that Trinitarian Love is total, absolute, and relational. God the Father and God the Son share a loving union so deep, that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit is created. Through this outpouring, Jesus, the Incarnate Word, unites humanity into Trinitarian communion as both recipient and participant. How awesome is this mystery of our faith! Who can fully comprehend the depth of the love and mercy of God or understand how to return this love. Pope Benedict XVI writes in this encyclical: Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow. (Jn7:37-38). Yet, to become such a source we must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God.”

Throughout salvation history, God continually has called us back to himself despite repeated falls in cycles of sin. Jesus, Love and Mercy enfleshed, was sent as Our Savior to redeem us and restore our relationship with Our Heavenly Father. We are His children, and although we are often slow to understand, fearful, or in error, God will not forsake us. He will do everything, we allow, to gain our trust and confidence in His goodness. God raises up saints and prophets to guide us along the way. He blesses us with devotions and holy images to draw us to Himself in loving relationship.

Two of such, well known in our day, are the devotions to the Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy. These concepts of heart and mercy are not new as can be evidenced by their numerous references in Sacred Scripture and Catholic Tradition. However, the private revelations of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and St. Maria Faustina Kowalska were the impetus for their evolution in the Church. These saints are among God’s messengers who present us with images and symbols to help us discover that which is hidden and seemingly incomprehensible. Through them we glean and experience God as Love. Devotion to the Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy are facets of the same Jewel: The Eucharistic Heart of Christ. They are complimentary, but distinctive in revealing Its qualities of love and mercy. Through these devotions, the mystery of the Pierced Heart of Our Crucified Lord is more clearly understood. The Sacred Heart is the fullness of Jesus in His Humanity and Divinity. He, as Second Person of the Trinity, is Love and, thus, He must share this love depicted as flames issuing from the depths of His Heart. He desires a return of this love in a mutual bond of friendship. Our



apathy, sinfulness, and error are the spear which pierces His Sacred Heart anew. However, because, it is Love Incarnate Who is pierced, it is mercy and compassion that pours forth. Jesus gives us Himself sacramentally through the living streams of blood and water flowing from His pierced side. We are not to fear Him, but rather, run to Him! We are to receive the gift of His mercy, so that in our participation of His outpouring of love, our love and joy may be complete. For He calls to us: Come to Me, I am gentle and humble of heart! (Mt 11:28)

The recently Beatified Father Michael Sopocko, spiritual director of St. Maria Faustina, held the belief that Divine Mercy is the logical consequence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Divine Mercy, Br. John Reynard) Through the Pierced Heart, this progression is clearly articulated. In both devotions, we hear the cry of the Beloved to His loved ones and understand the desire of the Thrice Holy God for deep communion with all His children. Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify to love, is the supplication of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary so familiar to us. The flame of love consuming the Heart of God is mercy. Thus, love and mercy are a symbiotic and circular manifestation of God in which one aspect is necessary to express the other. The Eucharistic Jesus, the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, is integral to both the inception and practice of these devotions. Both saints received their mission within the context of the Blessed Sacrament.

To fulfill The 12 Promises, Jesus asked for the reception of Holy Communion on Nine First Fridays, as well as, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Likewise, reception of Holy Communion is needed to gain the special indulgence of Mercy Sunday. From the Treasury of the Merciful Heart, these Feast Days draw forgiveness, reconciliation, and countless blessings as we receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and participate in the life of the Trinity through Him, with Him and in Him. In the devotions to the Sacred Heart and Divine Mercy, Jesus gifted us with images and symbols intended to draw us closer to His fount of Mercy: the Eucharist.

Relationship and intimate union with Him through the means He inaugurated on Holy Thursday is the principle objective of these devotions. It is from the Eucharistic Heart that both St. Margaret Mary and St. Maria Faustina saw streams of light. The Blessed Sacrament is the Heart of Jesus. Each Sacred Host contains Jesus fully alive and present in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. This is the same Heart, revealed to St. Margaret Mary in which Jesus, passionately in love with humanity, desires at all costs to save us from the abyss of perdition. We are taught in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy to offer the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – the Holy Eucharist – to the Father and are asked by Jesus to make a visit, if possible, to the Blessed Sacrament at 3:00 pm, the Hour of Mercy. Before His Sacramental Presence, we are again at the Foot of the Cross witnessing the Living Streams of which we are invited to partake in loving relationship with our God. Jesus on the Cross, Jesus lifted in the hands of the priest, Jesus in the monstrance: we can hear Him speak from His Eucharistic Heart, When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself.



Fr. Sopocho's understanding of the progressive nature of the devotions as well as, the centrality of the Eucharistic Heart, can also be evidenced in the manner the images were presented. Jesus opened His pierced side to reveal His Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary in 1673 when the world, in a sad state of coldness perpetuated by Jansenism, related to God in terms of fear. Jesus, in the revelation of Divine Mercy, appeared to St. Maria Faustina, just prior to the horrors of World War II. He chose, however, not to reveal His Heart at that time, instead showing her only the rays of Blood and Water issuing from His Breast.

In our present day, it would seem that Jesus is asking us to go deeper than ever before and to "see" with the eyes of faith, His Eucharistic Heart, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, the Source and Summit, of these devotions. We can rightly conclude, that the Sacred Host, whether visible in the monstrance, as the Sacred Heart exposed to St. Margaret Mary, or held in the Tabernacle, as Jesus' Heart unseen in His Breast presented to St. Maria Faustina, provide the same love, blessing, and interior illumination for us. Is not Jesus calling us anew in these troubled times, not alone through symbols or images, but through His very Being to His Heart in the Blessed Sacrament? Is He not still awaiting our response to His appeal for love for love posed to St. Margaret Mary? Are we ready to drink from the Source of the rivers of Living Water and pray with St. Maria Faustina: O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus like a fountain of mercy for us, I trust in You! Can our hearts echo the sentiments of St Margaret Mary: Let every knee bend before Thee, O greatness of my God, so supremely humbled in the Sacred Host. May every heart love Thee, every spirit adore Thee and every will be subject to Thee!