

The Love Of God

An Anthology

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LOVE OF GOD.

"He loved me and delivered Himself for me." — Galatians 2:20. "I cannot tell how men endure life, who do not profess this faith in the Creator's special love." — Faber.

FOREWORD.

FOR MANY SOULS the personal love of Christ is something vague and unattainable. Something that belongs to the mountain peaks of the spiritual life, the exclusive property of canonized saints. To help to dispel this most harmful of ideas is the object of the pages which follow. They are so many dew-drops of God's love gathered in the spiritual meadows, bringing to the weary soul the morning freshness of a personal and intimate devotion to Christ. They are meant not so much for connected reading as for meditation before the Tabernacle, before Him who, in the words of one of the greatest of His lovers, "loved me and delivered Himself for me."

Hymn of Saint Francis Xavier.

My God! I love Thee, not that I
May Heaven's joys obtain thereby,
Nor that I know who love not Thee
Shall burn in Hell eternally.

Thou, Thou, my Jesus, on the tree,
With outspread arms embraced me,
For me did feel the nails, the spear,
For me did suffer shame and fear.

And pains and torments manifold,
A sweat of blood, with grief untold,
Nay death itself — and all for me,
A sinner vile as vile can be.

Why then sweet Jesus, love not Thee,
Who lovest me so tenderly?
Not that I may Thy glory see,
Nor Hell's eternal tortures flee.

Nor anyway rewarded be,
But only as Thou hast loved me,
So love I now and will love Thee,

Only because Thou art my King,
My Lord, my God, my everything.
Laying His Hands on each one of them. (Luke 4:40)

“Never have I properly understood this gesture of divine love, and nevertheless it marks the beginning of an interior life, conscious and firm, the awakening of the soul to a personal and intimate devotion... What I must understand is this, that it is before me, before me alone, that Christ has halted, that it is with my particular troubles He has busied Himself, that it is on my head He has placed His Sacred Hands.

“As long as we consider ourselves as lost in a crowd of nameless souls, as long as we imagine that the words of Christ are words thrown haphazard to some chance audience, as long as we have the idea that His promises, destined for all, are applied to no one in particular, so long are our souls sunk in sleep... When, then, O my Saviour, will I come to understand that it is indeed to me You speak; when will I realise particularly that we have a great something to discuss, us two; when will I esteem as is proper, and love as I ought, the placing of Your Divine Hands on the head of Your docile and devoted disciple?... May I feel them then resting on me, may I remain always before You, and, O Jesus, by Your holy grace, make to disappear this mist of irreality, this fog of conviction and of mirage, which has for so long prevented me from seeing You near me, and has made me think that You took interest in me only in general, with all the others, as it were en bloc.”
— Père Charles, S.J.

There is no such thing as "the world" to God. Each one of us is a world to Him. It is a common mistake not to think half enough of ourselves. To think of ourselves in "general" is an imperfect way of thinking. We each cost the Eternal Son of God His Blood. We are so important to God, we carry out His Will. In spite of my sins and imperfections, God follows all my history with incessant care and interest. What does it matter if in this year I am a little better or a little worse? In God's eye a great deal. It is not only possible, but practicable, for us all to make a mark in Divine History. Acts of virtue, acts of love of Him will make me memorable for ever and ever. The thought of this, and the effort to fulfil it will colour my grey life, and make me ashamed if I dare to think it empty. — Father Considine, S. J.

It is necessary that our faith in this love of Christ Jesus be living and constant. Why?

Because it constitutes one of the most powerful safeguards of our fidelity. Look at Saint Paul: never did man work or spend himself as he for Christ.... To himself he applied the words of the Psalmist: "For Your sake, O Lord, we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Then, immediately he adds: "But in all these things we overcome." Where does he discover the secret of this victory? Ask of him why he can bear all things, even the "weariness of living"; why, in all his trials he remains united to Christ, with a firmness so unshakeable that "neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine nor the sword can spare him from Jesus." Ask him this, and what is his answer? "Because of Him that has loved us." That which supports him, strengthens him, encourages him, is his profound conviction of the love which Christ bears him.

"Dilexit me et tradidit se ipsum pro me." "He who loved me and delivered Himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20) — Abbot [Blessed Columba] Marmion.

And He spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that has a hundred sheep; and if he shall lose one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was

lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: and coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost. — Luke, 15: 3-6.

Is it possible that I have been loved by my Saviour and that so tenderly that He has deigned to think of me in particular in all the trifling circumstances by which He has drawn me to Himself? What can be sweeter than this thought: The amiable Heart of My God thought of my soul, loved it and procured for it a thousand means of salvation as if there were not one single other soul in the world to be considered? For as the sun shining on a portion of the earth's surface lights it up just as if it shone on it alone; so Our Lord took thought and worked for all His dear children in such a way that He thought of each one as if He had not thought at all of the others. "He loved me," says Saint Paul. "He delivered Himself for me"; as if to say: For me alone and just as much as if He had done nothing for all the others. This, O faithful soul, should be graven in your heart. —Saint Francis de Sales.

Fear not, for I have redeemed you and called you by your name: you are Mine — Isaiah 43:1.

Before the world was, before all time, before the angels, creation's eldest-born, had hymned their first canticle; then there was nothing but God; then when ravished with His own beauty, rich in His own essential opulence, God alone lived, all happy, self-sufficing and glorious, He loved me who was not. I was spoken in his own substantial utterance; I was loved in His personal predilection. This utterance, which is His Word and which He speaks eternally, was creative even before the creation of the world; it contained as cause and exemplar all that He had determined to call out of nothingness. I was there, not as I am but as I ought to be; not such as the abuse of my liberty, and my sins have made me, but such as grace has re-made me, such especially as I hope to be one day in glory. I was there: in seeing Himself God saw me: and as eternally He rests in that Word with infinite complaisance, enfolding, so to speak, in that ardent living embrace which is the Holy Ghost, so He enfolded with the same love all that the word contained. So that I, too was there, divinely embraced. In short, He loved me; He loved me in loving Himself, and His love for me dates from the impossible hour when he commenced to love Himself. He loved me; He loves me, with a love that is eternal. — Monsignor Gay.

Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? — Matthew 6:26.

“Above the joy that man experiences in feeling that God loves humanity, there is a joy still more sweet and intimate.

“In the matter of affection, our one great desire is to be loved personally. To be loved indirectly, by a kind of reflex as it were from the love given to the mass of men, does not touch our hearts sufficiently. We want love to come to us directly, in a straight line to our hearts. We cannot lay claim to be loved by Jesus with a love that is exclusive. Such exclusion would be lawful only in the measure of its necessity or its utility for a noble end. And the end to be gained by the love of Jesus by no means demands that to make room for us in His Heart, He should expel there-from all others. Besides, there is no reason to fear that God, in order to bestow it on our neighbour, withdraws from us a little of the love which otherwise He would have given us: the rose does not wish to capture for itself alone all the sunbeams, and since the love of God is infinite, it loses nothing in intensity because of the wideness of its diffusion.

“Nevertheless, our most intimate desire is that He should love us, directly and personally. If every soul shared this conviction of being so loved by God, how many would be valiant and happy in spite of everything! Is it then certain that Jesus loves us with a personal love?

“It is. Whoever you may be, be consoled and rejoice; He loves you personally, it is certain.

“For from the beginning of your life to its end, do you not hear the priest, speaking in the name of Jesus Christ, declare that Christ loves you personally. “Ego te baptizo; I baptize you”, “Ego te absolvo: I absolve you.” “Corpus Domini Nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam: May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve the soul of yours. “Profiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo in nomine Jesu Christi Filii Dei Vivi, qui pro te passus est: Depart, O Christian soul, from this world, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who for you did suffer.” Of this personal love of Christ for you, the priest is absolutely convinced; he has said it, will always say it and if needs be would write it in his life's blood.” — Père Anizan.

The salvation of a soul is the price of the Blood of God, the price of the death of God, the price of the greatest sacrifice which God, clothed in our human nature, could possibly make. — Père Grou, S. J.

The fact that God loves myriads of saints and angels together with me, and much more than me, cannot in the slightest degree interfere with the genuineness of the love He bears me personally, If I alone existed, if God possessed throughout the measureless realms of possible spaces no other creature but myself, He would love me neither more nor less than at present, nor would his love be even the faintest shadow of a degree more personal. His love of me increases or diminishes with my own personal sanctity, but is absolutely independent of the amount of divine love lavished upon others. — Vaughan.

The Crucifix.

"Your weary arms are all outstretched,
Outstretched to welcome me;
Your thorn-crowned Head is all bowed down
Bowed down in love for me,
Your aching heart beats slow and sad,
Beats sad for sake of me,
Your nail-pierced feet are weary, too,
A' weary seeking me.
Your gentle eyes are dim and dark,
All dimmed with care for me.
Your burning lips are parched and dry,
All parched with thirst for me.
Your white, sad face is wet with tears,
With wistful tears for me.
Your tired head bends lower still,
Bends low to pardon me.
And now there is a sob, a cry,
A cry aloud for me.
Your aching heart has ceased to throb —
A God is dead for me.

There are some thoughts, which, however old, are always new, either because they are so broad that we never learn them thoroughly, or because they are so intensively practical that their interest is always fresh. Now, among such thoughts we may reckon that thought which all children know, that God loves every one of us with a special love. It is one of the commonest thoughts in religion, and yet so amazing that, when we come to look steadily at it, we come nigh to not believing it.

God does not look at us merely in the mass and multitude. As we shall stand, single and alone before His judgment-seat, so do we stand, so have we always stood, single and alone before the eye of His boundless love. That is what each man had to believe of himself. From all eternity, God determined to create me, not simply a fresh man, not simple the son of my parents, a new inhabitant of my native country, an additional soul to do the work of the twentieth [or twenty-first] century. But He resolved to create me, such as I am, the me by which I am myself, the me by which other people know me, a different me from any that have ever been created hitherto, and from any that will be created hereafter.

Unnumbered possible creatures, which God saw when He chose me, He left to remain in their nothingness. They might have worshipped Him a thousand times better than I shall ever worship Him. But there was something nameless about me which He preferred. His love fastened on something special in me. It was just me, with my individual peculiarities, the size, shape, fashion, and way of my particular, single, unmated soul, which in the calmness of His eternal predilection drew Him to create me. I should not believe that God was God, if I did not believe this. This is the profession of faith which each of us should make in our hearts. I cannot tell how men endure life, who do not profess this faith in the Creator's special love. — Father Faber.

If a soul begins to occupy itself with the question of Jesus, it is well.

If it recognises in Him history's most glorious memory, it is still better.

If it adores Him as the Saviour, the Man-God, it has entered the gates of truth.

But there remains to it still a great step to take: it is to say to itself: This Man-God is my friend.
— Père Sauve.

"O Lord, You search me and know me; You know whether I sit or stand; You understand my thoughts from afar. My road and my resting-place You prove. All my ways You do foreknow." — Psalm 138:1-4 in the Vulgate, or Psalm 139:1-4 in the Hebrew.

With His absolute truth of understanding, His boundless, most kind heart, we shall find Him, as a necessary consequence, looking out on men with infinitely tender eyes. Never a human being comes within His horizon, but He looks through it with the eyes, of accurate judgment it may be, but indefinitely tempered by love; with intimate understanding He interprets it, with the welcome of friendship He receives it; there is not a good thought thinkable about it, not a good interpretation possible to put upon its wayward deeds, but that thought and that interpretation will have found a place in His Mind.... He offers men Himself and awaits the issue; When they look wistfully, He invites them to draw near; once or twice only does He make the first step, usually He leaves that to them; but, when they do come near, when they do let Him see that they want Him, then let His eyes glisten and His heart expands, and His hand opens and there is interest and sympathy and longing in every look and gesture; He was never so near seeming foolish, as when some pleading soul showed that it believed and responded, and the key was thus applied to the flood-gates of His bursting affection. — Archbishop Goodier, S.J.

As the mother loves her only son, so did I love you. — 2 Samuel 1:26 (2 Kings 1:26 in the Vulgate).
[The mystics saw in David's love for Jonathan, an analogy of God's love for the soul.]

Awake, my soul, sleeping time is over! Harken to my message! Beyond the sides, there dwells a king, who desires to possess you. With His whole heart, He longs for you. Beyond all measure, He loves you. And so, yes! Beyond all measure, He loves you. And, so tender and true is His love, that He has left His kingdom and has humbled Himself, because of you. He must wait still longer for the answer of your heart? He asks for you — for you and for your love. — Saint Gertrude.

The Lord has called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother, he has been mindful of my name. — Isaiah 49:1.

Jesus loves me!

We read how one day there appeared to Saint Angela of Foligno, the Jesus of the Passion, sad and pitiful.

"My daughter," He said, "look on Me and tell Me if My love for you has been in jest."

Oh. No, He has not loved me in jest but with a terrible earnestness.

Like Pascal, I believe a witness who attests his words with his life.

This is what Jesus has done.

An agreement merits confidence when it is signed in blood. Jesus has signed with His blood the pact of love between Him and me.

"In this we have known the love of God, because He has laid down His life for us."

— (1 John 3:16)

If anyone had done for me the one-thousandth part of what Our Lord has done for me!

We are touched at some kind act.

And we forget to thank the God, who has spent Himself for us.

"He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

(Galatians 2:20).

I can understand the astonishment, the amazement of Saint Paul.

He loved me, not mankind in general, but me personally, knowing me by my name and surname.

He delivered Himself for me. Seeing Him punished, I should, like him of whom the poet speaks, rush forward crying: "It is I who am the real culprit. Me! Ego adsum qui feci " (Aeneid ix. 427).

— Père Hoornaert, S.J.

The Divine Lover.

Me, Lord? Can You mispend

One word, misplace one look on me?

Call me Your love, Your friend?

Can this poor soul the object be

Of these love-glances, those life-kindling eyes?

What? I the centre of Your arms embraces?

Of all Your labour, I the prize?

Love never mocks, Truth never lies.

Oh how I quake: Hope fear, fear hope displaces:

I would, but cannot hope: such wondrous love amazes.

See Lord, see I am dead:
Tomb'd in myself: myself my grave.

A drudge: so born, so bred:
Myself even to myself a slave.
You Freedom, Life: can Life, and Liberty
Love bondage, death? 'Your Freedom I: I tied

To loose your bonds; be bound to Me:
My Yoke shall cease, My bonds shall free.'
'Dead soul, your Spring of life, My dying side:
There die with Me to live: to live in you I died.'

— Fletcher.

Christ has said: "Greater love than this no man has that a man lay down his life for his friends."

You, my dear Jesus, You have done so!

Who then would do as You have done? Where in the wide world is to be found one who for me would allow himself to be covered with spittle, with blows, who would permit nails to be driven into his hands and feet and his side to be pierced?

Noble friend! Who does thus sacrifice yourself that I may go free!

Saint Vincent de Paul offered himself one day to take the place, in irons, of a poor galley slave. Picture this slave meeting afterwards Saint Vincent de Paul loaded with chains in his stead. What emotion, what outpouring of thanks!

And that exactly is what I should experience in looking on Jesus Christ. I merited the chastisement that is sin's due. He has made Himself my divine substitute, suffering in my stead. — Père Hoornaert, S.J.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But, the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows. — Mathew. 10:28-31.

What most enkindled in Saint Paul his love for Jesus Christ was the consideration that He had died not only for all men but for him in particular. "He loved me," he cried, "and delivered Himself for me." And each of us should say the same, for Saint John Chrysostom assures us that God loves each single soul as much as He loves the whole world. Thus, though He suffered for all, our obligations to Him are no less than if He suffered for each one of us alone. And, dear reader, suppose that Jesus died to save you alone, leaving all others in their original misery, how you would consider yourself in His debt. But remark that this debt increases in the fact that He died for all. For, if He had died for you alone, what anxiety would be yours in the thought that those near and dear to you, your father, mother, brothers, friends were doomed to be lost, and that after death you would be separated eternally from them? Suppose that you were taken into slavery with your family, and that someone should come to rescue you alone, with what ardour would you not beg him to deliver with you your father, mother and brothers? And if he should do this to give you pleasure, how you would pour out your soul in thanksgiving to him? Say then to Jesus: For all that You have done for me, O sweet Redeemer, without my even demanding it, I thank You, and I love You, and I hope to thank You and to love You for all eternity. — Saint Alphonsus Liguori

So tenderly do I love my sheep, that rather than be without them, I would, if it were possible die over again by a special death, equal to the death upon the cross, for each separate one of them. — Revelations of Our Lord to Saint Bridget.

We read wonderful things in the Lives of the Saints about their love of God, wonderful things which we dare not think of imitating. They practised fearful austerities, or they spent years in unbroken silence, or they were ever in ecstasies or raptures, or they courted death and expired in the long tortures of an excruciating martyrdom. Each one of these things separately fills us with wonder. Yet, put them all together, conceive all the love of Peter, Paul, and John, of Joseph and Magdalen, of all the apostles and martyrs, of the confessors and virgins of the Church in all ages, thrown into one heart, made by miracle strong enough to hold such love; then add to it all the burning love which the nine choirs of multitudinous angels have for God, and crown it all with the amazing love of the Immaculate Heart of our dear Mother; and still it could not come near to, nay, it is but a poor imitation of the love which Jesus has for each one of us, however lowly and unworthy and sinful we may be. We know our own unworthiness. We hate ourselves for our own past sins. We are impatient with our secret meanness, irritability and wretchedness. We are tired with our own badness and littleness. Yet for all that, He loved us with this unutterable love, and is ready, if need be, as He revealed to one of His servants, to come down from heaven to be crucified over again for each one of us. — Faber.

If there be any meaning in human life at all and any foundation for religion, it is to be found, in the value of the individual to himself, to the world and to his Creator as "a single separate person," possessing a unique quality, so that in the universal symphony his own personal note is as necessary as any other, and for its own particular purpose is even a little better than any other. — Alfred Noyes.

That which should inspire us still more with love of this divine Heart, with love of this most amiable Saviour, is the fact that while He died and suffered so much for men in general, He had each of us in particular before his mind. For to each of us can be addressed the words of Saint Augustine: "Tibi fatigatus ab itinere Jesus" (Saint Augustine, tract 15, on John's Gospel). (Jesus for you is wearied with His journey.) If Jesus is wearied with His journey, it is for you He is so wearied; and there is not a single one of us that cannot say of this divine Redeemer, as did Saint Paul: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

Thus, we read in the life of Blessed Angela of Foligno that one day, our Lord enumerating to her in detail, all the torments of His Passion added: "All these I suffered for you." There is then no one who must not say to himself what Saint Augustine says of the evangelist Saint John, that the Son of God loved him as if He had loved but him alone. (Quasi solum diligeret) (Tract 124 on John's Gospel). — Père Froment, S.J.

"Love Me, because I love you. Love Me, My daughter, because there are few who love Me." — Our Lord to the Blessed Saint, Margaret of Cortona.

I thought of you in my agony; for you I shed such and such drops of blood.... I am a greater friend to you than this one, than that other; for I have done for you more than they. They would not suffer what I have suffered from you, nor would they die for you, in the time of your infidelities and cruelties as I have done, and am ready to do, and do in my elect and in the Blessed Sacrament. — (Reflections from the notebooks of) Pascal.

Here is a thought, O faithful soul, on which you should profoundly reflect. It is certain that on the tree of the cross, the Heart of Our Lord saw yours and loved it, and that by this love He obtained for it all the benefits you have ever received or ever will receive, among them being your good resolutions. Yes, O devout soul, we can all say, as did Jeremiah: "O Lord, before that I was, You did look upon me and did call me by my name." — Saint Francis de Sales.

Our Lord takes the greatest pains to make our hard hearts feel that His knowledge is connected with each and every individual soul. To Christ you are not a mere numbered unit — you are what your own make, your own history constitute you. To your Saviour, you are as if no other creature lived; He would have taken flesh for you alone; He would have been crucified for you alone; He would have opened His fountains and planned His graces for you alone.

There is no more striking name or designation in all Holy Scripture which He has given Himself than that of the Good Shepherd; one may also say that there is none to which He seems to cling so fondly. — Bishop Hedley, O.S.B.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the Heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

But we make His love too narrow
By fake limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

If our love were but more simple
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of Our Lord.

— Faber.

The infinite Beauty has for each single soul the love of a spouse. Nothing can better reveal us than this, the absolute power of love: for from this undeniable fact of which we are speaking, it seems to result that even in God Himself, love is above all. For that God should love His creature and give Himself to her as spouse, what is this if not the appropriation of the universal, the self-reduction of the immense to a mere point ; in other words the realisation of what seems impossible. Yet this is what love has done.

"My beloved to me," says the triumphant spouse. God belongs to me, as I to Him: He is mine as if He were only mine. From this entire gift rise those sacred flames of which Christ spoke: "I am come to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled" (Luke, 12:43). From it, too, flow waves of tenderness and life, reminding us of David's prophecy of heaven: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Your house; and You shall make them drink of the torrent of Your pleasure." (Psalm 39:9 in the Vulgate or Psalm 36:8 in the Hebrew.) — Monsignor Gay.

And when the sun was down, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them to Him. But He, laying His Hands on every one of them, healed them. — Luke 4:40.

Disciple: What O my Jesus was the first movement of Your Heart at the moment it commenced to beat in the womb of Mary, to communicate life to that body so sensitive that You did deign to take up to render Yourself like unto us?

Jesus: At that moment there was kindled in my Heart so great a fire of love for my Father and for men that human language cannot express it. I knew you by name; I knew all men, not vaguely and confusedly, but with an intimate and particular knowledge; and My Heart loved them, moved to pity at the sight of the evils they must encounter in life and of the sufferings which await them after death, if they reject the advances of my love. Oh who can fathom the tenderness with which My Heart spoke in advance to each of My creatures, exhorting and entreating them to open their eyes to their real interests: or who can gauge the compassion with which I drew them to Me, uttering thenceforward the words which My Heart still addresses to them today: "Come to Me all you who labour and are burdened and I will refresh you"? —Père Dufau, S.J.

There is a remark of Saint Chrysostom which may prove of very great service to us. He says that a good servant should value as highly the benefits which his master confers on him in common with others, and be as grateful for them, as if they were conferred on him alone. And this is the attitude of the apostle, when he says: He who loved me and delivered Himself for me."

It is with good reason he thus speaks, continues the holy doctor, and that each of us can so speak also, for each one of us profits as much by the death of Jesus Christ, as if He had died for him alone. For as the sun gives me as much light as if it shone for me only, and as the advantages I draw therefrom are none the less for being in common, but are rather increased by the fact that thus others can help Me; if needs be: so the incarnation and death of the Son of God are as advantageous to me, as if He had become man and suffered death for me alone. The advantages which others receive from them in no way lessen mine; on the contrary, they increase them, for they encourage and aid me to merit that glory to which I aspire.

Remember also, that the love of God is as great for each of us in particular, as if He loved nothing else besides. And as for the goodwill and love of Jesus, He was as ready to suffer for one man alone, if needs had been, as for all men. He would not have refused, says Saint Chrysostom, to do for one alone what He did for all.

Besides, it is true also, that God thought of me in particular, that He had me before His eyes in becoming man and in dying on the cross, that He loved me with an everlasting love, and that He delivered Himself up willingly to death, in order to win life for me. Each of us then must look on the benefits of God as if all for him only, must look on the love which is their source, as if God had loved but him alone and must say with Saint Paul: "He who loved me and delivered Himself for me." With such considerations, it will be impossible not to feel excited in us the most lively sentiments of gratitude and love towards our Divine Saviour. — Rodriguez.

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. — Luke 12:6-7.

Who could ever express, says Saint Laurence Justinian, the love that the divine Lord bears each one of us! It surpasses the love of all sons for their mothers, the love of all mothers for their sons. Our Lord revealed to Saint Gertrude that He would willingly die as many times as there are lost souls in hell, if they could only be redeemed. ("Toties morir quot sunt animae in inferno.") O most amiable Jesus, why is it that You are so little loved by men? Spread wide the knowledge of what You have

suffered for each of them, the love that You bear them, the desire You have to be loved by them, the stupendous claims You have to their love! Be You known, O Jesus, be You loved. — Saint Alphonsus Liguori.

The love of God for us is an individual love. Because He made us, He knows us through and through, and loves in each one of us that which makes us what we are — ourselves and not another, a special creation, what, when perfected will give us our individual claim to His love throughout eternity. In spite of our defects and our limitations, He loves each one of us with more than the indulgence of our most intimate friend. — Mother M. Loyola.

The great object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is that it should teach us to love Our Lord because He loves us. We were brought into the world solely because He loved us and wanted our love.... Some say: "I don't feel that God wants me to love Him; He doesn't care whether I love Him or not." Our Lord died for each one of us. Could He do more? He longs for our personal love. — Father Considine, S.J.

O adorable Heart of my Jesus, Heart burning with love for men, Heart that was created to love them, how is it that they make so little return for Your love and that they despise and scorn it as they do. And I, too, wretch that I am, have been of those thankless ones who cared not to love You. Pardon me Jesus this great fault of not having loved You, You who are so lovable, You who have so loved me that You have left nothing undone to force me to return Your love for love.

O tender and faithful Heart of my Jesus, inflame I beseech You, this poor heart of mine that it may burn with love for You as Yours has burned for me. It seems to me now my Jesus that I love You. But I love You too little. Grant then that I may love You with a great love and remain faithful to You until death. — Saint Alphonsus Liguori.

He that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out.... I am the good Shepherd and I know and mine know Me. — John 10 (especially verses 3,4, 11 and 14.)

God is not only our God, but our own God. He is really ours in a way in which He is no one else's, through His special love of us separately. He is not distant. He is not common property between all His creatures, though He is most truly so. His arms are not round all men; and round us amongst them, though verily His arms are so round us. But His arms are round our own selves. We have Him all to ourselves, in secret caresses, in private embraces, in a privileged exclusiveness. He is the God of our own souls — simply, sweetly, truly, our own private God.

I am always pleased with Saint Jane Frances de Chantal for being so sharp with the pedantic nun who said that for fear of selfishness, and attachment, and a want of holy poverty, she would only call God, God, not her God, not her own God. The saintly mother would not hear of it. She had been brought up in a different school. We must be of her school. We know of no such wire-drawn distinctions. We are greedy of God, and will have Him all to ourselves, leaving His infinite wisdom and power to manage how to be exclusively everybody else's God, while we have the exclusive enjoyment of Him for ourselves. — Faber.

Can a mother forget her child, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold I have graven you in My hands. — Isaiah 49:15-16.

There is no creature that may wit (know) how much and how sweetly and how tenderly He loves us.... And He has haste to have us to Him for we are His joy and His delight. And thus shall He be,

as long as any soul is in earth that shall come to Heaven; and so far forth that if there were none such soul in earth but one, He should be with that all alone till He had brought it up to His bliss. — Mother Juliana of Norwich (fourteenth century).

Doctors write treatises profound on the love of God; this love remains for me still a mystery. But once Jesus Christ shows me His Heart; I ask for no other book. From Him I learn all without effort. All the story of His love is contained in that symbol. He, who can read it has understood the Redemption, has understood Jesus Christ. He is forced to echo the Words of Saint Paul: "I can no longer doubt it, He has loved me: Dilexit me." — Père Suau, S.J.

{The following passage on Saint Francis of Assisi may be applied with still greater force to Our Lord.}

What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this: that from the Pope to the beggar; from the Sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis was really interested in him: in his own inner individual life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or the names in some clerical document. — G. K. Chesterton.

Before I formed you in the bowels of your mother, I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you. — Jeremiah, 1:5.

I know of no other way to gain devotion to the Sacred Heart than to believe in reality that the Sacred Heart has a devotion to me. — Father Dignam, S. J.

Now, as during His earthly life, Jesus is affectionate, gentle and encouraging. Could you then imagine Him regarding you with displeasure? Not if you realise the depth of His love and the goodness of His heart; it is ever overflowing with tenderness for you and because He loves you, He longs to have you near Him. He will bend towards you at your approach and will say to you with His unvarying loving kindness: "My beloved, why are you here? What have you to tell Me? What do you ask of Me?" Answer Him then. "I come to love You, to acknowledge my failings and my faults. I come that You may strengthen me and make me more faithful." You must have confidence in Him, perfect confidence. You may be familiar with Him; it is the confiding, the simple, the self forgetful who most quickly reach His presence. — Canon Saudreau.

Lose no opportunity in bringing home to yourself Our Lord's particular individual love of you, shown in even the smallest details of your life. It is God's peculiar prerogative, because He alone is infinitely wise and all-powerful, to be able so to direct and rule each single life as if that person alone was the centre of the universe, and all things else were ordered for her advantage, solely and entirely.

When I rise in the morning, I can say with truth: "This day, in all its circumstances, with all its consequences, has been appointed and fashioned to help me to love and serve God better." What peace, what courage, what an increase in love this thought should give us. — Father Considine, S.J.

Aspirations of Saint Alphonsus Liguori:

1. Who am I, Lord, that You have so loved me and that You should so seek my love?
2. You, my Jesus, have given Yourself entirely to me. I wish to give myself entirely to You.

3. Would, O my Saviour, that I could die for love of You who did die for love of me.
4. How, my dear Jesus, you have suffered for me. I wish to suffer for You, as far as you will.
5. O God! O God! I am Yours and You are mine.

It is our blameworthy and incomprehensible indifference that Our Lord wishes to remedy by the devotion to His Sacred Heart. "See," He says to each one of us, "I have shown you My Heart; in looking on it, you cannot but have been convinced that I loved you. Now show Me yours in turn; I wish to see if it resembles Mine, if in a word, you love Me. My son, give Me your heart; that is all I ask. It is the heart which is especially at fault in the world of today. If yours shares in the common misery, if it is cold, if knowing Me not, it does not love Me, bring it near to Mine. At the touch of Mine it will be enkindled; for I long for its enkindling, I long to be loved by you," — Père Suaud, S. J.

Alongside of His absolute trustworthiness, we shall find Him the tenderest of Hearts, a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a true and not a patronising or condescending friend, the exact equal of each and all, with an individual understanding and sympathy for every heart that opens out before Him, yet never does He confuse one with another, never does He weary of one in preference for another, much less exclude one for the sake of another, never is the love or interest of anyone diminished because He has love for so many.... Men might call Him by bad names; they might accuse Him of other evil deeds; they might say that He worked by Beelzebub, that He was possessed, that He was an imposter, that He blasphemed; they could never say, though He loved much and showed it, though His love went out to the most loathsome and abhorred so that some took scandal, that this His love was never other than understanding; and true, and generous, and enduring, and uplifting and in itself perfect. — Archbishop Goodier, S.J.

Don't let your heart sink with the false feeling that "somehow God doesn't care specially for me." The saints combined humility with the unshaken belief in God's great love for them. — Father Considine, S.J.

Once when I came before Him, my soul much oppressed, this Divine Master spoke thus to me interiorly: "My daughter, there is but Me and You." I said to him: "And the others, Lord?" He answered: "For every soul in the world, there is but Me and itself; all the other souls and all things else are nothing for it except by Me and for Me." — Journal of Lucie Christine.

I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn you, taking pity on you. — Jeremiah 31:3.

What shall I say of the love of the Sacred Heart for us? I fear that if I say little I shall have appeared to say nothing. Nevertheless, how can I be silent on such a subject? "He loved me," says the Apostle, and these words should be re-echoed by each one of us: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me: Dilexit me et tradidit se ipsum pro me".... Yes, O good Jesus, You have loved me and delivered yourself for me. And not content with doing so once or twice only, You deliver Yourself for me each day unceasingly. Unceasingly, You desire to be and to remain our victim. — Father Roothan, S. J.

Let us not forget that Christ wills the sanctity of His mystical body: all His mysteries have as end the establishment of this sanctity. "He loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it that He might sanctify it" (Ephesians 5:25). But what is this Church? That insignificant number of beings who had the privilege of seeing the Man-God living on earth? Certainly not. Our Lord came, not for

the inhabitants of Palestine alone who lived at that time, but for all the men of all the ages. "Christ died for all" (2 Corinth 5:15). The gaze of Jesus, being divine, was fixed on every soul; His love extended itself to each and everyone of them; His will to sanctify them remains still as sovereign and efficacious as on the day He shed His blood for the salvation of the world. — Abbot [Blessed Columba] Marmion.

Dear Jesus, make Yourself to me
A living bright reality,
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen,
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than even the sweetest earthly tie.

EPILOGUE.

And Christ died for all;
that they also who live
may not now live
to themselves,
but unto Him
who died for them
and rose again.
— 2 Corinth 5:15.
