

Devotion To The Sacred Heart

A Devotional History

By Mother Beatrice of the Sacred Heart.

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THE truth that God loves us and that we love Him is known to Christianity from earliest times. Saint John the Evangelist, Saint Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, do not tire in telling us this.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as it is recognized and practised by the Church offers a vast field of study to those who are devoted to His Sacred Heart. If our devotion is not very deep we may look upon it as regarding nothing else than the love of God in the world, and pay no attention to the Heart Itself. If we understand and have experienced the sweetness of the Sacred Heart, we shall be able to regard the Sacred Heart as being Jesus Christ Himself, Wholly and Entirely, Jesus loving us with a two-fold love resulting from two Natures harmoniously united in the Divine Person of the Word made Man.

To understand more adequately the riches poured out on us let us study the Heart in Itself, placing before ourselves the Heart of Jesus, living and concrete, showing us His Heart and saying "Behold this Heart which has so loved men, and in return receives from most men only ingratitude, indifference and contempt." Still, we must not lose sight of the fact that this love is a living, active reality. We behold the whole inner life of Jesus, His Virtues, His perfections as well as His sorrows and His Love. Thus, imperceptibly and without losing sight of the physical Heart of Christ our devotion is directed to the Person of Him who shows us His Heart in this manner, all loving and lovable. It is thus that we are to understand that Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a special form of devotion to His Adorable Person.

Devotion between the 12th and 14th Centuries.

During this period, we find the first traces and development of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart as regards Its outward manifestations. To Saint Bonaventure (1251-1274) known as the Seraphic Doctor and intimately acquainted with Saint Thomas Aquinas, must be given a high place amongst those devoted to the Sacred Heart. To him is attributed the beautiful lesson of the Second Nocturn of the Office of the Sacred Heart.

"Since we have reached the most sweet Heart of Jesus and it is good for us to abide in It, let us not readily turn away from It. How great a treasure, how exquisite a Pearl is Your Heart, O Good Jesus! Who is there who would not desire this pearl? Much rather would I give all the rest, all my thoughts and all the affections of my soul in exchange for It, casting my whole mind into the Heart of my Good Jesus. I will go to pray in this Temple, in this Holy of Holies, close to this Ark of the Testament. David said: – 'I have found my heart to pray to my God.' I also, I have found the Heart of the Lord, My King, My Brother and My Friend, my Good Jesus. And shall I not pray? Yes, I will pray. For His Heart is mine, I say it boldly. It is therefore mine. And behold I have but one heart

with Jesus. Having then found Your Heart and Mine, I shall pray to You as my God. Receive my prayers in the Sanctuary, or rather draw me, myself, wholly and entirely into Your Heart."

The prayer continues, beautiful, touching, begging that the soul purified by Jesus may approach Him, may always dwell in His Heart, always know and do His Will.

In the works of Saint Mechtilde, (1298) and Saint Gertrude, (1302) we have the devotion living and in action and in the most familiar relations with Jesus. – Mechtilde, at the invitation of Jesus Himself, enters into the Sacred Heart to rest therein. – Jesus, as a pledge of everlasting union with Him, gives her His Heart. She speaks to Him as to the tenderest of friends. He told her that she should ask from His Heart all that she wanted, as a child that asks from its father, all that she wishes for. One day when she was afraid of having neglected the Blessed Virgin, Our Lord told her henceforth to come and draw from His Heart, all that she wished to offer to Mary, His Mother. In short, she said herself, "If I were obliged to write all the favours that I have received from the all-loving Heart of God, I should require a larger book than that of Matins." Saint Gertrude's ardent devotion to Our Lord's Sacred Heart is revealed in all her writings. We see it loved with the tenderest love. A celebrated vision the saint had, marks an epoch in the history of the devotion apart from and next to its development during the life of the two saints.

This vision like the first great vision of Saint Margaret Mary took place on the Feast of Saint John the Evangelist, December 27th, during Matins (Morning Prayer). Saint Gertrude saw the Saint whom Jesus loved so well.

"What grace can I obtain, wretched me, on your most sweet Feast?" she asked him.

He answered, "Come with me, you are the chosen of My Lord; let us both rest together on the sweet breast of the Lord, in which are hidden the treasures of all blessedness... Behold the Hol of Holies who draws to Himself all that is good in Heaven and on earth... I have placed you at the opening of the Divine Heart that you might more easily draw the sweetness and consolation that in its perpetual fervour of love, the Divine Heart pours out in an impetuous torrent on all those who desire it."

When Saint Gertrude asked Saint John, " Why then have you kept such absolute silence about the devotion to the Heart of Jesus?" he replied, "My mission was to deliver to the Church in her first age, a simple word on the untreated word of God the Father that would suffice until the end of the world to satisfy the understanding of the whole human race, yet without any person ever succeeding in understanding it. But to tell of the sweetness of those pulsations has been reserved for the present time, so that in hearing of these things, the world that is growing old and whose love is weakening, may be revived."

These writings place Saint Gertrude very near Saint Margaret Mary. She was not chosen to be directly the Apostle of the Sacred Heart, nor to propagate the devotion; she was its exquisite poet and radiant lover.

Thirteenth Century Art delighted in the view of Christ, glorious and triumphant with it, the Cross itself is as a Throne.

13th to 15th Centuries.

From the 13th to the 15th Centuries devotion to the Sacred Heart spread without any development in itself. But in the following century, the devotion passes from the domain of mysticism to that of Christian asceticism. This is mainly owing to a Carthusian father of Cologne, Lanspergius (1489-

1539) and a Benedictine, Louis de Blois or Blosius (of Blois) (1506-1566), who seemed to have had a special role in propagating the devotion.

Lanspergius gives us some admirable models of prayers and affections to the Sacred Heart. He is the first to speak of pictures of this Heart. Here are some words written to a novice:-

"Strive to honour the Heart of the most tender Jesus Christ Our Lord which is wholly filled with love and with mercy. Be devout in paying it reverence often; kiss it, enter into it in spirit. It is the door by which we go to God, and God comes to us. You may also if your devotion urges you to do so, kiss the picture – I mean, of the Heart of Jesus, as if it were the real divine Heart of Jesus that you were pressing to your lips, desiring to imprint on it your heart, to plunge therein your spirit, to be absorbed therein, presenting yourself to draw from His gracious Heart into yours, His graces, His spirit, His virtues, all that His immensity contains that is salutary for you. Have recourse to It in all necessities, draw from It consolation and help of every kind. If all hearts abandon you and deceive you be without fear; this most faithful Heart will neither deceive you nor forsake you."

To this counsel must be added, if only as a specimen, some extracts from the pious aspirations that he proposes to us;

"O most lovable Jesus when will You take away my sin-stained heart and give me Your Heart? When will my heart be fragrant with the odour of Your Virtues, wholly inflamed with the love of heavenly things? Ah! Most sweet Jesus, shut up my heart in Your Heart, dwell therein all alone, be You its sole Master. Imprint, I beg of You, on my heart all the wounds of Your Wounded Heart, that so I may read therein unceasingly the immense love of Your Heart for me, and its intense sufferings."

Let us also add to this beautiful prayer, one of those that make us best grasp in life and in action the devotion of the Sacred Heart.

"O Heart, so noble, so good, so sweet, of my faithful Friend Jesus Christ, My God, My Lord draw, absorb into You, my heart, all my thoughts, all my affections, all the powers of my soul, all that is in me, all that I am, all that I can do, that I may live only for Your glory."

"Ah! Lord my God, my Saviour, my Redeemer, take away all my sins, and all that displeases You in me. All that is pleasing to You, pour into me from Your most Holy Heart. Change me and take full possession of me. May I live but to please You, all-holy God, and to love You. May I love You O sweet Jesus my God, with my whole heart, in all, and above all for ever. Amen."

Another ecclesiastic of note and theologian was Eschius or Nicolaus Van Esch (1507-1578) who settled in Cologne and contracted a close friendship with several members of the Carthusian Order. He became the private tutor, of several young men mainly university students, one of whom was Saint Peter Canisius, S.J. the most celebrated of his pupils. Van Esch has given us some very touching exercises of devotion to the Sacred Heart, amongst them the following.

"O most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, I implore You through the ardent love of Your Divine Heart, through Your human Heart that was transpierced, and through Its agony, let my heart be imprinted on Your transpierced Heart and fill it with the perfect charity that will eradicate within me all selfish (inordinate) love for myself and for creatures. Let the shaft of Your ardent love wound and inflame me so that I may love You perfectly with my whole soul, with my whole mind, and with all my strength, purely because of Your goodness without any expectation of return or reward. May I, for love of You, give up much, suffer and labour much, without ever relaxing my efforts. May I, by my

boundless and burning desire, by my prayers, attain perfect renunciation of myself and loving union with You, may I unceasingly long for You, call upon You and knock upon Your door. May I think of You, speak of You, hunger and thirst for You, seek You and find You, until wholly transformed into You, I become one sole spirit with You, I ever in You, and You in me. Grant me also that I may love with the same love my neighbour in You and for You, as myself." Amen.

Saint Peter Canisius S.J. was, like his master, Eschius, the intimate friend of the Carthusians at Cologne who after he became a Jesuit, retained grateful memories of his saintly master.

On the day that he made his solemn vows at the Vatican Basilica in Rome at the hands of Saint Ignatius Loyola, he was quite overcome, almost at the very moment of pronouncing them, with a profound sentiment of his misery and poverty.

It pleased the Sacred Heart to supply in full for all: –

"You opened to me, at that moment," he says to Jesus in his Memorial "the Heart of Your Sacred Body, and it seemed to me that I saw it quite close to me and you told me to drink from the fountain, in that manner, inviting me to draw the waters of my salvation from Your Fountains, O my Saviour. And I myself desired so ardently that there came to me from It floods of faith, hope and charity... And when I had ventured to approach Your most sweet Heart to quench my thirst You promised me a robe woven in three parts."

In his Memorial, there are very many other traces of his devotion to the Sacred Heart: "The Name of Jesus burns with such love for us that this Son of God and of the Virgin is ready – what do I say? It is His desire to suffer for you alone all the interior and exterior sorrows that He has suffered for the whole world, rather than permit that you, or one single soul, should be lost."

Finally in his conferences addressed to his brethren in religion, he recommended them "to unite their wills to the Heart of Jesus, as He has given us His Heart they should give Him theirs; that they should imitate the liberality with which He has given to us the Blood of His Heart to drink; that in union with the gratitude which the Saints draw from the Heart of Jesus they should return thanks for the gifts they have received, that they should make their nests in the crevices of the rock and that in all temptations they should rest in the lovable Heart of Christ."

In the History of the development of the devotion, Spain merits special mention. In their poems, her poets have hymned Its praises; her ascetics have made It their rule of life, her writers have treated of It.

To mention one amongst so many Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, (1532-1617) the humble lay-brother of the Society of Jesus, explains how the soul, by lively contemplation, dwells in the Heart of Jesus, how Jesus, through the great love that He bears her, puts her in His Heart. He shows us the devout soul reading in the holy Face of Jesus the sorrows of His Heart and of His Soul, and through her compassion, drinking at the fountain whence, they flowed, which is the Heart of Christ. Then Christ Himself leads her into the very interior of His Heart, and she, once she is in that Heart, in that ocean of anguish and tribulation – bears Him company... and as this Holy Heart is a fountain of love, she remains there wholly inflamed with the fire of love; and the burning ardour that Jesus communicates to her is so strong, that He transforms her into Himself. Thus wholly withdrawn into this shelter of the Heart of Jesus she enjoys therein all that this sweet Saviour imparts of Himself whilst covering her from head to foot with His sorrows and His sufferings.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart in the 17th Century.

This century is as it were the Dawn, the Spring-time of the devotion as we know it today. Everything announces the advent of the great movement that is to spread through the world. Amongst the many lovers of the Sacred Heart, a special place must be assigned to the Venerable Mother Mary of the Incarnation, an Ursuline who died in Quebec in 1672 whom Bossuet named the Teresa of the New World [beatified in 2007]. She speaks constantly of the Sacred Heart and very often writes at the top of her letters "saluting you very humbly in the Sacred Heart of our Good Jesus."

Saint Francis de Sales (1546-1612).

Doctor of the Church and Bishop of Geneva founded together with Saint Jane Frances de Chantal the Order of the Visitation at Annecy in France. One would say that he had seen before-hand, how intimately his Congregation would be connected with the Sacred Heart. On June 10th, 1611, being the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi he writes to Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, "This night God has given me the thought, my dear Mother, that our house of the Visitation is by His grace important enough to have His arms, His blazonry, His device, and His war-cry. I have therefore thought, if you agree, that we should take for our coat of arms, one Heart pierced with two arrows and surrounded by a crown of thorns. This heart serving as the base of a cross that will surmount it, and on which will be graven the names of Jesus and Mary... for truly our congregation is a work of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The dying Saviour has given birth to us in the opening of His Sacred Heart. It is therefore quite just that our hearts remain through assiduous mortification always surrounded by that crown of thorns that rested on the Head of our Leader, whilst Love kept Him fastened on the throne of His mortal agony."

The Visitation Order was consecrated beforehand to the Sacred Heart, it was, as if it were, baptised in that Divine Heart.

Saint Jane Frances de Chantal wrote to Saint Francis de Sales, "Be truly meek and humble and simple, that in this way your poor dear heart may become like the Heart of Jesus... God grant us the grace to be in His Sacred Heart living and dying."

Thus, we see from the writings of several nuns, that in this order, great Devotion to the Sacred Heart was practised long before the revelations to Saint Margaret Mary. In a supernatural manner a humble lay-sister, Sister Giovanna Benigna of the monastery of Turin, where she died in 1692, learned of the favours granted to Saint Margaret Mary. She knew of several favours bestowed on Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque of which no one in the country was speaking. She knew that this was a person through whom God would be glorified and that she would teach in the Church a very profitable devotion. Sister Benigna, her biographer related, was thrust ever deeper into the interior of this Divine Heart, where she dwelt as a dove in the cleft of the cornerstone.

Many Jesuit writers might be named and their works listed did space permit. But perhaps the book written by Father Kasper Druzbicki, S.J., entitled *Meta Cordium Cor Jesu* is a real manual of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Valuable and devout, the first of its kind, it deserves mention. A short preface indicates clearly the idea of the devotion.

"The exercises in honour of the Heart of the Lord Jesus, which you have in your hands and before your eyes are addressed especially to the physical Heart of Jesus, to His Heart of flesh, but only in as much as it is animated by His most holy soul and as it is in unity of being and of life with the spiritual and interior Heart, in as much also as it subsists in the Person of the Word. It is on these conditions that depend, or rather, it is from these sources that flow fair the value, the action, the

riches of the material Heart. In honour of this Heart thus understood, make acts of reverence, of love, of worship, of invocation, and observe other practices of piety and devotion; this is a very salutary thing and quite according to the Heart of Jesus."

The book contains a Little Office of the Name of Jesus; plus some prayers and aspirations to this Divine Name. It has Points of meditation on the Heart of Jesus considered as the image of the Trinity; on the Heart of Jesus considered as the Seat of the Divinity; on the Heart of Jesus considered as Heaven; on the Heart of Jesus considered as a Paradise; on the Heart of Jesus considered as a Banquet, and so on. Lastly, it has a little chaplet in honour of the wounds of Christ, the whole contents being full of the spirit of Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Before Father Druzbicki's book, no writer had treated so directly and at such length on the Heart of Jesus. And amongst all the manuals that have appeared since, there is scarcely one more practical, more copious more suggestive.

Saint John Eudes and the public Cultus of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Saint John Eudes was above all the special Apostle of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary, but he has also his part in spreading the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "Burning with singular love for the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary", he was the first to have the idea of a special cultus in their honour. He caused the Feast of these Hearts to be celebrated among the spiritual sons of his Order, THE EUDISTS. He composed in. their honour, a Mass and Office and devoted himself with his whole heart to spreading everywhere this devotion.

In 1670, the Bishops of Rennes, Countance, and Evereux gave their approbation and permitted the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be celebrated in their dioceses. Until the year 1670, Father Eudes had proposed only the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, then he conceived the idea of a special feast and Office in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The feast of the Sacred Heart was enjoined on the six houses of His Society to be celebrated on October 20th, 1672; it was to be their patronal feast. In this way, Saint John Eudes prepared the ground. He set on foot a movement that accorded with the devotion to the Sacred Heart. He it was who first celebrated the praises of that Divine Heart in liturgical chants; the confraternities that he established in honour of Jesus and Mary contributed to the establishment of others in honour of the Sacred Heart; the approbations that he obtained were an encouragement to ask for more.

The devotion such as it has been propagated throughout the world and approved of by the Universal Church, owes its characteristic features (the emphasis on Reparation and Consecration, the Holy Hour, and the Nine First-Fridays) to the revelations of Saint Margaret Mary, who was pre-eminently the Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is to be the Apostle of the Holy Heart of Mary that Saint John Eudes has been chosen. But he served as a powerful auxiliary and a worthy precursor of Saint Margaret Mary.

The Beginnings of the Present-day Devotion.

Whilst Our Lord was thus preparing the way for Saint Margaret Mary, He was also preparing the Saint herself. From her tenderest infancy, He watched over her and surrounded her with His love, watchful that from the earliest moment her heart should belong to Him alone. On June 21st, 1691, she entered the Visitation Monastery at Paray and soon afterwards, He began to reveal to her the secrets of His Sacred Heart. Had Margaret Mary any knowledge of the Sacred Heart before the revelation of Paray? Was she influenced by any of those who are now called her precursors? Did she know of the revelations made to Saint Gertrude and to others? There is nothing to indicate one

way or the other. After she entered the Convent, she may have read, or heard read, the passages on the Sacred Heart written by Saint Francis de Sales, but there is nothing to show that she was impressed by these. In short, although we cannot make any positive assertion about it, we have every reason to believe that the saint did not owe her devotion to the Sacred Heart to any exterior influences. Before her entrance into religion she does not seem to have thought of it; it was from Our Lord that she learned it.

First Great Apparition, Feast of Saint John the Evangelist, 1673.

Saint Margaret Mary wrote down in obedience to her director some details of what she experienced. She was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lord revealed Himself to her, and showed her the marvels of His Love and the inexplicable secrets of His Heart, which He had hidden from her until then. "My Divine Heart is so inflamed with love for men and for you in particular that not being able to restrain any longer within itself the flames of Its ardent Charity It must spread them everywhere through your means, and manifest Itself to men that they may be enriched with its precious Treasures. I have chosen you as an abyss of unworthiness and of ignorance for the accomplishment of this great design that thus all may be done by ME. Until now you have called yourself by no other name but that of my slave; I give you that of the beloved Disciple of My HEART." Thus, the Sacred Heart revealed Itself, inflamed with love for men; It will manifest Itself to these and enrich them with Its treasures for the sanctification and salvation of their souls.

Margaret Mary is the instrument chosen for the accomplishment of these designs.

The Second Apparition, 1673-1674.

We have now a symbolic vision of the Heart itself apart from the Body, which does not appear. It was "as if on a throne of flame more radiant than the Sun and transparent as crystal, with the Adorable Wound. It was surrounded by a crown of thorns and surmounted by a Cross." Our Lord told her of the great longing He had to be loved by men, and to rescue them from the snares laid for them by Satan. To please Him we must honour Him under the figure of a Heart of Flesh, and to those who honour Him thus He made the following promises:

1. I will give them the graces necessary for their state.
2. I will give peace to their families.
3. I will comfort them in their trials and afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge in life and in death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in my Heart an Ocean of Mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly towards high perfection.
9. I will bless every dwelling in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured.
10. I will give Priests a peculiar facility in converting the most hardened souls.
11. The persons who spread this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be effaced.

12.I Promise that all who go to Holy Communion on nine First Fridays, the final grace of perseverance, the Divine Heart becoming their assured refuge at the last moment.

The Third Great Apparition, 1674.

On a day when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, Our Lord appeared to her "all resplendent in glory with His five wounds shining like five suns." Our Lord allowed her to behold the inexplicable wonders of His pure love and to what an excess He had carried His love for men. But in return He received from them nothing but ingratitude and forgetfulness, and this, the Divine Master told her, He felt more acutely than all He had suffered in His passion, insomuch, He added, "that if they had rendered Me some return of love, I should esteem all that I have done for them as but little, and would do, if it were possible, still more for them. But they have nothing but coldness and rebuffs for all my eagerness to do them good." This love, forgotten, disregarded, asks for Reparation. At first, He asks this from His beloved servant: "Do you, at least give Me this pleasure, by supplying for their ingratitude as far as you are capable of doing." Humbly she represents to Him how powerless she is to do what He asks of her. "See," He replies, "here is what will supply for all that is wanting in you." And as He said this, He opened His Heart. There poured from It such a flame of fire that she thought she would be consumed by it. Not being able to bear it, she asked Him to have pity on her weakness.

"I will be your strength," He said. Then He pointed out to her the particular exercises, which must be performed in this spirit of love and reparation. "First," said Our Lord, "you will receive Me in the Blessed Sacrament on the First Friday of every month." Finally, Our Lord desires that on every Thursday night she should share in the mortal sadness that He felt in the Garden of Olives. "To accompany Me in that humble prayer which I offered My Father at that time in the midst of all my anguish." Here it is evident the devotion takes the form of a devotion of love and of reparation to the love that is unrecognized, forgotten; of loving compassion, of loving union with Jesus, the Victim of His love for men, asking for them pity and pardon. In this vision, it is only Margaret Mary who is asked by Our Lord to perform this Act of love and reparation. But these practices of frequent Communion in a spirit of love and reparation, the Communion of the First Friday, or Communion of Reparation, the vigil with Our Lord in the Garden or the Holy Hour, all these from the very beginning, became general, as corresponding with the spirit of the devotion.

The Great Apparition, 1675.

This Apparition took place during the Octave of Corpus Christi. Saint Margaret Mary was praying before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. Our Lord seems to have insisted again on what He had already demanded, when showing her His Heart He says, "Behold This Heart which has so loved men, which has spared nothing even to being exhausted and consumed in order to testify to them Its love – And the greater number of them make Me no other return than ingratitude by their coldness and their forgetfulness of Me in this Sacrament of Love. But what is still more displeasing to Me is, that the hearts consecrated to Me, should treat me thus."

So far, there is nothing very different in this Apparition with the exception, however, of the special mention of insults received in the Blessed Sacrament. But what follows is altogether new. Our Lord added "It is because of this, that I ask you to have the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi kept as a special feast in honour of My Heart, by receiving Holy Communion on that day in reparation for all the insults offered to My Heart during the time it has been exposed on the Altars."

Our Lord asks for a public devotion that shall have its appointed Feast and its own special practices. "I promise you that My Heart will pour out in abundance the powerful effects of Its influence on all those who will render It this honour and who will procure that others will render It also."

Again, the Saint insisted on her unworthiness as a wretched creature and a poor sinner.

"Well," Our Lord answered, "poor simple creature as you are, do you not know that I make use of the weakest of beings to confound the strong?" "Then," she replied, "Give me the means of doing what you command me to do."

"Address yourself to My servant (Jesus named Father Claude de la Colombiere (canonised in 1992) who at that time was Superior of the small Jesuit house at Paray) and tell him from Me to do his utmost to establish this devotion and to give this pleasure to My Divine Heart." Our Lord added that difficulties would not be wanting, "but he must know that he who distrusts himself to trust solely in Me is all-powerful."

After Our Lord's clear, distinct words, it at length became necessary, as the Saint says herself, to carry out His commands. This time the affair was concluded; Father de la Colombiere was won to the cause of the new devotion. It was not enough for him to reassure Margaret Mary and her Superior, Mother de Saumaise. He at once without delay, consecrated himself to the Sacred Heart. It was, we are told, on Friday, June 21st, 1675, the day following the Octave of Corpus Christi, the very day appointed by our Lord for the future feast. Thus was the devotion inaugurated. How poor, how small a beginning! And immediately difficulties arose. It was in the midst of contradictions that it was to develop. The Saint was the first to tell that Father de la Colombiere had much to suffer on her account. Contemporaries add that during the short time he remained at Paray, "he never ceased to instill this devotion into all his spiritual daughters."

Towards the end of September, 1676 Father de la Colombiere left Paray, having been appointed preacher to the Duchess of York, Mary of Modena, the future Queen of England of James II. On October 23rd, he arrived in London, the scene of his appointed duties. There he made the Sacred Heart known and loved. The first to learn from him was the Duchess herself, whom we shall see later approaching Pope Innocent XII to obtain the establishment of the new devotion. Afterwards came some chosen souls, who placed themselves under his direction. In some of his Lenten sermons, he even spoke of it. But this was all. At the close of his temporary sojourn in London he notes down on January 29 (February 8), 1677, that he has already inspired a great many people with the devotion, and that he has written about it to France, and has begged one of his friends to make it known in the place where he is. Banished from London owing to a violent persecution of Catholics and already ill, he passed by Paray on his way to Lyons. He saw Margaret Mary once again, encouraged and reassured her, and also Mother Greyfie, who had succeeded Mother de Saumaise as Superior. (1672-1678)

Prudently, as was his wont in everything, but in a very persuasive manner, he continued to exercise his apostolate. Many of his letters have as superscription: "My dear sister in the Heart of Jesus Christ." Sometimes he ended his letters with a formula such as "Believe me in the Heart of Jesus, yours..." He never missed an opportunity of recommending the Communion of Reparation on the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi; he asked Superiors to introduce it into their communities as a fixed practice, assuring them that great blessings are attached to this observance. When prudence permitted, he said that this practice had been "recommended to him by a person of extraordinary holiness." Amongst the young religious at Lyons who were under his spiritual

direction, he exercised the same apostolate. It was to him that Father Joseph de Galliffet attributed his own devotion to the Sacred Heart. The page in which he explains the offering to the Sacred Heart does not seem to have been written for his own use only. In any case, he had to explain it to others.

This apostolate was very restricted. For from the time that he returned to France, Father de la Colombiere's health continuously grew worse. He was also obliged to be prudent. For, as can be easily imagined, this new devotion was not to everyone's liking. It was in dying that the Father would particularly fulfil his mission. God willed that he should end his days at Paray, and that before leaving earth for heaven he should be able to see and to encourage Margaret Mary. He died on February 15th, 1682.

Two years afterwards his sermons were published at Lyons in four volumes, the diary of his spiritual retreats being published in a separate volume. In this we read: "At the end of this retreat (London, 1677), filled with confidence in the mercy of God, I have resolved to try by every possible means to carry out what has been prescribed to me on the part of my adorable Master, with regard to His adorable Body in the Holy Sacrament of the altar." Here follow some touching transports of love for the blessed Eucharist. Then the Father resumes: "I recognized that God willed that I should serve him by furthering the accomplishment of His desires concerning the devotion that He has suggested to a person with whom he has most intimate intercourse, and for which He has clearly willed to make use of my weakness. I have already inspired a great many persons in England with it, and I have written about it in France, and begged one of my friends to urge its practice in the place where he is. It will do great good there, and the great number of chosen souls that are in that community makes me think that the practice of it in that house will be most pleasing to God. Why cannot I, O my God, go everywhere and proclaim what you expect from your servants and friends?"

"God, therefore, having confided in the person who, there is reason to believe, is according to His Heart, she spoke plainly to me about it, and I obliged her to put down in writing what she had told me, which I have gladly related myself in the diary of my retreats, because God, in the execution of this design, wills to make use of my poor services." Here followed the account of the Great Apparition just as the Father had transcribed it.

The Retreat was much read, for the writer had a great reputation for sanctity. The passage about Margaret Mary and the account in her own hand gave added importance to what he had hitherto said with such discretion about the new devotion.

To the Journal of Retreats was added an Offering to the Sacred Heart, which also contributed to the development of the devotion. This Offering is composed of two parts. The first consists of a short explanation, very simple and clear, of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. "This Offering," it tells us, "is made to honour that divine Heart, the seat of all virtues, the source of all blessings, and the retreat of all holy souls. This Heart is still, as much as it can be, in the same sentiments, and especially it is ever burning with love for men, ever open to pour out all kinds of graces and of blessings, ever touched' by our miseries, ever urged by the desire of sharing its treasures with us and of giving itself to us, always disposed to receive us and to be to us a refuge, a home, and a paradise even in this life." We seem to hear the echo of Margaret Mary's words. The end is still more distinct. "In return for all this, He finds nothing in the hearts of men but hardness, forgetfulness, indifference, ingratitude. He loves and is not loved. His love is not even known because people will

not deign to receive the gifts by which He would testify it to them, nor listen to the tender, secret declarations of it that He would make to our hearts."

After these explanations, the offering springs out spontaneously: "In reparation for so many outrages and such cruel ingratitude, O most adorable and most lovable Heart of my beloved Jesus, and to avoid, as far as is in my power, falling into similar misfortune, I offer You my heart with all the impulses of which it is capable. I give myself wholly to You, and from this hour I protest most sincerely, as it seems to me, that I desire to forget myself and all that may in any way concern me, that thus all obstacles may be removed that could prevent me from entering into this divine Heart, which You have the goodness to open to me and into which I desire to enter, to live and to die therein with Your most faithful servants. I offer to this Heart all the merit, all the satisfaction of all the Masses, of all the prayers, of all the religious practices, of all the acts of zeal, of humility, of obedience and of all other acts of virtue that I shall perform until the last moment of my life. Not only, will all this be to honour the Heart of Jesus and His admirable dispositions; but also I beseech You to accept the entire oblation that I make of them, to dispose of them in the manner pleasing to You and in favour of whomsoever You will."

The Father explains afterwards, with that precision and that practical good sense which distinguish him even in his most ardent transports and his most generous impulses, how he reconciles this complete offering, first with his surrender to the souls in Purgatory, of all the satisfactory merit of his works, next with the urgent demands of charity or the various obligations that he may be under to say Mass and to pray for particular intentions. For the souls in Purgatory, he desires that all "may be distributed to them according as may seem good to the Heart of Jesus." For the other intentions, as he will be then making use of a good that does not belong to him, he maintains, as is right, that the obedience, charity and other virtues which he may practise on these occasions will belong wholly to the Heart of Jesus, whence he will have obtained the grace to practise these virtues, "which consequently will belong unreservedly to Him." We can judge now how complete is this offering. What does he ask in return? He tells us in the admirable final prayer, which reveals to us the inmost depths of a beautiful soul:

"Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me perfect forgetfulness of self, since that is the only way by which one can enter into You. Since all that I shall do in future will be Yours, grant that I may never do anything unworthy of You. Teach me what I must do to attain to the purity of Your love, with the desire of which You have inspired me. I feel within me a great will to please You, and a great inability to succeed in doing so without great light and very special help that I can only obtain from You. Let Your Will be done in me. O Lord, I know well that I resist it, but I think that I should like not to resist. It is for You, O divine Heart of Jesus Christ, to do everything. If I become a Saint, You alone will have all the glory of my sanctification: this seems to me clearer than daylight. But it will give You great glory, and it is for that reason alone that I would desire to be perfect. So be it. Amen."

As he had copied Margaret Mary's account for his own personal use, so he had written the offering for himself in particular. Whilst revealing in Father de la Colombiere a soul wholly and entirely devoted to the Sacred Heart, this offering at the same time gave an idea of the devotion, and was a model for one of its chief practices. It was an act of private devotion; it served to spread the devotion publicly. Father John Croiset, Margaret Mary's (new) spiritual director, did not make any delay about inserting it in his book.

Thus begins a new phase of the Devotion: Our Lord asks for a public devotion, particularly that a feast should be established; next, His designs are manifested to the world. The first step had been taken. The devotion began to spread. At first Saint Margaret Mary met with great opposition from some members of the Community at Paray, who disapproved of this 'innovation'; but in time the hearts of all were changed. Those who had shown the greatest suspicion became the Saint's friends. A little Oratory was arranged in the Convent where the Picture of the Sacred Heart was specially honoured. Then, within the enclosure, a chapel was built, the solemn dedication of which brought the whole of the little town of Paray and the surrounding parishes to the feet of Jesus to honour His Sacred Heart. This was on September 7th, 1688.

The Revelations of 1688 and 1689 included the message to the King, Louis XIV, but whether it ever reached him is doubtful. The Diocesan authorities at Dijon, where there was a Community of Visitation nuns, and to whom Rome had remitted the affair of promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart, granted them the desired permission for the Feast, and on the First Friday of February, 1689, the Octave of the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, the Office and Mass composed by Sister Joly, a Visitation nun, were solemnly chanted at Dijon. Intense enthusiasm for the new devotion spread rapidly. Father John Croiset, S.J. the Saint's Spiritual Director, after the death of Father de la Colombiere, worked with great zeal to further the devotion. Before the Saint's death, he had set about writing a second book on the Sacred Heart. She had said the only obstacle to the devotion was herself, it was better she should die! This was true although not in her sense – whilst she lived, all could not be told. On October 17, 1690 before it was believed that she was seriously ill, she died, breathing forth her soul in an act of love, "to be lost in the Sacred Heart."

In 1691 Father Croiset's book in which he inserted certain documents given by the Visitation Nuns and extracts from her letters, was published at Lyons and contributed largely to the spread of the Devotion. By now its internal organisation was fully complete, – to return Love for Love and by that Love to make reparation to LOVE wounded by ingratitude and indifference. In many Visitation monasteries, the devotion was accepted, as also in many towns in France. But there were formidable obstacles still to be overcome – The Visitation nuns as a body and the Society of Jesus remained to be won to the cause of this new devotion. In the outside world, the Jansenists were very far from submitting to Margaret Mary and the Jesuits. Lastly, Rome waited and watched – she was not hostile, neither had she given her approbation.

It was the Feast of the Visitation, July 2, 1688. Saint Margaret Mary had the happiness of spending the whole day before the Blessed Sacrament, and her Sovereign as she says, "deigned to bestow upon His poor slave several special favours of his loving Heart." He showed her "a very high place, spacious and extraordinarily beautiful, in the centre of which was a throne of flames." On this throne, she saw "the lovable Heart of Jesus with its wound." From this wound "issued such ardent, luminous rays that the whole place was heated and illuminated by them."

On this occasion, the Sacred Heart was not alone. On one side was the Blessed Virgin, on the other was Saint Francis de Sales "with the holy Father de la Colombiere." And next were the daughters of the Visitation, "their good angels at their side, each of whom was holding a heart in his hand "probably these were the hearts of those whom they were appointed to protect." "The Blessed Virgin," says the Saint by her maternal words invited us to draw near: 'Come, my beloved daughters, approach, for I wish to make you the guardians of this precious treasure'." Here follow some further developments, from which it distinctly results that the Heart of Jesus is Jesus Himself, wholly, and that the gift of the Heart is the gift of Jesus Himself with all His love, all his merits and

all His riches. "This Queen of goodness," continuing to speak to the daughters of the Visitation, said to them, whilst "showing them this divine Heart: 'Behold this divine treasure that has been manifested to you in particular'." "Jesus loves their Institute" as his dear 'Benjamin' (Son of my right hand), and "would give to them above others the advantages of Its possession." But it is not for themselves only that this treasure is given to them; "they must distribute this precious coin." They must try "to enrich the world with it, without any fear that it will fall short, for the more they take of it, the more there will be to take." Such is the part appointed to the religious of the Visitation mission, as it has been clearly indicated to them by their blessed Mother and Mediatrix.

"This Mother of goodness" then turned towards Father de la Colombiere and said to him: "And you, faithful servant of my divine Son, have a great part in this precious treasure; for if it is given to the daughters of the Visitation to make it known, loved, and distributed to others, it has been reserved for the Fathers of the Society to make known and perceived its profitableness and its value, so that by receiving it with the respect and gratitude due to so great a benefit, all may derive profit from it."

In short, as the Visitation nuns must continue to carry on Margaret Mary's work, so must the Jesuits continue and carry on the mission given to Father de la Colombiere. "The Sacred Heart will reward them." For, "according as they will give It this pleasure, this divine Heart, the source of blessings and graces, will pour these out so abundantly on the functions of their ministry that they will produce fruits exceeding their labours and their hopes, and for the salvation and perfection of each one in particular."

The scene ends with an exquisite discourse from Saint Francis de Sales. He invites his daughters "to draw from the Source of grace the waters of salvation," and he explains to them how the new devotion, far from being incompatible with their constitutions, which were themselves drawn from this Divine Heart, offers them on the contrary an easy means of fulfilling what is enjoined on them in the first Article of their Directory, which comprises in itself the whole perfection of their institute: "That their whole life and exercises should consist in uniting themselves with God." To fulfil this, he tells them that "this Heart must be the life that animates us, Its love our continual exercise, for It alone can unite us to God that we may help by our prayers and good example both Holy Church and the salvation of souls. And for this, we shall pray in the Heart and through the Heart of Jesus, which wills once more to become the Mediator between God and man. Our good example will be to live in conformity with the maxims and virtues of this Divine Heart, and we shall aid the salvation of our neighbours by spreading amongst them this holy Devotion. We shall try to spread the good odour of the Heart of Jesus in the hearts of the faithful so that we may be the joy and the crown of that lovable Heart."

The Rise of the New Devotion.

This new devotion was not always received with enthusiasm, some disliked it, others feared it, to some even its very name became hateful. Even Father Croiset's book on the Devotion was placed on the index. (For thirteen years, it was the primary vehicle for making universally known the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But then, through a technicality, it was placed on the "Index of Forbidden Books" to go into obscurity until modern times, 1887, when the Bishop of Sarajevo discovered this treasure and asked the Sacred Congregation of the Index to re-examine it. They did, and approved it without change.) It was one by one that souls had to be won. Only in 1887 was the book accepted. Yet in spite of obstacles, the devotion continued to spread among the people. In 1707, the Religious of the Visitation renewed their petitions and begged Pope Clement XI to grant

them the Mass proper to the Feast. The Pope, in praising their zeal and piety, told them to await in peace the Church's decision.

In 1720 a terrible plague in Marseilles in which many thousands died, was perhaps the occasion of the first solemn Act of Consecration, of public worship outside religious Communities. By it the plague was stayed. In 1722, it broke out again. This time only when the members of the City Council themselves made a solemn vow to celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart by Holy Mass, Communion, acts of homage, and a solemn procession, was the plague finally stayed. "Other cities nearby practised this devotion and thus it became popular."

In 1726, efforts were resumed for the approbation of Rome. The Kings of Poland and Spain, the Bishops of Cracow and Marseilles and the Visitation Order appealed to Pope Benedict XIII, then to Benedict XIV, but no direct answer could be obtained.

In 1765, Pope Clement XIII took up the cause again. On January 25th, the Sacred Congregation of Rites at last gave the longed-for decree and a feast was granted as a privilege. This was mainly owing to the efforts of the pious Queen of France, Maria Leczinska (Marie Leszczyńska the queen of Louis XV) who had humbly and courageously taken the matter to heart. At the meeting of the Clergy in this year, the Archbishop of Rheims, who presided, acquainted them with the desire to see "the devotion and the Office of the Sacred Heart in all the dioceses in which it was not yet established. Filled with profound respect and veneration, due more to Her Majesty's eminent virtues, than to her exalted rank, and wishing to second as far as possible such edifying zeal, they unanimously resolved to establish the devotion and the Office of the Sacred Heart in their respective dioceses, and to invite by circular letter the rest of the Hierarchy to do the same in their dioceses. This was done. The Circular was sent, and almost everywhere, a Feast was immediately established. On this occasion, a number of episcopal charges explaining the devotion and commanding it highly were issued. It was however, only a privilege. The Feast was conceded to those who petitioned it, not prescribed for the whole Church.

The Spread of the Devotion.

In 1856 Pope Pius IX at the petition of all the French Bishops assembled in Paris, extended the feast to the Universal Church with the rite of a double Major. In 1864, the Beatification of Margaret Mary gave an exalted sanction to the worship of the Sacred Heart in the form in which it was being propagated. Meanwhile the devotion continued to spread and from all parts came an appeal for a more solemn Feast. But it was only on June 28th, 1889, that the Feast was raised for the whole Church to a double of the First Class. On July 23rd, 1897, another decree was issued by which it was permitted to transfer the celebration of the feast to the Sunday. Thus was realised the Desire which Our Lord expressed in the GREAT APPARITION. The Feast had been established throughout the entire world with its distinctive characteristic of Reparation and Atonement. In what regards external solemnity, the celebration of the Feast was not yet all that it might be. But few feasts have taken such a hold of the faithful. In 1870-1871, numerous petitions had been addressed to Pope Pius IX begging that the whole Church might be consecrated to this Most Loving Heart. But the Pope did not consider that he should bring his authority to bear upon the matter.

In 1875, 525 Bishops sent a fourfold petition to the Holy Father begging him:

1. To choose a day on which, in the Vatican Basilica, he would consecrate the city of Rome and the world to the Sacred Heart.

2. That all Catholic assemblies, dioceses, parishes, religious congregations, houses of education et cetera, should make by the mouth of their Superior the same act of Consecration.
3. To grant indulgences and to command that the consecration should be renewed every year.
4. That the Feast should be raised to a double of the First Class with Octave as the Patronal Feast of the Whole Church.

But the Pope hesitated. He desired the Sacred Congregation of Rites to send everywhere a formula of Consecration, which he approved of, and offered it to all who wished to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart. This Unity of formula would demonstrate the Unity of the Church. To the Bishops he left it to translate, and if they judged well, to publish the formula to the faithful. He exhorted its recitation in public or in private on June 16th, 1875, reckoned as the second centenary of the Apparition. To all who should do this he accorded a Plenary Indulgence. Finally, the Pope commissioned Father Ramiere, the Director of the Apostleship of Prayer, who had been from the first the soul of the movement, to communicate the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites with the formula of Consecration, to the Bishops of the whole Catholic world. The ceremony of June 16th, 1875 was one of the greatest that the Catholic world has ever seen; a glorious triumph for the Sacred Heart, at which Saint Margaret Mary must have thrilled with joy.

But a still more glorious triumph was to come when Leo XIII at the close of the 19th century consecrated the whole Human Race to the Sacred Heart.

On May 25th, 1899 the Pope in his Encyclical "Annum Sacrum," announced to the whole Christian world the magnificent design he had conceived, and from which he expected, if all with their whole hearts and en masse lent themselves to it, great enduring benefits, – first of all for Christianity, next for the entire Human Race. He recalled what his predecessors had done for the Heart of Jesus and now he added, "will be, as it were, the crowning of all the homage that has ever been rendered to the Sacred Heart, and we have confidence that it will be very pleasing to Our Saviour."

He recalled the petitions to Pius IX and the Consecration of 1875. It seemed to him that the time had come at last to consecrate to the Sacred Heart the entire Human race. As the reason that urged him to this decision he pointed out that Jesus is the Supreme King, not only of Catholics and of all who are baptised but of the entire human race and he pointed out His rights to His Sovereignty. But what Jesus desires is our spontaneous recognition of this sovereignty, and the Act of Consecration is precisely this recognition. "As we have, moreover, in the Sacred Heart, the symbol and the living image of the infinite Love of Jesus urging us thus to return Him Love for Love, it is but right that it is to the Sacred Heart that we should make this Act of Consecration, which is indeed nothing else but consecrating ourselves to Jesus Christ."

"But those that know not Jesus, are we to forget them? All over the world, we send Apostles to them. But today, touched by their misfortune, we earnestly recommend them to Jesus, and as far as in us lies, we consecrate them to Him. And thus this Consecration, which we recommend to all, will be profitable to all, in some, increasing their faith and love, drawing down upon others the graces and sanctification of holiness." The Pope next shows that in this devotion lies the remedy for the ills of society. Formerly he tells us, the Cross appeared to Constantine both as the pledge and the cause of victory. "Behold today a new sign is offered to our eyes, a sign of hope, a sign wholly Divine, the Sacred Heart, shining with resplendent brightness amidst flames. It is in this Heart, that all our hopes must be placed that we must pray and expect salvation."

To all these great reasons for the general order that he had issued the Pope added another, which he said was quite personal: God had manifested His care of Him by curing him of a dangerous malady. He wished on his part to preserve a grateful memory of this by rendering the greatest homage to the Sacred Heart. He therefore ordered a triduum with prayer and litanies in preparation for the Feast, and he sent the formula of Consecration to be recited on the last day of the triduum, which would be the day of the feast. The encyclical bore the date of May 25th, 1899.

In 1899, the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi fell on June 9th and the solemn celebration being transferred to Sunday, the Consecration would take place on the 11th. But very nearly two months before that date, by a decree of April 2nd, the Sacred Congregation of Rites had authorised the recital in public of the Litanies of the Sacred Heart. As it was only on March 25th that the Pope so decided, this announcement could scarcely have been made sooner. The Pope had meditated taking this action but not until 1900. Probably his preservation from death in the dangerous illness of which he speaks in his Encyclical hastened the event. Notwithstanding this haste, the Catholic world was found prepared. We know with what solemnity was accomplished this Act, which Leo XIII described as the "Greatest Act of His Pontificate."

On July 21st, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in the name of the Pope, addressed to all the Bishops a letter strongly urging them to make known the Cult of the Sacred Heart by means of Confraternities, by means of the Month of the Sacred Heart and by the exercise of the First Fridays.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart at the Present Day.

From the 19th Century to the present day devotion to the Sacred Heart might be called the stay and support of our holy religion. It is now practised in all parts of the globe.

Saint Madeleine Sophie (Barat) born 12th December, 1779 at Joigny, a little Burgundian town in France, was God's instrument in founding a Religious Order for women devoted to the education of girls who had been deprived of education during the Revolution. It was far from the Saint's mind to found, what the Society of the Sacred Heart has been so often called, an Educational Order. Her first idea was that of a life consecrated to the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Order came into being after the manner of a living thing very little aware of itself, depending much on care and love and understanding; and only little by little did it come to the knowledge of its powers and the duties for which it would become responsible later on.

The ideal such as Saint Madeleine Sophie must have seen it, was very happily expressed by one preaching on the Society when he said, "for all the sorrows and sufferings of Our Lord's life on earth, and in His Passion, some special reparation and compensation was owed to Him and was made by a living guard of honour, a company that would devote itself to that Sacred Heart, and bear Its name and be Its very own, entirely consecrated to It, and serve It for love, each member for all the days of her life."

This is the central thought in the Saint's teaching; the personal gift of the whole being for personal service; the gift of love for love, with the added depth and devotedness which comes of understanding that a soul may make reparation and give real consolation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the coldness and ingratitude and misunderstanding which met the advances of His Love when on earth, and continues through all ages since, to treat it with the same careless contempt.

But the devotion to the Sacred Heart has more than one aspect. In one sense, it has as many aspects as there are souls to understand and practise it, for not all the millions of worshippers in the Church, or the thousands of consecrated members, could absorb those "unsearchable riches" of the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord. Nor could they exhaust the points of view from which this central object of their devotion may be studied. It is to the whole human race that the cry of the Sacred Heart "Behold this Heart which has so loved men," strives to make itself heard, and year by year its appeal spreads more widely in the great confraternities and associations through which its knowledge is carried here and there, and in whose track wonderful fruits of Christian life spring up.

United prayer obtains the conversion of sinners, graces of comfort and help in all necessities, peace in families, power in priests to win souls to God and fulfilment of all the other "Promises of the Sacred Heart," made known to Saint Margaret Mary.

At the end of her long life, a few weeks before her death, 25th May, 1865, Saint Madeleine Sophie, the Mother Foundress wrote to her religious, "When we write we underline the words we deem of most importance. Well, these are the words I underline for you.

"All, absolutely all, for the Sacred Heart of Jesus." May the Saint's last words echo in all our hearts throughout the centuries to the end of Time.

SACRED HEART OF JESUS, MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME!

(Thanks to the Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart.)
